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Mentally Constructing What Already Exists:  
The Pure Land Thought of Chan Master Jixing Chewu  
際醒徹悟 (1741-1810)

I. INTRODUCTION

One aspect of Chinese Pure Land history that has begun receiving attention during the past twenty years is the existence of a widely-recognized series of "patriarchs" (zu 祖), whose number stands at thirteen (although one list I have seen contains fourteen names).<sup>1</sup> These are figures whom Pure Land devotees acknowledge as shapers, defenders, and revivers of the tradition. Twelfth in this series is the mid-Qing dynasty figure of Jixing Chewu 際醒徹悟, a Chan monk in the Linji line who, in mid-life, abandoned the practice of Chan and devoted himself exclusively to the Pure Land path. After this change of direction, he put his energy into building up his home temple, the Zifu Temple 資福寺 on Hongluo Mountain 紅螺山 in Hebei, into a center for Pure Land practice, and his talks and essays focused on issues related to Pure Land practice, philosophy, and apologetics. His essays, as well as notes recorded by disciples during his dharma-talks, were later compiled into a relatively small work called "The Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Chewu" (*Chewu chanshi yulu* 徹悟禪師語錄).<sup>2</sup> The writings contained in this brief

1. See for example YU 1981: 36-52 for a survey of patriarchs and an account of the formation of the list. The only source of which I am aware for fourteen patriarchs is found in DAOYUAN 1978, p. 330-331, which lists Cizhou 慈舟 as the fourteenth after Yinguang. However, from DAOYUAN's remarks this appears to be a part of a personal crusade to add Cizhou to the list, a move that has so far failed to attract wide support.
2. *Chewu chanshi yulu*, ZZ 109: 750-790. Another edition is found in OUYI 1980, 2: 589-664. The thirteenth patriarch, the late-Qing /early Republican era figure Yinguang, also privately printed an edition that re-arranged the different parts of this work and gave them new section titles without altering the actual content, under the title *Mengdong chanshi yi ji* 夢東禪師遺集 (An anthology of Chan Master Mengdong's [i.e., Chewu's] literary remains). All references to the *Dai Nihon Zoku Zōkyō* will be given as "ZZ," and the volume and page numbers that follow will be taken from the Taiwan reprint edition.

anthology show a very gifted literary mind at work: full of parallel phrases, literary allusions, and clear, concise writing, it is a joy to read. The contents reveal his wide learning in several branches of Buddhist thought: perfection of wisdom, Tiantai 天台, Huayan, and Chan. His overriding concern is to generate a desire on the part of his reader to follow in the Pure Land path, and to settle any intellectual doubts that the reader might have by demonstrating that Pure Land practice and soteriology are fully compatible with the highest and most speculative Buddhist philosophy. In addition, it contains stele inscriptions, forewords and prefaces to other works, and his famous “One Hundred *Gāthās* on the Teachings” (*Jiaoyi bai jie*), a set of one hundred four-line verses all beginning with the line “The single word Amitābha...” (*yi ju Mituo*) and going on to praise the wonderful effects and doctrinal significance of this name.

In this article, we will begin our examination of this figure with a résumé of his life, and then look more closely at his methods of Pure Land practice, and his incorporation of mind-only thought into Pure Land theory as the basis for practice.

## II. THE LIFE OF CHEWU

There is only one source for Chewu’s biography, and that is the “Brief Sketch of the Life of Chan Master Chewu” (*Chewu chanshi xing lue* 徹悟禪師行略) written by the monk Mulian and appended to the end of “The Recorded Sayings of Chan Master Chewu” (*Chewu chanshi yulu* 徹悟禪師語錄).<sup>3</sup> This brief outline of the master’s life is remarkably un-hagiographical. Mulian claims that he heard everything from eyewitnesses and Chewu’s close associates, and that he intentionally presents his material in a straightforward, unembroidered manner. The result is a true biography that is very modern in its style and content.

Chewu’s ordination name was Jixing; “Chewu,” along with “Natang 訥堂,” were his style-names (*zi* 字), and he was also occasionally called (*hao* 號) Mengdong 夢東. He came from Fengrun County 豐潤縣 in what is now Hebei Province, the son of a family surnamed Ma. He was a gifted student and an avid reader in his youth, taking in the classics,

3. ZZ 109: 788-790. Other sources recount Chewu’s life, but they are all summaries or abbreviations of this work. See, for example, the entry “Jixing” in the *Foguang Da Cidian* 1988, 5947c-5948a; and PENG 1987: 360-363. As a way of demonstrating the variability in the Pure Land patriarchal tradition, this last source lists him as the eleventh, not the twelfth, patriarch.

histories, and anything else he came across. As Mulian says, “There is nothing that he did not survey.” The course of his life was changed at the age of twenty-two by a serious illness, which had the effect on him, as it has had on many other famous Buddhist figures, of awakening him to the evanescence of life. As soon as he recovered, he left home and went to the Sansheng Hermitage (*sansheng an* 三聖菴), in Fangshan County 房山縣, also in Hebei, and took refuge under the monk Rongchi 榮池, who tonsured him. The following year, he received the full precepts from the Vinaya Master Hengshi 恆實律師 of the Xiuyun Temple 岫雲寺, twenty-five kilometers west of Beijing.<sup>4</sup> For the first few years after ordination, he immersed himself in doctrinal and textual studies, attending lectures on a variety of scriptures including the *Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment*, the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Diamond Sūtra*, and the *Sūrangamasamādhisūtra*. He travelled to one monastery after another, and eventually mastered the teachings of all the schools. In the course of his studies, he concentrated especially on the Faxiang teachings of consciousness-only, teachings that he would adapt later in life to explain the Pure Land.

He also began Chan practice sometime during this period, and had his breakthrough in the year 1768, while practicing under the master Cuiru 粹如 at the Guangtong Temple 廣通寺. As Mulian writes, “Master, student, and the Way all came together, and he received the mind-seal [from Cuiru] in the 36th generation of Linji.” Thus, at the age of twenty-seven, Chewu was already an accomplished scholar and a certified Chan master. Five years later, Cuiru moved away to the Wanshou Temple 萬壽寺, and Chewu remained at the Guangtong Temple to continue “leading the assembly in the practice of Chan.” He remained there as an eminent Chan teacher for the next fourteen years, and his fame spread far and wide. Mulian credits Chewu with contributing to a revival of Chan teaching and practice.

Despite the success of his career as a Chan teacher, Chewu felt there was still something missing. He himself later wrote:

From the *guisi* 癸巳 year of the Qianlong reign period (1773) I was the abbot of the Guangtong Temple in Jingdu 京都. I led the people in Chan practice, talking here and there, and my words were recorded. In the *dingxi* 丁酉 year (1777)<sup>5</sup> my

4. Also known as the Tanzhe Temple 潭柘寺. There is an entry on this temple in the *Foguang da cidian*, 6106b-6107a.
5. The text in the *Zoku Zōkyō* gives this date as the *dingmao* 丁卯 year (1807), which is clearly incorrect. The version of the text found in the *Jingtu shiyao*, first

store of karma was deep and heavy, and so the conditions for all [kinds of] illnesses increased.<sup>6</sup>

He began to look at the example of the Song dynasty Chan master and scholar-monk Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904-975), a genuinely enlightened master living in times that Chewu considered far more conducive to the dharma who had turned to the Pure Land. Reflecting on Yanshou's example of reciting Amitābha's name 100,000 times daily in hopes of gaining rebirth, Chewu thought, "how much more in this age of decline would it be especially right and proper to follow and accept [this path], coming to rest one's mind in the Pure Land?<sup>7</sup> He began to turn away from Chan practice and toward recitation, and Mulian reports that he eventually set aside only a short period of each day for receiving guests, and devoted the rest of his time to worship and recitation of Amitābha's name.

