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Pure Land Hermeneutics[[1](#)] in the Song Dynasty:

The Case of Zhanran Yuanzhao (1048~1116)

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Summary

This paper is a preliminary study of Pure Land hermeneutics in the Song. In the paper, I examine the hermeneutics that the monk Yuanzhao of the Song Dynasty carried out. I argue that Yuanzhao engaged in an advanced third-phase hermeneutics in the Chinese Pure Land tradition. This hermeneutical phase, which had commenced in the Sui and the Tang periods when a Pure Land commentarial tradition was built up by such respected

masters as Huiyuan and Shandao, reached a full-blown stage when Yuanzhao undertook the exegesis of the Guan jing.

Yuanzhao's exegesis of the Guan jing is of particular importance because it represented the triumph of the Pure Land faith toward which Yuanzhao had been ill-disposed, and because it reflected substantially Yuanzhao's devotion to the faith. Initially an adherent of the Vinaya School who preached monastic rules and conducted ordinations, Yuanzhao converted himself to the Pure Land faith after he had fallen ill. After the conversion, Yuanzhao became the most staunch and outspoken supporter of the faith in his time, and a Pure Land spokesman who believed in the fundamental values of monastic rules and advocated the amalgamation of Pure Land and Vinaya practices. Not only did he

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disavow his previous antagonism toward the Pure Land, he also devoted himself to lecturing and writing about the Pure Land.

In his hermeneutics, Yuanzhao set a goal to transmit the doctrines of the Pure Land that his predecessors had interpreted. He studied the Pure Land scriptures and commentaries that he had at his disposal. His dedication to the Pure Land found its expression in many Pure Land related activities, including the composition of commentaries on two Pure Land sūtra s, the Amituo jing and the Guan jing. His commentary on the Guan jing purported a systemization of the major Guan jing exegeses derived from previous hermeneutics. He managed to recapitulate the principal Pure Land ideas and to explain away discrepancies among some Pure Land texts that had interpreted the faith somewhat differently. While he adopted some interpretations that Zhiyi, Shandao, and other exegetes had provided, he did clarify much of the contradiction and ambiguity embedded in these interpretations. His comparisons of the differences between guanfo and nianfo, between guanfo and guanxin, as well as his interpretation of the indiscriminatory rebirth in Sukhāvātī demonstrated an extraordinary insight that he possessed. As an adherent of the Amitābha Pure Land ideal, he helped solidify the theoretical basis of the Pure Land faith and assure aspirants definitive rewards of their devotions.

Yuanzhao's Pure Land hermeneutics represented both an exaltation and a revision of Zhiyi's, Shandao's, or Zunshi's views of the Pure Land. It also represented his disagreement with other Tiantai masters' interpretations of the sixteen guan stipulated in the Guan jing. His denial of the use of guanxin to interpret the sixteen guan and of the dichotomization of the sixteen guan into shi (phenomenon) and li (principle) guan reflected the sophistication of his hermeneutics. His advocacy of a simplified definition of the sixteen guan based on the aspirant's level of wisdom and virtue, rendered the distinction of shi or li guan insignificant. While

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Yuanzhao may have totally recognized the rebirth right of the most diabolic sinners, as it is what the Guan jing professes, he never forgot to put premium on morality. His Pure Land hermeneutics revealed the necessity of combining meditation, invocation, moral acts, vows, and devotion for the practice of the Pure Land faith.

關鍵詞： 1.Amitābha 2.Hermeneutics 3.Guang jing 4.Pure Land
5.Rebirth in Sukhāvātī 6.Yuanzhao

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I. Introduction

While it is known that the Pure Land scriptures originated in India, the commentarial tradition of the Pure Land scriptures was formed in China. This tradition, however, took shape much later than the commentarial traditions of other scriptures such as the Mahāprajñāpāramitā scriptures, partly because of the late appearance of the translated Pure Land scriptures.^[2] Only until all major Pure Land scriptures were translated did the commentaries emerge.^[3] The reasons for this late occurrence remain an intriguing issue that calls for further study, but the commentarial tradition itself has attracted some attention in the West. At least two major commentaries on the Guan Wuliangshoufo jing have been studied and one

of them has been translated into English in this decade.[4] More studies on the commentaries on this and other Pure Land

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scriptures can be anticipated, given the fact that the scriptures per se have also been translated.[5]

Thus far, scholars studying the commentarial tradition of the Pure Land scriptures have focused primarily on the pre-Song texts and have yet to pay attention to the texts produced in the Song. Doubtless, the pre-Song texts are important because they had some impact on later commentaries as scholars have suggested. The extent to which they impacted later texts is, however, hard to gauge if we do not look into those texts appeared in the Song. On the other hand, the disagreements among pre-Song texts were likely to complicate the process and change the focus of Pure Land hermeneutics in the Song. The occasionally ambiguous or implicit points made in these texts might also spur Song Buddhist scholars to write more comprehensible exegeses than what had been written by their predecessors. Among other things, the desire to unravel some mysteries on the part of Song exegetes is worth a close investigation.

A thorough investigation of Pure Land hermeneutics in the Song is beyond the scope of this paper. What follows is a modest and preliminary study of an important commentary on the Guan jing by Zanran Yuanzhao (湛然元照), a.k.a. Lingzhi Yuanzhao (靈芝元照, 1048~1116), of the Northern Song Dynasty. The primary goal is to

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argue that the tendency to systematize the commentarial tradition of the Pure Land scriptures continued to find its expression in the Song through the hermeneutics of the Guan jing. As Yuanzhao's case shows, this hermeneutics relied heavily on the legacy of earlier commentators such as Jingying Huiyuan 淨影慧遠 (523~592) and Shandao 善導 (613~681). It also supported the expansion of the Pure Land faith and practice, helping to bring a new phase of Pure Land hermeneutics to its full-blown stage.[6]

II. Yuanzhao and the Pure Land Scriptures

It is most fitting to study Yuanzhao and to use him to discuss Pure Land hermeneutics in the Song on the following grounds: first, originally a master of the Vinaya School who had been indisposed toward the Amitābha faith, he became a convert of Pure Land devotionism and one of the most dedicated Pure Land advocates in his time; second, he was among the major Pure Land exegetes during the Song Dynasty whose commentaries on the Pure Land scriptures are still extant; third, he was perhaps the most prominent, revered, and influential monk in the mid-Song, the last twenty years of the eleventh century when Emperors Shenzong (神宗, r.1068~1085) and Zhezong (哲宗, r.1085~1100) were in power: while active primarily in Hangzhou and its vicinity, where the Amitābha faith was most popular, he drew a large following from many other places; fourth, as a devoted champion of the Amitābha faith, he composed at least two commentaries on the Pure Land scriptures in addition to many works on monastic rules.[7] These two commentaries, the Amituojing shu (Exegesis and Sub-commentary on the Amituo jing 《阿彌陀經義疏》) and the Guan jing

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shu (Sub-commentary on the Guan jing 《觀經疏》), were important constituent elements of the larger commentarial tradition of the Pure Land scriptures throughout Chinese history. The composition of these two commentaries best exemplified the continuity of the hermeneutical tradition of Pure Land and won Yuanzhao the prestige in Pure Land hermeneutics in his time and in the time that followed.[8]

An account of Yuanzhao's career, his religious experience, and his turning to the Pure Land scriptures should prove essential to our understanding of the significance of Yuanzhao's Pure Land hermeneutics. Initially a monk of the Nanshan lineage of Vinaya Buddhism (南山律宗), Yuanzhao spent thirty years teaching Buddhism in Qiantang (錢塘), Hangzhou (杭州) during the reigns of Emperors Shenzong and Zhezong. There he established a Zichi (資持) branch of the Nanshan lineage, which restored the luster of the Vinaya School of Buddhism. As the abbot of some major temples in Hangzhou, including Fahui (法慧), Dabei (大悲), Xiangfu Jietan (祥符戒壇), Jintu Baoge (淨土寶閣), Lingzhi Chongfu (靈芝崇福), he "taught

bodhisattva precepts (菩薩戒) in several ten thousands assemblies and conducted additional ordinations (增戒) in sixty assemblies. People flocked to him like echoes in the valley because he “provided charity, conducted ordination, invoked blessings, and dispelled disasters.”^[9] However, after he became a Pure Land devotee, he also provided Pure Land services for people, including such prominent scholar-officials as Su Shi (蘇軾, 1036~1101). Su Shi commemorated his diseased mother at the temple over which Yuanzhao presided.

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He characterized Yuanzhao as follows: “the Master of the Vinaya [School of Buddhism] Yuanzhao of the Qiantang (錢塘) widely encourages Buddhists and lay people to devote their lives to the Blissful World of the West (西方極樂世界) and the Buddha Amitābha.”^[10] In his view, “the Master of the Vinaya [School] is exceptional in his practice of austerity. He is well versed in both doctrines and monastic rules. He has practiced the Buddha’s ways day and night for over twenty years and has never for a single moment assumed a false look. Since [Master] Biancai (辯才, 1011~1091) left [Hangzhou], Buddhists and lay people have honored him as their master.”^[11]

Su Shi’s characterization of Yuanzhao showed his own admiration for the master. He likened him to Biancai who, also known as Yuanjing (元淨), was among the most admired Tiantai masters during the reigns of Emperors Renzong (仁宗, r.1023~1063) and Shenzong. Su Shi himself dedicated an elegy upon hearing the news of Biancai’s death. In the elegy, he lamented the loss of a great master: “When I first visited the district of Wu (吳), I was still able to see the five masters including the doctrinal masters [Hui] bian ([慧] 辯, 1014~1073) and [Fan] zhen ([梵] 臻, dates unclear), Chan masters [Huai] lian ([懷] 璉, 1009~1090) and Qisong ([契] 嵩, 1007~1072). Twenty years later, only this old master remained [i.e., Biancai]. Now he is gone too. Who will take his place for the younger generation to honor as the Master?”^[12] This worry about

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the absence of Biancai’s successor, whether literal or rhetorical, certainly

dissipated when he saw Yuanzhao, as he said that the latter was respected as the Master after Biancai's demise.

