

## CHAPTER 9

# THE FELLOWSHIP OF DEATH: GENSHIN AND HIS CIRCLE OF PURE LAND ASPIRANTS

### 1. The Philosophy of Death in Picture and Sermon

Huizinga states in *The Waning of the Middle Ages* that Europe in the medieval period articulated a uniquely insistent conception of death.<sup>1</sup> Representative examples of its expression are the exhortations to mindfulness of death in daily life (*memento mori*)—the major theme in the sermons of the friars who emerged from the thirteenth century—and the woodblock prints depicting death as a putrefying corpse that developed in the fifteenth century. In 1485, the Paris printer Guyot Marchant published the first edition of the *Dance of Death* (*Danse macabré*) with woodblock illustrations, stirring feelings of terror in those who viewed it.

The vision of death that was repeatedly proclaimed from the church pulpit in daily sermons accorded with the depictions of physical decay. The contempt for the body was related to the sacred chorus urging people to “think on death” throughout life. Just at this time, Hieronymus Bosch (1450-1516), who is known to belong to the first rank of the “cursed arts” (*art modi*) of the profane world, produced panel after panel with colorful depictions expressing this grotesqueness and fear. Bosch’s representations of heaven and hell differ from those of Dante in that they are possessed of the odor of decomposition and the droll humor of the physical body.

In Japan, it was from the close of the Heian period to the early Kamakura period that a philosophy of death spread, imparting a

powerful stimulus to the world of the imagination. This was the time from the end of the ancient period and of the ascendancy of the imperial court to the formative period of the medieval world. Concretely, the philosophy of death came to fruition with the compilation of the various “tales of birth in the Pure Land” (*ōjōden* 往生伝) and the production of “pictures of the six courses (or dimensions) of existence” (*rokudō-zu* 六道図) such as the horizontal handscrolls of hell (*jigoku zōshi* 地獄草紙) and of famished spirits (*gaki zōshi* 餓鬼草紙). At a time when the ancient state sustained by the authority of the nobility faced profound crisis, various tales of birth in the Pure Land such as the *Nihon ōjō gokuraku ki* 日本往生極樂記 and the *Hokke genki* 法華驗記 were compiled and avidly read. In them, stories of the lives and miraculous births in the Pure Land of famous monks were told, but in addition, a number of accounts of the death—that is, rebirth in the Buddha realm—of ordinary people were also included.

It is common to think of the “tales of birth in the Pure Land” as stories of illustrious monks, but we must not overlook the role of this literature as a kind of guidebook in death, providing models of how human beings ought to meet their end. The biographies of eminent monks chiefly concern the religious life characterized by the arising of aspiration for enlightenment and the performance of practices, but it appears that, by contrast, the “tales of birth in the Pure Land” had the purpose of delineating the theory and praxis of death in its various facets—the preparation for death, the awareness of death, the methods of death, and so on. When viewed in this way, the tales of birth in the Pure Land may be seen to correspond to the sermons on death that Huizinga speaks of, and the woodblock prints of the *Dance of Death* have their counterpart in the hell scrolls. There is no need to insist on this correlation, but it is useful in delimiting the scope of our concerns in this chapter.

The Pure Land teaching and the notion of the decadent last dharma-age that spread at the end of the courtly period did not necessarily idealize miraculous death, but they did give rise to a notion of salvation that inverted the resignation to death and transformed it into a

leap into life. The person who successfully crystallized the spirit of the Pure Land teaching of this period and theoretically systematized the “gaze upon death” was Eshin Sōzu Genshin 惠心僧都源信 (942-1017), and the guiding work that fixed the foundation for the notion of the interior link between death and rebirth found in much of the tale literature was his magnum opus, *Essentials for Birth in the Pure Land* (*Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集). In this writing, Genshin presents a unique vision of the illustrations of the decay of the human body and formalized for the first time in Japan the sermon of “the mindfulness of death.” Here, we find expounded the methods of contemplative nenbutsu performed out of aspiration for the Pure Land and abhorrence of this defiled world. This was approximately two centuries before the wandering friars of medieval Europe energetically perfected their sermons on the mindfulness of death.

## 2. Defiled Death and Pure Death:

### *Essentials for Birth in the Pure Land* (*Ōjōyōshū*)

*Essentials for Birth in the Pure Land* begins by clarifying the precise methods for the sustained contemplation of hell. Rather than a direct visualization of death, this contemplation consisted of living as though a corpse, thereby seeking to manifest a kind of physiologically existential attitude. By this, I mean that nenbutsu practitioners who aspire for the Pure Land seek to actualize, through the modes of sight and of each of the other senses, the correlation between their own physical body and a putrifying corpse. This includes visualizing the physical bodies burning in the white heat of hell, hearing the screams of agony of the dead, experiencing the pools of excreta and urine, tasting the bitterness of the tears and the hunger, and feeling on one’s own flesh the flagellations of the flames and the whips. In other words, the aim is to become one with the dead in hell—to call to mind the various scenes of torment and to live the sermons of hell. Then, the practitioners must abandon all words other than the nenbutsu 念佛 and, like one struck dumb, grope their way toward death.

The contemplations of hell and of the Pure Land, in the beginning, serve as a shortcut to or vista on worlds of other dimensions. Examples of such vistas are the eight great hells (*hachi dai-jigoku* 八大地獄), including the first hell of Tōkatsu 等活 (between life and death), and the six courses, including the spheres of hell and of famished spirits, as well as the dance of the Buddha and bodhisattvas in the Pure Land and their coming to welcome beings of this world. The logical development of the *Essentials for Birth* moves from the contemplation of the defilement of the six paths, including hell, to the vision of the Pure Land. As stated before, this contemplative practice in fact was adopted self-consciously as a method for pursuing a physiological existentialism. This is probed most thoroughly not in relation to the contemplation of hell, but in the contemplation of the course of human existence.

Human existence is grasped in terms of the process of the decay of the corpse, but on moving to the following chapter on the contemplation of the Pure Land, we find that the idealized body of Amida 阿彌陀 Buddha, envisioned through both macroscopic and microscopic filters, is the object of contemplation. The movement here is a transformation from the contemplation of the defiled world of death to the contemplation of the purified world of birth, but this may be stated in short as a contemplation mediated by the dual vision of the pollution and purification of death. The world of the six paths is overlaid with the image of defiled death, while the world of light of the Pure Land radiates the image of purifying death. The end achievement of the contemplations of hell and Pure Land lies in how far one can actualize the visions of the images of such defiled death and purifying death.