In the 57th year of the Qianlong emperor (i.e., 1792), Chewu accepted an invitation from the Juesheng Temple 覺生寺 near Beijing to come and serve as its abbot, a post he held for the next eight years.<sup>8</sup> During this time, he restored the original buildings and added several others "so that all the old and sick could have a place to go for help, and beginners would have a convenient [place] in which to recite and practice." Both resident clergy and the local people admired him for his devotion and strict observance of the precepts, and many came to hear him preach or to receive advice and encouragement in their practice.

In 1800, he moved once again to the Zifu Temple on Hongluo Mountain 紅螺山 near Beijing, where he remained for the last ten years of his life. During this time, he carried on as before: teaching disciples, restoring the temple, meeting with lay devotees, and lecturing. In the third month of 1810, he began to have premonitions that his life was nearing its end, and he made arrangements for his own cremation and

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published in 1678 and reprinted in expanded form in 1930 by Ven. Yinguang to include the *Chewu chanshi yulu* has the *dingxi* 丁酉 year (1777), which seems much more likely. See OUYI Zhixu 藕益智旭 1980, 2: 593.

6. ZZ 109: 750b10-11.

7. ZZ 109: 789a1-2.

8. There is an entry on this temple in the *Foguang da cidian* 1988, 6796b-c. It was constructed in 1733, and its most notable feature, according to the dictionary, is its large, eight-sided bronze bell, which is 9.6 meters in height and inscribed with several sūtras, mantras, and illustrations.

chose a senior disciple to succeed him as abbot. At one point, he assembled the resident clergy and admonished them with these words:

The Pure Land dharma-gate covers all [beings] of the three roots [i.e., inferior, middling, superior]; there is no level of capability that it does not take in. For many years now I have labored along with the assembly to build up this *daochang* 道場. It was originally for the sake of drawing [people] from all directions to practice pure karma together. It would behoove everyone always to observe the rules and procedures I have set up; you are not permitted to alter course. This is so that perhaps the old monks and the assembly will not be burdened with any hardships.<sup>9</sup>

About two weeks before his death, he detected the first slight symptoms of the illness that would take him. He called together his disciples and set them to the task of helping him remain focused on the Pure Land by reciting the Buddha's name by his bedside, and he began to see signs that he would be reborn there: innumerable pennants and banners filled the sky in the west. When his disciples expressed sadness that he was leaving them, he told them: "I have arrived in the realm of the sages – you should be happy for your master. Why do you remain in suffering?"

On the seventeenth day of the twelfth month, he reported having seen a vision of Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta in the west, and told his followers that he fully expected to see the Buddha Amitābha himself that day. His disciples chanted the name more intensely, and Chewu said that with every *nian*, he could see more of the Buddha's body. He died that day, sitting upright with his hands in the Amitābhā-mudrā. The assembly could smell an unusual fragrance filling the room. After the first seven days of the funeral period, the master's face looked like he was still alive; it was filled with compassion and peace. Hair that was white at the end of his life turned black, and was extraordinarily lustrous. After the second seven days, he was placed in the vault, and after the third seven days he was cremated. Over one hundred relics (*śarīra*) were collected, and his followers, respecting his wishes, placed his remains in the common pagoda rather than construct a special structure just for him.

Chewu died at the age of seventy, having been a monk for 49 years. Mulian, who wrote the master's biography a decade or so later, says nothing of his recognition as a "patriarch" of the Pure Land School, but Yinguang's (印光, 1861-1940) 1933 expanded edition of Peng Jiqing's (彭際清, 1740-1796), 1783 *Jingtu sheng xian lu* (Record of the sages

9. ZZ 109:789a15-18.

and worthies of the Pure Land) labels him the eleventh patriarch,<sup>10</sup> and OGASAWARA Senshū believes that the popularity of this anthology of biographies and rebirth stories may have contributed to his acceptance throughout China as such<sup>11</sup>

### III. CHEWU'S METHODS OF PURE LAND PRACTICE

At different times in Pure Land history, masters have recommended various forms of practice to their followers. In China, Lushan Huiyuan 廬山慧遠 (344-416) and Tiantai 天台 founder Zhiyi 智顛 (538-597) taught forms of meditative contemplation suitable for rigorously disciplined practitioners. Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密 (780-841) described four different methods of *nianfo* 念佛, and even today one can find a work that describes forty-eight different methods of *nianfo*, each of which serves a different purpose or is suited to a different circumstance.<sup>12</sup> How did Chewu envision the methods of Pure Land practice and what results did he expect from them?

A. *The prerequisites.* In concert with other Pure Land writers, Chewu recommended that practitioners develop certain beliefs and attitudes prior to the actual practice of *nianfo*. The first was *bodhicitta* (*putixin* 菩提心), the altruistic intention to dedicate the merit of all one's practices to the benefit of other living beings.<sup>13</sup> After that, one needed faith and vows. Faith came first, and was indeed the basis for the generation of vows: "One need only have deep faith in the Buddha's words, and in dependence upon them generate a vow to hold on to his name (*chi ming* 持名)."<sup>14</sup>

As to vows, Chewu explains these both in terms of the practitioner's own aspiration to achieve rebirth in Sukhāvātī, and Amitābha's vows to

10. PENG 1987: 360.

11. OGASAWARA 1951: 10. As OGASAWARA notes, the list of patriarchs of the Pure Land school has undergone many changes as different authorities proposed their own versions. Modern usage makes Chewu the 12th, not the 11th patriarch, as one can see in the monastic breviary most in use in Taiwan, the *Fomen bibeikesong ben*, which includes a liturgy for honoring the patriarchs on page 118-119, and in the list given by Ven. DAOYUAN in his study of Pure Land's "globalization" (*shijie hua* 世界化) in DAOYUAN 1978: 330-331.

