

Genshin's Ojo Yoshu:
Collected Essays on Birth Into the Pure Land

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Translator's Introduction

One of the major types of Japanese Buddhism is that which makes central Amida Butsu (the Buddha Amitabha) and salvation in his Western Pure Land. To this type belong four of the traditional Twelve Japanese Buddhist Sects, namely, Yodzu Nembutsushu, Jodoshu, Shinshu and Jishu. These four claim approximately three-sevenths of all Japanese Buddhists as adherents; and the Shin Sect, with its nearly 20,000 temples, is the largest and in many ways the most aggressive sect of modern Buddhists.

The worship of Amida Butsu in Japan dates from the very beginnings of Buddhism in this land in the sixth century. Early in the seventh century the great Shotoku Taishi expressed longings for Amida's Western Pure Land. Gyogi Bosatsu, the father of religious syncretism in Japan, and other pious monks of the seventh and eighth centuries preached salvation through faith in Amida's name, wrote books and painted pictures setting forth the hope of birth in the Western Pure Land. Then with the founding of the Tendai Sect by Dengyo Daishi, early in the ninth century, Amidaiism was given its rather prominent place in the teachings of this comprehensive type of Buddhism. This was especially true of the famous Tendai institution of Miidera, where Amida was given the highest place of honor.

But while Amida Buddhism was a recognized part of Japanese Mahayana Buddhism during these centuries, it was left to Genshin in his writings, especially the Ojo Yoshu, to lay the foundations for Buddhist sects which made Amidaiism, it not the only way, at least the supreme way of salvation. Especially with the founding of the Jodo and Shin sects does Amida Buddhism become a dominant type in Japan, and these rest definitely upon Genshin's work.

Both the Jodo and the Shin sects, in tracing their spiritual origins, assign a high place to Genshin and his Ojo Yoshu. Honen Shonin, the founder of the Jodo Sect, says that it was his reading of Ojo Yoshu which won him for this way of salvation. And at the beginning of his own writing, the Sangakushu, he says, "I make the Nembutsu of Ojo my foundation." The Shin Sect, founded

by Shinran, a disciple of Honen, looks upon Genshin as the sixth of the Seven Great Transmitters of the Amida Faith. These seven are Nagarjuna and Vasubandhu of India, Donran¹, Doshaku² and Zendo³ of China, and Genshin and Honen of Japan. The importance of the Ojo Yoshu may be seen also from the fact that the work has been published in a good many editions down through the centuries since its first appearance in the latter part of the tenth century, the last edition appearing as recently as 1913.

The oldest extant edition is the Kempo Edition which appeared in the fourth year of the Kempo Era, 1217 A.D. This edition consists of six volumes and was published in commemoration of the two hundredth anniversary of the author's death. The original edition of 984 A.D. has been lost, as have been other editions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. However, a copy of the first edition which the author had sent to China seems to have survived to the middle of the thirteenth century when about the year 1253 an edition was got out in Japan which was based on this edition. This edition, like the Kempo edition, is in six volumes and differs from the latter only in that a few lines are omitted from the first of the ten main divisions into which the Ojo Yoshu is divided. There was another edition published about the same time, though possibly a little earlier, which is also in six volumes and differs from the Kempo edition in that it omits twenty words from the first main division.

Two copies of the Ojo Yoshu are extant which may date from the Shogen Era (1207-1211), though it is rather likely that they belong to a little later period. Then there is the "Yellow Paper Edition," so called because printed on yellow paper, which belongs somewhere in the Kamakura Period (1159-1333). This is, however, not a complete edition, since only one volume survives.

It will be noted that most of these editions belong to the period in Japanese Buddhist history in which the great Jodo and Shin sects, the two leading Amida sects, had their first success. Whether any editions were published during the period of the Ashikaga anarchy and the subsequent period of civil strife is not certain. At any rate, none seems to have come down to our day from those troublesome times. Only after the Tokugawa Shogunate was well established and the land had peace again was publication of the Ojo Yoshu resumed. The Kwan-ei Edition, appearing in the eighth year of the Kwan-ei era (1631), was the first. This was followed by

¹ T'an-luan. (editor's note).

² Tao-ch'o (editor's note).

³ Shan-tao (editor's note).

another edition in 1640. Then some time during the Teikyo era (1684-1688) appeared the Teikyo edition.

About the time of the Teikyo edition, which like all previous editions, was Chinese and complete in six volumes, appeared the first edition in easy Japanese written in the hiragana and graphically illustrated. This was an abbreviated edition since it contained only the first two of the ten main divisions of the Ojo Yoshu. This was apparently soon followed by another abbreviated popular edition. What is known as the Genroku Hiragana edition is the one which appeared in the second year of that era (1689). This, too, is an abbreviated popular edition, though it comprises six volumes.

Another Genroku edition is that of 1697, which is a complete edition in Chinese and published in six volumes. This edition may be regarded as a standard edition for modern scholars and copies of it are not difficult to secure.

In 1790 appeared the Kwansei edition, which is an abbreviated popular edition containing again only the first two main divisions. It differs from the previous popular editions in that it is in three rather than in six volumes.

The most recent complete edition in Chinese is that of 1839, differing from the older complete editions in that it is in three volumes rather than the traditional six. That the Ojo Yoshu has not lost its hold on the popular mind in modern times is shown by the fact that in 1883 appeared again an edition in easy Japanese and consisting, like previous popular editions, of the first two main divisions of the work. It would seem that about this time an attempt was made to publish a lithographic edition, but this was given up as impracticable. The last edition to appear is that of 1913. This is also a popular edition consisting of the first two main divisions. Comparing this edition with the Genroku Chinese edition of 1697, it will be observed that a good many passages of an explanatory nature have been inserted into the text. We have indicated these interpolations by the use of brackets and foot notes. On the other hand, there are a few passages found in the older Chinese editions and especially the names of scriptures which are omitted in the popular editions. These, too, are indicated by the use of brackets and foot notes.⁴ As has already been indicated, the Ojo Yoshu, in its complete form, consists of ten main divisions. It is probably

⁴ The substance of what is said above regarding the various editions of the Ojo Yoshu is based largely on an article by Mr Murin Kusaka in Vol. 4 of *Bibliophilia*, 1929, entitled, „Eishin Sozu no Ojo Yoshu Kobanhon ni tsuite.”

natural that when an attempt was made to popularize this work only the first two main divisions should be published, for they contain what might be called the Divine Comedy proper of this Buddhist Dante. The headings of the ten main divisions are as follows: 1. Leaving the Unclean World; II. the Pure Land; III. Evidences for the Existence of The Pure Land; IV. Correct Practice of Nembutsu; V. Methods for Promoting Nembutsu; VI. Nembutsu for Special Seasons; VII. Benefits of Nembutsu; VIII. Evidences for Nembutsu; IX. Various Causes Leading to Birth in the Pure Land; X. Questions and Answers.

Division I. Leaving the Unclean World, is subdivided into the follow sections: I. Stories about Hell (in eight short chapters on the eight great hells, each with its sixteen minor hells); 2. Realm of Hungry Spirits; 3. Realm of Beasts; 4. Realm of Angry Demons; 5. Realm of Human Beings; 6. Realm of Heavenly Beings; 7. General Summary;

Division II. The Pure Land, gives in ten short chapters the pleasures of Amida's Western Pure Land. It is only these two first divisions that we give in translation below. For an outline of the remaining eight divisions, the reader is referred to the appendix.

A few words about Genshin himself may not be out of place here. Genshin, or as he is often called, Eishin Sozu, i.e., the abbot of Eishin, was born in a small village of Yamato Province in the year 942 A.D. He lost his father when he was only seven. This apparently made a deep impression on the mind of this precocious lad. His mother seems to have been a woman of deep piety and her influence on the boy was a very big factor in his spiritual career. Apparently soon after the father's death the boy was sent away from home to study at the great Tendai center on Mount Hiei. It is reported that the mother on this occasion said to her son: "You shall not see my face again until you have become a noted priest in the world," and then producing from a silk wrapping a copy of the Amidakyo (the smaller Sukhavati-vyuha), she gave it to him saying: "This is what your father used to read. I give it to you. Read it and preach the joy which it contains."

That this parting injunction spurred the youth on to do his best may be inferred from the fact that he soon won for himself a reputation as a scholar of unusual ability. It is claimed that when he was only fifteen he was chosen as a lecturer on the Hokkekyo (Saddharma Pundarika sutra) in the palace before the Emperor Murakami (946-966). His fluency of speech and great ability impressed his Royal audience and he was handsomely rewarded by the Emperor. The young scholar, thinking how this recognition would please his mother, promptly sent the Royal gifts to her. But the pious mother was anything but pleased, fearing that his head was being turned with his early success. She sent back a severe rebuke saying: "The idea of your leaving home was that

you might enter the way of true enlightenment and not to gain profit and make a name for yourself.” She added a little verse which reads: “I thought you would become a bridge to connect this world with the next, but I am sad to find that you are only a monk of this world.”

The shot struck home, for he replied: “I regarded books as bridges that lead across this world, but now, happily, I have learned to enter the way of truth through them.” The young monk now gave himself all the more zealously to his studies, and withdrew himself almost completely, not only from the world at large, but also from the society of his fellow monks on the mountain. It is said that he read the entire Buddhist canon through five times, not to gain fame but that he might find true enlightenment. This was, of course, unconsciously a preparation for writing what became his master work, the *Ojo Yoshu*. This is shown quite clearly by the contents of these *Essays on Birth into The Pure Land*, since they are so largely but a compilation of what is taught on this subject in the canonical scriptures.

While the reading in the canonical writings was a preparation for writing the *Ojo Yoshu*, Genshin did not read them with this in view. Apparently it was again his mother who influenced him to write these essays. This time it was not by anything she said or did but rather by her death. She died in 983 A.D. and Genshin now went back to his home for the first time since he had left it more than thirty years before. He went back to conduct the *Indo* service, the ceremony of conducting his mother’s spirit to The Pure Land. Soon after his return to his retreat at Ryogen-in of Enryakuji he set to work on these essays. In the space of about six months he had finished the task and given to Japanese Buddhism a writing which, while not ranking as a canonical scripture, has had a far greater influence, especially on the religious life of the masses, than most of the canonical scriptures of Buddhism have had. In reading the *Ojo Yoshu* one is repeatedly reminded of Dante’s immortal work and it would be only natural to institute a comparison. We shall, however, leave this to the reader and confine ourselves to a few general observations.

The object which both Dante and Genshin seek to accomplish is essentially the same. Both writers try to picture the horrors of hell in all their loathsome details and paint the glories of the Pure Land in all the attractiveness that their imagination can conjure up so that the reader may fear and flee from the sinful life that leads to the one and seek with all his might the life of righteousness that leads to the other. Genshin goes beyond Dante in the first in that he adds to the horrors of hell other stages of existences including our present human life as something to be hated and from which one is to escape. Both Genshin and Dante hold that a person’s lot in the next world is determined by what one is in his inner life in this world and not by the whimsical decrees of ecclesiastical authorities. In this Dante ran more or less counter to the general belief of his day, especially when he assigns men high in authority in the church to the lower hells.

Genshin was but applying the ordinary Buddhist doctrine of good and evil Karma, i.e., what a man soweth that shall he also reap. One never feels in reading the *Ojo Yoshu* that Genshin's own personal animosities had anything to do with the place to which sinners were assigned as one does in reading Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. He represents the hell wardens as quoting from the scriptures to impress upon the victims that they are receiving merely their just rewards.

It should be added, on the other hand, that Dante's work is far more gripping on the imagination just because he makes it all such a personal narrative and peoples the other world with persons whom he calls by names, many of whom are well known to the average reader. Genshin does not give a single name except those of well known Buddhas and Bodhisattvas like Amida, Kwannon and Daiseishi. His sinners in hell and saints in the Pure Land are not so much specific persons as types. This difference between Dante and Genshin is due largely to the underlying difference in the conception of the nature of the human personality. With Dante a personal human being remains essentially a human being whether he is suffering in demon form the tortures of hell, enduring the disciplinary sufferings of Purgatory or enjoying in angelic splendor the unutterable bliss of the Pure Land. Genshin, being true to the Buddhist conception, cannot picture human beings as such suffering in hell or enjoying the pleasures of the Pure Land. When human beings fall into hell or into any of the states below the human state they cease by that very fact to be human beings. The same is true when they rise to the stages of existence above the human stage. In hell they must be demons, in the Realm of Beasts they are beasts and in the Pure Land they are Bodhisattvas and Buddhas who, though pictured in terms of personality, have nevertheless lost so much of their human characteristics that it would be hard to identify them with human persons who once lived here on earth and who could be called by definite names in the way Dante calls his other-world citizens by definite names.

While both Dante and Genshin regard the results of a life of sin and one of righteousness as equally certain and inexorable, it is not equally final with both writers. Dante writes above the portals of hell these words. "All hope abandon ye who enter in!" It is only from Purgatory that the inhabitants can hope to escape someday. With Genshin nothing is permanent in the lower realms of existence, though apparently those who enter the Pure Land are forever saved. The lower realms, including hell, are all a sort of purgatory. One may fall or rise in the scale of beings and so even the lowest hell will give up its victims when the measure of suffering caused by evil Karma is full and this evil Karma has been exhausted. But that this should not tempt the sinner to persist in the pleasures of sin, Genshin says that "there is about as much chance to escape from the clutches of hell as for a monkey to grab the moon."

An interesting point of comparison between the two writers that might be made is in connection with their conception of the shape and size of the cosmos. Genshin's conception is on a vastly larger scale than Dante's though one cannot feel that this is due to a keener observation of things but only to that tendency toward extravagance which is so characteristic in Mahayana Buddhist writings. Dante's conception was, of course, the general Ptolemaic conception with a very limited universe and with the earth as its center. His hell is a deep pit extending from a point near the surface of the earth under Jerusalem, to the center of the earth, the entrance to which is like a path down some steep mountain-side. Purgatory is a mountain on the opposite side of the earth. Dante's heavens are located on the moon, the planets, the fixed stars, the primum mobile and the Empyrean beyond the stars. The fixed stars and the region beyond them are conceived of in terms which do little justice to the immensities of stellar space as understood by modern astronomy.

Genshin's hell is also an abyss but a rather vast one. Entrance to this abyss begins a thousand yodjanas [leagues] beneath the base of Mount Sumeru which mountain constitutes, as it were, the axis of every Buddhist universe. Mount Sumeru rises from the encircling ocean to a height of 84,000 yodjanas and its base extends an equal distance downward. The Realm of Hungry Spirits, the Realm of Beasts, the Realm of Angry Demons, the Human Realm and the Realm of Heavenly Beings (i.e., a sort of earthly paradise) are located around the base, up the slopes and on the top of this central mountain. The earthly paradise is divided into many divisions and the lower ones of these are located on top of this mythological mountain while the upper ones are found far up in the regions of infinite space. But what constitutes the true Pure Land, namely, Amida's Western Paradise lies trillions of Buddha lands to the West, or beyond the limits of the world as we know it. Genshin's conception of time is also on a vast scale dealing as he does in the language of countless Kalpas. The length of one kalpa may be indicated by estimating how long it would take to wear down a large granite mountain if a little bird should graze it with the tips of its wings, say once in three years. When one compares the work of the two writers in regard to originality of thought and literary merit the result would be usually very much in favor of the Florentine poet. As a matter of fact, Genshin's essays are, as we said above, largely a mere compilation of what he has read in the voluminous Buddhist scriptures. Sometimes he gives this in direct quotations and at other times in the form of summaries. It is only when we come to certain sections that deal with the beauties of the Pure Land that Genshin shows some originality, for while here too he quotes frequently from the scriptures he often draws on the charms of his own beautiful Japan. The lotus ponds, the crystal bathing pools, the bridges that span beautiful mountain streams, the lovely groves of trees and the artistic pavilions of luxury-loving tenth century Kyoto provide him with material for pictures of the Pure Land. In Genshin's time Kyoto culture had succeeded in blending the works of Chinese art with the natural beauty of Japan, and this seems to have made a great impression on this pious monk who, when he talks about human life as such, in good Buddhist fashion, pictures it as a sink of perdition and a cesspool of

corruption. One is specially struck in his pictures of the Pure Land with the frequent mention of the Seven Precious things out of which everything in the Pure Land seems to be made. These Seven Precious things, or Treasures, are gold, silver, emerald, coral, agate, crystal and pearl. It should be added, however, that these belong only to the first stages of the heavenly life and that the higher ones are pictured entirely in terms of spiritual values.

The paucity of Genshin's vocabulary makes him rather monotonous in his descriptions. Dante, it may be remembered, in spite of his wealth of thoughts and words also gets rather monotonous when he dilates on the pleasures of the Pure Land, or as one critic has put it, it is "a dazzling sameness, a mystic indistinctness, an inseparable blending of the real and the unreal."

The influence which the two writers have exerted on the religious life of their times and in subsequent centuries is great in both cases. Genshin's influence was confined almost entirely to Japan, though a copy of the Ojo Yōshū was sent to the famous Tendai center of China where it excited considerable favorable comment among Buddhist scholars. At any rate, it has exerted a big influence in Japan and over a long period of time. Though it was written about 950 years ago it is still being published as we have said and still being read, especially by humble Buddhist believers who would know what fate awaits them when they have passed on from this life to the realms beyond.

OJO YOSHU

This book represents selections by Abbot Eishin. It is written in easy Japanese and is illustrated so that it is easy to understand and even uneducated people, women and beginners, can remember and enter the way of enlightenment.

Abbot Eishin-Author-OJO YOSHU

THE ABBOT'S SONGS

The cloud of the heart which desires the Pure Land will become the cloud of welcome. I was seeking the way of Buddha all through the night but it was really to find my own heart. When I obtain enlightenment and enter the bright sunlight of understanding, immediately the shallow snow of sin melts away.⁵

PREFACE

The teaching which shows how to obtain birth into the Pure Land and the easy way of training for becoming a Buddha, is for the sinners of this dark world just as easy as seeing with one's eyes or walking with one's feet. As it is such a blessed teaching, shall not all who seek with an earnest heart enter this way priests and laymen, men and women, the noble and the ignoble, the wise and the foolish? Only the revealed and the Hidden Teachings are comprehensive, and the causes and circumstances and the religious disciplines are numerous, but these are not difficult for the clever and wise who can easily understand things. But what about myself, one who is only a foolish man? I cannot comprehend these difficult things and walk in this hard way. That is why I have turned to the one gate of Nembutsu. I have now peace of heart and so have decided to set forth briefly in outline the teaching of the scriptures in regard to this matter. This should prove a help for easily understanding and for putting the teachings in practice.

There are ten divisions of the subject and these make three volumes. The ten divisions are the following:

1. Leaving the Unclean World.
2. Seeking the Pure Land.

⁵ Not found in the Chinese Editions.

3. Evidences for the Existence of the Pure Land.
4. Correct Practice of the Nembutsu.
5. Methods of Promoting the Nembutsu.
6. Nembutsu for Special Times.
7. Benefits of Nembutsu.
8. Evidences for Nembutsu.
9. Various works Leading to Birth in the Pure Land.
10. Questions and Answers.

I put this on my right hand side and shall not forget. Selections by Tendai head, Ryogenin Shamon Genshin.

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⁶ This Table of Contents is not found in the Chinese Editions.

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VOLUME I

Stories about Hell

CHAPTER ONE

Leaving the Unclean World

Leaving the Unclean World means to abhor and to depart from this impure world. It means to depart not only from this human world but also from the entire Six Realms. These all taken together constitute what is called the Three Worlds⁷. There is no peace in the Three Realms. The Buddha explained them by comparing them with a burning house and by saying that it is like living in a house which is on fire⁸. It is a thing above all others from which to separate oneself with a feeling of disgust.

Now in order to make clear the various phenomena of this Unclean World we divide our subject into seven parts as follows: I. Hell; II. Realm of Hungry Spirits; III. Realm of Beasts; IV. Realm of Furious Demons; V. Realm of Humankind; VI. Realm of Heavenly Beings; VII. General Summary.

The first of the above divisions, namely Hell, is divided into eight divisions as follows: 1. Hell of Repetition; 2. Hell of the Black Rope; 3. Hell of All Living Beings; 4. Hell of Lamentations; 5. Hell of Great Lamentations; 6. Hell of Scorching Heat; 7. Hell of the Great Scorching Heat; 8. Hell of No-Interval.

⁷ Three Worlds (sk. Trailokya) are World of Desire (sk Kamadhatu), World of Pure Form (Rupadhatu) and World of Formlessness (Arupadhatu).