Su Shi, of course, was only one of many officials who had spent time in Hangzhou and were patrons of Yuanzhao. Jiang Zhiqi (蔣之奇, 1031~1104), who was the Prefect of Hangzhou from 1102 to 1103, was also among the enthusiastic supporters of Yuanzhao. We have reasons to believe that he had close contact with some eminent monks in Hangzhou, including Gushan Zhiyuan (孤山智圓, 967~1022) and Yuanzhao.[13] On one occasion, Jiang Zhiqi invited Yuanzhao to lecture on the general imports of the monastic rules.[14] In this lecture, Yuanzhao apparently tied all Buddhist practices with the monastic rules, stating that buddhas in ten quarters, sages in the three periods of the past, present and future, as well as those who wanted to be rewarded a rebirth in the Amitābha Sukhāvātī had to achieve their goals through many efforts. Through wishes, vows, pledges, and relying on the dignity of the faith, vows, and efforts, they were able to liberate themselves from samsāra.[15] After the lecture, Jiang Zhiqi composed a poem to show his appreciation. The poem begins with “the mind is purified and the Buddha land is pure” (xinjin fotu jing 心淨佛土淨), a line drawn from what seems to have been the motto of the Pure Land teaching taught by the Tiantai School during the Song.[16]

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This combination of Vinaya and Pure Land concepts in a lecture was much more evident in a lecture delivered to the prominent Korean monk Ŭich'on (義天) during his tour in Hangzhou.[17] This lecture occurred in December 1085, when Ŭich'on, accompanied by Yang Jie (楊傑, dates unclear), paid him a visit. According to the compiler of Yuanzhao's works, Ŭich'on was so impressed by Yuanzhao's lecture that he requested Yuanzhao's written works be given to him for making printing presses so that they could be circulated in Koryŏ.[18] In the lecture, Yuanzhao stated that he had often taught aspirants two cardinal points of Buddhism. One was the need to have a good beginning when entering the path and another was the necessity of having an aspiring mind all the way through to the end.[19] By “good beginning,” Yuanzhao meant that one has to receive the precepts and uphold them conscientiously. At any time and in any given situations of the dusty

realm, one has to keep in mind that one is committed to the precepts and cannot for a single moment forget this even when dressing, eating, walking, sitting, speaking, in silence, moving, and when still. By “[all the way through to] the end,” Yuanzhao meant that one should dedicate oneself to the Pure Land, determinedly vowing to attain rebirth in the Land of the Utmost Bliss.[20]

Of particular interest is the fact that Yuanzhao himself was a convert who turned into an advocate of the Pure Land faith that he had abhorred and rejected in the early days of his career. According to his own account, he was a student of the Vinaya

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School of Buddhism, dedicating himself to strict monastic rules and conventional wisdom of the Buddha path that stressed effort, morality, and discipline. He had this vision of an ideal monk:

I thought to myself that even though one begins to study in one’s later years, isn’t that all because of one’s innate good? It is only because one has not met a good teacher and has committed sins, one loses his life in vain and endures suffering for a long kalpa. Having thought of this, I took a big vow to be reborn in the evil world of five defilements in the Sahā realm. There I would penetrate and comprehend Buddhist teachings and become a great teacher. I would lead people to enter the Buddha’s way. Then I saw the words of Dharma Master Huibu (慧布法師) in the Gaoseng zhuan (《高僧傳》), which go like this: “Although Amitābha’s Upāya land is pure, it is not where I vow to go. Enjoying happiness for twelve kalpas amidst lotus flowers is not as good as rescuing sentient beings in the three realms of extreme suffering.”[21] This has led me to become adamant in my own point of view, uninterested in the gate of the Pure Land for so many years and predisposed to revile those who cultivated the Pure Land faith.[22]

Yuanzhao’s initial vow was based on his understanding of the established Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. He set out to take the Bodhisattva path, aiming to liberate all sentient beings, which, he believed, could not be accomplished if he entered the blissful world

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of Sukhāvātī and obtained self-enjoyment, but could only be done, if he stayed in the evil world of the five defilements and in the realm of extreme suffering of the three paths (五濁惡世、三塗極苦之處). In his view, Amitābha’s Sukhāvātī was suspect and whoever pursued it was misled. Therefore, instead of propagating this Pure Land, Yuanzhao vehemently criticized the concept of Pure Land.

Although it is unclear how long Yuanzhao held this view, he seems to have changed his view after he had suffered from a severe illness. He began to see things differently, feeling uneasy with his earlier perception of the Pure Land. Thinking that he might have been wrong all along, he began to read the Tiantai shiyi lun (《天台十疑論》), better known as the Jingtū shiyi lun (《淨土十疑論》), and was much inspired by the central ideas in the treatise. Thereupon, he “fully gave up all he had learned and turned his attention to the teachings of Pure Land for some twenty years without ceasing even for a moment.”[23] Moreover, he “engaged in an in-depth study of the principles of the teaching, and delved into old and new texts.”[24] As a result, he cleared all the doubts he had and further enhanced his belief in the Amitābha Pure Land.[25]

At least by 1094, when Yuanzhao was forty-seven, he had already become a staunch advocate of the Pure Land teaching.[26] He actively engaged in the defense of Buddhism, including the Pure Land faith in Hangzhou area. His account of an Amitābha’s statue shows that he refuted some Buddhists for their negative view of pure land activities.[27] While reaffirming the Pure Land tradition

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that, in his view, had been established by Huiyuan ([廬山] 慧遠, 334-416) of the Eastern Jin, and had been elevated by Shandao (善導), Huaigan (懷感), Zhijue (智覺), Ciyun (慈雲) from the Tang to the Song, he condemned those who reviled nianfo (念佛) as engaging in an impudent act and pure land activities as a lesser way (xiaodao 小道).[28] To him, they were oblivious to the fact that the experiences of some earlier prominent Buddhist masters had proven the efficacy of Pure Land devotionism. He argued that Zhiyi (智顓, 538~597) had raised the Guan jing in his hand and praised Sukhāvātī before he died; Dushun (杜順, dates unclear) had encouraged

people to be mindful of the Buddha Amitābha (nian Mito 念彌陀) and had ascended the Western Paradise while visualizing the supreme image [of the Buddha Amitābha]; Zhijue (智覺) had organized pure land societies to facilitate nianfo and had attained the highest grade of rebirth in the Pure Land. Each of these masters had been known for a particular achievement: Zhiyi for his superior understanding of the Tiantai doctrines and meditation (jiaoguan 教觀), Dushun for his unmatched familiarity with the dharma realms (fajie 法界), and Zhijue for his enlightened comprehension of Chan and human nature. Their devotion to the Pure Land, in Yuanzhao's view, suggested the difficulty of putting one's faith in the Pure Land unless one was confident and knowledgeable of the transformation of life and death.[29] At the time of writing this account, Yuanzhao had already been known for his dedication to the Pure Land faith,

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hence the abbot, Yongyuan (用淵), of the Wuliang yuan asked him to write a commemorative account upon the completion of an eight-foot image of the Buddha Amitābha.[30]

Yuanzhao's conversion to the Pure Land faith soon prompted him to compose a sub-commentary for both the Guan jing and the Mituo jing. He did these commentaries to propagate Amitābha and the Pure Land teaching, which he now upheld with enthusiasm. Interestingly, what actually enlightened him was not the three major Pure Land sūtra s but the Jingtū shiyi lun (《淨土十疑論》), whose authorship has been mistakenly attributed to Zhiyi.[31] Presumably, his fascination with the Jingtū shiyi lun prompted him to compose a tract called Shiyi lun ke (《十疑論科》) and to study the Pure Land sūtras.[32]

The Jingtū shiyi lun is a typical treatise written in the form of a catechism in which ten doubts, or shiyi (十疑), are listed to address the problems of the Amitābha Pure Land. The first of the ten doubts is reminiscent of what had puzzled Yuanzhao before he

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converted himself to the Pure Land faith. The doubt was recorded as follows:

Question: All the buddhas and bodhisattvas have taken great compassion to be their work. If they desire to save and liberate all sentient beings, they should only vow to be reborn within the three worlds and save all sentient beings in the realm of five defilements and three paths [of painful rebirth]. For what reason, therefore, do they seek to find relaxation in being reborn in the Pure Land, and thus forsake all sentient beings? This is not an act of great compassion and is done only for their benefit; it will be a hindrance to one's awakening.[33]

The question, which is based on the principal Mahāyāna teaching of the Bodhisattva ideal, evidently has its validity. It rejects outright the pursuit of the Pure Land because by doing so one merely finds relaxation for oneself (zian qishen 自安其身) without worrying about all other sentient beings. Such an act is more of a Hinayanist goal than what a Mahayanist is taught to accomplish. Yuanzhao had cast the same doubt on similar ground in his early years, but he was convinced by the explanation offered in the Jingtu shiyi lun after reading it. What kind of explanation appealed to him so much that he decided to convert himself?

According to Yuanzhao, the Jingtu shiyi lun enlightened him particularly with the following two concepts. One relates to the idea of “two types of bodhisattva” and another revolves around the notion of the “enmeshed common people” (jufu fanfu 具縛凡夫). The text of Jingtu shiyi lun says:

There are two types of bodhisattva: those who traverse for a long time the way of bodhisattvas and who have attained the insight of non-arising (wushengren 無生忍). These are the ones who

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undertake such a responsibility [of saving all being] . But those who have not attained such an insight and those common persons who have newly produced the mind of Bodhi should never be separated from the Buddha until the power of such an insight is perfected. Only then will they be able to withstand existence in the three worlds and there they can strive to alleviate the sufferings of all sentient beings within these evil realms.[34]

The view expressed in this statement is elaborated in the following passage of the text, which is paraphrased rather than directly quoted from the Dazhidu lun (《大智度論》).[35] This passage reads:

...if such enmeshed common persons have a heart of great compassion, and even if they vow to be born in this evil world to save suffering beings, such will not take place. [Why is this? It is because the defilements of the evil world are strong. And if one does not possess the strengths of the insight of non-arising, one will follow this (evil) realm. One will turn towards sound and forms and will be enmeshed by them. One shall fall into the three evil realms. How then can one truly save all sentient beings?...] An enmeshed common person is like a small child who cannot leave his mother; or like a bird whose wings have not yet developed and can only stay close to the tree, going from limb to limb.[36]

Thus Yuanzhao was convinced that before he attained the high level of insight like the enlightened bodhisattvas, he was not even in

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a position to talk about rescuing all sentient beings. He was ready to accept what the Jingtū shiyi lun proclaims—an ordinary person can bring about the successful completion of samādhi only if he practices single-minded meditation on the Buddha Amitābha (zhuanian Mituo 專念阿彌陀佛)—and fully dedicates himself to Amitābha.[37] Particularly, after he read the works of Shandao and discovered the insights he later demonstrated in his works, he became wholeheartedly devoted to the idea of rebirth in the Pure Land and to the notion of single-minded meditation on the Buddha Amitābha.[38]

