

Nien-Fo (Buddha-Anusmṛti): The Shifting Structure of Remembrance

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In the doctrinal development of the practice of the remembrance of Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*; *nien-fo*; *nembutsu*) a distinct hiatus can be observed in the development from meditative *nien-fo* to invocational *nien-fo*, a development that began with Shan-tao in China and reached its apogee with Shinran in Japan. There is evident a movement from 1) the practice of remembering and visualizing a Buddha while chanting his name (*nien-fo san-mei*) as an aid to meditative concentration to 2) the independent tradition of Shan-tao and Shinran in which invocational *nien-fo* alone is sufficient. This paper attempts to sketch the shift in the understanding of remembrance (*nien*; *smṛti*) within that development.

Before the assertion by Chinese Pure Land masters T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o, and Shan-tao that the invocational *nien-fo* alone is sufficient, the *nien-fo* was adopted both in India and in China as meditation aid in several different doctrinal lineages.¹ But in the later thought of Shan-tao, as represented by his last and definitive work, the *Kuan-ching-shu*, the *nien-fo* became the single practice required for salvation. The single-hearted practice of such *nien-fo* was all that is needed for salvation.² It could be effectively practiced even though one's mind is distracted,³ for its efficacy does not depend upon one's own effort. In this Pure Land development, which at the time was revolutionary, the *nien-fo* is understood to be much more than an aid to meditation. It is rather a calling to mind of the primal sacrament: the vow of Amida Buddha to save all beings.

As this tradition developed from Shan-tao to Shinran, the emphasis shifted away from the meditative *nien-fo* that one cultivates with self-effort and earnest endeavor to the *nien-fo* of other-

power. This evolution in Pure Land doctrine entailed a new understanding of memory, for while the meditative *nien-fo* functions within a context of conventional remembering as an aid to practice, the invocational *nien-fo* restructures one's awareness of time in the experience of a primal sacrament. It is the thesis of this paper that with the development toward single-hearted *nien-fo*, the meaning of memory moves from an initial tension between remembrance of the past and prolepsis into the future in the meditative *nien-fo* to a collapsing of the conventional framework of linear time into the existential instant of *shinjin* (true entrusting) in Shinran's understanding of invocational *nembutsu*.

We will first direct our attention to the meditative *nien-fo* and sketch the meaning of remembrance as a dialectic tension between a recollection of what is past and a prolepsis into the future along a linear time line accepted as conventionally valid. The focus will then move to China to depict briefly the shifting understanding of remembrance within the development from the meditative *nien-fo* to the invocational *nien-fo*. Finally, a section will be devoted to Shinran's understanding of the "sacramental" structure of time-simultaneity in the very utterance of the *nembutsu*: *namu-amida-butsu*.

THE INDIAN PRACTICE OF MEDITATIVE BUDDHĀNUMSMṚTI

The practice of *buddhānusmṛti* (i.e., meditative *nien-fo*) was widespread both in India and in China, but evidently was prone to misuse, for a number of scholarly exegetical endeavors were written to guard against misinterpretations of the practice. The devotion to Pure Land Buddhas

was apt to neglect the Mahayana doctrines of emptiness and dependent co-arising by substituting a proleptic, i.e., future oriented, hope for an empirical encounter with actual Buddhas in their Pure Lands, either in meditation or after death, in the place of insight into the essence-free reality of Buddha. Buddhist doctrinal thinking on the Pure Land practice of *buddhānusmṛti* (*nien-fo*) was not purely academic; it was clearly directed toward maintaining the integrity of the tradition in its polymorphous devotional and monastic forms. There was a need to assure that Pure Land practices were understood doctrinally within the circle of traditional Mahayana teaching and that practitioners were fully committed to the path (*mārga*) of practice and effort. A broad spectrum of doctrinally sophisticated authors present *buddhānusmṛti* as a remembrance of the Buddha and the Buddha qualities (*guṇa*), a remembrance intended as a support for states of concentration (*samādhi*). For many unlettered practitioners, the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* (*nien-fo*) was no doubt a remembrance of past promises relating to a future realization. But the Mahayana pundits interpreted it as an aid to present meditation practice, with the obvious intent of deliteralizing the idea of empirically encountering a Pure Land somewhere. The tension between these two approaches is evidently that between the popular practices of Buddhist lay devotees and the scholarly, monastic practice of the lettered.⁴

Engagement in *buddhānusmṛti* as a meditative aid is seen from the earliest layers of the tradition. The very formation of the canonical texts of the Amitābha cult, the first of which was the *Larger Sukhāvāṭīvyūha*, reveals a developing practice of recollecting Buddha, not the inception of the practice. Nishio Kyōo has recently traced the practice back to the earliest layers of the Āgamas and the Nikāyas, where it formed the central focus of the practice of the four recollections.⁵ *Buddhānusmṛti* was understood to be a visual evocation of a Buddha image through a structured meditative procedure. In the *Ekottarāgama* (3.1) it

is taught that this single practice leads to the attainment of immortality (*amṛta*).⁶

