

PACIFIC WORLD

Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies

Third Series Number 7
Fall 2005

SPECIAL SECTION:
MEDITATION IN AMERICAN SHIN BUDDHISM



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Acknowledgment: This annual publication is made possible by the donation of Buddha Dharma Kyokai (Society), Inc. of Berkeley, California.

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Editorial Note: Meditation in American Shin Buddhism

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ON FEBRUARY 24, 2005, the Institute of Buddhist Studies, in association with the Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies, sponsored a symposium entitled, “Meditation in American Shin Buddhism” at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California.

The symposium was organized on the premise that the question of meditation and the broader issue of practice in Shin Buddhism are in need of reexamination within a contemporary, Western context. Shin Buddhism, one of the first forms of Buddhism in the United States, is now just one of many Western Buddhist communities, a great number of which are increasing in scope and activity through a focus on the practice of meditation. American Shin Buddhism is also experiencing an infusion of non-Asian followers and new perspectives on the role and value of religion in the world. Many Shin Buddhist followers adopt the Western call for social praxis and engagement and for the practical application of doctrine to everyday life. Non-traditional approaches to meditative practice are also being demanded by those who look to Shin Buddhism for personal transformation, fulfillment, or healing. All of this is taking place in the context of the development of Western perspectives on institutional orthodoxy and orthopraxy, which are often at odds with those of traditional Shin Buddhist organizations.

This symposium featured a number of renowned Buddhist and Shin Buddhist scholars, whose consideration of the role of meditation in American Shin Buddhism placed emphasis not only on historical and contemporary developments in Buddhist meditative practice, but also on propagational, institutional, and spiritual questions surrounding it. In sum, each of the presentations represented a unique and creative approach to the possibility of resituating practice within American Shin Buddhist thought, community, and life.

The Institute of Buddhist Studies wishes to thank the many people and organizations that made this symposium possible, including Socho Koshin Ogui of the Buddhist Churches of America; Dr. Takamaro Shigaraki, Professor Emeritus, Ryukoku University; the Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies; the George Aratani Endowment for the IBS Center for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies; the Reverend Russell Hamada Memorial Endowment for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies; the Yehan Numata Foundation; and the BCA Research and Propagation Program.

Keynote Address: The Meaning of Practice in Shin Buddhism

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I. THE FUNDAMENTAL STANDPOINT OF BUDDHISM

RELIGIONS GENERALLY SEEK to acknowledge the existence of some kind of transcendent being and bring about persons' reliance upon or obedience to that transcendent power. The structure of the Buddhist teaching is completely different, however. Buddhism encourages us to engage in profound reflection on the reality that we human beings lead lives of ignorance, emptiness, and falsity in our everyday, secular lives. Through a penetrating insight into ourselves, we are subjectively made to negate the present state of our being, which remains buried in the secular world. Buddhism, moreover, focuses on our attainment of true human growth as we search for a higher way of life by awakening supramundane wisdom. One who realizes the fulfillment of such wisdom is called a "buddha," and Buddhism reveals the path leading to the attainment of buddhahood.

Buddhism teaches that, as our minds become purified, we realize a profound awakening to ultimate truth that pervades the universe, just as Śākyamuni did. Hence, it proposes that we cast off the old shells of our ego-selves through the ongoing repetition and deepening of this experience of awakening, and that, as we do, we realize true growth and maturity as human beings. In this sense, Buddhism can be distinguished from religions in general. While constituting the teachings expounded by the Buddha, Buddhism is, at the same time, a teaching through which we are enabled to become buddhas.¹

Buddhism clarifies the path by which human beings come to awaken supramundane wisdom. The original Buddhist scriptures explain that the most fundamental path of practice is "the middle path" (Skt. *madhyamā pratipad*, Jpn. *chūdō*).² The middle path expresses our liberation from the extremes of sensual indulgence and ascetic practices. It also points to our engagement in a total self-negation of our own state of being. At the same time, it indicates that Buddhist life involves a whole-hearted aspiration for

the highest ideals of life, as well as our constant directing of ourselves to the supramundane world. It implies, therefore, our subjective engagement in superlative forms of praxis.

The middle path involves, moreover, relentless reflection upon our own self-centered and ego-attached manner of existence within the ordinary, secular world. As we transcend and radically overcome this existence, we come to see that the true state of our existence is in accord with the principle of interdependent origination (Skt. *pratitya-samutpāda*, Jpn. *engi*). That is, we come to control ourselves by living in accordance with the law of interdependent origination.

Many of the early Buddhist sutras describe this middle path in terms of the eightfold noble path (Skt. *ārya-aṣṭāṅgika mārga*, Jpn. *hasshōdō*).³ The eightfold path noble comprises right view, right thought, right speech, right conduct, right living, right endeavor, right mindfulness, and right meditation. Right view means that, guided by the teachings, we become free of ego-attachment and come to see all existences, just as they are. In this sense, right view represents not only the initial stage of the path of practice, but also the ultimate goal toward which the path is directed. The starting point is the goal. Yet the path of practice is also a process along which we proceed from the starting point and direct ourselves toward the goal. In this way, right view constitutes the beginning and the end, the end and the beginning. The other seven aspects of the path function as stages in a process leading to the self-fulfillment of right view.

The second stage of right thought represents correct thinking. It is the first step that must be taken in order to realize the fulfillment of right view. Right thought is a mental act, which inevitably leads to the appearance of verbal and physical actions. The third stage of right speech refers to the correct use of language. It is a linguistic expression for right view. The fourth stage of right conduct refers to correct actions and behavior. It is the physical expression of right view. Right thought, right speech, and right conduct take place in close relationship with each other, as concrete and practical manifestations of right view.

The fifth stage of right living refers to the act of living correctly. The three acts of right thought, right speech, and right conduct are integrated and constantly performed in all spheres of everyday life. This stage, then, refers to the concrete practice in everyday life of right view. The sixth stage of right endeavor signifies correct effort. It refers to one's unceasing efforts to maintain a thoroughly correct life every day by living in accord with the principle of interdependent origination. The seventh state of right mindfulness signifies correct and exclusive thought. It refers to whole-hearted thought, in which one wishes to be able to live one's entire life based on right view, in accordance with the law of interdependent origination.

That is to say, right thought, right speech, and right conduct, which are the concrete and practical manifestations of right view, and right liv-

ing, which unifies them all, are sustained and fulfilled by right endeavor and right mindfulness. The final stage of right meditation refers to correct meditation. It signifies the mental state that is pure and synthesizes all of the previous seven stages of practices. In this way, right view as the starting point of the path becomes, through correct meditation, right view that is the ultimate attainment on the path.

In this way we can see on the eightfold noble path right view becomes subjectively fulfilled within ourselves, so that we come to see things exactly as they are in accordance with the principle of interdependent origination. Again, right view, which is the ultimate goal of the path of practice, is discussed at the outset as the gate of entry into that path. The path of practice in Buddhism begins with our encounter with the teachings and our selection of the truth elucidated therein as our ultimate refuge. Then, by being unceasingly mindful of that truth and directing ourselves to that truth, we relentlessly and critically negate our present state of being as empty and false. Thus, we open our eyes to right view—this new manner of seeing—as we follow the path that is pointed out by those teachings. This is starting point of the Buddhist path.

Then, based on our performance of specific practices, this state of seeing things as they really are gradually becomes manifest subjectively and practically within our daily life. In other words, the path of practice is an engagement in which we constantly discard our old self and realize the growth of a new self, as we look toward becoming a person who can truly live within right view itself. In this way, it could be said that the path of practice leading to the attainment of enlightenment is the path on which we earnestly move from right view at the entry level to right view at the level of ultimacy. It is the path of self-fulfillment, of the culmination of seeing (and knowing) things as they really are. This is the way in which I understand the fundamental structure of the path of practice in Buddhism. I also believe that the same structure can be found in the path revealed by Shinran, which he called “the true essence of the Pure Land way (*Jōdo shinshū*).”

Since Shin Buddhism discusses the establishment of one buddha—Amida—along with our whole-hearted taking of refuge in that buddha, its teaching is often viewed as positing the existence of a transcendent being and urging our absolute reliance on it. However, this is a total misunderstanding of Shinran’s teaching. The Shin Buddhist path remains resolutely Buddhist. That is, the doctrine of Shin Buddhism clearly sets out a path on which human beings can transcend the secular world and attain supramundane wisdom as we cast off our old selves and realize growth toward buddhahood.

Shinran explains that this Pure Land path of practice, on which human beings attain buddhahood, is the path of saying the Name (*shōmyō no michi*). He also expresses it as the path of shinjin (*shinjin no michi*).⁴

II. THE PATH OF HEARING THE NAME IN THE *MURYŌJUKYŌ*

In Shin Buddhism, Amida Buddha is understood to be a symbolic expression of ultimate truth, a symbol which seeks to reveal ultimate truth that pervades the universe to common people in a way that would be easy for them to understand. As both Amitābha (unlimited light) and Amitāyus (unlimited life), the symbol of Amida indicates that truth is revealed in a manner that reaches all people, at all places and times.

We will return to a fuller discussion of Amida Buddha as symbol later on; however, for the time being let us consider the following. When Amida, as symbolic expression, is revealed as form, it is discussed in terms of buddha-body or buddha image. When it is expressed as language or word, it is explicated as the Buddha's Name (*myōgō*). In other words, the path of contemplation, in which one engages in the practice of visualizing the Buddha, is explicated as the method that will bring one to the experience of encountering Amida's buddha-body, or Amida Buddha that is symbolized as form. On the other hand, the path of hearing the Name (*monmyō*) is set forth from the standpoint in which Amida Buddha is symbolized as word or Buddha-Name.

The Pure Land sutras that comprehend Amida Buddha as Name and expound the path of hearing the Name are the *Bussetsu Muryōjukyō* (Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life)⁵ and the *Bussetsu Amidakyō* (Amida Sutra).⁶ The sutra that comprehends Amida Buddha as buddha-body and teaches the path of contemplating the Buddha is the *Bussetsu Kanmuryōjukyō* (Sutra on the Contemplation of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life).⁷ The teaching of Shin Buddhism is primarily based on the *Muryōjukyō*, and thus sets forth the path of hearing the Name. Hence, in Shin Buddhism the Name of the Buddha is considered to have particular significance because it indicates that Amida Buddha "names itself" and works toward us. Hence, in this path one is said to encounter Amida when one hears the Name or the "calling voice" of the Buddha.

The content of the path of practice set out in the *Muryōjukyō* is exceedingly complex. While it would be impossible to cover the whole of it in a simple manner, it might be condensed and summarized in the following way. In its most basic form, practitioners on this path hear the Name of the Buddha or raise the mind aspiring for enlightenment. They then think on Amida Buddha and give rise to an aspiration to be born in that buddha's Pure Land. Both householders and renunciant monks perform, in accordance with their respective standpoints, the practices of various kinds of roots of goodness. As a result, they constantly and unceasingly engage in the practice of the nembutsu and in their aspiration for birth. The deepening of those practices enable them to attain birth in Amida Buddha's Pure Land after their lives come to an end.⁸

In this way, the path of practice in the *Muryōjūkyō* provides a way for the attainment of birth in another realm called the Pure Land, based on the performance of the practices of various roots of goodness. Through the performance of various practices, the practitioner is able to continually deepen thoughts on the nembutsu, as well as the aspiration to be born. More fundamentally, this means that one casts away the mind of miscellaneous defilements and ignorance and perfects the mind of shinjin. It also means that one goes on to realize the realm of *samādhi* and visualization of the Buddha. From that perspective, the path of practice set out in the *Muryōjūkyō* is basically a path of the gradual awakening of the mind that sees things just as they are, through the performance of various practices, based on the hearing of the Name or the raising of the mind aspiring for enlightenment. That is, starting from the entry-level realization of right view and true knowing, it completes and deepens it and thus reaches the perfection of supramundane wisdom, or the mind that sees (and knows) things exactly as they are. One can also say that it is the path in which one earnestly discards one's old self and realizes self-growth toward becoming a person who lives within this mind of truly seeing.

In other words, according to the *Muryōjūkyō*, upon hearing the Name of Amida Buddha one is able without fail to awaken to truth and realize oneness with Amida Buddha. This experience of awakening is expressed as *citta-prasāda* (purification or clarification of the mind). This is also described as the experience of shinjin.⁹ The sutra then goes on to say that upon realizing the experience of shinjin one is able to attain in this life the state of true settlement (*shōjōju*), which refers to the first level of enlightenment (*satori*). This realization brings about many kinds of benefits and happiness. And then, after death, one attains birth in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha, thereby realizing true, complete enlightenment and buddhahood.¹⁰

III. NĀGĀRJUNA'S PATH OF PRACTICE PERFORMED IN THE THREE MODES OF ACTION

The *Muryōjūkyō* repeatedly urges practitioners to hear the Name of Amida Buddha. However, it offers no concrete method that would enable them to hear the Name. That method would be later explicated by Nāgārjuna of India (ca. 150–250 CE) who prescribed a path of practices performed in the three modes of action, which was said to be a path of easy practice for householders.¹¹

Although materials pertaining to it are limited, Nāgārjuna's text, *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā-śāstra* (Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages, Jpn. *Jūjūbibasharon*), can be seen as representing his thoughts as to Pure Land Buddhism. In that text Nāgārjuna sets out a path of practice for laypersons

and bodhisattvas that leads to the attainment of the stage of non-retrogression (*futaitenchi*), calling it the path of “easy practice of entrusting as a means for attaining it” (*shin hōben igyō*). The content of that path of practice is presented in this manner. One hears, believes, and accepts the Name of the Buddha. Then, one performs practices involving the three modes of karmic actions. That is, one is constantly mindful of the Buddha (mental activity), recites the Buddha’s Name (verbal activity), and reverently worships the Buddha (physical activity). Through those practices, one seeks to reach the stage of being able to visualize the Buddha. This is the mind of pure shinjin.

We can see how the idea of hearing the Name that had originally been expounded in the *Muryōjukyō* has been recast in Nāgārjuna’s path of “easy practice of entrusting as a means.” Indeed, the structure of the path of practice set out in the sutra (in which, through practice, one realizes purity of mind and is able to see things as they really are in the stage of visualizing the Buddha) has been clearly inherited and exhibited here.¹² Nāgārjuna explains that, through this threefold method of practice (physical worship of Amida, recitation of Amida’s Name, and thinking on Amida Buddha),¹³ one will eventually and unfailingly be able to hear the Name or “calling voice” of Amida Buddha. He describes this method as a path of easy practice—the path to enlightenment for householders—which could be accomplished by anyone.¹⁴

In other words, the path offered by Nāgārjuna provides that, if in our everyday lives we establish the daily customs and lifestyles that include the performance of practices in the three modes of action—worship, recitation of the Name, and thinking on the Buddha—then any of us will be able to encounter Amida Buddha and awaken to ultimate truth.

Nāgārjuna’s teaching of the path of easy practice—the path of practice in the three modes of action—eventually was transmitted to China and flourished within Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. A text attributed to Vasubandhu, the *Muryōjukyō ubadaisha ganshōge* (Treatise on the Pure Land) describes the path of practice leading to birth in the Pure Land as that of the “five gates of mindfulness” (*gonenmon*) or five kinds of practice pertaining to Amida Buddha and the Pure Land. That is, one worships the Buddha (*raihō*), praises the Buddha (*sandan*), aspires to be born in that land (*sagan*), contemplates the Buddha and land (*kanzatsu*), and transfers merit for birth (*ekō*). The primary axes for this path of the “five gates of mindfulness” are aspiration and contemplation of the manifestations of the adorned virtues of Amida Buddha and the Pure Land. In this way, we can see that Vasubandhu’s Pure Land thought inherited ideas that differed from those of the *Muryōjukyō*, which was centered on the notion of “hearing the Name.”

Although Tanluan in China inherited Vasubandhu’s idea of the “five gates of mindfulness,” he revealed it to be a path of practice that accords with the capacities of ordinary beings. For him, the practice of the nembutsu

across ten thought-moments (*jūnen nembutsu*) is an expression of a person's mental state at the moment of death, which has been attained through the continuous practice of reciting the Buddha's Name or contemplating the Buddha's body. According to Tanluan, this practice extinguishes all of one's karmic sins, produces goodness, and fulfills the karmic activity necessary for birth. Despite his emphasis on the extinguishing of sins through the nembutsu, Tanluan's thought is a development of Nāgārjuna's and Vasubandhu's notions of the path of practice.¹⁵

The Pure Land thought of Daozhuo represents a transmission of Tanluan's path of practicing the nembutsu across ten thought-moments. One must fully take note of the fact, however, that Daozhuo explains that practice as the path of nembutsu-samādhi.¹⁶ On the other hand, the path of practice found in Shandao's Pure Land thought clearly reflects a structure of thought similar to that seen in Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu. That is to say, Shandao's path of practice involves having a firm belief (*anjin*), undertaking practices (*kigyō*), and performing the karmic act leading to birth (*sagō*). On this path, one takes refuge in Amida Buddha and aspires to be born in the Pure Land. Based on those thoughts, one performs the "five right practices" of reciting the Pure Land sutras (*dokuju*), contemplating the Buddha (*kanzatsu*), worshipping the Buddha (*raihai*), saying the Buddha's Name (*shōmyō*), and praising and making offerings to the Buddha (*sandan kuyō*). Among the five, says Shandao, one should engage in saying the Name in particular. Through those practices, one attains the samādhi of visualizing the Buddha and all of one's karmic evil is extinguished. Then, after death one realizes birth in the Pure Land.

In conclusion, practices in the three modes of action are said to constitute the path to enlightenment for householders. In contrast to the path to enlightenment for renunciants, which required the performance of practices at specified places and times, the acts of worship, recitation, and thinking on the Buddha can be performed at any location or time. Thus, it is important that one establishes such practices as everyday customs and works them into one's lifestyle. The significant point here is that, of the practices in the three modes of action, recitation of the Buddha's Name is the one that could most easily be made into an everyday custom. Hence, in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism, the practice of saying the Name came to be considered as the central practice.¹⁷

IV. SHINRAN'S PATH OF PRACTICE

It is said that the Pure Land Buddhist thought of Hōnen in Japan relied solely upon the teachings of Shandao. In fact, however, Hōnen's path of practice represented a further development of Shandao's notion of the path

of practice. According to the latter, a person performs the single practice of saying the Name, attains samādhi during ordinary life, and abides in right-mindedness as Amida Buddha comes to welcome him at the moment of death. All karmic sins and hindrances are then extinguished and one attains birth in the Pure Land.