III. The Study and the Commentary of the Guan jing

As mentioned earlier, Yuanzhao had learned much from Shandao before he formulated his own interpretation of the major Pure Land tenets. For instance, his understanding of rebirth in the Pure Land through “single-minded meditation” (zhuanian 專念) taught by the Jingtū shiyi lun was inspired by Shandao’s discussion of “single-minded practice” (zhuanxiu 專修).[39] This term was used in Shandao’s essay titled “On Single-minded

and Unfocused Practices in the Pure Land Faith” (Jingye zhuan-za er xiu〈淨業專、雜二修〉) where he distinguished “single-minded practice” from “unfocused practice” by stating the following:

All sentient beings are afflicted by their karma. They live in a delicate environment, but their consciousness and spirits float and fly. So, they are unable to attain the visualization (guan nan chengjiu 觀難成就). Therefore the Buddha out of pity and

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compassion advised them to engage in the single-minded invocation of the name and epithet of the Buddha [Amitābha] (直勸專稱名字). It is exactly because the invocation of name is easy that one will attain the rebirth [in the Pure Land] when one continues the invocation.[\[40\]](#)

Shandao actually equated “single-minded invocation” to “single-minded meditation,” as he continued to say:

If those who have engaged in the single-minded practice can continue, as suggested above, invoking the name of the Buddha until the end of their lives, they will all be reborn [in the Pure Land], whether they are in the number of ten or one hundred. Why is it so? It is because they perform correct mindfulness (zhengnian 正念) and are undisturbed by confusing matters outside [of their thought], because their practice corresponds with the Buddha [Amitābha’s] original vows, because they do not betray Buddhist teachings, and because they comply with the Buddha’s words. For those who have engaged in other perverse practices and have abandoned single-minded invocation, not even one or two of them [can obtain rebirth in the Pure Land] if they number a hundred; not even three or four if they number a thousand. Why is it so? It is because they miss correct mindfulness when engaging in perverse practices and deranged acts, because their practice does not correspond with the Buddha [Amitābha’s] original vows, because they betray the Buddha’s teachings, and because they do not comply with the words of the Buddha.[\[41\]](#)

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Obviously, Yuanzhao considers the “single-minded invocation” as the equivalent of the “single-minded practice” and “single-minded meditation” that he learned from Shandao and the *Jingtu shiyi lun*. Therefore he reaffirmed Shandao’s explication, saying “Those engaged in the single-minded invocation will be reborn in the Pure Land. If they number a hundred, all of them will be reborn [there]. Those engaged in perverse practice, only one or two out of a thousand or ten thousand can attain the [correct] visualization and its effect because their mind and consciousness are confused and befuddled.”[42]

Clearly, Yuanzhao was inspired by Shandao’s explanation of the single-minded practice and the single-minded invocation as the gateway to the rebirth in the Pure Land. Similar to what he learned from the *Jingtu shiyi lun*, this understanding was entirely in keeping with the Pure Land scriptures, which he now wholeheartedly accepted. He became a convert of the Pure Land faith by first reading the *Jingtu shiyi lun* and then the Pure Land sūtra as well as Shandao’s interpretation of them. He believed in whatever those scriptures said and began advocating the attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land through practicing what the Pure Land scriptures taught. He obviously accepted all three major Pure Land scriptures and treated them as one unified text, but he formulated his Pure Land ideas on the basis of the *Guan jing*, to which he dedicated a subcommentary, titled *Guan wuliangshou fojing yishu* (《觀無量壽佛經義疏》).[43]

The preparation for this subcommentary probably occurred not too long after Yuanzhao turned his attention to the Pure Land faith, although the date of completing this work remains unknown. The

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preface to his commentary says that he studied the sūtra at an early age.[44] However, it should not have been before the time he became very ill, which led him to become appreciative of the merits of the Pure Land faith. Therefore, while lamenting that many people had no place to turn to (*wugui 無歸*) after millions of kalpas, he celebrated the opportunity of studying this scripture on which his “remaining years” could depend.[45] He delved into the sūtra, perhaps along with other Pure Land scriptures, and found the existence of a number of commentaries in which different points of view

were embedded. These commentaries were the works of various Pure Land masters from different lineages so they somewhat reflected sectarian viewpoints of these respective lineages. Yuanzhao thought that the diverse opinion shown in these commentaries confused Pure Land aspirants, and made the possibility of finding a good path to the Pure Land very difficult for them. He felt incumbent upon himself to put together a coherent and comprehensive commentary by consulting all references and exegeses, collating and redacting old and new texts, selecting those he considered better interpretations and expunging bad ones. Although his goal was “to transmit but not innovate” (shu er bu zuo 述而不作), as he claimed in his preface, he actually was critical and elective in synthesizing earlier commentaries.[46] Sometimes, he even found Shandao’s interpretations not appealing and occasionally

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questioned and revised them. Only Ciyun Zunshi (慈雲遵式, 964~1032) in his mind had “exhausted the principles of the Pure Land faith.”[47]

IV. Yuanzhao’s Hermeneutics

Scholars have identified a variety of Pure Land practices that had been widely accepted prior to the Song Dynasty. Although each developed in its own right and might enjoy some degree of popularity, each was integrated in the more composite form of Pure Land teaching by Buddhist masters in different denominations in later Tang and early Song. It may not be easy to determine the reasons for this development, because the way people practiced the Pure Land faith could evolve and change from time to time, depending on factors ranging from the influence of regional folk belief and the guidance of charismatic masters. It is a complex issue that defies simple explanation. However, in the case of the Pure Land practice in Northern Song Hangzhou where prominent monks congregated, the influence from Buddhist monasteries and charismatic masters was much more evident. Within this context, it might be useful to test Kenelm Burridge’s theory of three hermeneutical phases and treat Yuanzhao as representing one of the charismatic monks who influenced the practice of Pure Land teaching partly with his Pure Land hermeneutics.[48]

Like other charismatic monks in earlier times, Yuanzhao was facing some important issues that tended to discredit the Pure Land faith in the Northern Song. One of them revolved around the “classification of teachings,” or the *panjiao* (判教) practice during this time. The tendency to classify the Pure Land teaching as part

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of the Lesser Vehicle (*xiaosheng*, 小乘), or *Hīnayāna*, still continued unabatedly. In light of the process of rebirth as recorded in the major Pure Land scriptures, such characterization was perfectly valid to those who made the classification. Ideas such as the reliance on *Amitābha*’s saving grace for rebirth and that the grace was extended only to those people mindful of the Buddha were among the most questionable. Opponents of the Pure Land teaching relegated it to Lesser Vehicle because they believed its scriptures taught primarily individual salvation. Their views clashed with that of the Pure Land advocates, among whom Yuanzhao was the leading figure. It was only natural that he vigorously defended his faith and reaffirmed its status as Greater Vehicle (*dasheng* 大乘), or *Mahāyāna*.[\[49\]](#)

Another important issue arose because the teaching had sometimes been labeled “gradual,” thus was diminished its weight within the Buddhist tradition. Yuanzhao asserted that it was definitely a “sudden” teaching, as many predecessors of Pure Land teachings had so indicated in their exegeses. He noted that *Huiyuan* ([淨影] 慧遠, 523~592), the author of the first surviving subcommentary on the *Guan jing*,[\[50\]](#) had characterized it as “the dharma wheel of the sudden teaching” (*dunjiao falun* 頓教法輪). He had argued that “*Vaidehi* and others were able to enter the state of non-arising or no-rebirth (*wusheng* 無生) not by way of *Hīnayāna* [but by way of Pure Land devotion] , even though they were ordinary beings (*fanfu* 凡夫). Therefore, the *Amitābha* teaching of this age is

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a round and sudden form of vehicle, to which no other paths are comparable.”[\[51\]](#) Yuanzhao also noted that *Ciyun Zunshi*, an earlier renowned monk of the Tiantai School, had made the following point: “Among the *Hīnayāna sūtra* s, no text on the palm leaves records even a single word of *jingtu*, let alone encourages rebirth [in the Pure Land]. Nor

does any sūtra in the Hīnayāna [tradition] mention even the name Amitābha.”[52] Upholding Zunshi’s view, Yuanzhao concluded that “In this [Mahāyāna tradition] , once one hears of the Buddha Amitābha and his Pure Land, one immediately enters the Mahāyāna path and obtains the Buddha seed. How can it not be a big mistake if one hears but believes nothing about the Pure Land?”[53]

More than seeing Pure Land teaching as Mahāyāna Buddhism, Yuanzhao also regarded it as the “whole truth” (liaoyi 了義), as opposed to the “partial truth” (buliaoyi 不了義) of the Hīnayāna teachings.[54] He followed Zunshi, defining the “whole truth” as the truth of “the Pure Land is none other than one’s own mind (zixin 自心), and Amitābha is none other than one’s own nature (zixing 自性).[55] This explanation of the Pure Land conformed the theory of

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“the Pure Land is the Mind” (jingtu weixin 淨土唯心), or of “the Mind is the Pure Land” (weixin jingtu 唯心淨土), which was widely recognized and often debated in the Song. The controversy arose because the following questions were posed to the advocates of Pure Land teaching: If the Pure Land is in one’s mind, why should one look for the Pure Land elsewhere? On the other hand, if the purified mind is tantamount to the Pure Land (xinjing tujing 心淨土淨), then why should one seek to gain rebirth in another Pure Land? In answer to such questions, which apparently take the idea of jingtu weixin very literally, Zunshi interpreted the phrase metaphorically. He argued that those who believe that the mind is confined to a small square-inch area certainly would see the Pure Land far away from the realm of his being. One should be aware that in one single thought, one’s mind, like dust, could reach everywhere. Therefore, even if there were billions of lands out there, they would be as near as one’s footstep and never beyond one’s mind.[56] As an adherent of Zunshi and his interpretation of the xinjing tujing theory, Yuanzhao asserted that the distinction of Pure Land and Defiled Land is really up to one’s own mind. As long as one’s own mind-body (xinti 心體) is void and receptive, one can obtain rebirth in the Pure Land unhindered; and as long as one’s mind-nature (xinxing 心性) is encompassing, one can choose the path of the Pure Land unobstructed. He lamented the common misappropriation of the weixin jingtu idea, feeling sorry that Amitābha was designated as “foreign object” (waiwu 外物), and

the land of bliss was relegated to “other region” (tabang 他邦).[57] In Yuanzhao’s view, although there are numerous buddha-lands (or buddha-fields), they can be classified into two kinds: the Land of Dharma-nature (faxing tu 法性土) and the Land of Response and