A central source text (later regarded as the locus classicus by Shinran) for the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* is the eighteenth vow of the *Larger Sukhāvāṭīvyūha*:

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings throughout the ten quarters, realizing sincerity, entrusting faith (*shinjin*), and aspiration to be born in my land and saying my name up to ten times, do not attain birth, may I not attain unequalled, supreme enlightenment.⁷

The same promise, to welcome devoted beings into the Pure Land at their moment of death, is made in *The Smaller Sukhāvāṭīvyūha*,⁸ and in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*.⁹

But the Triple Pure Land scripture does not offer *buddhānusmṛti* as a replacement for more arduous practice. The nineteenth vow of the *Larger Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* says that sentient beings must "bring their stock of merit to maturity" in order to be born in the Pure Land.¹⁰ The *Smaller Sukhāvāṭīvyūha* notes that "beings are born in that Buddha land of the Tathāgata Amitāyus as a reward and result of good works performed in this present life."¹¹ And the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* insists that one must practice the threefold goodness, which includes belief in the causal process of good karma and commitment to the reading and study of the Mahayana scriptures, for these are "the efficient cause of the pure actions taught by all the Buddhas."¹² Indeed, *samādhi* is judged to be authentic by its agreement with the sūtras and is not a path that differs from their insistence on engagement and effort.¹³

The procedure for *buddhānusmṛti*, outlined in the *Pratyutpannabuddha-saṃmukhāvasthitasamādhi-sūtra* (The Scripture on the Concentration wherein One Stands Face to Face with

Buddhas in the Present), describes how one should withdraw into a secluded place, call to mind (*smṛti*) the Buddha in accord with the doctrine one has heard, and enter into meditative concentration.¹⁴ This scripture, however, is clearly concerned that the practice be interpreted within the context of emptiness as it is presented in the Prajñāpāramitā scriptures, i.e., that it not be misconstrued as somehow different from the path of Mahayana practice. *Buddhānusmṛti* is explained as a concentration on emptiness, for it involves no empirical apprehension of a "real" Buddha and demands no supernormal ability (*abhijñā*) to bring such about. Rather, it is a seeing of Buddha as in a dream, because *cittamātram idaṃ yad idaṃ traidhātukam*, i.e., all things appear as sentient beings construct (*vikalpayati*) them. Thus the *Pratyutpannasūtra* rejects any concept that would attribute a real existence (*bhavaśaṃjñā*) to the Buddha seen in concentration. *Buddhānusmṛti* is here a remembrance of the Buddha and his teachings and a visualization elicited from that memory as an aid to meditation on emptiness.

The above theme, that all the three realms are mind-only, echoes the basic thesis of Yogācāra thinking and indeed it is in the context of this tradition of doctrinal interpretation — a tradition that held undisputed hegemony in India from ca. 300 to ca. 500¹⁵ — that most of the doctrinal thinking on Indian Pure Land movements took place. Although the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* does not explicitly mention Pure Land devotion, it contains a passage on the question of whether the images seen in concentration are identical with or different from the mind that reflects upon them:

The Buddha answered: Good son, they must be identical with thinking. This is so because they are nothing but ideas. Good son, I have taught that the object of consciousness is nothing but a

manifestation of conscious construction only.¹⁶

The process of meditating on images as described in this Yogācāra text moves from the hearing (and holding in mind) of doctrine to the formation of appropriate images, wherein meanings are understood and calm (*śamatha*) induced, which in turn leads to vision (*vipaśyanā*). The entire process is based on recollecting doctrine and practicing in accordance with the meaning of doctrine.

There was a concern that devotees not misconstrue the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*, taking it for an actual seeing of a Buddha. In the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita is depicted as having achieved a state of deep concentration in which he sees many Buddhas in their golden bodies. After emerging from that state, he begins to feel dejected because these bodies are no longer present to him and he wonders whence they came and where they have gone. His mentor, Dharmodgata, has to explain that they are "only the results caused by the former practices" of those Buddhas in their former lives.¹⁷ The *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* comments on this case:

Although the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita knew that all things are empty, neither coming nor going, he had not yet been able to understand all of the Dharma teaching, for, having a deep reverence for all the Buddha bodies, he was unable to understand their emptiness.¹⁸

In his commentary on Prajñāpāramitā, *Trīśatikāyaḥ Prajñāpāramitāḥ Kārikāsaptaiḥ*, Asaṅga, the principal Yogācāra thinker, explains in a similar vein that:

[Buddha] lands cannot be grasped because they are nothing other than conscious constructs flowing from wisdom (*jñānaniṣyanda-vijñaptimātratvāt*).¹⁹