Hōnen emphasized the importance of having right-mindedness as the Buddha comes to welcome one at the moment of death over the idea of realizing the samādhi of visualizing the Buddha during ordinary life. However, since both paths are directed to the attainment of shinjin, which is seeing things exactly as they really are, they can be considered to be identical.¹⁸ In Hōnen's nembutsu movement there was a focus on the number of recitations that a practitioner was to perform. This resulted in a division of opinion between those who advocated many callings of the nembutsu and those who maintained that just a few would be sufficient. This led to much confusion and controversy.¹⁹

Shinran responded to this situation by reemphasizing the path of practice expounded in the *Muryōjūkyō* and in Nāgārjuna's teaching. His position was that the acts of worship, recitation, and thinking are all grounded in the act of "hearing the Name." According to him, our actions of physical worship of Amida Buddha, saying the Buddha's Name, and thinking on Amida are—in and of themselves—Amida Buddha's act of calling out to us; they are none other than Amida Buddha's calling voice itself. When we deeply come to realize or awaken to this, we are able to "hear" that voice.

For Shinran, the true nembutsu practice of saying the Name is based in the Eighteenth Vow, which he calls the "Vow of birth through the nembutsu" and the "Vow of shinjin, which is Amida's directing of virtue for our going forth."²⁰ Selected by Amida Buddha's Universal Vow of great compassion, this nembutsu is the path of easy practice and easy attainment of birth that is most appropriate for ordinary, lay householders. As he states,

Nothing surpasses saying the Name of the Tathagata as the essential in attaining birth.²¹

Saying the Name, one will attain birth in the Pure Land of bliss without fail; this is because birth through the nembutsu is brought about by the Buddha's Primal Vow.²²

Shinran offers the following explanation of the true and real practice of the nembutsu:

The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathagata of unhindered light. This practice, embodying all good acts and possessing all roots of virtue, is perfect and most rapid in bringing them to fullness. It is the treasure ocean of virtues that is suchness or true reality. For this reason, it is called great practice.²³

The meaning of this passage is that our everyday practice of the *nembutsu*—our voicing of the Name of Amida Buddha—is our practice, and yet it is also true practice, which embodies all good acts and virtues, and brings to perfect fulfillment all that is valuable for our attainment of birth and enlightenment. Our saying of the Name is at the same time the calling of the Name by all of the buddhas, which we hear and receive. In other words, “saying the Name” refers not just to the act of saying the Name, but to the identity of saying the Name and hearing the Name. For that reason, this practice of saying the Name is “great practice.” Even as it remains our practice, it is called the Buddha’s practice as well—the true and real practice that is bestowed by the Buddha.

For Shinran, moreover, the act of “saying” bears within it a sense of “knowing.” He states,

Saying (shō) means to utter the Name. *Shō* also means to weigh, to determine the measure of something. This means that when a person says the Name even ten times or but once, hearing it and being born without even the slightest doubt, he or she will be born in the true fulfilled land.²⁴

“Saying” means to “weigh” or to “determine the measure of something.” Shinran applies this definition of the word “saying” as he quotes the following passage from Tanluan’s *Commentary* in his “Chapter on Practice.”

How does one “praise”? One says the Name of the Tathagata in accord with the Tathagata’s light, which is the embodiment of wisdom, wishing, by practicing in accord with reality, to be in correspondence with the significance of the Name.²⁵

As a note regarding the word “says,” Shinran inserts the following comment into the passage: “‘To say’ (*shō*) means to ascertain weight.”²⁶ From these examples, it can be observed that for Shinran the word “say” (*shō*) in “saying the Name” means to “weigh,” to “determine,” and to “know.”

It could thus be said that in Shinran’s thought saying the Name means that, through the unceasing continuation of the practice in its essence, one gradually comes to “ascertain,” “determine,” and “know” truth itself. The medium for this realization is the Name of the Buddha, as the symbolic expression of truth. The significance of our continuation of the practice of saying the name in everyday life is that, through it, we come to “know” the true within ourselves. In other words, while saying the Name means that we call out the Name of the Tathāgata with our mouths, it also means that, through it, we come to know the teachings all the more. In this way, it could be said that true saying of the Name exists where our “saying”

means to “say and know” (*shōchi*).

In regard to this point, two writers have offered their thoughts:

My reciting of the Name is nothing more than an imitation. For there to be true recitation of the Name, it is necessary that all the Buddhas say the Name.²⁷

Praising the Name of Amida Buddha flows into the content of the “Vow that all the Buddhas extol the Name” and the “Vow that all the Buddhas praise the Name” within the great flow of the saying of the Name. The meaning of this practice is not simply the act of an individual person. The act itself really possesses a deep, symbolic foundation.²⁸

The *myōkōnin* Asahara Saichi (1851–1933) expressed his understanding in this way:

When I say the nembutsu, as recited by me, it has no taste to it. But when I say the nembutsu, as is recited to me, then the nembutsu is rich in flavor.²⁹

I do not say the Name. *Namo Amida Butsu* echoes toward me.³⁰

I have discussed elsewhere³¹ that the Name of Amida Buddha is, in the final analysis, none other than a religious symbol or expedient means by which ultimate, supramundane truth makes itself known in this secular world. What I refer to here as a “religious symbol” involves a variety of meanings and thus cannot be simply explained.³² However, it can basically be understood in the following manner.

“Religious symbolism” indicates a means of expression used by one who has had an immediate experience of awakening to ultimate truth. When one seeks to talk about or explain the content of that experience in this world of falsity, the means of expression must, unavoidably, take the form of religious symbols. It follows that symbols have a paradoxical structure in which they affirm the secular world, even as they negate the nature of that world. That is to say, one speaks about one’s experience in a conventional manner. And yet, at the same time, since one is seeking to express the ultimate, supramundane content of that experience, the conventional manner of one’s expression must be negated from its very roots.

The point is that a religious symbol always transcends symbolic expression itself by pointing to ultimate truth and reality. That is, a symbol is in itself not the ultimate truth or reality itself. It simply points to that ultimate truth and reality. At the same time, however, nothing can take the place of that symbol, since it always participates profoundly in that ultimate truth and reality. In a sense, this means that, as one who has had a direct expe-

rience with ultimate truth seeks to give expression to it, ultimate truth is coming to manifest itself in that symbol.

Shinran's selection of a passage from the *Daichidoron* (Commentary on the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra*) in his *Kyōgyōshō monrui* can be understood in this context.

Consider, for example, a person instructing us by pointing to the moon with his finger. (To take words to be the meaning) is like looking at the finger and not at the moon. The person would say, "I am pointing to the moon with my finger in order to show it to you. Why do you look at my finger and not the moon?" Similarly, words are the finger pointing to the meaning; they are not the meaning itself. Hence, do not rely upon words.³³

Here, if we understand the Name to be a word that is like a "finger pointing to the moon," the Name as "finger" is a symbolic word that can only point to the "moon" or meaning of ultimate truth and reality. It is not in any way truth or reality itself. As the passage states, "words ... are not the meaning itself." Thus, the Name "Amida Buddha" signifies the act of the affixing of or declaration of a name, an act that takes place in the direction from the other shore (*higan*) to this shore. However, considering this further, this "finger that points to the moon" takes on significance as a "finger" only in the light of that "moon." The "moon" is, in a sense, "pointed to" by the "finger." At the same time, however, it is only within the light of the "moon" that the "finger" can truly constitute a "finger pointing to the moon."

In exactly the same way, the Name, as "finger pointing to the moon," is a word whose name has been declared; it is not the "moon." It simply points to ultimate truth. Yet, without the Name there would be no path through which we could encounter that ultimate truth. Thus, in a sense, in the Name ultimate truth is manifesting or "declaring" itself in the world of falsity and emptiness. In other words, the Name "Amida Buddha" is the activity of ultimate truth and reality "declaring itself," or "naming itself" from the other shore to this shore. In this way, as religious symbol, the Name signifies the self-manifestation of truth in the secular world.

On the Shin Buddhist path of practice we come to encounter Amida Buddha as ultimate truth in the Name-as-symbol and in the nembutsu practice of saying that Name. It is also on that path we can come to awaken to ultimate truth and reality. The meaning of saying the Name or reciting the nembutsu is revealed in this passage from the *Tannishō* (A Record in Lament of Divergences):

But with a foolish being full of blind passions, in this fleeting world—this burning house—all matters without exception are

empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. The nembutsu alone is true and real.³⁴

As we say the Name we come to truly know that all secular and ordinary values in this world and in our lives are without exception “empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity.” We then choose to cast away all of this into the nembutsu. At the same moment, we choose to accept the nembutsu alone—solely and exclusively—as ultimate value and as our place of final refuge. This is the path of the nembutsu of the Primal Vow, which Shinran revealed as

Attaining Buddhahood through the nembutsu is the true essence of the Pure Land way (*nembutsu jōbutsu kore shinshū*).³⁵

The problem, of course, is whether this nembutsu of “choice,” in which we choose to abandon and choose to take up value and action, will arise within us—for it is not just a function of simply reciting the Name. What is essential is that we deeply hear, with our entire beings, the Name declaring or naming itself within this nembutsu of “selection” or “choice.”

Here, we see again the significance of the true practice of saying the Name of the Primal Vow in Shinran’s thought. Superficially, the single practice of saying the Name has features in common with the nembutsu of the Twentieth Vow. However, such nembutsu practitioners “make the auspicious Name of the Primal Vow their own root of good.”³⁶ They engage exclusively in designs to embellish or adorn themselves with the merits obtaining through the act of recitation.

The nembutsu of the Primal Vow, however, differs radically from this. It signifies the world of our ultimate refuge, in which at the risk of our very lives we choose to take up the nembutsu that “alone is true and real.” As an inevitable consequence of that choice the true state of our very selves becomes critically exposed, and declared, within the saying of the Name. In this way, our choice of the nembutsu that “alone is true and real” becomes, conversely, a harsh illumination of our own selves. Thus, as a “declaration” of our deluded passions and falsity, the true practice of saying the Name completely tears down our existence to its foundations. The more we aspire for the truth and the closer we draw toward it, the more we find that the falsity of our own selves is relentlessly called into question and destroyed within the illumination of truth.

It is just as when we seek the light. As we get closer and closer to the light our own shadows become all the more starkly revealed. When the true and real state of our selves becomes all the more deeply brought into question and we come to awaken to our own deluded passions and falsity, then inevitably the Tathāgata’s declaration and “naming of itself” comes to

be heard. The Tathāgata's declaration that is present in the act of saying the Name can be heard and reflected upon (*monshi*) and truly known (*shinchi*) within this radical negation of our selves.

With the Name as our "finger pointing to the moon," we can choose to take up ultimate truth and reality—our ultimate place of refuge—as we wholeheartedly say the Name. At the same time, the Name is also the self-declaration or "calling voice" (*yobigoe*) of truth. That is to say, truth names itself so that we may be able to know ourselves. Its importance lies in each voicing of the Name, where we can hear and reflect on the Name declared by the Buddha, come into contact with its truth, and encounter its reality. This is the meaning of the true practice of saying the Name of the Primal Vow.

Thus, for Shinran, the practice of saying of the Name, which arises in the direction from ourselves to the Buddha, is identical with the practice of hearing of the Name (*monmyō*), which arises from the direction of the Buddha toward us. In other words, our act of saying the Name, in which we voice the words "I take refuge" (*namo* or *kimyō*) in the Buddha, is in itself identical with the Buddha's "command of the Primal Vow calling to and summoning us" (*hongan shōkan no chokumei*).³⁷

The path of "birth through the nembutsu" of the Eighteenth Vow is elucidated as the "path of hearing the Name" (*monmyō no michi*), which is based in the passage on the fulfillment of that Vow in the *Muryōjukyō*.

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, which is directed to them from Amida's sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression.³⁸

This clearly reveals that the path of practice of the Primal Vow is none other than the path of whole-heartedly hearing the Name (*sono myōgō o kiku*). The meaning of "the Name" here refers, as we have seen above, to our own saying of the Name, which is at the same time identical to the buddhas' saying of the Name. The path of practice of the Primal Vow exists when we engage in this practice of saying the Name, for this path is also that of hearing the Name, in which our calling the Name in the direction of the Buddha is at the same time our hearing of the Name that is being declared by the buddhas to us.

For Shinran, hearing the Name is none other than shinjin itself. Shinran presents this explanation of the meaning of "hearing" the Name,

The word *hear* in the passage from the (Larger) Sutra means that sentient beings, having heard how the Buddha's vow arose—its origin and fulfillment—are altogether free of doubt. This is *to hear*.³⁹

He also states,

“Hear” further indicates shinjin.⁴⁰

Hearing is to entrust oneself to the Name that embodies the Tathagata’s Vow.⁴¹

To “hear” indicates our own subjective comprehension (our true knowing) of two aspects of the real state of our existence: we realize subjectively that we are falling into hell (why “the Buddha’s Vow arose”) and also realize the constancy of great compassion (the “origin and fulfillment of the Buddha’s Vow”) that has been established for our sake. “Hearing” means that we truly know the identity of two aspects with one another.

Learning of the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha and hearing the Buddha’s Name is not simply a matter of thinking about or understanding the Buddha’s Vow or Name in some objectified way. Rather, it means that we exhaustively examine our own state of existence through hearing and reflecting on the teachings, and we awaken profoundly to our own falsity, emptiness, and karmic evil. As we awaken to the reality of our own existence and bring ourselves in accord with it, we are able to comprehend the Buddha’s Primal Vow of great compassion. As we come into contact with the truth and reality of the Buddha, conversely, we are able to awaken to our own delusion and ignorance.

V. THE SHIN BUDDHIST PATH TO ENLIGHTENMENT IS TO HEAR THE CALLING VOICE OF THE BUDDHA

When we are able to see our own form clearly, the mirror that reflects our form also becomes clear; and when the mirror becomes clear, our form comes to be seen clearly as well. When the state of our own existence is radically negated as false and empty, at that very moment the truth and reality of the Buddha comes to be clearly comprehended. As long as we are not sure of the falsity of our own existence and we do not realize that our current lives are “false and empty,” it will not be clear to us at all that Amida Buddha is true and real. As long as we believe in the certainty of this *saha* world and continue to dwell peacefully within it, the Pure Land will lie hazily in the distance, never to be clearly seen. Truly knowing the falsity of our selves and the truth of the Buddha—awakening to the uncertainty of the *saha* world and the certainty of the Pure Land—these realizations arise simultaneously and in identity with each other.

Thus, in the Shin Buddhist practice of reciting the Buddha’s Name, saying the Name is identical to hearing the Name. As we properly perform practices every day in the three modes of action (worship, recitation, and

thinking)—in particular if we continuously perform the practice of saying the Name—then our act of calling out the Name (from us to the Buddha) will inevitably undergo a complete reversal of direction and we will come to realize (and awaken to the truth that) it is none other than the Buddha's calling of the Name—the Buddha's calling voice (from Buddha to us). Stated in another way, as we perform practices in the three modes of action, particularly the practice of reciting the Buddha's Name, our ego-centric way of life, which we had led up until that point, will gradually crumble, and Amida Buddha, which dwells within us, will become manifest within us. What we experience is the destruction of our ego-centric selves and the manifestation of the Tathāgata—the realization of the oneness of the self and Buddha.

In Shin Buddhism, this religious experience of awakening to the identity of our selves and the Buddha is referred to as "shinjin." This experience of shinjin reoccurs and deepens throughout the many different conditions of our human lives, and as it does, true human growth takes place. As I mentioned earlier, the Shin Buddhist path to enlightenment is that of continuously performing practices in the three modes of action (that is, worship, recitation, and thinking on the Buddha) every day, and, as we do so, to hear the calling voice of Amida Buddha. It is on this path that we are enabled to realize a true human life.

I would like to conclude my talk by reflecting on two more poems by Asahara Saichi.

Saichi! Who is now reciting the nembutsu? Hmm... It is Saichi. No, that's not it! It is the direct teaching of Amida (*oyasama*). It is the oneness of this self and Buddha.⁴²

Where is the Tathagata? The Tathagata is right here. He fills Saichi's heart and mind as he recites, "Namu Amida Butsu."⁴³

As we can see, Saichi was able to hear the calling voice of the Buddha as he recited the Name every day. Clearly he lived everyday with this profound sense of shinjin.

Practice in Shin Buddhism refers to the performance of practices in the three modes of action, that is, worship of the Buddha, recitation of the Buddha's Name, and thinking on the Buddha, and especially the practice of saying the Name every day. In today's American Shin Buddhist sangha the practice of worship, recitation, and thinking on the Buddha during Sunday temple services is quite important. But, to the extent that this practice represents the path to enlightenment for Buddhist householders, what is even more vital is that they become part of the daily customs and lifestyles of Shin followers so that they can be practiced every day. And it is also important that affirmative techniques and guidance be provided to them in the future.

Through the daily performance of these practices in the three modes of action we will be able to realize shinjin, which is the experience of encountering Amida Buddha. And, through the repetition and deepening of that experience, we will be able to generate new and dynamic human lives. This represents the entirety of practice on the path to enlightenment in Jōdo Shinshū.