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Transformation (yinghua tu 應化土).[58] The former includes the lands in which various buddhas reside and travel. Although they are called lands, they really are not lands and should be called weixin jingtu. These lands, according to Yuanzhao, are parts of the “pure and defiled worlds in ten quarters” that one can embrace in one blink of eyes or in one instance of thought, as Zunshi had once said. The latter includes three forms of lands: the Land of True Rewards (shibao tu 實報土), the Land of Expediency (fangbian tu 方便土), and the Land of Cohabitation (tongju tu 同居土).[59] The land, which one sees in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra on the Benevolent King (Renwang boruo jing《仁王般若經》) and where the three worthies and ten sages (sanxian shisheng 三賢十聖) live, belongs to the Land of True Rewards. The land outside of the three realms, as described in the Dazhidu lun (《大智度論》) where śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas live, belongs to the Land of Expediency. As for the Land of Cohabitation, Yuanzhao divided it into the defiled land (tongju huitu 同居穢土) and the pure land (tongju jingtu 同居淨土).[60] He maintained that the Amitābha Pure Land illustrated in the Guan

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jing belongs to tongju jingtu in which only Mahāyāna buddhas, brahmans, and humans reside.[61] This Amitābha Pure Land is not the Pure Land described in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra on the Benevolent King (Renwang boruo jing《仁王般若經》), in the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment (Yuanjue jing《圓覺經》), and in the Lotus Sūtra (Fahua jing《法華經》). The Pure Lands mentioned in those sūtra s belong either to the Land of Eternal Serenity and Illumination or to the Land of True Rewards.[62]

Yuanzhao made some effort to clarify the meaning of guan (觀), a central idea in the Guan jing. He took it upon himself to deal with earlier interpretations of two key phrases associated with Queen Vaidehi’s request for instruction from the Buddha. These phrases, siwei (思惟) and zhengshou

(正受), had been interpreted as three blessings (sanfu 三福) and sixteen guan (shiliu guan 十六觀) in old commentaries.[63] The interpretation had turned Vaidehi's plea to

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the Buddha into a request for teaching her three blessings and sixteen guan.[64] According to Yuanzhao, Shandao had referred to this earlier interpretation in his Mysterious Meanings of the Guan Jing (Guan jing xuanyi 《觀經玄義》).[65] There he seemed to have disagreed with these commentaries in their interpretation of the two phrases.[66] Yuanzhao argued in support of him, saying that the Huayan Sūtra treats siwei and zhengshou as variant terms of samādhi (sanmei 三昧) and that Vaidehi's plea to the Buddha, which is "teach me how to contemplate (guan 觀) on the field of pure and calm actions," really is a request for the instruction of contemplation, guan.[67] In Yuanzhao's view, the skillful means one uses before engaging in guan is siwei, whereas the actual completion of guan is zhengshou. Simply put, both are methods of guan, albeit the difference in depth. This seems to suggest that siwei is the preparatory stage of the entire process of guan whereas zhengshou is the advanced and ultimate stage of the process. This interpretation, if indeed it was what Yuanzhao meant, is probably closer to the intended meaning of the Guan jing text, which was

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enhanced by Shandao's interpretation.[68] In any case, the crucial point in Yuanzhao's opinion is the necessity of involving in the activities to evoke blessings. Without blessings, according to him, one cannot achieve the goal of guan. Missing either blessings or guan will result in either the lack of dignity or in being encumbered by the wrong paths. The former leads to the commonplace rewards and the latter to the inability to gain rebirth in Sukhāvātī.[69] Yuanzhao maintained that he who wants to cultivate guan must cultivate blessing (fuye 福業) so that he can nurture his wisdom of guan (guanzhi 觀智). Only when he manifests the three blessings, can he practice guan. The three blessings can be likened to a shipload of treasures and the wisdom of guan to the ship mast. The combination of the two is similar to the mutual complement of phenomenon (shi 事) and principle (li 理) and to the simultaneous operation of the blessings and the wisdom. To

Yuanzhao, it is uninspiring to cultivate guan by simply sitting still and upright without practicing things such as serving teachers and parents, upholding precepts to which one commits, and reciting Mahāyāna sūtra s. It is essential to practice correct guan (zheng guan 正觀) with the aid of all good deeds that one has performed.[70]

This understanding of guan led Yuanzhao to enunciate another disagreement with Shandao. For example, he denied the notion of “concentrated-goodness” (dingshan 定善) and “nonconcentrated-goodness” (sanshan 散善) that Shandao had used in the Guanjing

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xuanyi.[71] There Shandao regarded the first thirteen guan as “concentrated goodness” and latter three blessings and nine grades (safu jiupin 三福九品) as “nonconcentrated goodness.”[72] Yuanzhao argued that this would reduce the sixteen guan to thirteen guan, which apparently does not conform to the text of Guan jing. He noted the fact that since all of the last three practices are designated as guan in the Guan jing text, using the category of “nonconcentrated goodness” to define them makes little sense. In other words, he seemed to assert that they are guan regardless of the fusion of moral themes in the depiction of three blessings and nine grades of rebirth. The category of “nonconcentrated goodness” that Shandao used to define the last three guan is simply wrong.[73]

V. The Controversy of Rebirth in the Pure Land

The path to the Pure Land had been questioned again and again before the Pure Land faith started to attract public attention. Yuanzhao himself had had strong doubts about the Pure Land

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teaching in his early days as it teaches a form of rebirth totally contradictory to the very concept of the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva ideal. His acceptance of the Pure Land teaching made him a dedicated spokesman for the theory of rebirth in the Land of Bliss. He championed this theory relentlessly, bringing to the fore what he thought would dispel the suspicions of the

major Pure Land doctrines. His commentary was really an extension of this undaunted effort. It is not surprising to see that he continued to reiterate what he believed were common flaws on the part of those opponents of the Pure Land faith. One of these “flaws” was their denial of the manifestation of various buddhas and bodhisattvas occurred at the time of the aspirant’s entry into the Pure Land, or Sukhāvātī. The opponents believed that the manifestation of buddhas and bodhisattvas was due to the aspirant’s own vision rather than to their true existence. Yuanzhao argued that this view was mistaken on three counts: first, the distrust of the words of the Buddha; second, the inability to cultivate the power of the Buddha; third, the distrust of the body of the Buddha. Yuanzhao claimed that the descriptions of blissful visions in the Guan jing are based on the words of the Buddha and are not subject to interrogation. The compassionate vows that various buddhas and bodhisattvas took have their power of rescuing the aspirant from his suffering. This power is the Buddha’s power which needs to be cultivated. Moreover, the Buddha and all sentient beings are equal in their “fundamental nature” (tixing 體性). Naturally, the Buddha will respond to the stimulus arising from the aspirant’s attempt to visualize heavenly beings. If there were no such response, then the three bodies of the Buddha would be incomplete and the Buddha would not be real.[74] Yuanzhao recognized the omnipotence of the Buddha, stressing the importance of trusting his words, power, and body. He spoke outright that one would have nothing to trust if

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one did not trust the Buddha. If the Buddha teaches the rebirth in the Pure Land, there must be a Pure Land into which one can be reborn. It was his strong conviction that the rebirth in the Pure Land is an achievable goal and those who have obtained this form of rebirth are not at all fools as have been characterized by the opponents of the Pure Land. It must be so, he contends, because the Wuliangshou fojing (《無量壽佛經》) says that all of the bodhisattvas in ten directions vowed to be reborn in the Pure Land and because the Puxian xingyuan (《普賢行願》) chapter of the Huayan Sūtra also reaffirms the same vows that Bodhisattvas Mahāsthāma-prāpta (Dashizhi 大勢至) and Avalokiteśvara (觀音) took. In addition, many eminent monks, including Huiyuan ([廬山] 慧遠), Huisi (慧思, 515~577), and Zhiyi who had been recorded in Buddhist biographies, had practiced

this Pure Land faith. None of them in Yuanzhao's opinion could have been fools.[75]

The desire to obtain rebirth in the Pure Land along with the mindfulness of the Buddha and the cultivation of *guan* were also accused of being “attachments to the marks” (*zhaoxiang* 著相). Opponents of the Pure Land teaching viewed *Sukhāvātī* as a path not at all transcendental because of these attachments. Yuanzhao contested this view, saying that the criteria of attachments lie in the extent to which human mind and wisdom can detect brightness and darkness. What the Buddha meant by “detachments to the marks” (*buzhaoxiang* 不著相) refers to such marks as self, others, all sentient beings, people enjoying long life etc. The marks had never been associated with mindfulness and cultivation. Unlike the attachment to the splurge of one's power and wealth, to the indulgence in lust and fame, to amassing public property, and to one's wife and children, the *nianfo samādhi* (念佛三昧, the Buddha-Recollection *samādhi*), which the Buddha had encouraged people to cultivate, absolutely has no mark attached. Why is it so?

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Yuanzhao argued that the body of the Buddha has no mark, to which nothing can attach.[76]

The *nianfo samādhi* is one of the steps in the practice of Pure Land devotionalism. A term used in the *Guan jing* to describe the eighth and ninth *guan*, it is, however, a major path to the Pure Land. The description of the eighth *guan* in the *Guan jing* indicates those who practice this *guan* are able to remove the sins committed in the immeasurable million kalpas of life and death. By virtue of this *guan*, one is able to obtain *nianfo samādhi* while visualizing the Buddha *Amitābha*. It is because one has the vision of the Buddha *Amitābha* and of various other buddhas in ten directions, that one is in the state of *nianfo samādhi*. [77] In his exegesis of the *Guan jing*, Yuanzhao points out a passage in the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi Sūtra* (《般舟三昧經》), where the Buddha *Amitābha* was asked by those who wanted to know what had caused him to be born in this Land of Bliss. *Amitābha*'s answer was that he was able to obtain such rebirth because he had cultivated the *nianfo samādhi*. [78] Yuanzhao takes this answer to heart, believing what *Ciyun Zunshi* has taught with respect to the practice of Pure Land teaching

is requisite for obtaining the nianfo samādhi and achieving various bodhisattva Pāramitās.[79] In fact, he recapitulates Zunshi's words about other purposes of practicing the Pure Land teaching. One of them is eliminating ignorance and terminating all minor and grave sins including the Five Grave Offenses and the Ten Evils (wuni shi'e 五逆十惡). The ultimate goal is obviously this: To free oneself from

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the fear and horror of one's last moment so that one can enjoy a peaceful and blissful transition from this world to the Pure Land. At this moment, one can see all the saints appearing to guide him, at first to leave the dusty and toilsome world, and finally to enter into the state of non-retrogression, where there is no longer an experience of the long kalpa of transmigration, and also where one can obtain non-arising (wusheng 無生) existence in the Pure Land.[80]