Likewise, Aśvabhāva in his *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahopanibandhana* discusses Asaṅga's recommendation of the recollection of Buddha qualities. He identifies the Enjoyment Bodies that are seen in concentration with the Pure Land Buddhas, and maintains that, since the Enjoyment Body is supported upon the Dharma Body, Pure Land Buddhas are empty of any essence of their own.²⁰

The *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* witnesses to the fact that practices of *buddhānusmṛti* were widespread, for the purpose of this text was to bolster weakened devotion of the Buddha Śākyamuni in the face of the burgeoning cults of devotion to various Pure Land Buddhas.²¹ The fact that these Mahayana writers took pains to interpret *buddhānusmṛti* indicates both their own devotion to meditation on Buddhas (otherwise they would have rejected the practice) and points up the perceived danger that the meaning of such devotional visualization practice might easily be misconstrued. The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* interprets Pure Land as the mind of wisdom and sees practice as a method for the realization of that wisdom.²² As I have argued elsewhere,²³ this text was most likely composed within a Pure Land tradition with the intent of deliteralizing the notion of Pure Land. The *Buddhabhūmisūtra* was soon subsumed into the Yogācāra doctrinal circle and a commentary, the *Buddhabhūmivivākhyāna*, was written by Śīlabhadra to explicate its meaning from the Yogācāra perspective. This commentary treats of "the attainment of great recollection and wisdom (*smṛtimatyadhigama*) as wisdom perfected by hearing [doctrine] because it articulates the unflinching meaning of what has been heard."²⁴ It is mirror wisdom that elicits the wisdom images of Pure

Land Buddhas and that remains unforgetful in concentrated meditation upon those images.²⁵

One can sense a tension in these interpretations between accepted Yogācāra doctrinal understanding and the widespread practice of *buddhānusmṛti* with its devotional intensity. Since the monk scholars were the guardians of doctrine, they acted as theoreticians of Pure Land devotion, and the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* in India evolved under their oversight and aegis.

Yet the Indian Mahayanists did not devote a great deal of attention to examining the structure of memory. The *Ch'eng wei-shih lun*, which if not actually composed in India at least reflects Indian Yogācāra thinking, identifies memory as an activity of the *manovijñāna* in perceiving past experiences or events. In its treatment, it first excludes memory from either the container consciousness (*ālaya*) or thinking consciousness (*manas*):

Memory (*smṛti*) is the clear remembrance of things that have been practiced or experienced. The container consciousness is obscure, feeble, and incapable of clear remembrance.²⁶

Memory is the remembrance or recollection of a thing experienced in the past. Thinking (*manas*) perceives and perpetually takes as its object a thing actually felt and experienced at the present moment, which is not a thing to be remembered. It has nothing to remember and thus has no memory.²⁷

Memory is then defined as an associated mental state of the perceptive consciousness (*manovijñāna*):

What is memory? It is the state which makes the mind remember clearly and not forget a thing, an event, or a situation that has been experienced. Its special activity consists in serving as the supporting basis for meditation, because it incessantly recalls and retains the thing experienced in such a way that there is no failure of recollection, and thereby it induces concentration.²⁸

These definitions all regard memory as directed to the past and tacitly assume the conventional validity of a temporal continuum from past through present to future, for "time is a conventionally established conditioned reality."²⁹ As a conditioned state of mind, memory itself serves only as an aid to concentration and, discriminating between past and present, falls away upon the attainment of non-discriminative wisdom — to reappear after the conversion of support as one of the functions of discernment wisdom.³⁰

THE CHINESE SHIFT IN UNDERSTANDING *NIEN-FO*

In China a drastic change in the understanding and practice of *nien-fo* (i.e., *buddhānusmṛti*) took place. The introduction of Buddhist doctrine and practice from India into China at first proceeded without benefit of an established scholarly sangha. Even when the sangha so developed and the Indian practice of *buddhānusmṛti* as an aid to meditation was adopted, the sense of living at the end of times of the doctrine (*mappō*) — of being somehow beyond normal time — tended to relegate scholastic niceties to the periphery. Instead, attention was focused upon the efficacy of practice to find deliverance (*mokṣa*).

Pivotal to the Chinese understanding of *nien-fo* are two texts which are attributed to Indian masters but which apparently had little impact in India. In his *Daśabhūmivibhāṣaśāstra* Nāgārjuna is importuned to teach an "easy way" to awakening and, although scolding those who make the request, he acquiesces and recommends the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* :

If a man thinks of me and utters
my name, submitting himself to
me, he will enter the Certainly
Assured Rank and attain unex-
celled, supreme awakening.³¹