12. ZHENG 1991.

13. ZZ 109: 754a10.

14. ZZ 109: 758b2; see also 109: 769b8-10.

bring rebirth about. In a long hortatory essay designed to engender faith and vows on the part of his audience, Chewu relates the following story:

For example, take Ying Ke 瑩珂. He was a man who had not given up alcohol and meat. Later, he began reading biographies of those who have gone to rebirth. With each story he read, he gradually gained more willingness until at last he gave up the food [and] recited the Buddha's name. After seven days, he felt the Buddha appearing to him, comforting him and saying, "You have ten years remaining to your life. Recite the Buddha's name well, and after ten years I will receive you." Ke replied, "In this Sahā world, it is easy to lose true recitation. I wish that I could attain rebirth even sooner, and serve all of the worthies." The Buddha said, "Since you have made this wish, I will come for you in three days." Three days later, he attained rebirth.<sup>15</sup>

At the end of this essay, after presenting several such inspirational stories of vows made and aspirations granted, Chewu drives home his point:

Ah! There is nothing that the Buddha will not achieve for the sake of sentient beings. He is truly a kind and compassionate mother and father. If one wishes rapid rebirth [in the Pure Land, as in the story of Ying Ke 瑩珂], then he leads them to rapid rebirth. [...] Thus, he shows kindness to all; how is it that he should withhold his compassion from me alone? He brings to pass the vows of all beings; how is it that he should frustrate my vows alone? [...] Therefore, these three seeds: faith, vow, and practice, are exhausted by the single word vow.<sup>16</sup>

Besides faith and vows (and practice, mentioned in the above quotation and to which we will come shortly), a list of four requisite states of mind appears in another essay. Here Chewu says:

In *nianfo*, one needs to produce four kinds of mind. What are these four? First, from beginningless time up to the present one has created karma; one must generate a mind of shame. Second, having had an opportunity to hear this dharma gate, one must generate a mind of joy. Third, one's karmic obstructions are beginningless, and this dharma-gate is difficult to encounter, and so one ought to generate a mind of great sorrow. Fourth, as the Buddha is thus compassionate, one ought to generate a mind of gratitude. If [even] one of these four minds are present, then one's pure karma<sup>17</sup> will be fruitful.<sup>18</sup>

15. ZZ 109: 757a16-b3.

16. ZZ 109: 757b9-16.

17. *jing ye* 淨業, a term frequently used in Pure Land writings to refer specifically to Pure Land practices. The *locus classicus* of this term is the *Guan wuliangshou fo jing* 觀無量壽佛經 (or *Meditation Sūtra*), where the Buddha Śākyamuni uses this term to refer to the practices and attitudes that will lead to rebirth in Sukhāvāṭī. See, for example, T.365, 12:341c8.

18. ZZ 109: 772b5-8.



This list of four prerequisite states of mind does not appear in any of the three Pure Land scriptures, although it may come from another source within the Chinese Pure Land tradition.

One item that Chewu explicitly leaves out of the list of prerequisites for practice is confession of faults. Chewu states that the lack of any need for confession in fact constitutes one of Pure Land's advantages over the other dharma-gates. He says:

Moreover, the other gates of cultivation require one to confess one's present karma; if any manifest karma is not confessed, then it constitutes an obstacle on the Way, leaving one without a path for advancement. But the one who practices pure karma goes to rebirth carrying their karma with them; there is no need to confess one's karma. This is because when the mind reaches the point of reciting the Buddha's name just once, one is able to extinguish the faults [accumulated over] 8,000,000,000 *kalpas*.<sup>19</sup>

And so, with these preliminaries in place, one is ready to begin practice. What does one then do?

*B. Oral/mental invocation and the goal of attaining rebirth.* The term *nianfo* 念佛 is ambiguous: the first character, *nian*, can mean either to contemplate or think about, or it can mean to recite aloud. Thus, in reading Pure Land texts, one must always attend to the context within which an individual author discusses *nianfo* in order to clarify whether he or she means oral invocation and recitation or mental contemplation and visualization. In the case of Chewu, we find evidence that he taught *nianfo* at various times in both senses, and so extra care is needed to determine which meaning he gives in any given passage. In this section, we will look at the places where Chewu uses terms such as *chi ming* 持名 (“hold the name”), *nian yi/duo sheng* 念一/多聲 (“recite one/many sound[s]”), or *cheng ming* 程名 (“invoke the name”), and see how he envisioned this aspect of practice and what results he expected it to bring.

Aside from the term *nianfo* 念佛 itself, the term that Chewu most commonly uses for Pure Land practice is *chi ming* 持名, “to hold the name.” In the Pure Land scriptures, this term (or its expanded form *zhichi minghao* 執持名號) does not necessarily mean oral recitation of the name, although such practice is not excluded either. For example, Luís GÓMEZ's translation of the relevant passage from the shorter *Sukhāvativyūhasūtra* reads as follows:

19. ZZ 109:758b8-11.

Śāriputra, if good men or good women hear this explanation of the qualities of the Buddha Amita, and embrace his name (*zhichi minghao* 執持名號), and keep it in mind single-mindedly and without distraction, be it for one day, or for two, for three, for four, for five, for six, or for seven days, then, when their lives come to an end, the Buddha Amita, together with his holy entourage, will appear before them. At the time of their death, their minds free of any distorted views, they will be able to be reborn forthwith in Amita Buddha's Land of Supreme Bliss.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, the final instructions of Śākyamuni Buddha at the end of the *Meditation Sūtra* are: "Hold well to these words. 'Holding these words' means to hold the name of the Buddha Amitāyus."<sup>21</sup> In both cases, the emphasis is on the name itself rather than on any meditative visualization of the Buddha, his retinue, or his land. One hears the name, and one keeps it firmly in mind. Whether one does so through spoken recitation or mental concentration appears to be left to the practitioner's discretion.

Chewu uses the term *chi ming* 持名 in exactly this sense. At times he clearly uses the term in the sense of oral invocation, as when he says, "when one holds to the name with a mind of faith and aspiration, each recitation will be a seed for a nine [-petalled] lotus. Reciting one time is the proper causal basis for rebirth."<sup>22</sup> Here, "reciting one time" is my rendering of *chi yi sheng* 持一聲, where *sheng* ("sound") is a numerary adjunct used for counting a number of audible repetitions. Nevertheless, in other places where the term occurs, he seems to mean something more like keeping the name in one's mind and letting it dominate one's thoughts at all times. For example, in the middle of a discussion of the basic identity of the Buddha that is recited or contemplated (*nian*) with the practitioner, he says, "the causal mind of the self that is itself the Buddha, with profound faith and total resolve, holds the name exclusively and sincerely."<sup>23</sup> In the context of this discussion within which this statement appears, it is clear that Chewu is recommending that the practitioner keep the name in mind at all times, understanding that the

20. GÓMEZ 1996: 148. His translation of the same passage from the Sanskrit text appears on page 19. Interestingly, it omits the words "this explanation of the qualities of" and stipulates only that people should hear the name itself and bring it to mind. Thus, the Sanskrit focuses more concretely than the Chinese on the sense of hearing the name and remembering it.

21. T.465, 12:346b15-16.

22. ZZ 109: 754b10-11.

23. ZZ 109:772a13-14.

presence of the name both realizes and brings about the identity of his or her mind with the Buddha.

In the final analysis, we must say that Chewu was indifferent on the issue of oral versus mental invocation of the name, and he used the term *chi ming* 持名 freely in both senses, sometimes emphasizing one or the other explicitly as in the examples given above, and other times leaving the issue ambiguous. We find in his writings no attempt to categorize or systematize oral and mental methods of *chi ming* 持名 as we see in, for instance, Zhuhong 祿宏's "audible," "silent," and "half-audible and half-silent" typology with its recommendations as to when or for whom one or the other was most appropriate.<sup>24</sup> What mattered to Chewu was that, whatever means one used, the name, and not a visualized image, predominated in one's mind every waking moment.