Translated by David Matsumoto

NOTES

1. Ui Hakuju, *Bukkyō shisō kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1943), p. 341; Ueda Gibun, *Bukkyō wo dō rikai suruka* (Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppan Kyōkai, 1963).
2. Miyamoto Shōson, *Konpon kū to chū* (Tokyo: Daiichi Shobō, 1943), p. 147 et seq.; *Chūdō shisō oyobi sono hattasu* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1944), p. 656 et seq.
3. Ui Hakuju, *Indo tetsugaku kenkyū*, vol. 3 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1965), p. 25 et seq.; Miyamoto Shōson, previous two cited works.
4. For a more comprehensive treatment of the path of practice in Pure Land Buddhism, see Shigaraki Takamaro, *Jōdokyō ni okeru shin no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1975). For a more detailed examination of the path of practice in Shinran's thought, see Shigaraki Takamaro, *Shinran ni okeru shin no kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1990).
5. *Bussetsu Muryōjūkyō* (Ch. *Wu-liang-shou ching*; The Larger Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life), *Taishō*, vol. 12, p. 265c; *Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho Hensansho*, *Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1982) (hereafter SSZ 1), p. 1.
6. *Bussetsu Amidakyō* (Ch. *A-mi-to ching*; Amida Sutra), *Taishō*, vol. 12, p. 346b; SSZ 1, p. 67.
7. *Bussetsu Kanmuryōjūkyō* (Ch. *Kuan wu-liang-shou ching*; Contemplation Sutra), *Taishō*, vol. 12, p. 340c; SSZ 1, p. 48.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 56 et seq.
9. See Shigaraki, *Shinran ni okeru shin no kenkyū*, p. 256.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 765.
11. Nāgārjuna, *Jūjūbībāsharon*, *Igyōbon* (Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages, Chapter on Easy Practice; Skt. *Daśabhūmika-vibāsa-śāstra*; Ch. *Shih-ti-ching-lun*), *Taishō*, vol. 26, p. 25.
12. See Shigaraki, "Ryūju Jōdokyō ni okeru gyōdō shisō," in *Jōdokyō ni okeru shin no kenkyū*, p. 153 et seq.
13. It is thought that the linguistic origins of "thinking on" (*okunen*) might have been *smṛti* or *anusmṛti* in Sanskrit. According to the dictionary, they mean to recollect, remember, mindfully recollect, think on. Both words refer to the "nen" of *nembutsu*. Might they, in a broader sense, also be translated as "meditation"?
14. *Ibid.*
15. Shigaraki, "Donran ni okeru gyōdō shisō," in *Jōdokyō ni okeru shin no kenkyū*, p. 250 et seq.

16. Shigaraki Takamaro, "Dōshaku Jōdokyō ni okeru gyōdō shisō," in *Ryūkoku daigaku ronshū* 389–390 (1969): pp. 57–71.
17. See Shigaraki, *Jōdokyō ni okeru shin no kenkyū*, p. 341.
18. Shigaraki, "Hōnen ni okeru gyōdō shisō," in *Jōdokyō ni okeru shin no kenkyū*, p. 388 et seq.
19. Ibid.
20. "Chapter on Shinjin," *Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho Hensansho, Shinshū shōgyō zensho*, vol. 2 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1983) (hereafter SSZ 2), p. 48; The Shin Buddhism Translation Series, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997) (hereafter CWS 1), p. 79.
21. *Songō shinzō meimon* (Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls), SSZ 2, p. 594; CWS 1, p. 511.
22. SSZ 2, p. 572; CWS 1, p. 513.
23. "Chapter on Practice," SSZ 2, p. 5; CWS 1, p. 13.
24. *Ichinen Tanen Mon'i* (Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Calling), SSZ 2, p. 619; CWS 1, p. 489.
25. SSZ 2, p. 15; CWS 1, p. 27.
26. Ibid.
27. Soga Ryōjin, "Monpō seikatsu," in *Soga Ryōjin senshū*, chap. 10 (Tokyo: Yayoi Shobō, 1970), p. 59.
28. Takeuchi Gihan, *Shinran to gendai* (Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 1974), p. 63.
29. See Suzuki Daisetsu, *Myōkōnin Asahara Saichi shū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1967), p. 144.
30. Ibid., p. 172.
31. See Shigaraki Takamaro, "Amidabutsuron," in *Ryūkoku daigaku Bukkyō bunka kenkyōjo kiyō* 20 (1982): pp. 98–127.
32. In regard to religious symbols, an interesting interpretation can be found in Paul Tillich's *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957). The current discussion is largely guided by this work.
33. "Chapter on Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands," SSZ 2, p. 166; CWS 1, p. 241.
34. SSZ 2, pp. 792–793; CWS 1, p. 679.
35. *Jōdo wasan* (Hymns on the Pure Land), SSZ 2, p. 494; CWS 1, p. 344.
36. "Chapter on Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands," SSZ 2, p. 165; CWS 1, p. 240.
37. "Chapter on Practice," SSZ 2, p. 22; CWS 1, p. 38.

38. This version of the passage is from the “Chapter on Shinjin,” SSZ 2, p. 49; CWS 1, p. 80, and reflects significant changes to the content of the original sutra passage. See CWS 2, p. 259 for a detailed explanation of the manner and reason for Shinran’s unique reading of this and other passages.

39. “Chapter on Shinjin,” SSZ 2, p. 72; CWS 1, p. 112.

40. *Ichinen tanen mon’i*, SSZ 2, p. 605; CWS 1, p. 474.

41. *Songō shinzō meimon*, SSZ 2, p. 578; CWS 1, p. 495.

42. See Suzuki Daisetsu, *Myōkōnin Asahara Saichi shū*, p. 28.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

Dōgen's Zazen as Other Power Practice

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IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE that Japanese Sōtō Zen founder Eihei Dōgen (1200–1253) encouraged his students to apply themselves diligently to *zazen*, the sitting meditation that he espoused as a primary practice throughout his career. Dōgen frequently challenged his students to active inquiry into the teachings and to a vivid meditative awareness informed by penetrating questioning. And Dōgen was not seeking for an “easy practice” as a response to concerns about *mappō*, in the spirit of his fellow Kamakura period innovators. But none of this means that Dōgen was advocating a self-power practice with which its practitioners could accomplish great realization through their own efforts. On the contrary, many aspects of Dōgen's meditation teaching assume the practitioner's devoted acceptance of and support from “other” sources.

This is not to claim that Dōgen was relying solely on some Other Power with the same humble and insistent devotion as his contemporary Shinran. But in this paper I will focus on the aspects of Dōgen's *zazen* practice that do imply receiving support from Other Power. “Other Power” here does not refer to reliance on any single other source such as the Vow of Amitābha, but Dōgen did see the necessity for awakened realization of receiving support and strength from a variety of external “other” sources and the importance of sincere devotional gratitude to these benefactors. The material in this paper does not relate directly to Jōdo Shinshū devotional traditions. But we will see some of how Dōgen's *zazen* is deeply grounded in a strong devotional orientation. It is hoped that some aspects of this context might perhaps be informative to the formulation of an appropriate modern Shinshū meditative praxis.

For Dōgen, external support derives from three main sources: the lineage of historical (or quasi-historical) buddhas and ancestors, the cosmic buddhas and bodhisattvas, and perhaps most importantly, the phenomenal world of the environment informed by buddhadharma. This latter energy source, which we might trace back to the early teaching of the buddha-field or *buddhakṣetra*, has striking parallels with the role of Sukhāvatī (the Land of Bliss) of Amida Buddha in Pure Land Buddhism. Dōgen emphasized in his teaching of nonduality the ultimate nonseparation of self and other,

but he did at times acknowledge the aspect of these sources as “other,” conventionally at least.

Before exploring these three sites of his devotion, we may note that Dōgen makes clear in many of his writings that the *zazen* he advocates is not a meditative skill for his students to learn, or a technique for achieving some future heightened or exalted state. In his “Universally Recommended Practices for *Zazen*” (“*Fukanzazengi*,” the earliest version of which was written upon Dōgen’s return from China in 1227), he says, “The *zazen* I speak of is not meditation practice [in the traditional Buddhist sense]. It is simply the Dharma gate of peace and bliss, the practice-realization of totally culminated awakening.”¹ Dōgen’s *zazen* is a ritual expression and celebration of awakening already present. He repeatedly emphasizes the oneness of practice-realization, in which practice does not lead through one’s own efforts to some subsequent realization. For example, in 1241 he said, “Know that buddhas in the buddha way do not wait for awakening.”²

For Dōgen, *zazen* is not an activity aimed at results. In 1234 he said, “A practitioner should not practice buddha-dharma for his own sake, to gain fame and profit, to attain good results, or to pursue miraculous power. Practice only for the sake of the buddha-dharma.”³ Practice is the effect of realization, rather than its cause. In this way, Dōgen’s meditative praxis is a faith expression of the beneficial gift of grace from the buddhas and ancestors, analogous to how *nenbutsu* and *shinjin* are provided to the *Shinshū* devotee thanks to the Vow of Amida.

The first locus of an otherly power for Dōgen, and indeed in most of the Zen tradition, is the lineage of ancestral teachers going back to the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. The structure of Dharma transmission, which is central to the Zen Buddhist lore and tradition, itself expresses a type of Other Power reliance. Without the guidance and power of the realization of previous historical teachers, the ancestral teachers going back generation after generation to ancient buddhas including but not limited to the historical Śākyamuni Buddha, realization in the current generation would be impossible. Modern scholarship has clarified how the lineage of names venerated in Zen, especially in the traditionally accepted Indian lineage, was concocted later and is not historically accurate. However, the persons who kept alive the practice in each generation, sometimes not known with historical accuracy, may remain for present practitioners not only the object of gratitude, but also an active source to call upon for support.

Dōgen regularly expresses deep gratitude to all the buddhas and ancestors for transmitting the teaching and invokes their support for current practice. In his *Shōbōgenzō* essay, “Only a Buddha Together with Another Buddha” (“*Yuibutsu yobutsu*”), he expands on a line from chapter 2 of the *Lotus Sutra*, “Only a buddha and a buddha can thoroughly master it,” to describe how realization depends on interaction with the realization of

other buddhas. He begins by saying, "Buddha-dharma cannot be known by a person."⁴ Here Dōgen is not only acknowledging indebtedness to the lineage of buddha ancestors and the personal teachers of each practitioner, but also starkly clarifying the limitations of self-power. He says, "What you think one way or another is not a help for realization.... If realization came forth by the power of your prior thoughts, it would not be trustworthy. Realization does not depend on thoughts, but comes forth far beyond them; realization is helped only by the power of realization itself."⁵

In his 1243 essay from *Shōbōgenzō*, "The Ancient Buddha Mind" ("Kōbusshin"), Dōgen talks of the pervasion of the buddha-mind throughout the world, for example that, "Its ten directions are totally the world of Buddha, and there has never been any world that is not the world of Buddha."⁶ And yet he gives various cases in which noted historical Chan masters referred to the assistance and inspiration of their predecessors with profuse gratitude and called them "ancient buddhas." Commenting on an instance when Xuefeng referred to the great Zhaozhou as an ancient buddha, Dōgen says, "In his action now, as he relies on the influence of an ancient buddha and learns from an ancient buddha, there is effort beyond conversing, which is, in other words Old Man Xuefeng, himself."⁷ The exertion and practice from the buddha ancestors themselves thus provide a reliable external power that allows buddha practice now.

In his *jōdō* (dharma hall discourses) in *Eihei Kōroku*, Dōgen frequently refers to zazen as a practice bestowed by the buddha ancestors and the buddhas and bodhisattvas. For example, he emphasizes this in discourse 516 in 1252, in which he cites Nāgārjuna (from the *Dazhidulun* attributed to him) criticizing other forms of sitting meditation by those who "seek to control their own minds, and have the tendency of seeking after nirvāṇa."⁸ For Dōgen, zazen is already the expression and benefit received from the buddhas and ancestors, and is not about seeking to gain some other state thereby.

In a slightly subsequent *jōdō* 522, Dōgen cites his own teacher Tiantong Rujing's saying, "Right at the very time of sitting, patch-robed monks make offerings to all the buddhas and ancestors in the whole world in ten directions. All without exception pay homage and make offerings ceaselessly." Dōgen then avows that, "I have been sitting the same as Tiantong," simply as a ritual of devotion and gratitude for this practice, an offering to all buddhas and ancestors. He concludes by equating this zazen to "taking a drink of Zhaozhou's tea for oneself,"⁹ referring to the great Tang dynasty Chinese master who is celebrated in a notable *kōan* for kindly offering tea to all students who arrived before him, regardless of their level of experience.

Dōgen's devotion to and reliance on Śākyamuni as primary Buddha is fully exhibited in his strong emotional responses in his many memorial discourses in *Eihei Kōroku* on the occasions of commemorating Śākyamuni's

birthdays and *parinirvāṇa* days. But clearly he expresses devotion to all buddhas as well.

One of the dozen final essays in *Shōbōgenzō*, edited after his death by Dōgen's successor Koun Ejō, is a lengthy discussion of "Veneration of the Buddhas" ("Kuyō shobutsu"), which concludes with ten methods for venerating a buddha.¹⁰ These include building a *stūpa* or various ways of making offerings to one, but also include offering one's meditative practice as gratitude to the buddhas. Throughout this long essay Dōgen praises practices of making offerings, clearly indicating his strong devotional attitude, as he says, for example, "Making venerative offerings in this way is the essence and life of the Buddhas in the three times."¹¹

As a second primary locus of devotion, Dōgen certainly speaks of relying on the cosmic buddhas and bodhisattvas for assistance, and even in totally entrusting them. In the undated *Shōbōgenzō* essay "Birth and Death" ("Shōji"), Dōgen says simply, "Just set aside your body and mind, forget about them, and throw them into the house of buddha; then all is done by buddha."¹² Dōgen frequently uses a similar phrase, dropping off body and mind, *shinjin datsuraku*, to indicate both zazen and complete enlightenment itself. But the *Shōji* passage clarifies that his critical notion of *shinjin datsuraku* is not something one does through one's own effort, but it "is done by buddha."

Dōgen's trust in the buddhas and bodhisattvas is indicated, for example, on an occasion in 1250 when he gave a dharma hall discourse appealing to the power of buddhas and bodhisattvas for clear skies. He ends by quoting his own teacher in appeal, "Make prostrations to Śākyamuni; take refuge in Maitreya. Capable of saving the world from its sufferings, wondrous wisdom power of Avalokiteśvara, I call on you."¹³

Dōgen especially invokes the power of Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion who is attendant to Amida Buddha. For example, after relating a dream or vision he had that included Avalokiteśvara, Dōgen says poetically, "When Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva makes an appearance, mountains and rivers on the great earth are not dead ashes. You should always remember that in the third month the partridges sing and the flowers open."¹⁴ For Dōgen the vitality and renewal of awakening practice arises with the grace of Avalokiteśvara's presence.

One traditional Mahāyāna expression of devotion to the buddhas and bodhisattvas is the formal practice of taking refuge in the three treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and sangha. In an undated *Shōbōgenzō* essay "Mind of the Way" ("Dōshin"), which may perhaps have been among his last writings, Dōgen emphasizes devotion to these three jewels. He says to "Aspire to respectfully make offerings and revere the three treasures in life after life."¹⁵ He also encourages chanting the three refuges, and specifically the practice as the end of life approaches of ceaselessly reciting "*Namukie Butsu*." Among

the various other devotional practices he then extols, including making offerings, making Buddha images, revering the *Lotus Sutra*, and wearing Buddha's robe, *okesa*, Dōgen concludes by mentioning zazen, which he says is the dharma of buddhas and ancestral teachers, rather than of the three worldly realms.¹⁶ In this late writing, chanting homage to Buddha and zazen are grouped together as compatible and in some sense equivalent practices. It is said in Sōtō sources (though with uncertain historical accuracy) that as Dōgen's own health was failing in Kyoto in 1253, he himself recited the three refuges while walking around his room, before dying in zazen.

The third source of "Other Power" for Dōgen is the world itself, seen as a buddha-field providing nourishment for practitioners in a mutual interconnected relationship. Dōgen's worldview or cosmology sees the phenomenal world as an agent for awakened awareness, a dynamic, living force supporting the soteriological unfolding of the buddha-nature. This worldview is rooted in the teachings of the bodhisattva path, the sutras and commentaries of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Without providing a detailed discussion of philosophical history, far beyond the scope of this paper, I note that sources for Dōgen's Mahāyāna worldview include the writings of Tiantai figures such as Chanran (711–782), who articulated the teaching potential of grasses and trees, seen in earlier Buddhism as inanimate and thus inactive objects.¹⁷ Another source for this view of reality is the Chinese Huayan teachings, based on the *Avatamsaka*, or *Flower Ornament Sutra*, which describes the interconnectedness of all particulars. Thereby the world is a site of radical intersubjectivity, in which each event is the product of the interdependent co-arising of all things. Huayan teachers such as Fazang (643–712) developed and elaborated this vision. It can be described with their philosophical fourfold dialectic of mutual nonobstruction of the universal and the particular, and beyond that, the mutual nonobstruction of particulars with "other" particulars.¹⁸

This Huayan dialectic was elaborated in Chinese Chan with the five-degree or five-ranks philosophy of the interrelationship of universal and particulars that was first enunciated by Dongshan Liangjie (807–869), considered the founder of the Chinese Caodong (Japanese Sōtō) lineage, which Dōgen brought from China to Japan.¹⁹ Dōgen only occasionally refers directly to this five-rank dialectic of interfusion of the ultimate within the particular phenomena of the world. But it is clearly pervasive as a background in much of his philosophical teachings.

Other expressions of a similar worldview are apparent in Pure Land teachings. Here in an introduction to Shinran's teaching is a description of the background of Amida Buddha's Pure Land:

In the Mahāyāna tradition, fulfilled- or enjoyment-body Buddhas are said to occupy fields of influence in which their wisdom acts to save beings. Bodhisattvas vow to establish such spheres, and their

attainment of Buddhahood is, at the same time, the purification of their lands and the beings in them, resulting in a Buddha realm or pure land. These lands are characterized above all by the bliss of enlightenment, and in the sutra literature, this bliss is depicted in such concrete terms as jewel trees and palaces, pools strewn with golden sands, soft breezes and mild climate. These features are manifested to awaken and guide beings throughout the universe to enlightenment.²⁰

As in the Huayan vision of lands, the Pure Land constellated through the practice or vows of bodhisattvas upon full awakening includes landscape features that function as liberative guides to beings. The lands themselves then become sources of benefits to devotees.

This cosmological perspective of the world as an active buddha-field or in some ways a pure land is evident even in Dōgen's earliest writings. His "Talk on Wholehearted Engagement of the Way" ("Bendōwa"), written in 1231, is his fundamental text on the meaning of zazen. In this writing Dōgen avows that when even one person sits upright in meditation, "displaying the buddha mudra with one's whole body and mind," then "everything in the entire dharma world becomes buddha mudra, and all space in the universe completely becomes enlightenment."²¹ The notion that space, the surrounding world of the practitioner, can itself become enlightenment or awakening is profoundly subversive to conventional modern viewpoints. In this passage Dōgen continues to elaborate on this awakening of all things. He adds that "earth, grasses and trees, fences and walls, tiles and pebbles, all things in the dharma realm in ten directions, carry out buddha work." Not only are the landscape features of the world dynamically active, but they also are agents of enlightening activity. Moreover, the meditator and the phenomenal elements of the world "intimately and imperceptibly assist each other."