⁸ The sections in brackets are not found in the Chinese Editions.

CHAPTER TWO

Hell of Repetition

The Hell of Repetition is located one thousand yodjanas below this world. It is ten thousand yodjanas in length and in width. The sinners in this place are always bent upon injuring one another. If they meet any one by chance they act like a hunter would toward a deer. Whetting their iron claws they proceed to scratch each other's eyes out and lacerate the flesh on each other's thighs until the blood runs out and the bones are exposed. Thereupon come the hell wardens and beat them with iron rods from head to foot till their bodies are broken into fragments like grains of sand. And again they cut their flesh into slices with sharp swords as fish is sliced in the kitchen. But when the cool wind blows over the remains they come to life again and assume their former shape. After a short interval they are made to pass again through the same sort of agony. A voice from the sky cries out, saying: "Let all these beings come to life again!" Or the hell wardens, beating the ground with black iron pitchforks, shout: "Revive! Revive!" [Chidoron, Yugaron⁹].

One day and night in the realm of the four Deva Kings is as long as fifty years of human life, and life in the realm of the Deva Kings lasts five hundred years. But one night and one day in this hell is equal in length to the length of life in the realm of the Deva Kings, and the victims have to remain in this hell five hundred years. All who destroy life in any form fall into this hell. [Kusha, Shohonenkyo]¹⁰.

On the outside of the four gates of this hell are sixteen special places which belong to this hell and which are also hells. The first of these is called the Place of Filth. This hell is filled with hot dung and filth which is very bitter in taste and full of worms with hard bills. The sinners are put into this hell and forced to eat this hot dung while the worms crawl all over them, chewing and piercing their skin, gnawing their flesh and even sucking the marrow from their bones. Those who have killed deer or birds fall into this hell.

The second place is called the Place of the Revolving Sword. It is enclosed with black iron walls ten yodjanas in height. It is filled with burning fire, in comparison with which an ordinary fire

⁹ Yogācārabhumisāstra (editor's note).

¹⁰ These scriptures are not mentioned in the popular Edition.

seems like snow. When the body comes into contact with this in the slightest way it shrivels up as small as a mustard seed. In this fire hot iron sticks rain down in heavy showers. There is in this place also a forest of swords which are so sharp that a hair or even the sign of a hair coming in contact with them is cut into fine bits. How much more then is this the case with the bodies of sinners! Sometimes the swords fall down like a large waterfall from the sky. So great is the confusion of agonies here that no one can endure it. Those who have destroyed life with a covetous spirit fall into this hell.

The third place is called the Place of the Fiery Caldron. In this hell the sinners are put into an iron caldron and boiled like one boils beans. Those who have killed, cooked and eaten animals fall into this hell. The fourth place is called the Place of Much Suffering. In this place are innumerable trillions of pains. We cannot describe these in detail. Those who have bound people with fetters, beaten them with rods, compelled them to make long journeys, cast them down steep places, suffocated them with smoke, frightened children and, in short, all those who in any such ways have caused others to suffer, fall into this hell. The fifth place is called the Place of the Black Calm. The sinners in this hell are in pitch darkness and they are constantly being wasted with a dark fire. Then a raging storm begins to blow which forces Diamond Mountain to clash with the surrounding mountains so that the bodies of the sinners are crushed between them and the fragments are scattered like grains of sand. After this a hot wind blows which cuts like a sharp sword. Those who have killed sheep by suffocating them with fire and those who have killed turtles by crushing them between tiles fall into this hell.

The sixth place is called the Place of No-Joy. In this hell is a big fire which burns the bodies of sinners day and night. There are in it birds with red hot beaks, dogs and foxes whose cries are so blood-curdling that the hairs of the victims stand on end. They continually come and gnaw away at the bones and flesh of the victims which lie around in a confused mass. Worms with hard snouts pierce the bones and suck out the marrow. Those who have blown shells, beaten drums and made dreadful noises, or those who have killed birds and beasts fall into this hell. The seventh place is called the Place of the Most Severe Suffering. It is located on the edge of a steep cliff where sinners are continually burning in a fire of iron. Those who have ruthlessly killed anything fall into this hell.

(The above description is found in the Shohonenkyo¹¹. The remaining nine hells are also given in this Sutra to which the reader is referred for further information.

¹¹ Shohonenkyo or Shohonenshokyo, which is so frequently quoted in the Ojo Yoshu, was translated into Chinese from the Sanskrit in the sixth century. It consists of seven chapters dealing with the following subjects: 1. the results of the ten kinds of good conduct, 2. Birth and Death, 3. The different hells (Earthly Prison), 4. the condition of Pretas (Hungry Spirits), 5. the Birth as a Beast, 6. the conditions of Devas, 7. the Koya-Smrty-upasthana. See Nanyo Catalogue. No. 679.

CHAPTER THREE

Hell of the Black Rope

The Hell of the Black Rope is located below the Hell of Repetition and is of the same size as the latter. The hell wardens seize the sinners and fling them face downward to the ground, which is made of hot iron. Then, after marking them with hot iron cords in both directions as a carpenter makes marks with his line, they cut them up into pieces with hot iron axes, following the markings. Sometimes they cut them up with saws, or disembowel them with swords and after slashing them into slices they hang them up to view. Sometimes they spread nets made of innumerable hot iron ropes and drive the sinners into these, and then an evil wind begins to blow which wraps the fiery nets around the sinners roasting the flesh and charring the bones. [Yugaron, Chidoron]¹² On the right hand and the left are high iron mountains. On the top of these mountains are fastened flagstaffs made of iron and an iron rope is fastened at either end to these staffs and thus stretches from one mountain top to the other. Beneath this rope are placed in a row a number of large caldrons filled with a boiling, steaming substance. The sinners, with heavy burdens fastened on their backs, are forced to walk across on this rope, and naturally they cannot help from falling into the boiling caldrons below. In these they are boiled for a long time till bones and flesh are reduced to an indistinguishable mass. [Kwanbutsu Sammaikyo]¹³

If one compares the suffering in this hell with the suffering in the Hell of Repetition together with its sixteen special places, it is found to be ten times as severe. The hell wardens in tormenting the sinners say to them: “The heart is itself the chief enemy and causes the greatest evils. It binds men and sends them to appear before Emma-O. You must be roasted alone in hell and be devoured as a result of your evil work. Wife and children, brothers and sisters or relatives are all of them unable to save you.”

Down to the fifth hell below this one the suffering increases tenfold in each hell over the preceding one. From this we may gather what is the intensity of the suffering in these hells. [Shohonenkyo]¹⁴. A hundred years of human life are equal in length to one day and night in Toriten¹⁵, and in this heaven life lasts a thousand years, but the length of life in Toriten is

¹² These scriptures are not mentioned in the popular Edition.

¹³ These scriptures are not mentioned in the popular Edition.

¹⁴ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular Edition.

¹⁵ Toriten is the second of the six Devalokas, the six heavens of the World of Desire.

equivalent to only one day and night in this hell and here life lasts one thousand years. Those who have destroyed life or who have stolen anything fall into this hell.

Adjoining this hell is another one called the Place of Crying-Receiving Pain. The sinners are placed on a precipice immeasurable yodjanas in height. They are tied together with black ropes of hot fire and when they have been thus lashed together they are pushed over the brink. As they fall they strike on the fiery ground below, which is studded with sharp swords as numerous as the blades of grass. Thereupon dogs with jaws of flaming iron chew them into fine bits, and though they cry out for help none are saved. Those who have been teachers of the Law but who have explained it with evil prejudices, thus failing to give the truth and indifferent to the consequences, and who then have committed suicide by throwing themselves over a precipice, fall into this hell.

There is another place called the Place of the Dreaded Eagle. The hell wardens here, wielding their iron clubs with great wrath, strike the sinners suddenly and do violence to them day and night. Sometimes they brandish their flaming iron swords and slash the victims, or drawing iron fiery bows with arrows affixed they cruelly shoot them, all the time driving them forward. Those who with a covetous spirit, have bound or killed others in order to rob them of their possessions, fall into this hell. [Shohonenkyo]¹⁶.

¹⁶ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular Edition.

CHAPTER FOUR

Hell of Assembly

The Hell of Assembly is below the Hell of the Black Rope, and it is of same size as the latter. In this hell are numerous iron mountains arranged in pairs so as to face each other. There are in this place various ox-headed and horse-headed hell wardens who are armed with all sorts of pronged iron sticks and clubs which serve as instruments of torture. With these they drive the sinners before them and make them pass between the pairs of mountains, whereupon these mountains come together crushing the victims till the blood oozes out and covers the ground.

Then again there are iron mountains tumbling from the sky which crush the sinners into fragments like grains of sand. Sometimes the victims are placed upon a rock and crushed with another rock. Or again they are placed into an iron mortar and pulverized with an iron pestle. Out from the dungeons of evil come demons, lions, tigers, wolves and various other beasts made of flaming heat, crows and eagles all these crowd around and devour the victims. [Yugaron, Dairon]¹⁷. Eagles with beaks of flaming iron catch away the entrails and, hanging them on the branches of trees, consume them. There is here also a large pond in which are fish hooks made of iron and heated to a whit heat. The hell wardens, seizing the sinners, fling them down upon these hooks. The pond is filled with molten copper and through this the sinners are forced to swim. The bodies of some become red like the rising sun, while those of others sink like heavy stones. Still others stand and with uplifted hands cry out to heaven. There are also groups of those who weep and wail together. But however great the suffering is, there is none to help, none to save.

Sometimes the hell wardens seize the victims and put them into a forest of sword blades. As they look up to the top branches of the trees in this forest they see beautiful and well-dressed women, indeed the faces of those whom once they loved. This fills them with joy and so they try to climb up the trees, but when they do so the branches and leaves all turn into swords which lacerate the flesh and pierce and pierce the bones. Though they are terrorized by this their evil Karma still drives them on in their desire, and defying the swords they climb on. But when they reach the top they find the object of their desire below on the ground luring them to come down and each one saying to the lover on the tree: "Because of the Karma created by my passions for you I have come to this place. Why do you not come near me and embrace me?" Thus each one allures her victim from beneath the trees till the latter in their infatuation begin to climb down the tree again. But as they descend the leaves of the trees which are made of swords turn upward and thus

¹⁷ These scriptures are not mentioned in the popular Edition.

lacerate their bodies. When they are about to reach the ground the women appear on the tops of the trees. Then the victims, overcome with passion, again climb up. This process goes on for ten trillion years. The cause of being thus deceived in this hell by one's own heart and the consequent suffering is one's own evil passion.

The hell wardens, while torturing the victims, quote from the Scriptures saying: "It is not a case of suffering the evil consequences of another's deeds, but you are suffering the consequences of your own evil deeds. This is the way with all living beings". [Shohonenkyo]¹⁸.

Two hundred years of human life are equal in length to one day and night in Yamaten¹⁹ where life lasts two thousand years, but one day and night in this hell is as long as life in Yamaten and in this hell the victims must remain two thousand years. Murderers, thieves, and adulterers fall into this hell.

Connected with this hell are sixteen separate hells. Among these is a hell called the Evil-Seeing Place. Those who with violence have committed fornication with other men's children fall into this hell and receive its tortures. The sinners think they see their own children in hell tortured by the hell wardens who take iron sticks and iron gimlets and thrust these into their privates, or using iron hooks they thrust them in and pull them out of the vagina. The sinners seeing this suffering of their children are filled with longing and pity for them so great that they cannot endure the sight. But if one compares the suffering caused by seeing this with the suffering caused by being burned in the fire, it is not one-sixteenth as great. After being thus tortured by seeing their own children ill treated they receive the suffering in their own bodies. First the hell wardens stand the victims on their heads and boil them in a fluid of molten copper which runs in at the anus and through the internals, thus burning the vital organs and finally running out from the mouth and the nose. The above mentioned kinds of suffering, namely, the suffering in heart and the suffering in body, continue for immeasurable hundreds of thousands of years.

There is another special place called the Place of Much Suffering. In this place are doomed to suffer such men as are guilty of sodomy. Here the victim, seeing the man he lusted with, embraces him with a passion like a hot flame which completely consumes his body. After he has

¹⁸ These scripture is not mentioned in the popular Edition.

¹⁹ Yamaten is the third of the Six Devalokas.

died he comes to life again and runs away in great terror but only to fall over a terrible precipice where he is devoured by crows with flaming beaks and by foxes with mouths of flames.

Then there is another separate hell called the Place of Enduring Suffering. Here must suffer those who have stolen and violated other men's wives. The hell wardens seize the sinners and hang them with heads downward from the branches of trees. Beneath them is a raging flame which completely consumes their bodies. They come to life again and then are burned as before. When they cry out in agony the flames enter their bodies and consume the vital organs. This suffering continues for immeasurable hundreds of thousands of years. Further description of this is found in the scriptures. [Shohonenkyo]²⁰.

²⁰ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular Edition.

CHAPTER FIVE

Hell of Lamentations

The Hell of Lamentations is located below the Hell of Assembly and it is of the same size as the latter. The heads of the hell wardens are yellow like gold, and from their eyes issue flames of fire. They are clothed in red garments and their arms and legs are fat. . They are robust .and tall and can run like the wind. From their mouths Issue horrible voices and with their strong breath they pierce the sinners as with arrows. The sinners are terror-stricken and, beating their own heads, they beg for mercy. “Have mercy on us and grant us a little respite!” they cry, but this only increases the wrath of their tormentors, who beat them over their heads with iron clubs and chase them over the ground made of hot iron. Sometimes they place them on hot roasting shelves and turning them over and over again, they roast them. Sometimes they fling them into hot pans and boil them. And again they drive them into holes of iron filled with raging flames, or seize them and, after prying open their mouths with iron tongs, pour in molten copper which burns up their internal organs so that they flow out. [Yugaron, Dairon]²¹. The sinners quote the scriptures and cry out with a grudge against Emma-O saying: “O you honorable Ruler! Why do you not treat us with a heart of pity? Why are you not more gentle with us? We are vessels of sorrow. Why do you not show mercy toward us?”

Then Emma-O answers, saying: “You are deceived by the web of your own passions. You have created evil Karma and now you receive the reward of your evil works. Why are you angry with me and holding a grudge against me?” And he says further to them: “While you were in the world you were deceived by your heart of lust and folly and thus you created evil Karma. Why did you not at that time repent? Even though you repent now it avails nothing.” (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo).

Four hundred years of human life are equal in length to one day and night in Tosotsuten²², and in this heaven life continues for four thousand years; but the length of life in Tosotsuten is equivalent to only one night and day in this hell and here life lasts four thousand years. Murderers, thieves, adulterers and drunkards fall into this hell.

²¹ These scriptures are not mentioned in the popular Edition.

²² Tosotsuten is the fourth of the Six Devalokas.

This hell has sixteen special places. Among these is one called the Hell of Fire and Worms. Those who have sold sake diluted with water fall into this place and their bodies are afflicted with the four hundred and four diseases. The power of one of these diseases is such that in a single day and night it would destroy all the inhabitants of the Four Islands²³. From the bodies of the victims come out worms which eat up the skin, flesh and marrow.

There is another place called Cloud-Fire-Mist. Those who have forced women to drink sake and then violated them bringing them to shame fall into this hell, and they are tortured with a flame which is twelve hundred feet deep. The hell wardens lay hold on them and force them to walk through this fire until they are consumed from head to foot. When they seem utterly destroyed the hell wardens call out: "Revive! Revive!" and they come to life again. Then they drive them through the fire again just as before, and thus without any intermission in their suffering this is kept up for immeasurable hundreds of thousands of years.

There is another place mentioned in the scriptures in which the hell wardens torment the sinners and quote from the scriptures saying: "One who drinks wine, even though he may be in the position of a Buddha, is sure to fall into doubt, and thus breaking the rules of the monkhood he destroys, as if by fire, the seeds of his salvation." (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo).

²³ Four islands means Japan with its four major islands.

CHAPTER SIX

Hell of Great Lamentations

The Hell of Great Lamentations is located below the Hell of Lamentations and is of the same size as the latter. The suffering in this hell is of the same kind as in the other hells except that it is ten times greater than all the suffering in the preceding four hells and their separate sixteen compartments taken together. Eight hundred years of human life are equal in length to one day and night in Kerakuten²⁴ where life lasts eight thousand years, but one day and night in this hell is as long as life in Kerakuten and here life continues for eight thousand years. Murderers, thieves, adulterers, drunkards and those who use evil language fall into this hell. The hell wardens torment the sinners while quoting the scriptures saying: “Evil language is the worst fire which burns up even the great ocean. Therefore the one who uses such language will be consumed like dry grass, trees or tinder.”

There are in this hell sixteen separate places, among which is one called Receiving-Baring-Suffering. Here the sinners’ mouths and tongues are nailed together with hot iron nails so that they cannot cry out. Another place is called Receiving-Limitless-Suffering. Here the hell wardens cut out the victims’ tongues with hot iron shears. After they have been cut out they grow on again but only to be cut out again. They also pull out their eyes just as they do their tongues, and without any intermission they slash their bodies with knives. These knives are so sharp that they can cut even iron and stone. How easily, then, do they cut human flesh! Such various and innumerable sufferings are the lot of all those who have used evil language. There are many such teachings in the scriptures. (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo).

²⁴ Kerakuten is the fifth of the Six Devalokas.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Hell of Scorching Heat

The Hell of Scorching Heat is located below the Hell of Great Lamentations and is of the same size as the latter. The hell wardens seize the sinners and make them lie on the ground, which is made of hot iron. Sometimes they make them lie facing upward and sometimes downward, all the time beating and punching them from head to foot until their flesh is beaten into a pulp. Sometimes they place them on a large roasting shelf made of iron and heated to an intense heat. Thus they roast them in a raging flame. Turning them over first on one side and then on the other, they roast them until they are burned thin. Sometimes they fasten them on a large iron skewer, sticking these through them from the bottom to the head, and scorch them thoroughly till the flames enter the vital organs, their joints and bones, eyes, noses and mouths. Then again they place them in a large caldron and boil them like beans. And sometimes they place them on the upper floor of an iron house and cause raging flames of hot iron to envelop them from all directions, thus consuming even their bones and marrow. (This is the heart of Yugaron and the Dairon).

If one should put a portion of this fire as small as the light of a firefly into this world of ours it would consume this world in a short moment. What must, then, be the suffering of these sinners whose bodies, tender like budding grass, are being burned in this hell eternally! The victims in this place look longingly up at the fires in the preceding five hells, for these seem by comparison cool like snow or frost. (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo).

Sixteen hundred years of human life are equal in length to one day and night in Takejizaiten²⁵ in which heaven life lasts sixteen thousand years, but the length of life in Takejizaiten is equivalent to only one day and night in this hell and here life continues for sixteen thousand years. Murderers, thieves, adulterers, drunkards, those who use vile language and heretics fall into this hell.

Outside the gates on the four sides of this hell are again sixteen special places among which is one called Fundarikiya. Here the bodies of the sinners are roasted in a flame until there is not a spot as large as a mustard seed which is not burned.

²⁵ Takejizaiten is the Sixth of the Six Devalokas.

All the people in this hell keep saying to one another: "All ye, come quickly, come quickly! Here is the Lake Fundarikiya. Here is water to drink. Here is the cool shade of a wood." Lured on by these words, the sinners rush forward, but on either side of the road are pits filled with fire into which they all fall and where they are consumed skin and bone. After a little while they come to life again and the terrible heat makes them long for the water and so they press on until they enter the place of Fundarikiya. Now the flames of Fundarikiya are five hundred yodjanas in height. When the victims have been burned to death in this flame they come to life again after a little while, and then this process is repeated as before. Into this hell fall all those who have starved themselves to death in the hope of thus earning their way into heaven, also those who have taught this heresy to others.

Another of the special places is called Dark-Fire-Wind. Here the sinners are carried up into the sky by an evil wind, and as they have nothing to which they can cling they are twirled around and around like the wheel of a cart so that they become invisible to the eye. And while they are being thus twirled around and around another wind arises which is sharp like a sword and which cuts them into pieces as small as grains of sand and then scatters the fragments in all directions. By and by the fragments come together again and the victims come to life once more but only to be cut up and scattered as before. This process goes on endlessly. In this way are punished all heretics who hold the view that all existence is divided into Things Permanent and Things Impermanent and the view that the Impermanent is the body and the Permanent, the Four Great Elements. (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo).