The reason for this emphasis lay in Chewu's explanation of the relationship between Amitābha's name and his reality. Chewu equated the name "Amitābha" and the title "Buddha" with the existence of all the virtues that enable a being to merit the name "Amitābha Buddha": "The Buddha that appears in an instant of thought establishes his name with all of his virtue; outside of this virtue, there is no name. By means of the name one calls virtue in; outside of that name, there is no virtue."<sup>25</sup> In this and similar passages, Chewu appears to assume that Amitābha could not even establish his own name as a Buddha if he did not exercise the merits and virtues by which he earned that title; the name depends on the reality that gives it validity. Therefore, the simple name "Amitābha" held in the mind or on the lips stands as a placeholder for the full visualized image of the Buddha and opens the mind to the Buddha's full reality. This may perhaps serve to account for Chewu's apparent lack of interest in training students to perform the visualization techniques found in the *Meditation Sūtra* and his emphasis on the practice of *chi ming* 持名.

Finally, it is quite clear from almost every passage in the *Recorded Sayings* that Chewu takes for granted that the goal of practice is the attainment of rebirth in the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī. The stories he recounts to illustrate the power of even the most frivolously-made vows all show how beings attain the rebirth that they desire, and he devotes much space to instilling a longing for the Pure Land in his readers.

24. YÜ 1981: 59.

25. ZZ 109: 762b5. See also 109: 767b7.

However, the question for the next section is: Is rebirth in the Pure Land at the end of the present life the *only* goal he imagined for his students and followers? Or did *chi ming* 持名 bring other benefits in this life?

C. *Mental contemplation and the goal of enlightenment.* The first essay in Chewu's *Recorded Sayings* begins this way:

The essence of all the gates of teaching is to illuminate the mind; the essence of all the gates of practice is to purify the mind. Now for illuminating the mind, there is nothing to compare with *nianfo* 念佛. Recollect the Buddha (*yi fo* 憶佛), contemplate the Buddha (*nianfo*), and you will surely see the Buddha manifesting before you. This is *not* a provisional skillful means! One attains to the opening of the mind oneself. Is this kind of Buddha-contemplation (*nianfo*) not the essence of illuminating the mind? Again, for purifying the mind, there is also nothing to compare with *nianfo*. When one thought conforms [to the Buddha], that one thought is Buddha; when thought after thought conforms [to the Buddha], then thought after thought is Buddha. When a clear jewel drops into turbid water, the turbid water cannot but become clear; when the Buddha's name enters into a chaotic mind, that mind cannot help but [be] Buddha. Is this kind of Buddha-contemplation not the essence of purifying the mind?<sup>26</sup>

Thus, at the very outset we get clues as to the results that Chewu expected to obtain from the practice of *nianfo*: the illumination of the mind, the purification of the mind, and a vision of the Buddha Amitābha, all accomplishments that are to come about not after death, but in this very life. Throughout his writings, he discussed (a) the way in which *nianfo* had its effects instantaneously, (b) the way in which it caused practitioners to manifest their innate Buddha-mind, and (c) the need to persevere in the practice every moment over a lifetime in order to maintain the identity of the self and the Buddha and assure the attainment of rebirth. We will examine these three aspects of his teaching in turn.

(a) Chewu saw the mind as an ongoing process of thinkings that could radically alter their course from one moment to the next. He reminds his reader in several places that thought creates karma, and karma has only ten directions into which it can lead one: the traditional ten realms of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, śrāvakas, gods, asuras, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-denzens. He says:

With the manifestation of a single moment of the mind, all of reality can become delusion and all delusion can become reality. On my last day there is no change [in my fundamental nature], and on my last day I will follow my conditioning.

Now if it is not the conditioning of the Buddha-realm and the thought of the Buddha-realm, then I will have thoughts of one of the other nine realms. If it is not one of the three vehicles [of śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, or bodhisattva], then I will have thoughts of the six worldly paths. If I do not have thoughts of [the realms of] gods and humans, then I will have thoughts of the three evil paths. If I do not have thoughts of [the realms of] animals and hungry ghosts, then I will have thoughts of the hells. As an ordinary being, I cannot but have thoughts; only a Buddha has accomplished [the feat of] having the substance of the mind empty of all thoughts. [...] If a thought arises, then it must fall into one of the ten realms; there is no thought that subsists outside of the ten realms. Every thought that arises is a condition for receiving [future] rebirths. There is no-one who knows this principle and yet fails to *nianfo*.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, for Chewu, every instant was a pivotal moment in which one's fate could be decided and one's trajectory altered. The law of cause-and-effect meant that the contents of one's mind set one on a certain path. Since everyone had thoughts at every moment (fully-enlightened Buddhas excepted), then their path was set or re-set at every moment. Since there were only ten possible directions to go, then one's path must of necessity be chosen from among those ten. The most desirable path, as he thought should be obvious to all, was that of the Buddhas, and to put oneself on that path, one had to *nianfo*. That meant, as outlined above, to practice *chi ming* 持名, to hold the name which, as the vessel of all the Buddha's virtues, was the Buddha itself.

(b) Based on this principle, Chewu could assert that allowing the Buddha's name to dominate one's mind for a moment made it identical with the Buddha in that moment. He stated the matter in this way:

What is "being a Buddha"? "Being a Buddha" is just reciting the Buddha's name and contemplating the Buddha's proper and dependent [recompense]. Thus, it is easy. A sūtra says, "When your mind thinks of the Buddha, then it is the thirty-two marks and the 80 minor characteristics." How could this not mean that thinking of the Buddha entails being the Buddha? And becoming the Buddha means that one is the Buddha.<sup>28</sup>

In a later essay, Chewu elaborates on this idea further. When one's mind is filled with Amitābha Buddha (even if only through holding the name

27. ZZ 109: 752b14-753a2.

28. ZZ 109:754b18-755a3. The term "proper recompense" (*zheng bao* 正報) and "dependent recompense" (*yi bao* 依報) refer respectively to the fruition of a Buddha's pure karma in terms of his own natural attributes (stature, adornments, intelligence, wisdom, strength, and so on) and in terms of his environment (land, dwelling, retinue, and so on).

in mind without any other mental imagery), then it becomes identical to the Buddha in that instant:

Now if at this present moment, my mind is focused on Amitābha, the Western Region, and on seeking rebirth in the Pure Land of utmost bliss, then at this very moment the proper and dependent [recompense] of the western region are within my mind, and my mind is within the proper and dependent [recompense] of the western region. They are like two mirrors exchanging light and mutually illuminating each other. This is the mark of horizontally pervading the ten directions. If it firmly exhausts the three margins of time, then the very moment of contemplating the Buddha is the very moment of seeing the Buddha and becoming the Buddha. The very moment of seeking rebirth is the very moment of attaining rebirth and the very moment of liberating all beings. The three margins of time are all a single, identical time; there is no before and after. [...] Awakening to this principle is most difficult; having faith in it is most easy.<sup>29</sup>

The fact that *nianfo* 念佛 revealed Buddha-nature so directly in this way made its practice superior to any method that Chan had to offer.

The two phrases in the *Meditation Sūtra*, 'this mind becomes the Buddha,' 'this mind is the Buddha,' are simpler and more direct than the Chan statements 'direct pointing to the person's mind,' and 'see [one's own] nature and become a Buddha.' Why is this? Because 'seeing the nature' is difficult and 'being a Buddha' is easy.<sup>30</sup>

As this passage and the quotation that opened this section show, even though Chewu turned his back on Chan, illumination of the mind and the uncovering of its inherent Buddhahood remained important goals for him. What had changed was the method he recommended for attaining these goals.

