

Permeable Boundaries Between Ritual and Play: Religious and Ludic Possibilities in a Chinese Buddhist Board Game

Beverley McGuire

Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religion,
University of North Carolina Wilmington

Abstract

This article examines religious practices embedded in a board game designed by the Chinese Buddhist monk Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599–1655). Not only are religious practices incorporated in the design of the board and dice, but Ouyi frequently discusses their importance in his instruction manual for the game. He emphasizes the profound moral and religious transformation that can result from practices, including recollection of Amitābha Buddha, repentance rituals, and meditation. Ouyi draws upon such practices to suggest that his own game can turn players' thoughts towards enlightenment and overcome karmic obstacles, either by stimulating the compassionate response of Buddhas and bodhisattvas or by revealing one's own Buddha nature. However, Ouyi does not fully explain the rules of play, which leaves room for ambiguity on the stance players should take towards the game; should it be performed like a religious practice, or just played? This article explores the religious and ludic possibilities that emerge when rituals and other religious practices appear in the context of a game.

Keywords:

Ouyi Zhixu, game, ritual, play, Ming dynasty

悠遊穿梭於儀式與玩樂之間 ——中國佛教紙板遊戲中的宗教與娛樂之發展性

傅佩玲

美國北卡羅來納大學威明頓分校哲學與宗教系教授

摘要

本文檢視由中國佛教僧人蕩益智旭（1599–1655）所設計的紙板遊戲（選佛譜）中內蘊的宗教實踐。蕩益不僅將宗教實修結合在遊戲和擲骰的設計中，還反覆在遊戲說明手冊中說明如此實修的重要性。藉由念佛、拜懺與禪修，他強調如此實修可以產生深刻的人格和宗教的轉化。透過這些實修方法，蕩益意在藉由此遊戲來引發諸佛菩薩的慈悲接引，或是顯露出玩家自身的佛性，讓玩家的念頭轉向證悟並克服業障。不過蕩益並未完全說明遊戲規則，這讓玩家們對遊戲所該採取的態度留下了模糊的空間：是應該當作宗教實修進行，或者單純就是玩遊戲？本文旨在探討在遊戲情境中出現的儀軌和其他宗教實修中所具有的宗教與娛樂的可能性。

關鍵詞：

蕩益智旭、遊戲、儀式、玩樂、明

The Game Designer

Ouyi Zhixu is considered one of the four great masters of the Ming dynasty by later Chinese Buddhists, alongside Yunqi Zhuhong 蓮池株宏 (1535–1615), Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546–1623) and Zibo Zhenke 紫柏真可 (1543–1604).¹ While some esteem him as a patriarch in the Pure Land tradition,² and others regard him as an advocate for Tiantai Buddhism³, in fact, Ouyi had no official lineage and drew from various Chinese Buddhist traditions during his life, including Chan, Vinaya, Tiantai, and Pure Land. He also engaged in a wide range of religious practices during his lifetime, including divination, repentance rituals, meditation, and ascetic practices such as filial slicing, bodily burning, and blood writing.⁴

Ouyi drew upon these various traditions and practices when designing his board game called *Selection of Buddhas* (*xuanfo tu* 選佛圖) or the Ten Dharma Realms (*shi fajie tu* 十法界圖). The game was originally created in response to a secular board game called *Promotion of Officials* (*shengguan tu* 升官圖), in which players vied to attain higher rank in the imperial administration that was reproduced in monumental proportions on the game board.⁵ In *Selection of Buddhas*, players instead seek to achieve Buddhahood by ascending various cosmological realms and levels of spiritual attainment. Ouyi claims to have designed the game for Buddhist friends, fellow monks and advanced lay practitioners, to give them a substitute for gambling—a game that is fun but spiritually beneficial. He modeled it after Youxi Chuangdeng’s 幽溪傳燈 (ca. 1582–1597) “Selection of Buddhas” board, which Ouyi purchased in 1623. According to Ouyi, Youxi’s version illustrated the rules behind the rise and fall of the ten dharma realms of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, *pratyekabuddhas*, *śrāvakas*, celestial beings, humans, *asuras*, hungry ghosts, animals, and hell-dwellers.

¹ As Jennifer Eichmann notes, Ouyi was not included among the four eminent monks of the Ming dynasty in Qian Qianyi’s 錢謙益 *Short Biographies to the Poetry Collection of Successive Dynasties* (*Liechao shiji xiaozhuan* 列朝詩集小傳) because he was of a slightly later generation. Eichmann, “Humanizing the Study,” 160. For scholarship on Ouyi Zhixu’s life and ritual practice see McGuire, *Living Karma* and Shengyan, *Minmatsu Chūgoku*.

² Peng, *Jingtū shengxian lu*, 202–206.

³ For a summary of the debate surrounding whether Ouyi should be categorized within the Tiantai tradition, see Chen, “Ouyi Zhixu sixiang.”

⁴ For a discussion of these ritual practices see McGuire, *Living Karma*.

⁵ For a discussion of *Selection of Buddhas* and *Promotion of Officials* see McGuire, “Playing with Karma” and Ngai, “From Entertainment,” 39–129.

Although we cannot compare Ouyi's game with earlier versions since they are no longer extant, he states that he added squares to accommodate a broad range of people. He writes:

Additionally, I added in the causal practices of sages and ordinary beings, as well as their different predispositions, to display the differences in their intrinsic natures. I set up a square for “faith without [good] roots” and “[those who] have great power and protect the *dharmā*” to reveal the path of perfect transformation. [Those who are] violent, evil, and violate [the precepts] are allowed to take refuge in the Pure Land, following the *Contemplation Sūtra*. [Those] bound to suffer in Avīci Hell can ascend to Tuṣita Heaven, according to the *Huayan Sūtra*. All celestial beings have the suffering of falling from virtue and status, while [those in] the Formless [Realm] have the disaster of wandering aimlessly through rebirth. These are all the original teachings of the Vehicle[s]; it is not conjectural opinion.⁶

兼增聖凡因行。及種性差別。以彰不一之機。設無根信位。及大權護法。以開圓轉之路。逆惡猛心。準觀經而許歸淨土。阿鼻極苦。依華嚴而徑登兜率。諸天有降德貶墜之苦。無色有窮空輪轉之殃。皆本教乘。非出臆見。

Ouyi emphasizes the scriptural precedent allowing for those seemingly damned to hells to seek relief in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha or the Tuṣita dwelling of Maitreya Buddha, demonstrating that he viewed the game as consonant with Buddhist doctrine and practice. He includes those who must rely on Buddhas and bodhisattvas for their faith and those who have committed serious transgressions, and he emphasizes that celestial beings and those in the Formless Realm are also subject to suffering and rebirth in the game.

In the preface to his six-fascicle game instruction manual entitled *Manual for Selection of Buddhas* (*Xuanfo pu* 選佛譜) written in 1653, Ouyi highlights the game's potential for instructing players about Buddhist teachings. In fact, Ouyi says that he wrote the instructional manual at the behest of those who claimed, “Playing this game even once is enough to enable one to thoroughly understand all of the Buddha's teachings.”⁷ In her study of *Selection of Buddhas* May-Ying Mary Ngai emphasizes the didactic potential of the game,

⁶ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11864.

⁷ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11866.

arguing that it served as a means of proselytization and spreading Buddhist teachings in China and other parts of East Asia.⁸

The Gameboard

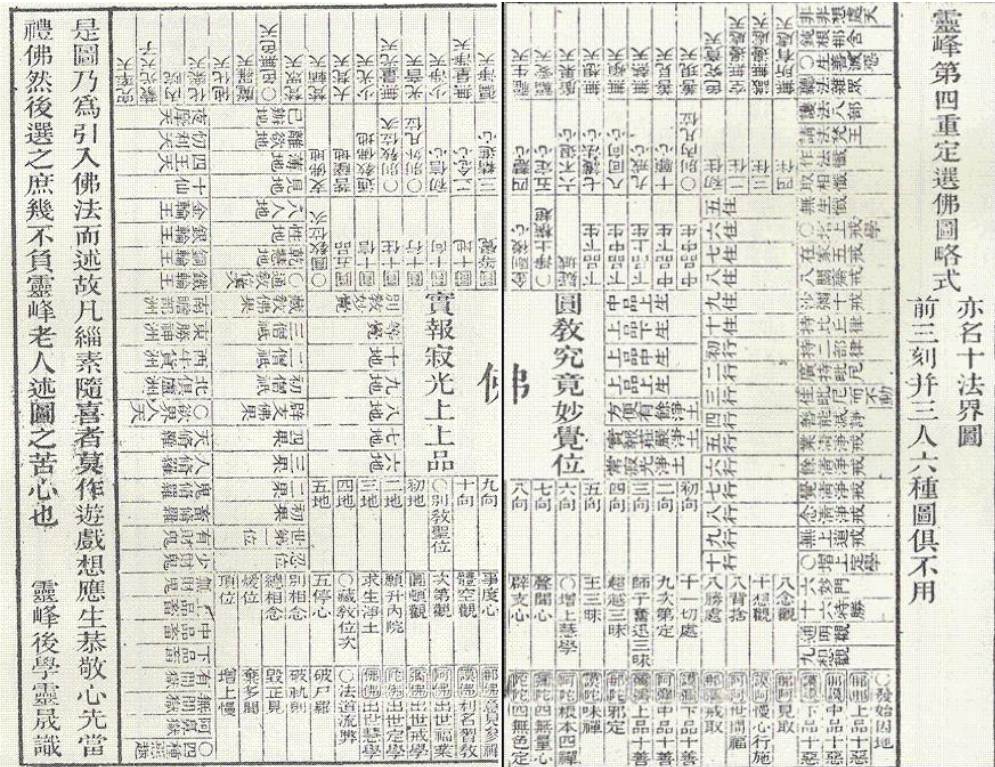


Figure 1: The Gameboard⁹

In *Selection of Buddhas*, players move in a clockwise direction around the board, beginning at the lower right stage “beginning the causal stage of practice” and ultimately ending at the final stage of Buddhahood in the center (See Figure 1; see Appendix for a translation of the squares on the board). There are fifteen large divisions—called “gates” (*men* 門)—of the squares illustrated on the board:

1. Beginning the causal stage of practice (*yindi* 因地)
2. Abuses in the Saṅgha

⁸ Ngai, “From Entertainment.”

⁹ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11871.