According to Dōgen there is a clear and beneficial mutuality in the relationship between practitioner and the environment. "Grasses and trees, fences and walls demonstrate and exalt it for the sake of living beings; and in turn, living beings, both ordinary and sage, express and unfold it for the sake of grasses and trees, fences and walls." This world is very far from being an objective, Newtonian realm of dead objects that humans hold dominion over in order to manipulate and utilize for their human agendas. Rather, the myriad aspects of phenomena are all energetic partners in spiritual engagement and devotion, in what is in effect a kind of pure land.

Thus the role of meditation is not to create, achieve, or obtain some enlightened state through the power of one's personal effort. Rather, meditation is the necessary expression of this interactive event of awakening. The practitioner is gifted with the opportunity and responsibility to express

this together with grasses and trees, fences and walls, and space itself. As Dōgen says almost at the very beginning of "Bendōwa," "Although this dharma is abundantly inherent in each person, it is not manifested without practice, it is not attained without realization. When you let go, the dharma fills your hand."²² The upright sitting he describes is the manifestation of letting go of one's self-clinging and the simultaneous acceptance of the abundant Dharma of the surrounding buddha-field.

In his practice instructions Dōgen emphasizes dignified, upright posture or manner. He particularly discusses this in his 1241 essay "Gyōbutsi Igi," "The Awesome (or Dignified) Presence of Active (or Practicing) Buddhas." But in this essay Dōgen also points to the support of the *dharmadhātu*, or buddha-field, "What allows one corner of a buddha's dignified presence is the entire universe, the entire earth, as well as the entirety of birth and death, coming and going, of innumerable lands, and lotus blossoms."²³ Dignified presence is not accomplished through the strength of self-power or personal efforts.

In a memorial discourse for one of his leading monks in 1252, Dōgen asserts that zazen is sufficient in itself to offer entry into the buddha land. He says, "For adorning his reward in the Buddha land, nothing is needed besides the slight fragrance of practice during one stick of incense."²⁴ Zazen here is not a means to resultant entry into the buddha land through the self-power of one's personal effort, but the slight fragrance of practice is here celebrated as itself an adornment of this buddha land provided by the buddhas, ancestors, bodhisattvas, and the buddha land itself.

We see that Dōgen developed a full meditation praxis not based on accomplishing some awakening or liberation through any self-power or effort. Rather, his meditation teachings are deeply involved with devotional gratitude for support from buddhas, ancestral teachers, bodhisattvas, and from the awakened buddha land. Turning from the Zen meditation teaching of Dōgen, there is no question that some branches of Zen do appear to rely on "self-power." This may be most present in the context of Zen lineages that emphasize acquisition of *kenshō*, with the idea that some dramatic experience of realization is desirable, a view that Dōgen strongly criticized.

But the implications of Dōgen's "other" reliance in his zazen, and especially his view that zazen cannot be accomplished through one's own self-power, can still be readily seen in significant portions of modern Sōtō Zen. Kōshō Uchiyama Roshi, a successor of Kōdō Sawaki Roshi who revitalized zazen practice in twentieth-century Japanese Sōtō, has proclaimed the saying, "Gaining is delusion, losing is enlightenment."²⁵ Such a saying resonates in spirit for me with Shinran's, "If even a good person can enter the Pure Land, how much easier for a bad one."

Modern American Sōtō Zen already includes a variety of strands and approaches to practice. But something of the spirit of the devotional side of Dōgen remains. This is evident in some of the teachings of Shunryu Suzuki

Roshi in the American Zen classic, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Suzuki clarifies the limitation of self-power and expresses total reliance on Buddha's power when he says, "Everything is Buddha's activity. So whatever you do, or even if you keep from doing something, Buddha is in that activity. Because people have no such understanding of Buddha, they think what they do is the most important thing, without knowing who it is that is actually doing it. People think they are doing various things, but actually Buddha is doing everything."²⁶ Suzuki expresses the appreciation of the Pure Land when he advises seeing buddha-nature in everything and in each individual. "Just this [zazen] posture is the basic one or original way for us, but actually what Buddha meant was that mountains, trees, flowing water, flowers and plants—everything as it is—is the way Buddha is."²⁷

On a personal note, my very first seven-day Zen *sesshin* (meditation retreat) thirty years ago in New York was led by my first teacher, Rev. Kandō Nakajima, a Sōtō Zen priest who I believe may have been raised in a Shinshū family. The retreat was held in the Bronxville home of Nakajima Sensei's friend, Rev. Hōzen Seki, the founder and minister of the Jōdo Shinshū New York Buddhist Temple. I remember Rev. Seki's warmth and kindness as he spoke to welcome we young students of Buddhism during sesshin; also how impressed I was with Rev. Seki's large Buddhist library upstairs. In those days I also used to enjoy walking by Rev. Seki's temple on nearby Riverside Drive just to see the large statue of Shinran out front, even though I knew little about him then.

Dōgen's zazen, without gaining ideas or reliance on self-power, remains available. But the first generations of American Zen practitioners probably still lack full appreciation of the devotional depths of Buddhist practice. This is due in part to the influence of some Western psychotherapeutic orientations that promote ideals of mere self-improvement. Consumerist conditioning has also led practitioners to seek to acquire dramatic meditative experiences as products. It may well be that American Buddhism will not become fulfilled until the value of "Other Power" is recognized. In my humble opinion, it will be an indication of American Buddhism's maturity when American Zen students appreciate the subtle teachings and perspective of Shinran.

NOTES

1. Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura, trans., *Dōgen's Extensive Record: A Translation of the Eihei Kōroku* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), p. 534. *Eihei Kōroku* is one of Dōgen's two major (massive) works, along with the better known *Shōbōgenzō* (True Dharma Eye Treasury). *Eihei Kōroku* includes a later version of "Fukanzazengi" from 1242 (the popular version most often cited), but the majority of the lengthy *Eihei Kōroku* is composed of formal *jōdō* or dharma hall discourses from Eihei-ji, which is the primary source for Dōgen's mature teachings.
2. Taigen Dan Leighton and Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans., "The Awesome Presence of Active Buddhas" ("Gyōbutsu igi"), in *Beyond Thinking: A Guide to Zen Meditation by Zen Master Dōgen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi (Boston: Shambhala, 2004), p. 79.
3. Shohaku Okumura and Taigen Daniel Leighton, trans., "Guidelines for Studying the Way" ("Gakudō yōjinshū"), in *The Wholehearted Way: A Translation of Eihei Dōgen's Bendōwa, with Commentary by Kōshō Uchiyama Roshi* (Boston: Charles Tuttle and Co., 1997), p. 112.
4. Ed Brown and Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans., "Only Buddha and Buddha," in *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dōgen*, ed. Kazuaki Tanahashi (New York: North Point Press, 1985), p. 161.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 161–162.
6. Gudo Wafu Nishijima and Chodo Cross, trans., *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 3* (Woods Hole, MA: Windbell Publications, 1997), p. 27.
7. See *ibid.*, p. 25.
8. Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, pp. 459–460.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 465.
10. Yūhō Yokoi with Daizen Victoria, *Zen Master Dōgen: An Introduction with Selected Writings* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), pp. 113–127.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
12. Arnold Kotler and Kazuaki Tanahashi, trans., "Birth and Death," in Tanahashi, *Moon in a Dewdrop* (see note 4), p. 75.
13. Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, p. 332.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
15. Mizuno Yaoko, ed., *Shōbōgenzō*, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1993), p. 471.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 474.

17. For Chanran, see Linda Penkower, "T'ien-t'ai During the T'ang Dynasty: Chan-jan and the Sinification of Buddhism" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1993).
18. See Thomas Cleary, *Entry into the Inconceivable: An Introduction to Huayen Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), pp. 24–42, 147–169; and Garma C. C. Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality: The Philosophy of Hwa Yen Buddhism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), pp. 18–21, 136–170.
19. See Taigen Dan Leighton with Yi Wu, *Cultivating the Empty Field: The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi* (Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 2000), pp. 8–10, 62–63, 76–77; and William Powell, *The Record of Tung-shan* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), pp. 61–66.
20. Yoshifuma Ueda and Dennis Hirota, *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought* (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1989), p. 122.
21. Okumura and Leighton, *The Wholehearted Way*, p. 22.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
23. Tanahashi, *Beyond Thinking*, p. 83.
24. Leighton and Okumura, *Dōgen's Extensive Record*, p. 452.
25. Kōshō Uchiyama, *Opening the Hand of Thought: Foundations of Zen Buddhist Practice*, rev. ed. (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), p. 153.
26. Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* (New York: Weatherhill, 1970), p. 126.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 131.

Seeing through Images: Reconstructing Buddhist Meditative Visualization Practice in Sixth-Century Northeastern China

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INVESTIGATION INTO MAHĀYĀNA Buddhist meditative visualization practices has focused almost exclusively on the tantric and Pure Land traditions. Since these are what survive today, such an emphasis may appear reasonable. To read this situation back into earlier periods of Buddhist history, however, may be problematic. My own research indicates that, in medieval China, for example, Pure Land and tantric forms of meditative visualization practice formed but two sub-traditions within a larger, persistent mainstream Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition of meditative visualization. A hint of the diversity of meditative practices, visual and non-visual, within this mainstream tradition may also be glimpsed by examining the range of meditative practices, including visualization practices, within the medieval Tiantai (天台) lineage(s) centered largely within the southeastern China of that time.¹ In this article we will examine the meditative visualization practices, in particular the visualization of the Buddha's body and its marks, of another lineage system, the Ten Stages (*shidi*, 十地) lineages of northeastern China centered around the ancient city of Ye (鄴) in the late sixth and early seventh century CE. Many of the Tiantai visualization practices systematized by Zhiyi (智顗, 538–597) in the late sixth century in the southeast were, in fact, brought south from this northeastern area, largely conceived, by his teacher Huisi (慧思, 515–577), a native of that area.²

Our examination of the meditative visualization practices of the Ten Stages lineages will, in fact, involve a reconstruction of these practices. Since no description of these practices is extant, our reconstruction of these practices will focus on six main areas: (1) the repentance, or confessional, ritual (*chanfa*, 懺法) known as "The Buddha Names in Seven Registers," a practice that most probably originated within the Ten Stages lineages; (2) the brief set of directions for the implementation of this ritual, the "Great Outline of the Method for Venerating and Paying Obeisance to the Buddhas at the Six Times of the Day" ("Liushi libaifofa dagang," 六時禮拜佛

法大綱), which also probably originated within the Ten Stages lineages and which indicates that this ritual is one of visionary repentance; (3) the *Ten Stages Sutra* (Skt. *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*; Ch. *Shidi jing*, 十地經) and certain visualization sutras, especially the *Sutra on the Ocean Samādhi of Visualizing the Buddhas* (*Guanfo hai sanmei jing*, 觀佛海三昧經), that detail the practice of the meditative visualization of the buddhas; (4) recitation; (5) the development of a soteriological dimension for meditative visualization practice; and (6) summaries of the “Method for Venerating the Buddhas” (“Lifo fa,” 禮佛法) ascribed to Ratnamati, an Indian Buddhist monk who arrived in Luoyang (洛陽) in the early sixth century and whose disciple Huiguang (慧光, 468–537) was one of the founders of the Ten Stages lineages.

There are several things this article will not do. It will not provide a detailed examination of all of the varieties of meditative practice used in the Ten Stages lineages nor will it provide a detailed investigation of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” genre of visionary repentance, its subgenres, and which lineages or schools may have practiced these rituals.³ These topics are beyond the scope of this study and deserve separate treatments. Rather, we will focus our attention on the meditative visualization practice suggested by the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” ritual inscribed on the cliff face outside of the cave carved for the Ten Stages monk Lingyu (靈裕, 518–605) in 589 CE. We will conclude our reconstruction of this practice with a brief discussion of its relationship to Tiantai meditative visualization practice and what this comparison might tell us about meditative visualization practice in general in northeastern China in the late sixth century.

Equally importantly we need to remind ourselves that our reconstruction proceeds from texts, most of which, if not all, depict normative situations. How any individual practitioner may have implemented these meditations is unknown, and perhaps unknowable. For any individual the best we may hope for is to glimpse the structure of their meditation(s) and what their meditation(s) focused on, not the details of how they actually practiced these meditations. We also need to remind ourselves that our reconstruction is from our perspective, although we base it on texts from the period under discussion. It may seem a reasonable reconstruction when we look at current meditative visualization practices in Chinese Buddhism, but it may be better to regard the system of meditation arrived at more as an “implied system,” one that describes an implied performance rather than the actual details of an individual practice. Finally, the reconstruction presented in outline here does not, of course, preclude other plausible reconstructions.

Before we begin our reconstruction, however, we need to provide a few introductory remarks about the significance of the meditative visualization of the Buddha’s form as well some background on the nature and impact of the Ten Stages lineages in northeastern China in the sixth century.

PROLOGUE: SOME EARLY ISSUES IN
MEDITATIVE VISUALIZATION

In the centuries after the Buddha Śākyamuni's death an important theme that became increasingly prominent was the question of whether the Buddha was accessible after death, and, if so, how and "where." A linguistic example of this debate occurs with one of the so-called ten epithets of the Buddha, the word *Tathāgata*. It may be parsed as either "*tathā+gata*," or "Thus Gone," or as "*tathā+āgata*," or Thus Come. K. R. Norman has argued persuasively that the original sense was "Thus Gone."⁴ For most early Buddhists, and later for most non-Mahāyāna Buddhists, the Buddha was only accessible, and could only be venerated, through his Dharma, or teaching. One avenue pursued by some of those Buddhists who felt access was in some way possible was to collect, and venerate, the Buddha's relics at *stūpas*, large mounded or tower-like edifices. While for some honoring the Buddha's relics may have been a way to show respect for the tradition's revered teacher and founder, for others it was much more: through the relic one was in the presence of the Buddha; through his physical remains he was somehow "connected" to this world. Yet, while a bodily relic constituted a Buddha presence, it was largely not a communicative one. The Buddha's presence was, by and large, a mute one, a frustrating legacy, perhaps, for the teacher of gods and men.⁵

With the shift from aniconic to iconic representation of the Buddha in art and the creation of Buddha images in the round by the beginning of the second century CE, whole new options were not only created but also exploited with amazing rapidity.⁶ In a series of eight similes on the voice and body of the Buddha found only in the Chinese translation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*, or *Scripture on the Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines*, translated by Lokakṣema in 179 CE, one simile, the third, raises the issue of Buddha images. There the teacher Dharmodgata says:⁷

"It is like the images of the Buddha's form that people make after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. When people see these images of the Buddha's form there are none who do not kneel down and make offerings. His images are upright and handsome and their fine features perfectly resemble the Buddha's. When people see them there are none who do not praise them, sigh in admiration, take up flowers, incense, and colorful silks and make offerings [to them]. O Worthy One, is the Buddha's spirit in the image?"

The Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita said, "It is not in it. The reason why the Buddha image is made is, however, to desire to have people obtain merit from it...."

Dharmodgata's question is somewhat surprising in light of his statements that preceded it. Nothing has been mentioned about the images of the Buddha's form being living Buddha presences, although the actions of the people who see such images might suggest more than simple respect. The need to deny that these Buddha images have the Buddha's spirit in them indicates that the numbers of Buddhists who believed in and venerated such a living presence were not insignificant, even at that early date. In fact, through the last eighteen centuries of East Asian Buddhist history it is these twin tracks of merit accrual and the Buddha's presence that have been associated with the creation of Buddha images.

Another striking development was the rapid creation of Buddhist meditations based on the visualization of the Buddha image. Our earliest evidence for this practice comes from another early translation into Chinese, also by Lokakṣema in 179 CE, of the *Pratyutpannasamādhi-sūtra* (*Banzhou sanmei jing*, 般舟三昧經).⁸ Here veneration and visualization of the Buddha image are portrayed not only as an efficacious meditative technique centered on the use of the Buddha's image (real or imagined) as a locus for meditation on the qualities of the Buddha, it is even more importantly, as the sutra itself stresses repeatedly, a means for coming into the actual presence of the buddhas. In their presence the practitioner receives their teachings, becomes enlightened through these teachings, and, finally, brings these teachings into the world for the benefit of other beings.⁹ This sutra perhaps alludes to the recent, innovative character of its teaching when it mentions on a number of occasions that some Buddhists slander this sutra by saying that it is not a sutra spoken by the Buddha.¹⁰ Remember that in both of the sutras the Buddha images in the round and the visualization of the Buddha image, either the discussion itself or the whole sutra dates significantly fewer than one hundred years after our first evidence for Buddha images in the round, itself a necessary precondition for any of these (textual) developments to have taken place.

Finally, what is important to note here is that this ideology of visualization also stated that the visualized image itself was a Buddha presence. The Thus Gone has quietly become the Thus Come. These three points also constitute important points of difference when we compare the Buddhist (and Asian) use of images and visualizations with the (Judeo-) Christian uses.

Buddhist art historians are fond of saying that the Buddha image is a presence that is an absence (i.e., of the actual Buddha). There may be a meditative corollary to this. Since Buddhists have regarded the truth to which the Buddha had awakened as somehow "beyond" our normal perceptions of the world, we might say that the more absent the (physical) presence of the image, the more present is reality as absence. The visualized image of the Buddha is closer to the actual reality of the Buddha than is the physical image itself, and it is communicative.

When we move to medieval China, this changes. The Chinese never had the historical Buddha as part of their living history. They collected and venerated relics. They produced and venerated Buddha images, often in astounding numbers, especially by the sixth century CE. Yet, I shall argue, it was by venerating the Buddha through Buddha visualization that some Chinese Buddhists felt that they were actually able to perceive the Buddha(s), both physically and, ultimately, soteriologically.