Genshin presents a systematization of the required methods of practice for persons who abhor this corrupted world (defiled death) and aspire for the Pure Land (purifying death). These are the various forms of contemplation focusing on the Pure Land and Amida Buddha (properly practicing nenbutsu, *shōshu nenbutsu* 正修念仏) and the mystical methods of asceticism (methods of auxiliary practice, *jonen no hōhō* 助念の方法). These formal contemplations and ascetic methods



*Amida Buddha Coming to Welcome the Aspirant into the Pure Land.*

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usually signify the practitioner's disciplining of body and mind, but more directly they aim at the *purification of the visual sense* through mental concentration. Through nenbutsu samadhi, the practitioner achieves mental concentration and prepares the conditions in which, within the sense of sight, the "Buddha's welcoming"—a kind of theophany—is projected. The visual experiences of the first stages in contemplative nenbutsu are filled with colorful visions that recreate the hierarchal narrative depictions of hells and the tales of the Land of Bliss, but in the final stages, the vistas are bleached of images, and there are instead mystical experiences with sensations of floating or flying wrapped in the light of Amida Buddha. The shift from images of polluted death to purifying death does not occur with a fixed speed or rhythm, but needless to say, the qualitative transformation and purification in vision serves to determine the salvific course.

The logic of negation (abhorence of this corrupt world) and affirmation (aspiration for the Pure Land) in *Essentials for Birth* takes its point of departure from the foundation of the experience of this qualitative transformation and purification of the visual sense. The logic of negation and affirmation acquires its meaning through the concept of the opposition of defiled death and purifying death, but usually it is said that the two realms of this defiled world (locus of defiled death) and the Pure Land (locus of purifying death) are experienced and symbolized as contiguous and successive. This is because this shore (defiled realm) and the other shore (pure realm) hold the possibility of mutual interchange through the qualitative transformation of sight.

Here, however, there arises a difficulty. That which can be attained through the hierarchical transference of sight is only an objective Pure Land or defiled world, and if one seeks ultimately to acquire the subjective experience or actuality harbored within that vision, it is not the Pure Land reflected in sight, but rather the conclusive confirmation of birth in the Pure Land (purifying death) experienced in body and mind that is required. The problem with a qualitative transformation of sight is that it aims for the transfiguration of the objectified world and thus focuses its attention on the magical deformation of that object. This

leads to the objective awareness of purifying death, but does not directly give birth to the actual experience or confirmation of that pure death. As long as practitioners of contemplative nenbutsu continue to live in this world, they cannot transcend the realm of the objectively conscious activity that is mediated through sight. The standard of sight only explains the topology of birth in the Pure Land, and cannot adequately provide evidence within the horizon of bodily experience.

We see clearly here the aporia in the logic of *Essentials for Birth*, and to find a way out of this impasse, Genshin in the end presents the problem of the “temporal point of death,” the actual and present decay of the practitioner’s physical body. As I have stated, the physiological sensation of defiled death and purifying death becomes possible through the refinement of the sense of sight, but according to Genshin, the shift from visual experience of purifying death to its actual confirmation cannot be established without actual physical death. In other words, he seeks to overcome the aporia by inserting, between defiled death and purifying death as visions, the moment of physical death. The scene of actual, physical death signifies the condition that fulfills the myth of the practitioner’s death and rebirth. Further, the myth of death and rebirth functions to draw the conceptual defiled death and purifying death down to the level of concrete sensibility. Whether or not rebirth—that is, the path to purifying death—can be discovered in this way depends on whether the vision of Amida Buddha coming to welcome one appears in the visual awareness of the individual dying practitioner. Amida Buddha’s response to the practitioner’s questing vision is delivered instantaneously upon physical death. The sensation of sight is lost together with the extinction of the physical body that forms its basis, but precisely because of this, the crucial confirmation of purifying death is assured.

Unfortunately, this confirmation remains only a possibility. This is because there are dying persons who cannot discover the path to birth into the Pure Land and harbor within their sight only images of defiled death. Whether one’s sight, which is lost from the physical body at the very end, holds images of defiled death or of purifying death is affected

by fortuitous circumstances. The confirmation of pure death visits the bedside at the end together with the forced suppression of defiled death and interchanges with it. The “rituals for the moment of death” taken up in a chapter at the close of *Essentials for Birth* seek to treat this problem head-on. This may be said to be the most central and fundamental aspect of the work.

When nenbutsu practitioners fall ill and have little life remaining, they are taken to a temple called the “hall of impermanence” (*mujō-in* 無常院). Fellow nenbutsu practitioners come to care for them in shifts. The witness at the side of the dying person is to inquire constantly, to the very moment of death, whether in the consciousness signs are received of birth in the Pure Land, or whether there are visitations of the terror of falling into hell, and to record in writing the details of any confession. This joint activity of scrutinization is carried on between patient and nurse with persistence and without neglect or interruption. The visual perceptions of the nenbutsu practitioners at the moment of death overlap with the consciousness of death, and through the power of sight they seek to transform the awareness of death through ecstatic consciousness. Moving about the perimeters of defiled death and pure death as images, they seek to attain the final exhaustion of the energies of the self. Their powers of sight are made to stand at the brink, where they will either fall to extinction surrounded by defiled death, which is the consciousness of death, or leave the stage filled with an awareness of religious exultation.

In this way, the nenbutsu at the very moment of death uttered by the nenbutsu practitioner is a question addressed to Amida Buddha in order to determine one or the other alternative between religious rapture and death. The dying persons lie on their sides facing the image of Amida Buddha that has been enshrined before them, and grasping the cords of five colors that extend from the hands of the Buddha’s image, they incessantly inquire about their possibility of birth in the Pure Land. The Buddha’s response to this inquiry appears in the practitioner’s vision. The Buddha’s appearance is termed by Genshin “the thought of Amida’s welcoming,” and the appearance of suffering in hell is “the

aspect of evil committed.” The former is the consciousness of religious exultation surrounded by images of pure death, while the latter is the consciousness of death itself filled with images of defilement. The chapter on “rituals for facing death” in *Essentials for Birth* pursues the meaning of birth in the Pure Land based on a bi-polar structure involving the signal of the questioning of the nenbutsu practitioner at the point of death and the signal of Amida Buddha in response, but as stated earlier, there is no guarantee that the Buddha’s answer will unflinchingly select the circuit of religious exultation alone. There remains a strong probability that solely the “aspect of sins” will appear in the sight of the dying, and there is no way—whether through ascetic or meditative practices—to obtain absolute certainty of avoiding it. Thus, in the chapter on rites at the time of death at the end of *Essentials for Birth*, one can only be said to face an anxious darkness of nihilism, torn between images of defiled death and images of purifying death. Keeping this characteristic of *Essentials for Birth* in mind, I will provisionally label this work “Document A.”