(c) The fact that the course of the mind could be turned in a single instant presented practitioners with a wonderful opportunity. A single moment spent filling the mind with Amitābha's name made the mind Amitābha for that moment. However, there was also a danger: in the very next moment the mind was liable to turn back to its old patterns of thought, and Chewu asserted that the benefits of *nianfo* could all be lost as quickly as they were gained:

However, if in this very moment one occasionally loses the illumination, or suddenly produces regressive regrets, and is out of accord with the Buddha, then karma can [once again] entangle the mind, and the present sensory-realm will

29. ZZ 109: 756a3-9.

30. ZZ 109: 754b16-18.

revert to its previous recompense. As a result, one will again be just another suffering sentient being in the land of endurance.<sup>31</sup>

Such an idea contrasts sharply with the ebullient optimism of a Shinran or an Ippen that rebirth is assured after the first utterance of the *nem-butsumu*.

In practical terms, this meant that the Pure Land practitioner was under the necessity of maintaining this practice of *chi ming* 持名 from one moment to the next, deepening it and strengthening it through constant application all their lives. Not only that, but Chewu thought that this life was too precious even to waste it on other Buddhist practices; they were not as reliable as *nianfo*, and thus time and energy spent in their pursuit was time taken away from the critical practice of *chi ming* 持名:

This day has passed; our lives are now that much shorter. The light that passes in a span of time is also the light that passes through a span of our lives. Can you not cherish it? Knowing how precious is the spirit (*jingshen* 精神), then one must not dissipate it uselessly; hold on to the Buddha's name each and every moment! The days and nights [must] not pass away empty; practice pure karma each and every instant! If one sets aside the Buddha's name and cultivates the holy practices of the three vehicles, this too is squandering one's spirit. Even this is like a common mouse trying to use a 1000-pound crossbow; how much more the activities of those in the six paths of birth-and-death! If one puts aside pure karma in favor of the small results of the provisional vehicles, this is also an empty passage of days and nights. Even this would be like using a precious jewel to buy one garment or one meal; how much more choosing [to aim for] the small results with outflows of [rebirth in the realms of] deities or humans!<sup>32</sup>

This constant practice had two purposes. One was to maintain the identity of one's own mind and the Buddha's mind as much as possible, which led to the very this-worldly or pre-mortem results of illumination and purification. In this it provided the same results that Chan practice promises, but much more easily and reliably.

The other purpose was to establish the mind in this identification with the Buddha Amitābha so that, at the moment of death, one would be much more likely to have one's mind properly focused at this most critical juncture. This raises a point in which I believe one may see a major difference of opinion between Chinese and Japanese Pure Land thought. Chinese masters tended to be much less sanguine than their Japanese

31. ZZ 109:756b9-12.

32. ZZ 109:758a1-8. "Pure karma" (*jingye* 淨業) is a term specifically used to refer to Pure Land practice.

counterparts about the certainty of rebirth, and one can even find stories within the tradition about devoted practitioners who, despite years of *nianfo* practice, are distracted from it on their deathbeds and lose their place in the Pure Land.<sup>33</sup>

While Chewu may not express the idea quite this starkly, he is very frank about the possibility that one may turn away from the practice in a moment and never recover it again:

However, if at the very moment the mind can turn its karma [...], the great mind suddenly regresses and the true practices are compromised, then karma will be able to [once again] entangle the mind.<sup>34</sup>

It is imperative, according to Chewu, that the last thought in this lifetime be fixed on Amitābha; only then is rebirth assured. And, he says, the arising of this thought at the proper time does not happen by chance. One must prepare for it through prior training.<sup>35</sup> Thus, constant practice not only provides the pre-mortem benefits of purifying the mind and manifesting its original Buddha-nature; lifelong effort also sets up a pattern of thought that makes the arising of concentration on Amitābha and his Pure Land at the crucial moment of death more and more likely the longer it is prolonged.

At this point we have a fairly complete picture of the kinds of practices Chewu advocated and the goals that he expected the practitioner to realize through them. It remains now to examine the way in which he thought that the practice of *chi ming* 持名 made these goals possible. The key, as we shall see, lay in a melding of Pure Land and mind-only thought.

33. The modern Taiwan Pure Land Master Zhiyu once told this story during a dharma-talk: There was once an elderly layman who had two wives. He was very pious, and practiced *nianfo* ardently for many years. He developed a serious illness, and knew that his death was near, so he concentrated his mind and practiced intensely on his bed, and reported to those around him that he could see Amitābha and his retinue coming to receive him. Right at this critical moment, his second wife came into the room crying and agitated, and asked him how she and her son were to get along once he was dead. The layman assured her that he would provide for them in his will, but the distraction proved disastrous for him. He lost the vision of Amitābha and could not get it back. Instead of the Buddha and his attendants, he now saw a wall of black and the pathway to hell opening before him. This story is found in Zhiyu 1992: 58.

34. ZZ 109:756b2-4.

35. See ZZ 109: 762a1-3.



#### IV. THE BUDDHA AND THE DEVOTEE IN THE MIRROR OF THE MIND

Like many commentators in the Chinese Pure Land tradition, Chewu concerned himself at times to explain how *nianfo* worked to bring about the results it did, and these explanations brought him into the realms of the theological and the metaphysical. However, a comparison of Chewu's writings on this aspect of Pure Land theory with other writers' demonstrates a narrower range of concerns than one finds in most other texts. A reading of MOCHIZUKI Shinkō 望月言亭's *History of Chinese Pure Land Thought* (*Chūgoku jōdōkyōri-shi* 中國淨土教理史) shows that Pure Land thinkers in China historically took on a wide range of problems in explaining the workings of Pure Land practice: the nature of the Pure Land itself; how the Pure Land fit into the overall picture of the cosmos and the various other realms that constituted it; how defiled beings could be reborn in the Pure Land without defiling it in turn; the relationship of Amitābha to Śākyamuni; how the Amitābha seen in visions and dreams relates to the Amitābha who lives in his distant Pure Land; how to define both the practices and goals of Pure Land in the vocabulary of principle (*li* 理) and phenomena (*shi* 事); and so on.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, Chewu's comparatively small literary output deals with only one or two problems of this sort in any depth: the relationship of Pure Land thought to the two truths of Mādhyamika, and its compatibility with the principle of mind-only. Of the two, the latter draws the lion's share of his thought and is elaborated in more detail and subtlety. However, his exposition of the theme of mind-only contains an interesting twist that makes a closer examination worthwhile.

Near the end of Chewu's *Recorded Sayings*, one finds a creed of sorts that he composed which lists ten essential articles of faith for practitioners. Of these ten, the sixth says, "Believe that there really is a Pure Land," and is followed by an editorial gloss that reads, "Its existence is no different from the present Sahā world." The tenth article reads, "Believe that the only source of all dharmas is the mind."<sup>37</sup> These two statements in juxtaposition define the problem that appears to have pre-occupied Chewu greatly: to confirm the existence of Amitābha and his Pure Land in a literal, realistic way while simultaneously upholding the

36. MOCHIZUKI 1932, passim.

37. ZZ 109: 788a.

fundamental tenet of Chinese Buddhist thought which held that all reality is nothing more than a manifestation of mind.