(Even an illiterate person can see that the one who holds such a view suffers from illusion, namely, the view that the Four Great Elements of earth, water, fire and wind constitute the Permanent, and that the body which dies and is dissolved into the Four Great Elements is impermanent and empty. How, then, can such a one understand the real nature of things, namely, that there are fundamentally wonderful laws by which there is an interaction of the negative and positive principles in the Four Great Elements! In the world there are many people, priests and laymen, learned and unlearned, or even those who have superior knowledge but not enough really to enjoy the nature of things—who are not different from those who hold such errors.)

(What pitiable objects these are! They may be versed in the Three Teachings but their learning is only mouth and ear learning, a fancy for flowery words. They pride themselves on their great learning but if one looks into their inner heart and examines what they really say and enjoy then things seem quite different. Nevertheless, it is difficult to discriminate between the true and the

false. Such people not only destroy the seeds of Buddhahood and are far from the circle of the saints; they cannot fail to reap in things great and little the fruits of the seeds they have sown. I beseech you, therefore, to reform your self-centered views and go forward in your knowledge of the truth. Constantly embracing sorrow but finally finding constant joy, overcoming and being indifferent to poverty and wealth, to positions of honor and low estate, to sorrow and happiness, because knowing the principle of fundamental truth and not resting in false views but fearing the various hells, seek ye to live on the lotus leaf of Futai.)²⁶

²⁶ The last two paragraphs are not in the older Chinese Editions.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Hell of the Great Scorching Heat

The Hell of the Great Scorching Heat is located below the Hell of Scorching Heat. It is of the same size as the latter and the kinds of sufferings here are also the same (Dairon, Yugaron), but ten times greater than the combined sufferings of the preceding six hells with their separate places of torture. It is impossible to describe the sufferings in this place. Life here lasts one-half a Middling Kalpa. Murderers, thieves, adulterers, those who use vile language, heretics and those who degrade nuns who keep the precepts of purity fall into this hell.

Such evil doers, first of all, are terrified at the sight which meets them as they look down into this hell and see its state. There are the hell wardens with horrible features, hands and feet of hot flames and their bodies tense with frightfulness. Their voices are like thunder and the sinners hearing these are all the more terror stricken. In their hands, these hell wardens brandish sharp swords. They inflate their bellies like black clouds. Their eyes flash like burning flames. Their curved tusks are sharp like lances. Their arms and hands are long and knotty, and when they grow angry their bodies become rough and terrifying so that the sinners are almost destroyed by the frightfulness of it all. Seizing the sinners they tie ropes around their necks and then drag them along for a distance of six thousand, eight hundred thousand yodjanas across lands and through bottoms of seas; and then coming out from the sea, they drag them on for another 360,000,000 yodjanas and finally descend gradually for another 100,000,000 yodjanas.

Among all winds the wind of Karma is the strongest, and it is in this way that the wind of Karma of men's evil deeds drags them to their doom. After they reach this place Emma-O tortures them in various ways. Then binding them with the rope of evil Karma he drags them toward this hell. From afar the victims catch sight of the raging flames of this Hell of the Great Scorching Heat as they belch forth. When they hear the cries of the victims who are already in this hell they are filled with sorrow and fear, and as they come gradually nearer they behold their immeasurable torments. And when they learn that this torture continues for immeasurable hundred thousand times ten thousand hundred millions of years the terror that enters their hearts becomes ten times greater than it was when they had merely heard the wailings of the victims. Then the hell wardens, taking each sinner separately, torments him saying: "Are you frightened as you hear the cries and see with your eyes? How much more then will you be terror-stricken when your body is burning like dry grass and tinder! However, the burning by fire here is not that of a literal fire but rather the hot passion of your evil Karma. The burning of fire may be extinguished, but the burning of evil Karma cannot be put out." Tormenting them thus, they drag the victims toward

this hell from which rise up great volumes of flames 500 yodjanas in height and 200 yodjanas in breadth. The power of evil Karma which the sinners have created for themselves suddenly hurls them into this raging flame. It is like flinging one over a fearfully high precipice. (Thus far is the heart of the main outline of the Shohonenkyo).

Outside the gates on the four sides of this Hell of the Great Scorching Heat are sixteen separate places. Among these is a place which is filled so completely with flames that there is not a spot as large as the eye of a needle where there is no flame. The sinners in this fire, raising their voices, resentfully cry out continually, saying: "The flames burn without ceasing for immeasurable ten millions of years." Those who have violated pure laywomen fall into this hell.

There is another place called Fully-Receiving-All-Suffering. Here the hell wardens, taking out their swords of flames, skin the victims from head to foot and then, without cutting the flesh, they place the raw skinned bodies on the hot iron ground and roast them. Then they pour over them molten iron. In this way they are tortured through immeasurable ten million thousand years. Those who have deceived nuns by giving them strong drink and destroyed their souls so that they have become immoral fall into this hell; also those who have corrupted women with riches.

The remaining separate places of this hell are described in the scriptures. (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo).

CHAPTER NINE

Hell of No-Interval - Abijigoku

Abijigoku is the Hell of No-Interval. It is situated below the Hell of the Great Scorching Heat and is at the bottom limit of the Realm of Passions. As the sinners approach this hell from the sky above, they wail with a great lamentation, quoting from the Scriptures these words: “Everything is nothing but flames. In the sky there is not a space without flames and the whole land in every direction is covered with them. The whole land is filled with evil doers and there is no room for me. I am alone and like an orphan without a friend. I am in a dark and evil place. I am enveloped in a great raging flame. I can see neither moon nor sun in the sky.” Thus they wail. Thereupon the hell wardens reply with wrathful severity, saying: “You fools, we shall burn some of you for a period of an Increasing Kalpa and others of you for a period of a Decreasing Kalpa. You have already created your evil Karma and do you now repent? You are not Asuras, Gandharas or Dragon Demons of the Heavenly Realm. You are caught in the meshes of your own deeds. You fools, how can others save you since this is not the result of the deeds of others? If you compare the suffering as you see it from the sky with the suffering which you will have to undergo in this hell, it is like comparing a drop of water with the waters of the great ocean. Your present suffering is like the drop of water, your later suffering like the waters of the great ocean.” Tormenting the victims with these words, they drag them toward this hell for 25,000 yodjanas, and as the sinners hear the wailings of the victims in hell, their terror, as the hell wardens had said, is increased tenfold until their souls are consumed with fear as in a nightmare. For two thousand years they are flung headlong down toward this infernal abyss. (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo).

This Abijigoku is 80,000 yodjanas in length and breadth. Within the sevenfold walls made of iron, there are seven folds of iron nets. Below the walls are eighteen compartments and around the walls are forests of swords. At each of the four corners there is a copper dog whose height is 40 yodjanas. The eyes of these dogs are lightning, their tusks are swords, their teeth are mountains of swords and their tongues are like thorns of iron. From the pores of their skin issue flames, the smoke of which is a stench so horrible that it cannot be compared with anything in this world. The heads of the eighteen hell wardens are like that of Rasetsu²⁷ and their mouths resemble Yashas. From their sixty-four eyes they emit iron balls. Their curved tusks project upward for four yodjanas, and from the tips of these fire streams forth filling the walls of Abijigoku. On top of their heads they have eight oxen heads with eighteen horns attached to each head. From the tips of these horns issue forth flames.

²⁷ Rasetsu, Yasha, the names of demons.

And again within the sevenfold walls are seven iron banners. From the ends of the banner staffs fire gushes forth like a fountain and fills the enclosure. Near the gates on the four sides are eight caldrons from which bubbles up molten copper which fills the enclosure. In each of the separate compartments there are 84,000 iron bees and large serpents which vomit poison and fire. Their bodies fill the enclosures and the barking voices of the serpents are like a hundred thousand thunderclaps. Large iron balls rain down and fill the place. There are fifty billions of worms in this place and from their eighty-four thousand snouts fire flows down like falling rain. When these worms come down the fire in this hell flares up furiously and lights up everything for a distance of 84,000 yodjanas. In this hell are gathered those who suffer the most severe of the 8,000,000,000,000 pains. (This is the heart of the Kwanbutsu Sammaikyo).

In the fourth volume of the Yugaron it is said that in the Great Iron Land of Three Heats which lies to the eastward one hundred yodjanas there is a furiously raging fire whose leaping flames pierce these beings so capable of suffering. The flames bore through the skin, lacerate the flesh, crush the bones, enter the marrow and consume it. It is like pouring oil on dry tinder and setting fire to it when the wind blows. The whole body is shrivelled up by the furious flames. These mounting flames come not only from the east but also from the south, the west and the north. As these suffering beings are consumed by these flames leaping together from the four directions, the sparks from their burning bodies ascend together and the whole thing becomes one raging flame. Everything is filled with it in all directions and not a space is left untouched. There is also not the slightest interval when their suffering ceases. The sinners here are innumerable, and while they cannot see one another they can know that others are there with them from the cries of pain that fill the place. Sometimes the hell wardens winnow them with an iron winnow filled with iron coals of Three Heats. Then again they place the victims on the hot iron ground and make them climb up and down a large hot iron mountain. They pull out the tongues from their mouths, drive hundreds of nails into them as one drives nails in stretching a cow's hide, until there is no room for more, and, forcing them to lie on their backs on a surface of hot iron, they pry open their mouths with hot iron sticks and pour in streams of iron of Three Heats until their mouths and throats are burned and their entrails are consumed so that they flow out below. Then again they pour molten copper into their mouths and this enters into their internals and consumes the vital organs until they flow out below. (This is the heart of the Yugaron. By the Three Heats is meant, Burning, Extreme Burning, and Widely-Extreme Burning).

The suffering in this Abijigoku is a thousand times greater than the combined sufferings of the preceding seven great hells and their separate places. The suffering in this hell is so severe that the victims envy the victims in the Hell of Great Scorching Heat, for the suffering in the latter seems to them like the pleasures in Takejizaiten. If the beings under the four heavens and the beings in the six Devalokas of Kamadhatu should smell the stench of this hell they would perish

utterly. The reason is because all the victims of this hell are filled with putrefaction. If it be asked why the stench does not reach up to us the answer is that it is because there are two high mountains, the one called Mount of Appearing and the other Mount of Disappearing, which shut off the stench from us. If a person should hear all about the sufferings in this hell he could not endure it and it would kill him. How terrible, then, it must be! Not one-thousandth of the horrors of this Abijigoku has been told, for it cannot be described. No one could listen to the description, nor can it be compared with anything else. If anyone should describe it thoroughly or listen to a full description of it, he would vomit blood and die. (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo). According to the Kusharon²⁸, life in this bottomless hell lasts for the period of a Middling Kalpa.

Those who have committed the Five Crimes²⁹, denied the law of Karma, made light of the Mahayana doctrine, committed the Four Cardinal Sins³⁰, and received alms without making any returns, fall into this hell. (This is the heart of the Kwanbutsu Sammaikyo). Outside of the four gates of this bottomless hell are sixteen separate places belonging to it. Among these is one called Iron-Plane-Fox-Eating- Place. Over the bodies of the sinners in this place the flames of fire rage for a distance of ten yodjanas. Among all the hells the torments in this hell are the most severe. Iron tiles rain down upon the victims, crushing their bodies and pulverizing their bones. Foxes with flaming jaws continually come and devour them. In this way the victims are tormented without ceasing. Those who have set fire to pagodas and temple buildings, burned images of Buddha, burned the homes of priests and burned the bed-room furniture of priests, fall into this hell. There is another separate place called Black-Vomit-Place. Here the victims are so hungry and thirsty as a result of the heat which burns their bodies that they devour their own flesh. When, however, they have apparently consumed themselves they come to life again and begin once more to devour themselves. There is in this place a black-bellied serpent which coils itself around the bodies of the sinners and then gradually devours them from the feet up. Then again the victims are placed in a hot flame and roasted, or they are thrown into a large caldron and boiled. Their bones and flesh are melted like ice in the spring, and this mass, mingling with the fire, unites to make one huge, raging flame. In this way the victims must endure inconceivable tortures of one kind and another for end-less millions of years. Those who have stolen anything offered to a Buddha and eaten it, fall into this hell.

²⁸ Abhidharmakosha in Sanskrit. (editor's note)

²⁹ Five Crimes are: Parricide, Matricide, Killing a saint, Disturbing the peace of the monks and Opposing the Buddha.

³⁰ Four Cardinal Sins are: Killing, Stealing, Adultery, and Evil Language.

There is a further separate place called Rain-Mountain-Gathering- Place. This is an iron mountain one yodjana in height and it falls on the victims pulverizing them like fine dust. After this they come to life again but only to be crushed a second time. There are here also eleven flames which completely enfold the victims and burn them.

Sometimes the hell wardens take their swords and slash the bodies of the sinners all over and then pour molten lead into the wounds. Then again the sinners are afflicted with the four hundred and four ills, and in various ways they are tortured for immeasurable millions of years. Those who have stolen and eaten offerings made to a Pratyeka Buddha fall into this hell.

There is another place called Embado. In this place there is an evil bird called Emba. The size of this bird is that of an elephant. It has a bill like a sword and this sends forth a flame. Seizing the sinners it carries them with flapping wings high up into the sky and, after soaring about for a while, drops them so that they plunge down like huge boulders and with such violence that their bodies are broken into hundreds of thousands of bits. But the fragments assemble again and the victims come to life, only, however, to be seized a second time and carried up and dropped. Their feet are lacerated by sharp swords with which the road is studded as thickly as growing grass. Dogs with teeth of flames come and gnaw and then devour them. In such ways they are tortured without ceasing. Those who plotted against others and starved them to death fall into this hell. Further accounts may be found in the scriptures. (This is the heart of the Shohonenkyo).

In the fourth volume of the Yugaron, dealing in general with the separate places adjoining the eight great hells, we read: "All the Great Abysses have on each of the four sides a bank, a gate and an iron lattice fence which encloses them. The pieces of this fence are so close together that one cannot even stick a finger between them. As one comes out through these four gates one enters a garden on each of the four sides. In each of these gardens is a hidden fire which is knee-deep. As the victims emerge from the gates seeking a place of rest and meandering along, they sink into this hidden fire and their flesh, tendons and bones are all burned, but as they pull their legs out they become whole again. Immediately adjoining this place of the hidden fire is another place filled with dead bodies, dung and mud. As the victims seek to escape from the place of the hidden fire and find rest, before they have barely got out of that place they fall into this place of dead bodies, dung and mud and they are covered from head to feet with this vile mass. Moreover, this vile stuff is filled with worms called Hikuta which bore their way through the skin of the victims, enter the flesh and cut the tendons. They even enter the bones and consume the marrow.

Immediately adjoining this place of dead bodies, dung and mud is a road studded with spears and swords. As the victims emerge seeking a place of rest, they come to this road and suddenly they are cut all to pieces, but as they lift their feet they become as before.

Next to the road of spears is a forest of swords. The victims enter this forest seeking rest in its shade, but suddenly a strong wind arises which causes the leaves made of swords to fall upon the victims and pierce their bodies. And as they fall to the ground a troop of black dogs rushes at them and tears these hundreds of bodies to pieces and devours them. Adjoining this forest of swords is a grove of pear trees on which grow iron thorns like spears. The sinners seeking a place of rest enter this grove, and when they climb up the trees the thorns of spears bend downward and pierce them. When they climb down from the trees the thorns of spears turn upward and pierce their bodies. Thereupon large crows with iron beaks light upon their heads or their shoulders and peck out their eye balls.

Near this grove of thorns is a large, wide river filled with boiling water and hot ashes. The victims, as they flee from the grove of thorns, next fall into this river, and here they are carried up and down by the boiling water like beans boiled in a kettle over a hot fire. And, more terrible still, stationed along this river are a number of hell wardens who are armed with goads and forks, ropes and large nets, and with these they prevent the victims from escaping from this river. For the victims to try to escape from this river is as vain as a mantis fighting against an axe, or a monkey trying to grab the moon. Sometimes the hell wardens tie ropes around the victims' necks or catch them in their nets and then make them lie face upward on a surface of hot iron, all the while beating them with hot iron rods and reproaching them by saying: "Why did you do the deeds which cause you to suffer thus? Speak the truth and tell the facts!" Then the sinners with terror in their faces reply: "It is because we were ignorant from the beginning and driven on by hunger." Thereupon the hell wardens take iron sticks and with them pry open their mouths and then thrust in iron bolts of intense heat. Other victims reply, saying: "It is because we were merely thirsty for a drink of hot water." In answer to this the hell wardens take molten copper and pour it into the sinners' mouths. In this way the victims are tortured with immeasurable tortures, for one must suffer for the evil deeds committed in this life, and as long as the evil Karma is not exhausted it is impossible to get out of hell.

The road studded with spears, the forest of swords, the thicket of iron thorns and so forth, make together one of the four groups of hells which lie outside the four gates of the central hells and thus there are four such gardens. (The above is the heart of the Yugaron and the Kusharon). (Outside the four gates of a hell according to one Sutra there are four gardens, thus making sixteen in all. The sixteen separate places attached to each of the eight great hells mentioned in

the Shohonenkyo, are all different from one another in their nature.)³¹ There are also eight cold hells such as Afuda which we find described in detail in the sutras and Abhidharma Pitaka, but we have no time to mention these here.

³¹ The section in paranthesis is in the form of a note in the Chinese editions, though in the popular editions it appears as part of the main text.

II

Realm of Hungry Spirits

The Realm of Hungry Spirits consists of two places. One of these is situated 500 yodjanas below the earth. This is the world of King Emma. The second place is situated between the Human Realm and the Realm of Heavenly Beings. The beings in the Realm of Hungry Spirits have many shapes and forms, but I shall mention only a few of them. There are for example some whose bodies are only one foot in height, others with bodies about the same size as human beings, while there are others whose form is one thousand yodjanas in height. Some are like snow-peaked mountains. [Daishukyo]³². Some are demons called Kettle-Body which are twice the size of a man. They have neither faces nor eyes, and their hands and feet are without fingers and toes like the legs of a tripod. The place being filled with flames, their bodies are roasted. Those who in this life coveted wealth and burned others to death receive this reward.

Then there are hungry spirits called Eating-and-Vomiting whose bodies are very broad and a half yodjana in height. Their stomach and chest feel heavy, and so they continually try to vomit, but as they cannot succeed in this they suffer in various ways. Those husbands who in this life ate the good food themselves and gave nothing to their wives and children, and such wives as ate all the good food themselves and gave nothing to their husbands, receive this reward.

Then, again, there are hungry spirits called Eating-Odour who have to live on the smell of the food which sick people offer along the rivers or in forests. Those who in this life allowed wife and children only to smell the good food which they themselves ate, receive this reward. There are hungry spirits called Eating-Law who run about on steep places where it is difficult to walk, seeking food but finding none. If they enter a temple and hear an exposition of the Law (Dharma) they obtain strength and manage to live. Those who in this life sought to obtain fame by a false interpretation of the Law receive this reward.

Then there are hungry spirits called Eating-Water whose bodies are parched with thirst. They rush about in search for water but cannot find even a drop. Their long hair covers their faces so that they cannot see. They run along the river banks and if there are people crossing they lap up the water which may be left in their foot prints, and thus moistening their parched throats they

³² Sutra of the Great Assembly. (editor's note). This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

manage to exist. Or when people make an offering of water to the spirits of their departed parents they give a little to these spirits and so they prolong their lives. If the spirits try to take some of this water themselves then the various demons whose function it is to guard the water beat them with sticks. Those who in this life mixed water with the sake they sold or those who put in earth worms and leeches and so did not fulfill the good Law receive this reward.

There are still other hungry spirits called Fear-Hope who live on the offerings which people make to their departed parents. Beside this they have nothing on which to live. Those who in this life rob the poor of even the little they have acquired through great efforts receive this reward. Then, again, there are hungry spirits who are born on the seashore where there is neither cool shade nor river water and where it is so hot that even their winter days are more than a thousand times hotter than summer days on earth. They subsist on obtaining only the morning dew. Though they live on the sea shore the sea looks to their eyes like a dry place. Those who in this life have taken advantage of merchants who have been overtaken with illness on their journey and have beaten down their prices and so robbed them receive this reward.

There are other hungry spirits who for lack of food go to cemeteries and eat the cremated bodies, but this does not stay their hunger. Those who in this life were prison wardens and who ate the food intended for the prisoners receive this reward. There are further hungry spirits who are born among the trees and who suffer great tortures by being squeezed between the trunks of large trees like Tokusa worms. Those who in this life cut down the cool forests, the trees in groves or the trees in temple groves receive this reward. [Shohonenkyo]³³.