It is possible to assert that in *Essentials for Birth*, Genshin thoroughly ascertained the logical limitations of the traditional thought regarding birth in the Pure Land, but he was fully aware of the inability to overcome the difficulty seen above. Genshin threw himself completely into the composition of *Essentials for Birth*, but with regard to his investigation of the death of the person of nenbutsu and the problem of birth in the Pure Land, it amounted to no more than a point of departure.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Body and Spirit: Pledges of the Samadhi of Twenty-five (*Nijūgo-zanmai kishō*) (Document B)

Genshin wrote the three fascicles of *Essentials for Birth* during 984-985, when he was forty-four years old. The following year, 986, the Fellowship of the Samadhi of Twenty-five (*Nijūgo-zanmaie* 二十五三昧会) was inaugurated at Shuryōgon’in 首楞嚴院 at Yokawa 横川. In this year, Yoshishige Yasutane 慶滋保胤, known as a man of literature and

member of the nobility, took the tonsure with the name Jakushin 寂心 and became a disciple of Genshin. Together, the two became leaders of the nenbutsu association they formed called the Nijūgo-zanmaie fellowship. In this way, *Essentials for Birth* came to fulfill the function as the guiding manifesto for the new group.

While absorbed in the logical structures of *Essentials for Birth*, Genshin was an isolated seeker leading a secluded life and was able to maintain a conceptual purity in probing unexplored regions, but when presiding over the Nijūgo-zanmaie, he came to fulfill the role of sect leader and stand in direct contact with the urgent desires of aspirants. In the former role, he was the composer of a systematic and theoretical text, but as the latter, he was forced to become its interpreter within the social and psychological context. A practical theoretician, when confronting reality with the strength of logic, must wear a variety of masks. Because of this, there may appear to be differences between the person creating a text and the person seeking to impart order to its context.

As a small, highly elite group of aspirants for birth in the Pure Land, the Nijūgo-zanmaie fellowship possessed the character of a heretical nenbutsu movement in relation to the Tendai 天台 establishment, which professed a comprehensive theology, including exoteric and esoteric teachings, and meditative practices and disciplines. Nevertheless, in Genshin himself and the policies of the Zanmaie movement, there was not the least direct criticism of Tendai doctrine, and in the movement, there was no inclination to break with Mt. Hiei or leave the mountain for villages below. In this sense, the Zanmaie should be seen to occupy a strategic position as a reform movement within the Tendai system, with a form of mystical meditation as its model for action.

The Nijūgo-zanmaie fellowship was formed in the fifth month of 986, and in the ninth month of that year, Yasutane composed the "Pledge of the Shuryōgon'in Samadhi of Twenty-five" in eight articles. Two years later, in the sixth month of 988, Genshin himself wrote the "Pledge of the Yokawa Shuryōgon'in Samadhi of Twenty-five" in twelve articles. Genshin's is an expanded version based on Yasutane's eight articles; hence, there are no fundamental differences in direction between

the two sets of pledges. Moreover, the original eight articles by Yasutane are informed by the thought delineated in *Essentials for Birth*, so that there is no doubt that it is Genshin who is the actual source of the entire process of creation.

If *Essentials for Birth* is the basic work systematically defining the salvific meaning of birth in the Pure Land, the Pledges are the platform formulating the direction and the organizational policy of the nenbutsu association. It is natural that Genshin, the creator of the foundational writing, should participate in the composition of the guidelines for transferring his theory into the arena of actual practice, but it is significant that Yasutane had the responsibility for creating the original guidelines. Genshin, the actual leader and founder of the sect, selected Yasutane as the representative for the sect's collaborating aspirants. Thus, from one perspective, Yasutane served to mediate between the theoretical concerns of Genshin and his *Essentials for Birth*, on the one hand, and the overall practical concerns of the sect, on the other. Between the ideal death as birth in the Pure Land and the actualities of death there lies an abyss that is difficult to bridge. It is in the question of how to resolve this problem in practice that the urgent impulse for the formation of the association lies. Hence, a person like Yasutane, who transmitted the actual aspirations of the sect, was necessary.

I have labeled *Essentials for Birth* as "Document A" and the two versions of the Pledge, which form the practical guidelines for the group, "Document B," viewing them as essentially texts treating death. Genshin's discussion of death as birth in the Pure Land in Document B differs markedly in tone from his treatment in Document A. This difference arises from the fact that Genshin and Yasutane were both individual members of the contractual community.

Document B includes both Yasutane's and Genshin's versions of the Pledge, which show some differences in content, but here I will take up common elements in the two versions to illuminate their general nature. Like *Essentials for Birth*, the Pledges are written in Chinese (*kanbun* 漢文), but in contrast to the highly logical style of *Essentials*, the Pledges possess a strikingly emotive tone. Earlier, I pointed out the character of

the Pledges as sect guidelines. It is not surprising, therefore, that each article included in them should possess the terseness and severity of commands. At the same time, however, there are comments attached to each article that are filled with a sympathy and consideration for the sick and deeply colored by devout prayer for those who died as fellow aspirants. Overall, the Pledges manifest a sense of impermanence that surges through them like waves. It may be said that the logical view of impermanence in *Essentials for Birth* is, in the Pledges, replaced by an emotional feeling of impermanence. In *Essentials for Birth*, Genshin gave witness to the joy and the pain of the person to be born in the Pure Land, but in the Pledges, by establishing Yasutane as mediator between himself and the sect, he turns his attention wholly to the final moments of the sick and the rites for the dead.

The elements common to both versions of the Pledge may be stated as follows:

On the fifteenth of each month, the members of the association shall gather and pass the night in the performance of the samadhi rituals of continuous nenbutsu (*fudan nenbutsu no zanmai girei* 不断念仏の三昧儀礼).

If a member becomes seriously ill, the person should be moved to the Temple of Birth in the Pure Land (Ôjōin 往生院) and cared for by other members, who take turns in this task.

When the sick members die, they should be buried at the cemetery called “Mausoleum of Peace” (Annyōbyō 安養廟) (in the eight-article version, the “Mausoleum of the Lotus Seat,” Kadaibyō 花台廟).