These goals, of course, can assure whoever wants to believe in the idea of rebirth in the Amitābha Pure Land. It is in keeping with the most controversial idea in the Guan jing that allows even those guilty of committing the Five Grave Offenses and the Ten Evils to enjoy this rebirth. Yuanzhao certainly is aware of the controversy arising from this section of the Guan jing. Like all earlier exegetes, he has to justify the position of the Guan jing and resolve the contradiction between the Guan jing and Wuliangshou jing, which prohibits those who have committed the Five Great Offenses and the Ten Evils from being reborn in the Pure Land. In his exegesis, Yuanzhao does indicate the difference between the two sūtras. However, he contends that Amitābha's vows do not block those heinous sinners from obtaining rebirth in such blissful land. Amitābha offers those sinners expedient means to seek opportunities for such a rebirth. Although his words appear contradictory in the two sūtras, his goal is the same. While the Wuliangshou jing reveals the wonders of the blissful world to encourage good people to pursue the non-arising rebirth, the Guan jing illustrates the tremendous moral and ethical effort requisite for one's acts and for the most evil persons to have opportunities to receive this rebirth. It teaches the expiation of sins and the rebirth in the Pure Land as a path open to whoever invokes his name and prays to him. Yuanzhao finds that the Guanfo sanmei jing (《觀佛三

昧經》)[81] supports this idea as follows:

Those disciples of the four divisions who vilify all Vaipulya sūtra s [i.e., Mahāyāna sūtras] , commit the sins of the Five Grave Offenses, and violate the Four Grave Prohibitions (pārājikās, or sizhongjin 四重禁) can expiate their sins by whole-heartedly practicing mindfulness of the Buddha Amitābha and by meditating (guan) on him every day and night.[82]

Essentially, Yuanzhao seems to have argued that it is never too late to turn to the Buddha Amitābha for redemption, but not without first making enormous effort to engage in the crucial nian and guan that the Guan jing teaches. As long as one has faith in Amitābha and practices nian and guan, one is permitted rebirth in the Pure Land.

This view touches on the issue concerning the kinds of being to which the discourse of Guan jing addresses or the audience for which the sūtra was written. Controversies have surrounded the nine levels of rebirth and their references to Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna. Yuanzhao notes that, according to the Guanjing xuanyi, earlier exegetes have identified the three higher levels with the three worthies and ten sages of Mahāyāna, the three middle levels with two ordinary beings and four grades of saints (liangfan siguo 兩凡四果) of Hīnayāna, and the lowest level with beginners, who are ordinary people of Mahāyāna (dasheng shixue fanfu 大乘始學凡夫) with varied degrees of sin. He disagrees with this interpretation and upholds Shandao's view. The gist of his argument is: the text of the Guan jing clearly indicates that ordinary beings, fanfu (凡夫)

are the ones in quest of the Pure Land, and that adepts should follow what is said in the Guanjing xuanyi, from which Shandao had quoted ten passages as proof of the scripture's audience: the common people. Yuanzhao summarizes these ten passages and restates Shandao's conclusion that the Tathāgata's sermons on the sixteen guan are simply for those common sentient beings that will experience transmigration. They have little to do with greater or lesser worthies and saints.[83]

This interpretation makes better sense than earlier interpretations in that it tallies with the central theme of the Guan jing which offers the evil sinners an opportunity of rebirth in the Pure Land because they are constituent elements of fanfu. Likewise, ordinary women are another constituent part and should not be denied the entry into the Pure Land. The Guan jing does show that women are permitted to gain this rebirth because it says Vaidehī's "five hundred female attendants awakened aspiration for the highest, perfect Enlightenment and desired to be born in that land."^[84] This, however, is not the case according to the Sukhāvātīvyūhopadeśa, a.k.a., the Rebirth Treatise or Wangsheng lun (《往生論》), commonly regarded as authored by Vasubandhu (ca. 420~500).^[85] To explain away the discrepancies between the Guan jing and the Rebirth Treatise, which says women and sense-defective persons cannot be reborn in this land,^[86] the author of the

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Jingtu shiyi lun proposes a different reading of the text of the Treatise: It means that women and sense-defective persons will no longer be the same upon their rebirth in this Pure Land. In other words, they will become men according to Amitābha's vow.^[87] Following the thread of this argument when confronted with the question as to why the Rebirth Treatise contradicts the Guan jing, Yuanzhao explains that this is not what the Rebirth Treatise means. Rather, the Treatise assures that there is no returning to the female body and to the state of sense-defectiveness once a woman or a sense-defective person is reborn in the Pure Land. A woman will attain the rebirth in the Pure Land for sure, but she will turn into a man because, according to Yuanzhao, Amitābha vowed to relinquish the possession of perfect awakening if a woman remained a woman after she was reborn in his land.^[88] Simply put, there are absolutely

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no women in the Pure Land, nor are there any sense-defective persons. Yuanzhao makes this assertion and refers his opponents to the Jingtu shiyi lun for the remaining argument.^[89]

VI. Guanfo and Guanxin

It seems evident that Yuanzhao advocates both guan and nian in the practice of the Pure Land teaching. To him, dichotomizing guan and nian into separate practices of meditation and invocation leads to misunderstanding of the intent of the Guan jing and of the Pure Land teaching that he understood. He believes that his predecessors such as Zhiyi and Shandao understood the Guan jing better than most other masters because they saw guan and nian as interconnected practices. In his view, nian is as much meditation as guan if one practices it to one's full capacity. One will not be surprised to see the similarity of guan and nian in the Pure Land texts because the former can comprehend visualization, contemplation, and concentration, whereas the latter involves meditative inspection, silent repetition of Amitābha's name in mind, and hearing Amitābha's name invoked by others. Both constitute the ideal practice of the Amitābha faith and ensure the better rebirth in Sukhāvātī. They are the principles underpinning the Guan jing as Yuanzhao says in his exegesis:

Masters [Hui] yuan and [Shan] dao both said that all scriptures have their goals based on their distinct principles. This sūtra [i.e. Kuan jing] is based on the guanfo samādhi (yi guanfo sanmei weizong 以觀佛三昧爲宗). The masters' view is established generally on what the sūtra can [help people] accomplish. Although there are sixteen guan, there is difference between the dependent (yi 依) and the normal (zheng 正) [in their results as far

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as the reward is concerned.] The gist is primarily guanfo. As the sūtra says below, "... during this present life he obtains the nianfo samādhi." This nian is in fact guan.[90]

The last sentence of this quote further proves that Yuanzhao sees guan and nian as an integrated process and in fact uses them interchangeably. In his view, guanfo and nianfo possess the same dynamism and are means to the same goal. Again, he claims that the Guanfo sanmei jing can attest to this view. The sūtra says:

If a person can guan a pore in the skin of the Buddha, then the person can be said to be engaged in the act of nianfo. It must be due to this nianfo that buddhas of all kinds often appear before him and teach him the correct dharma (zhengfa 正法). This person then bears the various tathāgata seeds

of the three periods. This is still even greater for someone who possesses a physical body and has completed the act of nianfo.[91]

Yuanzhao is of the opinion that the gates of guan (guanmen 觀門) within the Pure Land tradition differ drastically from one another. The act of guanfo as portrayed in the Guan jing is quite unique if one compares it with the act of guanxin (觀心), which is the beginning step of the Pure Land teaching described in other sūtras.[92] The unique aspects of the Guan jing are as follows:

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First, guanxin aims to collect one's thoughts and channel these thoughts into one's mind (shexiang guixin 攝想歸心), whereas [guanfo in] this sūtra aims at delivering the mind to another realm (songxin tajing 送心他境). Second, guanxin does not limit one to follow four manners or rules (siyi 四儀), whereas [guanfo in] this Sūtra requires one to sit in proper posture (zhengzuo 正坐). Third, guanxin does not concern direction, whereas [guanfo in] this Sūtra requires that one faces West. Fourth, guanxin could be practiced at any time, whereas [guanfo in] this Sūtra requires one to practice at any time except when having meals.[93] Fifth, guanxin is meant to cut off one's doubts and vindicate the principles of the Pure Land teachings, whereas [guanfo in] this Sūtra is meant to bring one's karma to conclusion and evoke one's sense of rebirth [into the Pure Land]. Sixth, guanxin allows one to reveal one's Māra-affected

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karma (moye 魔業), whereas [guanfo in] this Sūtra ensures one to be protected by the power of the holy (shengde huchi 聖德護持).[94]

Although it appears that this depiction of guanfo as a distinct practice of Pure Land devotion as represented by the Guan jing show yet another of Yuanzhao's efforts to elevate the Sūtra, his purpose was to demonstrate the ramifications of guan and to point out the limitations of Guanxin as a major approach to the path of the Pure Land. As there were differences between guanxin and guanfo, these differences needed to be addressed and made

clear because of the possible confusions that might arise. Yuanzhao did just that, with his hermeneutical insights. He risked offending his grand master, Siming Zhili (四明知禮, 960~1028) by stressing that guanfo differs from the Tiantai School's guanxin which Zhili had used to interpret the sixteen guan. Tiantai's guanxin, which is characteristic of zhiguan (止觀), is to gather all thoughts and direct them toward one's mind rather than deliver one's mind to Sukhāvātī.[95] Such kind of guanxin should not be mixed up with guanfo in the Pure Land practice, even though it is similar to the beginning stage of guanfo. Yuanzhao explained this when he responded to the question regarding whether the sixteen guan of the Guan jing could count as guanxin. He noted that it could count only if one's mind reached the realm of Amitābha. Amitābha's body and land is [the projection of] mind, so in this sense one could be said to engage in guanxin when practicing the sixteen guan. However, guanxin is of the utmost importance only when one begins to enter this path, cut off one's doubts, and vindicate the truth of the Pure Land faith. If the goal is to attain deliverance from this Sahā world to the Pure Land and to cultivate its cause to induce such reward, then guanfo is the best. To Yuanzhao, the guanxin discussed in the various sūtra s is geared up for seeing the Buddha

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with one's own mind. This guanxin is also a kind of guanfo, which, according to Yuanzhao, is based on one's own mind-samādhi (zixin sanmei 自心三昧). The other kind of guanfo, called "taking causes to stimulate effects" (congyin ganguo 從因感果), can be realized when one correctly practices the sixteen guan.[96]

As suggested earlier, Yuanzhao did not claim that he was renovating Pure Land thought, but rather he was transmitting the old tradition. He also indicated that his exegesis of the Guan jing was a result of much consultation, differentiation, and selection of old exegeses. In light of the above discussion, it is fair to say that he engaged in what may be characterized as an extended third-phase hermeneutics. In this hermeneutics, he attempted to systemize what the earlier exegetes, including Huiyuan, Zhiyi, and Shandao, had theorized. In his systemization, Yuanzhao continued to resolve the problems of inconsistency found in different Pure Land texts and to elevate the status of the Pure Land faith. Although his exegesis was in some way repetitive of the earlier writings, particularly of

what he believed were Zhiyi's and Shandao's works, he did provide aspirants of the Pure Land, if not his challengers, with additional insights conducive to their understanding of the rebirth theory. His insights are found in his sophisticated elaboration on and modification of previous interpretations of the issues surrounding the Pure Land scriptures and the faith they represent. By tying together the loose ends that he found in these scriptures and their commentaries, he skillfully established a more coherent system of faith. Meanwhile, he reaffirmed the Pure Land tradition by reminding people of the contributions of previous Pure Land masters, exegetes, and practitioners, including Huiyuan, Shandao, and Zunshi, who he believed had truly attained the Pure Land deliverance and had

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become wang sheng ren (往生人).[97] This helped him to reassure common person of their eligibility to enjoy the rebirth if they dedicated themselves to the Buddha Amitābha.