1. THE TEN STAGES LINEAGES

The basic problem in reconstructing Ten Stages' religious practice is that they are generally assumed to have had none. This attitude probably derives from the views of modern Japanese scholars who have classified the Ten Stages lineages as a philosophical school, a view that has, at least until recently, been largely followed by Western Buddhist scholars working on medieval China.¹¹ While such a characterization does not deny that those connected with these lineages engaged in religious practice, it has effectively deflected scholars' attention away from the actual practices associated with these lineages. Among some it has even helped foster the impression that those connected with this school did not engage in any significant practice. It is true that there were scholars and exegetes of real sophistication among those in the Ten Stages lineages. Yet, judging by the extant biographies of monks associated with these lineages, most, including the scholars and exegetes, engaged in regimens of religious practice. Our single most notable exception to this commitment may be Jingying Huiyuan (淨影慧遠, 523–592), monk, scholar and exegete, who has left us such notable works as the *Tacheng yizhang* (大乘義章) and the earliest extant commentary to the *Foshuo Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* (佛說觀無量壽佛經, the *Guan Wuliangshou jing yishu*, 觀無量壽佛經義疏).¹² Yet even a cursory survey of the biographies of those associated with the Ten Stages lineages indicate that he is the exception that proves the rule. In order to contextualize our reconstruction of Ten Stages' practice it will be useful to provide a thumbnail sketch of the Ten Stages lineages and their contributions.

Soon After Ratnamati (勒那摩提, d. ca. 513) and Bodhiruci (菩提留支, fl. 508–535) arrived in Luoyang in 508 CE they were commissioned by imperial decree to translate into Chinese the **Daśabhūmi[kal]vyākhyāna*, or *Extended Commentary on the Ten Stages Scripture* (hereafter the *Ten Stages Commentary*), attributed to the Indian Buddhist monk Vasubandhu. They were joined in this commission by Buddhāsanti (伏陀扇多) whom some have identified as the meditation master and painter known in our early sources as either Buddha (佛陀) or Bhadra (跋陀) (hereafter Buddha/bhadra; fl. 525–538). This translation was begun in the first decade of the fourth month of 508

and completed at the beginning of summer, 511.¹³ According to statements in Daoxuan's (道宣, 596–667) *Xu Gaoseng zhuan* (續高僧傳, hereafter XGSZ), or *Continued Biographies of Eminent Monks*, completed in 667, differences of opinion arose between Bodhiruci and Ratnamati over the interpretation, and thus presumably the translation, of passages in the text. As a result, two, or possibly three, different versions were produced. Only later were these versions combined into a single text by Ratnamati's subsequent disciple Huiguang.¹⁴ This conflated edition of the *Shidi jinglun* (十地經論), as the translation was known in Chinese, is the only version now extant.

These three monks figure much more prominently, however, in later Chinese Buddhist history than simply being the translators of the *Ten Stages Commentary*. They, together with Huiguang, Bodhiruci's disciple Daochong (道寵, fl. 520s), and Ratnamati and Buddha/bhadra's disciple Sengchou (僧稠, 480–560) either stand at the head of, or mark an important turning point in, a number of significant trends in later Chinese Buddhism.

Doctrinally, they provided translations of a significant number of Indian Yogācāra (Mind Only) and Tathāgatagarbha (Buddha-Nature < Womb of the Tathāgata) texts. In addition to the *Ten Stages Commentary*, we might mention also the *Sandhinirmocana-sūtra* (*Shenmi jietuo jing*, 深密解脫經), the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (*She dacheng lun*, 攝大乘論), the *Jin'gang xian lun* (金剛仙論), and the *Anunatoāpurnatoānirdeśa-parivarta* (*Buzeng bujian jing*, 不增不減經).

Second, from Bodhiruci's disciple Daochong and Ratnamati's disciple Huiguang were formed two "schools" of early Chinese Yogācāra exegesis and practice known as North of the Road (*daobei*, 道北) and South of the Road (*daonan*, 道南) respectively. Both of these "schools," known collectively as the Ten Stages (Dilun) lineages, focused not only on an analysis of the ten stages of the bodhisattva's path of practice as found in the *Ten Stages Commentary*, and how this path was to be understood in terms of Yogācāra theories of the mind, but also on how this bodhisattva path was to be implemented in ritual and meditative practice. While both analysis and practice were necessary to tread this path, in my view, for most monks within these lineage traditions exegesis and doctrine were to a significant degree praxis driven. I part with traditional and modern wisdom on this point. The point of much of my work on the Ten Stages lineages, and one of the main points of this article, is that we cannot really understand Buddhism in northeastern China during the sixth and early seventh centuries unless we recognize the nature of the meditative and ritual practices that these lineages had.

Through imperial patronage, first in the Northern Wei (魏, 439–534), and later under the Eastern Wei (535–549) and Northern Qi (齊, 550–577) dynasties, the influence of these two "schools," and especially those lineages that stemmed from Huiguang and his disciples, spread throughout the region

east of the Taihang (太行) mountain range from Luoyang in the southwest, through Ye (near modern Anyang), reaching at least as far as Dingzhou (定州) in the northeast. This is the area known in medieval sources as the area “East of the Mountains,” or Shandong (山東).

Third, Huiguang and the self-styled Ten Stages lineages that stemmed from him were important for spreading the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*, or clerical code, in northern China in the sixth and seventh centuries. Daoxuan, the great seventh-century commentator on the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*, in fact, frequently stresses this fact in his XGSZ biographies of the various teachers in the Ten Stages lineages. Over the centuries the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* subsequently became the sole, standard *vinaya* for all of East Asia and the only continuing *vinaya* tradition in which nuns are still ordained.

Fourth, Bodhiruci, Ratnamati, and the monk Buddha/bhadra trained students in particular meditative practices that were to prove very influential throughout northern China well into the eighth century. From Bodhiruci Tanluan (曇鸞, 476–572 or 488–554), China’s first Pure Land thinker, developed meditative visualizations to ensure rebirth in the Amitābha’s Pure Land of Sukhāvatī. Ratnamati and the monk Buddha/bhadra apparently cooperated in training a group of meditation monks, Daofang (道房, d. after 506), Master Ding (定師), Sengshi (僧實, 476–563), and, the most famous of them all, Sengchou. Summaries of Ratnamati’s meditative program in seven steps, extant in mid-seventh-century compendia, indicate that the meditative procedures in which these monks were trained probably combined meditation and repentance in the meditative visualization of the buddhas and bodhisattvas.¹⁵ To this list of meditation monks we should also probably add Huiguang, following early inscriptions,¹⁶ even though the later Chinese tradition regarded him primarily as an exegete and promoter of the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya*. Of this group Sengchou was arguably the most famous meditation master in northern China in the mid-sixth century, and may have been influential in the history of the early Chan (禪; Jpn. Zen; Kor. Sŏn) lineages.¹⁷

Possible evidence for Huiguang’s meditative practices may come, in part, from Lingyu, the most eminent and influential disciple of Daoping (道憑, d. 549), whom Daoxuan regarded as Huiguang’s closest and ablest student.¹⁸ An inscription carved at a cave temple constructed for Lingyu in 589 presents us with a practice that is at once both ritual and meditation. Referred to in other contexts as the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers,” it represents a paradigm of meditative praxis that unites repentance and meditation around the meditative visualization of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Of cardinal importance in this context are repentance verses composed by Lingyu and a repentance prayer written by his colleague in the Ten Stages lineages, Tanqian (曇遷, 542–607),¹⁹ both preserved in the mid-seventh-century Buddhist encyclopedia *Fayuan zhulin* (法苑珠

林), which demonstrate clearly that the repentance rituals in which they engaged had a soteriological trajectory.²⁰ This soteriological dimension was properly a function of the meditative component of the paradigm. That it had become a function of the repentance component at this time may provide us with significant clues to how they viewed the dynamics of liberation. By contextualizing the texts, rituals, and meditations as well as the issues that they raised we can, I think, reconstruct an important aspect of Ten Lineages practice at that time.

2. THE "BUDDHA NAMES IN SEVEN REGISTERS" REPENTANCE RITUAL

Lingyu's cave temple, now referred to as Dazhu sheng ku (大住聖窟), or Cave of the Great Resident Sage, is located at the western end of a valley formed by a ring of eight hills.²¹ A cave dedicated to Lingyu's teacher, Daoping, is located near the crest of the hill at the eastern end of the valley. Lingyu's cave opens to the south. It is a square room about two meters on a side. When one enters one faces Vairocana seated in a niche on the northern wall who, together with his two attendants, faces south. In the niche in the western wall are Amitābha and his two attendants facing east; the eastern wall has Maitreya and two attendants facing west. To Vairocana's left is a vertical panel formed of seven squares, each containing one of the seven buddhas of the past. To Vairocana's right is a similar panel containing the first seven of the thirty-five buddhas of repentance beginning with Śākyamuni Buddha at the top. The remaining twenty-eight buddhas are presented, in a counterclockwise direction, in panels to the left and right of both Amitābha's and Maitreya's attendants. It appears that when the images of the buddhas and bodhisattvas to be venerated are arranged along the walls of a cave temple, the practitioner, by moving counterclockwise as the ritual proceeds, can keep his right shoulder moving toward the images to be venerated.²² As one turns and looks out the entrance of the cave, there are three inscriptions on the inside of the south wall, one each to the left and right of the entrance and one above it. The inscription to the left of the entrance displays the images of the twenty-four Indian patriarchs together with short passages that identify them. It is perhaps our earliest extant such list.²³ To the right is inscribed a passage from the *Mahāsamnipāta-sūtra* on the decline of the Buddha's Dharma.²⁴ On the outside wall of the cave, on the right-hand side as one looks out, are a series of inscriptions in three registers.²⁵

Among the inscribed passages taken from Buddhist sutras carved on the outside of the cave temple there is one passage that presents an abridged (*lue*, 略) rite of visionary repentance, the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" ("Qijie foming," 七階佛名).²⁶ This is inscribed at the left end of the lower reg-

ister and is preceded, as we move back eastward toward the cave's entrance, by lists of buddhas' names: the buddhas of the ten directions beginning with Sumerupradīpaprabhāsa Tathāgata (Xumi deng guangming, 須彌燈光明) in the east; the thirty-five buddhas; the fifty-three buddhas.

The "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" is what we might term a "hybrid canonical" text: while all of its components are canonical, the text itself as a combination of these components, and the liturgies associated with it, were composed in China.²⁷ As a ritual text the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" may be defined as a genre. Perhaps uniquely, we may define this genre by the fixed number and order of the groups of buddhas' names. Usually litanies of buddhas' names are the most flexible part of a ritual; they may be expanded and contracted as the situation requires. In the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" these registers are fixed. Subgenres here are defined by the different repentance prayers used. In the subgenre examined in this article the repentance prayer, including the verses at the end in the Dunhuang and canonically transmitted versions, is taken from the "Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance" found in the early (i.e., 266–420 CE) Chinese translation of the *Vinaya-viniścaya* (hereafter *VV*).²⁸ The prayer itself is composed of two parts: the confession and repentance of various groups of offenses; a transfer of merit.

For purposes of reference and to facilitate discussion I present a translation of the "Mt. Bao Lingquan Monastery Repentance Ritual" below. Since the last part of the prayer in the inscription is missing, I have supplied the remaining section through comparison with the Dunhuang and canonical versions.

The Text of the Abridged Repentance for Venerating [the Buddha Names] of the Seven [Registers]:²⁹

1. Homage to All of the Buddhas of the [Ten] Directions [Beginning with] the Buddha of the Eastern [Direction] [*Sumerupradīpa] prabhāsa;
2. Homage to All of the Seven Buddhas of the Past [Beginning with] [Vapaśin];
3. Homage to All of the Fifty-Three Buddhas [Beginning with] Dīpamkara;
4. Homage to All of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions [Beginning with] Bhadrāsī Tathāgata;
5. Homage to All of the Thousand Buddhas of the Bhadrakalpa [Beginning with] Krakucchanda Tathāgata;

6. Homage to All of the Thirty-Five Buddhas [Beginning with] Śākyamuni Tathāgata;
7. Homage to All of the Innumerable Buddhas of the Ten Directions;³⁰
8. Homage to All of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and the Three Times, Past, Present, and Future;

I take refuge and repent:

"In this way may all the buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, who constantly reside in the world, may these World-Honored Ones compassionately be mindful of me. I now in all cases repent those obstructing offenses that I have committed: the mass of offenses that I have committed in this life or in previous lives since beginningless time, no matter whether I have done them, instructed others to do them, or seen them done and taken pleasure in that; whether of pagodas, of the sangha, or of the possessions of the sangha of the four quarters, no matter whether I have taken them, instructed others to take them, or seen them taken and taken pleasure in that; or committed the five heinous sins that entail immediate [retribution] or the [four] *pārājika* offenses, no matter whether I have committed them, instructed others to commit them, or seen them committed and taken pleasure in that; the path of the ten unvirtuous actions, no matter whether I have done it, instructed others, or seen it done and taken pleasure in it; those obstructing offenses that I have committed, whether I have concealed them or not concealed them; those for which I should fall into such places as the hells, or the [realms of the] hungry ghosts or the animals as well as all the evil realms of existence, or into the border regions, or among the lowly and depraved, or among barbarians.³¹ Now all the buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, should bear witness to and know me, should recall and hold me in mind."

Again, before all the buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, I say:

"If I, in this life, or other lives, have ever practiced giving alms or kept the pure precepts, even to the extent that I have donated one morsel of food to an animal or practiced pure conduct, may these roots of goodness that I have bring sentient beings to maturity, may these roots of goodness that I have cultivate *bodhi*, may these roots of goodness that I have extend to ultimate {wisdom, may these

roots of goodness that I have may they all, the whole accumulated, compared, reckoned, or calculated amount, be transferred to supreme ultimate enlightenment.³² Just as what the past, future, and present buddhas have done has been transferred, I also likewise transfer.”

The mass of offenses I all repent;
All merits I completely rejoice in,
And ask the buddhas, the virtuous ones [to teach];
I vow to accomplish the unexcelled wisdom.

The past, future, and present buddhas,
Among sentient beings most excellent,
Limitless the ocean of their virtues,
I take refuge in; hands joined I venerate you.]³³

Before we examine the composition of this ritual a few comments are in order regarding the inscription and its relationship to the Dunhuang manuscripts, in particular Beijing 8344/Yu (宇) 16, and the edition of the text in the first fascicle of Zhisheng's *Ji zhujiing lichanyi*.

The Academia Sinica rubbing appears to be unique among extant rubbings of the Mt. Bao inscriptions in preserving much of the title: “The Text of the Abridged Repentance for Reverencing [the Buddha Names] of the Seven [Registers].” There are three lacunae: *Lue li qi ... chanhui deng wen* (略禮七...懺悔等文). Parallelism with the title of Beijing 8344/Yu 16 makes it very probable that the missing characters here are *jie foming* (階佛名), which, together with the preceding character for “seven,” gives us “Buddha Names of the Seven Registers.” This makes this inscription the earliest dated exemplar of this ritual text. As Daniel Stevenson has noted, among the dated Dunhuang manuscripts of this genre the earliest possible date would be 676 CE for Beijing *kun* (崑) 96.³⁴ Unfortunately, this manuscript, Beijing *kun* 96, represents another subgenre with a ritual format and prayer different from the ritual subgenre under discussion here. The earliest datable version of the text inscribed at Lingyu's cave temple outside of Mt. Bao is to be found in Zhisheng's *Ji zhujiing lichanyi* compiled in 730. The other datable Dunhuang manuscripts of this ritual all date to the ninth and tenth centuries.³⁵

Second, in Beijing 8344/Yu 16, in Zhisheng's (fl. 730) *Ji zhujiing lichanyi*, and in virtually all of the Dunhuang manuscripts that list these rosters, or arrays, of buddhas prior to the “Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance Prayer,” the actual names of the fifty-three and thirty-five (and twenty-five) buddhas are listed at those points in the litany. In the Mt. Bao inscription the litany of buddha arrays is as presented above, i.e., the actual lists of these bud-

dhas' names are given separately prior to the text of the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers." The names of the twenty-five buddhas are inscribed at the beginning of the middle register on the cliff face, just above the names of the fifty-three buddhas. At Mt. Bao anyone reciting this ritual could insert the names of the fifty-three, thirty-five, or twenty-five buddhas by reading them into the ritual at the appropriate points in the litany of "registers." Whenever the list of twenty-five buddhas is included among the rosters, in all extant manuscripts it is inserted in the eighth position, after number 7 in our list above.

Finally, the *Ji zhujiing lichanyi*, Beijing 8344/Yu 16, and most Dunhuang manuscripts insert not only the list of the twenty-five buddhas, but also the lengthy names of two buddhas taken from the *Dvadaśabuddhaka (sūtra)* (*Shier foming shenzhou jiaoliang gongde chuzhang miezui jing*, 十二佛名神咒校量功德除障滅罪經) translated by Jñānagupta in 587. Although the names of these two buddhas are associated with the late Dilun and early Huayan lineages, the relatively late date of translation of the *Dvadaśabuddhaka (sūtra)* apparently precluded any use of these names in the Mt. Bao inscription (and in Xinxing's "Rules for Receiving the Eight Precepts").³⁶ In the *Ji zhujiing lichanyi* and in the relatively numerous Dunhuang manuscripts where these two names occur they are most commonly inserted after the names of the twenty-five buddhas, in ninth position.

One of the curiosities of the "Buddha Names of the Seven Registers" is that there are always at least eight "registers" of buddhas given, even in our earliest inscription at Mt. Bao. When the names of the twenty-five buddhas and the names of the two buddhas from the *Dvadaśabuddhaka (sūtra)* are added we can have up to ten "registers." While to date there has been no satisfactory explanation of this situation, I suspect that, if the number "seven" actually refers to the total number of rosters of buddhas, the first seven rosters in the Mt. Bao inscription were probably the original seven with the eighth roster in the Mt. Bao list³⁷ and the twenty-five buddhas being added later.

Let us look briefly at the structure of these arrays and the repentance prayer a little more closely. I mentioned above that the ritual of the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" inscribed at Mt. Bao might be referred to as a hybrid canonical text. Specifically, this means that it is constructed from three slightly overlapping sources. The *Scripture on the Visualization of the Two Bodhisattvas, King of Healing and Supreme Healer* recommends that the practitioner reverence or venerate (*li*, 禮) six rosters of buddhas, numbers 1–3 and 5–7 of our inscription, as a preliminary to visualizing the two bodhisattvas, King of Healing and Supreme Healer.³⁸ The context in this scripture suggests strongly that these other arrays of buddhas be visualized also. We have already seen that the title of a Dunhuang manuscript, in fact, specifically links the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" ritual to this

scripture, entitling it “The Abridged Method of Repentance for Reverencing the Buddhas of the Seven Registers (Taken from) *The Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Visualization of the Two Bodhisattvas the King of Healing and Supreme Healer*.”