At that time, the person should be buried while sprinkling sand empowered through the mantra of light (*kōmyō shingon*) over the corpse and chanting the nenbutsu.

The members of the association are to accumulate the merit of good practices in the three modes of action—physical, verbal, and mental—mindful of the Pure Land. If a member should become negligent in the duties of the association, he or she shall be expelled.

The five rules summarized here were set forth in eight articles by Yasutane and expanded to twelve by Genshin. There are minor differences, but these are not of direct concern here. From the items listed above, it is clear that the central themes of the Pledges are the monthly meetings for conducting nenbutsu samadhi and the rules concerning the rites at the time of death and the funeral.

This chain of elements—monthly nenbutsu gatherings, death, and funeral—forms a framework consisting of a closely bound set of rites of passage, but in the actual rules as recorded in the Pledges, this ritual flow is interrupted part way through. That is, the rule concerning the ritual for sprinkling sand empowered by the mantra of light on the corpse is inserted immediately following the opening article on monthly nenbutsu gatherings. In Yasutane's eight-article version, it is the second article, and in Genshin's twelve-article version, although it is the fourth, the first three articles concern details of the nenbutsu meetings, so in fact, just as in Yasutane's version, the position is identical.

The empowerment of sand through the mantra of light originates from esoteric rituals and was performed at the burial ceremony following the rites at the time of death. The esoteric incantatory ritual possesses a twofold form, including both the mantra of light and the empowerment of sand, and its significance in the burial ceremony requires independent investigations both historically and doctrinally. Our concern here, however, is the importance the Pledges give to the method of treating the corpse. We would normally expect the rules governing the rituals of sand to be included in the latter part of the Pledges, together with the specifications concerning the Annyōbyō cemetery. Surprisingly, however, these rules follow the article concerning the regular gatherings for continual nenbutsu, or perhaps may be seen to be aligned with it. Further, the sand ritual become particularly conspicuous when we consider that in *Essentials for Birth*, Genshin makes no mention of it whatsoever.

We must begin by recognizing that the demands of the Zanmaie fellowship as a sect were expressed in this form, and both Genshin and Yasutane were forced to acknowledge the urgency of these demands.

Through the rules for the ritual of sand empowered through the mantra of light, the Pledges formed a strong field of force circumscribing the concept of individual death embraced by the members of the association. Second, we must note that the Pledges, by adopting the spell of the mantra of light, clearly testified to the separation of the corpse and spirit of the deceased at death. It is here that we find the establishment of the notion that the spirit of the deceased parts from the corpse and goes to be born in the Pure Land. This dualistic concept of spirit and material body is, in *Essentials for Birth*, thoroughly suppressed and concealed, based on the orthodox Buddhist standpoint of nonduality. In the Pledges, Genshin adopts the idea of the venerated spirit (*sonrei* 尊靈) to reinforce the practical meaning of rites for birth in the Pure Land. This is one mask Genshin was forced to wear in confronting the aspirations for salvation of the sect members.

Yasutane's eight-article Pledge quotes a passage from an esoteric text stating that the deceased, through the efficacy of the sand empowerment ritual (*dosha kaji* 土砂加持), attains the "body of light" (*kōmyōshin* 光明身) and is "transformation born" (*keshō* 化生) on a lotus in the Pure Land. Here, the nature or mode of existence of the "body of light" that is transformation born in the Pure Land is unclear, but in the twelve-article version, Genshin clearly states that what is "transformation born" on a lotus in the land of bliss is the "revered spirit." The existence of the spirit that Yasutane was hesitant to specify is plainly asserted. The eleventh article declares that, when a death occurs among the membership, a funeral must be performed and the nenbutsu chanted, but the explanatory passage that follows this article goes on to state that, after the members have chanted the nenbutsu, they should each make deep obeisances with the whole body to the ground, and calling the name of the "revered spirit," guide it to birth in the Pure Land. Here, Genshin explicitly states that the body of light born on a lotus in the Pure Land is the *spirit* of the deceased. Further, this spirit has been enabled to attain birth through the purification of its past evil karma by the sand that has received salvific power (*kaji* 加持) by means of the mantra of light. The sand empowered by the spell is an esoteric tool of spirit pacification that

removes defilements from the corpse, promotes the separation of spirit from body, and quickens the birth of the spirit.

Based on the discussion above, it is possible to formulate the following summary statement: in *Essentials for Birth* (Document A), the image of the death of nenbutsu practitioners splits into the two focal poles of defiled death (rejection of this defiled world) and purifying death (aspiration for the Pure Land), but in the Pledges (Document B), this relationship breaks down, through the mediation of the funeral rituals, into a dualistic structure of corpse (mausoleum) and spirit (Pure Land). This indicates a shift from a conception of death based on images to a conception of death that is substantialist. Defiled death comes to be moored to the physical corpse and sinks downward into the world of darkness, while purifying death, guided by the spirit, soars to the world of light. The visual illusion that previously deformed death is lost, replaced by the chemical reaction of spirit and body that dissolves death. The structure of the decomposition of spirit-body bears close resemblance to that of the dualistic principle of *mogari* 殯 (temporary interment) and *yūrikon* 遊離魂 (wandering spirit) that was widely accepted in the ancient period of the *Kojiki*, *Nihon shoki*, and *Man'yōshū*. We see here that the characteristic faith of the ancient period, which accepted as perfectly natural the functioning of the separation and joining of spirit and body, had a strong impact on the practical interests of the members of the Pure Land Buddhist nenbutsu association.<sup>3</sup>

Buddhism, which was formed in India, gave birth to the religious thought of the awakened one that in principle did not assume the existence of the spirit or soul. This was a matter of refusing to take the existence of the spirit as a subject for metaphysical debate, not an outright denial of the existence of the spirit itself. What was at issue was whether or not the aspirant attained awakening, not whether a sacred spirit resided within the aspirant or the awakened one. In the same way, regarding the concept of no-self, which is one of the fundamental tenets of Buddhist thought, there is a refusal to assert as an additional hypothesis the existence, apart from the person who is to attain awakening, of a self, or a self of self-awareness. It is necessary to abandon

the attitude of reflective self-consciousness of human subjectivity, or questioning the basis of the self, or refining self-awareness. Apart from human existence as unified body and mind there is no body of enlightenment, and this body-mind must sublimate the existence and consciousness of "self" or "spirit."