3. The four kinds of evil rebirths
4. Humans and *devas* in the desire realm
5. Heavens in the form and formless realms
6. Eliminating evil and giving rise to good
7. Training in superior moral discipline (*jiexue* 戒學)
8. Training in superior meditative concentration (*dingxue* 定學)
9. Training in superior wisdom (*huixue* 慧學)
10. Advancing to the position of the *tripiṭaka* teaching (*zangjiao* 藏教)
11. Advancing to the position of the shared teaching (*tongjiao* 通教)
12. Advancing to the position of the separate teaching (*biejiao* 別教)
13. Advancing to the position of the perfect teaching (*yuanjiao* 圓教)
14. Ascending to the Pure Land
15. The Stage of Perfect Realization

In this way, players wind their way through various types of rebirth and stages in the Buddhist path. The first two divisions discuss virtuous practices that cause one to progress to better realms of rebirth and more advanced stages on the Buddhist path, including good deeds (*shan* 善), meditation (*chan* 禪), and training (*xue* 學), as well as corruptive practices—evil deeds (*e* 惡), pride (*man* 慢), and breaking of precepts—that result in worse realms of rebirth and regression on the Buddhist path. Divisions 3-5 encompass the six realms of rebirth, from Avīci Hell to the highest heavens. Division 6 discusses mechanisms for moral transformation, such as listening to the *dharma*, receiving the support of *dharma* protectors, and engaging in repentance rituals. Divisions 7-9 describes the foundational elements of the Buddhist path, namely training in moral discipline (*jie* 戒; Skt. *śīla*), meditative concentration (*ding* 定; Skt. *samādhi*), and wisdom (*hui* 慧; *prajñā*). Divisions 10-13 correlate to the comprehensive “classification of teachings” (*panjiao* 判教) developed by Zhiyi 智顛 (538–597) that distinguished between the *tripiṭaka* (*zang* 藏), shared (*tong* 通), separate (*bie* 別), and perfect (*yuan* 圓) teachings. The *tripiṭaka* teaching primarily draws from the *tripiṭaka* collection of *Āgamas*, *Vinaya*, and *Abhidharma*, and enables those of dull capacities to attain *nirvāṇa* as an arhat.¹⁰ The shared teaching supports an intuitive understanding of emptiness shared by Theravada and Mahāyāna traditions, and includes the states of *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and bodhisattva. The separate teaching focuses

¹⁰ For a succinct discussion of the four teachings see Donner & Stevenson, *The Great Calming*, 14–15.

exclusively on the Mahāyāna bodhisattva path, which the Tiantai tradition envisions as consisting of 52 stages. However, these three teachings are considered provisional and gradual; only the perfect teaching allows for a perfect and sudden realization of ultimate reality and awakening as experienced by the Buddha. Within the perfect teaching, at each of the 52 stages of the bodhisattva path, one perceives everything, at every moment, as identical to the middle way—transcending the biased views of emptiness and provisional reality. In this respect, as Neal Donner and Daniel Stevenson explain, the perfect teaching is understood as a “pathless path” as “any and every condition—wholesome or unwholesome, defiled or pure, saintly or afflicted—serves equally as a basis for discernment.”¹¹

However, in Ouyi’s game, the Perfect Teaching division does not contain the last stage and culmination of the Mahāyāna path. Although Ouyi includes a square for “enlightenment equal [to a Buddha]” (*dengjue* 等覺),¹² the penultimate stage of the bodhisattva path, he inserts an entirely new division, “Ascending to the Pure Land,” before the final square of “Buddhahood” (*fo* 佛), and “marvelous enlightenment” (*miaojue* 妙覺)¹³ in the “Stage of Perfect Realization.” Looking closely at the final, center square (see Figure 2), on the right it reads, “Marvelous enlightenment, the final stage of the Perfect Teaching” (*yuanjiao jiuqing miaojue wei* 圓教究竟妙覺位) and on the left reads, “The highest of the highest classes, the tranquil light of true reward” (*shibao jiguang shangshangpin* 實報寂光上上品). Ouyi’s decision to include the Pure Land division prior to the attainment of Buddhahood, and his interpretation of Buddhahood in both Tiantai (“marvelous enlightenment”) and Pure Land (not just “the highest class” (*shangpin* 上品), but “the highest of the highest of classes”) terms aligns with Tiantai teaching and practice since the Northern Song, when Pure Land was regarded and practiced as an integral part of the Tiantai tradition.¹⁴ The Pure Land was seen as an opportune “way-

¹¹ Donner & Stevenson, *The Great Calming*, 16.

¹² This is the 51st stage in Huayan and Tiantai traditions that describe the stage of advanced bodhisattvas ready to attain perfect enlightenment; it is considered “equal” (*deng* 等) to that of a Buddha. Chuck Muller, “perfect enlightenment 等覺,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E7%AD%89%E8%A6%BA>

¹³ This is the 52nd and final stage in Huayan and Tiantai traditions that depicts the incomprehensibly subtle enlightenment attained by the Buddha. Chuck Muller, “marvelous enlightenment 妙覺,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?59.xml+id\(%27b5999-89ba%27\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?59.xml+id(%27b5999-89ba%27))

¹⁴ Stevenson, “The Ties that Bind,” 160; Getz, “Siming Zhili,” 4.

station on the path to Buddhahood,”¹⁵ where one could more easily complete the path to enlightenment.

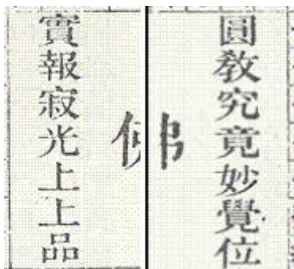


Figure 2: Close-up of the final, center square¹⁶

The Dice

Ouyi draws from two types of Buddhist rituals, divination and recitation of the name of Amitābha Buddha, when designing his dice. To be clear, I use the word “dice,” but a strict translation would be “wheels” (*lun* 輪), and they resemble tops, since they have sharp points on either side that allows them to be spun and thrown (see Figure 3). Ouyi models them after the “wheels” in the *Sūtra on the Divination of Good and Bad Karmic Retribution* (*Zhancha shen’ē yebao jing* 占察善惡業報經; T. 839, 17: 901c–910c), where it instructs practitioners to find a piece of wood the length of their pinky finger, carve four flat surfaces in the middle, and taper the ends so that it spins easily. Ouyi cites the sūtra which states, “By using this form [of a wheel], a person can destroy wrong views and webs of doubt, turning them towards the right path that leads to the abode of peace; for this reason, it is called “wheel.”” (T. 839, 17: 902b27–b28) Ouyi uses the same shape for his dice, but he increases the number of flat sides from four to six, and changes the characters inscribed on the sides. While the three tops in the *Divination Sūtra* reveal the good and evil deeds committed in the past, the strength of those karmic forces, and whether retribution will occur in the past, present, or future, Ouyi’s two tops for the game have the six Chinese characters *Na-mo-a-mi-tuo-fo* 南無阿彌陀佛 (“Homage to Amitābha Buddha”) on their sides (see Figure 3).

¹⁵ Jones, “Foundations of Ethics,” 10.

¹⁶ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11871.



Figure 3: Image of the board, manual and modern rendition of the tops¹⁷

Ouyi views the throwing of the dice as having ethical and soteriological import, and he suggests a correspondence between the dice and the gameboard. Ouyi outlines the procedures (*fa* 法) for throwing the dice as follows: “Put the wheel in the palm of your hand and raise it to throw it sideways. This represents going from being an ordinary person (*cong fan* 從凡) to becoming a sage (*ru sheng* 入聖), turning evil into good, and all [beings] in the ten realms returning (*gui* 歸) to the ultimate (*jiujing* 究竟) [realization of Buddhahood].”¹⁸ Ouyi similarly describes the characters inscribed on the dice as having religious significance, and he correlates them with stages and divisions on the gameboard: *na* and *mo* signify evil (*e* 惡) and *amitufofo* represent good (*shan* 善).¹⁹ More specifically, *na* represents afflictions of perception (*jian fannao* 見煩惱), *mo* represents afflictions of attachment (*ai fannao* 愛煩惱), *a* represents the virtue of generosity (*shi shan* 施善), *mi* represents the virtue of the precepts (*jie* 戒), *tu* represents the virtue of meditation (*ding* 定), and *fo* represents the virtue of wisdom (*hui* 慧).²⁰ In addition, *a* refers to the path of arising and ceasing

¹⁷ “Xuanfopu 選佛譜,” *Xuanfopu wangzhan* 選佛譜網站, Accessed January 22, 2022, http://learn-buddhamap.net/new_map.htm. This website allows one to play Ouyi’s game virtually, and it instructs players to have an “attitude of reverence” (*gongjing xin* 恭敬心) and play the game “carefully” (*shenzhongde* 慎重地), which resonates with Jianmi Chengshi’s concerns explored later in this article.

¹⁸ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11867.

¹⁹ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11867.

²⁰ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11867–11868.

(*shengmie men* 生滅門), *mi* represents the path without arising and ceasing, *tuo* signifies the sequential path (*cidi men* 次第門), and *fo* is the path of sudden perfection (*yuandun men* 圓頓門).²¹ Just as the *Divination Sūtra* offers a way for practitioners to determine their karmic status so that they can repent and eliminate bad karma, *Selection of Buddhas* encourages players to envision themselves transforming their moral status from bad to good and following the path to ultimate enlightenment.

Ouyi connects his dice with the wheels used in divination and describes a simple procedure for how to throw the dice, but he offers no other instructions or protocols such as those that appear in the *Divination Sūtra* or Ouyi's ritual texts.²² This ambiguity allows for interpretive flexibility on the part of the players: they can approach the game as secular play or view it as having a revelatory or divinatory capacity. Ouyi himself engaged in various types of divination practices, including drawing lots to determine the purity of his precepts, and he even created his own lots (*jiu* 鬮) to determine how he should approach his commentary on the *Sūtra of Brahma's Net* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經; T. 24, 1484: 997a–1010a).²³ In his manual Ouyi implies that *Selection of Buddhas* shares both the formal features and function of the *Divination Sūtra*. Further evidence can be found in the fact that one-third of the divinatory results from the *Divination Sūtra* appear in Ouyi's gameboard, which leads May-Ying Ngai to write, "to a certain degree, his game *Xuanfo tu* and manual *Xuanfo pu* were meant to be a board-gaming version to pair up with this [Divination] sūtra."²⁴

In addition, Ouyi connects the throwing of the dice with the worship of Amitābha Buddha who resides in his western Pure Land. According to Pure Land sūtras, any being who hears the name of Amitābha and seeks to be reborn in his realm will, by the power of Amitābha's vow (*benyuan* 本願), together with mindful recollection of Amitābha's presence (*nianfo* 念佛), attain birth in Sukavatī following their death.²⁵ By embedding the name of Amitābha in the implements of the game, Ouyi lays the groundwork for players to engage in the

²¹ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11868.

²² The *Divination Sūtra* outlines ritual protocols and procedures for practitioners to follow before they spin the wheel, beginning with a purification ritual and including offerings of flowers and incense, worshipping the Three Jewels, invoking and worshipping the bodhiattva Dizang, repentance, etc. McGuire, *Living Karma*, 45.

²³ McGuire, *Living Karma*, 38.

²⁴ Ngai, "From Entertainment," 143.

²⁵ Stevenson, "The Ties that Bind," 153.

devotional practice of mindful recollection of Amitābha Buddha. He explains why he decided against using numbers on his dice as he writes:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are just mundane numbers. Such morally neutral *dharmas* cannot give rise to good deeds and eliminating evil deeds, but the six characters *na, mo, a, mi, tuo, fo* are the great name of myriad virtues. All who hear the Buddha's name obtain non-retrogression and turn towards unsurpassed correct enlightenment (*zhengjue* 正覺). All who recite the name of the Buddha can eliminate eight billion eons of lifetimes of heavy sins. Each moment of thought (*ynian* 一念) corresponds to a recollection of the Buddha (*nianfo* 念佛), and many thoughts correspond to many recollections of the Buddha. For this reason, I used these six characters as marks for the wheel.²⁶

幺二三四五六。不過世間數目。是無記法。不能生善滅惡。那謨阿彌陀佛六字。乃是萬德洪名。一聞佛名。皆得不退轉於無上正等正覺。一稱佛名。能滅八十億劫生死重罪。一念相應一念佛。念念相應念念佛。故用此六字為輪相也。

Alluding to the *Contemplation Sūtra* (*Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經; T. 365) that suggests recollection of Amitābha Buddha can eliminate incalculable eons' worth of sin, Ouyi proposes that players who recite the name of Amitābha Buddha can also eliminate their sins, and other players who hear the name can turn their thoughts towards enlightenment. Again, Ouyi does not explicitly instruct players to recite Amitābha's name or engage in a formal ritual, but he invites the possibility for players to recall Amitābha Buddha each time they roll the dice.

Ouyi views the throwing of the dice as performing a significant action, not unlike actions that occur within the context of rituals. The "turn" (*zhuan* 轉) of the dice can morally and religiously transform (*zhuan* 轉) players, and hearing the name of Amitābha Buddha (*foming* 佛名) can turn (*zhuan* 轉) them towards awakening. Even if players do not formally recite Amitābha's name, each turn hinges on the phrase *Namo Amitufo* and offers players the opportunity to recall him in their minds. As Ouyi writes, he inscribed the name on the dice so that each thought (*nian* 念) might correspond to recollection of the Buddha (*nianfo* 念佛).²⁷ He alludes to a mental transformation that can

²⁶ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11868.