The fourth array in the Mt. Bao inscription is found in two sources. In both sources it is ritually significant. One is the commentary on the *Ten Stages Scripture*, the *Daśabhūmivibhāṣa* (*Shidipiposha*, 十地毘婆沙), or *Discourse on the Ten Stages*, attributed to the famous second-century Madhyamaka thinker Nāgārjuna.³⁹ This list of ten buddhas forms the core of the “Chapter on Easy Practice” (“Yixing pin,” 易行品)⁴⁰ lays out an “easy,” rapid way to attain the stage of non-retrogression in the practice of the bodhisattva path, i.e., the first of the ten stages according to the Ten Stages lineages. The other is the *Scripture on the Visualization of the Ocean Samādhi of the Buddhas* (hereafter *Ocean Sutra*).⁴¹ By visualizing these ten buddhas and reciting their names the practitioner will rapidly attain the direct realization that constitutes entry into the first stage of bodhisattva practice. These ten buddhas, in fact, stand for all the buddhas of the ten directions, the “substance” of the direct realization, who appear to the practitioner when he/she attains the first stage and validate his/her attainment. Meditation on this, or any, array of buddhas is meant to mirror, and perhaps even facilitate, the very enlightenment experience it seeks to attain.⁴²

Although the thirty-five buddhas, the sixth register, are referred to in the *Scripture on the Visualization of the Two Bodhisattvas, King of Healing and Supreme Healer*, the repentance prayer and the list of the thirty-five buddhas come from the “Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance Ritual” found in the VV, one of the oldest repentance formats traceable in our sources. In the VV this repentance ritual not only explicitly stipulates that the repentance should be done “surrounded by” the thirty-five buddhas, it also enjoins the practitioner to visualize the qualities of these thirty-five buddhas. Upon successful completion of the ritual the buddhas will appear before the practitioner and provide him with those teachings that will lead him and all sentient beings to liberation.⁴³

The inside of the cave temple on Mt. Bao also provides us with the earliest iconographic representation of these thirty-five buddhas. As the VV enjoins, and as described above, they surround the practitioner. The eighth register is supplied, I suspect, through the influence of the last line of the repentance prayer.

One other Dunhuang manuscript, undated, is important for situating the Mt. Bao inscription of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” ritual. The Dunhuang manuscript P. 2849 contains three texts: *Zhifa* (制法, Instituted Rules),⁴⁴ three short works on eating,⁴⁵ and *Shou bajie fa* (受八戒法, Rules for Receiving the Eight Precepts).⁴⁶ All three of these texts are arguably early compositions and were attributed to Xinxing, the founder of the

Three Stages Teaching (Sanjie jiao, 三階教).⁴⁷ This would place the original composition of the texts included in this manuscript in the 580s and early 590s. The Dunhuang manuscript itself may be a later copy.

Although this manuscript was known as early as 1987,⁴⁸ and recent studies by Nishimoto Teruma have demonstrated its importance for understanding the Three Stages school, its importance for untangling the complex filiations of rituals and texts associated with the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” has not yet been recognized. The *Rules for Receiving the Eight Precepts*, after a brief prologue, in fact provides Xinxing’s version of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” repentance ritual. Comments before and after this ritual make it clear that this is a self-contained repentance ritual. It begins with nine rosters of buddhas, including the twenty-five buddhas in eighth position. The ninth roster is the eighth roster in the Mt. Bao inscription, which, as we shall see, may be a distinctive creation of the Ten Stages lineages. Then follows a repentance prayer in seven sections, each section introduced with a refrain that may be peculiar to rituals associated with the Three Stages school: “May the buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time bear witness to and know your disciple, so-and-so” (十方三世諸佛當證知弟子某甲等). Although only the last two of these seven sections make use of text from the “Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance Prayer,” the sequence of topics in the first five sections follows the sequence of topics presented in the first section of the “Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance Prayer.” The sixth section quotes only a portion at the end of the first part of this repentance prayer, but the seventh section quotes the second part on the transfer of merit almost entirely. The ritual then ends with a short section for receiving the eight precepts. Through its use of the eight rosters of buddhas, a portion of the first part, and almost the whole second part of the “Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance Prayer,” Xinxing’s ritual of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” shows its indebtedness to the Ten Stages’ form of the ritual inscribed at Mt. Bao. Xinxing himself, the founder of this school, hailed from Ye and many of the practices that he adopted (or adapted) were likely borrowed from those current in Ye during his lifetime. In this period Ten Stages doctrines, practices, and discourses provided much of the religious currency for this area.

3. THE VISUALIZATION I: THE “GREAT OUTLINE OF THE METHOD FOR VENERATING AND PAYING OBEISANCE TO THE BUDDHAS AT THE SIX TIMES OF THE DAY”

Although the sources for the Mt. Bao ritual program suggest that these eight registers of buddhas were to be visualized meditatively, and although we know from his biography that Lingyu practiced Buddha mindfulness (*nianfo*) meditation, we have no direct contemporary

evidence that this was, in fact, how this ritual was implemented. Anecdotal information from sources such as biographies do, however, give us some indication of the general stance of the text, practice, and discourse communities surrounding the capital of Ye in the late sixth century. This information suggests that the meditative visualization of the buddhas and bodhisattvas was most commonly done in arrays and not singly. Daochuo's (道綽, 562–645) biography of Tanluan, a northeasterner, for example, has the following exchange between Tanluan and Emperor Jing (靜, r. 534–550 CE) of the Eastern Wei (534–550):⁴⁹

The Lord came and reprimanded the Dharma Master, “The buddha lands of the ten directions are all constituted as pure lands. Why is it the Dharma Master only fixes his intent on the west? Is not this giving rise to a biased view?” The Dharma Master said, “Since I am an ordinary person, my wisdom is shallow and short [sighted]. Since I have not yet entered the stages [of the bodhisattva path], I must constrain the power of my mindfulness (*nian*).

君子來呵法師曰十方佛國有為淨土法師何乃獨意注西豈非偏見生也
法 師對曰吾既凡夫智慧淺短未入地位念力須均

Tanluan's religious practice focused only on the visualization of one buddha, Amitābha, his entourage, and the Pure Land in the west, not arrays of buddhas. The passage quoted suggests a contrast between this visualization of a single buddha and the visualization practices focused on arrays of buddhas pursued more generally in the Ye area at that time.

Our first direct, transmitted evidence that these registers, or rosters, of buddhas were to be visualized comes from a short text, “The Great Outline of the Method for Paying Obeisance to the Buddhas at the Six Periods” (“Liushi libai fo fa dagang,” 六時禮拜 佛法大綱) appended to the end of a text entitled “Text for Taking Vows at the Six Periods of the Day and Night” (“Zhouye liushi fayuan wen,” 晝夜六時發願文) found toward the end of Zhisheng's 730 version of the ritual. This text is known also from a number of undated Dunhuang manuscripts.⁵⁰

The Great Outline of the Method for Paying Obeisance to the Buddhas at the Six Periods. At each of the three times during the day and the three times during the night you should solemnly hold incense and flowers. You should enter the pagoda and, visualizing the image, silently make your offerings, and circumambulate and venerate the Buddha. At dawn and at noon you should at both times separately intone the [names of the] fifty-three buddhas; the remainder should all be intoned as a group. At sunset and at the

early night you should at both times separately intone the [names of the] thirty-five buddhas; the remainder should all be intoned as a group. At midnight [and at late night] you should at both times separately intone the [names of the] twenty-five buddhas; the remainder should all be intoned as a group. Visualize these buddhas of the seven registers as if they were before your very eyes, meditating upon the qualities that the tathāgatas possess. In this way you should purify [yourself] and repent.⁵¹

晝三夜三各嚴持香華入塔觀象默供養行道禮佛平明及與午時並別唱五十三佛餘皆總唱日暮及與初夜並別唱三十五佛餘皆總唱半夜並別唱二十五佛餘皆總唱觀此七階佛如在目前思惟如來所有功德應作如是清淨懺悔

At the end of these instructions the practitioner is enjoined to “visualize these buddhas of the seven registers as if they were before your very eyes, meditating upon the qualities that the tathāgatas possess. In this way he should perform his purification and repentance.” This passage is virtually a direct quotation from the VV epilogue quoted above,⁵² only the “buddhas of the seven registers” has been substituted for the “thirty-five buddhas.”

The “Text for Taking Vows at the Six Periods of the Day and Night” most likely derives from the Three Stages school and probably represents a form of Three Stages ritual practice.⁵³ The brief set of instructions for the practice of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” at the end was, however, most likely borrowed from the Ten Stages school. These instructions form an independent section and have no essential relationship to the vows section.⁵⁴ Furthermore, that the concluding lines are a virtual quotation from the VV link these instructions intimately to the “Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance.” These lines do not occur in the parallel set of instructions Xinxing gives in section 10, “The Method for Venerating the Buddhas” (“Lifo fa,” 禮佛法) of the Three Stages manuscript *Zhifa* (P. 2849).⁵⁵ All of this demonstrates in a general way, I think, the existence and continuity of the meditative visualization of the buddhas and bodhisattvas from the late sixth through the early eighth centuries: the “Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance Ritual” is embedded in the ritual of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” inscribed in 589 at Mt. Bao; the thirty-five buddhas themselves, before whom the practitioner is to perform the ritual are carved in the cave at which the ritual was to be performed; the injunction to visualize not only the thirty-five buddhas but all of the buddhas of the seven registers, taken virtually verbatim from the epilogue to the “Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance Ritual” in the VV is repeated in a text appended to a Three Stages’ ritual that itself may well represent earlier Ten Stages’ practice; this injunction to visualize the buddhas does not occur in the parallel set of instructions in the *Zhifa*,

perhaps written by Xinxing himself. Consequently, I would suggest that by Zhisheng's time in the early eighth century this particular set of instructions, originally a text or pericope of the Ten Stages school, had become added to a set of vows redacted in the Three Stages school and was perhaps even regarded as original to it.

Outside of the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" ritual complex, early on associated with the Ten Stages school and only later associated with the Three Stages school by bibliographers, and the evidence of certain later Dunhuang manuscripts, the writings of the Three Stages school shows almost no connection with the "Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance Ritual." In fact, among the Dunhuang manuscripts of the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers," the only evidence linking these texts to the Three Stages school is this "Text for Taking Vows at the Six Periods of the Day and Night" and "The Method for Receiving the Eight Precepts" attributed to Xinxing, the latter found only in a single manuscript, P. 2849.

4. THE VISUALIZATION II: THE *TEN STAGES SUTRA* AND THE TECHNIQUES ELABORATED IN THE *SUTRA ON THE OCEAN SAMĀDHI OF VISUALIZING THE BUDDHAS*

We have already referred to the cluster of six visualization sutras translated in the early fifth century. We have also noted that the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" has a close liturgical relationship one of these, the *Scripture on the Visualization of the Two Bodhisattvas, King of Healing and Supreme Healer*. The visualization practices are detailed, however, in another of these visualization texts, the *Ocean Sutra*. We mentioned above that Tanluan's practice focused on the visualization of a single buddha, Amitābha, his two attendants Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and his Pure Land. The Tiantai meditative practices systematized by Zhiyi in the fourfold *samādhis* (*sizhong sanmei*, 四種三昧) also organize its meditative visualizations around single buddhas. Zhiyi received these practices from his teacher Huisi, a northerner from the northeastern area dominated by the capital cultures of Luoyang and Ye.⁵⁶

The *Ocean Sutra* describes a different set of practices. After outlining specific preliminaries such as how to visualize the thirty-two major marks (*xiang*, 相) it describes how to visualize multiple buddhas, whether in set arrays, such as the seven buddhas of the past or the buddhas of the ten directions, or filling all of space.⁵⁷ Both sets of practices are relevant for our discussion.⁵⁸

It is useful to begin with the visualization of the buddhas filling all of space. The instructions for this set of visualizations give us the basic directions for visualizing a buddha and how to extend this visualization to larger and larger areas. This visualization is also helpful in order to understand

the visualization practices that may have been performed by those wishing to enter the first stage of the bodhisattva path.

At the beginning of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, translated by Bodhiruci, Ratnamati, and Buddhasānta in 508, the Bodhisattva Vajragarbha (Jin'gang zang, 金剛藏) enters into the samādhi known as the "radiance of the Mahāyāna" (*dacheng guangming*, 大乘光明). When he attained this samādhi the faces of innumerable buddhas from the ten directions, all named Vajragarbha and filling all of space, appeared before him to seal his attainment.⁵⁹ Although this section of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* suggests that through this samādhi Vajragarbha attained direct realization of reality, and thus entered the stages of the bodhisattva path, the sutra itself is somewhat vague and does not link this samādhi with the attainment of a specific stage of the path.⁶⁰ The commentary on the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* attributed to Vasubandhu, the *Daśabhūmikaṣākyāna*, also translated by Bodhiruci in 508, is not much more specific. It only notes that the word "samādhi" indicates that Vajragarbha's attainment "is not in the realm measurable by thought" (*fei siliang jingjie*, 非思量境界).⁶¹

The first specific connection of the attainment of the samādhi of the radiance of the Mahāyāna with the stages of the path is found in Fazang's (法藏, 643–712) commentary on the *Huayen Sutra* (*Huayan jing*, 華嚴經).⁶² There he connects the attainment of the radiance of the Mahāyāna, the first of the four great samādhis of the Mahāyāna, with the attainment of the first four stages of the path.⁶³ The alignment of these four great samādhis with the ten stages of bodhisattva practice is expanded and rearranged by Chengguan (澄觀, 738–839), the self-proclaimed fourth patriarch of the Huayan lineage.⁶⁴ Although the alignment of the radiance of the Mahāyāna and the other three samādhis with particular stages of the bodhisattva path may be innovations of the Huayan lineage, these alignments at least make explicit, I think, that the attainment of the radiance of the Mahāyāna is to be equated with the attainment of the bodhisattva path.

Aside from accumulating merit, receiving teachings, or obtaining rebirth in their pure lands, the importance of visualizing buddhas filling all of space may lie in the idea that, in preparing to enter the noble path (*āryamārga*), the practitioner meditates on a representation of that very reality that he or she expects to perceive directly in order to facilitate that direct perception. For the non-Mahāyānist this is normally a meditation on the four noble truths. After leading the meditator through a series of meditative exercises designed to help him develop proficiency in actualizing the different levels of meditative concentration (*dhyāna*; often referred to generally as *śamatha*) as well as proficiency in insight (*vipaśyanā*), the meditator is finally enjoined to meditate on the four noble truths. This is to prepare him for the actual direct perception of the reality of the four noble truths. This perception constitutes entry into the path of seeing (*darśana-mārga*) and the noble path.

Analogously, for those of the Ten Stages lineages, and those influenced by them in sixth-century northeastern China, meditating on the buddhas filling all of space may prepare the practitioner for the direct realization of the first stage of bodhisattva practice. Once attained the buddhas of the ten directions will then appear before you and seal your attainment.

After describing certain ritual and meditative preliminaries, the meditation of the buddhas filling all of space begins with the visualization of a single Buddha image mark by mark.⁶⁵ The practitioner may construct this visualization in reverse order, proceeding from the toes to the head, or in normal order, going from the head to the toes. For example,⁶⁶

Those who are pleased to do the visualization in reverse should visualize from the toes of the image and proceed successively upwards. First visualize the toes. Fix your mind and make it focused, passing seven days having the toes of the Buddha as support. Whether your eyes are closed or your eyes are open make it so that you clearly and distinctly see the toes of the golden image. Then gradually, next, visualize the upper portions of both feet making it so that they are seen clearly and distinctly. Next visualize the leg⁶⁷ as that of the king of the deer. After the mind has become focused [on this], next proceed successively up to the *uṣṇīṣa*,⁶⁸ and from the *uṣṇīṣa* visualize the face.

Should this not be completely clear then again repent, redoubling your hard probing of yourself. When your precepts have become pure, you will see the face of the Buddha image clearly and distinctly distinguished like a likeness in a golden mirror.

After you have performed this visualization, visualize the fine hairs between the eyebrows as pearls of rock crystal curling to the right. When this mark has become manifest, you will see the Buddha's eyes and eyebrows as if they had been painted by a divine painter. After you have seen this thing, visualize the radiance of the forehead, making it distinct and totally clear.

The mass of marks done this way is called a "reverse visualization."

樂逆觀者從像足指次第仰觀初觀足指繫心令專緣佛足指經一七日閉目開目令了了見金像足指漸次復觀兩足趺上令了了見次觀鹿王蹠心既專已次第至髻從髻觀面若不明了復更懺悔培自苦策以戒淨故見佛像面如真金鏡了了分明作是觀已觀眉間毫如頗梨珠右旋宛轉此相現已見佛眉眼如天畫師之所畫作見是事已次觀頂光令分明了如是眾相名為逆觀

Since this passage summarizes the basic *process* to be used when visualizing these marks, few of the thirty-two major marks of the Buddha are actually

mentioned.⁶⁹ Two points in this passage are especially noteworthy. First, using the toes as an example, the passage emphasizes how each mark should be visualized and brought to clarity before proceeding to the next mark. Second, the passage points out a critical phase of the visualization when it gets to the visualization of the face. Should the face not be clear the text does not tell the practitioner to redouble his or her efforts at accomplishing the visualization. Rather the text instructs the practitioner to cease the visualization and undergo a period of repentance. This will purify the practitioner's karma sufficiently so that the visualization will then become clear and stable. This function of ritual repentance is a theme this text comes back to repeatedly. Although later practitioners of meditative visualization are not explicit on this point, this may also be one of the reasons why meditative visualization and repentance have had such a close relationship in China. I have been unable to find any comparably explicit linkage between repentance and meditative clarity in Indian Buddhist discussions of meditation.⁷⁰

The text continues with a brief description of the visualization done in the normal order and then begins to describe the process of multiplying the Buddha image.⁷¹

After you have done it this way, to and fro, fourteen times, truly visualize a single image making it perfectly clear and distinct. When this visualization is entirely accomplished, whether coming out of meditation or entering into meditation, one will continually see the image standing before the practitioner. When you have seen one clearly and distinctly, then imagine two images. When you have finished seeing two images, next imagine three images, and so on until you get to imagining ten [images], making them all clear and distinct. After you have finished seeing ten images, imagine a whole room full of Buddha images so that no spaces or cracks are between them.