Chewu was certainly not the first Chinese Buddhist to apply mind-only thought to Pure Land practice. This had been done throughout history by Pure Land's supporters and detractors both. One of the main issues dividing the two camps was not whether the Pure Land and the Buddha who created and sustained it were mind-only – all agreed that they were. The difference lay in their willingness or unwillingness to accept that they also existed literally, apart from the *Sahā* world, off to the west, as a destination for those of low capacities who had failed to realize the truths of mind-only and universal emptiness. This latter position, sometimes called “Western Direction Pure Land” (*xifang jingtu* 西方淨土), was rejected by detractors in favor of a strict mind-only construction called “Mind-Only Pure Land” (*weixin jingtu* 唯心淨土).<sup>38</sup> The supporters claimed that both “Western Direction Pure Land” and “Mind-Only Pure Land” were equally true, and this is the position that Chewu, in the simultaneous affirmations of the sixth and tenth articles, defended.

The detractors of Pure Land practice liked to point out that a literal belief in Amitābha as a Buddha external to one's own consciousness to whom one could cry for help, and the belief in the real existence of Sukhāvātī as a land localizable to the west were violations of a basic Buddhist understanding of the world. Their favorite prooftexts were the dictum in the “Chapter on Buddha-Lands” in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* that stated: “If the bodhisattva wishes to acquire a pure land, he must purify his mind. When the mind is pure, the Buddha-land will be pure,”<sup>39</sup> and the statement in the *Meditation Sūtra*: “This mind creates the Buddha; this mind is the Buddha.”<sup>40</sup> For example, the Ming dynasty Buddhist reformer Hanshan Deqing (1546-1623) disparaged the practice of *cheng ming* 程名 or *chi ming* 持名 if it consisted solely of oral invocation without any effort made to purify the mind. In his view, the practice of *nianfo* absolutely had to be accompanied by a strict observance of the precepts and the firm intention to cut off the roots of desire, after which one could engage in either recitation or visualization exercises.

38. On the opposition between *xifang jingtu* 西方淨土 and *weixin jingtu* 唯心淨土, see SHI Jianzheng 1989: 48.

39. WATSON, trans. 1997, p. 29.

40. *Guan wuliangshou fo jing* 觀無量壽佛經, T.365, vol. 12:343a21.

However, during the course of this practice, one must understand that while one will be reborn in the Pure Land, this birth will really be “non-birth” and the going “non-going.” This, he claimed, was the splendor of the teaching of “Mind-Only Pure Land.”<sup>41</sup> Hanshan was uncompromising in his belief that *nianfo* only worked when used as an active form of self-cultivation and mental illumination; it did not work automatically for the ignorant and the defiled.

Chewu fully agreed that the Buddha Amitābha and the land Sukhāvātī were manifestations of the mind. The opening statement of his longest and most sustained exposition of his thought begins with the statement, “It is essential to know that the phrase ‘*a-mi-tuo-fo*’ 阿彌陀佛 has its main import in the doctrine of mind-only.” From this starting-point he goes on to demonstrate the truth of the doctrine of mind-only from the three viewpoints of direct experience, the use of similes and metaphors, and the testimony of enlightened beings and Buddhas.<sup>42</sup> After these demonstrations, he argues that a further examination of the meaning of the word “mind” in “mind-only” reveals the multivalence of this word. Following an analysis from Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰宗密’s (780-841) *Chan yuan zhu quan ji dou xu* 禪源諸詮集都序 (T.2015, vol. 48, p. 397-415), Chewu states that “mind” can mean the insentient, material mind-organ, the mind composed of the eight consciousnesses of the Faxiang or Weishi school, the unenlightened *ālayavijñāna*, and the enlightened *ālayavijñāna* which is the “true mind.” This last aspect is the “mind” one affirms in the doctrine of “mind-only,” and this mind exists inherently (*ben you* 本有) and beginninglessly (*wu shi* 無始) in all beings, whether worldlings or Buddhas. To affirm that all of reality, whether the Sahā world or Sukhāvātī, is mind-only is to affirm its non-duality with this mind.

Up to this point in his argument, Chewu has said nothing with which a critic such as Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 could find fault. However, Chewu then begins to shift the terms of the debate in such a way as to simultaneously affirm the reality of other things, including the Buddha, as external to the mind and existent in a provisional, phenomenal way. He asserts that, just as one can take the word “mind” and make it part of the compound “mind-only,” one may take any phenomenon and make it part of a parallel compound, “X-only.” The equal pervasion of the

41. Hanshan Deqing 1: 437, 439.

42. ZZ 109: 763a10 ff.

enlightened mind that all sentient beings possess with all other phenomena makes this novel construction of “X-only” thought possible.

If the mind pervades everywhere horizontally and exhausts everything vertically, then the meaning of mind-only is complete, and the meaning of all the other “X-only” doctrines (*wei yi* 唯義) is also complete: form-only, sound-only, smell-only, flavor-only, touch-only, dharma-only, right on up to subtle-obscuration only and particle-only. Only when these “X-only” doctrines attain completion does one complete the true meaning of mind-only. If the meanings of all these other “X-only” doctrines are not attained, then one is left with only the empty name of “mind-only” rather than the true meaning of “mind-only.” It is only because the meanings of all these other “X-only” are attained that one can say that dharmas lack fixed characteristics, and the import is that they encounter conditions, as one could also say of subtle-obscuration-only and particle-only.<sup>43</sup>

Thus, because this fundamental mind unobstructedly pervades all phenomena, one can say that they also unobstructedly pervade the mind and each other, and everything can become the “only” reality there is. Chewu uses “mind-only” as a way of affirming the Huayan doctrine of the mutual interpenetration of principle and all phenomena and of all phenomena with each other.<sup>44</sup>

Within this understanding, Chewu then begins to discuss the status of Amitābha. One of the variables that one may insert into the algebraic expression “X-only” is “Buddha”: thus, “Buddha-only” is just as much the case from the ultimate point of view as “mind-only.” As he develops his argument further, Chewu then goes on to stress the transcendence of all oppositions in the enlightened mind, and the mutual interpenetration of all distinct phenomena that takes place even while the transcendence of oppositions undercuts their distinctiveness one from another. Thus, the mind of the practitioner who recites the name “Amitābha,” as we have seen, actually incorporates the complete reality of Amitābha (through the transcending of oppositions between practitioner and Buddha) while remaining distinct from him (through the Huayan doctrine of perfect interpenetration which requires that distinctions be maintained in order to have things that can interpenetrate). Because this complete coincidence of transcendence and immanence is impossible for the rational mind to hold, it is inconceivable, and can only be understood by “surpassing feelings and leaving aside views.”

43. ZZ 109: 764a16-b3.

44. That Chewu draws his inspiration from Huayan thought on this point is clear from his use of the metaphor of the jewels in Indra’s net at 764b10-11.

Chewu sums up his argument as follows:

First, we took “mind-only” as the meaning. Second, we took “Buddha-only” as the meaning. Third, we took “transcendence of oppositions and perfect interpenetration” as the meaning. Finally, we took “surpassing feelings and leaving aside views” as the meaning. Only when one takes all four of these meanings as the primary import does one get a proper understanding of the single phrase, “Amitābha.” How, then, could it be simple to talk about the proper understanding!<sup>45</sup>

How, indeed!