²⁷ May-ying Mary Ngai translates the phrase, "When one thought responds to [the power of Amitābha Buddha's vow], one thought is enlightened; when every

occur when players' thoughts are directed towards the name of Amitābha Buddha. Moreover, given that the roll of *fo-fo* (Buddha-Buddha) is the highest roll, which enables one to swiftly progress through the board, it encourages players to strive to attain *fo* (Buddha), which corresponds to the final square of the game as well as their own potential Buddhahood. For example, in the very first square on the board, if one rolls *fo-fo*, one ascends to the second square of the fourteenth division—the lowest class of the lowest rebirth in the Pure Land. Referring again to the *Contemplation Sūtra*, Ouyi explains that if one relies on the compassionate power of the Buddha's vow at the moment of one's death, even if one has no time to invoke or recall Amitābha Buddha, if friends recite the Buddha's name with one mind (*yixin chengfominghao* 一心稱佛名號), one is immediately born into the lowest class of the lowest rebirth.

Playing a game, or performing a ritual?

Although Ouyi envisions the throwing of the dice as morally, mentally, and soteriologically significant, he does not explicitly instruct players to recollect or recite the name of Amitābha Buddha. In fact, he offers no explanation about how to play the game anywhere in his manual.²⁸ One can decipher some of the game mechanics, such as the throws of the dice by analyzing the combinations that appear on the first twenty-one squares,²⁹ but other aspects of game play remain ambiguous. This caused consternation for some of Ouyi's followers who objected to what they perceived as a misuse of the game. Ouyi's disciple Chengshi 成時 (1618–1678) wrote on the side of the reprint of the board:

thought responds to [Amitābha Buddha's vow power], every thought is enlightened." Ngai, "From Entertainment," 136. I have chosen to translate *xiangying* 相應 as "correspond" rather than "respond," and *nianfo* 念佛 as "recollection of the Buddha" rather than "one thought is enlightened" in this particular excerpt, however I do think that Ouyi espouses the view that one can become enlightened through a transformation of thought in other parts of his instruction manual, which I will discuss later in the article.

²⁸ Kuo, "Divination, jeux," 160.

²⁹ Ouyi omits fourteen of the thirty-six possible combinations thrown on two 6-sided dice. One can surmise the dice were thrown sequentially, and if one received a *na* or *mo* on the first throw, any character on the second would be acceptable, but if one threw any of the characters *A*, *mi*, *tuo*, or *fo* on the first throw, a second throw of *na* or *mo* is unacceptable (one loses one's turn) because it would imply a mixture of affliction and enlightenment. McGuire, "Playing with Karma," 14.

This board is meant to serve as a means of drawing one into the Buddha's teachings, therefore both ordinary people and monks can enjoy it. But do not give rise to playful thoughts (literally: "thoughts of a game" (*youxi xiang* 遊戲想))! One must have an attitude of reverence, first worshipping the Buddha and then throwing [the dice]. Those with ordinary capacities are not worth the trouble that the elder master of Lingfeng took to create the board!³⁰

是圖乃為引入佛法而述。故凡緇素隨喜者。莫作遊戲想。應生恭敬心。先當禮佛。然後選之。庶幾不負靈峰老人述圖之苦心也。

While he acknowledges the potential for the game to spread Buddhist teachings, Chengshi insists that the game should be performed—as one would a ritual—rather than played. Specifically, he says players should have an attitude of devotion or reverence (*gongjing xin* 恭敬心), worshipping Amitābha Buddha before throwing the dice. In other words, their minds should be entirely directed towards Amitābha Buddha rather than giving rise to playful thoughts. He clearly envisions players engaging in a ritual, rather than simply throwing dice, and he expresses frustration at what he perceived to be a disrespectful playing of the game—one lacking a proper devotional stance. His exasperation reflects the ambiguity of the game, which one is clearly meant to play, but which incorporates ritual apparatus and religious practices that blur the boundaries between religion and play.

Western scholars have analyzed the similarities and differences between play, games, rituals, and drama. In the mid-twentieth century, Johan Huizinga proposed that magic circles, card-tables, consecrated sites, and stages share the form and function of playgrounds, "forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart."³¹ He characterizes play as freedom (voluntarily or freely performed), separate from ordinary life, occurring in demarcated places, often repeated, and establishing a temporary order from which deviation "spoils the game."³²

Although some question the extent to which one can create spatial, temporal, and psychological boundaries between the "magic circle" and the real world, insisting that "reality is messier,"³³ many scholars build on the notion of an "as

³⁰ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11862.

³¹ Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 10.

³² Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 10.

³³ Pargman & Jakobson, "Do you believe," 227.

if” or “as though” imagined world that players, practitioners, and performers create and inhabit—one that is separate from real life, governed by rules, and absorbs their full attention.³⁴ Applied to *Selection of Buddhas*, players inhabit a Buddhist universe filled with cosmological and soteriological possibilities, governed by rules of karma, and they act “as if” they aim to attain the highest realization of Buddhahood. Applied to the Chinese Buddhist Pure Land rituals, practitioners prepare the ritual space and then follow a consistent set of rules or procedures (*fa* 法) whereby they initially make offerings to the Three Jewels, then invoke the presence of Amitābha Buddha, worship him, engage in confession and repentance, dedicate their merit, and profess vows.³⁵ They visually imagine themselves to be in the presence of Amitābha Buddha, and the power of his vow, together with mindful recollection of Amitābha’s presence, creates the conditions for them to attain birth in Sukhāvātī after their death.³⁶

In this way, unlike games, religious rituals are understood to have transformative power and salvific efficacy. Ritual actions provide the “impetus” (*ji* 機) or “stimulus” (*gan* 感應) for the compassionate response (*ying* 應) of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.³⁷ Although Ouyi does not explicitly refer to religious practices in *Selection of Buddhas* as “stimulating the response” (*ganying* 感應) of Buddhas and bodhisattvas as he does elsewhere in his ritual corpus,³⁸ he does emphasize the importance of relying on the power of the Buddha’s compassion. Discussing the first square of the board—the lowest of the ten hells—Ouyi writes:

[If you roll] *a-fo*, rely on the power of the Buddha’s compassion to bring forth his virtue of generosity. Because of the strength of karmic afflictions (*yehuo* 惑業), you are not yet able to ascend to stages without outflow, therefore you only turn towards worldly blessings (*shifu* 世福). [If you roll] *mi-fo*, rely on the power of the Buddha’s compassion to bring forth his virtue of morality. Because of the strength of karmic afflictions, you are not yet able to attain the precepts, therefore you are only able to hear the true teachings. [However, even] extremely evil people in the present world who happen to hear the teachings immediately plant roots of virtue (*shangen* 善根) and eliminate heavy

³⁴ Caillois, *Man*, 10–11; Salen & Zimmerman, *Rules of Play*, 80; Juul, “The Game,” 5; Seligman, Weller, Puett, & Simon, *Ritual*.

³⁵ Stevenson, “The Ties that Bind,” 173–178.

³⁶ Stevenson, “The Ties that Bind,” 153.

³⁷ Stevenson, “The Ties that Bind,” 152.

³⁸ McGuire, *Living Karma*, 50–58.

sins. [... If you roll] *tuo-fo*, rely on the power of the Buddha's compassion to bring forth his virtue of meditation. Therefore you can suddenly be freed from evil karma (*e ye* 惡業), establish an altar and perform rituals (*yi* 儀), practicing at six times of the day, and seeking for the Buddha to eliminate their sins (*miezui* 滅罪), this is called "repentance involving the discernment of signs." [If you roll] *fo-fo*, rely on the power of the Buddha's compassion to bring forth his virtue of wisdom, therefore just before the end of your life, even though you are overwhelmed by suffering and have no time to recall the excellent characteristics and virtues of the Buddha [Amitābha's] *dharmakāya*, you can still rely on good friends and teachers to recite the name of the Buddha one mind (*yixin* 一心), and immediately attain birth in the lowest of the lowest classes [of rebirth in the Pure Land], as is illustrated in the sūtra of sixteen contemplations [i.e. the *Contemplation Sūtra*].³⁹

阿佛。則仗佛慈力。生其施善。然惑業方強。未能卽階無漏。故僅轉為世福。彌佛。則仗佛慈力。生其戒善。然惑業方強。未能得戒。故僅獲聞正法。現見世間極惡之人。偶來聽法。卽種善根。消滅重罪。[...] 陀佛。則仗佛慈力。生其定善。故能頓離惡業。結立壇儀。六時行道。求佛滅罪。名取相懺。佛佛。則仗佛慈力。生其慧善。故於臨命終時。雖復苦逼。不遑念佛法身功德相好。猶能依善友教。一心稱佛名號。卽得下品下生。具如十六觀經所明。

By repeating the phrase "rely on the power of the Buddha's compassion," Ouyi highlights the transformative impact of the Buddha, either when one engages in repentance oneself, or when others engage in recitation of Amitābha Buddha's name on one's behalf.

In other religious texts where Ouyi does appeal to the idea of "stimulus-response" (*ganying* 感應), he insists that only ritualized settings enable practitioners to properly summon Buddhas and bodhisattvas, who can then reveal past karma, eliminate present karma, or ensure a good future.⁴⁰ Failing to follow ritual protocols and procedures, by contrast, can have serious repercussions.⁴¹ What do we make of the fact that Ouyi affirms the transformative power of divination and devotion, embedding and inscribing

³⁹ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11873–11874.

⁴⁰ McGuire, *Living Karma*, 6.

⁴¹ Stevenson, "The Ties that Bind," 151.

them within the very implements of the game, but fails to give any detailed instruction about how the game should be played?

By omitting extensive rules of play and ritual protocols from his manual, Ouyi allows for both religious and ludic possibilities of the game. *Selection of Buddhas* capitalizes on the permeability between ritual and play. As Richard Schechner writes, “play creates its own (permeable) boundaries and realms: multiple realities that are slippery, porous, and full of creative lying and deceit.”⁴² I would suggest that Ouyi, by contrast, sees the slippery and porous boundary between ritual and play as full of creative possibility. In his preface he writes, “The benefit of this game is for people, while playing the game (*youxi jian* 遊戲間), to suddenly know (*dun zhi* 頓知) the suffering of the six paths of rebirth and the differences between the Three Vehicles of liberation, and sincerely consider it inconceivable.”⁴³ Although Chengshi wants to banish all thoughts of a game, Ouyi wants to encourage people to play the game. For it is while they are in that state—of freedom, separation from worldly life, absorption in a Buddhist cosmology, and orientation towards attaining Buddhahood—that they might fundamentally realize the truth of suffering and the path of liberation. Players can slip from the realm of play into the realm of religious insight and practice. This is the “turn” embedded in the dice and boardgame, where the game is not merely didactic or instructive, but instead transformative. They may find themselves invested in their own karma, engaging in recollection of Amitābha Buddha, and aspiring to attain enlightenment. In this way, *Selection of Buddha* affords players the possibility of approaching the game in both religious and ludic ways. It does this by providing minimal rules of play: players must throw the dice sequentially and decipher their roll to determine which square they should move to. There are no constraints or guidelines about how they should roll the dice or whether they should perform the practices described in the squares.

Theorists identify rules as a seminal feature of rituals and games. As Rachel Wagner suggests, “Both ritual and games are defined by *rules*, or structures that regulate and limit performance, shaping the player-performer’s experience. Rules, in this sense, are the structure-providing mechanisms that shape experience.”⁴⁴ Game rules and ritual protocols set limits on what players can and cannot do, which impacts the experience of players and practitioners. However, in the case of *Selection of Buddhas*, rules are implied in the dice and

⁴² Schechner, *The Future of Ritual*, 26.