VII. Concluding Remarks

The above discussion should prove that Yuanzhao did engage in a serious and sometimes critical Pure Land hermeneutics. While trying to systemizing earlier exegeses of the Guan jing, he also modified all Pure Land related theories and established an unambiguous approach to the Pure Land practice. It is safe to argue that he upheld the unity of Pure Land and Vinaya, of invocation and contemplation, of nianfo and guanfo, and of guanxin and guanfo while advocating an indiscriminatory rebirth that behooves all aspirants to make moral effort and devotion.

There were of course other concerns and questions with which Yuanzhao might not be able to deal. Likewise, there were problems that he was not prepared or opt for desirable solutions. But these concerns, questions, problems could arise at any time and on any occasion when he met skeptics, particularly with the rising Neo-Confucian rationalists and iconoclastic Chanists of the time. Still, as the above discussion shows, he managed to influence such Confucian dignitaries as Su Shi and Jiang Zhiqi, and also to refute the Chanist's antagonism towards the pursuit of Sukhāvātī.[98] In the meantime, he proposed to distinguish guanfo from guanxin, clarifying their

meanings and functions while retaining their connection. And, probably because he felt zeal for building a

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clearly defined Pure Land tradition, he inadvertently irritated some of his colleagues who did not appreciate his endeavors.[99] Suffice it to say that Yuanzhao demonstrated in his hermeneutics a vision of what he believed was the correct Pure Land path on the basis of the Guan jing in which morality is just as important as faith and devotion. Other than showing faith in the Buddha Amitābha, every person, particularly a diabolic sinner who has committed grave sins, will also need to make serious effort to perform meritorious deeds, should he or she desire to obtain the deliverance from the Sahā world and gain rebirth in the Land of the Utmost Bliss.

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宋代淨土詮釋初探——以湛然元照(1048~1116)為例

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提要

本文針對宋代淨土詮釋提出初步研究，以宋僧湛然元照之淨土詮釋為討論中心，其主要觀點是：湛然元照所致力的淨土詮釋，是中國淨土詮釋傳統中的第三期，而此期的淨土詮釋，以隋、唐間的淨影慧遠和善導大師所建之義疏傳統為始，而以北宋湛然元照之註《觀經》趨於完熟。

本文認為元照之註《觀經》，有其特殊重要性。因為元照本人原奉律教，根本反對淨土信仰，其後既然發憤為《觀經》作註，正顯示他對淨土信仰之首肯，也反映他獻身淨土之虔誠。身為律教之徒，他原只專意宣講教律及傳授戒法，不務其他。後來身染重病，悟先前所見為非，乃棄其平生所學，專志於淨土教門，歸信西方，竟成為當時淨土信仰最熱心之

擁護者及代言人。元照篤信教律之基本價值，並主張淨、律二教合一，捐棄對淨土的成見與反感，轉而口宣筆述，力倡淨土之道。

元照自謂其對淨土之用心在傳述前人之淨土義解，所以他研習所見之淨土教典及論疏，熱心述作，不遺餘力。所作淨土論疏，包括《觀經疏》及《彌陀經疏》等。其中《觀經疏》將歷來有關《觀經》的重要義解加以系統化，以之重申西方淨土之深旨，並說明各淨土教典詮釋西方有其異趣之由。雖然元照間或採用智顛、善導及其他義解之觀點，對存於這些義疏間的矛盾與籠統處，他確也在自己的註解中，嘗試加以澄清。他對「觀佛」、「念佛」與「觀佛」、「觀心」之間異同的比較，及對人人皆得往生西方的解釋，充分地表現他超凡之識見。而身為彌陀淨土理想的支持者，他不但有助於淨土信仰的理論基礎之強化，而且使歸向者深信往生淨土之報必可獲償。

元照的淨土詮釋代表對智顛、善導、或遵式等前輩淨土見解的提昇與修正，也表現他與其他天台法師對《觀經》中十六觀見解之相歧。對用「觀心」來闡釋十六觀之作法，及將十六觀二分爲「事觀」與「理觀」之論點，他提供了周密的看法來加以否定。此外，他主張以淨土發願者的智、德之深淺爲依據，來簡化十六觀之意涵，以取代「事觀」與「理觀」之二分法。即令元照或遵《觀經》之說，完全認許犯十惡之罪

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者皆有往生之權，他始終不忘強調德行之重要性。他的淨土詮釋揭示了結合禪定、唸誦、德業、行願及奉身等淨行，在實踐淨土信仰上是確然有其必要的。

關鍵詞：1.阿彌陀佛 2.詮釋 3.《觀經》 4.淨土 5.往生淨土 6.元照

[1] This paper concerns only the pure land of the Buddha Amitābha, viz., Sukhāvātī, and the scriptures associated with this pure land.

[2] Major Pure Land scriptures, such as the Amitābha Sūtra, the Wuliangshou jing, and the Guan Wuliangshou jing, were not translated or authored until the fifth century.

[3] For example, it has been estimated that from the Sui to the Song period, Pure Land scholars produced at least forty commentaries on the Pure Land Sutras, including the Guan Wuliangshou jing, whose author is attributed to Kālayashas 疆良耶舍 between 424 and 442 A.D. Although most of these translations were done before 800 A.D., they did not appear until the emergence of the Guan Wuliangshou jing in the fifth century. See Kōtatzu Fujita, “The Textual Origins of the Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching: A Canonical Scripture of Pure Land Buddhism,” in Robert Buswell Jr. ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990) pp.149-173.

[4] Here, I am referring to Julian Pas’ *Visions of Sukhāvātī: Shantao’s Commentary on the Kuan Wu-liang-shou Ching* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1995) and Kenneth Tanaka’s *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Doctrine* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990). As Pas suggests in his book, there is no point to use the reconstructed Sanskrit name of the Guan wuliangshou jing because it is a Chinese, or a Central Asian, work which has been falsely identified as a translation of Sanskrit text. See Fujita, *op. cit.*, and Pas (1995) p. 36. Throughout this paper, the shortened form of its Chinese title, i.e., Guan jing, is used.

[5] For example, new translations of the Pure Land scriptures have been made available recently. Luis Gómez has translated *Amituo jing* and the *Wuliangshou jing*. Inagaki Hisao has translated all three major sūtras. See Luis Gómez., *The Land of Bliss: The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996) and Inagaki Hisao, *The Three Pure Land Sūtras* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995). Old translations of the three sūtras include Max Müller’s translations of the *Amituo jing* and *Wuliangshou jing*, and J. Takakusu’s translation of the *Guan jing*, titled the *Amuitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*. These translations are included in Max Müller ed., *The Sacred Books of the East* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1969), vol. 49, Part II. The *Amuitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* begins from page 161 of Part II.

[6] See below for the “three hermeneutical phases.”

[7] In fact, most of Yuanzhao's extant works are Vinaya texts. Typical of them is the lengthy Sifenlü xingshichao zichiji (《四分律行事鈔資持記》). See T.1085, 40:157-428.

[8] This point will be elaborated in my forthcoming paper that deals with Tiantai Buddhists' critique of his commentary.

[9] See Shimen zhengtong (《釋門正統》) (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe reprint Xu zang jing 《續藏經》 edition, hereafter XZJ,) vol. 130, p.919b12. Chinese text reads: 施貧、授戒、追福、禳災. See also Fozu tongji in T.2035, 49: 297c3-4. The latter lists only shishi (施食) and rangzai (禳災).

[10] See Su Shi wenji (《蘇軾文集》) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, punctuated edition, 1986) p. 585, "Amitufo song bingxu" (《阿彌陀佛頌并敘》).

[11] See Xianchun Lin'an zhi (《咸淳臨安志》) (Taipei: Guotai wenhua shiye chubanshe, reprint), juan 79, pp. 1-2. This commemorative note, which Su Shi wrote for the temple over which Yuanzhao presided, does not seem to have been included in Su Shi's collected works. The phrase "zuoxiang" (作相) in his note is obscure in meaning, thus my translation is conjectural.

[12] On Biancai Yuanjing, see my "Elite and Clergy in Northern Sung Hang-chou," in Buddhism in the Sung (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), chapter eight, pp.295-339.

[13] This is evident in the collected works of the two monks. Their works indicate that Jiang invited them separately to lecture at his court or in his residence.

[14] This perhaps occurred in early 1103. Since Jiang was appointed the Prefect of Hangzhou in October 1102 and the lecture took place in March, it must have been in March of 1103. Later in 1103, Jiang was appointed the Prefect of Yangzhou. For Jiang's two appointments, see Li Changxian, Songdai anfushi kao (《宋代安撫使考》) (Ji'nan: Qilu shushe, 1997) pp. 267, 314. For the date of his lecture, see Zhiyuan yibian (《芝苑遺編》) (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chubanshe, XZJ edition) 105: 557a7.

[15] XZJ 105: 559b17-560a1.

[16] XZJ 105: 560a8. Cf., discussion below.

[17] On Üich'on's pilgrimage in China, see my "Üich'on's Pilgrimage Reassessed: the Korean Temple in Hang-chou during the Sung-Yüan Period." (forthcoming)

[18] XZJ 105: 560a11-14.

[19] XZJ 105: 563a8-9. I believe the first sentence, rudao dun you shi (入道頓有始), should read ru dao xu you shi (入道須有始) so that it can parallel the second sentence, qixin bi you zhong (期心必有終). The word "dun" makes little sense here. It is very likely a misprint.