There are hungry spirits the hair of whose heads hangs down and envelops their bodies. The hairs are like swords and so lacerate their bodies, or they change into flames and so burn their bodies by enfolding them from all sides.

There are other hungry spirits who give birth to five children every night and day. Driven on by their hunger they consume these children but even then their hunger is not stayed. [Roku Haramitsukyo]³⁴.

³³ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

³⁴ Sutra on the Six Perfections. (editor's note). This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

Then there are hungry spirits who have nothing at all to eat, and so they break open their own skulls and eat their brains. Again, there are hungry spirits who emit flames from their mouths and live upon the moths which happen to fly into these flames. There are hungry spirits who feed on pus, phlegm and the remains of the washings of human dung. [Dairon]³⁵.

And there are hungry spirits who can obtain nothing to eat because of various obstacles. For example, some have become so emaciated by their continual hunger and thirst that they are so weak that even a gentle spring breeze would blow them over. At times they succeed in finding a stream of pure water but when they rush to it and try to scoop up the water in their hands demons of great strength come along and beat them with iron clubs, or the water suddenly turns into flames and burns them or it ceases to flow and is dried up. There are other hungry spirits who cannot eat anything because of some defect in their bodies. For example, some of them have stomachs as big as a large mountain but mouths as small as the eye of a needle, and so even when they find food and drink they cannot make use of them. There are other hungry spirits who though they are free from any obstacles either within or without nevertheless cannot satisfy their hunger or slake their thirst, for when they eat even the small-lest bite it at once changes into a fierce flame and so burns their vitals until they flow out. [Yugaron]³⁶.

Thus the victims in the Realm of Hungry Spirits suffer in various ways, each one according to the punishment that is meted out to him. One day in this realm is as long as one month of human life and existence here lasts for 500 years. The Shohonenkyo says that those who are cruel, covetous, jealous and envious fall into this Realm of Hungry Spirits. [By the cruel and the covetous are meant those who think only of their own things, who do not love others or give alms, and those who are never satisfied no matter how much they rob others. According to the teachings of the Buddha our desires should be limited as much as possible. To limit one's desire means to know how to be content with even a little. What shall we say then? If the heart is content, then eating simple food drinking plain water and using the elbow as a pillow is true happiness. Jealousy means to hate and envy people. Fear, then, rewards in the Realm of Hungry Spirits. Open wide your heart and be tranquil in mind. Do not commit evil against others. If you err, rectify your error. Think no jealous thoughts but constantly live at peace.]³⁷

³⁵ Nagarjuna's Prajnaparamita-sastra. (editor's note). This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

³⁶ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

³⁷ The last paragraph is not in the older Chinese editions but only in the modern popular editions.

III

Realm of Beasts

The Realm of Beasts is divided into two parts. The chief place is in the great sea, and branches are interspersed in the Realms of Humans and Heavenly Beings. If one should go into details, it would be found that there are 3,400,000,000 kinds of beings in this realm. We may classify all these under three general heads, namely, birds, beasts, insects and worms.

The various creatures in this Realm of Beasts have a spirit for injuring. The small ones are swallowed up by the large ones and the weak are devoured by the strong. Without intermission day or night these creatures mutually inflict suffering upon one another. There is ever present a heart of fear. What shall we say of all this? The various creatures that live in water are killed by fishermen. Those that walk on land have their lives taken by hunters. Furthermore, such beasts like horses, cattle, elephants and so forth are beaten over the head with clubs, with hooks made of iron, or they are pulled along by their pierced snouts, or with a bridle fixed in their mouths they are forced constantly to carry heavy burdens while they are being lashed with whips. As they go along they seek to drink water and eat grass but are not allowed to do this. Then there are various sorts of badgers, rats and wolves which are born in the darkness and die in darkness. Fleas, lice and their brood live on man's body and are killed by man. Then there are the various kinds of dragons which receive day and night and without intermission the tortures of the Three Heats. There are also various creeping things with large and long bodies. These are deaf and slow of mind. They are without legs and so they coil, roll and slide on their bellies and for this reason are constantly being bitten by various kinds of small insects. Then there are creatures very small like the moths that float in the sunlight which streams in at the window. There are others as small as rabbit's hair split into a hundred or a thousand parts. But on the other hand, there are creatures whose bodies are 10,000 yodjanas in length. Thus there are various sorts of beasts. They one and all are subject to innumerable tortures some for one time, others for seven times and still others suffer from one Kalpa to a hundred, thousand, ten thousand or hundred millions of Kalpas.

This is the reward meted out to the ignorant and those who are without a sense of shame and who in vain receive the alms bestowed by men of faith but who do not repay such kindness. [Selection from various Scriptures]³⁸.

³⁸ This is not in the popular edition.

IV

Realm of Angry Demons-Ashura

The Realm of Angry Demons is divided into two parts. The creatures of this realm which are fundamentally superior live at the bottom of the great sea north of Mount Sumeru. The inferior creatures of this realm dwell among the rocks of the high mountains which lie between the four great continents. “When it thunders these creatures are in great confusion for they think it is the attacking drum of Heaven and their hearts are in great terror and pain. They are continually fighting with the creatures of all the heavens. They are attacked and they suffer injury in body, being broken and killed. Three times every day and night the creatures of this realm fight and groan and cry. [Their cries sound like a hundred or a thousand thunder claps. They slash one another and their lacerated bodies are hurled down so that their crushed bones and streaming blood flow down like one huge red wave. Spears and daggers appear of themselves and injure the bodies of these creatures.]³⁹ So various are the sufferings in this realm that they cannot be enumerated.

³⁹ This section is not in the Chinese editions.

V

Realm of Human Beings

In explaining the Realm of Human Beings we divide it roughly into three states. And let us observe carefully that there are three states namely, the State of Impurity, the State of Suffering and the State of Impermanency.

In the first state, the State of Impurity, there are various kinds of impurity. In every human body there are 360 bones. The joints of these bones mutually support each other. [By this is meant that they hold each other in place like the links of a chain.]⁴⁰ First the bones of the toes support the bones of the feet. The bones of the feet support the bones of the ankles. The bones of the ankles support the bones of the lower legs. The bones of the lower legs support the bones of the knee. The bones of the knees support the bones of the thighs and hips. The bones of the thighs and hips support the bones of the back. The bones of the back support the bones of the shoulders. The bones of the shoulders support the bones of the neck. The bones of the neck support the bones of the jaws. The bones of the jaws support the bones of the teeth. Above these is the skull. Again the bones of the neck support the bones of the shoulders. The bones of the shoulders support the bones of the arms. The bones of the arms support the bones of the forearms. The bones of the forearms support the bones of the hands. The bones of the hands support the bones of the fingers. Thus the bones, one by one gradually form as it were a chain, and so the 360 bones and the various connecting joints together constitute the frame of the human body, just like a rotten dilapidated house. Four slender veins pass everywhere through the muscles. Again, six veins hang together, five hundred muscles are bound together and seven hundred slender veins are netted together all like sticky clay. The sixteen coarse veins run like a chain through the body, being all connected with each other. There are two strands of muscles Three and a half arm spans in length which are gathered together in knots. The sixteen intestines and the stomach envelop the vital organs of life-heat. The twenty-five “breathing tubes” are like so many air holes and the hundred and seven little chambers are like a broken and splintered instrument. The eighty thousand air holes are covered as with tangled grass. The five sense organs and the seven chambers are filled with impure things. The body is covered with a sevenfold skin and it is nourished by the six tastes, and yet the whole life is one of dissatisfaction and the greedy heart finds no rest. Such a body is all rotten and impure so that the self-nature is wholly vile. Who, then, can love or be proud of such a thing? [Hoshakukyo]⁴¹.

⁴⁰ This line is not in the Chinese Edition.

⁴¹ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

Again, it is said that there are five organs in the belly which are spread out like leaves bound together and facing downward. Their shape is like a lotus. There are tubes connecting the inside with the outside. Each one of these is ninety fold. The lungs are uppermost and the color is white. The liver is blue-green. The heart is in the middle and its color is red. The spleen is yellow. The kidneys are at the bottom and their color is dark. There are also six abdominal viscera. The large intestines are the viscera for transmission, as are also the tubes of the lungs. The length is three and a half arm spans and the color is white. The gall bladder is the viscera for purifying, as are also the channels of the liver. Their color is blue-green. The small intestines are the viscera for transmitting energy, and so are also the arteries of the heart. The length of the smaller intestines is sixteen arm spans and their color is red. The stomach is the viscera for the “five cereals.” Three sho⁴² of feces are inside and the color of the feces is yellow. The bladder is the viscera for the urine and so are also the kidneys. The bladder holds one to⁴³ of urine. Its color is dark. The Three Heats are the viscera for the feces. Being thus arranged the large and small intestines, mingling their red and white colors and coiling about each other eighteen times, present the appearance of the coils of poisonous serpents. And furthermore, from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet and from the marrow of the bones to the skin outside, the whole body is permeated with the eighty thousand chamber worms of various shapes each one having four heads four mouths and ninety-nine tails. In each chamber of the body there are ninety thousand small worms which are smaller than the tips of a rabbit hair. [Zenkyo Shidai Zenmon]⁴⁴.

In the Hoshakukyo we read: “Seven days after a man is born eighty thousand worms are born in his body and begin to gnaw their way in all directions. There are worms of two chambers called Paper-Hair which live at the roots of the hairs and which constantly gnaw away at them.

Then there are worms of two chambers called Encircling-Eye which live in the eyes and gnaw away at them. There are four other worms which live in the throat and gnaw away there. Then there are worms called Rice-Leaves which live in the ears and gnaw at them. Other worms called Storehouse-Mouth live in the nose and gnaw at it. Then there are two worms, which gnaw at the lips, one being called Far-Striking and the other Universal Striking. There is one called Needle-Mouth which gnaws at the tongue. Five hundred worms gnaw away on the left side of the body

⁴² One Sho equals 1,588 qts.

⁴³ One To equals 10 sho or 3,97gallons. Evidently a To in Genshin’s day was smaller than the modern To.

⁴⁴ These scriptures are not mentioned in the popular edition.

and five hundred on the right side. Four worms gnaw at the vital organs and two at the heat organs. Again, there are four worms living in the urine channel which gnaw away there and four living in the rectum and which gnaw at the feces there. Worms called Black Heads live in the feet and consume them. Thus the whole body is infested with these eighty thousand worms which day and night gnaw away at it and consume it. They make the body feverish, cause the heart to feel grief and give rise to the various diseases which even good physicians cannot eradicate or cure. [Selections from Gojugoshichi]⁴⁵.

It is said in the scriptures that when a man is about to die all these worms in his body become terrified and begin to gnaw at and devour each other. It is for this reason that the patient suffers the various agonies which cause great surprise and sorrow to the relatives as they stand around the dying man. The worms keep up this fight with one another till finally only two of them are left, and these two keep up the combat for seven days. After seven days one of them is killed and the other survives. Thus it is that even though one eats at a table of delicious foods of various kinds, after one night all becomes impure and turns into vile dung and urine. The same is true of the body itself; it is impure from childhood to old age. We may wash with all the waters of the great ocean and yet we cannot make it clean. Though we cover it outwardly with beautiful clothes, inside is all impurity. It is like a painted jar full of dung. [Dairon Shikwan]⁴⁶.

In a poem of the Zenkyo we read: "Though they know that the body is rotten and impure, the ignorant still love it. They see only the outward color of the face but do not observe the impurity inside." More-over, after death, when the body is cast away on the burial place, after a period of from one to seven days it swells up and its color is changed to blue as it rots. The skin comes off and the pus and blood flow out. Eagles, hawks, fish-hawks, crows, faxes, wolves and various kinds of birds and beasts tear it up and devour it. After the birds and beasts devour it the body becomes an impure mass filled with innumerable worms and is mixed up in a rotten heap. Men abhor this even more than they do a dead dog, and as they pass by they hold their noses. When the bones are whitened the joints become disconnected, and the arms, legs, and skull are scattered hither and yon by the wind. They are exposed to the sun and bespattered by the rain and covered with frost till the color of the bones is changed and they are gradually pulverized, mixed with the dust and so revert to dirt. [Dai Hannya Shikwan]⁴⁷. Hakurakuten in his poem says: "Where is now the rosy face of Seishi? She has become whitened bones and has rotted away on

⁴⁵ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

⁴⁶ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

⁴⁷ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

the heath.”]⁴⁸ May we realize that this body of ours is nothing but impurity from beginning to end. All men and women who love each other are nothing more. What man of wisdom, then, will love? Therefore we read also in the Shikwan “If we do not yet understand this state our love is very strong; but when we understand we give up all the passions of the heart and no longer allow it to cling. For example, if one does not see the dung one can eat food, but as soon as one smells the stench one feels nauseated.” Again we read: “If this state is understood it seems as if the high eyebrows, the blue eyes, the white teeth and red lips were covered with the powder of dung. It is as if red powder were put temporarily upon a rotting corpse. How, then, can we look upon the body with our eyes, and, still worse, come near to it and embrace it with lustful pleasure? To be in this state is to be in the Great-Yellow-Hot water of lustful disease.”

The second state is the State of Suffering. This body of ours, from the time of its birth, is continually subject to suffering. It is as we read in the Hoshakukyo, “A baby when it is born, be it a boy or a girl, as it is held in the arm or wrapped in its clothes, suffers greatly from the heat in the summer and from the cold in winter. It suffers just as intensely as a skinned ox would if he touched a wall. After the child grows older it still suffers much.” In the same scripture it is explained how this body of ours is subject to two kinds of suffering. Various diseases afflict the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, throat, teeth, chest, abdomen, hands and feet. Thus the body is attacked by the four hundred and four diseases. This is called internal suffering.

Again when a man is put into prison he is subjected to various sorts of tortures. For example, the ears and nose may be cut off, or the hands and feet, and so the various devils and evil spirits take advantage of the victim and inflict pain. Mosquitoes, horseflies, bees, scorpions, crickets, ants and various poisonous insects sting and bite the body. Cold and heat are hard to endure, and hunger and thirst cause much pain. Rain and snow beat upon the body, and frost and snow pierce the skin. By various sufferings the body is thus continually being attacked. In general it may be said that this body of the Five Skandhas, in all its postures of dignity, whether standing or sitting, awake or asleep, is altogether an existence of suffering. It goes on forever and never finds rest. This we call external suffering. In addition to this, various states of suffering may be seen which need not be explained here.

In the third place there is the State of Impermanence. In the Nehankyo⁴⁹ we read as follows: “The life of man does not stop even for a moment. It flows on more swiftly than a mountain

⁴⁸ This poem is not in the Chinese editions.

⁴⁹ Nirvana Sutra (editor's note).

stream. Though we may remain for today, tomorrow is uncertain.” In the Shutsuyokyo we read: “If today is already past, life gradually declining is sadder than that of a fish living in the water left in the footprint of a horse . • What, then, is the pleasure of life?” The Mayakyo says on this point: “Human life is like an ox being pulled by a butcher to the slaughtering pen; every step brings him that much nearer to his doom. So it is with a man’s life.”

We may take, for example, the life of a man who, let us say, has accumulated good Karma throughout a long life, a man cared for by many children and grandchildren who one day enjoy the flower festival and on another day gather to view the moon. They dearly love him with deep filial piety so that others envy him and say: “What a happy man he must be!” But even though he may be happy in this way, still in accordance with the law of the impermanence of things this happiness cannot last. If one or two of his children die he is saddened because they precede him in death and his long life becomes a burden to him. Henceforth he sheds the tears of old age. His body gradually declines in strength and at last becomes a vehicle of impermanency, and he is made a lonely man. He continues to feel sad. Wealth may fill his coffers and he may have a magnificent house with a roof facing east and west and with a far view toward the north and south. The pleasant song of a beautiful woman and the sunshine of spring may charm him. He may be entertained by the dancing of beautiful women whose long sleeves are spread out by the breezes, or he may be fascinated with the autumn scenery; yet all these things pass away with time, the man changes and all becomes but as a dream of yesterday.

In a poem of the Daikyo we read: “All beings born into this world must die, and though life may be almost endless, still at last it must come to an end. Those who flourish now must decline; those who meet must part again. Youth does not last long; rosy cheeks fade in sickness and life is swallowed up by death. No phenomenon is permanent.” Again we read in the Zaigyoohokyo: “The water always comes short of the shore; the fire, however lively it may burn, does not continue thus very long; the sun rises but soon sets again, and the moon waxes only to wane again. And though a man may occupy a high rank and be honored, still Impermanency quickly becomes his rival and overtakes him. Since, then, all things are the same, let man worship with a faithful heart the infinitely Venerable”. (This is the heart of the above mentioned Scripture).

Those, then, who should fear Impermanency are not only the masses but all, and let even the hermit fear he who rides on the wind, sits on the clouds and flies about freely enjoying himself. [In his hermit environment he is surrounded with flowers during the four seasons. On all sides are mountains full of fragrance and thus he spends his life. But let him fear, for this earth must all pass away so that heaven and earth cannot be distinguished from each other and both become one sea of mud. Even the hermit who may witness seven times the birth of a new world cannot

ultimately but submit to the Law of Impermanency.]⁵⁰ Even the one who may soar up into the sky, submerge himself in the sea or hide himself in the rocks, must face death. [If while living in this hermit sphere we do not desire the way of the Buddha we must return again through the dark passage into Six Realms.]⁵¹ Now if this is so then these things are not really to be desired. Let us, then, venerate what is truly venerable, and following the teachings of the Buddha and being diligent in doing work according to the teachings, let us seek the reward of eternal pleasure. It is said in the Shikwan that the murderous ghost of Impermanency does not respect even venerable and wise men though they may be strong, for the body of all is full of risks and unstable like the dew on the morning glory or the foam on the water which cannot be relied upon. Why, then, should we foolishly and complacently think that we can live quietly a hundred years running hither and yon to gather wealth which, after all, does not satisfy the heart? When we die suddenly this accumulated wealth must be left behind, for not one mite follows the body which must go through this dark passage. And when we go on this journey into the dark intermediate states no one remembers our good and evil deeds. Not long after a man dies his land and wealth are divided among his unfilial heirs unevenly and they quarrel among themselves, saying: "Others have much while I have little and this is unfair." Sad to say, their inheritance becomes merely a source of quarrels and envy. The coming of Impermanency is swifter than a swift river, a raging storm or a flash of lightning. There is no place to which one can escape whether in the sea, the mountains, the sky or the city. When we know this we have great fear of heart. We are unable to sleep in peace or enjoy our food, but we seek our deliverance as if we were saving our head from fire. It is like the parable of the wild fox who pretended to be dead when caught by the hunters. He heard one say: "I want his ears." Another said: "Give me his tail!" and a third demanded his teeth. He thought he would escape with his life even though he lost these, but when he heard one say; "Cut off his head for me!" he became greatly terrified. Thus it is with man. Though he meets with the sufferings of birth, old age and sickness he still feels safe, but death he cannot face so lightly. Why, then, are we not more afraid? If we had a heart that fears we would act like those who test the hot bath or like those who tread on fire. We would not lustfully stain ourselves in the Five Senses and the Six Passions. (This is the heart of the teaching.) Since this, then, is the nature of human existence we ought truly to dislike it and flee from it.

⁵⁰ The section in brackets is not not in the Chinese editions.

⁵¹ The section in brackets is not not in the Chinese editions.

VI

Realm of Heavenly Beings

In the Realm of Heavenly Beings there are three divisions, namely, the World of Desires, the World of Form and the World of Formlessness. This is a broad subject and difficult to explain in detail. We shall explain Toriten and illustrate other points.

First, as to the condition of these heavenly beings it may be said that all things are according to their hearts' desire. Nevertheless, even though the pleasures of these beings are boundless, when life comes to an end they cannot escape the pain of the Five Decays. The first is the fading of the crown of flowers. Second, the heavenly weather clothing becomes soiled. Third, sweat flows from the body. Fourth, the eyes often grow dizzy. And fifth, the place of living no longer gives enjoyment. These are called the Five Decays. When we meet with these sufferings we are disliked and cast off by the family of heavenly maidens. It is pitiful to roll around among the bushes and trees weeping and grieving. At such a time the victim cries out, saying: "I was loved constantly by all the heavenly maidens and why is it that now they love me no longer? They have flung me away like grass and do not care for me in the least. Now there is nothing on which I can rely. Who is there to save me? Leaving the palace castle of Zenken, my life here must come to an end. There is no hope of seeing Teishaku on his treasure throne. It is difficult to behold the glory of Shushoden and doubtful whether I can ever again ride on the treasure elephant of Shakuten. I shall never again gaze on the flowers of Shushaen. Never again shall I sit at the sake feast of Zorinen, nor play and linger in Kwankien. Sitting on the smooth stone of the white jewel under the Goba tree is a pleasure no longer possible. I can think no longer about bathing in the waters of Shushochi. I shall never again eat the Four Sweets and I alone am denied hearing the Five Glorious Kinds of Music. How sad that I alone must meet this fate! Oh, have mercy on me and save my life! But for a moment longer, I pray grant me this pleasure and let me not fall down on Mount Mezu or into Bassho sea! But though I utter these prayers for help there is no one to save."⁵² (The heart of the Roku Haramitsukyo).