⁴³ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11865.

⁴⁴ Wagner, *Godwired*, 6.

board, but only minimally outlined in the manual. As a result, it offers little regulation over or limitation to the possibilities of performance. It nevertheless resembles the magic circle, which Katie Salen and Erik Zimmerman suggest, “simultaneously represents a path with a beginning and an end, but one without beginning and end...a space that is both limited and limitless. In short, a finite space with infinite possibility.”⁴⁵ As they point out, the only way to differentiate between rituals and games is the “lusory attitude” of players when they step into the world of the game. Ouyi sees his game as having the potential to transform players while they are absorbed in this state of play as they engage in activities analogous to religious practices of divination and devotion.

Repentance Rituals

While divination and recollection of Amitābha Buddha’s presence inspires the design of the dice, other practices appear as squares on the gameboard or as explanations for progress in the game. In the manual for *Selection of Buddhas*, repentance rituals enable players to avoid being sent to unfortunate realms of rebirth and expedite their ascent to Buddhahood: the unrepentant easily fall to hells, while the penitent advance to stages otherwise impossible. At every square except that of ultimate realization, players can always reform themselves or strive for further cultivation. For example, Ouyi suggests those who “break *sīla*” (*po shiluo* 破尸羅) descend immediately into Avīci hell if they repudiate karmic retribution (literally “cause and effect”) or lack remorse,⁴⁶ and those who “break an observance” (*po guize* 破軌則) fall into the three lower realms if they do not know how to repent and seek to eliminate their sins.⁴⁷ He urges transgressors to instead rely on the Vinaya to confess and then seek to eliminate their sins (*miezui* 滅罪) by performing repentance rituals.⁴⁸ In later squares, Ouyi encourages those born in higher realms—*devas*, *asuras*, and humans—to consider their past sins (*guozui* 過罪) or rebuke themselves (*heze* 訶責) for their spiritual deficiencies if they still have attachments to views or harbor arrogant thoughts, even when practicing virtuous acts such as generosity.⁴⁹ Ouyi recommends that bodhisattvas engage in repentance to safeguard their religious progress. In his discussion of bodhisattvas who have aroused the

⁴⁵ Salen & Zimmerman, *Rules of Play*, 95.

⁴⁶ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11917.

⁴⁷ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11919.

⁴⁸ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11919.

⁴⁹ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11900–11901.

intention for enlightenment (the eleventh square in the Distinct Teachings division; see Appendix), Ouyi admits they may have eliminated discriminating views and karmic afflictions, but he advocates they perform repentance involving the contemplation of non-arising in order to prevent the discriminating mind from arising again.⁵⁰

Ouyi devotes three squares for repentance rituals in the division entitled “Eliminating evil and giving rise to good,” which appears after the various realms of rebirth. They are the three methods of repentance described by Zhiyi 智顓 (538–597) in his *Elucidation of the Sequential Approach of the Perfection of Dhyāna* (*Shi chan poluomi cidi famen* 釋禪波羅蜜次第法門 T 1916, 46: 485b29–486b22): “repentance involving procedures [as stipulated by the Vinaya]” (*zuofa chanhui* 作法懺悔)⁵¹, “repentance involving the discernment of signs” (*guanziang chanhui* 觀相懺悔), and “repentance involving the contemplation of non-arising” (*guan wusheng chanhui* 觀無生懺悔).⁵² As Zhiyi explains, the first repentance calls upon the person to perform a particular regimen of action to redress violations against the Vinaya, but it does not take into consideration any changes in their demeanor or understanding. The second repentance involves concentrating one’s mind in *samādhi* and seeking auspicious signs that indicate their sin has been eradicated. The third repentance entails penetrating the source of sin by discerning the origin of the mind.

Ouyi includes instructions for performing each repentance ritual immediately before he explains the rolls of the dice in his manual, and he explicitly addresses those instructions to monastics and lay practitioners, which signals the possibility that they might step aside from the game to perform them. He offers only brief instructions for observing the first type of repentance that addresses the violation of minor precepts (*qingjie* 輕戒), which refers to the set of five or ten precepts. Ouyi writes that the seven groups of Buddhist disciplines—*bhikṣu*, *bhikṣuṇī*, *upāsaka*, *upāsikā*, *śrāmaṇera*, *śrāmaṇerikā*, and *śikṣamāṇā*—that violate such precepts should “with a thoroughly pure mind, not dare to conceal [their sins], but instead reveal (*falū* 發露) them and eliminate them with regret (*huichū* 悔除) in front of pure respected friends (*shiyōu* 師

⁵⁰ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 12131–12132.

⁵¹ Daniel Stevenson translates it “repentance involving a fixed regimen [of action].” As Zhiyi explains, it involves a particular regimen of action for removing the sin, such as dwelling apart or submitting to the will of the *saṅgha*. It does not involve changes in demeanor or the presence of wisdom. Stevenson, “Zhiyi,” 468.

⁵² Ouyi discusses these in *Xuanfo pu*, 11994–11999.

友).”⁵³ He offers lengthier instructions for “repentance involving the discernment of signs,” which applies to those who have violated the bodhisattva precepts (*dajie* 大戒):

Now, following the Mahāyāna teachings, establish an altar and bind the ritual space, purify and establish [yourself] in the three deeds [of body, speech, and mind], and at six times day and night practice the fivefold repentance (*wuhui* 五悔) [of repentance, imploring the Buddhas, sympathetic rejoicing, dedication of merit, and professing vows].⁵⁴ Pitifully (*ai* 哀) seek the mysterious or manifest support (*ming xian jiabei* 冥顯加被) of Buddhas and bodhisattvas and pray that you might again have purity of precepts. For these reasons, it is called “repentance involving the discernment of signs.” It can eliminate the fundamental heavy sins, but it cannot eliminate the seven grave offenses (of bringing forth blood from the Buddha’s body, killing one’s father, killing one’s mother, killing a monk, killing an *ācārya*, splitting up the *saṅgha* that maintains observances and preaches the *dharma*, or killing sages of the Three Vehicles). Having already performed the procedure for binding the altar, one does not give rise to afflicted activity (*huoye* 惑業), therefore with *na-na* and similar [rolls], one does not move. Having already eliminated heavy sins, [the outcome of the roll] follows the depth of one’s meritorious practices.⁵⁵

今依大乘教法。立壇結界。淨治三業。晝夜六時。勤修五悔。哀求諸佛菩薩。冥顯加被。祈復淨戒。故名為取相懺。能滅根本重罪。但未即滅七逆罪耳。(七逆者。一出佛身血。二弑父。三弑母。四弑和尚。五弑阿闍黎。六破羯磨轉法輪僧。七弑三乘聖人。須更修無生懺。)既結壇儀。不起惑業。故那那等不行。既滅重罪。隨功行之淺深。

Ouyi includes the preparatory activities of purifying the ritual site and practitioners, suggesting that players—if they choose to perform such rituals—

⁵³ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11994.

⁵⁴ These are discussed by Zhiyi in his *Mohe zhiguan* (Great calming and contemplation) (T. 1911.46.98a14–c16). Daniel Stevenson argues it was widely used during Zhiyi’s time, thus he likely borrowed it rather than creating it. Stevenson, “The T’ien-T’ai,” 421–423.

⁵⁵ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11996.

would follow the full protocol of the repentance ritual.⁵⁶ He also explains that low rolls (of *na* or *mo*) would reflect the depth of their practice rather than the efficacy of the ritual, which allows for the dice to potentially play a divinatory role. Just as he emphasizes the power of Amitābha’s vow to bring about transformation in the rolling of the dice, Ouyi here calls on practitioners to seek the empowerment or support (*jiabei* 加被) of Buddhas and bodhisattvas so that they purify their precepts. Only after practitioners have completed the practice, signaled by his use of “already” (*ji* 既), do the rolls of the dice signal the result of the ritual. Because the repentance ritual eliminates heavy crimes, players do not fall back to earlier squares on the board. Instead, those with low rolls (*na* or *mo*) simply fail to advance, while those with high rolls advance to squares for contemplation, mindfulness, and wisdom. This differs markedly from the first type of repentance that follows Vinaya protocol: if one throws low rolls on that square, they are sent back to the first square on the board due to “strong habits of affliction” (*fannaο xi* 煩惱習) causing them to commit offenses again.⁵⁷

Whereas Buddhas and bodhisattvas provide the means for eliminating sins in the repentance discerning signs, “repentance involving the contemplation of non-arising” uses an entirely different ritual mechanism for such purification—one’s own mind. Ouyi writes that regardless of the type of sin, including the seven grave offenses, practitioners should:

First use [the previous repentance rituals] involving procedures and discerning signs to direct their flow (*qi liu* 其流). Then promptly observe that the nature of sin is empty in order to block their source (*qi yuan* 其源). As it says, “should you wish to repent, seat yourself in proper [meditative] posture and fix your mind on ultimate reality. The multitude of sins are like frost and dew: the sun of wisdom can dissipate them [instantly].”⁵⁸ (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 11997).

⁵⁶ Stevenson discusses such protocols and the basic building blocks that constitute such ritual performance and narrative, which are also reflected here, in “The Ties that Bind,” 172–179.

⁵⁷ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11994.

⁵⁸ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11997. The quoted verse appears in *Zhiyi’s Elucidation of the Sequential Approach of the Perfection of Dhyāna* (*Shi chan poluomi cidī famen* 釋禪波羅蜜次第法門 T 1916, 46: 485b29–486b22), which quotes from the *Sūtra on the Contemplation of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy* (*Guanpuxian pusa xingfa jing* 觀普賢菩薩行法經 T 277, 9: 393b). This verse is preceded by a line in the sūtra that states “The ocean of all karmic obstructions is born entirely from deluded thinking.” Stevenson, “Zhiyi,” 470.

Ouyi notes how the first two repentance rituals address the “flow” of karma while the third addresses its “source.” He draws from Zhiyi’s metaphor of a sun melting dew that describes how wisdom can melt away transgressions by illuminating their fundamental emptiness. For those practitioners who do not have respected friends before whom they might perform the first repentance, or have no means of establishing an altar or ritual space to engage in the second, Ouyi recommends: “Keeping a sincere, straightforward mind (*zhixin* 直心), establish the aspiration to attain *samādhi*, and facing the Three Jewels in the ten directions, confess your transgressions, vow not to do them again, and then in a quiet place, according to principle [of emptiness], reflect and contemplate the non-arising of sin.”⁵⁹ Here, rather than the transformative power of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, it is the power of the mind in contemplation that dissolves the root of sins.

Ouyi intimates the complexity of such contemplative practices by admitting ambiguity about what “non-arising” (*wusheng* 無生) entails. It may refer to the arising and ceasing of causes and conditions (*yinyuan* 因緣) and the insubstantiality of self and *dharmas*. It could allude to the emptiness of causes and conditions, which are like dreams or illusions.⁶⁰ It could be mean causes and conditions are provisional existences (*jia* 假) that are misapprehended (*xuwang* 虛妄) to arise, when in the experience of the middle way, both emptiness and existence are negated.⁶¹ It could be the middle truth of causes and conditions, which profoundly grasps that the form of sin (*zuixiang* 罪相) is the form of reality (*shixiang* 實相)—in other words, the true form of things that they are, which is inconceivable (*bukesiyi* 不可思議).⁶² Ouyi uses the Tiantai principle of threefold truth as a hermeneutic to interpret the various understandings of “non-arising”—the threefold truth consisting of emptiness (*kong* 空) or ultimate truth, conventional or provisional existence (*jia* 假) or worldly truth, and the middle (*zhong* 中) or the simultaneous affirmation of both emptiness and provisional existence.⁶³ Ouyi emphasizes the profundity of this type of contemplation; through it, one can understand reality in a way that escapes any possible mental conception—it is “inconceivable.” This also alludes

⁵⁹ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11997–11998. 則應秉質直心。立決定志。先向十方三寶。悔除所犯。誓不更造。次於阿蘭若處。如理思惟。觀罪無生。

⁶⁰ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11998.

