

long does it take for the deceased's consciousness to finally leave the body, according to the Buddhist death theory? Actually, it varies with different persons and has no standard answer. On average, the time for the consciousness of the dead to depart from the body is usually considered to be 8 h.³² Therefore, the 8 h immediately after death is a critical period. In this period, it is prohibited to move or touch the dead body, including washing the dead and changing its clothes,^{10,26,29} for it is believed that touching or moving the body in these 8 h may make the dead feel pain and thus arouse his/her negative emotions, which will lead the dead to be reborn in a bad realm.²⁶ In addition, assisting recitation should last at least 8 h after death, in order to guide the consciousness of the dead to concentrate on Buddha Amitabha to successfully gain rebirth in the Pure Land.²⁶

In sum, a good death in Pure Land School means gaining rebirth into the Pure Land. All of the end-of-life practices and procedures in the death rites are aimed at assisting the dying and the dead to achieve this goal.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN PURE LAND BUDDHISM AND THE CURRENT DEATH AWARENESS MOVEMENT

Despite some differences mentioned above, many of the attributes of a good death in Pure Land Buddhism which unfold in the dying process are virtually what the concept of a "good death" in Western societies is trying to achieve. This has been noticed by some Buddhists in Taiwan, who are actively taking part in the current death awareness movement supported by the Western ideal of a "good death" in search of a collaboration between Buddhism and the movement.

With respect to hospice care, the participation of Buddhist groups and individuals is outstanding. Since Mackay Memorial Hospital established Taiwan's first hospice unit in 1990 to provide terminally ill patients with physical, emotional, and spiritual care given by a team of physicians, nurses, social workers, clergy, etc.,^{1,33} more hospitals have been devoted to the popularization of the hospice movement,³⁴ including the Buddhist Tzu Chi General Hospital, which is based on

Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation and has created hospice units for terminally ill patients. Some Buddhist health professionals also founded the Buddhist Lotus Hospice Care Foundation in 1994, a Buddhist nonprofit organization, to spread the notion of a "good death" as well as to promote Pure Land Buddhist end-of-life practices, such as recitation of the name of Buddha Amitabha, assisting with recitation, and the procedures of Pure Land Buddhist death rites. For them, the *Bill of Palliative Care* passed by the Yuan of Legislation in Taiwan in 2000 is not only significant to terminally ill patients in hospice units but also meaningful to Pure Land Buddhists or those who would like to die in a Pure Land Buddhist way. This bill grants terminally ill persons the right to renounce medical interventions to prolong their lives at the end of life, which enables Pure Land Buddhists to follow their own will and peacefully die while reciting the name of Buddha Amitabha without interruption. In addition, due to efforts of the Lotus Foundation, many general hospitals have arranged a room for assisting the recitation, so that Pure Land Buddhists can carry out their after-death rituals there.³⁵ In terms of introducing Buddhism to the theories of hospice care, Buddhist Master Hui-min has taken great pains to apply Buddhist terminology in explaining the concept of hospice care and has consistently paid attention to the effects of the intervention of Buddhist practices in hospice care.

As to the establishment of death education in Taiwan, Nan Hua University, a Buddhist university, created the Institute of Life and Death Studies in 1997. This is the first educational organization in Taiwan to provide a systematic education of death, and its Dean, Buddhist Master Hui-kai, is very concerned with the value of Buddhist teachings in the growing life and death education.³⁶ Scholars with an interest in Pure Land Buddhism, such as Si-chi Chen, an associate professor at Hua Fan University, have also attempted to incorporate its teachings into the contents of the death and life education.⁴

However, in the course of these collaborations, what are the contributions that Pure Land Buddhism have made or can make to the death awareness movement? We can get a hint from an article in which C. S. Chao attempted to conclude the meanings of a good