Let everyone know that the sufferings at such a time are more severe than the sufferings in hell. In the Shohonenkyo we also read that when one is about to depart from the heavenly realm great suffering is borne. If one compare this suffering with the many tortures of hell it seems sixteen times greater than these. Again, if an angel of great virtue be born the family of heavenly

⁵² The places mentioned in this paragraph are regions in Toriten which is the second of the Six Devalokas. Teishaku is the King of Toriten. Shakuten is the same as Teishaku.

maidens forsake their former love and follow this angel of virtue. If there is one who should not follow this angel of dignity they hunt him out in the palace and finally eject him. [Yugaron]⁵³.

In the other five Heavens of Desire there are also places of suffering, and though there is nothing like that in the two heavens of the upper world still when one must leave these heavens there is suffering. Even in Hisoten⁵⁴ one cannot escape the reward of evil Karma. If this is so then are even the pleasures of the Heavenly Realm worthless. Is not, then, everyone of the Six Ways a way of folly? The only desirable thing must be, then, the Imperishable High Land of the Western Region.

⁵³ This scripture is not mentioned in the popular edition.

⁵⁴ Hisoten is the highest heaven of the Realm of Heavenly Beings. It is an abbreviation for Hisohihisoshoten. „No-Thought-no-Non-Thought-Place-Heaven”.

VII

General Summary of the Disgusting Conditions in the Six Ways

In taking a general view of these disgusting conditions it may all be regarded as a box of suffering. Let us therefore be careful not to be ruined by pleasure, for mountains from all four sides close in on us and there is no escape. But the spirit of covetousness and even of love enmesh the heart and it is captivated by the Five Lusts and it continually dotes on inconstant things regarding that as pleasure which is not real pleasure. It is like one who obtains a momentary relief by bathing a boil or removing a wild eyelash. Since, then, calamities⁵⁵ must come soon how can a wise man love his body or regard it as a treasure? We read therefore in the Shohonenkyo “The wise man always is anxious and is like a man in prison. The foolish man is always enjoying himself and saying that life is like in Koonten. [Truly this world is a prison-house and the Pure Land is our true country. We should therefore make haste to dislike and escape from this prison-house and return to our true country of the Pure Land.”]⁵⁶

In a poem of the Hoshakukyo we read: “Though we may enjoy our life of doing various evil deeds, accumulating property, rearing and educating a family, still when life comes to an end and this body is afflicted with pain, then wife and children cannot help us. How much less, then, when we fall into the horrors of ‘the Three Ways’ can we see wife, children and friends! Our vehicles and wealth soon become other men’s property. When once we have died father and mother, brothers and sisters, wife and children, friends, servants and property - not one of these comes near to befriend us. Only our evil Karma constantly pursues us and only Emma-O says to the victim: “I do not ascribe one extra sin to you. You have come here in consequence of the sins you yourself have committed. Deeds and their rewards follow each other and there is nothing to take the place of your sins. Your father and mother, wife and children cannot save you. Only you yourself can work out the cause of your deliverance. Therefore cast away the evil works which fetter your hands and neck. Leave behind the evil way and seek peace.”

In a poem of the Daishukyo we read: “Wife and children, treasures and even kingly rank do not accompany us when we leave this life. Only the precepts, the alms and uprightness go with us in this world and into the world to come.” Thus the doing of evil causes in turn the receiving of suffering and life becomes vanity. Death itself is vain, for there is no end to the cycle of rebirth

⁵⁵ Literally calamities through Sword, Mountain, Fire and Water.

⁵⁶ Not in Chinese editions.

and death. In the poem of a certain scripture we read: “If one should take the bones of a single man during the period of one Kalpa and pile these up, and assuming that these did not rot or decay, they would make a pile as big as Mount Vaipula.” If this is true for one Kalpa what are we to say about a period of innumerable Kalpas? It is because we do not walk in the Way that we have to pass through these endless Kalpas in vain. If in this world we do not try to discipline ourselves neither will we be any better in a future world. It is difficult to be born as a human being in the endless cycle of birth and death. Even though we do obtain birth as a human being it is difficult to obtain the various faculties. And even though we may have the various faculties the chances are few that one will have an opportunity to get acquainted with Buddhism. And even though one gets acquainted with Buddhism it is difficult to obtain a heart of faith. Therefore it is said in the Daikyo: “The chances of being born as a human being as over against birth in one of the Three Lower Realms is like comparing the dirt under the finger nails with the earth that extends into the ten directions.” And in the Hokkekyo⁵⁷ we read: “During the endless and numberless Kalpas it is difficult to have an opportunity to hear this Law. And even though this Law is heard it is difficult to become a human being. But by chance we have now obtained the body of a human and become acquainted with Buddhism, both of which are not easy to obtain. Now, therefore, in this our present life is our one chance to depart from this sea of suffering and to obtain birth in the Pure Land. And yet, even though our hair is growing white we stain our heart with vulgar things, and though our life is drawing to an end our desires remain with us. At last when we leave this bright sunlight and go alone to the bottom of the “Yellow Spring,” falling into the midst of a raging flame which consumes even copper and which is hundreds of yodjanas in extent, even though we cry then to heaven and beat the earth, all will be in vain. Let all disciples, therefore, speedily arouse in themselves a heart which desires to depart and quickly follow in the way of deliverance. When we come to the Mountain of Treasure, let us not go away from it empty handed.” Someone may ask saying: “In what way shall I arouse a heart that seeks deliverance?” The answer is that if we have a really broad view of things we must understand the various foregoing explanation about the law of Cause and Effect and the sufferings arising from impurity in the Six Ways.

It is also said in a poem of a sermon by the Bodhisattva Nagarjuna addressed to King Zandaka: “As for this body, impurity flows incessantly from its nine openings like the water in the rivers and oceans. A thin skin covers it and makes it appear as pure, and it is decorated with brocade and embroidery, but every wise man, knowing that all this is a deception, flings away all lust. It is like a person with a scab on his body who approaches the fire and at first feels comfortable but afterward finds that it only increases his pain. Thus it is with all forms of passion; at the beginning they give pleasure but at the end they cause great suffering.” To know that the real state of the body is Impurity is to understand that it is vanity and that the self is not real. He who

⁵⁷ The Lotus Sutra or Sadharma Pundarika Sutra in Sanskrit. (editor’s note)

disciplines himself with this thought obtains his reward. He who is superior in form and who has great knowledge but does not practice the precepts and does not have real wisdom is still a beast. But one may be ugly in outward appearance and know little and yet if he is disciplined in the precepts and has the true wisdom he is called Superior.

There are none who can escape from the Eight Laws⁵⁸. If one can avoid covetousness he is truly a superior person and without an equal. If there are Saramanas and Brahmanas let father and mother, wife and children and the family follow their will, receive their words and cease doing evil and impious things. For if one has committed a sin even though it was to help one's family, such a one must nevertheless receive great suffering in the future. He who has committed various evil deeds may for a time go unpunished. Sword and fire may do him no harm now, yet in the next life the sinful state will be made manifest and he will fall into hell to receive the various punishments. A believing heart, keeping the precepts, giving alms, hearing many things, wisdom, a feeling of shame and uprightness - these seven laws are called the Holy Treasure; these are truly treasures with which nothing is to be compared. They are the golden words of the Nyorai⁵⁹ and they surpass all the rarest treasures of the world. If one knows how to be content he is truly rich even though he may be poor. And one who has many desires is truly poor even though he may possess great wealth. Where there is great wealth there is also much suffering. It is like the dragon with many heads - the more heads the more poison. Let us realize that delicious things are really like poison and, therefore, let us purify ourselves with the waters of wisdom.

Though we must eat in order to sustain this body, still let us not covet rich foods to satisfy our palates and stomachs and so do injury to the heart. Let us not seek satisfaction in the little things of life and thereby lose the big things. [Also Mencius said: "Even coarse clothing covers the body and keeps out the cold." Why, then, should we covet showy garments and be proud? In general it may be said that one who has a true regard for the virtue of the heart is indifferent to external appearance. He does not envy people who wear brocades and is not ashamed of his own simple clothes. Therefore it is said in the analects of Confucius. "He who is seeking the Way but is still ashamed of wearing poor clothes and eating simple food is not worthy to talk with." The lord of the famous Kan-yo castle which was over three hundred ri in extent and so large that it shut out even the sun, found no place of rest except the small spot on which he sat. Even the crude hut made of branches, if we do not take note of its appearance, is just as truly a training hall as any place in the universe and therefore the heart can feel enlarged and the body at leisure.

⁵⁸ The Eight Laws, also called Eight Winds because they stir up the human heart, are: Gain and Loss, Slander and Praise, Honor and Dishonor, Pain and Pleasure.

⁵⁹ Tathagata (editor's note).

There are endless kinds of palaces and straw huts, and even to sing the lines: “Hard is the lot of the old mountain woman gathering brushwood on the mountain side,” shows that one has not awakened from the dream of the endless cycle of life and death]⁶⁰. Let us arouse a heart which dreads being stained in the various passions and let us be diligent and seek the way to the highest Nirvana. First let us harmonize this body and be at peace, and after this let us purify ourselves. There are five periods in the night; two of these being for sleep and rest. The three other periods, namely, the beginning, middle and end of the night, are for meditation on life and death and for seeking understanding. Do not pass the time in vain.

It is, for example, like putting a pinch of salt into the river Ganges which, of course, would not make the river salt water. So it is when a little evil is mixed with the various good deeds; it is dissipated and disappears.

Even though we may receive the pleasures of separation from our passions in Bonten⁶¹ we shall nevertheless fall again into the sufferings of the immeasurable flames; and though we may be in the heavenly palace and our bodies radiate brilliant light we shall afterward enter again into the black dark hell. In the so-called Black-Rope-Hell and in the Hell-of-Repetition burning and cutting, piercing and skinning go on without intermission. The eight hells burn fiercely and continuously, and this is the punishment for the evil deeds of all living beings. It is impossible to paint, put into words, read or think about the condition of such sufferings. What, then, must be the tortures of these victims! If we compare the suffering of even a single thought about Abi Hell with that of a man cutting his body with three hundred swords the latter will not be one billionth as severe. The suffering in the Realm of Beasts is immeasurable. They are bound with ropes and beaten with whips. Some of them are injured for the sake of the bright pearls, feathers, horns, tusks, bones, hair, skin and flesh which they yield.

The suffering in the Realm of Hungry Spirits is also like this. Though the beings here seek various sorts of satisfactions they cannot be satisfied in heart. Enduring hunger, tortured by heat and cold, tired and exhausted, their sufferings are boundless. Even the various impurities of urine and dung they cannot obtain as food for a billion Kalpas. And if by chance they should obtain a little of this sort of food, when they take it out to eat it some other hungry spirit snatches it a way and runs off with it. They lament over the agony of the hot flames even in the pure cool of the autumn moon, and they suffer from the cold even in the warm days of spring. When they happen

⁶⁰ The section enclosed in brackets is not in the older Chinese edition.

⁶¹ Bonten is one of the heavens of Brahma.

to come to an orchard the various fruits suddenly disappear, and when they approach a pure stream of water this quickly dries up. As a result of their evil Karma their life drags on and for fifteen thousand years they suffer various tortures and continually receive poison without intermission. In this Realm of Hungry Spirits the swift river of passion carries the beings along according to the law of Cause and Effect. The fire of an evil mind and anger rages furiously and consumes both body and mind. If anyone would extinguish such various evil works let him walk in the way of real deliverance. Forsaking the law of worldly fame let him obtain the place of purity and permanence. [Hyakujugyoge]⁶².

If there is any mind for disliking and departing (from this evil world) it is like Bodhisattva Asvagosha's resuscitation when he heard the singers' song which runs as follows: "The various phenomena of existence are like a vision and like an illusion. In all relations of the Three Worlds there is not one that can be relied on. Kingly rank, high fame and the wielding of power - none of these can remain when Impermanency comes over them. A floating cloud seems to be there but suddenly it disappears and becomes nothing. This body is an empty illusion and like a plantain. It is an enemy and a thief and cannot be trusted. It is like a box full of vipers. No human being can be loved with pleasure. For this reason all the Buddhas continually mortify the body."

In the above passage we have in detail the teachings about Impermanency, Suffering, Emptiness and the Non-Atman. Those who hear this doctrine understand the Way. Again we read in the poem of Hekijo by the monk Kenno: "The reason the cycle of birth and death does not come to an end is because the various passions of covetousness are deep and because of indulgence in lust and the taking of pleasure in taste. Feeding our own enemy we go to the grave. In vain we endure the various pains. The body is rotten like a corpse. From the nine orifices flow impurities. Like the worms in the gutter enjoying the dung so man foolishly loves his body and covets it. To delight in form and indulge in wanton expedients is to give foundation to the Five Lusts⁶³. The wise man does not indulge in wanton expedients and therefore the Five Lusts are annihilated for him. Covetousness is born of evil ideas and passion is born of covetousness. If we think correctly and do not countenance covetousness then all other passions will disappear." In ancient times, after the death of the Buddha Mijukenda and when the True Law had declined, the Bodhisattva Damashiri with this poem spread the teachings of Buddhism and thus benefited numberless living beings.

⁶² This poem is not mentioned in the popular edition.

⁶³ Five Lusts are the lusts of five senses.

If anyone desires the Pure Land it is as described in the Kongokyo⁶⁴ where we read: “The law of all existence is like a dream, like foam, like a shadow, like the morning dew, like lightning. May we realize this.” Again we read in the Daikyo: “All work is impermanent. This is the law of life and annihilation. To end the annihilation of life and annihilation, such calm annihilation is true happiness.”

At the four corners of the Myodo of Gionji bells are hanging. In the sound of the bells the meaning of this poem is explained. When a sick monk hears this sound and receives the pleasure of purity it is like entering into the third Meditation Region and like being born into the Pure Land. How much more, then, do the great knights of Setsusen who throw away their whole bodies understand this poem! Let the disciple be not careless in trying to understand the heart of this poem. Observing the doctrine according to its true explanation, let him abstain from the errors of covetousness, anger, ignorance and so forth. Let him be like a lion chasing a man. Let him avoid the painful work of unprofitable heresy and let him not be like a fool who chases after a lump of dirt. Someone may ask and say: “It is easy to understand the teachings about Impurity, Suffering and Impermanency and that every phenomenon which appears to us has a noumenon back of it, but what is meant by Emptiness?” We reply: “Is it not explained in the sutra where we read: ‘It is like a dream and a vision. Therefore let us understand the meaning of Emptiness by thinking of it in terms of a dream.’” It is as recorded in the Seiseiki, where we read: “In the land of Harateishi, two or three ri eastward from the Seroku grove there is a dried-up pond. In ancient times on the edge of this pond a hermit built a grass hut and hid himself in it. This hermit learned various arts and was powerful with magic so that he could change bricks and pebbles into jewels. He could change men into animals and animals into men. But he was not yet able to ride on the wind and the clouds and be of service to real hermits. Opening a map he thought over ancient matters and sought for witchcraft. In this secret document it is said: “Command a knight to put away his long sword in the corner, not to breathe deeply and to keep silent from evening till morning. Also he who would learn magic let him sit in the center of the platform, hold a long sword in his hand and with his eyes closed and ears stopped let him recite with his mouth the incantation. When morning comes he will be able to perform magic.”

The hermit following out this instruction sought out a knight. He treated him very courteously and was very kind to him. Then he said to the knight: “Please keep silent for one night.” The knight replied: “If you should command it I would not refuse even to die for you. How much more then shall I be glad to breathe silently at your request.” Thereupon the hermit erected a platform and carried out the instructions as he had read. He sat down and waited for the sun to set. After it became dark each one went on with his duties. The hermit recited his incantations

⁶⁴ Diamond Sutra or Vajracchedika-prajna-paramita-sutra (editor’s note).

while the knight was holding his ordinary sword but just before it became dawn the knight suddenly cried out with a loud voice. The hermit turning on the knight asked him rather indignantly: “Why did you fail to do your part? Why did you cry out?” To this the knight replied as follows: “After I had received your orders and when it became midnight my mind became somewhat faint and confused as if I were dreaming. My feelings changed and everything seemed strange. When I got up and looked around it seemed as if my former master him-self had come and was comforting me. On account of your great kindness to me I did not break my silence and so my master became very angry and killed me and I entered the state between this life and rebirth in the next. Since I had not finished my work I was not sorry that I had entered this state. But still I was determined to reward your great kindness by keeping silent even though I had to pass through many rebirths to enter this world again. I was finally born into the family of a great Brahman in Southern India. I obtained a body and came forth from the womb. Though I endured various sufferings I did not forget your great kindness to me and so I did not utter a word. I succeeded to the headship of a family. I became an adult and was married. After a while I buried my parents and mourned for them. I had children of my own. But during all that time I did not break my silence. My chief relatives and also my maternal relatives, all of them, marveled at me for this. When I became sixty years old my wife said to me one day: ‘You must speak. If you do not say something I will stab your child to death.’ With this she took the baby in her arms, seized a dagger and was about to stab the child. I thought in my heart that already my life had undergone changes and that once before I had left this world. I am now again an old man and this is my only child. With these thoughts in my heart I could not endure seeing her kill the child and so I stopped her by crying out: ‘Don’t kill it! Don’t kill it!’”

When the hermit heard this he was sorry for what he had done and that he had caused the knight to be bewitched by an evil spirit. He felt keenly the knight’s kindness toward him, but being disappointed over not obtaining his real purpose he grew so angry that he died (Summary).

Now the sphere of dreams is like this story and all existence is like a dream. When a man has not awakened from the dream of vain thoughts he looks upon things in the Emptiness as though they were real. Therefore it is stated in the *Yuishikiron*⁶⁵: “Unless one comprehends the truth he is continually in a dream. Therefore Buddha explains life and death as a long night.” One may say: “If one has an understanding of the doctrine of Impermanency, Suffering, Emptiness and so forth, is not this the same as the doctrine of Self-Harmonization and Self Control for which Hinayana stands?” We reply that latter view is not limited to the Hinayana and is found also in Mahayana. The *Hokkekyo* says: “Make great mercy your room. Make meekness and

⁶⁵ Discourse on the Theory of Consciousness-Only. (editor’s note)

perseverance your clothes, and make the emptiness of all phenomena your seat. In this way the Law is explained.”

The conception of Emptiness in all the sutras does not contradict the heart of great mercy. How much more, then, do the ideas of Suffering, Impermanency and so forth stir up the Bodhisattva to vows of mercy. Therefore in the Prajnaparamita class of sutras the idea of Impurity and so forth are also the Law of the Bodhisattva. If you wish to understand this you must read these sutras. One may ask: “What profit is there in this sort of view?” We reply: “If one constantly harmonizes and settles his heart in this way, then the Five Passions become weaker and at death the mind is right and without error, and so one does not fall into the evil place. It is as written in a poem of the Kwanjinkenen of the Daishogonron: “When one is in the prime of life and without any worry he becomes idle and does not make progress. He becomes covetous for the various things of this world. He gives no alms, does not keep the precepts nor practice meditation, and so when he faces death and for the first time becomes awakened and wishes to do good he finds that it is too late.” The wise man should constantly practice meditation and cut out all thought of the Five Passions. Those who are diligent and careful in training their mind have no regrets when they reach the end of life. Their heart has already reached a harmony and is without confusion. But if one does not train his heart and concentrate it then at death there is necessarily a confusion of heart.”

The following is written in the fifty-seventh poem of the Hoshakukyo: “As we examine our own bodies we find muscles and veins intertwined, moist and soft skin as a covering and the nine orifices from which vile things are constantly flowing out. The human body is like a house enclosed in a bamboo fence. As within the house we find various kinds of grains stored so in the body we find all sorts of vile things such as dung and urine. The joints of the bones do not work together smoothly because they are frail. In spite of this the foolish fondle their bodies but the wise do not.