⁶¹ This is alluding to Zhiyi’s threefold truth, which is explored extensively in Swanson, “Foundations,” 115–156.

⁶² Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 11998.

⁶³ Swanson, *Foundations*, 6.

to “the contemplation of the inconceivable” (*guan bukesiyi jing* 觀不可思議境): the first, foundational element in the ten modes of contemplation from Zhiyi’s *Great Calming and Contemplation* (*Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀 ; T 1911, 46: 52b1–4). *Selection of Buddhas* signals its significance by allowing players to advance from this square (of repentance involving the contemplation of non-arising) to other states of contemplation, rebirth in the Pure Land, or if one rolls the highest roll, the attainment of Buddhahood.

Meditative Regimens

As was the case for repentance rituals, in *Selection of Buddhas*, Ouyi draws heavily on Zhiyi’s *Elucidation of the Sequential Approach of the Perfection of Dhyāna* in his discussion of meditative regimens, especially the ascending sequence of meditative regimens, from those that produce *dhyāna* states with and without defiling outflows (*youlou yi wulou chan* 有漏亦無漏禪), to those that produce *dhyāna* states free of defiling outflows (*wulou chan* 無漏禪). The previously discussed rituals of recollection of Amitābha Buddha’s presence and the repentance rituals involving procedures or the discernment of signs rely on Buddhas and bodhisattvas, while repentance rituals involving the contemplation of non-arising depend on the wisdom inherent in one’s own mind. Both approaches have the potential to be ritually efficacious, bringing about a transformation of one’s karma. In Ouyi’s game, meditation appears prominently not only within Divisions 8 and 9 (“Training in superior meditative concentration” and “Training in superior wisdom”; see Appendix), but also Divisions 12 and 13 (“Advancing to the position of the Distinct Teaching” and “Advancing to the position of the Perfect Teaching”) that encompass the stages of the bodhisattva path.

In “Training in superior meditative concentration,” Ouyi devotes an entire fascicle to explaining the thirteen types of meditation that Zhiyi lists in his primer, *Initial Gate to the Succession of Dharma Realms* (*Fajie cidì chūmen* 法界次第初門; T 1925: 675a12–679c25), signaling how important Ouyi considers contemplative practice. In his general remarks about meditation, he urges players to strengthen their power of meditative concentration, which can exhaust all causes and effects (*yinguo* 因果). The thirteen types of meditation are:

1. Six excellent approaches to meditation (*liu miaomen chan* 六妙門禪)⁶⁴
2. Sixteen superior [forms of meditations] (*shiliu tesheng* 十六特勝)⁶⁵
3. Clear penetration [of breath, form, and mind] (*tongming guan* 通明觀)⁶⁶
4. Nine kinds of meditation [on a corpse] (*jiuxiang guan* 九想觀)⁶⁷
5. Eight kinds of mindfulness (*banian guan* 八念觀)⁶⁸
6. Ten kinds of contemplation (*shixiang guan* 十想觀)⁶⁹
7. Eight renunciations (*babeishe guan* 八背捨觀)⁷⁰

⁶⁴ This consists in (1) counting the breath from one to ten, (2) following one to ten without any dispersal of thought, (3) stopping or stilling one's concentration on the breath pervading one's body, (4) observing the truth of impermanence in regards to one's body and mental consciousness (thereby breaking through the four false beliefs in permanence, joy, self, and purity rather than impermanence, suffering, no-self, and impurity), (5) returning to contemplate the truth that the mind does not arise and is fundamentally empty, and (6) purifying the mind, or uncovering its fundamental purity when one does not give rise to discrimination of deluded thinking (*wangxiang fenbie* 妄想分別; Skt. *saṃjñā-parikalpa*).

⁶⁵ Also called awareness of breath (Skt. *ānāpāna-smṛti*), this involves (1) knowing the entrance of breath; (2) knowing the exit of breath; (3) knowing the length of breath; (4) knowing the breath pervading the body; (5) eliminating bodily volitions; (6) sensing joy; (7) sensing happiness; (8) sensing mental volition; (9) one's mind giving rise to joy; (10) one's mind giving rise to inclusions, (11) one's mind creating liberation; (12) observing impermanence; (13) observing dispersal; (14) observing separation from desire; (15) observing cessation; (16) observing renunciation.

⁶⁶ Those who penetrate breath, material form, and mind will then arouse the six supernatural powers (*liu shentong* 六神通) and three insights of divine vision, knowledge of previous lives, and the power of extinction of contamination or affliction.

⁶⁷ Considered an expedient way of overcoming desire, nine thoughts of the corpse are of its (1) swelling, (2) destruction, (3) being torn apart by wild beasts, (4) pus and boils, (5) green decayed flesh, (6) chewing, (7) dispersal, (8) bones, (9) burning.

⁶⁸ The eight recollections are that of (1) the Buddha, (2) the Dharma, (3) the Saṅgha, (4) the precepts, (5) renunciation, (6) heaven, (7) inhalation and exhalation of breath and (8) death.

⁶⁹ The ten thoughts are those of (1) impermanence, (2) suffering, (3) no-self, (4) impurity of food, (5) inability to enjoy all worldly things, (6) death, (7) impurity, (8) cession, (9) separation, and (10) extinction.

⁷⁰ Paul Swanson translates them "eight liberations." They refer to eight stages of liberation that lead to complete cessation (Skt. *nirodha-samāpatti*): (1) remove desires by concentration on a certain external object; (2) cultivate total concentration by focusing the mind internally; (3) maintain calm while freeing the

8. Eight bases of overcoming [desire and attachment] (*bashengchu guan* 八勝處觀)
9. Ten universal points of concentration (*shi yiqiechu guan* 十一切處觀)⁷¹
10. Nine Stages of *Samādhi* (*jiu cidi ding* 九次第定)
11. Lion-like, strenuous *samādhi* (*shizi sanmei* 師子奮迅三昧)
12. Transcending *samādhi* (*chaoyue sanmei* 超越三昧)
13. Kingly *samādhi* (*wang sanmei* 王三昧)

This division is then followed by “training in superior wisdom,” which consists of the following eight squares:

1. Mind of the śrāvaka (*fa shengwen xin* 發聲聞心)
2. Mind of the pratyekabuddha (*fa pizhifo xin* 發辟支佛心)
3. Mind of the six paramita (*shi liudu xin* 事六度心)
4. Direct realization of emptiness (*tikong guan* 體空觀)
5. Sequential development of the three [Tiantai] contemplations (*cidi sangan* 次第三觀)⁷²—the view of emptiness, dependent arising, and the middle view
6. Perfect, sudden, and marvelous contemplation (*yuan dun miao guan* 圓頓妙觀)
7. Vowing to ascend to the inner court [of Maitreya Buddha in Tuṣita Heaven] (*yuan sheng neiyuan* 願升內院)
8. Seeking rebirth in the Pure Land (*qiusheng jingtu* 求生淨土)

While constraints of space prevent a comprehensive analysis of the various meditative regimens included in the game, the squares include a variety of meditation methods, states of meditative awareness (or *samādhi*), mental

mind from external objects; (4) attain a state of mental and physical purity; (5) focus on unlimited space and dissolve the distinctions of the external world; (6) attain both physically and mentally a realm without limits; (7) attain the foundation that transcends space and the mental realm; and (8) attain a state in which this foundation is constantly manifested. Paul Swanson, “eight liberations 八背捨,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%85%AB%E8%83%8C%E6%8D%A8>

⁷¹ The ten universals are green, yellow, red, white, earth, water, fire, wind, air, and consciousness.

⁷² These refer to (1) entering emptiness from provisional existence (*congjia rukong* 從假入空), (2) re-entering provisional existence from emptiness (*congkong chujia* 從空出假), and (3) entering the middle [through integrating the two] (*ru zhongdao guan* 入中道觀). For a discussion of these three contemplations, see Donner and Stevenson, *The Great Calming*, 12 and Swanson, *Foundations*, 116–123.

capacities (of the *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and bodhisattva), and mental aspirations (vows to attain rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven or Amitābha Buddha's Pure Land). The latter division contains the gradual and sequential path of the contemplations of the Distinct Teaching for bodhisattvas with dull capacities, as well as the perfect and sudden contemplation of the Perfect Teaching aimed towards bodhisattvas with keen capacities. Drawing on other well-established terms in Tiantai meditative and ritual manuals, such as the distinction between “phenomenal” (*shi* 事) and “noumenal” (*li* 理) approaches to meditation, Ouyi suggests one can approach religious practices (*xing* 行) in two ways: “either from using phenomena to enter principle or using principle to attain phenomena.”⁷³ For example, one might meditate on the body to understand the principle of impermanence, but one could also meditate on impermanence to better grasp the phenomenal reality of one's body. As one progresses from the division on meditation to the division on wisdom, one finds increasing emphasis placed on the principle or truth underlying phenomena, beginning with *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* who grasp the respective principles of suffering and interdependence but not compassion for other people, *bodhisattvas* who possess compassion, those who embody emptiness, those who know that people have Buddha Nature, and those who achieve nondual awareness.

If we focus on three sequential squares in the division on wisdom—direct realization (literally, embodiment) of emptiness, sequential development of the three contemplations, and perfect and sudden contemplation—we find that the role played by Buddhas and bodhisattvas in generating wisdom gradually becomes assumed by the player's own mind. For example, in the square for embodying emptiness, Ouyi notes how people mistakenly perceive themselves as having a self despite the fact that they are empty of self-nature, and how Buddhas and bodhisattvas compassionately teach them about the five aggregates, the twelve sense fields (i.e., the six sense faculties and their objects), etc., so that they might understand no-self, end their delusory thoughts, and escape suffering. Lacking the wisdom to understand the truth of dependent origination, they must rely on bodhisattvas who do grasp the truth of non-arising (of self and *dharmas*), make vows to liberate sentient beings, and use a number of “*dharma gates*” (*famen* 法門) to do so, even though they are illusions.⁷⁴ In this square, players clearly depend on Buddhas and bodhisattvas to instruct them in Buddhist teachings because they do not understand the truth of emptiness. However, in the next square Ouyi describes how people might understand that

⁷³ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 12074.

⁷⁴ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 12082–12083.

all sentient beings possess Buddha nature (*foxing* 佛性) that neither arises nor ceases but eternally abides, even though it is covered by adventitious defilements and afflictions.⁷⁵ Having such knowledge, they may then make vows to extinguish such afflictions and liberate all sentient beings, following the fifty-two stages of the bodhisattva. In the third square, “Perfect, Sudden, and Marvelous Contemplation,” which Ouyi explains is also called “three contemplations of a single mind” (*yixin sanguan* 一心三觀) and “the great calming and contemplation” (*mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀), Ouyi describes those who have perfected their understanding of emptiness and nondual awareness as follows:

Although delusion and enlightenment are different, their natures are truly equal. The thusness (*ru* 如) of sentient beings is the thusness of Buddha: it is a single thusness, not two thusnesses. Thus, giving rise to compassion for those of a similar essence, unconditional compassion, one makes the four great vows [to liberate sentient beings]. One cultivates the six perfections and ten thousand practices according with the nature [of a bodhisattva]. One liberates oneself and others, so that all return to the hidden storehouse (*mizang* 秘藏). Whatever one observes, one understands that its essence (*dangti* 當體) is empty, provisional, and middle [i.e. simultaneously empty and provisionally existing], neither horizontal nor vertical, neither together nor separate. The virtues possessed by nature (*xingde* 性德) are likewise. Inconceivable! These are the “three contemplations of a single mind” (*yixin sanguan* 一心三觀) that are sudden and perfect. It is the supreme Great Vehicle, quiescent and luminous, luminous and quiescent, and therefore called “wonderful.”⁷⁶

迷悟雖殊。性真平等。眾生如。佛如。一如無二如。遂起同體大悲。無緣大慈。發無作四弘誓願。稱性修行六度萬行。自度度他。同歸祕藏。隨其所觀諸境。了知當體即空假中。不縱不橫。不並不別。性德法爾。不可思議。是名一心三觀。至圓至頓。最上大乘。即寂而照。即照而寂。故名妙也。

Here Ouyi presents a simplified version of the Tiantai idea of the contemplation of “three thousand realms in an instant of thought” (*yinian sanqian* 一念三

⁷⁵ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 12085.