Vasubandhu's *Sukhāvāṭīvyūhopadeśa*, a text which presents "instructions to enable all sentient beings to be born in the Pure Land of Buddha Amitāyus,"³² recommends that such birth be realized through faith. This faith comprises five aspects of recollection (*smṛti*): worship, praise, vow, meditation, and transferral of merits. The first four aspects describe the process whereby one attains birth. Worship signifies mindfulness of the power of Amitāyus. Praise consists in the chanting of his name: *nien-fo*. Vow is the firm commitment to be born there. Meditation is the visualization of the merits of Buddha Land. The fifth aspect is the final practice of compassion that flows from attainment, the leading of all beings to the Buddha Land. But for Vasubandhu practice does not refer to the graded *mārga* system of the Indian scholars, Abhidharma or Yogācāra. Rather, faith itself encompasses all practices.³³

These two texts direct attention away from the arduous path practices of the Indian masters, to focus on the practice of faith. They constitute a "swing" away from the "difficult" path of the holy sages, felt inappropriate in the actual conditions of China, to the "easy" path of faith in Buddha. They also denote a shift in the understanding of *nien-fo* from a remembrance of the

Buddha to an anticipation of salvation by the Pure Land Buddhas. This is not to say that these two texts reject the karmic path of effort. They do not, as witnessed by Nāgārjuna's insistence that that path is the best. But, in their focus on the value of *nien-fo*, they do point the way toward the later development of "single-practice *nien-fo*," the complete reliance on the practice of calling on the name of the Buddha Amitāyus (Amitābha) as the single way to salvation.

As long as the practice of *nien-fo* was understood as an aid to meditation, it occasioned little concern among the more monastic schools, for meditative *nien-fo* had long been so practiced. But when *nien-fo* began to be preached as an exclusive path, as the best path in the days of the degenerate doctrine (*mappō*), then it ran directly counter to the path system as expressed in the *sāstra* texts. Indeed, the Pure Land masters Tao-ch'o, Chai-ts'ai, and Shan-tao all felt the need to refute criticisms made by the adherents of the She-lun sect, the initial version of Yogācāra thought in China, which took as its basic authority Paramārtha's translation of Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasamgraha* (*She-lun*) and Vasubandhu's *Mahāyānasamgrahabhāṣya*. Asaṅga's text does warn against the neglect of effort and insists that in order to attain awakening one must exert effort and engage in practice. The very last section of his *sāstra* treats the effort required to attain Buddhahood. Paramārtha, as is often his custom, interpolates his own ideas into Vasubandhu's commentary, ideas that directly relate to Pure Land practices. These were probably added in direct reference to the Chinese argumentation over the import of *nien-fo*. Paramārtha's text says:

The line [in Asaṅga's basic text] states "[if sentient beings discard effort], realization would be forever without cause." All Buddhas realize Dharma body and it exists everywhere. But, if without one's own effort it

could be realized, then such a realization would be without cause. Why? If [Dharma body alone] were the cause [for awakening], then there would never have been any worldings at all, since in virtue of another's [effort], all would have been delivered. Indeed [effort as causative] would not have any meaning. Therefore, there would be realization without any personal cause.³⁴

The criticism implicit in this passage seems to have often been leveled against the exclusive reliance on *nien-fo* as an independent practice. Huai-kan, a disciple of Shan-tao, in his *Shih ching-t'u ch'un-i lun* [Treatise Clarifying Doubts about Pure Land] decries the impact of his criticism:

It is more than one hundred years since the *Mahāyānasamgraha* was introduced into this country. Many teachers, upon reading this treatise, have discontinued the practice of the Western Pure Land.³⁵

It seems probable that Huai-kan is alluding to Paramārtha's She-lun version of the *Mahāyānasamgraha* and its stricture against reliance on other-power.³⁶

Shan-tao in his *Kuan-ching-shu* defends *nien-fo* practice against the She-lun critics. In the last section of that work, he recommends faith in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* which was taught by Buddha over that in the *Mahāyānasamgraha* which was taught by *bodhisattvas*, i.e., Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.³⁷ His defence is precisely that it is incorrect to accuse *nien-fo* practitioners of lacking practice, because practice is embodied in the name itself, i.e., the merits engendered by the practice of Amitābha himself.

This dispute is significant beyond the confines of the issue being argued, for it signals both the emergence of Pure Land as an increasingly independent form of doctrinal thinking and also marks a shift from *nien-fo* as an auxiliary to meditation to *nien-fo* as an exclusive and effective path in itself. Here *nien*, i.e., *anusmṛti*, takes on a proleptic meaning as an anticipatory, future-oriented practice which, by placing total reliance on the primal vow of Buddha Amitābha, directs attention away from this degenerate world to future salvation after death. The function of memory in *nien-fo* is held in doctrinal tension between a remembering of the past vow of Amitābha and a prolepsis of future birth in Pure Land.

The import of the shift in meaning is that Pure Land thinkers, dissatisfied with the classical path interpretation of the She-lun thinkers, have now to develop their own Mahayana understanding of *nien-fo* in contrast to that holy path of finely graded and seemingly endless stages. It is only with these Chinese Pure Land masters, T'an-luan, Tao-ch'o, and Shan-tao especially, that Pure Land takes on a recognizable identity as a discrete doctrinal option.