如是往返凡十四遍諦觀一像極令了了觀一成已出定入定恒見立像在行者前見一了了復想二像見二像已次想三像乃至想十皆令了了見十像已想一室內滿中佛像間無空缺

The text then describes another round of purification, vows, and ritual repentance, this time in much greater detail.⁷²

After you have made the room full [of Buddha images], return again to zealously lighting incense and scattering flowers. Sweep the stūpa, plaster the earth, bathe the assembly of monks, and massage and provide physical relaxation⁷³ for your father, mother,

teacher, and elders. Wash your body, rubbing oil on your feet. Beg for food in the four directions and, the good and fine [food] that you obtain, proffer to your teacher and elders and divide and offer to your father and mother.

After you have performed these activities, make a great vow: "I am now visualizing the buddhas. With the merit from this may I not vow to be a human, god, *śrāvaka*, or *pratyekabuddha*. May I correctly desire to focus my quest on the buddhas' way of bodhi." After you have made this vow, if you truly and wholeheartedly quest for the Mahāyāna, you should perform repentance (*chanhui*). After you have performed repentance, next you should perform a request for the buddhas [to teach] (*qing fo*). After you have performed a request for the buddhas [to teach], next you should perform a rejoicing [in the merits of others] (*suixi*). After you have performed a rejoicing [in the merits of others], next you should perform a transference [of merit]. After you have performed a transference [of merit], next you should perform the making of vows.

After you have performed the making of vows, you should straighten your body, sit upright, fix your awareness in front of you, and visualize the buddhas as the meditational object,⁷⁴ making them gradually expand and become larger.

滿一室已復更精進燒香散華掃塔塗地澡浴眾僧為父母師長案摩調身
洗浴身體上塗足油四方乞食得好美者先上師長分奉父母作是行已發
大誓願我今觀佛以此功德不願人天聲聞緣覺正欲專求佛菩提道發是
願已若實至心求大乘者當行懺悔行懺悔已次行請佛行請佛已次行隨
喜行隨喜已次行迴向行迴向已次行發願行發願已正身端坐繫念在前
觀佛境界令漸廣大

Here again we see one of the organizational features of this text and this visualization: the alternation of periods of meditational visualization with periods of purification and ritual repentance. Again two points in this passage are noteworthy. First, it outlines the ritual paradigm within which repentance takes place, the five-limbed *pūjā*. This is referred to slightly later in the text as the *wu fa* (五法), the five methods.⁷⁵ This is the earliest enumeration of the five-limbed *pūjā* that I have been able to locate thus far.

Second, we see here in a more explicit and developed form the triadic relationship among precepts and vows, repentance, and visualization (or visionary experience) first encountered in embryonic form in the *Ugradattapariprcchā* and later in more developed form in the *VV* and later *Triskandha* texts.⁷⁶ Nobuyoshi Yamabe has recently argued that repentance and visionary experience (if not visualization practice) were essential

components in the bestowal and maintenance of the bodhisattva vows, or precepts.⁷⁷ In brief, before you can receive the bodhisattva precepts, you must purify yourself through the performance of repentance rituals and receive signs (*hao xiang*, 好相) from the buddhas, in a vision or a dream, that this purification has been accomplished. When the buddhas appear to you they may even bestow the precepts upon you in this vision or dream. Your human master then either bestows upon you the bodhisattva precepts or simply testifies to your experience before a statue of the Buddha.⁷⁸

In the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” and in the visualization practices we have been surveying here precepts, repentance, and visualization also form a unit, but the emphasis is on maintaining moral and mental purity in order to accomplish the goal of meditative visualization. We should not forget, however, that many of the monks in the Ten Stages lineages about whom we have information were deeply involved in the study of the vinaya. Also, in Lingyu’s biography, when Lingyu announced that he would soon pass away, people flocked to him to receive the precepts.⁷⁹

The *Ocean Sutra* then proceeds at length to describe how the visualization of the buddhas is to be expanded and made larger. Beginning with a room full of buddhas, for example, the practitioner should expand the visualization to the size of a monastery, then by stages to an area covering one *yojana*,⁸⁰ one hundred yojanas, one Jambudvīpa (8,000 yojanas wide), the other continents of the world system—first Pūrvavideha in the east (8,060 yojanas wide), then Aparagodāniya in the west (8,900 yojanas), and finally Uttarakuru in the north (16,000 yojanas)—one hundred Jambudvīpas, one hundred *koṭis* of the four continents, and finally all of space in the ten directions. There should be no cracks or spaces anywhere in these visualizations and each and every Buddha image in all of these visualizations should clearly and distinctly display his thirty-two major and eighty minor marks.

The visualization of the buddhas of the ten directions is outlined in chapter 11, “Calling to Mind the Buddhas of the Ten Directions” (“Nian shifang fo,” 念十方佛).⁸¹ This visualization provides us with the basic pattern for visualizing an array of buddhas. The basic pattern is laid out in the visualization of Bhadrāsī Buddha and his buddha land “Aśoka” in the east. This visualization illustrates the meditative visualization that corresponds to the fourth roster of buddhas in the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers.”⁸²

The Buddha announced to Ānanda: “How does the practitioner visualize the buddhas of the ten directions? One who visualizes the buddhas of the ten directions begins with the eastern direction. In the east there is a world; the country is called ‘Jeweled Security and

Stability.⁸³ Immeasurable koṭis of jewels take on koṭis of thousands of forms, which are thereby used to form [the land].

"The Buddha is called Bhadrāsī, who both lets forth innumerable rays of light to illuminate everywhere hundreds and thousands of countries and, with innumerable koṭis of replicate bodies⁸⁴ and all of his transformation bodies,⁸⁵ sets himself in front of the practitioner. The color of his body is like a golden mountain, upright, solemn, and fully without comparison. He sits in a large diamond cave. The rays of innumerable varieties of jewels adorn and form halls and pavilions. In front of each and every hall and pavilion are hundreds of koṭis of jeweled trees as immeasurable as motes of dust. Below each and every jeweled tree are eighty-four thousand Lion Seats.⁸⁶ Each and every Lion Seat has a replicate body of the Buddha, seated cross-legged,⁸⁷ in samādhi seated below the jeweled tree. The body of Bhadrāsī Buddha is two hundred fifty koṭis of *nayutas* of yojanas long.⁸⁸ Each and every hair follicle on his body [shows] all the unsurpassable [thirty-two] major and [eighty] minor marks as innumerable as motes of dust. In each and every major and minor mark are innumerable transformation buddhas.

"Each and every transformation buddha's height appears lofty and majestic, like Mt. Sumeru. [Each] lets forth a great radiant brightness, seated on a jeweled lotus flower set in empty space. Each of the replicate bodies of all the buddhas emits a subtle and wondrous radiant brightness that puts forth innumerable hundreds and thousands of transformation buddhas. Each and every transformation buddha sits on a jeweled lotus flower. Each and every lotus flower has one thousand pennants and tubular banners. Each and every pennant and tubular banner gives off hundreds of koṭis of subtle and wondrous sounds. [From] among all of these sounds are taught the visualization of the innumerable buddha-bodies of the ten directions.

"When these marks become manifest, one will see the realms of the ten directions as if they were diamonds. The color of the hundreds of koṭis of jewels will neither decrease nor increase. After one has seen these [thirty-two] marks, in front of all the buddhas, one will receive the Dharma at the princely throne. One in a realm such as this is named a bodhisattva of the *gotrabhūmi*."⁸⁹

佛告阿難云：何行者觀十方佛觀十方佛者東方為始東方有世界國名寶安隱無量億寶有億千色以用合成佛號善德亦放無數光普照百千國亦與無數億分身諸化佛住於行者前身色如金山端嚴無比坐大金剛窟無數雜寶光莊嚴為堂閣一堂閣前無量微塵數百億諸寶樹一一寶樹下八萬四千師子座

The meditator then visualizes the buddhas of the other nine directions proceeding from the southeast to the northeast and concluding with the zenith and nadir. Each of these nine sections builds on the visualization of Bhadraśrī and his land but alters or augments the basic description to indicate those features that are peculiar to each of the other nine lands.

Chapter 11 then concludes with a short section on how one should venerate, make offerings to, and be mindful of the Buddha(s) when one enters a pagoda, or stūpa, and venerates the Buddha image there.⁹⁰ Specifically it mentions that to venerate one buddha is to venerate all buddhas, a refrain often seen in the slightly later writings of the Huayan thinkers beginning with Zhiyan (智儼, 602–668). The passage also suggests briefly how to integrate the visualization of the buddhas of the ten directions with actual, and visualized, offerings of incense and flowers to the pagoda's Buddha image. Although here making offerings to and bowing before an image of the Buddha takes place in a ritual setting,⁹¹ it may also provide an example of how to extend the visualization to more common settings. All of this suggests that the visualization of the buddhas of the ten directions is not just a visualization to be practiced during periods of formal, seated meditation.

5. RECITATION

When Lingyu passed away in 605 at the age of eighty-eight, Daoxuan recorded that that he did so while in the “meditative concentration of a verbally supported Buddha mindfulness” (*jīng lǐ kǒuyuán niánfó*, 靜慮口緣念佛). Whatever the content of Lingyu's meditation, Daoxuan indicates not only that it was accompanied by a recitation of some sort, but also that it was supported by this recitation. Since it was a *nianfo*, or Buddha mindfulness (*buddhānusmṛti*) meditation, we would expect that the meditation would have focused on a buddha or array(s) of buddhas together with a recitation of their names. This expectation is strengthened by our considerations above of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” repentance ritual and the visualization practices it employed. A Pure Land emphasis is also obvious in the long form of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” ritual preserved in Zhisheng's *Ji zhu jing lichanyī*. As with the abridged form of the ritual that precedes it, it was probably written by someone in the Ten Stages lineages, possibly even by Lingyu himself. Of course, *nianfo* practices involving the visualization of a buddha, particularly Amitābha or Maitreya, together with the recitation of his name are known from this period and slightly later. The visualization sutras, including the *Ocean Sutra*, however, are curiously silent about recitation being a component of Buddha visualization practice.

Evidence for recitation as a support for visualization practice does, however, appear in at least one Indian Buddhist meditation manual, the

Visuddhimagga. There the meditation used to instruct the practitioner in the development of the four *dhyānas* (Pāli *jhāna*) of form is the visualization of the earth disk, the earth *kaṣiṇa* meditation. As the meditator prepares to enter the first, second, third, and finally, the fourth *jhāna* he is enjoined prior to each stage to fix his attention not only on the image of the earth disk but also on a word for “earth” to provide support for his visualization.⁹² While this hardly proves that visualization and recitation are always to be connected in this fashion, I think it suggests in a natural way a possible, even probable, wide-ranging correlation between the visualization of an image and the use of the name of the thing visualized as a linguistic support. In the case of the visualization of the bodily image of a buddha together with the thirty-two major and eighty minor marks, his name would function as the natural support for this visualization.

Despite the extreme paucity of studies of religious recitation, not only in Buddhism but also in religions generally, our brief remarks here can only point to the relevance and importance of recitation in certain forms of meditative practice. Unfortunately, we must leave this topic here, since the broader uses of recitation in religious and meditative practice would take us well beyond the scope of this study.

6. THE SOTERIOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF MEDITATIVE VISUALIZATION AND VISIONARY REPENTANCE

Buddhānusmṛti (nianfo) initially appears in texts as a series of meditations on the epithets and qualities of the Buddha. From there it expanded into meditations on the acts of the Buddha and into visualizations of the bodily form of the Buddha, complete with his thirty-two major and eighty minor marks. Finally it expanded into the visualization of the buddhas of the ten directions filling all of space. In the earliest extant visualization text, the *Pratyutpannasamādhi-sūtra* translated into Chinese in 179 CE, the visualization of the Buddha(s) was primarily for the purpose of going into the presence of these buddhas, obtaining teachings appropriate to the practitioner (and the age in which s/he lived), and bringing these back into the human world in order to enlighten all beings. Such visualizations could also be used to obtain rebirth in the various buddha realms. Finally, although this was not as clearly articulated in the early visualization texts, by the early fifth century the visualization of the Buddha’s bodily form could also be used to attain a direct realization of the reality of the Buddha’s nature. The usual doctrinal justification in visualization texts in the early fifth century, including the *Ocean Sutra*, was to pay homage to the *Prajñāpāramitā* and to realize the ultimate emptiness of the Buddha’s form and marks. To see these as empty was to perceive directly the nature of the Buddha and thus to see all dharmas as empty.

Beginning with the *Jin'gang xian lun* (Vajrasū's (?) Commentary [on the *Vajracchedikā* (*Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*)]), purportedly a commentary on Vasubandhu's *Jin'gang bore boluomi jinglun* (Treatise on the Diamond Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom), translated by Bodhiruci in 535, a new element was introduced into the debate in China.⁹³ Although this work appears to have had little impact in India or Tibet, in the northeastern China of the sixth century it added important new elements to the Yogācāra debate and to meditative practice. In an effort to explain both the *Vajracchedika*'s, or *Diamond Sutra*'s, denial that the Buddha can be known through his major and minor marks as well as the efficacy of knowing the Buddha through those very marks, the commentary introduced the concept of the "two kinds of *dharmakāya*" (*erzhong fashen*, 二種法身). Here the "*dharmakāya* of the dharma-nature" (*faxing fashen*, 法性法身; Skt. *dharmatādharmakāya*) was distinguished from the "*dharmakāya* of expediency" (*fangbian fashen*, 方便法身; Skt. *upāyadharmakāya*). The *dharmakāya* of the dharma-nature is the *dharmakāya* in its ultimate nature.⁹⁴ The *dharmakāya* of expediency is the *dharmakāya* that responds to activities and includes both the *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*. What is noteworthy for our discussion is that this idea linked the Buddha's major and minor marks—features of the *dharmakāya* of expediency—intimately to the *dharmakāya* of the dharma-nature. Meditative visualization of the Buddha's form with his marks is at once a gateway to and a meditation on the ultimate nature of the *dharmakāya*.

To see the Buddha merely through the visualization of his major and minor marks is, however, denied. The *cakravartin*, the world monarch of Indian political ideology, also displays these marks. On the other hand, to see these marks as empty and as the natural expression of the *dharmakāya* of dharma-nature, i.e., as representations of the *dharmakāya* of expediency, is to see them in their true context. Seen in their true context, the meditative visualization of the Buddha with his major and minor marks can be efficacious.

An index of how this concept of the twofold *dharmakāya* was received and how it was used to explain the efficacy of Buddha visualization may be seen in Tanluan's commentary (*zhu*, 註) to the **Sukhāvativyūhopadeśa* (*Wuliangshou jing youpotishe yuan sheng jie*, 無量壽經優婆提舍願生偈), the *Verses on the Vows for Rebirth: An Upadeśa on the Amitāyus-sūtra*.⁹⁵ First, Tanluan introduced the distinction between the *dharmakāya* of dharma-nature and the *dharmakāya* of expediency in a straightforward, matter of fact way, as if it were already common knowledge.⁹⁶ He then states that "the *dharmakāya* of dharma-nature produces (*sheng*, 生) the *dharmakāya* of expediency; the *dharmakāya* of expediency expresses (*chu*, 出) the *dharmakāya* of dharma-nature," and argues that "while different they are indivisible, one yet cannot be made the same" (*yi er buke fen yi er buke tong*, 異而不可分一而不可同). Elsewhere this idea of the inseparability and interfusion of the two types

of dharmakāya is used to inform his discussion of the meditation on the major and minor marks.⁹⁷ Quoting and commenting on a passage from the *Guan Wuliang shou fo jing* on why one should imagine the buddhas (*xiangfo*, 想佛), i.e., visualize them,⁹⁸ Tanluan explains:⁹⁹

When the mind imagines the Buddha, this mind is just the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor marks of form. Just when the minds of sentient beings imagine the Buddha, the major and minor marks of the Buddha's body appear and manifest in the minds of sentient beings. It is as when the water is clear, the form of the image is manifest; the water and the image are neither the same nor different. Therefore it is said that the body of the Buddha with its major and minor marks is just this mind imagining [them].

"This mind makes buddhas" means that the mind is able to make buddhas. This mind is the Buddha. Outside of the mind there is no Buddha. It is like fire that comes out from the wood but the fire cannot be separated from the wood. Since it cannot be separated from the wood, it is able to burn the wood. Wood becomes fire which burns the wood which just becomes fire.

心想佛時是心即是三十二相八十隨形好者當眾生心想佛時佛身相好顯現眾生心中也譬如水清則色像現水之與像不一不異故言佛相好身即是心想也是心作佛者言心能作佛也是心是佛者心外無佛也譬如火從木出火不得離木也以不離木故則能燒木木為火燒木即為火也

The mind of the meditator, the bodily form of the Buddha with his major and minor marks (the dharmakāya of expediency), and the ultimate nature of the Buddha (the dharmakāya of the dharma-nature) are inseparable but not the same. The key is for the practitioner is to see that—following the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts—the marks, as all dharmas, are empty and at the same time—according to the *Yogācāra*—a natural and intrinsic expression of the Buddha's ultimate nature, which are meditatively efficacious.