⁷⁶ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 12088.

千)⁷⁷ of the Perfect Teaching. Ouyi alludes to the passage from the *Great Calming and Contemplation* (*Mohe zhiguan* 摩訶止觀); 1911, 46: 54), where Zhiyi describes the relationship between the mind and all *dharmas* as neither vertical nor horizontal, but instead obscure, subtle and profound. Zhiyi writes, “Knowledge cannot know it, nor can words speak it. Herein lies the reason for its being called “the realm of the inconceivable.””⁷⁸ However, through perfect and sudden calming and contemplation (*yuandun zhiguan* 圓頓止觀), one can perceive the true reality embodied in such instants of thought.

Interestingly, the square for “Perfect, Sudden, and Marvelous Contemplation” does not mark the end of training in superior wisdom; instead, it is followed by two other squares: vows to ascend to Tuṣita Heaven and seeking rebirth in the Pure Land of Amitābha Buddha. This underscores Ouyi’s regard for the transformative power of vows and aspirations; these are the squares that allow those who commit heinous sins to find refuge in the Pure Land, and those relegated to Avīci Hell to ascend to Tuṣita Heaven. They illustrate Ouyi’s view that Buddhas and bodhisattvas have the power to eliminate even the heaviest of karmic burdens. Not only do we find the Pure Land vows immediately after the contemplative practices in the division of wisdom, but we also find Pure Land squares immediately following the fifty-two stages of the bodhisattva in later divisions of the board game. As May-Ying Mary Ngai observes, such placement highlights the shortcut nature of the Pure Land teachings, which allow for practitioners to attain rebirth in the Pure Land by chanting the name of Amitābha Buddha on their deathbed without having to attain any meditative achievement. Ngai writes, “In short, both the Pure Land and meditative practices are equal in chance of achieving liberation and their next moves on the game board are identical, which is the winning square—Buddhahood.”⁷⁹ In other words, meditation and recollection of Amitābha Buddha’s presence have similar ritual efficacy, allowing practitioners to attain Buddhahood through different ritual mechanisms.

⁷⁷ The “three thousand realms” refers to the fact that each of the ten realms of existence (hell dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, *asuras*, *devas*, *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, bodhisattvas, and Buddhas share the characteristics of the others, making one hundred realms, which are also characterized by ten thusnesses that manifest the true state in phenomena, making a thousand realms, and each realm consists of living beings, space, and the aggregates that constitute *dharmas*. Because they are so interpenetrating, they are involved in every instant of thought.

⁷⁸ Translation by Leon Hurvitz, “Zhiyi,” 461.

⁷⁹ Ngai, “From Entertainment,” 176.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Ouyi not only draws from rituals of divination and recollection of Amitābha Buddha when designing his dice, but he also emphasizes the transformative potential of repentance rituals and meditative regimen in his manual for the game. By offering minimal rules of play in his manual, he allows for people to adopt the role of player or practitioner. They can simply play the game, or they can invest it with religious and soteriological significance, viewing the dice as divinatory, the recollection of Amitābha Buddha's name as salvific, repentance rituals as morally and spiritually transformative, and meditative regimen as revelatory of true reality.

Ouyi's game presents Tiantai and Pure Land teachings as equally beneficial for progressing on the path to perfect and sudden awakening. As noted above, he put "seeking rebirth in the Pure Land" after "perfect, sudden, and marvelous contemplation" in the wisdom division, and he includes the division "Ascending to the Pure Land" immediately before the final square of Buddhahood. Moreover, the final square articulates perfect enlightenment in both Tiantai and Pure Land terms—it is perfect and marvelous, but also the highest of the highest class. Describing the final square in his manual, Ouyi writes:

This is called the highest Pure Land of Quiescent Light. It is not that aside from acquired virtue there is an intrinsic virtue to be realized, for the Tathāgatagarbha's nature of wonderful true thusness is possessed by all sentient beings, and neither arises nor ceases. It encompasses entirely without remainder, thus there is no *dharma* that is not intrinsically included (*xingju* 性具).⁸⁰

是名上上寂光淨土。非於修德之外。別有性德可證也。蓋如來藏妙真如性。一切眾生之所共有。不生不滅。統攝無餘。故無一法而非性具。

Ouyi defines the Pure Land in Tiantai terms to describe the full realization of virtue, the true thusness of Buddhahood, and the intrinsic inclusiveness of Buddha Nature.

Unlike his disciple Chengshi who sought to banish all playful thoughts, Ouyi sees a benefit in playing with thoughts. Each moment of thought serves as an opportunity for moral and religious transformation. In the absorption of play, players can suddenly realize the inconceivable truths conveyed in the game.

⁸⁰ Ouyi, *Xuanfo pu*, 12187.

Ouyi creates a game environment where the dice draw to mind the divination of good and bad karma, the rolling of the dice evokes turning and transforming, and penitential and contemplative practices signal progression and awakening. Players find themselves deciphering rolls that describe them performing repentance rituals and recollection of Amitābha Buddha, or rolls that depict them engaging in meditation, even if they themselves do not engage in such religious practice. The ambiguity surrounding religious practices, whether they are mere play, or whether they call for performance, allows for both ludic and religious possibilities in the game. It takes advantage of the permeable boundaries afforded by play, slipping players into the imaginary role of practitioner, in the hopes that they might suddenly realize that the game is real.

Appendix: Squares on Ouyi's Board

Gate 1: Beginning the causal stage of practice (*fashi yindi* 發始因地), or “fundamental cause of the initial functioning [of mind]”⁸¹

1. Ten evil deeds of the highest level (*shangpin shie* 上品十惡; Skt. *daśākuśala*) [of hell dwellers]
2. Ten evil deeds of the middle level (*zhongpin shie* 中品十惡) [of animals]
3. Ten evil deeds of the low level (*xiapin shie* 下品十惡) [of hungry ghosts]
4. Clinging to views (*jianqu* 見取)
5. Pride in one's giving (*manxin xingshi* 慢心行施)
6. Worldly merits (*shijian fu* 世間福)
7. Clinging to precepts (*jiequ* 戒取)
8. Ten good deeds of the low level (*xiapin shishan* 下品十善)
9. Ten good deeds of the middle level (*zhongpin shishan* 中品十善)
10. Ten good of the high level (*shangpin shishan* 上品十善)
11. Those with aberrant *samādhi* (*xieding* 邪定)⁸²
12. Those with [one] taste of meditation (*weichan* 味禪)
13. Four essential meditations (*genben sichan* 根本四禪)
14. Four immeasurable minds (*si wuliangxin* 四無量心)
15. Four formless meditations (*si wuseding* 四無色定)
16. Meditation with thoughts (*yijian canchan* 意見參禪)
17. Studying Buddhism for fame or fortune (*liming xijiao* 利名習教)
18. Karmic merit for escaping the world [of *saṃsāra*] (*chushi fuye* 出世福業)
19. Training in discipline to escape the world [of *saṃsāra*] (*chushi jiexue* 出世戒學)
20. Training in meditation to escape the world [of *saṃsāra*] (*chushi dingxue* 出世定學)

⁸¹ Ngai, “From Entertainment,” 10.

⁸² As Charles Muller explains, this refers to “meditation based on improper understanding, or aimed at improper goals, which has the potential of bringing about unwholesome effects (Skt. *Mithyā-samādhi*.” Charles Muller, “aberrantly determined 邪定,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E9%82%AA%E5%AE%9A>

21. Training in wisdom to escape the world [of *samsāra*] (*chushi huixue* 出世慧學)

Gate 2: Abuses in the Saṅgha

1. To break *sīla* (*po shiluo* 破尸羅)
2. To break an observance (*po guize* 破軌則)
3. Defaming right view (*hui zhengjian* 毀正見)
4. Abandoning [learning through] extensive listening (*qi duo wen* 棄多聞)
5. Fueling pride (*zeng shangman* 增上慢)

Gate 3: The four kinds of evil rebirth

1. Avīci Hell (*Abi diyu* 阿鼻地獄)
2. Uninterrupted Hell (*wujian diyu* 無間地獄)
3. Interrupted Hell (*youjian diyu* 有間地獄)
4. Lowest Animals (*xiapin chusheng* 下品畜生)
5. Middle Animals (*zhongpin chusheng* 中品畜生)
6. Highest Animals (*shangpin chusheng* 上品畜生)
7. Ghosts without money (*wucaï gui* 無財鬼)
8. Ghosts with a bit of money (*shaocai gui* 少財鬼)
9. Rich ghosts (*youcai gui* 有財鬼)
10. Animal *asuras* (*chu xiuluo* 畜脩羅)
11. Ghost *asuras* (*gui xiuluo* 鬼脩羅)
12. Human *asuras* (*ren xiuluo* 人脩羅)
13. Heavenly *asuras* (*tian xiuluo* 天脩羅)

Gate 4: Humans and *devas* in the desire realm

1. The Northern Continent of Uttara-kuru (*beijuluzhou* 北俱盧洲)
2. The Western Continent of Avāra-godānīya (*xinihuozhou* 西牛貨洲)
3. The Eastern Continent of Pūrva-videha (*dongshengshenzhou* 東勝神洲)
4. The Southern Continent of Jambudvīpa (*nanshanbuzhou* 南瞻部洲)
5. Iron wheel-turning sage king (*tielunwang* 鐵輪王), ruler of Jambudvīpa
6. Copper wheel-turning sage kings (*tonglunwang* 銀輪王)
7. Silver wheel-turning sage king (*yinlunwang* 銀輪王)
8. gold wheel turning sage kings (*jinlunwang* 金輪王)
9. Ten types of celestial beings (*shi zhong xian* 十種仙)

10. Four guardian gods (*siwang tian* 四王天)
11. Heaven of the 33 gods (*daoli tian* 忉利天)
12. Yama's heaven (*Yemo tian* 夜摩天)–first of the six *devalokas*
13. Tuṣita Heaven (*Doulü tian* 兜率天)
14. Princes of Covering Light (*mengguang tianzi* 蒙光天子)
15. The Inner Court of Maitreya [in Tuṣita Heaven] (*mile neiyuan* 彌勒內院)
16. Heaven of Flowers and Music (*huale tian* 化樂天)
17. Heaven of enjoyment created by others (*tahua zizai tian* 他化自在天)
last of the six *devalokas* and the abode of Mahêśvara (i. e. Śiva)
18. Māra's heaven (*moluo tian* 魔羅天)