“We find such vile things in the body as tears, saliva and sweat which are constantly flowing out of it, pus and blood which fill it, brains made of a mixture of yellow fat and milk in the skull, and phlegm which is spat out from the chest. Besides these there are the viscera of life-heat, fat, membranes and the stomach which is one of the five viscera in the belly. All these are polluted by the various kinds of unclean things. How sinful is the human body! You should have great fear of it because it is like a house of resentment. But the ignorant and greedy are so foolish that they take great care of their bodies.

“The human body which is composed of many vile things is like a half-ruined old castle. Day and night the stream of worldly passions beat against it. The body is like a castle the bones being like the castle walls and the blood and flesh like the paint on the walls. Whoever is greedy, quick tempered or foolish is deceived by the body. You should hate this castle of bones and flesh. Blood and flesh which are closely connected always produce evil thoughts and then man suffers pain both outwardly and inwardly. Nanda, you should seek understanding. Remember day and night what I have been preaching to you and do not long for the realm of evil desires. If you wish to escape from this world, keep your mind fixed in true understanding; and when you have obtained enlightenment you will pass over the sea of life and death.” (Other descriptions which are not mentioned here may be found in the Dairon Shikwan etc).⁶⁶

⁶⁶ The sections enclosed in brackets are not found in the popular editions but are taken from the edition in Chinese of 1697.

GOKURAKU THE PURE LAND

CHAPTER I

Pleasures of Being Welcomed by Many Saints

The pleasures of the time when one is welcomed by many saints are as follows: When the life of men of evil deeds comes to an end, the two elements of wind and fire depart first. As these two elements are by their nature the things that control all movements they stir things up and so cause great pain to the victim. On the other hand, when good men die the two elements of earth and water depart first. These two elements are by their nature quiet and so give ease to the body and therefore there is no pain (at death). How much more, then, does he who for many years has controlled his mind and piled up the merits of Nembutsu, find great joy in his heart when he comes to die! The great vow of Amida Nyorai is such that he comes with twenty-five Bodhisattvas and the host of a hundred thousand monks. In the western skies purple clouds will be floating, flowers will rain down and strange perfumes will fill the air in all directions. The sound of music is continually heard and golden rays of light stream forth. In brilliant rays which dazzle the eyes, he (Amida) will appear.

At the time of death, the merciful Kwannon⁶⁷ with extended hands of a hundred blessings and sublimity and holding out a lotus seat of treasures, will appear before the believer. The Bodhisattva Daiseishi⁶⁸ and a numberless host say in one voice: "Blessed art thou! Blessed art thou! Thou hast with a faithful heart and much thought reformed the evil and practised the good. Mercy and honesty have been thy constant concern. Thou hast made the wise to be wise and hast not turned to passions nor hast thou doubted in calling on the Name and reciting the Nembutsu. Thou hast graven faith upon thine heart and thou hast submitted thyself to the Great Vow. Therefore thou art now welcome." Uttering these words, he places his hand upon the believer's head and with the other hand he draws him to himself. At this time the believer beholds the Nyorai (Amida) with his own eyes and his heart is filled with great joy. His body and mind are at ease now and he is happy as in a state of ecstasy.

⁶⁷ Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara.

⁶⁸ Daiseishi is the Bodhisattva Mahashamaprapta. Daiseishi and Kwannon are usually associated with Amida, and these three form one of the chief trinities of Mahayana Buddhism.

Let us realize, therefore, that when one comes to the hour of death, even though it be in a grass hut, at that very moment one can take his place upon the lotus seat. One can follow after Amida Nyorai and in company with a host of Bodhisattvas be born in a moment into the realm of the Pure Land which lies in the West ten thousand hundred millions lands away. [This is the substance of the Kwangyo, Byodo, Kakukyo and the Biography⁶⁹].

Even the pleasures of the hundred million thousand years of life in Toriten⁷⁰ or the pleasures of the deep ecstasies of Mahabrahman's palace are not to be regarded as pleasures in comparison (with these pleasures of the Pure Land). When the karma of reward is exhausted the one (living in Toriten or Mahabrahman's palace) falls at last again into the cycle of change and he cannot escape from the Three Evil Realms⁷¹, but this one (who has been born into the Pure Land) is now resting thankfully in the arms of Kwannon and he is dwelling securely on the Treasure Lotus Seat. Having passed a long period of time in crossing the Sea of Suffering, he has now for the first time been born into the Pure Land, and his happiness is thus beyond the power of words to describe.

In a poem by Nagarjuna we read: "If at the end of life one obtains birth into this country then one has boundless virtues. I, therefore, do nothing but offer my life to Amida and desire to enter the Pure Land."

⁶⁹ The Biography probably means the Buddha Karita of Asvagosha.

⁷⁰ Toriten, the second of the Six Devalokas.

⁷¹ Three Evil Realms are Hell, Realm of Hungry Spirits and Realm of Beasts.

CHAPTER II

Pleasures of the First Opening of the Lotus

What is called the pleasures of the First Opening of the Lotus is this: When a believer is born into the realm of the Pure Land we speak of it as the time of the First Opening of his Lotus. All his pleasures are increased a hundred thousand times above what they were before. Such a one is like a blind man who has for the first time received his sight, or like a man from the country who has suddenly been transported to a palace. As he looks at his own body his skin becomes radiant with golden rays. His clothes are made of natural treasures. Gold rings, hair ornaments of beautiful feathers, a crown of gems, a necklace of most wonderful jewels and such ornaments beyond description in their beauty, cover his body. As he beholds the radiance of the Buddha, his eyes become purified and he is able to see the multitudes that assemble in the next world and to hear the voice of the various Laws. Everything of form and sound is mysterious and marvelous to him. When he looks up into the spacious sky he beholds a wide radiance of sublimity so glorious that heart and words cannot express it, and his eyes lose themselves in the path of clouds. The mysterious voice of the honorable Law is heard and it fills this Land of Treasures. Golden palaces, bejeweled halls, green groves, ponds of treasures and all such things shine round about him with great brilliancy. Wild geese, wild ducks and mandarin ducks fly about in great flocks. Living beings from all parts of the universe are born into this place like showers of rain. Saints like the grains of sand on the Ganges for their number come from the innumerable Buddha lands. Some ascend into the palaces and live in the sky. Some, sitting in a place in the sky, read and explain the scriptures. Others, sitting in silence in the sky, are enjoying the ecstasy of meditation. Also on the ground among the trees of the forests such sights are common. Here and there are some wading and bathing in the streams while others are singing and scattering flowers. There are still others who are walking to and fro among the palaces and halls, worshipping and praising the Nyorai. In such ways the innumerable heavenly beings and saints enjoy themselves, each one according to his heart's desire. How impossible it is, then, to give all the names of the incarnate Buddhas and Bodhisattvas who fill the Pure Land like a cloud of fragrant flowers!

By and by as we look around we behold longingly and reverently Amida Nyorai in the distance seated on a Lotus Flower of Treasure like the King of the Golden Mountain. He is in the center of a pond of Lotus Flowers of Treasures, the one on his right and the other on his left. Innumerable beings are reverently gathered around him.

Then again in this Land of Treasures there are precious trees which grow in rows. At the foot of each tree are one Buddha and two Bodhisattvas who radiate light and whose garments send forth a radiance which widely illuminates gloriously a pond of emeralds just as if suddenly thousands and tens of thousands of innumerable lights were piercing the night of darkness. At this time Kwannon and Seishi appear before the believers, and speaking to them with voices of great mercy they comfort them in various ways. Thereupon the believers come down from their Lotus Seats, prostrate themselves upon the ground and with bowed heads they worship. Then being conducted by these two Bodhisattvas, they are at last brought before Amida Nyorai. They kneel upon the steps of the Seven Precious Things⁷² and worship the Venerable Form of Ten Thousand Virtues (Amida). Hearing the way of soul sincerity they enter the sea of the desire of universal wisdom. Tears of joy stream down like rain and a heart of deep desire penetrates to the very marrow. For the first time they enter into the fruit of Buddhahood and obtain what they have never experienced before. The believers, while they were still in this evil world, could only read or hear about these things, but now they can see them for themselves. How great, then, must be their joy! [This is in general the substance of the Kwangyo].

In a poem by Nagarjuna we read: “If one has planted the good root but doubts, his lotus will not open. The one whose faith is pure will have his lotus open; that is, he will see Buddha.”

⁷² Seven Precious Things are Gold, Silver, Emerald, Coral, Agate Crystal and Pearl.

CHAPTER III

Pleasures of Communicating Mysteriously Body and Form

The pleasures of Communicating Mysteriously Body and Form are as follows: The beings in the Pure Land, having bodies of golden color and being pure inwardly and outwardly, give forth a brilliant light and thus mutually glorify each other. They have thirty-two forms and they are so sublime, upright and marvelous that there is nothing with which to compare them in this world. As to the great multitude of Sravakas, the light of their body extends about six feet. The light of the Bodhisattvas radiates a hundred yodjanas. Some say it radiates a hundred thousand yodjanas. If we should compare the masters of the Six Devalokas with the beings of the Pure Land it would be like a beggar standing alongside of a king.

Then again the various beings of The Pure Land have all the five mysterious communications whose marvelous nature cannot be comprehended. They live a life of freedom according to their heart's desire. If, for example, they wish to look across the universe without taking a step they can do so. If they wish to hear the voice of anyone in the universe they can do so without moving from their seats. Not only this, but they can hear also the things of the infinite past as if they were happening today. They know the inmost thoughts of the beings of the Six Realms as if they were reflected in a mirror. They can go and come freely as if all the lands of the Buddha in all the ten directions lay beneath their feet. They can do anything they please in the realm of infinite space (lit. hundred, thousand, ten thousand hundred million Nayuta⁷³ worlds) and in the realm of endless time (lit. hundred, thousand, ten thousand, hundred millions of Nayuta Kalpas.)

The forms of beings in this present evil world are thirty-two in number, and who is there that can obtain even one of these? But as for the Five Mysterious Communications, what kind of being is there that has attained even one! For beings in our world it is impossible to see without sun light or lamp-light; and, without moving, it is impossible to approach an object. We cannot see through even one sheet of paper. We know nothing of the things in the past; we know merely the things of the present moment. We are still confined to the cage and obstructed in every direction. But as for the beings in the Pure Land there is not one which does not have this power

⁷³ Nayuta equals one quadrillion.

(of mysteriously transcending space and time). Even though for a period of a hundred Great Kalpas they have not planted the seed (karma) of the Special Characteristic Forms and have not created the cause for the Mysterious Communications, during the Four Meditations, they still have this power as a natural consequence of having been born into the Pure Land. How happy, then, they must be! [This is the substance of the Kwangyo, Byodo, Kakukyo].

In a poem by Nagarjuna we read: “The stature of the heavenly beings is as high as the top of Gold Mountain. Many beautiful scenes welcome their approach. Those who are born into this country can see with their heavenly eyes across the universe without restrictions. The saints bow to them in welcome. The beings in this country have miraculous powers and knowledge of their destiny. Therefore they depend upon Buddha for life and they worship him.”⁷⁴

⁷⁴ The poem of Nagarjuna quoted here is not in the popular Editions.

CHAPTER IV

Pleasures of the Five Wonderful Realms

The pleasures of the Five Wonderful Realms are as follows: By means of his forty-eight vows, Amida Buddha makes his Pure Land glorious. Everything becomes exceedingly beautiful and gloriously wonderful. Wherever you look there is pure and wonderful color. There is no voice which does not speak of deliverance. The realms of odor, taste and touch are equally glorious. In this so-called Paradise World the ground is of emeralds. Golden ropes that outline the paths give forth light. The roads are level and without any ups and downs; they are wide and without any bounds. All over the land one finds various wonderful garments. All the heavenly beings walk about in this land. (The above is the condition of the land).

In these various treasure lands there are found in each one 50,000,000, 000 palaces and halls made of the seven Precious Things. Some are tall structures and some are low; some are spacious and some are small, for they are such as to delight the heart and please the mind. The various Treasure Beds are covered with wonderful clothing. Above are sevenfold balustrades covered with myriads (lit. 10,000,000,000) flower flags. Necklaces of jewels are hanging down and canopies of treasures are overhead. Within the palaces and over the halls are various heavenly beings who continually make music and praise the boundless virtues of the Nyorai. (The above is in reference to the palaces).

Inside and outside of the chapels, meditation chambers, palaces and halls, on the right and on the left, there are numerous bathing pools. On the bottom of the pools of gold there is silver sand, and on the bottom of the pools of silver is golden sand. On the bottom of the crystal pools is emerald sand, and on the bottom of the emerald pools is crystal sand. Coral and amber, mother of pearl and agate, white pearls and purple gold are arranged in like manner. These pools are filled with the waters of the Eight Virtues. The sands of treasure are transparent and illuminate even the deep. (The Eight Virtues are the following: 1. Transparent and pure; 2. Cool and cold; 3. Sweet; 4. Light and soft; 5. Moist; 6. Easy and gentle; 7. The power to slake thirst and to dispel all pain and worry; 8. The quality that nourishes with the Four Elements the hundred parts of the body, namely, eyes, nose, ears, vital organs etc. It bestows the various Good Roots).

The roads, steps, curved bridges and all things are built of the various treasures. Flowers of various treasures are growing all over the ponds. The green lotus flowers emit a green light; the yellow lotus, a yellow light; the red and white lotus flowers emit red and white light, each flower having its own peculiar light. As the breezes blow gently over these flowers they mingle with each other and this makes a wonderful color. Everything is filled with fragrance. In each flower is a Bodhisattva and every ray of light reveals numerous incarnate Buddhas. The waters flow in gentle ripples not too rapidly and not too slowly. Their sound is mysterious and there is nothing which does not speak of Buddhism. Sometimes there is proclaimed the doctrine of the non-reality of suffering, the non-reality of the self and the various Perfections. And again there is sounded forth the law of No-difference No-obstacle in the Ten Regions. Sometimes there is heard the voice of Great Mercy and Great Compassion, and again the voice of Perseverance of Death and Birth. Whatever voice they hear, it pleases them greatly. By virtue of their purity, annihilation and sincerity they fulfill the way of the Bodhisattva and Sravaka.

Wild ducks, wild geese, mandarin ducks, snipes, white herons, cranes, swans, peacocks, parrots, karyobin and other birds with colors of treasures play in great flocks, night and day, chattering and singing the praises of Nembutsu, Nempo⁷⁵, and Nemso⁷⁶. They proclaim the Five Roots⁷⁷, the Five powers⁷⁸ and the Seven Understandings⁷⁹. There is not even a mention of such things as the Three Realms⁸⁰ and suffering. There is only the pleasant and natural voice.

When the Bodhisattvas and Sravakas wish to bathe, the pools of treasures give them pleasure and become deep or shallow as their hearts desire. The water cleanses all the filth from their hearts and they become pure and clear, transparent and calm. After bathing they go away, some up into the sky, others sit under the trees and explain the scriptures. Some read the scriptures while others listen to the reading. 'There are some who are sitting in silent meditation while others are strolling about according to their hearts' content. Among them are some who have not yet obtained the fruit of Rakan or Bodhisattva but who would obtain this state and get the secret of the Way. There is none who is not happy.

⁷⁵ Nempo - meditation on the Law.

⁷⁶ Nemso - meditation on monks and priests.

⁷⁷ Five Roots - the five sense organs.

⁷⁸ Five Powers: Believing, Progressing, Meditation, Determining, Wisdom.

⁷⁹ Seven Understandings: Selecting, Progressing, Being Pleased, Omitting, Rejecting, Determining, Believing.

⁸⁰ Three Realms: the three lower realms, namely Hell, Realm of Hungry Spirits and Realm of Beasts.

In one place there is a pure river with golden sand on its bottom. In places it is shallow, in others it is deep. It is cool in some spots and warm in others. It has all the virtues and so satisfies the hearts of all men. Various people walk about in this river or gather on its banks. (The above is a description of the waters).

There are trees of Melia Azedarach around the pools and on the banks of the streams. These trees stand in rows and their branches intermingle. Some trees have leaves of purple, gold and silver branches; some have leaves of coral and fruits of mother of pearl. Some are of one treasure, others are of seven treasures intermingled. The trees are decked with leaves, branches, flowers and fruits, and they shed a beautiful light. The breezes are so gentle that they do not break the branches as they blow through the forests of treasures. Fine nets are set in motion by the breezes and wonderful flowers drop whose fragrance is wafted away in whatever direction the breezes blow. The fragrance mingling with the water is carried away on the streams. And what shall we say of the wonderful sounds that are heard! Five kinds of sounds are making a wonderful harmony just as if a hundred thousand kinds of musical instruments were being played in unison. Whosoever hears this music naturally is led to meditate on Buddha, the Law and the Priesthood. Even the ten thousand kinds of music in the Six Devarokas are inferior to even one kind of music of these trees of treasures. Among the leaves of these trees grow flowers and in the flowers is the fruit. From all these things a brilliant light is emitted and this light makes a canopy of treasures. Each tree has such a canopy and under these canopies the things of the Buddhas reveal themselves clearly. If one wishes to see the Buddha lands clearly outlined in the Ten Directions one can see them reflected among these trees of treasures. Above the trees are sevenfold nets of treasures and between these nets are 50,000,000,000 palaces of wonderful flowers. In these palaces are numerous heavenly youths who are enjoying themselves, in various ways and from whose necklaces a bright light is emitted. There are various trees of Seven Treasures and various soft grasses that are famous in the world. Sweet and pleasing fragrance fills the air everywhere and everyone feels happy. (The above is in regard to the forests).

Various fine nets of treasures are spread in the sky and on the nets are hanging bells of treasures. Heavenly flowers of various colors fall down in profusion. Garments of treasures with ornaments and furniture well decorated come revolving down from the sky like so many birds. These things are scattered in front of the Buddhas as offerings. Innumerable musical instruments are hung in the sky and they make music automatically, proclaiming the wonderful Law. (The above is in regard to the sky.)

The odor of various kinds of incense fills the world in all directions. Those who smell these odors have no thoughts about our dusty troubles and dirty customs. Everything on the ground and in the sky, the palaces and halls, the flowers and trees, all things are made of and mingled with the hundred thousand kinds of odors coming from the innumerable treasures. This fragrance extends widely into the Ten Directions.

All those who belong to the grade of Bodhisattva practice in the work of the Buddha. If any of these, whether they be Bodhisattvas of the Pure Land, Rakan or any of the various beings, desire to eat, tables made of the Seven Treasures appear of themselves. These are laden with delicious hundreds of kinds of food and drink served in vessels made of the Seven Treasures. The taste of this food is not that of this world nor is it of the Realm of Heavenly Beings. The taste, the color and the fragrance are so unusual that they cannot be compared with what we have in the Human and the Heavenly Realms. The sweet and the sour are as the heart desires. Those who see the color and smell the odor are made pure in heart. When they eat this good food their color and strength are increased. When they have finished eating the tables disappear of themselves and then at the proper time appear again.

If they desire any clothes these appear as they would have them. Like the praise of Buddha, if we fulfill the Law, we obtain a wonderful reward. There is no need of cutting, sewing, dyeing, mending or washing these garments. And again, since there is bright light everywhere, there is no need of the sun, moon or lamps. Cold and heat are harmonized and so there is no spring, summer, autumn or winter season. Virtuous winds of nature harmonize the cold and the heat. The climate gives a pleasant sensation to the body of the beings here just like the sensation which a monk has when he is absorbed in silent meditation. Every morning the breezes scatter new flowers and the land of the Buddhas is filled with fragrant odors. The flowers are soft like cotton batting. When one walks on them the feet sink four inches but as soon as the foot is raised they spring up again as before. After the morning is past the flowers all sink into the earth and new flowers fall down in their place. The same phenomenon takes place at noon, in the evening and at midnight. The Five Mysterious Spheres do not make beings covetous though they make them enjoy whatever they see and hear because it is in the Pure Land. It only increases their immeasurable and excellent merit. The merits in this world of the Western Pure Land rank first among the merits of the numberless pure Buddha lands in the Ten Directions, up and down. All the beautiful ornaments and wonderful things of the Pure Land of the 21,000,000,000 Buddhas are assembled in the Pure Land of the West. If one can obtain a vision of the state of this Pure Land he will be able to eradicate all evil Karma piled up during immeasurable hundreds of millions of Kalpas, and at the end of his life he is certain to obtain birth into that land. (The above represents two kinds of Kwangyo-Amidakyo, Shosan-Jodokyo, Hoshakyo, Byodokyo, etc.).