In this way, Buddhism was able to establish a systematic thought that denied, from the stance of the enlightened one, both matters of self and matters of spirit or soul. This is the basic stance throughout the Buddhist thought of the various phases of its history in India, China, and Japan. When, however, this early Buddhist thought of the enlightened one came into contact with the religious consciousness of ordinary people and absorbed their religious aspirations, it could not but fuse with miscellaneous folk beliefs and magical elements. Among these, the ancestor worship that was deeply embraced by the common people and the notion of the spirit or soul, which formed the foundation for such worship, were the most powerful elements. In Japan, the fusion of Shinto and Buddhism may be said to be a representative example, but similar occurrences may be found in the histories of Indian Mahayana Buddhism and of Chinese Buddhism. When we consider the intellectual influence of Buddhism, however, we find that persons who did not have experiences as enlightened beings in some form were not respected in the Buddhist world. Persons who were venerated by Buddhist groups and believers and treated as objects of worship were those who had attained a particular mystical experience through severe and sustained practices such as *sanmitsu kaji* 三密加持 and meditation, focused practice or solitary reclusion in mountain wilderness, one million utterances of the *nenbutsu*, or fasting and abstinence from water. Such persons acquired autonomous powers as a kind of charisma and realized in this world, in their personal figures, the qualifications of an enlightened one. In other words, they had accomplished "the attainment of buddhahood with this very body" (*sokushin jōbutsu* 即身成仏) and manifested birth in the Pure Land in the present.

Here, we see that it is possible to formulate the tradition of enlightened persons in Buddhism as consisting of two strains: one that

takes the stance of no-self, which sublates the existence of the soul or spirit, and one (including the positions expressed as “attainment of Buddhahood with this very body” in esoteric Buddhism or “seeing into one’s nature and attaining Buddhahood,” *kenshō jōbutsu* 見性成佛 in Zen) that considers the body-mind to be the substance or locus of enlightenment. Needless to say, “with this very body” in this case does not indicate merely the organic, physical body. This body is the meaningful medium or conductor that possesses within the seeds of enlightenment, and apart from it there is no locus for the actualization of the enlightened one. It is, in fact, for this reason that the long continued austerities can be accomplished by the body through superhuman efforts, and at the conclusion of such practice, a spiritual revelation visits the body. The Buddha’s coming to receive one into the Pure Land or the Buddha’s reception are typical examples of such spiritual revelations (hallucinatory experiences).

Amida Buddha’s coming to welcome persons of the nenbutsu, as signs of their salvation, as recorded in Genshin’s *Essentials for Birth*, signified this kind of visitation, a sort of spiritual revelation, and by no means the flight of the spirit to another realm (the Pure Land). In principle, a spiritual revelation is a spontaneous activity, not an activity of casting off the self and moving into another realm or dimension. Nevertheless, in executing the Pure Land Buddhist rituals at the time of death and the funeral rites that followed, the problem arose of how to confirm the “subject” that is actually born in the Pure Land. Thus, the problem of the subjective confirmation regarding spiritual revelation gave place to ritual procedures for tangible recognition of the separated spirit. It may be said that in shifting from author of *Essentials for Birth* to collaborator in the Pledges of the association, Genshin undertook the task of establishing the existence of the spirit or soul.

For example, in the work *Rules Concerning Amida’s Guidance* (*Indō hōsoku* 引導法則), in one fascicle, which is attributed to Genshin, the section on funeral rites in the Pledges is taken up and the ritual significance discussed. The ritual procedures for the guidance of the spirit of the deceased to birth in the Pure Land are outlined, but in a

prefatory section, prayer is made for the support and protection of Dainichi Nyorai 大日如来, Amida, Śākyamuni, and other Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and the divinities of heaven and earth. In this connection, it is stated that in the guidance of the spirit of the dead to the nine-leveled Pure Land, there are methods of practice (*ji* 事) and truth (*ri* 理). Regarding practical guidance, there is the salvific power of Kannon Bodhisattva and Amida Buddha's vow to guide beings, which work to save the spirit of the dead as it sinks and wanders in the dark realms of the six courses. The guidance rooted in true reality refers to the fact that the spirit is in fact originally possessed of the "wisdom of wondrous vision," a mystical power of insight, so that if, through this power, it delves into the fundamental source of ignorance and awakening, it immediately attains the realm of the nine-leveled Pure Land.

Above, we have considered the Pledges (Document B), taking as our point of departure the contrast between Yasutane's eight-article version, which passively conceals the problem of the spirit or soul, and Genshin's twelve-article version, which gives clear recognition to the function of the noncorporeal spirit. In addition, we have touched on several related issues. This contrast between the two versions is supported by another contrast in contents. In the fifth article of his version, Yasutane, following the procedures for the time of death prescribed at the end of *Essentials for Birth*, states that the attendant should inquire about and record what appears to the dying person's sight, but Genshin, in his version, makes no mention whatsoever about the presence or absence of the person's visions in the final moments of evils committed or Amida's welcome. As stated before, the fundamental theme that colors the Pledges lies in its emphasis on the funeral rites, as opposed to the ritual procedures of preparation for the time of death, and in actualizing the dualistic separation of the aspirant's spirit and physical body through the ritual of the empowered sand. Thus, whether or not the dying person sees aspects of past evils or features of Amida's welcome naturally comes to be viewed as a secondary issue. The visions at the end of life are an indispensable theme in *Essentials for Birth*, which gives central focus to the ritual procedures for the moment of death, but

in the Pledges, these do not comprise the final and most important scene. Yasutane, following the import of *Essentials for Birth*, adheres in his eight-article Pledge to its concern about the specific visions of the dying, but while this may indicate his deep respect for the writing of his master Genshin, because of this, his version does not genuinely represent the worldview of his fellow aspirants.

Thus, we must view as an altogether natural consequence Genshin's total deletion from the Pledges of the question of visions of past evils or of Amida's welcome, which had been the most crucial issue to be investigated according to *Essentials for Birth*. With regard to Document B, it is the twelve-article version that better indicates the principles of the Pledge, and in this version, Genshin, as leader of the sect, logically clarified and refined Yasutane's stance.

