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

by John P. Keenan, Department of Religion, Middlebury College, VT

In the doctrinal development of the practice of the remembrance of Buddha (budhāanusmṛti; 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-me) 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 rememberance (nien; smrī) 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. But in the later thought of Shan-tao, as represented by his last and definitive work, the Kuanching-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. It could be effectively practiced even though one’s mind is distracted, 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 BUDDHĀANUSMRTI

The practice of buddhāanusmrī (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 (guna), 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.

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 Sukhāvatiyūha, reveals a developing practice of recollecting Buddha, not the inception of the practice. Nishio Kyō 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. Buddha 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 (āmṛta).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 Sukhāvatiyūha:

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 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 Sukhāvatiyūha,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 Sukhāvatiyūha says that sentient beings must “bring their stock of merit to maturity” in order to be born in the Pure Land.10 The Smaller Sukhāvatiyūha 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. 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 idam yak idam traiddhātukam, i.e., all things appear as sentient beings construct (vikalpayati) them. Thus the Pratyutpānasūtra rejects any concept that would attribute a real existence (bhavasamjñā) 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. 500 — that most of the doctrinal thinking on Indian Pure Land movements took place. Although the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra 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.

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 Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāśūtra the Bodhisattva Sadāprādita 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. The Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra comments on this case:

Although the Bodhisattva Sadāprādita 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.

In his commentary on Prajñāpāramitā, Triśatikāyāḥ Prajñāpāramitāḥ Kārikāsaptaḥ, 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-vijñaptirnātratvāt).

Likewise, Aśvabhāva in his Mahāyāna-samgrahopanibandhana 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.

The Karunāpūṇḍarīka 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. 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. As I have argued elsewhere, 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 Buddhabhūmivākhyāna, was written by Śālabhadra to explicate its meaning from the Yogācāra perspective. This commentary treats of “the attainment of great recollection and wisdom (smṛtimatyaadhigama) as wisdom perfected by hearing [doctrine] because it articulates the unfalling meaning of what has been heard.” It is mirror wisdom that elicits the wisdom images of Pure Land Buddhas and that remains unforgettable in concentrated meditation upon those images.

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.

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.

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.

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." 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.

THE CHINESE SHIFT IN UNDERSTANDING NIENT-FO

In China a drasticchange in the understanding and practice of nient-fo (i.e., buddhanusmṛti) 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 buddhanusmṛti 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 nient-fo are two texts which are attributed to Indian masters but which apparently had little impact in India. In his Daśabhūmīvidhāsastra Nāgarjuna is importuned to teach an "easy way" to awakening and, although scolding those who make the request, he acquiesces and recommends the practice of buddhanusmṛti:

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

Vasubandhu's Sukhāvatīvyūhapadeśa, a text which presents "instructions to enable all sentient beings to be born in the Pure Land of Buddha Amitāyus," 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: nient-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 of non-discriminative wisdom — to reappear after the conversion of support as one of the functions of discernment wisdom.

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 nient-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 nian-fo, they do point the way toward the later development of “single-practice nian-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 nian-fo was understood as an aid to meditation, it occasioned little concern among the more monastic schools, for meditative nian-fo had long been so practiced. But when nian-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 śāstra texts. Indeed, the Pure Land masters Ta-ts’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 Mahāyānasamgrahabhaṣya. 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 śāstra 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 nian-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 worldlings 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 nian-fo as an independent practice. Huai-kan, a disciple of Shan-tao, in his Shih ching-t’u ch’un-ji 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 nian-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 nian-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 *ni'en-fo* as an auxiliary to meditation to *ni'en-fo* as an exclusive and effective path in itself. Here *ni'en*, 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 *ni'en-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 *ni'en-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'0, and Shan-tao especially, that Pure Land takes on a recognizable identity as a discrete doctrinal option.

Yet, as the simple recitation of *ni'en-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 *ni'en-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 *ni'en-fo* and to regard it once more as one valid practice among many for inculcating *samādhi*. The further development of a doctrinal understanding of single-practice *ni'en-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* (*ni'en-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). 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 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.

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 repeateable 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.\textsuperscript{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 Sukhāvatīyāha 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 \textit{at that moment} and abide in the stage of non-retrogression ....\textsuperscript{43}

In his \textit{Yuishinshō-mon'i} Shinran comments that the phrase:

> “attains birth immediately” (i.e., \textit{at that moment}) means that when a person realizes shinjin, he is born immediately.\textsuperscript{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\textit{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**

Rememberance within the Indian practice of \textit{buddhānusmṛti} and for the most part Chinese \textit{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. Rememberance 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 \textit{nembutsu} as a sacrament operative in an existential simultaneity of time, both rememberance 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 \textit{nembutsu} is a rememberance 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 Asanga and Śīlabhadra treated Pure Land themes, while in China Hui-yüan, Chih-i, Chi-tsang, and Shan-tao wrote commentaries on Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā 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).


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 (prāśrabdhi) required for entry into advanced samādhi; see "Wonhyo on Visualization."

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


15. Christian Lindtner, A Treatise on Buddhist Idealism: Kambala's Ṭhānokālā, "Indiske Studier 5: Miscellanea Buddhica (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 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 Ṭhānokālā, 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 Śataśāstravaipulyaśūkṣa (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 Bhaviveka’s attack on the Yogācāra position in his Tarkajñā. In point of fact, until this divergence, the task of interpreting the philosophy of emptiness was evidently performed by the Yogācāra thinkers.


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

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


30. Keenan, A Study of the Buddhahūmyupadeśa, 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-samgrahaparodhikana, T. 31, p. 438a.


34. T. 31, p. 269c; Griffiths, The Realm of Awakening: Chapter Ten of Asanga’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 Buddha/hood] 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 Dipamkara-srijñana 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 Asagha in China to reflect the doctrinal context then present, namely, the argumentation over Pure Land practice.


36. Huai-kan himself belonged to the Fa-hsiang school and both accepted Hsuan-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.


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.

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40. Micrea 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.”


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.