Yet, as the simple recitation of *nien-fo* came increasingly to the fore as a total negation of self-reliance, the danger increased that Pure Land practice and thought would diverge from the overall Mahayana doctrine of emptiness. In the absence of the previous Yogācāra doctrinal guidance, Pure Land thinkers had to evolve an alternate Mahayana understanding within the context of single-practice *nien-fo*. Not ready to take this step, Chinese doctrinal thinkers after Shan-tao, who had focused on the validity of an exclusive recitation of the name, tried to soften the impact of *nien-fo* and to regard it once more as one valid practice among many for inculcating *samādhi*.³⁸ The further development of a doctrinal understanding of single-practice *nien-fo* took place not in China but in Japan, in the thought of Shinran.

JAPAN: NEMBUTSU AS THE PRIMAL SACRAMENT

Shinran's interpretation, although frequently quoting both Indian scriptures and Chinese treatises, is innovative in the extreme. In effect, he reclaims the entirety of the Mahayana tradition around the central practice of *nembutsu* (*nien-fo*). But for him *nembutsu* is not a memory aid to meditation, nor simply a proleptic hope for a future Buddha encounter. Rather, *nembutsu* becomes a sacrament which embodies an immediately present experience of salvation effected by Amitābha and elicits a profound movement of gratitude and commitment to the tasks of compassion.

The term sacrament is of course not usually employed in Pure Land thought. It is here borrowed from the Christian tradition, because its original meaning can perhaps serve as an appropriate vehicle for an enunciation of *nembutsu*. The etymological meaning of the Latin term *sacramentum* is a vow, such as that made by a soldier (from which its Christian usage as baptismal commitment derives).³⁹ By attending to this basic meaning of the term, one can perhaps understand Shinran's notion of *nembutsu* as a recollection of the primal vow or sacrament. The practice of *nembutsu* can then be understood as a ritual sign, i.e., a sacrament in its more ordinary sense, signifying the remembrance of the present here-and-now efficacy of Amida's vow, realized through *shinjin* (faith and entrusting) and expressed by the recitation of *nembutsu* in gratitude for being so encompassed. The *nembutsu* is a sacramental sign indicating the already accomplished, i.e., primal, salvation brought about by Amida in the present instant, eliciting from the mind of the practitioner the deepest sense of entrusting (*shinjin*) and gratitude for having been saved by virtue of his compassionate vow.

In this understanding the prior significance of *smṛti* as memory of things past, i.e., of the career of Dharmākara, is superseded by a recollection focused on the instant of *shinjin* and its enunciation in *nembutsu*. Indeed, as outside of history, the account of Dharmākara-Amitābha becomes a paradigmatic myth relating not something merely remembered in the past. It is rather an account of what took/takes place apart from time-history. To paraphrase Mircea Eliade, we might suggest:

The myth of Dharmākara relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, *ab initio*. But to relate a sacred history is equivalent to revealing a mystery. For the person of that myth is not an ordinary sentient being; he is an awakened *bodhisattva*, and for this reason his *gesta* constitute a mystery; man could not know his acts if they were not revealed to him. The myth then is the "history" of what took place *in illo tempore*, the recital of what Amitābha did at the beginning of historical time. To tell a myth is to proclaim what happened *ab origine*. Once told, that is, revealed, the myth becomes apodictic truth; it establishes a truth that is absolute ... The myth proclaims the appearance of ... a primordial event.⁴⁰

Shinran does not simply negate the notion of memory. Rather he collapses the temporal framework in which conventional time is experienced and telescopes it all into the present moment when one utters *nembutsu* in true entrusting and faith (*shinjin*). In a context of a total negation of self-

effort, Shinran empties the notion of time and employs the *nembutsu* as the bearer of the deepest Mahayana doctrine. This collapsing of time derives from Shinran's attending to the present efficacy of Amida's primal vow of other-power, not from his philosophical ruminations on the nature of time itself. He is not giving an account of something past nor depicting something future, but attempting to enunciate a present experience of *shinjin*. He is grasped in the present moment by the power of that vow and graced by receiving the merits of Amida. Shinran's understanding of *nembutsu* is a remembrance of what is present this very instant in the realization of entrusting oneself to Amitābha's primal vow. That vow is not a past occurrence that has continuing efficacy in the repeatable present. The Buddha's vow power is not an event which occurred in history. Shinran in his *Kyōgyōshinshō* quotes Chih-chüeh (904-975) to this effect:

How wonderful is the power of Buddha! It is altogether beyond comprehensibility. Nothing like it has ever taken place in history.⁴¹

Amida's vow is primal because it is the primal source before any past time in virtue of which one experiences *shinjin* and enters the state of the definitely assured. Shinran has collapsed the conventional notion of time as a continuum from the past through present to future into the existential present instant. As Nishitani Keiji understands it:

It is the characteristic of *shinjin* that within the time of "now," in the true instant, the past which is further back in the past than any point in the past — that is, the past before any past whatsoever — becomes simultaneous with the present and is transformed

into the present In the turning over of the power of the Primal Vow, the past, without ceasing to be past, becomes present within the present *shinjin* of Shinran; and in his *shinjin*, Shinran's present, without ceasing to be present, becomes present in the past. The power of the Primal Vow is this power to make simultaneous.⁴²

Just as the primal vow is not an event of the past, so birth into Pure Land does not occur in the future. Shinran quotes the *Larger Sukhāvativyūha Sutra*:

As all beings hear his name, faith (*shinjin*) is awakened in them and they are gladdened down to one thought. This comes to them from having been turned over from Amida's pure mind. When they desire to be born in the Pure Land, they are born there *at that moment* and abide in the stage of non-retrogression⁴³

In his *Yuishinshō-mon'i* Shinran comments that the phrase:

"attains birth immediately" (i.e., at that moment) means that when a person realizes *shinjin*, he is born immediately.⁴⁴

The reception of *shinjin* and birth in Pure Land are not a future event to take place in some subsequent time. The time of the primal vow is a mythic primal source of time itself, not a point, however distant, within that continuum. The fulfillment of that vow in the reception of *shinjin* occurs in an existential

instant of the utmost present, apart from any past memory or future prolepsis. The *nembutsu* then is a sacrament of the existential here-and-now simultaneity of present participation in that primal source. *Shinjin* arrests conventional time and establishes a simultaneity between the actual present and both the primal vow and its fulfillment in birth in Pure Land. Pure Land then is the emergence of a future beyond any point in the future.

CONCLUSION

Remembrance within the Indian practice of *buddhānussmṛti* and for the most part Chinese *nien-fo*, functioned as an aid to concentration within a conventional time continuum wherein the tension in recollecting Buddha was between a recollection of the past deeds of Buddha and a prolepsis of the future. Remembrance here functions as a remembering of past doctrine and its content with the expectancy of future birth in Pure Land.

But in Shinran's understanding of invocational *nembutsu* as a sacrament operative in an existential simultaneity of time, both remembrance and prolepsis collapse in the realization of *shinjin*. *Nembutsu* becomes much more than a simple aid to meditative practice. It is the primal sacrament, the performance of which acknowledges in gratitude Amida's efficacious vow as source and enables one to entrust oneself to the merits of Amida in total abandonment of all self-power. For Shinran, then, the *nembutsu* is a remembrance of the primal vow-time before time and a prolepsis beyond any future anticipation, for in the realization of *shinjin* one's mind is focused upon the existential present acceptance of the mind of Amida. Memory here is telescoped into sacramentally present instant and bears little resemblance to conventional assumptions about recalling past events.

FOOTNOTES

1. In India Asaṅga and Śīlabhadra treated Pure Land themes, while in China Hui-yūan, Chih-i, Chi-tsang, and Shan-tao wrote commentaries on *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* (*Kuan-ching*). For the parallel tradition of visualizing Maitreya, see Alan Sponberg, "Wonhyo on Visualization: Maitreya Cult Practice in Early China and Korea," forthcoming in *Maitreya, the Future Buddha*, Alan Sponberg and Helen Hardacre, eds. (Cambridge University Press); and "Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism," in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, Peter N. Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985).

2. On the chronology of Shan-tao's works, see Ryosetsu Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana: Concept of the Nembutsu in Shan-tao's Pure Land Buddhism* (Tokyo: Kyoiku Shincho Sha, 1974), pp. 79-122. For the notion of *nien-fo* as an adequate practice, see p. 37 and p. 62. The translation "single-hearted nembutsu" (*senju-nembutsu*) is from Taitetsu Unno, *The Tannisho: A Shin Buddhist Classic* (Honolulu: The Buddhist Study Center Press, 1984), p. 11 et passim.

3. Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana*, p. 100 and p. 104. Sponberg shows a parallel structure in Wonhyo's understanding of Maitreya visualization, for there also the effectiveness of the practice occurs in the absence of that serenity (*praśrabdhi*) required for entry into advanced samādhi; see "Wonhyo on Visualization."

4. Such a tension appears to lie behind the concerns of the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, a text intended to counter the popularity of devotion to a host of Pure Land Buddhas and a neglect of Śākyamuni. See Yamada, Isshi, *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka, Edited with Introduction and Notes* (London: University of London, 1968).

5. Nishio, Kyōo, *Genshi jōdo kyōten* (Tokyo: Shishin Gakusha, 1982), pp. 1-24.

6. Nishio, *Genshi jōdo kyōten*, pp. 50-55; Paul M. Harrison, "Buddhānusmṛti in the Pratyut-

panna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra," in *The Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 6 (1978), p. 35-39.

7. Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana*, p. 27; see *Letters of Shinran*, trans. Yoshifumi Ueda (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1978), p. 87.

8. *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, ed. E. B. Cowell, vol. 49 of "The Sacred Books of the East," reprinted New York: Dover, 1969. "The Smaller Sukhāvāṭvīyūha," trans., F. Max Muller, p. 99.

9. *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*. "Amitāyurdhyānasūtra," trans. J. Takakusu, p. 101.

10. *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, p. 15 and p. 45.

11. *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, p. 98.

12. *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, p. 168.

13. *Buddhist Mahayana Texts*, p. 179.

14. Harrison, "Buddhānusmṛti," p. 43.

15. Christian Lindtner, "A Treatise on Buddhist Idealism: Kambala's Ālokamālā," *Indiske Studier 5: Miscellanea Buddhica* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlagm, 1985), pp. 111-112, speaks of: "... the achievements of the great systematic and creative thinkers of Yogācāra, the most flourishing branch of Mahayana — almost, indeed, synonymous with Mahayana — in this period (i.e., the time of the *Ālokamālā*, identified as the first half of the sixth century)." The notion of Mādhyamika and Yogācāra as the two major competing schools of Mahayana is in need of revision, for that evaluation reflects more the picture derived from the Chinese pilgrims who traveled to India in the sixth century than the development of earlier Indian doctrinal history. The first doctrinal divergence between Mādhyamika and Yogācāra appears to be Dharmapāla's *Śataśāstravaipulyaṭikā* (T. 30, pp. 246a-249c), where he responds to a criticism of the Yogācāra notion of ultimate meaning by counterposing the Yogācāra interpretation of emptiness to the Mādhyamika understanding. It is, so it appears,

this passage of Dharmapāla that elicited Bhavivaveka's attack on the Yogācāra position in his *Tarkajvāla*. In point of fact, until this divergence, the task of interpreting the philosophy of emptiness was evidently performed by the Yogācāra thinkers.

16. *Scripture on the Explication of Underlying Mysteries*, trans. John Keenan, forthcoming from the Bukkyō Dendō Kyōkai Series. Confer Étienne Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocanasūtra, L'Explication des Mystères* (Louvain and Paris, 1935), VIII, 7, pp. 90-91 and p. 211.

17. T. 8, p. 421b. Also reported in *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*. See *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and its Verse Summary*, trans. Edward Conze (San Francisco: Four Seasons, 1973), pp. 291-294.

18. T. 25, p. 746b.

19. Tucci, Guiseppe, *Minor Buddhist Texts*, Part I (Roma: Serie Orientale Roma IX, Part I, Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1956; Kyoto: Rinsen I, 1978 Reprint), p. 63.

20. Paul Griffiths; Noriaki Hakamaya; John Keenan; and Paul Swanson, *The Realm of Awakening: Chapter Ten of Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1989), Introduction, pp. 26-33, and Section O, pp. 235-239.

21. *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka*, ed. Yamada, p. 3.

22. The same intent is evident in its commentary, see John P. Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa: The Doctrinal Development of the Notion of Wisdom in Yogācāra Thought*, Ph.D. disser., University of Wisconsin, Madison, (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1980), pp. 445-446.

23. Keenan, "Pure Land Systematics in India: The *Buddhābhūmisūtra* and the *Trikāya* Doctrine," *Pacific World*, New Series 3 (Fall 1987) pp. 29-35.

24. Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa*, p. 462.

25. Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa*, p. 668 and p. 672.

26. *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi: La Siddhi de Huien-Tsang*, trans. Louis de la Vallée Poussin (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1928), p. 151; *Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun: Doctrine of Mere Consciousness*, trans. Wei Tat (Hong Kong: The Ch'eng Wei-Shih Lun Publishing Committee, 1973), p. 163.

27. de la Vallée Poussin, pp. 257-258; Wei Tat, p. 293.

28. de la Vallée Poussin, pp. 311-312; Wei Tat, p. 377.

29. Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa*, p. 411.

30. Keenan, *A Study of the Buddhābhūmyupadeśa*, p. 547, pp. 559-562 (where discernment wisdom, i.e., intellectual mastery wisdom, is the conversion of manovijñāna; see also *Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun*, Poussin, p. 684 and Avabhāva's *Mahāyāna-saṃgrahopanibandhana*, T. 31, p. 438a.

31. *Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, p. 258; in Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana*, p. 30.

32. Minoru Kiyota, "Buddhist Devotional Meditation: A Study of the *Sukhāvalīvyūhopedeśa*," in *Mahayana Buddhist Meditation: Theory and Practice* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1978), pp. 249-250.