[20] Ibid. 105: 560a7-10.

[21] Huibu (d.587) was prominent in the Qi and the Liang Dynasties. His biography is in Taoxuan's Xu gaoseng zhuan (《續高僧傳》), to which Yuanzhao was actually referring. Yuanzhao apparently restated Huibu's words recorded in the Xu gaoseng zhuan, although he kept the idea intact. However, he used the phrase "twelve kalpas" (十二劫) instead of the "ten kalpas" (十劫) that Daoxuan had used. I am not sure about the significance of the number twelve or ten in the context of Huibu's words. See T.2060, 50: 481a9-11.

[22] See T.1969, 47:170a21-28, his "Jingye lichanyi xu" (《淨業禮懺儀序》), "Preface to the Repentance Ritual in the Pure Land Teaching" in Lebang wenlei (《樂邦文類》).

[23] T.1969, 47: 170b5-6.

[24] T.1969, 47: 170b6-7.

[25] Ibid.

[26] See note below.

[27] The account, "Wuliang yuan mituoxiang ji" (《無量院彌陀像記》), is in the Buxu Zhiyuan ji (《補續芝園集》) which is a supplement to his Zhiyuan ji (《芝園集》). It indicates that he was forty-seven at the time this account was written. Both the Zhiyuan ji and the Buxu Zhiyuan ji are included in the XZJ 105. The cited account is in pp. 608c13-609a10. The statue in question

was located in a certain Wuliang yuan (無量院) at the Jiuxian Mountain (九
仙山) of the Lin'an County (臨安縣).

[28] XZJ, 105: 608b1-10. While the term nianfo means basically
buddha-sm.rti, or “remembering Buddha,” it connotes a wide range of
meaning within the Pure Land tradition, ranging from the single-minded
invocation to the general recollection of the Buddha Amitābha’s name. It
will be less confusing if it remains untranslated, which is what I do
throughout this paper unless otherwise noted. For a brief discussion of
nianfo, see Roger Corless, “T’an-luan: First Systematizer” in James Foard et
al., *The Pure Land Tradition: History and Development* (Berkeley: Institute
of Buddhist Studies, Berkeley, 1996), pp.125-126.

[29] See “Wuliang yuan mituoxiang ji” cited above, XZJ 105: 608b10-12.

[30] XZJ 105: 609a1-2.

[31] Note that Tiantai shiyi lun quotes a number of works produced in Tang
times. On the other hand, those prominent authors engaged in the teaching
of Pure Land devotion during the Tang, such as Jiakai (迦才, ca.620~680),
Huaigan (懷感, dates unclear), kuiji (窺基, 632~682), Daojing (道鏡, dates
unclear) and Shandao (善道, dates unclear), never quoted this work. Pure
Land authors in the Song not only quoted this work but also wrote preface to
it. Thus the author could not be Zhiyi, nor could it be any of the Tang
authors named above as suggested by some Japanese scholars, in particular
Sato Tetsuei, mentioned in Leo Pruden’s “The Ching-t’u shih-i-lun” in
Eastern Buddhist, 6:1 (May, 1973) pp. 126-157. The author is very likely a
Tiantai monk in late Tang or early Song.

[32] The Shiyi lun ke, which has only one fascicle, is not extant. For this and
other Yuanzhao’s works related to the Pure Land, see Mochizuki Shinko,
Chūgoku jōdo kyōrishi (《中國淨土教理史》). I use Shi Yin Hai’s (釋印
海) Chinese translation, *Zhongguo jingtu jiaoli shi* (Hsinchu: Huiji jiangtang,
1974). See p. 250. Also see Takahiko Hioki, “The Nembutsu and Pure Land
Thought of the Monk Genshō” 〈靈芝元照の淨土教思想〉 in *Indogaku
Bukkyogaku Kenkyū*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1976), pp. 264-267.

[33] See *Jingtu shiyilun* in T.1961, 47:77b21-24. C. f., Leo Pruden’s
translation in “The Ching-t’u shih-i-lun” p.133.

[34] T.1961, 47:77b22-c3. The translation is based on Leo Pruden's cited above, with minor changes.

[35] Compare T.1969, 47: 170b2-5 and T.1961, 47:77c3-21. The bracketed text, which is in the Jingtū shīyī lùn passage, is left out in Yuanzhào's passage. Cf., Pruden, op. cit., p. 133, note 30.

[36] Comparing the text of this passage and that of the Tiantai shīyī lùn, one can see that Yuanzhào did not quote verbatim the long passage of the latter. Rather, he just took some sentences to support his argument. The ellipsis in the bracket represents a long missing passage.

[37] Although I am following Pruden's translation of *zhuānniàn* (專念) here, I believe the term means more than "single-mindedly meditate." See discussion below.

[38] See the section on Yuanzhào's hermeneutics below.

[39] See T.1969, 47: 170b8-9. Here, Yuanzhào began to paraphrase Shandào's essay mentioned below.

[40] T.1969, 47:209c29-210a4. The Chinese text in Shandào's essay reads: 眾生障重，境細心麤，識颺神飛，觀難成就，是以大聖悲憐，直勸專稱名號，正由稱名易故，相續即生。

[41] T.1969, 47:210a4-11. Chinese text reads: 若專修者能如上念念相續，畢命爲期者，十即十生，百即百生，何以故？無外雜緣得正念故，與佛本願相應故，不違教故，順佛語故。若捨專念，修雜業者，百中希得一、二，千中希得三、四，何以故？乃由雜緣亂動失正念故，與佛本願不相應故，與教相違故，不順佛語故。

[42] T.1969, 47:170b8-10. Chinese text reads: 若專修者，百即百生。若雜修者，萬千一二，心識散亂，觀行難成。

[43] This subcommentary is included in *Taishō shishū daizōkyō*, vol. 37. Also included in the same volume is his subcommentary on the *Amituo jing*. Both are used to write this paper.

[44] In his account of the lecture delivered to Üich'on in 1085, Yuanzhào noted that it had been thirty years before he studied the Pure Land teaching. If the account were right, that would mean he started in 1055 when he was

eight years old. Given what he said about his early disbelief in the Pure Land, the “thirty years,” which is misprinted as “three hundred years,” should probably have been “twenty years.” See XZJ, 105: 563a7.

[45] See his preface to the Guan wuliangshou jing yishu in T.1754, 37:279a11. The “remaining years” is translated from yusheng (餘生), a term one normally would not use until later ages. Presumably, Yuanzhao used this phrase here rhetorically.

[46] See T.1754, 37: 279a12-14 and discussion below.

[47] T.1754, 37: 284a23.

[48] See Kenelm Burridge, *New Heaven New Earth: A Study of Millenarian Activities* (New York: Schocken Books, 1969) pp. 105-116, for the details of the three phases.

[49] Note that earlier subcommentaries on the Guan jing, such as Jingying Huiyuan’s subcommentary, begin with the discussion of whether the Pure Land teaching belongs to Lesser or Greater Vehicle. Although Yuanzhao’s commentary does not begin with this issue, the issue was obviously one of his primary concerns.

[50] See Tanaka (1990), p.59. While Tanaka says that his commentary is the oldest extant Pure Land work to be written in the shu (疏) format, it may not be wrong to say that it is the oldest surviving commentary on the Kuan jing available today.

[51] See T.1754, 37: 280a. This is a paraphrase of the text of Huiyuan’s commentary on the Guan jing in T.1749, 37: 173a. The original wording is a little different, but the meaning remains the same. Cf., Tanaka (1990), pp. 117-118.

[52] See T.1754, 37: 280a17-19. This is a rephrase of the text found in Zunshi’s Wangsheng jingtu jueyi xingyuan ermen (《往生淨土決疑行願二門》), whose first section, viz., jueyimen (《決疑門》), is included in the Lebang wenlei. Zunshi’s words are: “No single sūtra in the Hīnayāna tradition ever has a word exhorting people to attain the rebirth in other Pure Lands.” See T.1968, 47:145b12-13.

[53] T.1754, 37:280a19-21.

[54] According to Zunshi, the Dharma has two forms: one is the partial truth of Hīnayāna Buddhism, and another is the whole truth of Mahāyāna Buddhism. However, within Mahāyāna Buddhism there are also two forms: one is that of the whole truth, another is that of the partial truth.

[55] See T.1754, 37: 280a21-26. Although Yuanzhao quotes Zunshi most of the time when he discusses the point of the “whole truth,” these few words are Yuanzhao’s interpretation of Zunshi’s points.

[56] T.1754, 37:280b11-14.

[57] T.1754, 37:280b8-9.

[58] Yuanzhao seems to have based his classification on Jingying Huiyuan’s classification. Huiyuan had classified Pure Lands into three categories from two perspectives: characteristic, or xiang (相) and cause, yin (因). From the perspective of the cause, he classified the pure lands into: (1) the Land of Perfect Response, yuanying tu (圓應土), (2) the Land of True Rewards, shibao tu (實報土), and (3) the Land of Dharma-nature, faxing tu (法性土). See Tanaka (1990) pp.103-104. Cf., David Chappell, “Chinese Buddhist Interpretation of the Pure Lands,” in David Chappell et. al., eds., *Buddhist and Taoist Studies, I* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1977), p. 29.

[59] See T.1754, 37: 282b17-c3. This classification seems to have come from Zhiyi’s four categories of pure lands: (1) The Land where the Common and Saintly Live Together, fansheng tongju tu (凡聖同居土), (2) the Land of Expediency with a Remnant [of fundamental ignorance], or fangbian youyu tu (方便有餘土), (3) the Land of True Reward without Obstruction, shibao wuzhangai tu (實報無障礙土), (4) the Land of Eternal Serenity and Illumination, chang ji guang tu (常寂光土). See Chappell (1977), p. 33.

[60] This is based on Zhiyi’s division of fansheng tongju tu. See Chappell (1997), pp. 33-34.

[61] See T.1754, 37: 282c6. This doubtless comes from Zhiyi’s two forms of fansheng tongju tu. Zhiyi had divided this fansheng tongju tu into a defiled land, huitu, and a pure land, jingtu. In the huitu, the impurities like those in

our present Sahā-world are not seen. In the jingtu, the four evil rebirths do not exist and only men and gods with pure embellishments reside there. This pure land is like the Amitābha Pure Land that Yuanzhao defined.

[62] T.1754, 37: 282b17-283a14. Although Yuanzhao referred to them as jiguang tu and guobao tu, he apparently used them alternatively in place of chang jiguang tu and shibao tu.