In a poem by Bodhisattva Seishin we read: “When one tries to picture the state of that world, it transcends all the limits of the Three Worlds. It is as vast and limitless as the sky. In it there are thousands and ten thousand kinds of flowers of Treasures. These flowers grow all over the ponds of Treasures, pure streams and sweet springs. As the gentle breezes blow, the colors and fragrance of these flowers mingle. There are various palaces, towers, [precious roofs, golden doors, rounded pillars, all of which are made of the Seven Treasures. It is impossible to state in words the shapes and forms of these objects. As one sits in the towers of these halls]⁸¹ it is possible to look without any obstructions across the world of the Ten Directions. The various trees of Treasures are wonderful in color, and their light is green. Surrounding the trees are balustrades of Treasures. Fine nets filled with innumerable treasures are spread out in the sky, and gold and silver bells attached to these nets proclaim in wonderful sounds the glories of the Law. All the desires of these beings are satisfied in enjoyments. For these reasons I desire to be born in the land of Amida Buddha.”

⁸¹ The Section in brackets is not in the older Chinese edition.

CHAPTER V

The Pleasures of the Happiness which never Fails

The Pleasures of the Happiness which never Fails are as follows: In this evil world of ours there is no real pleasure in which one may indulge. Even the Seven Treasures of the state of the Holy King of the Turning Wheel⁸² do not last long. Also the pleasures of the Heavenly Realm are haunted by the Five Decays⁸³. Even the beings in Uchoten⁸⁴ cannot escape from the Wheel of Life. How much less then is this possible for beings in the lower worlds with their life of pain and pleasure which cannot satisfy the heart. The rich do not necessarily live long and those who live long are often not rich. Some are born in the morning and die in the evening. Therefore it is said in the scriptures: “The breath that goes out does not wait for the breath that comes in, nor does the breath that comes in wait for that which goes out. And not only does pleasure give way to sadness before our very eyes, life itself ends and after death, as a result of our sins, we fall into the Evil Way. But in this world of the Western Region there is pleasure without end. Human beings and heavenly beings mingle with each other and see each other. All have a mind of mercy and they mutually love each other with a love like that bestowed upon an only begotten son. All of them wander to and fro on the land of emeralds and play together in the groves of Melia Azedarach, or saunter from palace to palace, from pool to pool and from grove to grove.

If they desire quietness then naturally the voice of the breeze, the sound of the waves and the music of instruments die away. If they wish to see anything then even the strange and unusual places of mountain vastnesses and river valleys appear before their eyes. If they do not wish to see these things, then they can in a moment transport themselves away from these scenes. And the same thing is true in regard to things of smell, taste, touch and the proclaiming of the Law. Sometimes they pass over bridges of clouds, make music on instruments, dance, ascend into the sky and so reveal their power of mysterious communications. Sometimes they accompany the knights from other regions, go to bid them farewell, or they wander about seeking pleasure in

⁸² The Holy King of the Turning Wheel is the king who reveals himself in this world when human life is 80,000 years in length. He is called by this name because when he takes a walk he is preceded by a wonderful wheel which makes smooth the path before him.

⁸³ There are several lists of the Five Decays but the more ordinary is as follows: 1. clothes become old and shabby, 2. hair grows gray and falls out, 3. the body throws out a stench as it grows old, 4. the stench from the sweat of the armpits, 5. the lack of pleasure in the physical life.

⁸⁴ Uchoten – one of the uppermost heavens in the Realm of Heavenly Beings, the „Earthly” Paradise.

fellowship with holy, heavenly beings. Sometimes they go to the pools of Treasures, or visit and encourage those who have newly been born (into the Pure Land) saying: “Do you know where this place is? It is called the Pure Land World and the Lord of this world we call Amida Butsu. On him you must now rely.” Again they sit on lotus stands in the ponds of Treasures. As they have power to understand their own destinies, they talk to each other about their former lives, namely, as to what country they lived in, how their mind became enlightened by this and that scripture when they were seeking the way of the Buddha, how they kept this and that precept, and learned such and such teachings and thus developed the Good Root, and how they gave such and such alms. In this way they talk with one another about the virtues which they enjoyed, or they tell in detail the story from beginning to end of how they came to be born into the Pure Land. Sometimes they talk about the blessings and accommodations of the various Buddha in the Ten Directions. Then again they express their opinions regarding the means of taking away the sufferings of the beings in the Three Evil Ways.

In this way they talk frankly about many things. After this, for diversion, they walk together or climb the Mount of Seven Treasures. (The Mount of Seven Treasures, the Tower of Seven Treasures, and the Chamber of Seven Treasures are all from the Jupposhugyo).

Then again they bathe in the pond of Eight Merits, or sit down [in a row] quietly and without speaking a word. [They sit in correct form on the floor as in the meditation of Zazen, and without form or thought they enjoy the communion with the Mysterious and Immeasurable]⁸⁵ or they will recite the entire canon in a moment and explain most perfectly the most profound passages. Thus their enjoyment continues without any interruption. Their place is a place of incorruption, and in this pure Land of Pleasure they abide forever and thus have for all time escaped from the terrors of the Three Realms⁸⁶ and the Eight Difficulties⁸⁷. Life here is boundless and their state is not subject to birth and death, nor do they endure the four sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death which characterize human life. For every desire there is something to satisfy it and there is nothing which does not satisfy the heart. And as there is nothing which does not satisfy the heart there is no bewilderment of passions as in our human life. There is not the pain of parting from

⁸⁵ The section in brackets are not in the older Chinese edition.

⁸⁶ The Three Realms namely, Hell, Realm of Hungry Spirits and Realm of Beasts.

⁸⁷ The Eight Difficulties are: 1. Blindness and Deafness, 2. Worldly Wisdom (because tempted by it), 3. Being born before or after a Buddha appears in the world, 4. Happiness in Hokurashu (a pleasant land in China. One becomes so engrossed with the pleasures in this land that one fails to listen to the Buddha and so misses eternal life, 5. the Happiness of long life on earth (since this keeps one from Buddha's salvation), 6. Existence in Hell, 7. Existence in the Realm of Hungry Spirits, 8 Existence in the Realm of Beasts.

loved ones which causes an ever-increasing sadness. Nor is there any pain of hatred or envy, for they look upon each other with eyes of mercy and with a heart of sympathy. Their heart, seeking the Pure Land, is not tarnished with various passions and they are above considerations of worldly success. Their purity of heart is like cloth woven of white threads. It is like pure water. They are not much concerned about anything but think only upon Amida. They constantly apply their mind to this law and so naturally attain entrance to this country. Nothing that they seek is denied them. Their body is as of diamond and so is not burned even though it is in fire. It does not become tarnished even though it is in the mud. Their heart is not stained with the dust of their environment. Their marvelous body of purity and strength is not affected by the sufferings of any and all sufferings combined⁸⁸. They are never injured even though attacked by ten times ten thousand numberless warriors armed with spears and arrows. They are not burned even though they may be in the midst of limitless flames; nor are they drowned though they are submerged in a fathomless ocean. Therefore they can go freely even into the eight Hot Hells and the eight Cold Hells in order to save their relatives from the Three Worlds and the Six Realms.

On the other hand, the beings in our world have bodies of flesh and so they are weak both within and without. And as they lack a heart of purity and strength their five passions⁸⁹ mount up higher than Mount Sumeru and sink deeper than the bottom of the blue ocean. They are constantly allured by color and odor, and they are bewildered in body and mind. They covet the things which have no real existence and are not satisfied even when they have enough. Their desire is never satisfied throughout their whole life of struggle. Covetousness is the chief among the hundred and eight passions⁹⁰. These passions not only produce the cause of future rebirths but they also injure our weak bodies from without. There are the sufferings from fire, sufferings from water, sufferings from swords, sufferings from hunger, sufferings from hitting each other with stones or clubs, and sufferings from cold and heat according to the four seasons. There is nothing but suffering when we examine even the smallest parts of our bodies, not to mention the larger parts. But when we have been born into this Pure Land everything is like a diamond changeless, permanent, without increase or decrease, wonderful, and therefore there is no such suffering as in our fleshly body; yea, it is less than the finest particle of dust.

⁸⁸ Sufferings combined. This is the eight of the Eight Difficulties, namely: 1. Birth, 2. Old Age, 3. Sickness, 4. Death, 5. Hatred, 6. Separation, 7. Frustration of one's desire, 8. The combination of the preceding seven sufferings.

⁸⁹ The Five Passions are the passions of the five senses.

⁹⁰ The Hundred and Eight Passions are the following: To the Five Roots, i.e. five senses, is added the Will, making thus the Six Roots. Each Root or passion has six aspects, thus making thirty-six passions. These are operative in the past, present and future and thus we get thirty-six times three or One Hundred and Eight Passions.

If one has once obtained a place upon the Stand of Seven Treasures he forever leaves behind the sea of life and death where beings are submerged in the sufferings of the Three Worlds and the Six Realms. If as a result of a special vow one is born into another world, this will be free and unrestricted annihilation (of evil) but not the annihilation of the rewards of good works. If one is in the Pure Land there is not even a name for suffering or for pleasure. How much less then is there any suffering! In fact, there is not as much as the seed of a poppy.

In a poem by Nagarjuna we read: "If one has been born into the Pure Land, he shall never again fall into hell or Realm of Hungry Spirits. Therefore I, too, with no confidence in myself, will put my trust in Amida with singleness of heart and seek after the Pure Land."

CHAPTER VI

The Pleasures of Being Attracted and Making Covenants

The Pleasures of Being Attracted and Making Covenants are as follows: The things men seek after while living in this world are not really in accordance with their hearts' desires. The tree seeks to be quiet but the wind blows without ceasing. The son wishes to take care of his parents but the parents do not survive long enough. And even though the parents should live, the son, in the case of a poor family, cannot provide what his filial piety would prompt him to do even though he would be ready to "burst his bladder" in the attempt. [If he goes far away from home or business he will be unable to look upon the graceful faces of his parents in the morning or care for them in the bed-chamber in the evening. As all this is impossible for him, he breaks his heart in vain in the effort]⁹¹. The same thing is true in the relationship of master and servant teacher and disciple, husband and wife, friend and friends among relatives and with all people, to whom one owes an obligation. By worrying thus with a heart of foolish love one only increases the work of Karma. How much more does the Law of Cause and Effect progress favorably when each one lives in his own separate place!

Every man knows where he is now and what kind of life he is living in the Six Realms and the Four Births [Viviparous birth, oviparous birth, birth from moisture, birth by transfiguration]⁹². But who knows but that the animal in the field or the bird on the mountain may not once have been our parents in their former existence. [This thought is expressed in an old poem which reads: "There is a cuckoo in the hillside field crying 'Cuckoo! Cuckoo!' Who knows but that it is my father or my mother."]⁹³ In a verse of the Shindikwagyo we read: "Men in this world commit various sins for the sake of their children and then they fall down into the realms of Hell, Hungry Spirits or Beasts to receive suffering for a long time. Not being saints nor having the mysterious power of communication they cannot understand their former transmigrations. All beings fail to make retribution by kindness to others. All beings are caught on the Wheel of Birth and Death. They pass around from stage to stage in the Six Realms like the wheel of a wagon, without beginning or end. At one time they are father or mother, at another time may be husband or wife, and they show kindness to each other during the various lives in this world. But if they are born

⁹¹ The section in brackets is not in the older Chinese editions.

⁹² The section in brackets is not in the older Chinese editions.

⁹³ The section in brackets is not in the older Chinese editions.

into the Pure Land they are endowed with a superior wisdom and their clear power of mysterious communication reaches unto those who were formerly their benefactors and to those who were their acquaintances through many lives and generations, they can attract them freely. Endowed with a heavenly eye, they can see where they live, and with their heavenly ear they can hear their voice. Their wisdom of destiny enables them to remember the favors (of their former benefactors) and with their insight into others' hearts they understand their hearts. Their mysterious powers of communication enable them to go where they are, and by changing their form they can adapt themselves to their needs and in various ways teach them and lead them in the way of salvation. And again it is explained in the Byodokyo where we read: "Those who are born in the Pure Land of the West know for themselves where they lived in their previous lives, what was their state and by what causes they are now born into the Pure Land. Since they know everything about the present state of every being that goes and come to and from the Eight Directions and up and down, they understand what the various heavenly beings, birds, beasts and insects think in their minds and the language which they speak. They all know in what year of what Kalpa these shall be born into this Land (the Pure Land) and obtain the fruits of a Sravaka or walk in the way of a Bodhisattva.

Again we read in the vow of Fugen⁹⁴ in the Kegonkyo⁹⁵: "Oh that at the end of my life I might overcome all my various obstacles and look upon Amida Buddha and obtain birth into his world of happiness!" I wish I could obtain birth into this land and fulfill this great vow to make all things perfect, and to bestow benefit upon all beings without exception. Since such a one knows even the beings who have no relation to him, how much more should he care for those who are united with him. In a verse of Nagarjuna we read: "The pure and glorious light in a single moment illumines widely the meeting place of all the Buddhas and brings benefits to all beings."

⁹⁴ Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. (editor's note)

⁹⁵ Flower Garland Sutra or Avatamska Sutra in Sanskrit. (editor's note)

CHAPTER VII

The Pleasures of the Fellowship of the Saints

The Pleasures of the Fellowship of the Saints are as follows: As it is said in the Scriptures, “All beings who hear of these pleasures rouse a desire to be born into this Land. That is because they can meet in fellowship with the various people of the highest good.” The virtues of the hosts of Bodhisattvas are wonderful. The Bodhisattva Fugen said: “If there are living beings who have not yet planted any good words, and Sravakas or Bodhisattvas who have not planted a little of the Good Root, they will be unable to hear my name and much less see my body. If there are living beings who hear my name they will not fall from the Bodhisattva state. The same is true if they see me even in a dream”. (This is the heart of the Kegonkyo).

Again it is said: “I constantly follow after the various beings, and throughout the Kalpas of the future I practise the immense works of Fugen and enable them to attain the state of the highest Bodhisattva. The form of the body of Fugen⁹⁶ is like the empty sky. He lives in the truth and not in the land. Revealing himself widely according to the desires of the various living beings he makes the bodies of all equal, satisfies all desires and bestows benefits upon them. Through the various ways of meditation he reveals the mysterious communication to all the Buddhas in all lands. Each mysterious communication extends without exception to every country in the Ten Directions. It extends to the Nyorai of every land also to the very dust of each land.

The great Saint Manjusri is the mother of the wisdom of all the Buddhas of the Three Worlds. That the Nyorai of the Ten Directions were able to convert their minds at first was due to Manjusri’s influence. If all the beings of passion in all the worlds hear Manjuri’s name, look upon his countenance and brilliant form, or look upon his various incarnations according to the various kinds of beings of passion, they can all fulfill the way of Buddha. This surpasses the power of our imagination. (This is the heart of the Kwangyo.)

If one hears his (Manjusri’s) name he can clear himself of the sins committed during his lives and deaths of 1,200,000,000 Kalpas. If one worships him and makes an offering to him he will

⁹⁶ Manjusri and Fugen are the two Bodhisattvas frequently associated with the Buddha Shakyamuni in Mahayana Buddhism.

always be born in the house of a Buddha. If one calls upon his name for one day, and much more so if one continues to call upon him for seven days, Manjusri will certainly appear to him. If one has some obstacle caused in a previous existence, even if he sees Manjusri only in a dream, all his desires will be satisfied. If anyone sees his forms he will not fall into the evil way for a hundred Kalpas; and he who practices a heart of mercy shall certainly see Manjusri. One who receives his name, keeps it and calls upon it, shall never fall into the terrible flames of the Hell of No-Interval, even though he may have heavy obstacles in his way. And he shall be born in another direction, i.e. in the Buddha Land of Purity. (The above is the heart of the Monju Nehankyo.)

Again the blessings conferred upon living beings by hundred, thousand, hundred millions Nayuta of Buddha are far less than those bestowed by the Bodhisattva Manjusri in one Kalpa. Therefore the blessings and happiness of those who call upon the name of the Bodhisattva Manjusri are far greater than that of those who receive and keep the names of all the hundred, thousand, hundred millions of Buddhas. (The above is the heart of the Hoshakukyo.)

The merits of the Bodhisattva Maitreya are immeasurable. Anyone who hears his name shall not fall into the dark hells. If one calls upon his name but for a single moment his sins during the lives and deaths of 1,200 Kalpas are blotted out. One who relies upon him can continue in the incomparable high way without growing weary. (This is the heart of the Miroku Joshokyo.)

One who praises and worships the Virtues of Maitreya can blot out the sins committed during the lives and deaths of hundred, thousand, ten thousand, hundred million, numberless Kalpas. (This is the heart of the Kokuzokyo⁹⁷ and the Butsumyokyo⁹⁸). His vows, wisdom and works which he performed through numberless thousand, ten thousand Kalpas are so great that they cannot be measured. To enumerate them is impossible. (In a verse of the Kegonkyo, namely, in the fortieth volume of that scripture, it is said that the above-mentioned three Bodhisattvas continually live in the paradise world).

The Bodhisattva Jizo⁹⁹ spends every morning on the sands of the Ganges in meditation and so he fills the whole world of Law and takes away the sufferings of the various beings. He surpasses

⁹⁷ Kokuzo Sutra. Kokuzo is Akasagarbha Bodhisattva. (editor's note)

⁹⁸ Sutra on the Buddha names. (editor's note)

⁹⁹ Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha. (editor's note)

all the great saints in their vows of mercy. (The heart of the Jurinkyo¹⁰⁰). In a verse of this scripture it is said that the virtue of the Bodhisattva Jizo is so great that if one calls upon his name for one day, one obtains a greater blessing than by calling upon the names of other sages for the period of 10,000,000,000 Kalpas. Though we should spend a hundred Kalpas in singing the praises of his virtues we could not exhaust our theme. Therefore let everyone make offerings to him. (Summary.)

The Bodhisattva Kwannon said: “If any beings who suffer call upon my name three times and I do not go to them and save them, then may I never obtain the right understanding.” (Komokaieikyo) There may be one who calls upon the names of the various hundred, thousand, Koti (10,000,000,000) Nayuta (1,000,000,000,000) of Buddha, and there may be one who calls upon my name for but a moment, the merit of these two is the same. The various beings who meditate upon my name can all of them obtain entrance into the land of Futaiten whence there is no removal by misfortune. (Juichimenkyo). Those beings who hear the name of Kwannon are able to obtain release from suffering. He (Kwannon) also descends into hell to take upon himself the sufferings of hell in their stead. (A verse of Seikwannonkyo) The depth of his vow is like that of the sea and cannot be measured even though one should meditate upon it for several Kalpas. He has ministered to many thousand, hundred millions of Buddha and made a vow of great purity. Having the power of mysterious communications, he obtained universal wisdom and accommodations (to the needs of beings to be saved). There is no country in the Ten Directions in which Kwannon has not revealed himself. Let no one then have any doubt in his mind. He is the one upon whom may rely all beings who are in suffering and in the pains of death. Being full of virtue he looks upon them with an eye of pity. He is the Bodhisattva whose blessing is as unfathomable as the sea. Therefore, trust him and look up to him in worship! (Heart of the Hokkekyo).

The Bodhisattva Daiseishi said: “All those beings whose evil heart hinders them in crossing over the sea of life and death, I am able to help pass over victoriously. (Heart of the Hoshakukyo). He illumines all beings with the light of his wisdom and enables them to escape from the three ways. It is because this Bodhisattva does this with great power that he is called Daiseishi, Great Power. He who looks upon this Bodhisattva can cleanse himself from the sins committed during the lives and deaths of numberless Kalpas of immeasurable duration. This Bodhisattva does not enter the womb but is continually in the wonderful and pure lands of all the Buddhas. (Heart of the Kwankyo). Throughout immeasurable, limitless and numberless Kalpas he fulfills his vows and is an assistant to Amida. He is always present among the throng of beings and proclaims the words of the Law. All who hear him can obtain the pure eye. His powers of mysterious

¹⁰⁰ Great Extended Sutra on the Ten Wheels. (editor’s note)

communications extend throughout the countries of the Ten Directions, and he manifests himself to all beings. If beings pray with a sincere mind, he will lead them all to the world of enjoyment. (Hymn by Nagarjuna.)