#### 4. The Dead and the Living: *The Registry of the Fellowship of the Samadhi of Twenty-five (Nijūgo-zanmaie kakocho)* (Document C)

The vows made in common in the Pledges had as their ultimate aim the vigil over the final moments of the dying member and the pacification and departure of the spirit. The more intense the awareness on the part of the remaining members of the importance of the ritual process of pacifying and sending off the spirit, the greater the vividness with which they imagined the world of the Land of Bliss, where the spirit was to have its final resting place. The members of the association, as they went about their daily lives, constantly bore in mind the participants who had died in this world and were now dwelling in the Pure Land. In this way, they strengthened the psychological solidarity with the departed, and desired, through the guidance of those spirits at the time of their own deaths, to pass over the boundary of death in the present world toward the other world.

Such thoughts, feelings of community, and aspirations of those still living were continually and repeatedly relived through the acts of recording the names and deeds of the long departed spirits. It is in this

way that the records were born commemorating the deaths of the departed spirits. In other words, a formal registry (*kakochō* 過去帳) came to be kept. Through preserving records of the past lives of the deceased members, the living confirmed the form of their own existence in the future, and the dead, through the visual illusion of them reflected in the *Registry*, called to the living, questioning the meaning of their lives and beckoning them to new deaths. The *Registry* constituted a series of biographies, which imparted human figures and personalities to the spirits in the Pure Land, and among these records, the living members discerned symbols that integrated those figures within the fellowship. The *Registry* as the personification of spirits, however, in reality threatened the character of the living, and the names of the dead recorded in it became a code that ultimately nullified the physical bodies of the living.

I will label the *Registry*, as such a book of the dead, Document C, for it indicates a third stage in the overall conception, meaning, and ritual of death that we have been considering. Genshin's twelve-article version of the Pledge was composed in 988, and the document that became the *Registry of the Fellowship of the Shuryōgon'in Samadhi of Twenty-five* was begun on the eighteenth day of the seventh month, 1013. Nearly a quarter of a century had passed since the writing of the Pledges. Further, the year it was begun, four years before his own death, Genshin was over seventy years old and already confined to sick bed. It is possible that Genshin's illness was one impetus for turning to the writing of the *Registry*.

That the *Registry* was begun in 1013 does not, of course, mean that there were no written records of members who had died before then. Since funeral rites for the dead were necessary from the time the association was formed, the deaths of members were naturally recorded in some form from the beginning. Such a record is represented by the extant *Registry* of the original association members of the Samadhi of Twenty-five (*Nijūgo-zanmai konpon kechienshū kakochō* 二十五三昧根本結縁衆過去帳). I will summarize this original *Registry* together with the Shuryōgon'in *Registry* begun in 1013.

To begin, the original *Registry* lists the names of the members of the fellowship down through the years beginning from the earliest period. It states nothing, however, about either the achievements of the individual members or the circumstances at the time of their death and birth in the Pure Land. The list of names is divided into two, with the first section recording the names of forty-four original association members<sup>4</sup> and the second section listing later members, with eighty names, including some lay members. Altogether, there are 124 names listed. As the name of the fellowship indicates, there was a provisional limit of twenty-five regular members, but with fluctuations through deaths and the addition of new members, it appears that at times there were more or fewer participants.

The forty-four original members included the following by clerical rank: one imperial monk (*zenjō hōō* 禪定法皇), Kazan Hōō 花山法皇; one former archbishop (*zen gondaisōzu* 前權大僧都), Genkyū 嚴久; two former acting bishops (*gonshosōzu* 權小僧都), Kakuchō 覺超 and Genshin; six *ajari* 阿闍梨, Bonshō 梵照, Jōkyū 貞久, Myōshin 明普, Ryōun 良運, Ryōchin 良陳, and Shōkon 聖金; and thirty-four *daitoku* 大德 (“greatly virtuous”). Unlike the preceding titles, *daitoku* does not indicate a clerical rank, but is a honorific title for monks and probably indicates ordinary practicing monks of no particular rank or reputation. Kazan Hōō was a victim of political struggles and was forced to abdicate by circumstances. His turn to Genshin for spiritual guidance was wholly exceptional, and he did not conduct his life in accord with the rules of the samadhi fellowship. Further, Gonku, Kakuchō, and Genshin had all resigned from their clerical positions at the time they became members. It is clear, therefore, that the samadhi fellowship was an association of nenbutsu practitioners on the whole without rank or official ecclesiastical position.

Next, the eighty-eight participants listed in the latter part of the *Registry* may be broken down into the following: two *zasu* 座主 (former *daisōjō* 大僧正); four *hōin* 法印; four *hōgen* 法眼; two *hokkyō* 法橋; three *gonshōsōzu*; one *gon-risshi* 權律師; three *ajari*; eight monks; sixteen *shami* 沙弥; twenty-four nuns; seven lay men; and six lay women.<sup>5</sup> It is unclear to what extent the dates of activity (or death) of the eighty members who

appear in the latter part of the original *Registry* might suggest the lower limit in the period covered by the record, but the overwhelmingly high percentage of *shami*, nuns, and laypeople is notable. It demonstrates that the principles of the early sect were carried on in the later period.

The second text included under Document C is the Shuryōgon'in *Registry*. As mentioned above, it bears the date 1013 for the start of composition, and selecting five of the members listed in the original *Registry*, it records achievements made during their lives and the circumstances of their deaths. The five are Genshin, who occupies the opening position, followed by Jōkyū Daitoku 貞久大徳, Sōjo Daitoku 相助大徳, Kazan Hōō, and Ryōhan Daitoku 良範大徳. The record concerning Genshin is by far the longest. The dates of death are also recorded for the five: Genshin, tenth day, sixth month, 1017, at age seventy-six; Jōkyū, ninth day, first month, 987, at age twenty-five; Sōjo, 993; Kazan Hōō, eighth day, second month, 1008, at age forty-one; and Ryōhan, fourteenth day, fifth month, 1001, at age twenty. Thus, the list does not necessarily reflect the order of death, and Genshin, who died last, is placed at the beginning. This probably reflects the fact that, as mentioned above, the composition of the Shuryōgon'in *Registry* was hastened by Genshin's illness. This is because the details of Genshin's own death and birth in the Pure Land and his own confessions at death were secrets of the sect that all members were to bear firmly in mind. It is unclear, however, why records of the final moments of life were limited to only five people. There were probably portions that were deliberately omitted, as well as portions that were simply scattered and lost. Incidentally, regarding the terms for "death" in recording the year, an honorific commonly used for emperors (i.e., *hōgyo* 崩御) is used for Kazan Hōō, Genshin's date is for "entrance into nirvana," Jōkyū and Ryōhan are listed as "end of life," and no notation is made for Sōjo.