[63] T.1754, 37: 283a17-20. The two phrases read “jiaowo siwei, jiaowo zhengshou” (教我思惟，教我正受) in Chinese. Like traditional commentators, modern scholars have wrestled with the meanings of the two phrases and have translated the phrases and the sentences differently. The varied words used in their translations reflect the ambiguity of the two terms. Below are examples of four translations: “[T]each me how to concentrate my thought so as to obtain a right vision of that country.” (Takakusu) “[T]each me how to contemplate that land and attain samādhi.” (Inagaki) “[I]nstruct me to think and to concentrate.” (Tanaka) “[T]each me how to concentrate my thought, teach me how to reach the [kuan-Fo]-samādhi.” (Pas) See Takakusu (1969), p.166; Inagaki (1995), p.96; Tanaka (1990), p.147; and Pas (1995) p. 170. Although it is unclear which old commentaries, gushu (古疏), Yuanzhao was referring to because he did not specify their names, we know that he was referring to some commentaries by a number of exegetes, zhushi (諸師), whose views had been recognized by Shandao. He singled out Shandao’s comments to make his point in the following passage. Also, the reason that sanfu was related to these two phrases is probably because the Guan jing says that the Buddha told Vaidehi to cultivate sanfu should she desire to obtain rebirth in the Land of the Utmost Bliss in the West (xifang jile shijie 西方極樂世界).

[64] T.1754, 37: 283a17-20.

[65] This commentary is not among the list of extant works that are attributed to Shandao. Scholars have been using Shandao’s Guan Wuliangshoufo jingshu to discuss his thought.

[66] See T.1754, 37: 283a20, and 37: 290a15-16.

[67] T.1754, 37: 283a20, and 37: 290a20. The quoted sentence from the Guan jing reads “jiao wo guan yu qingjing ye chu” (教我觀於清淨業處), which Inagaki translates as “teach me how to visualize a land of pure karmic

perfection” and Takakusu translates as “meditate on a world wherein all actions are pure.” See Inagaki (1995) and Takakusu (1969) quoted above.

[68] Cf., Pas (1995) PP. 170-171. Pas suggests that siwei seems to “relate more to concentration of thought than to actual meditation,” whereas zhengshou “refers to the ultimate state reached in samādhi.” This interpretation is in keeping with Yuanzhao’s point. Pas, however, also suggests that the Chinese commentators “have proposed a different exegesis of the two terms, against which Shan-tao reacted.”

[69] T.1754, 37: 290b24-26.

[70] T.1754, 37: 283a22-27, 290b25-26.

[71] Although Shandao may have been the first to use these terms extensively, they were coined by Jingying Huiyuan in his commentary on the Guan jing. The two terms also defy simple translations. Pas translates ding and shan as “concentrated” and “nonconcentrated,” whereas Tanaka translates them as “meditative” and “non-meditative.” Huiyuan also used these two terms to coin the phrases dingshan wangsheng (定善往生) and sanshan wangsheng (散善往生) to explain two different categories of rebirth in the Pure Land due to different practices. The former results from the practice of the sixteen guan and latter from the practice of three kinds of purified acts (sanzhong jingye 三種淨業). Here I follow Pas’ translation of the two phrases. Likewise, I follow his translation of the two types of rebirth as “the method of rebirth [in the Pure Land] through concentrated goodness” and “the method of rebirth [in the Pure Land] by means of nonconcentrated goodness.” See Pas (1995), pp. 179-180, 223-227. C.f., Tanaka’s translation: “the meditative good acts (ting-shan) for rebirth,” and “the non-meditative good acts (san-shan) for rebirth.” See Tanaka (1990), pp. 147-148.

[72] T.1754, 37: 283a29-b1.

[73] Ibid. 37: 283b2-4.

[74] Ibid. 37: 284c6-12.

[75] Ibid. 37: 284c13-18.

[76] Ibid. 37: 284c21-285a3. The translation of the term nianfo sanmei can be “the Buddha-Recollection samādhi,” “the Buddha-Contemplation samādhi,” or “the Buddha-Meditation samādhi,” all depending on how the term nianfo is understood. I use Inagaki’s translation as a reference but keep nianfo consistently untranslated due to its ambiguity mentioned earlier.

[77] See Guan jing, in T. 365, 12: 343b12-13, 343b28-c1.

[78] T.1754, 37: 297b13.

[79] Ibid, 37: 285b16-20.

[80] Ibid, 37: 285b20-23.

[81] This sūtra, I suspect, is Guanfo sanmeihai jing (《觀佛三昧海經》), whose translator is Buddhahadra and whose reconstructed Sanskrit title is Buddhadyāna-samādhisāgara-sūtra. Yuanzhao quoted the sūtra in his commentary a number of times.

[82] T.1754, 37:304a25-28. The pārājikās refers to killing, stealing, carnality, and lying.

[83] T.1754, 37: 283 b6-29.

[84] See Inagaki (1995) p. 117. Cf., Takakusu (1969), p. 199.

[85] Although whether the work is properly attributed remains debatable, I am following the traditional view to attribute the work to Vasubandhu.

[86] The verse section of the Rebirth Treatise says that “In the world [made up of] the wholesome roots of Mahāyāna [i.e., Pure Land], all are equal. [Here,] objectionable designations do not exist: women and those with defective senses and those belonging to the lineage [gotra] of the two vehicles [of the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas] are not caused.” The prose section of the Treatise also declares that “Body is of three kinds: [the body of] the people of the two vehicles; [the body of] women; and [the body of] those whose sense organs are not complete. [In the Pure Land] these three errors do not exist. Designation is of three kinds: [Pure Land] is a realm devoid of the three bodies; it is devoid even of the names of women, two vehicles, and those with defective senses.” See Minoru Kiyota, “Buddhist Devotional Meditation: A Study of the Sukhāvāṭīvyūhopadeśa” in Minoru

Kiyota ed., *Mahāyāna Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1978) p. 276 and p. 282.

[87] See T.1961, 47: 80b26-29. This vow is the thirty-fifth one in the *Wuliangshou jing*, which says “May I not gain possession of perfect weakening if, once I have attained buddhahood, any woman in the measureless, inconceivable world systems of all the buddhas in the ten regions of the universe, hears my name in this life and single-mindedly, with joy, with confidence and gladness resolves to attain awakening, and despises her female body, and still, when her present life comes to an end, she is, again reborn as a woman.” See Gómez (1996) p. 170. For some reason, the *Jingtu shiyi lun* refers to this vow as the forty-eighth vow.

[88] T.1754, 37: 304c14-19. The original meaning in the verse section of the *Rebirth Treatise* seems to correspond with the question addressed to Yuanzhao, whereas the prose section seems to be in keeping with Yuanzhao’s interpretation. See the *Wangsheng lun*, T.1524, 26: 231a13-14, 232a3-8. Cf., Richard K. Payne, “The Five Contemplation Gates of Vasubandhu’s *Rebirth Treatise* as a Ritualized Visualization Practice,” in Foard et. al., (1996) pp. 233-266, especially pp.236-237.

[89] T.1754, 37:304c14-19.

[90] T.1754, 37: 280b22-26.

[91] T.1754, 37:280c2-6.

[92] It seems to me that Yuanzhao was talking about other sūtras that also discuss Amitābha’s Pure Land, although he did not name these sūtras. However, in his *Commentary on the Meanings of Amituo Jing* (*Amituo jing yishu* 《阿彌陀經義疏》) the following titles were listed when he brought up other sūtras (*bielun* 《別論》) related to the Pure Land teaching: the *Larger Sūtra* (*Da jing*《大經》), i.e., *Wuliangshou jing* (《無量壽經》), the *Dabei jing* (《大悲經》), the *Banzhou jing* (《般舟經》), the *Guyinsheng jing* (《鼓音聲經》), and the *Dafagu jing* (《大法鼓經》). However, in his letter addressed to Master Lu’an (廬安法師), Yuanzhao stated that some exegetes had mixed up the sixteen *guan* with the method of *guan* in the Tiantai School’s *zhiguan* (止觀). He believed that the two kinds of *guan* are different. See “Shang Lu’an fashi lun shiliu guan jing suoyong guanfa shu” (《上廬安法師論十六觀經所用觀法書》), XZJ 105: 563a18-b1.

[93] See T.1754, 37: 281c2-3. The four points concerning the Guan jing are found in the first three guan named ri xiang (日想), shui xiang (水想), di xiang (地想). See T. 365, 12: 342a4, 342a19, 342a24. The phrase bu jian yu shi (不簡餘時) was explained again in the line-by-line exegesis of the commentary as bu ze shi chu (不擇時處), hence the translation of “at any time.” Likewise, the phrases xu chu bian shi (須除便食) appears in the Guanfo sanmei jing as chu bian zhuan shi (除便轉時) and is preceded by another phrase wei chu shi shi (唯除食時), which also appears in the di xiang (third guan) section of the Guan jing. See T.1754, 37: 292b22-25. My translation is based on the comparison of this section of exegesis and the exegesis in Yuanzhao’s Commentary on the Meanings of Amituo jing where it points out that the Amituo jing sets a time restriction, whereas the Larger Sūtra and the Guan jing do not set a time restriction, See T.1761, 37: 361c14-16. According to Yuanzhao, the phrase wei chu shi shi appeared in other editions of the Guan jing as wei chu shui shi (唯除睡時), which means “except when sleeping.” Yuanzhao argued that various old texts read shi shi (食時). Reading it as shui shi is wrong because one naturally ceases working when one falls asleep and nothing can be “excluded” (chu 除) from a spontaneous sleep. On the other hand, engaging in xiang or visualization while eating is not respectful of the Amitābha Sukāvātī and has to be restricted. This interpretation seems reasonable. However, both Takakusu and Inagaki read the shi shi as shui shi (睡時), as indicated in their translations. See Takakusu (1969) p. 171, and Inagaki (1995) p. 98.

[94] T.1754, 37:281b27-c5.

[95] Ibid. Also see XZJ 105: 564b18-565a2.

[96] T.1754, 37: 281c17-19.

[97] This term was probably coined by Jiakai (迦才) in his Jingtū lun (《淨土論》). See T.1963, 47:97a15.

[98] Although Yuanzhao seems to have viewed this as general Chanist’s attitude, he actually named the Six Patriarch, Huineng (慧能), along with Zhigong (誌公), a.k.a., Baozhi (寶誌), as representatives of Chanists. The latter was generally regarded as thaumaturgist. See XZJ 105: 564b6.

[99] I have discussed this point in a forthcoming paper. See XZJ 105: 564a11-16 for an example. His letter addressed to Master Lu'an indicates that the latter was not pleased with his question and challenge.