Gate 5: Heavens in the form and formless realms

1. Heaven of Brahma (*fanzhong tian* 梵眾天; Skt. *Brahmakāyika*)
2. Heaven of the Buddha's Ministers (*fanfu tian* 梵輔天; Skt. *Brahmapurohita*)
3. Heaven of Great Brahma (*dafan tian* 大梵天; Skt. *Mahābrahma*)
4. Heaven of Little Light (*xiaoguang tian* 少光天; Skt. *Parīttābha*)
5. Heaven of Limitless Light (*wuliang guang tian* 無量光天; Skt. *Apramāṇābha*)
6. Heaven of Light and Sound (*guangyin tian* 光音天; Skt. *Ābhāsvara*)
7. Heaven of Little Purity (*shaojing tian* 少淨天; Skt. *Parīttasubha*)
8. Heaven of Limitless Purity (*wuliang jing tian* 無量淨天; Skt. *Apramāṇasubha*)
9. Heaven of Universal Purity (*bianjing tian* 徧淨天)
10. Heaven of Merit Production (*fusheng tian* 福生天; Skt. *Puṇyaprasava*)
11. Heaven of Extensive Rewards (*fu ai tian* 福愛天)
12. Heaven Without Thought (*wuxiang tian* 無想天; Skt. *Asaṃjñīsattva*)
13. Heaven Without Affliction (*wufan tian* 無煩天; Skt. *Abṛha*)
14. Heaven Without Heat (*wu re tian* 無熱天; Skt. *Atapāḥ*)
15. Heaven of Good Views (*shan jian tian* 善見天; Skt. *Sudarśana*)
16. Heaven of Skillful Manifestation (*shan xian tian* 善現天; Skt. *Sudṛśa*)
17. Heaven of the Most Rarified Form (*se jiu yi tian* 色究竟天; Skt. *Akaniṣṭha*)

18. Heaven of Unlimited Space (*kong wubian chu tian* 空無邊處天; Skt. Ākāśānantyāyatana)
19. Heaven of Limitless Consciousness (*shi wubian chu tian* 識無邊處天; Skt. Vijñānānantyāyatana)
20. Heaven in which Nothing Exists (*wusuoyou chu tian* 無所有處天; Skt. Akiñcanyāyatana)
21. Heaven of Neither Perception Nor Non-Perception (*feixiang fei feixiang chu tian* 非想非非想處天; Skt. Naivasamjñānāsamjñāyatana)
22. Arhat with dull faculties (*dungen Anuohan* 鈍根阿那含)

Gate 6: Eliminating evil and giving rise to good

1. Those who listen to the *dharma* (*tingfa zazhong* 聽法雜眾)
2. Eight groups of *dharma* protectors (*hufa ba bu* 護法八部), i.e.: *devas*, *nāgas*, *yakṣas* (spirits of the dead who fly about in night), *gandharvas* (half-ghost music masters), *asuras* (demigods of evil disposition), *garuḍas* (golden-winged birds which eat dragons), *kiṃnaras* (heavenly music masters), *mahoraga* (snake spirits)
3. Brahma kings asking for the *dharma* (*hufa fanwang* 請法梵王)
4. Repentance involving procedures [stipulated by the Vinaya] (*zuofa chan* 作法懺)
5. Repentance involving the discernment of signs (*quxiang chan* 取相懺)
6. Repentance involving [the contemplation of] non-arising (*wusheng chan* 無生懺)

Gate 7: Training in superior moral discipline (*zengshang jiexue men* 增上戒學門)

1. The five precepts of a householder (*zaijia wujie* 在家五戒)
2. The eight precepts [of an *upāsika*] (*ba guanzhai jie* 八關齋戒)
3. The ten precepts of a *śrāmaṇera* (*shami shijie* 沙彌十戒)
4. Upholding the Vinaya of a *bhikṣu* (*chi biqiu lü* 持比丘律)
5. Upholding the Vinaya of the two divisions [of *bhikṣu* and *bhikṣuṇī*] (*chi erbu lü* 持二部律)
6. Extensively [reciting and] upholding the Vinaya (*guang chi pini* 廣持毗尼)
7. Abiding in the Vinaya without defilement (*zhu pini budong* 住毗尼而不動)

8. Being virtuous and capable of settling disputes (*shanneng miezheng* 善能滅諍)
9. Purity of action/karma (*ye qingjing jie* 業清淨戒)–*bodhisattva upāsakas* and *bodhisattva śrāmaṇeras* who uphold the *dharma* and never transgress it (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12008).
10. Purity of the others [i.e. the *bodhisattva bhikṣu*] (*yu qingjing jie* 餘清淨戒)
11. Purity of enlightenment (*jue qingjing jie* 覺清淨戒)–*bodhisattva bhikṣu* who never again give rise to transgressing precepts or evil thoughts (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12010)
12. Purity of mindfulness/recollection (*nian qingjing jie* 念清淨戒)
13. Precepts of the supreme path (*wushangdao jie* 無上道戒)–thoroughly embodying the precepts and transferring the merit to liberate other beings (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12012-12013).

Gate 8: Training in superior meditative concentration (*zengshang dingxue* 增上定學)

1. Six excellent approaches to meditation [outlined by Zhiyi] (*liu miaomen chan* 六妙門禪)–counting one’s breaths, following the natural flow of breath, stopping thoughts and anxieties, contemplating impermanence or other teachings, returning to consider the emptiness of one’s own mind, and its original purity. (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12015–12020).
2. Sixteen superior [forms of meditation] (*shiliu tesheng* 十六特勝)
3. Clear penetration (*tongming guan* 通明觀) of breath, form, and mind (*xi se xin* 息色心) (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12031)
4. Nine kinds of meditation [on a corpse to quell desire] (*jiuxiang guan* 九想觀)
5. Eight kinds of mindfulness (*banian guan* 八念觀)–mindfulness of the Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha, precepts, equanimity, divine matters, the inhaling and exhaling of breath, and death (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12037).
6. Ten kinds of contemplation (*shixiang guan* 十想觀)–of impermanence, suffering, lack of self, impurity of food, the impossibility of finding joy in this world, death, the impurity of our bodies, severing our passions

and delusions, becoming free of desires, and exhausting [our karmic bonds] (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12038).⁸³

7. Eight renunciations (*ba beishe guan* 八背捨觀)
8. Eight bases of overcoming [desire and attachment] (*ba shengchu guan* 八勝處觀)
9. Ten universal [points of concentration]⁸⁴ (*shi yiqie chu guan* 十一切處觀), namely blue, yellow, red, white, earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12058)
10. Nine stages of *samādhi* (*jiu cidi ding* 九次第定)
11. Lion-like, strenuous *samādhi* (*shizi fenxun sanmei* 師子奮迅三昧)
12. Transcending *samādhi* (*chaoyue sanmei* 超越三昧)
13. Kingly *samādhi* (*wang sanmei* 王三昧.)

Gate 9: Training in superior wisdom (*huixue* 慧學)

1. Mind of the *śrāvaka* (*fa shengwen xin* 發聲聞心)
2. Mind of the *pratyekabuddha* (*fa pizhifo xin* 發辟支佛心)
3. Mind of the six *pāramitā* (*shi liudu xin* 事六度心)
4. Direct realization of emptiness (*tikong guan* 體空觀)
5. Sequential development of the three [Tiantai] contemplations (*cidi sanguan* 次第三觀) – the view of emptiness, dependent arising, and the middle view
6. Perfect, sudden, and marvelous contemplation (*yuan dun miao guan* 圓頓妙觀)
7. Vowing to ascend to the inner court [of Maitreya Buddha in Tuṣita Heaven] (*yuan sheng neiyuan* 願升內院)
8. Seeking rebirth in the Pure Land (*qiusheng jingtu* 求生淨土)

Gate 10: Advancing to the position of the *Tripitaka* teaching (*zangjiao weici men* 藏教位次門)

1. Five kinds of mental stabilization (*wuting xin* 五停心)

⁸³ Here I follow the translation of Paul Swanson, “ten kinds of contemplation 十想,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%8D%81%E6%83%B3>

⁸⁴ Chuck Muller, “ten universal [points of concentration],” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=%E5%8D%81%E4%B8%80%E5%88%87%E8%99%95>

2. Mindfulness of distinct characteristics (*biexiang nian* 別相念)—the impurity of the body, the suffering of sensations, the impermanence of thoughts, and the lack of self (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12097).
3. Mindfulness of general characteristics (*zongxiang nian* 總相念)—the impurity of mental phenomena, the suffering in mental and physical phenomena, the impermanence of bodily sensations, and the lack of self of the mind and body. (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12099).
4. The warmth square (*nuan wei* 煖位)—the first of the four kinds of right endeavor (*si zhengqin* 四正勤) (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12100), which are putting an end to existing evil, preventing evil from arising, bringing good into existence, and developing existing good.
5. The pinnacle square (*ding wei* 頂位) for those who excel at cultivating the four supernatural powers (*si ruyi zu* 四如意足) of zeal, effort, concentration and wisdom. (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12101)
6. The forbearance square (*ren wei* 忍位), where one endures suffering with forbearance and joy (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12102)
7. The best worldly square (*shi diyi wei* 世第一位)
8. The first realization of the stream-winner (*chuguo xutuohan* 初果須陀洹)
9. The second realization of the once-returned (*erguo situohan* 二果斯陀舍)
10. The third realization of the non-returned (*sanguo anahan* 三果阿那含)
11. The fourth realization of the arhat (*siguo aluohan* 四果阿羅漢)
12. The realization of the *pratyekabuddha* of the Middle Vehicle (*zhongcheng pizhifuo guo* 中乘辟支佛果)
13. The first *asamkhyeya* [*kalpa*] of the Mahayana (*dacheng chu asengqi man* 大乘初阿僧祇滿)—the first incalculable eon from giving rise to *bodhichitta* until attaining enlightenment.
14. The second *asamkhyeya* [*kalpa*] (*er asengqi man* 二阿僧祇滿)
15. The third *asamkhyeya* [*kalpa*] (*san asengqi man* 三阿僧祇滿)
16. Realization of Buddhahood from Tripitaka [teachings] (*zangjiao foguo* 藏教佛果)

Gate 11: Advancing to the position of the shared teaching (*tongjiao weici men* 通教位次門)

1. The dry stage of wisdom (*chu ganhui di* 初乾慧地), the first of ten stages of bodhisattvas

2. The second stage of nature (*erxing di* 二性地)
3. The third stage of the eight [tolerances] (*san baren di* 三八人地)
4. The fourth stage of insight (*si jian di* 四見地)
5. The fifth stage of thinning out [afflictions] (*wu bo di* 五薄地)
6. The sixth stage of freedom from desires (*liu liyu di* 六離欲地)
7. The seventh stage of accomplishment [of arhatship] (*qi yi ban di* 七已辦地), at which point *śrāvakas* stop, but bodhisattvas advance (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12121)
8. The eighth stage of *pratyekabuddha* (*ba pizhifo di* 八辟支佛地)
9. The ninth stage of *bodhisattva* (*jiu pusa di* 九菩薩地)
10. The tenth stage of Buddha (*shi fo di* 十佛地)

Gate 12: Advancing to the position of the separate teaching (*biejiao weici men* 別教位次門)

1. The first mind of faith (*chu xin xin* 初信心)
2. The second mind of mindfulness (*er nian xin* 二念心)
3. The third mind of effort (*san jingjin xin* 三精進心)
4. The fourth of wisdom (*si hui xin* 四慧心)
5. The fifth mind of *samādhi* (*wu ding xin* 五定心)
6. The sixth mind of non-retrogression (*liu butui xin* 六不退心)
7. The seventh mind of protecting the *dharma* (*qi hufa xin* 七護法心)
8. The eighth mind of transferring [merit] (*ba huixiang xin* 八迴向心)
9. The ninth mind of the precepts/moral discipline (*jiu jie xin* 九戒心)
10. The tenth mind of vows (*shi yuan xin* 十願心), where one is reborn according to one's vows (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12131)
11. The first abode of the arousal of the intention [for enlightenment] (*chu faxin zhu* 初發心住)
12. The second abode of the antidote stage (*er zhi di zhu* 二治地住)
13. The third abode of cultivation (*san xiuxing zhu* 三修行住)
14. The fourth abode of producing virtue (*si shenggui zhu* 四生貴住)
15. The fifth abode of possessing sufficient expedient means (*wu fangbian juzu zhu* 五方便具足住)
16. The sixth abode of the correct mind (*liu zhengxin zhu* 六正心住)
17. The seventh abode of non-retrogression (*qi butui zhu* 七不退住)