What has Chewu done with this argument? First, he has co-opted the detractors’ position of “mind-only,” agreeing with them that this doctrine is fundamental to orthodox belief and making it a member of his own list of ten essential beliefs. But then, by making use of the Huayan doctrine of mutual, unobstructed interpenetration, he advances his position in two ways that begin to undercut the position of the strict “Mind-Only Pure Land” partisans.

First, he de-centers the practitioner’s mind. Those critics who depended upon the above-quoted statements from the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and the *Meditation Sūtra* tended to emphasize the centrality of the individual’s mind while ignoring the status of other beings and phenomena. When they repeatedly argued that the purity or impurity of the practitioner’s mind constituted the decisive factor in the attainment of rebirth (as Hanshan Deqing argued) or in the adornment of one’s own pure land through self-purification (as the Sixth Chan Patriarch Huineng 惠能 stated),<sup>46</sup> they left any notion of Amitābha as a being who existed in his own right out of the account altogether. The practitioner’s own mind then becomes the central creative and organizing principle for all of reality. Chewu’s exposition of “Buddha-only” and all the other “X-only” philosophies that flow logically from the pervasion of mind into all reality takes the practitioner’s own mind out of the center and places it as one phenomenon among all others, not creating them, not dominating them, not organizing them in any way, but interacting with them equally and reciprocally.

Second, he reaffirms the real distinction between the practitioner and the Buddha in such a way that Amitābha can be seen as a genuinely different being from the practitioner without violating the principle of

45. ZZ 109:765a1-3.

46. YAMPOLSKY 1967:156-159.

non-duality. Amitābha, as much as any other being or phenomenon, exists external to and in distinction from the practitioner. The critics, in over-emphasizing the mind's role in "creating" Amitābha and "being" Amitābha, had neglected Amitābha as an autonomous being who is free to act according to his own purity and enlightenment, independently of the practitioner's level of attainment. Chewu, on the other hand, affirmed both positions at the same time, and so re-positioned Amitābha as a phenomenon in the world as well as an instantiation of the principle that pervaded the world. This allowed the practitioner and the Buddha to co-exist in a relationship of mutuality and equality as fellow phenomena, where neither could subsume or dominate the other. By emancipating Amitābha from the domination of the practitioner's mind, Chewu set the stage for the explanation of the efficacy of *nianfo* 念佛 according to the concept of *ganying* 感應 found in other parts of his *Recorded Sayings*.

Chewu, like many other Pure Land thinkers, attributed the efficacy of *nianfo* to *ganying*, a kind of sympathetic vibration or resonance that took place when one set one's mind upon Amitābha. The non-dual relationship of perfect interpenetration at the level of phenomenon – phenomenon explained in terms of "mind-only" as given above – gave Chewu the freedom to explain how this *ganying* worked. By affirming the principle of "mind-only," Chewu agreed that Amitābha was an image (a *phaenomenon* in the Greek sense) in the practitioner's mind, even if only the name appeared there with no accompanying visualization. However, by maintaining Amitābha's autonomy from the practitioner's mind, Chewu was able to affirm that the practitioner was equally an image in Amitābha's mind. The result of *nianfo*, therefore, was to bring two authentically-separate-yet-interpenetrating minds into a similarity and simultaneity of content in such a way that they could begin to "vibrate" together, setting in motion the mechanism of *ganying* 感應 that would lead to illumination and rebirth. Unenlightened beings cannot conceive of this mutual interpenetration of two minds, and so in discussing it one necessarily has to look at the matter from the point of view of either the practitioner's mind or Amitābha's mind, as Chewu does in a passage that is a rhetorical *tour de force*:

Now the reason that Amitābha can be Amitābha is that he deeply realized his self-nature as mind-only. However, this Amitābha and his Pure Land – are they not [also the practitioner's own] self-natured Amitābha and a Mind-Only Pure Land? This mind-nature is exactly the same in both sentient beings and Buddhas; it does not belong more to Buddhas and less to beings. If this mind is Amitābha's, then sentient beings are sentient beings within the mind of Amitābha. If this mind is

sentient beings', then Amitābha is Amitābha within the minds of sentient beings. If sentient beings within the mind of Amitābha recollect (*nian*) the Amitābha within the mind of sentient beings, then how could the Amitābha within the mind of sentient beings fail to respond to the sentient beings within the mind of Amitābha?<sup>47</sup>

In other words, Amitābha and the practitioner are related to each other within a completely symmetrical two-way contemplation. Amitābha is a *phænomenon* of the practitioner's mind, but at the same time, the practitioner is a *phænomenon* of Amitābha's mind. Amitābha, being an omniscient Buddha, is always aware of sentient beings, but these beings, in their delusion and distraction, are seldom aware of Amitābha. However, when someone begins the practice of *nianfo*, then both become aware of each other and each becomes a *phænomenon* within the other's mind, and this sets up the resonance. Non-duality is the key: the distinction between beings and Buddhas as phenomenon (*shi* 事) makes this relationship possible, while their fundamental identity in terms of principle (*li* 理) makes this resonance possible. Thus, Chewu summarizes: "This means that the one is the many, always identical and always distinct [...] this is the essential summary of *nianfo*."<sup>48</sup>

## V. CONCLUSIONS

What is Chewu's place in the Pure Land tradition, how original are his formulations, and how do we profit from this reading of his works?

At the outset of an evaluation of his significance, it seems that Chewu's claim on our attention and study should be assured because of his place within the lineage of Chinese Pure Land patriarchs. For those who study the Chinese Pure Land tradition, this in itself makes some level of awareness of his life and thought self-evidently worthwhile.

But to dig deeper, we may ask: how significant a figure is he within the wide and varied scope of Chinese Pure Land thought? That he was acclaimed a patriarch within a relatively short time of his death would indicate that he enjoyed a high reputation among devotees of *nianfo*, and so we can assume a certain amount of charisma on his part, although it does not seem to have issued in the organization of his followers into any great *nianfo* societies among clerics and laity. Also, within the history of Pure Land ideas and doctrinal developments, his legacy may

47. ZZ 109: 761a2-8.

48. ZZ 109: 761a15-17.

seem rather meager. After all, he left only one slim text in two *juan* to posterity which deals, as I observed earlier, with only a narrow range of concerns when compared with the wide-ranging reflections of earlier figures such as Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏 or Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭.

This paucity of literary and philosophical output may well justify scholars in leaving him to one side while they explore the writings of other, more prolific figures. However, it seems to me that he had at least one very original idea that merits allocating some time and energy to the study of his work. That idea is the re-working of “mind-only” thought along Huayan lines as given in section IV above. But how original was this idea? An examination of the Pure Land tradition that preceded Chewu shows that many thinkers before him had written about the non-duality of the Buddha and the practitioner, and of the simultaneous affirmation of conventional and ultimate truth with regard to the Buddha and his land. It may be worth taking a moment to examine briefly some of these antecedents.

The application of mind-only thought to Amitābha and his realm of Sukhāvātī is among the oldest trends in the Chinese Pure Land tradition. The *Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra* (Ch. *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經, T.418), one of the first scriptures to be translated into Chinese in the second century C.E., puts forth this idea. In Paul HARRISON’s translation, the relevant passage says: “Whatever I think, that I see. The mind creates the Buddha. The mind itself sees him. The mind is the Buddha.”<sup>49</sup> Here, however, the concern is specifically with the vision of Amitābha achieved by an experienced practitioner in *nianfo* as a visualization exercise, and therefore deals with Amitābha as an image, not as an autonomous being. One can easily see this as part of a larger concern within meditative circles about the status of visualized objects generally, as seen in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*.