In Genshin's case alone biographical details are included. This passage became the original source for the numerous later biographies of Genshin. It states that during his life, Genshin never engaged in falsehoods or flattery, and this image of a deeply sincere person is seen throughout. Further, his self-control and temperance in preparation for

death after becoming ill are indicated with detachment. On the morning of the day of his death, he ate as usual, removed hairs from his nostrils, rinsed his mouth, and taking strings attached to the hands of a buddha image and uttering the nenbutsu, passed away as though in sleep. According to prescribed forms, he lay on his right side with head to the north, facing the west. After these details, experiences of disciples are recorded in which Genshin appeared in a dream or as a spirit. Finally, as the remembrance of the writer, it is noted that Genshin often said that he would probably attain birth in the Pure Land, but that it would be on a lotus in the lowest level of the land of bliss.

Kazan Hōō died in the capital and the destination of his spirit is not recorded. Jōkyū Daitoku, a young practicing monk, is said to have died an agonizing death enveloped in the raging flames of hell. Concerning Sōjo Daitoku, a reclusive *hijiri* 聖 and disciple of Zōga 增賀, it is not recorded whether he was pursued by visions of his evils or beheld Amida's welcome at the end. A message received in a dream by a friend is given as testimony, holding out the possibility of birth in the Pure Land. Finally Ryōhan, who died at the age of twenty, is said to have spent his daily life in nenbutsu samadhi, but at the time of death, he stopped those who attended his final moments from chanting the nenbutsu in unison, and placing his palms together in silence, faced the buddha image and died peacefully. Genshin was still alive when Ryōhan died, and at that time he composed and read an invocation, expressing the wish that the spirit of the deceased would come to rest in the Pure Land and that he would be able to meet those who had gone before him.

From the deaths of the five members described in the *Shuryōgon'in Registry*, we see that there are a variety of patterns. They indicate that great degree of uncertainty regarding the possibility of the appearance of Amida's welcoming, which is described with great anticipation in the section on the "Rites at the Time of Death" in *Essentials for Birth*. The variability in the circumstances at death appears quite natural when we consider the differences in the personalities and conditions of illness of the nenbutsu practitioners facing death. Here we must note, however, that as seen in the examples of Genshin and Sōjo, it is recorded that the

deceased appeared in dreams or as spirits to disciples or friends, and this record was offered as evidence for the attainment of birth in the Pure Land. The living experienced the presentiment of a miraculous visitation, and once a sign had appeared, it was viewed as sacred evidence for detecting and confirming the destination (the Pure Land) of the deceased. In this way they overcame and sublated the pessimistic circumstances of the actual scene of death, the suffering and despair, and in expectation of a chance meeting in a miraculous dream, sought to revive their sense of solidarity with the dead. The *Registry* offers proof, through the medium of spiritual revelations, of the sworn community of the living and the dead.

The Pledges (Document B) discussed before form an outline for ritually actualizing the phase of death that is equivalent to birth in the Pure Land through the separation of the spirit and the body. The *Registry* (Document C), by contrast, is a joint covenant for the reunion, in a mythological context, of the dead (spirit) and the living sect members. Here, the dualistic structures of defiled death-purifying death (Document A) and corpse-spirit (Document B) are transformed into a bipolar pattern of the living (those remaining in the defiled world) and the dead (those who attained the Pure Land).

It is impossible to explore here the lineage of the two registries as a record of the dead from the broad perspective of the history of Japanese religion, but we note that with regard to the Samadhi of Twenty-five fellowship, it is clear that already at the stage of the development of the Pledge, keeping a register was viewed as a matter of some importance. Genshin's twelve-article version of the Pledges makes no mention of it, but in Yasutane's eight-article version, at the end of the eighth article, explanation is given. It is stated that the members of the association should, with the dead in mind, observe the rules of morality while alive, perform good, and make offerings. In other words, although the realm of the dead and the realm of the living are separated, the dead must not be forgotten. For this reason, it is stated that the names of the dead should be listed in a register, the day of the month that they died recorded at the Ōjō-in, and at the regular nenbutsu meeting each month,

the name of Amida Buddha should be chanted.

Further, in the postscript to the eight-article Pledge, it is stated that nuns and laypeople also may join the samadhi fellowship. This is also clear from the fact that among the eighty members listed in the latter part of the original *Registry*, we find a large number of men and women laity and nuns, but Yasutane goes on to say that if members of the association attain birth in the Pure Land, the still living members will all aspire to receive their guidance. From the stance of the basic thought of *Essentials for Birth*, only Amida Buddha can guide and save human beings in this defiled world; hence, from the viewpoint of Genshin's Pure Land theology, the idea that persons born in the Pure Land can guide the living must be seen as heretical. It is probably for this reason that in Genshin's twelve-article version of the Pledge, this matter receives no mention.

From the opposite perspective, however, it seems natural that the members of the association remaining in this defiled world should rely on their relations with their fellows who have been born in the Pure Land through having received a vision of welcome, and that they should aspire to receive guidance to birth in the Pure Land. It is not difficult to imagine that one impetus behind the composition of the *Registry* was this expectation of the living with regard to the dead. As I have stated repeatedly, however, while death might be certain for all the members, it was by no means a foregone conclusion that they would receive visions of Amida's welcome and attain birth in the Pure Land. Thus, the Shuryōgon'in *Registry* sought to overcome this invisible barrier through the insertion of the mythical element of spiritual revelation. It is the pattern of the biographies set forth in the Shuryōgon'in *Registry* that indicates the original form of the mythologization of charisma expressed in the biographies of persons who have attained birth in the Pure Land, biographies of eminent monks (*kōsōden* 高僧伝), accounts of miraculous occurrences (*reigenki* 靈驗記) and other records, and that provides the framework of legend as myths of birth in the Pure Land.

Above, I have sought to clarify the problem of death and birth in the Pure Land through an investigation of Genshin's theology, by

analyzing Documents A, B, and C. As a result, based on the characteristics seen in the foundations underlying each of these documents, it is possible to draw the following conceptual formulation.

In *Essentials for Birth* (A), the death that is pondered harbors a tension between the images of defiled death and purifying death, which exhibits visual characteristics of religious experience. In the Pledges (B), the oppositional relationship between images is broken down, through the rites for pacifying and sending off the spirit, into corpse (mausoleum) and spirit (Pure Land). Finally, in the *Registry* (C), the two poles of the living and the dead form a mythic community possessing an expanse of time and space.