33. Kiyota, "Buddhist Devotional Meditation," p. 257.

34. T. 31, p. 269c; Griffiths, *The Realm of Awakening: Chapter Ten of Asaṅga's Mahāyānasamgraha*, p. 257. The addition of Paramārtha stands out clearly when compared to the other translations. Hsüan-tsang's Chinese has:

If sentient beings discard their effort, then such a realization [of Buddhahood] would be without cause [and would not occur]. To discard the cause is not correct ... (T. 379c; Griffiths, *op. cit.*, p. 256)

Dharmagupta's Chinese has:

The error consists in the absence of a cause [for Buddhahood], as if one realized [it] always. To discard the cause [for Buddhahood] is unreasonable ... (T. 31, p. 320c)

The Tibetan translation of Dīpaṅkara-śrījñāna has:

This [mistaken view that no effort is needed] results from the faulty conclusion that all [Buddhas] arise without cause and therefore says that the cause [for Buddhahood] is not interrupted ... (D. 190a; P. 232a)

Since none of these translations mention realizing Buddhahood "through another," it seems that Paramārtha has added the passage when he translated the basic text of Asaṅga in China to reflect the doctrinal context then present, namely, the argumentation over Pure Land practice.

35. T. 47, p. 39. Passage translated in Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana*, p. 127. Fujiwara gives the date of Huai-kan's death as between 695 and 701 c.e. (p. 123).

36. Huai-kan himself belonged to the Fa-hsiang school and both accepted Hsüan-tsang's new translations and remained devoted to the Pure Land practice. His work is an attempt to interpret Pure Land within a Fa-hsiang framework.

37. Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana*, p. 105.

38. Fujiwara, *The Way to Nirvana*, pp. 123-176.

39. Van Roo, Gulielmo, *De Sacramentis in Genere* (Roma: Apud aedes Universitatis Gregoriannae, 1960), pp. 19-20. Van Roo writes: "In regard to the etymology, *sacramentum* comes from *sacrare*, 'to constitute (either a person or a thing) by divine right,' which can only be done through a public authority ... There are two classical uses:

military and civil. A military sacrament was the vow whereby soldiers called upon the gods and bound themselves in faith and obedience. He who vows in truth, prays for the favor and aid of the gods. He who knowingly dissimulates, brings down the wrath of the gods on himself and his family. Here sacrament retains the notion of an initiation or a religious devotion. In civil procedures, a sacrament was a sum of money which was deposited in a sacred place by a litigant. The victor in the lawsuit retrieved his monies. The loser however relinquished his monies for sacred use. Even this usage of sacrament seems to have had a religious origin: calling upon the gods in giving testimony of the truth of what is said in litigation and from the devotion or consecration of the oath itself." Without entering into the Christian usage of the term after its adoption by Tertullian, the classical Latin usage offers analogues for translating the *nembutsu* thought of Shinran into Western idioms. To wit: 1) its basic meaning refers to a vow, just as *nembutsu* is an entrusting of oneself to the vow of Amida, 2) a sacramental vow must be done in faith, just as *nembutsu* must be enunciated in *shinjin*, 3) properly performed, the military vow or sacrament brings about the aid of the gods; while the utterance of *nembutsu* brings about the transference of merits (*ekō*) from Amida, and 4) in its civil use the vow was a calling upon the divine, parallel to calling upon Amida in *nembutsu*. One has, of course, to be careful in adopting terms across traditions, lest meanings from one be read into the other. But, it would appear, the use of the term "sacrament" has the distinct advantage of stressing in a particularly obvious manner the deepening of *nembutsu* in Shinran and its centrality as the primal act that elicits *shinjin* by other-power and points to the source the faith so elicited in the primal vow of Amida. Also see *The Macmillan Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 12 "Sacrament: An Overview," by Theodore W. Jennings Jr., p. 501.

40. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (Harcourt Brace, 1959; 1961 Harper Torchbook reprint), p. 95. The Eliade text reads: "The myth relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, *ab initio*. But to relate a sacred history is equivalent to revealing a mystery. For the persons of the myth are not human beings; they are gods or culture heroes, and for this reason their *gesta* constitute mysteries; man could not know their acts if they were not revealed to him. The myth, then, is the history of what took place *in illo tempore*, the recital of what the gods or the semidivine beings did at the beginning of time. To tell a myth is to proclaim what happened *ab initio*. Once told, that is, revealed, the myth becomes apodictic truth ... The myth proclaims the appearance of a new cosmic situation or of a primordial event."

41. Gutoku Shaku Shinran, *The Kyōgyōshinshō, The Collection of Passages Expounding the True Teaching, Living, Faith, and Realizing of the Pure Land*, trans. D. T. Suzuki (Kyoto: Shinshū Ōtaniha, 1973), p. 139.

42. Nishitani, Keiji, "The Problem of Time in Shinran," in *The Eastern Buddhist* 11/1 (May 1978), 20-21. The basic insight for the above section on Shinran's understanding of memory as simultaneity comes from this article.

43. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, trans. Suzuki, p. 89.

44. *Letters of Shinran*, trans. Ueda, p. 11.