Lushan Huiyuan 廬山慧遠 (344-416), upon reading this and related passages in the *Pratyutpannasamādhisūtra*, sensed that it was speaking only of Amitābha as an internally-generated image, and was led to ask the Central Asian monk and translator Kumārajīva to clarify for him how such an internal image could act like an independent being: answering questions, touching the practitioner on the head, and so forth. Kumārajīva’s response hints at the notion of a reciprocity between Buddha and practitioner. One can see the Buddha in the *pratyutpanna-*

49. T.418, vol. 13:905c-906a. The translation is found in HARRISON 1998, p. 21.



*samādhi*, he says, because while the practitioner's mind is turned toward the Buddha, the Buddha emits light that illumines the ten directions. Thus, seeing the Buddha is similar to a tuning a radio to the frequency of a particular radio station; when tuned correctly, it catches the signal. Just so, when the practitioner's mind is "tuned" to the frequency of a Buddha's light, one achieves a vision of that Buddha, and the image that appears is simultaneously an appearance in the mind and a true representation of an actual, externally-existent Buddha.<sup>50</sup> While this exchange succeeded in relating an internal vision of Amitābha to an externally-existent Amitābha, it did not place the practitioner and the Buddha in the relationship of parity in the way that Chewu's construction does.

Since Chewu's biography mentions the major impact that Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 had on his thought, one might reasonably expect to find precedents for the former's Pure Land theology in the latter's writings. One of Yanshou's shorter works, the catechetical tract *Wanshan tong gui ji* 萬善同歸集 (Anthology on the myriad virtues returning to the same [source], T.2017), does have a short series of questions and answers that deal explicitly with the meaning of the term *weixin jingtu* 唯心淨土, or "Mind-Only Pure Land." However, the questions raised regarding this Mind-Only Pure Land and the answers given evince very different concerns from those of Chewu. Yanshou's fictitious questioner wants to know how the visualization of an external Buddha, violating as it does the principle of mind-only, can possibly avoid entrapping the practitioner in delusion and discrimination. Yanshou replies that this is an *upāya*, a skillful teaching device by which all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas lead the unenlightened in the right direction, even though what they teach might not be literally or ultimately true. Beginners on the bodhisattva path, who have not yet realized that all of reality is mind-only, simply cannot grasp the ultimate nature of their own minds and the Buddha that they contemplate. For them, contemplating the Buddha and seeking rebirth in an objectified Sukhāvātī is all right as a provisional measure. With time, they will eventually come to the realization that the Buddha and his land were creations of their minds all along, and they will revise their perception

50. T.1856, vol. 45:134b5-22; 134c7-12. The reader is also referred to KIMURA Eiichi's critical edition of this text found in KIMURA 1960-62, 1:34-36, with a modern Japanese rendering at 1: 165-169.

of reality accordingly.<sup>51</sup> Chewu's concern to validate the practice of *chi ming* 持名 as a means of purifying the mind or to defend the idea of an Amitābha that actually does exist in a manner autonomous from the practitioner's mind appear quite antithetical to Yanshou's claim that such a Buddha appears only as an *upāya*.

Yunqi Zhuhong 雲棲祿宏's most extended doctrinal treatment of Pure Land thought, the long preface to his commentary on the shorter *Sukhāvativyūhasūtra* (*Fo shuo amituo jing shu chao* 佛說阿彌陀經疏鈔, ZZ 33: 326-491) has surprisingly little to say on the subject of *weixin jingtu* 唯心淨土. For the most part, Zhuhong contents himself to affirm the nature of Amitābha and Sukhāvati as mind-only and repeat Yongming Yanshou's exposition of the ultimate truth of mind-only coupled with the need for a provisional discrimination of practitioner from Buddha as an *upāya*. Only once does Zhuhong actually use the technical vocabulary of the Consciousness-Only school (at ZZ 33:356a17-b9), where he brings in the eight consciousnesses and the *ālayavijñāna*, only to reduce them to the "one mind" (*yi xin* 一心) of the phrase "the single, unperturbed mind" (*yi xin bu luan* 一心不亂). In so doing, he demonstrates that his primary doctrinal background is not actually in Consciousness-only thought, but in Tiantai 天台 thought and its concern to show how all phenomena are ultimately grounded in the "one mind" or "absolute mind." It is this mind to which Zhuhong refers when he calls everything "mind-only."

So far, we have not encountered the relationship that Chewu described between practitioners and Amitābha, based on an epistemology that held between two autonomous beings, each holding the other in his gaze. One can find some idea of a mutuality of this sort in the writings of the eighth century Pure Land thinker Feixi 飛錫. Feixi also used Huayan thought to advocate the efficacy of Pure Land practice by showing the non-duality and mutual illumination of the practitioner's and the Buddha's mind. This idea, found in Feixi's *Nianfo sanmei baowang lun* 念佛三昧寶王論 (T. 1967, 47: 141c-142b, section 15, and following sections *passim*), seems similar to Chewu's reasoning on the mutuality of mind-only. However, Feixi's primary concern here appears to be affirming that the practitioner is an instantiation of the Buddha, relating the two in terms of phenomenon (*shi* 事) and principle (*li* 理). In other words, it is an ontological argument relating the inherent but inchoate

51. T.2017, 966b26 ff.

Buddhahood of the practitioner to the realized Buddhahood of Amitābha as if it were a question of relating the many to the one. While Chewu, as seen in one quotation given above (at the end of section III), does in one instance use the language of “the many and the one” to describe the relationship, the majority of his essays present an epistemological analysis of the image of the Buddha that appears in the practitioner’s mind at the same time that an image of the practitioner appears in the Buddha’s mind.

This is far from an exhaustive survey of all Chinese Pure Land literature, and one could go on indefinitely multiplying individual examples of past Pure Land masters. Based on a reading of MOCHIZUKI’s *History*, however, it appears that one would only continue seeing the analyses and concerns given in the previous paragraphs appearing again and again. It is safe to conclude that, in this one instance within his limited literary remains, Jixing Chewu did indeed hit upon an original way of explaining the relationship between Amitābha Buddha and the beings, both unenlightened and enlightened, who contemplate either his image or his name. His analysis went beyond the chorus of predecessors in the tradition whose primary concern was to emphasize the non-duality of this relationship while disparaging the appearance of duality as a delusion that the Buddha exploits as a skillful expedient. Chewu, going against the stream, argues that the distinction between the Buddha and the devotee is a real one, and it will not be overcome or superseded even with the attainment of enlightenment. Buddhas and other beings are independent entities, interrelated as *phænomena* in each other’s minds, as much separate as identical. Their separateness makes a relationship possible, while their identity makes possible the resonance of *ganying* 感應 through which the Buddha saves beings and takes them at death to a really-existent Pure Land in the west.

Because of the originality of this insight, as well as his patriarchal status within the tradition, Chewu deserves more scholarly attention than the half-paragraph accorded him in MOCHIZUKI’s *History*,<sup>52</sup> and the author hopes that this small study has made a start in his rediscovery.

52. MOCHIZUKI 1932: 534-535.

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