The process of successive formation from Document A to B to C forms a typology corresponding to movement from representation to ritual to myth. This formulaic relationship forms a code for binding together microcosm (individual representation) and macrocosm (myth in expansive space) through manipulative action (spells and religious rites). Thus, at the end of the ancient period in Japan, the problem of death and birth in the Pure Land was freed by Genshin and the samadhi fellowship from an indigenous belief system and came to illuminate an abstract, formal structure for interpreting the role and function of death in general and its transformations.

## 5. The Ethos of Death: The “Ceremony of the Samadhi of Twenty-five” (*Nijūgo-zanmai shiki*)

The problems of vision, pacification and sending off of the spirit, and spirit revelation in relation to death and the corpse are the most important factors in the conception and rituals of death, but they do not include the opportunity for directly breaking through to the consciousness of death or the deep levels of self-awareness. Of course, it is difficult to integrate such awareness or consciousness into a formula such as the relationship or chart outlined above. Among the materials related to the samadhi fellowship there is a document which may be classified in the sphere of the psychology of death; hence, I will touch on it here.

The opening chapter of *Essentials for Birth*, “Abhorning This Defiled World,” divides defiled existence into the six realms of hell, famished spirits, beasts, warring demons, humans, and devas, and begins by describing the terrifying pain and suffering they hold. The six realms are the world of transmigration that possesses endless extension in terms of both linear time and shared time. Further, they are the world of the dead who, upon dying, return to saṃsāric existence. *Essentials for Birth*, however, while encompassing these concepts, seeks to grasp the six courses as six aspects of the actual world. In other words, for Genshin, the six courses were above all the content of the self-awareness of aspirants for birth in the Pure Land, and at the same time, they were the distinct means for apprehending the world.

To take up the Pledges next, the eight-article version dictates (in articles one and two) that members should, through rites for the dead, guide beings who have fallen into the six courses of existence to the Pure Land, and the twelve-article version also indicates that one should watch over the sick in the Ōjoin and utter the nenbutsu so that they will not fall into the three evil courses of hell, famished spirits, and beasts (article eight). In the Pledges, the six courses symbolize a taboo space of darkness that should be avoided through ritual.

Finally, in the third set of documents, the *Registries*, the statement regarding birth in the section on Ryōhan Daitoku in the Shuryōgon’in *Registry* is particularly problematic. As mentioned before, after Ryōhan’s death, Genshin composed a prayer and read it aloud, expressing the fervent wish that his spirit not fall back into the six courses, but come to rest in the Pure Land.

Thus, Documents A, B, and C take up the problem of the six courses from distinct stances and perspectives, but they all deal with the two aspects of the dying person’s awareness of having committed evil acts and the spirit’s journey and destination in another world after death. Underlying these concerns is the issue of how the dying person can transcend the events experienced during the process of death, and in this connection, the time and space of a reverse utopia formed by the life-spirit and death-spirit of a single person are depicted. These conceptions

concerning the six courses were organized and discussed in another writing also attributed to Genshin, the “Samadhi of Twenty-five Ceremony” (*Nijūgo-zanmai shiki* 二十五三昧式). This writing is prefaced by a vow of aspiration signed by the members of the Samadhi of Twenty-five fellowship (twenty-five persons), after which are passages concisely describing each of the realms of the six courses. The entire piece is formed so that it may be chanted in chorus together with the nenbutsu. The date of the joint signing of the vow of aspiration is recorded as the twenty-third day, fifth month, 986, approximately four months before the composition of Yasutane’s eight-article Pledge. It appears that this date is in fact the official inauguration of the Samadhi of Twenty-five fellowship.

According to this writing, the members were to gather on a fixed day each month to conduct uninterrupted nenbutsu and chant the *Amida Sutra* and other scriptural writings in order to save beings who had fallen into the various realms of the six courses and who were thus wandering in samsara. The merit of the nenbutsu and the sutra chanting was dedicated to the spirits of the dead who had fallen into the six paths, but the tortures of the six paths were, at the same time, unavoidable difficulties for those who remained alive. In our declining days, when we have grown old, we suddenly become aware that we are hemmed about by an undefinable anxiety, wandering in samsara, transmigrating through the six courses, with good and evil arising alternatively. After stating this, the “Samadhi Ceremony” enters upon its central theme, the description of the six courses, beginning with hell, famished spirits, and beasts. Thus, the journey of the six paths is a kind of metaphysical caricature for the purpose of illuminating an other-dimensional darkness. This is a grotesque and strange space, compressed by forces from both this world and the other world, an imaginary and ailing world in which suppressed notions rush wildly about.

The six courses given typical form in the “Samadhi Ceremony” are carefully selected and summarized versions of the six courses depicted in *Essentials for Birth*. In this way, they were made the established form of the six courses, through the centripetal and realistic power of

representation of the ethos of death in the "Samadhi Ceremony." The sobered consciousness, facing death, is gradually reined in and tamed. In this intermediary realm (the six courses of existence), visual and audio hallucinations suffused with terror and pain may be summoned up by the surfacing of "visions of one's evils," but further, together with the emergence of "visions of Amida's welcoming," with the stilling of the consciousness, this may be replaced by a realm of dreamlike visions, and gradually one may be enveloped in the eternal darkness of deep sleep. At this time, the consciousness of the six courses, which are an intermediary sphere between life and death, manifests an ecstasy of aesthetic pleasure, and this condition of extreme intoxication at the very brink of death, or vision of religious ecstasy, temporarily fabricates the ethos of death as rebirth enveloped in dreamlike radiance.

At the close of *Heike monogatari* 平家物語, in the chapter "The Anointment Ceremony" (*Kanjō no maki* 灌頂の巻), Kenreimon'in, in reduced circumstances, looks back on vicissitudes of her own life and that of her clan that led from splendor to watery death and likens them to transmigration through the six courses. This plaintive conclusion of *Heike monogatari* may be said to resemble the experience of dreamlike vision and Pure Land rebirth of the aspirants of the samadhi fellowship. It evokes with haunting and incomparable beauty the process by which the sense of impermanence of the "vision of evils," filled with cruelty and brutality, gradually modulates and heightens into the realm of the ecstasy of the "vision of Amida's welcoming."

*Heike monogatari*, completed two centuries after Genshin's death, through the catalyst of the period of unprecedented upheaval in the country beginning in the Jishō 治承 and Juei 寿永 eras, succeeded in sublimating and transforming the Pure Land Buddhist ethos of death and experience of birth in the Pure Land developed by Genshin and his fellow aspirants into the experience of the entire society.