18. The eighth abode of the child (*ba tongzhen zhu* 八童真住), who does not destroy their enlightened mind with mistaken views (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12136)
19. The ninth abode of the *dharma*-prince (*jiu fawangzi zhu* 九法王子住)
20. The tenth abode of consecration (*shi guanding zhu* 十灌頂住)
21. The first practice of joyful service (*chu huanxi xing* 初歡喜行) for oneself and others, the paramita of generosity. (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12137–12138)
22. The second practice of beneficial service (*er raoyi xing* 二饒益行)
23. The third practice of freedom from anger (*san wuchenheng xing* 三無瞋恨行)
24. The fourth practice of inexhaustible [effort] (*si wujin xing* 四無盡行)
25. The fifth practice of freedom from confusion (*wu li chiluan xing* 五離癡亂行)
26. The sixth practice of skillful manifestation (*liu shanxian xing* 六善現行)
27. The seventh practice of non-attachment (*qi wuzhuo xing* 七無著行)
28. The eighth practice of respect (*ba zunzhong xing* 八尊重行), also called the practice that is difficult to attain; the unimpeded perfection of vows (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12141)
29. The ninth practice of virtuous teachings (*jiu shanfa xing* 九善法行)
30. The tenth practice of [realizing the] truth (*shi zhenshi xing* 十真實行)
31. The first dedication [of merit] to save and protect all sentient beings without any mental image of sentient beings (*chu jiuhu zhongsheng li zhongsheng xiang huixiang* 初救護眾生離眾生相迴向)⁸⁵
32. The second indestructible dedication [of merit] (*er buhuai huixiang* 二不壞迴向), which Ouyi describes as the middle view between the view of emptiness and existence (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12144)
33. The third dedication equal to all Buddhas (*san deng yiqiefo huixiang* 三等一切佛迴向)
34. The fourth dedication reaching all places (*si zhi yiqiechu huixiang* 四至一切處迴向) through the power of great vows (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12145)

⁸⁵ These translations largely follow those of Chuck Muller, “ten dedications (of merit 十迴向),” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?53.xml+id\(%27b5341-5efb-5411%27\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?53.xml+id(%27b5341-5efb-5411%27))

35. The fifth dedication of inexhaustible storehouses of merit (*wu wujin gongdezang huixiang* 五無盡功德藏迴向)
36. The sixth dedication of merit causing all wholesome roots to endure (*liu suishun pingdeng shangen huixiang* 六隨順平等善根迴向)
37. The seventh dedication observing all sentient beings equally (*qi suishun deng guan yiqie zhongsheng huixiang* 七隨順等觀一切眾生迴向)
38. The eighth dedication with the characteristic of suchness (*ba zhenruxiang huixiang* 八真如相迴向)
39. The ninth dedication of unfettered liberation (*jiu wufu jietuo huixiang* 九無縛解脫迴向)
40. The tenth dedication of the unfathomable *dharmadhātu* (*shi fajie wuliang huixiang* 十法界無量迴向)
41. The first stage of joy (*chu huanxi di* 初歡喜地)
42. The second stage of freedom from defilement (*er ligou di* 二離垢地)
43. The third stage of emitting light (*san faguang di* 三發光地) because of one's boundless, subtle wisdom (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12150)
44. The fourth stage of flaming wisdom (*si yanhui di* 四燄慧地), in which one burns the fuel of afflictions (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12150)
45. The fifth stage of victory over difficulties (*wu nansheng di* 五難勝地)
46. The sixth stage of manifestation [of reality] (*liu xianqian di* 六現前地)
47. The seventh stage of traveling far (*qi yuanxing di* 七遠行地), beyond mundane and transmundane paths of the Two Vehicles (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12151)
48. The eighth immovable stage (*ba budong di* 八不動地)
49. The ninth stage of excellent wisdom (*jiu shanhui di* 九善慧地)
50. The tenth stage of *dharma* clouds (*shi fayun di* 十法雲地), when the cloud of wisdom covers all things (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12152)
51. Bodhisattvas [ready to attain] perfect enlightenment (*dengjue pusa* 等覺菩薩)
52. The square for marvelously enlightened Buddhas of the Distinct Teaching (*biejiao miaojuefo wei* 別教妙覺佛位)

Gate 13: Advancing to the position of the perfect teaching (*yuanjiao weici men* 圓教位次門)

1. The five grades [of the disciples] of the Perfect [Teaching] (*yuan wupin wei* 圓五品位)⁸⁶
2. The ten stages of faith of the Perfect [Teaching] (*yuan shixin wei* 圓十信位)
3. The ten bodhisattva stages of the Perfect [Teaching] (*yuan shizhu wei* 圓十住位)
4. The ten practices of the Perfect [Teaching] (*yuan shixing wei* 圓十行位)
5. The ten dedications of merit of the Perfect [Teaching] (*yuan shi huixiang wei* 十迴向位)
6. The ten stages of the Perfect [Teaching] (*yuan shidi wei* 圓十地位)
7. The stage of perfect enlightenment of the Perfect [Teaching] (*yuan dengjue wei* 圓等覺位)
8. The last [stage] of the adamantine mind (*jingang houxin* 金剛後心)

Gate 14: Ascending to the Pure Land (*jingtu hengchao men* 淨土橫超門)

1. The City of Doubt in the Pure Land (*jingtu huaicheng* 淨土疑城), where those who called on Amitābha Buddha but doubted him must remain for five hundred years, neither seeing the Buddha nor hearing the *dharma* until all of their earlier transgressions have been exhausted. (Ouyi 1989: Vol. 19, 12175)
2. Lowest class of lowest rebirth (*xiapin xiasheng* 下品下生)
3. Middle class of lowest rebirth (*xiapin zhongsheng* 下品中生)
4. Highest class of lowest rebirth (*xiapin shangsheng* 下品上生)
5. Lowest class of middle rebirth (*zhongpin xiasheng* 中品下生)
6. Middle class of middle rebirth (*zhongpin zhongsheng* 中品中生)
7. Highest class of middle rebirth (*zhongpin shangsheng* 中品上生)
8. Lowest class of highest rebirth (*shangpin xiasheng* 上品下生)
9. Middle class of highest rebirth (*shangpin zhongsheng* 上品中生)
10. Highest class of highest rebirth (*shangpin shangsheng* 上品上生)

⁸⁶ These were invented by Zhiyi. The five grades refer to (1) appropriate joy, (2) reading and reciting of the sūtras, (3) preaching the dharma, (4) preliminary practice of the six perfections while practicing contemplation, and (5) the proper practice of the six perfections. Paul Swanson, “five preliminary grades of the disciple 五品弟子位,” *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id\(%27b4e94-54c1-5f1f-5b50-4f4d%27\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id(%27b4e94-54c1-5f1f-5b50-4f4d%27))

11. Pure Land of Expedient Means with Remainder (*fangbian youyu jingtu* 方便有餘淨土)
12. Pure Land of Pure Reward and Adornment (*shibao zhuangyan jingtu* 實報莊嚴淨土)
13. Pure Land of Eternally Tranquil Light (*changjiguang jingtu* 常寂光淨土)

Gate 15: The Stage of Perfect Realization

References

- Caillois, Roger. *Man, Play and Games*. New York: The Free Press, 1961.
- Ch'en, Ying-shan 陳英善. "Ouyi Zhixu sixiang de tezhi ji qi dingwei wenti" 蕩益智旭思想的特質及其定位問題 (The Characteristics of Ouyi Zhixu's Thought and an Appraisal of his Status). *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 (Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy) 8 (March 1996): 227–256.
- Donner, Neal and Daniel B. Stevenson. *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-i's Mo-ho chih-kuan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993.
- Eichman, Jennifer. "Humanizing the Study of Late Ming Buddhism." *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* 26 (2013): 153–185.
- Getz, Daniel. "Siming Zhili and Tiantai Pure Land in the Song Dynasty." PhD diss., Yale University, 1994.
- Huizinga, Johan. *Homo Ludens: A study of the play element in culture*. Boston: The Beacon Press, 1955.
- Hurvitz, Leon, trans. "Zhiyi: *The Great Calming and Contemplation*." In *Sources of the Chinese Tradition*, 2nd edition. Edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, 460–461. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Jones, Charles B. 2003. "Foundations of Ethics and Practice in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism." *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 10 (2003): 1–20.
- Juul, Jesper. "The game, the player, the world: Looking for a heart of gameness." In *Level Up: Digital Games Research Conference Proceedings*, edited by Marinka Copier and Joost Raessens, 30–45. Utrecht: Utrecht University, 2003.
- Kuo, Liying. "Divination, jeux de hazard et purification dans le bouddhisme chinois: Autour d'un *sūtra* apocryphe chinois, le *Zhanchajing*." In *Bouddhisme et cultures locales: Quelques case de réciproques adaptations*, edited by Fukui Fumimasa and Gérard Fussman, 145–167. Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1994.
- Ma, Yungfen. "The Revival of Tiantai Buddhism in the Late Ming: On the Thought of Youxi Chuandeng 幽溪傳燈 (1554–1628)." PhD diss., Columbia University, 2011.
- McGuire, Beverley. *Living Karma: The Religious Practices of Ouyi Zhixu*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- . "Playing with Karma: A Buddhist Board Game." *Material Religion* 10, no. 1 (2014): 4–29.
- Ngai, May-Ying Mary. "From Entertainment to Enlightenment: A Study on a Cross-Cultural Religious Board Game with an Emphasis on the Table of

- Buddha Selection Designed by Ouyi Zhixu of the Late Ming Dynasty.” PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2011.
- Ouyi Zhixu. “*Xuanfo pu*” 選佛譜 (Manual for Selection of Buddhas). In *Ouyi Dashi QuANJI* 蕩益大師全集 (The Collected Works of Great Master Ouyi), vol. 19. Taipei: Fojiao chubanshe, 1989.
- Pargman, Daniel and Peter Jakobsson. “Do you believe in magic? Computer games in everyday life.” *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 11, no. 2 (2008): 225–243.
- Peng Jiqing 彭際清 *Jingtu shengxian lu* 淨土聖賢錄 (Record of Pure Land Sages). Tainan: Heyu Chubanshe, 2001.
- Rappaport, Roy A. *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- Salen, Katie and Erik Zimmerman. *Rules of play: Game design fundamentals*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004.
- Schechner, Richard. *The future of ritual: Writings on culture and performance*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Seligman, Adam B., Robert P. Weller, Michael J. Puett, and Bennett Simon. *Ritual and Its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Shengyan 聖嚴. *Minmatsu Chūgoku Bukkyō no kenkyū: toku ni Chigyoku no chūshin to shite* 明末中國佛教の研究：特に智旭を中心として (A Study of late Ming Buddhism: focusing especially on [Ouyi] Zhixu). Tōkyō: Sankibo busshorin, 1975.
- Stevenson, Daniel B. “The T’ien-T’ai Four Forms of Samadhi and Late North-South Dynasties, Sui, and Early T’ang Buddhist Devotionalism.” PhD diss., Columbia University, 1987.
- . “Zhiyi on the Concept of Ritual Repentance,” In *Sources of the Chinese Tradition*, 2nd edition. Edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom, 467–471. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- . “Where Meditative Theory Meets Practice: Requirements for Entering the ‘Halls of Contemplation/Penance’ (觀/懺堂) in Tiantai Monasteries of the Song.” *Tendai Gakuho* (Journal of Tendai Buddhist Studies), Special Issue: Essays on the International Tendai Conference (October 2007): 71–142.
- . “The Ties that Bind: Chinese Buddhist Rites for Securing Rebirth in the Pure Land,” *Hōrin: vergleichende studien zur japanischen kultur* 15 (2009): 139–202.
- Swanson, Paul L. *Foundations of T’ien-t’ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism*. Asian Humanities Press, 1989.