Again it is said: “Kwannon and Seishi have both a great name. Their merit and wisdom is immeasurable, and great is their mercy. They save the world and play in the sea of all beings. To meet with such a superior Bodhisattva is indeed not easy. We therefore revere him and worship his face. (Summary.) Thus he becomes forever as the treasure of help of each place. The great Bodhisattvas are numberless like the grains of sand on the Ganges river. Their color and form is beautiful and they are full of virtue. They live continually in the Pure Land and gather about Amida Nyorai. And again the crowd of the various Sravaka it is impossible to number. But his (Kwannon’s) mysterious transformation and wisdom reaches everywhere and his power is free. He is able to hold all the worlds in his hand. The number of the beings of the First Assembly is so great that even though a hundred thousand, ten thousand, hundred million immeasurable numberless men like Daimokuren, who was a man with the mysterious power of communication, should count them for a period of immeasurable numberless Kalpas, the portion which they could count would be like one drop of water while the uncounted portion would be like the great ocean. In that great throng there are innumerable beings who have not obtained the fruit (of the Law), and again from other regions there come an innumerable number of beings who have obtained the fruit. But the total is neither increased nor decreased for it is like the water of the great ocean which can be neither increased nor decreased whether the water of the river Ganges is added to it or not. The throng of the various Bodhisattvas is twice as great as the throng of the Sravakas. As it is said in the Dairon: “As for the country of the Buddha Amida, the Bodhisattvas are many and the Sravakas are few.” (Summary.) Thus the Pure Land is filled with a throng of holy beings who have a common life, see each other and hear each other’s voice and who seek after the same way. There is no difference among them. There are numberless beings and Bodhisattvas from the Buddha lands of the Ten Directions, as numerous as the grains of sand on the Ganges river. Each one of these reveals his mysterious power of communication and comes to the Pleasant Country where he looks upon the precious face of Amida Nyorai and makes offerings to him in reverence. Some of them make offerings of wonderful heavenly flowers, some burn a wonderful kind of incense, and some offer priceless garments. There are some who make heavenly music and praise the Nyorai with soft and calm voices. Some listen to the scriptures or propagate the teaching. There is no hindrance in their going and coming night and day. Some go away to the east while others are coming from the west. Some go away to the west while others are coming from the north. And again some return to the north while others are coming from the south. Thus the throngs come and go from the four corners, the eight directions and the directions up and down. It is like a flourishing marketplace. To hear once the names of such saints does not happen by accident. How much more likely then, must it be to meet with one through the hundred, thousand, ten thousand Kalpas! And the beings in the Pure Land gather

together continually in one place and talk with each other, exchange stories, ask questions, act with prudence, respect and are friendly toward one another and become intimate with each other. Is this not real enjoyment? (Summary of heart of the Sokwankyo and the Byodokyo).

In a verse by Nagarjuna we read: “The Bodhisattvas of this country have special characteristics and all of them beautify their bodies. I now trust, worship and leap over the prison of the Three Worlds. My eyes become like the green lotus. There is a throng of numberless Shomon, therefore I bow my head in worship.” And again he says: “The various children of Buddha, coming from the Ten Directions, reveal clearly the mysterious power of communication. They behold the precious form of Amida and do him reverence continually. Therefore I bow down before Amida Nyorai and worship him.”

CHAPTER VIII

The Pleasures of Beholding Buddha and Hearing the Law

The Pleasures of Beholding Buddha and Hearing the Law are as follows: To see a Buddha and to hear the Law in this present world is a very difficult matter. The Bodhisattva Shishiku said: “We have learned numberless laws of deliverance throughout numberless hundred thousand Kalpas and now we see the great saint Sakyamuni. This is as much of an accident as if a blind turtle should meet a floating log.” A Confucian youth sacrificed his body in order to obtain a half line of a certain poem, and Jotei “burst his bladder” to obtain true wisdom. Even Bodhisattvas do such things, and how much more, then, must ordinary people strive to attain! Sakya Buddha spent twenty-five years in the country of Sravasti. During that period, out of nine hundred millions of homes three hundred millions saw the Buddha, three hundred millions heard only his name, and the remaining three hundred millions neither saw him nor heard his name. If it is thus even when a Buddha is in the world, how much more (difficult to obtain salvation) is it after a Buddha has passed away! Therefore it is written in the Hokkekyo: “These sinful beings, because of their evil works, are unable to hear the honored name of the Three Precious Things though they spend an infinite number of Kalpas. But the dwellers in that Land continually behold Amida Buddha and hear wonderful expositions of the law.” In that land of pure ornaments there are banyan trees whose leaves and branches spread in the four directions. These trees are made of various treasures brought together. They are covered with fine nets of treasures and from the branches are suspended necklaces of gems. When the breezes blow through the branches and leaves of the trees they give forth music about the mysterious Law which sounds throughout the various Buddha lands, and whosoever hears this obtains a profound understanding.

Such a one lives in security and hearing is transcendent. Seeing the color of these trees, smelling their fragrance, tasting their fruit, feeling their light or grasping their shape-by all these the six senses are purified until they accomplish the way of the Buddha. Moreover, under these trees is a seat of infinite beauty. Upon this is seated Amida Nyorai whose infinite and limitless form cannot be expressed in words or conceived by the heart. His hair which covers his head rises upward into the blue heavens. The light of his white eyebrows turns to the right and is like the autumn moon. His eyes are like the green lotus, his lips like red flowers, and his voice is like that of the Karyobin¹⁰¹. His chest is like that of a lion, his legs are like those of Senroku¹⁰², and his palms have a thousand circular lines. These peculiar characteristics are 84,000 in number. The attributes of his body are that of purple gold which is polished. The innumerable rays of light are

¹⁰¹ Karyobin, a bird with a loud voice.

¹⁰² Senroku, the King Stag of the deer of the mountains.

like that of a thousand, ten thousand, hundred million suns and moons. Sometimes he stands in a chapel of Seven Treasures and preaches about the incomparable Law. His deep and wonderful voice gladdens the hearts of his audience. The throng of Bodhisattva, Shomon and heavenly beings with one accord join hands and when they arise they behold his face and worship him. Then the natural breezes blow gently and cause the branches of the trees of Seven Treasures to become entangled with each other and to drop wonderful flowers in the four directions. The various heavenly beings make all manner of music while their sleeves are blown by the breezes and they dance before him. At such a time their happy, entertaining and pleasing enjoyment is such that words cannot express it.

Amida Buddha sometimes reveals his immense body and sometimes he reveals himself in a body only sixteen or eighteen feet in height. Sometimes he is seated at the foot of the tree of treasures and at times he is at the pond of treasures. He expounds the Scriptures and the Law, accommodating himself to the degree of understanding and in accordance with the way his hearers have sought the Law, when they were seeking the way of the Buddha while still in their previous existences. Thus he explains the different laws in various ways so that each one may become speedily enlightened and obtain the way.

The two Bodhisattvas Kwannon and Seishi are continually in attendance, one on the right and the other on the left, and they discuss things with him. The Buddha sits facing these two Bodhisattvas and discusses with them matters about communicating in the eight directions and up and down, and also about things of the present time. Sometimes an immeasurable numberless throng of Bodhisattvas, from Buddha lands as numberless as the grains of sand of the Ganges in the East, gather before the Buddha of Eternal Life. They reverently make offerings to the Buddha and also to the Bodhisattvas and even to the throng of Shomon. These visitors, coming from the Buddha lands of the eight directions and up and down, when they behold the wonders of this Pure Land begin to wish that their own lands might become like this. Then Amida Nyorai moves his form and smiles, and from his mouth proceed numberless rays of light which illumine the lands in the Ten Directions. The light runs three times around his body and then enters again his brows. The throng of all the heavenly beings leaps for fullness of joy. Thereupon Daishi Kwannon in solemn dignity worshipping the Buddha, inquires of him, saying: "May it please thee to explain why thou smilest?" Then the Nyorai, with a wonderful voice of eight sounds and loud like thunder, makes answer to the Bodhisattva, saying: "Hear ye me clearly! The desires of the throng of Bodhisattvas coming from the Ten Direction I know perfectly. I shall grant their desires for a land of wonderful purity and an object of boundless pleasures. Know ye that everything is like a dream or like a sound! All their marvelous desires shall be satisfied. They shall without fail obtain a pure land like this. Knowing that all phenomena are like a flash of lightning, let them decide upon the way of the Bodhisattva, achieve the various virtues, obtain a

fixed mind and attain Buddhahood! If they understand that the nature of all phenomena is emptiness and that there is no ego, and if they seek eagerly after the pure Buddha land, they shall certainly obtain a land like this.” (Summary.) How much more then will this be the case when even the sound of waters, the singing of the birds and the grass and trees all proclaim the wonderful Law, and when one can hear naturally and spontaneously whatever one wishes to hear. Where else could one find such a pleasure of the Law! (This is mostly from the Sokwankyo and the Byodokakukyo)

In a hymn by Nagarjuna we read: “There is a seat of a wonderful stand growing from the good root of the flowers blooming in the pond of treasures. On this seat he sits like a Mountain King. The law of all existence is Impermanency and of a Non-ego Principle. It is like the moonlight upon the water, like the sparkle of a dew drop, or a flash of lightning. There is no law which can be called a Law.” By this he wishes to show the heart of the eternal, unchangeable, wonderful Law. Therefore I also worship Amida Buddha and continually pray that I, together with various beings, may obtain birth into that happy country.

CHAPTER IX

The Pleasures of Making Offerings to Buddha According to One's Heart's Desire.

The Pleasures of Making Offerings to Buddha According to One's Heart's Desire are as follows: The inhabitants of the Pure Land continually, through night and day, make offerings of various heavenly flowers to the Buddha of Boundless Life. If they have a desire in their hearts to make offerings to the Buddhas of the other worlds they come before Amida Nyorai, bow and with joined hands make their request known to him and he grants their wish. Then all are greatly pleased and this throng of thousand, ten thousand, hundred millions of beings fly up into the sky or ride on the clouds in pairs and scatter in bands going joyously away in a moment to the immeasurable Buddha lands in the Ten Directions just as if they were going simply to a neighbor's house. There they approach in worship the Buddhas, make offerings and serve them respectfully.

The things they offer are the following: Various wonderful flowers of tagara, manaban, orchids, Jatai¹⁰³ and various other fragrant things and the wonderful food of a hundred tastes; also clothes of various shades and colors, various kinds of musical instruments and all manner of offerings which they produce at will. Every morning they make these offerings and for meal times they return to their own land. After eating and drinking they read the scriptures, practice the Dharani¹⁰⁴ and enjoy the pleasures of the various laws. It is said that they make offerings three times a day to the various Buddhas. While believers are still in this present world, seeing and hearing through the scriptures about the various virtues of the Buddha lands of the Ten Directions, they beget a heart of longing and they say sadly to each other: "When shall we be able to see the pure lands of the Ten Directions and meet with the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas?" But if one should by chance obtain birth into this Pure Land one can, either on one's own strength or through the strength received from the Buddha, go in the morning and return in the evening or go and come in a moment to and from all the Buddha lands which lie in the Ten Directions. There one may serve the various Buddhas, live with the great teachers and continually hear about the true law. Such a one obtains entrance into the perfect enlightenment. Moreover, such a one can enter the various mundane spheres, engage in the various Buddhist ceremonies and practice works of benevolence. Is not this real joy? (From the heart of the Amidakyo, Byodokakukyo and Sokwankyo).

¹⁰³ Tagara, manaban, jatai flowers with a sweet fragrance.

¹⁰⁴ Dharani. There are four ways to practice Dharani: 1. reading the scriptures and not forgetting their meaning, 2. meditating on the various Laws and not forgetting them, 3. through meditation find the hidden meaning, 4. to dwell in peace in the real truth of the Law.

As Nagarjuna said about the heart of Buddha: “It is hard for a human being to make a perfect offering to pictures and wooden images or to the name of one or two Buddhas.” And it is difficult to worship an image of the famous and mysterious Buddha. How incomparable, then, is the joy with which the great Bodhisattvas of this Pure Land make direct offerings to the Buddhas of the Ten Directions three times each day and in accordance with their hearts’ desires! But this is also due to the good works of their previous lives and therefore they continually worship and keep in mind Amida Buddha.

CHAPTER X

The Pleasures of Making Progress in the Way of Buddha

The Pleasures of Making Progress in the Way of Buddha are as follows: In this present world it is hard to practice the way and obtain the fruit. The reason is that the one who suffers is always sad and the one who obtains pleasures is always captivated by them. Therefore whether It be pleasure or pain, both are far removed from the way of deliverance. Whether one is prosperous or in misfortune, both are alike bound to the wheel of change. Even the few whose mind is converted and who practice good works find it difficult to succeed. Evil passions break out from within and evil circumstances pull one from without. Some are double minded and some return to the Three Evil Ways. It is just like the moonlight on the water which trembles with every ripple. It is like the soldier who runs away from the enemy's sword, or like little fish, few of which ever reach maturity. Or again, it is like the fruit of the orchard tree which seldom ripens before it falls. That Mokuren backslid though he tried for sixty Kalpas was due to this fact. Only Shaka Nyorai was able to pile up merit and virtue through hard and painful works for numberless Kalpas. He sought after the way of the Bodhisattva and never ceased for even a moment. Looking around in the Three Thousand Great Thousand Worlds, there is not to be found a particle as small as a poppy seed for which this Bodhisattva did not sacrifice his body. All this he did in order to save living beings. Thus disciplining himself he was able to achieve the way of understanding. All other beings who attempted to establish themselves failed in practicing the discipline. With them it was like a baby elephant being killed by swords and arrows because of its weakness. Therefore Nagarjuna says: "It is as if a man poured a sho of hot water upon a sheet of ice forty ri in extent. When he pours it on it melts a little hole in the ice, but the next morning there is a little bump of ice in its place. Just like that it is when in this world the ignorant man seeks to reform his heart and save himself from suffering. Because in this world there is so much anger, covetousness and rebellion he rouses the passions in himself and so falls again into the evil way. (Summary.) But the beings in this Pure Land do not backslide because they have abundant favorable causes surrounding them. They make progress in the Buddha Way. These favorable causes are the following: 1. They are ever sustained by the power of the mercy of Amida Buddha; 2. The light of Amida Buddha constantly shines upon them so that the mind of right understanding is ever increasing; 3. The water, birds, trees, tinkling of bells by the breezes and other sounds constantly remind them of the Nembutsu, the Law and the Priesthood and so develop their hearts; 4. The various Bodhisattvas are their friends and so there are no evil external circumstances and all doubts within are removed; 5. Their lives are as long as the eternal Kalpas and equal to that of a Buddha so that they are not interrupted by birth and death and thus are enabled naturally to calm their minds and achieve the Way of the Buddha. We read in a poem of the Kegonkyo: "If a being looks but once upon a Buddha he will without fail be purified from all evil." If it is true that but one glance will have this effect, then how much greater must be the effect when one constantly beholds the Buddha! Even the effects of evil deeds committed

throughout countless hundred millions of Kalpas would pass away like a spring snow or dew drops and frost in the sunshine. Thus, because of the various favorable circumstances, the hearts of the beings in the Pure Land are in no way like our hearts. In their going and coming, in their advancing and in their resting they are not at all troubled in their minds. All these beings obtain hearts of great love and mercy. It is natural for them to make progress in the Way of Buddha and to understand the doctrine of Non-Birth and Non-Death. Ultimately and without fail they obtain the position of an Isshofusho¹⁰⁵ Bodhisattva or suddenly able to bear witness as a sublime Bodhisattva. And they attain Buddhahood and are able for the sake of living beings to reveal themselves in eight forms, or in accordance with circumstances they can go to the land of sublimity and purity and there turn the wheel of the marvellous Law and so save various beings. That today I desire the Pure Land and wish to have all beings obtain the same and that I am going throughout the Ten Directions to draw living beings unto myself, is just like Amida Nyorai's great vow of mercy. Is not such grace joy? Truly the affairs of this life are in the interval of a dream. Why then not fling away everything and seek after the paradise of the Pure Land? May all believers beware of being idle. (Taken largely from the Sokwankyo and Tendai no Jugi and so forth).

In a poem by Nagarjuna we read: "In Amida's infinite and accommodating realm there is no bad purpose or foolish wisdom. There is no illumination in evil causes but only natural progress in the Buddha Way. If one once obtains birth he will be unmoved and he will attain full enlightenment. Therefore I accept Amida Buddha and worship him. If I should tell about his virtues, his goodness is as wide, great and limitless as the waters of the great ocean. Oh that I might obtain the Good Root and purity and that I might together with other beings obtain birth in that land! May we together with all beings be born into the Pleasant Land of Peace!"

—End—

¹⁰⁵ One who attains Buddhahood by one truth and passes through all realms of existence unhindered.

Appendix

Outline of Divisions III to X of Ojo Yoshu¹⁰⁶

Divisions III. Evidences for the Existence of the Pure Land

1. Nature of the Pure Land.
2. Why the distinction between the Pure Land and the Evil World? Because man is evil and as such he can not enter the Pure Land, i.e. as evil he must be in an evil place.
3. Suppression of our evil desires

Division IV. Correct practice of Nembutsu.

1. Worship
2. Adoration.
3. Making Vows
4. Meditation.
5. Mass for the Dead.

Division V. Methods of Promoting Nembutsu

1. By men of virtuous character
2. By men who can practice the fourfold discipline: a) Spend much time at Nembutsu, b) Being punctual, c) Without intermission day or night, d) Leaving nothing undone.
3. Warning against being lazy or slothful in Nembutsu: a) Remembering Amida's Forty-eight Vows, b) Making merit as in Imakyo, c) Being virtuous according to the Six Perfection of the Roku Haramutsukyo, d) being holy as required in the Byodokakukyo, e) Doing no harm as in Hoshakukyo, f) Flying freely as the previous Scripture, i.e. Hoshakukyo, g) Mysterious Communications as in Jujuron¹⁰⁷, h) Changing Appearance according to environment as in Jujuron, i) Heavenly Eye seeing clearly as in Jujuron, j) Freely Hearing as in Jujuron, k) Knowing others heart and mind as in Jujuron, l) Knowing the truth wherever we live as in Jujuron, m) Unlimited Knowledge as in Hoshakukyo, n) Well-balanced disciplined mind as in Jujuron, o) Happiness and Grace

¹⁰⁶ This part of the Ojo Yoshu is not in the popular editions and not included in our translation.

¹⁰⁷ Nagarjuna's Treatise on the Ten Stages. (editor's note)

wherever we live as in Jujuron, p) Pity towards all as in Daihannyakyo, q) Without hindrance making apologetics for Buddha as in Jujuron, r) Seeing Buddha's Law Body as Manjusri said, s) Seeing all Buddha's virtues as the Bodhisattva Fugen said, t) Desiring to see the teaching as stated in Hannyakyo.

4. Stopping Evil and Doing Good as in Kwambutsu Sammaikyo. There are five causes and results, namely: a) Not breaking the precepts, b) Not being heretical in doctrine, c) Not being proud, d) Not being angry or jealous, e) Advancing with courage, f) Reading the scriptures, thinking about the power of the Buddha, and seeing the numberless Buddhas.
5. Confession of Sins.
6. Controlling Evil Deeds.
7. Reasons for the Need of Discipline.

Division VI. Nembutsu for Special Times.

1. Discipline for Nembutsu for ordinary times, i.e. certain hours by day and night, certain days in the month and certain seasons of the year.
2. At a Death Bed.

Division VII. Benefits of Nembutsu.

1. Destroying Evil and Living in the Good
2. Seeing the Mysterious World and Having Protection
3. Seeing the Buddha Incarnate
4. Victory in the Future
5. Enjoying the Special Benefits of Buddha
6. With Illustration Persuading Others to Believe in Buddha.
7. Turning Evil into Good.

Division VIII. Evidences for Nembutsu.

1. As it is written in the Mokugenkyo. "Since Nembutsu is the only way for all classes of people, therefore it is the superior way of salvation. It does not interfere with other ways." (He quotes also from other scriptures to prove this point.)

Division IX. Various Causes leading to Birth into the Pure Land.

1. If any one wishes to enter the Pure Land let him think of Buddha. There are two ways, namely: a) Understanding the Teaching of many Scriptures, b) Obeying all the Disciplines.

Division X. Questions and Answers.

1. True Nature of the Pure Land
2. Gradations in the Pure Land
3. Numbers born into the Pure Land
4. Nembutsu for Ordinary Times
5. Nembutsu for the Death Bed
6. Bad Heart and Good Fruits
7. Relative Values of all Good Works
8. Cause and Result of Faith and Unbelief
9. Material and Causes for Promoting the Way
10. Men and Methods for Promoting the Way