A similar formulation, but with quite different roots, emerged in the doctrinal, ritual, and meditative syntheses of Zhiyi in the late sixth century in southeastern China around Jiankang (建康), modern Nanjing. First, Southern Chinese debates since the early fifth century were concerned, initially, with buddha-nature (*fo xing*, 佛性) and whether all beings could attain liberation, and later, with paradigms that explored the relationship of buddha-nature to sentient, especially human, beings. This was, in effect, the Chinese Buddhist version of the perennial Chinese debate over human nature (*ren xing*, 人性) whose parameters had been laid out initially by Mengzi (孟子, late fourth century BCE) and Xunzi (荀子, third century BCE). Second were a series of triadic structurings of Buddhist formulations

of the two truths, the ultimate and the conventional, from the mid-fifth through the sixth centuries, influenced in complex ways by Chengshi (成實) scholasticism and debates.¹⁰⁰ Zhiyi wedded these to a Sanlun (三論), or Chinese Madhyamaka, formulation of emptiness and the practice of the meditative visualizations of buddhas and bodhisattvas inherited from his teacher Huisi. These are expressed most succinctly in Zhiyi's formulations of the three truths (*san di*, 三諦) and the three contemplations (*san guan*, 三觀).¹⁰¹ Both are organized around the structure: conventional existence (*jia*, 假, or *jiaming*, 假名), the emptiness (or ultimate reality; *kong*, 空) of conventional existence, and the middle way (*zhongdao*, 中道), which is the complete integration and interfusion of the first two. The three contemplations proceed from conventional existence to the realization of its emptiness, to a reexamination of conventional existence from the standpoint of emptiness, and finally to the realization of their total fusion, interpenetration, and mutual inclusion. The realization of the middle way is the perfect realization of buddha-nature.¹⁰²

The similarities here with the meditative model that we have outlined for Tanluan and, by extension, the Ten Stages lineage of Lingyu are obvious. It is usually regarded that Zhiyi made little explicit use of Yogācāra doctrine and texts, yet the results of his synthesis are strikingly similar. Let us put his formulations of the three truths and three contemplations into the context of meditative visualization. We begin with the visualization of the Buddha's form together with the major and minor marks as we might perform it in the context of the fourfold samādhi system. We then endeavor to perceive this form as empty. To use another of Zhiyi's formulations we move from the realm of phenomenon (*shi*, 事) to the realm of principle (*li*, 理). To the extent that our perception of emptiness negates the phenomenal form of the Buddha, his form, and marks, indeed, all appearances, this realization of the emptiness of the Buddha's body is still biased. We need to perceive emptiness in the form and marks of the Buddha (and in the appearance of the conventional world) without abolishing them. When these two aspects have been brought into balance and seen as mutually inclusive, our perception of the truth is no longer biased and we see the highest truth of the middle way. In other words we now have an unhindered perception of the buddha-nature as it exists in itself.

We started with the text of a repentance ritual inscribed in 589 on the wall outside of Lingyu's cave temple on Mt. Bao. By linking this up with other scriptural and ritual texts that would have been known to Lingyu, and by looking at the context of short instructional texts related to this specific ritual, we have argued that this ritual of repentance inscribed at Mt. Bao most likely took place within the context, not only of ritual recitation, but also of meditative visualization. We then explored what the roots and the contours of such meditative visualizations may have looked

like. By also introducing certain doctrinal innovations, notably the concept of the twofold dharmakāya that entered northeastern China in the early sixth century, we were able to argue that this provided a certain doctrinal justification, if not legitimacy, for the use of meditative visualization as a soteriologically sufficient meditative praxis. Such, at least, are the broad outlines of the situation.

Our final consideration in this section addresses what Lingyu and some of his contemporaries regarded as the goal of the repentance rituals they performed. On the surface rituals of karmic repentance would not appear to be problematic. They eliminate the future undesirable karmic results of one's past and present bad actions. The elimination of bad karma has no real direct impact on furthering one's progress along the path of spiritual development (*mārga*). Eliminating bad karma, however, could have an indirect impact by allowing one to obtain a favorable rebirth. In such a rebirth one would have better opportunities to practice the teachings of the buddhas and advance spiritually. To directly affect one's progress along the path of spiritual progress, the practitioner had to eliminate the *kleśas*, or defilements. In this view *kleśas* cannot be eliminated through rites of karmic repentance; they must be removed through meditation, or, more accurately, meditative realization.¹⁰³

It is thus of more than passing interest then that two eminent members of the Ten Stages lineage, from different branches of the lineage, composed repentance prayers in which they stated that karmic repentance eliminated *kleśas*. Both of the monks were members of the South of the Road school descended from the Ratnamati and Buddha/bhadra lineage through Huiguang. The first prayer is by Lingyu. Tanqian,¹⁰⁴ the author of our second prayer, was the student of Tanzun (曇遵, 492–576),¹⁰⁵ one of the ten great disciples of Huiguang.

Daoshi (d. 668), who included both prayers in chapter 86, "The Chapter on Repentance" ("Chanhui pian," 懺悔篇) in his encyclopedia of Buddhism, the *Fayuan zhulin*, recommended that these prayers be used as substitutes for those prayers found in the translations of Indian rituals and liturgies. Daoshi regarded the Indian repentance prayers as prolix and disorganized and he feared that the repentance that they provided might not be comprehensive. The prayers by Lingyu and Tanqian, both based ultimately on the *Daśabhūmikaśāstra*, by contrast for Daoshi were concise, comprehensive, and unsurpassed among all of the repentance prayers then available.¹⁰⁶

Lingyu's prayer is in verse. It is not clear whether this prayer was meant to substitute for the repentance prayer found in the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" inscription on the wall outside of his cave temple, and, if so, under what conditions. The title suggests, however, that they may have been used as supplemental verses for recitation. Also,

although entitled “Gāthās for a Generalized Repentance Prayer on the Ten Unvirtuous [Actions]” (“Zong chan shi’e jie wen,” 總懺十惡偈文), no mention is made in the verses of these ten unvirtuous actions. The relevant passage on kleśa is found at the end of Lingyu’s *gāthā*.¹⁰⁷

All the buddhas, at that time,
Are all entirely unable to save [me];
They can only remove what I myself confess;
The errors and faults I have committed.
Responding to the mind of the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
According with the originally pure nature,
The opacity [existent] since beginningless time
From this, gradually becomes slight and tenuous.
Therefore, taking to heart my shame and regret,
With profound mind I repent all offenses.
I pray the buddhas to let forth the radiance of their compassion,
And shine it on suffering sentient beings,
[So that] the accumulations of kleśas that there are
All be entirely dissipated and eliminated.

諸佛於爾時	皆悉不能救
唯除子發露	所造諸愆咎
應佛菩薩心	隨順本淨性
無始時無明	自此漸微薄
是故懷慚愧	深心海諸罪
願佛放慈光	照及苦眾生
所有煩惱聚	皆令悉消滅

Tanqian’s prayer is actually organized around the ten unvirtuous actions and in structure and content is reminiscent of the repentance prayer in the “Buddha Names of the Seven Registers” at Mt. Bao and in the VV. The prayer is divided into a repentance prayer proper at the beginning and a short section on vows at the end, a format standard for medieval Chinese repentance prayers. It is followed by four couplets in five-character verse. Although Daoshi gives us no indication of whether or not this prayer and its concluding verses were to be recited within a “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” format in which rosters of buddhas’ names are also recited, the structural similarity of this prayer and its verses to the Mt. Bao inscription are suggestive. The relevant section occurs at the end of the repentance prayer proper.¹⁰⁸

From beginningless time the ten unvirtuous actions are all produced from kleśas and wrong views. Now, as a result of relying

on the power of the correct view of buddha-nature, I profess my repentance. May all these be removed and annihilated. It is like a bright pearl thrown into turbid water; through the awesome virtue of the pearl the water immediately becomes settled and clear. The awesome power of the buddha-nature is also like this. Throw it into the turbid water of the kleśas, the five heinous sins, and the four pārajikas of sentient beings, and it immediately becomes settled and clear.

無始已來十不善業皆從煩惱邪見而生令依佛性正見力故發露懺悔
皆得 除滅譬如明珠投之濁水以珠威德水即澄清佛性威德亦如是投
諸眾生四重五逆煩惱濁水即澄清

The goal of the repentance ritual in both of these repentance prayers is not just to remove undesirable karma, but kleśas as well. Repentance rituals and liturgies are consequently regarded as soteriologically sufficient for the attainment of buddhahood. A phrase used in southeastern Chinese repentance liturgies of the same period expressed this succinctly, *miezui chengfo* (滅罪成佛), “Attain buddhahood by annihilating one’s offenses.”¹⁰⁹ If this is a correct reading of the dynamics of repentance rituals understood at that time, the ability to attain the ultimate goal of Buddhism through the performance of simple rituals of repentance must have contributed significantly to their popularity.

Zhiyi in the south attempted to sort this out in his monumental treatise on meditation, the *Mohe zhiguan* (摩訶止觀), originally delivered as a series of lectures in the early 590s, by distinguishing between *shichan* (事懺), phenomenal repentance, and *lichan* (理懺), repentance at the level of principle.¹¹⁰

Phenomenal repentance repents the path of suffering and the path of karma. Repentance at the level of principle repents the path of kleśa. The text says, “Should one commit a breach of the precepts, from those for novices up to those for full *bhikṣus*, one must abide by this to be brought back to life.” This is just the passage that refers to repenting the path of karma. “The sense organs, eye, ear, etc., are clean and pure.” This is just the passage that refers to repenting the path of suffering. “On the seventh day one will see the buddhas of the ten directions, hear their Dharma, and obtain the stage of non-retrogression.” This is just the passage that refers to repenting the path of kleśas.

事懺懺苦道業道理懺懺煩惱道文云『犯沙彌戒及大比丘戒若不還生
無有是處』即懺業道文也『眼耳諸根清淨』即懺苦道文也『第七日見
十方佛聞法得不退轉』即懺煩惱道文也

For Zhiyi this is also the distinction between ritual repentance and meditation. For Zhiyi meditation is largely the meditative visualization of the buddhas performed within the context of the five-limbed *pūjā*, the *wuhui* (五悔), or fivefold repentance, that became standard for the Tiantai tradition. Importantly, the overarching paradigm is one of repentance, no matter whether it is a matter of ritual repentance or meditative visualization.

It is useful in this context to note Zhiyi's view of the efficacy of ritual repentance and meditation. In section 5, at the end of his *Fahua sanmei xingfa* (法華三昧行法), *Procedure for Performing the Lotus Samādhi*,¹¹¹ Zhiyi discussed those signs that confirmed the successful practice of this ritual. He distinguished three classes of practitioners, those with inferior, intermediate, and superior karmic endowments.¹¹² Within each class he further distinguished three grades, those of the lowest, middling, and highest order. At the lowest of these nine orders the practitioner may experience such things as numinous anomalies, good dreams, or a sharpening of the senses.¹¹³ The practitioner of the highest of the nine orders, however,¹¹⁴

while engaged in walking, sitting, or reciting, [may] feel his body and mind suddenly become pure, whereupon he enters deep dhyāna absorption. Enlightened insight distinguishes [all things] clearly, [and yet] his mind experiences no fluctuation. Immersed in such a condition of dhyāna absorption he sees the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy [Samantabhadra], the World-Honored [Buddhas] Śākyamuni and Many Jewels [Prabhātaratna], and their manifestation bodies, as well as the buddhas of the ten directions. He acquires unimpeded great *dhāraṇī*, realizes purification of the six senses, [acquires the power to] universally manifest bodies of form [throughout the universe], opens forth the wisdom/views of a buddha, and enters the ranks of bodhisattvahood, all as is expounded at length in the *Sutra on the Visualization of Universal Worthy*.¹¹⁵

In other words, by Zhiyi's own testimony, through the performance of a cycle of ritual repentance and its accompanying meditative visualization(s), a practitioner may be able to attain direct perception of reality and be able to enter the bodhisattva path.

Zhiyi's distinction between *shichan* and *lichan* is also the tack that Daoshi adopted in the "Chapter on Repentance" to interpret different approaches to repentance.¹¹⁶ His colleague Daoxuan also used this distinction to organize his discussion of repentance, albeit largely within the context of the *vinaya*.¹¹⁷ Daoxuan also ranked these two types of repentance in terms of the capacities of the practitioners: the practice of

phenomenal repentance was for those who were “foolish and stupid” (*yudun*, 愚鈍), the practice of repentance at the level of principle was for those of “keen faculties” (*ligen*, 利根).¹¹⁸

It is not at all clear, however, that this distinction between *shichan* and *lichan* is one that Lingyu and Tanqian, and perhaps their colleagues, would have known, although it may have been one that they might have appreciated. The coordination of *shichan* and *lichan* with practitioners of dull and keen faculties was probably also unknown to them, and, equally probably, might have been a distinction they (and Zhiyi) may not have appreciated. For them, and for the elite southern liturgical tradition that Zhiyi would have been familiar with, repentance removed both karma and *kleśa* and was a soteriologically efficacious technique. Coupled with the traditional soteriological techniques of meditation, especially meditative visualization, these repentance techniques must have seemed to their practitioners to have been quite formidable. Judging by the testimony of Daoshi and Daoxuan, as well as the Tiantai tradition, Zhiyi’s resolution of the proper function of ritual repentance and meditation was generally accepted by the mid- to late seventh century.

7. SUMMARIES OF RATNAMATI’S “METHOD FOR VENERATING THE BUDDHAS” (“LIFO FA,” 禮佛法)

A noticeable anomaly in the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers” is that there are never just seven registers. There are no known exceptions to this. Even the earliest form of the ritual inscribed at Mt. Bao has (at least) eight registers. Our suspicions should be further aroused by the use of the word *jie* (階), translated as “register” in the title of this ritual. It does not mean a (vertical) “register,” “roster,” or “array.” Rather it means a (horizontal) “step,” “stage,” or “level.” Although it is true that Zhisheng’s *Ji zhujing lichanyi* and a number of Dunhuang manuscripts include a short phrase that indicates that the “previous seven [*sic*] registers are presented in sequence based on the text of the *Sutra of the King of Healing and Supreme Healer*” (*yishang qijie yi Yaowang Yaoshang jing wen cidì*, 已上七階依藥王藥上經文次第),¹¹⁹ it is not clear who may have added this phrase or when. It is possible that this phrase was not original to this ritual. If it were not original to this ritual—this is, after all, only a modest proposal—there may be other plausible interpretations of the term *jie*. This issue has, in fact, already been broached, first by Yabuki Keiki in 1927 and most recently by Hirokawa Gyōbin in his 1982 study of the Dunhuang manuscripts of the “Buddha Names in Seven Registers.” Since both assumed that the ritual complex as a whole was the creation of the Three Stages school, they interpreted the phrase “seven registers” to refer to the “seven teachings”

(*qifa*, 七法) found in Xinxing's *Duigen qi xingfa* (對根起行法), *The Practice that Arises in Accord with Capacity*.¹²⁰ The seven are: (1) I take refuge in the buddhas completely, (2) I take refuge in the Dharma completely, (3) I take refuge in the sangha completely, (4) I shall save all sentient beings completely, (5) I shall cut off all evils completely, (6) I shall cultivate all good completely, and (7) I shall seek out all good friends completely.

What I am modestly proposing here is that, since the ritual known as the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" probably originated within the Ten Stages lineages, the phrase "seven registers" may originally have referred to something else entirely, namely to a seven-stage program of practice introduced into China by Ratnamati. If so, the reconstructed title of the ritual (略禮七[階佛名]懺悔等文), inscribed at Mt. Bao, might then be read "The Abridged Text of the Repentance for Venerating the Buddhas and Their Names in Seven Stages" rather than "The Text of the Abridged Repentance for Reverencing [the Buddha Names] of the Seven [Registers]." Since the original text presented by Ratnamati was regarded by late sixth- and early seventh-century monks as prolix and disorganized, it was summarized by his disciples. Three different versions of this summary are extant. Two, by Daoshi and his colleague Daoxuan, are quite similar.¹²¹ The categories, organization, and perhaps half of the language in each are identical. The third, by the Huayan monk Zhiyan,¹²² employs quite different language but has the same basic organization and is clearly related to the versions presented by Daoshi and Daoxuan (see table 1). All three texts list a program in seven steps or stages (a recognized meaning of *jie*). In all three texts the practitioner attains a direct perception of reality and irrevocably enters the path at the fourth stage.

In both Daoshi's and Daoxuan's versions the practices of the third stage, which are to prepare the practitioner and guide him to the perception of the fourth stage, are specified in a general way. Daoshi's version runs,¹²³

The third is "veneration in which body and mind are respected and revered." In hearing or intoning the name[s] of the Buddha[s], you are immediately mindful of the Buddha's body as if he were right before your eyes, major and minor [marks] complete, fully adorned and radiantly effulgent. [All] mental characteristics are accomplished. Deeply moved (*gan*), you face the body of the Buddha. As his hand strokes the top of your head, [you say,] "May you remove my karmic offenses." Therefore, in form and mind you are respectful and reverent and are without any other thoughts. Your offerings are respectful and reverent yet psychologically you feel it is not enough. In your mind you imagine [the buddhas] appearing before you. You focus and fix [your mind on them] dispassionately, so that they might guide and benefit men and

Table 1
Sevenfold Method of [Buddha] Veneration

	Zhiyan's "Regulated Model for Venerating the Buddhas" ^a	Daoxuan's "Sevenfold Method of [Buddha] Veneration" ^b	Daoshi's "Sevenfold Method of [Buddha] Veneration" ^c
1	Veneration that Accomplishes a Transgression	Veneration that Is Egotistical and Proud	Veneration in Which One's Mind Is Egotistical, Proud, and Arrogant
2	Apparent Veneration	Veneration in Which One Chants in Harmony	Veneration in Which One Chants in Harmony and Seeks Fame
3	Veneration that Reverences Virtue	Veneration in Which Body and Mind Are Respected and Revered	Veneration in Which Body and Mind Are Respected and Revered
4	Veneration that Annihilates Transgressions	Veneration of the Buddhas in Which Wisdom and Purity Burst Forth and One Attains a [True] Understanding of the Buddha Realm	Veneration in Which Wisdom and Purity Burst Forth
5	Veneration that Transfers Merit to Sentient Beings	Veneration that Is a Revering and Offering and in Which One Clearly and Universally Enters the Dharmadhātu	Veneration in Which One Universally Enters the Dharmadhātu
6	Veneration that Transfers Merit to Bodhi	Veneration of One's Own Body as the Buddha in Which One Clearly and Correctly Contemplates	Veneration in Which One Correctly Contemplates and Cultivates Sincerity
7	Veneration that Transfers Merit to the Limits of Reality	Veneration in Which One Clearly [Understands] the Impartiality of the True Characteristic, the Three Jewels, and the Self and Other	Veneration of the Impartiality of the True Characteristic

a. *Huayan jingnei zhangmen deng za kongmu zhang* (Taishō, vol. 45, no. 1870, p. 540b–c).

b. *Shihmen Guijingyi* (Taishō, vol. 45, no. 1896, p. 865a–c).

c. *Fayuan zhulin*, juan 20 (Taishō, vol. 53, no. 2122, pp. 435a–436a).

gods to act in the highest, to act the best. Although the merit is great, it is still not yet that this is wisdom. Afterwards many fall back and perish. This is named the “veneration of body and mind.”

第三身心恭敬禮者開唱佛名便念佛身如在目前相好具足莊嚴晃曜心相成就感對佛身手摩其頂除我罪業是以形心恭敬無有異念供養恭敬情無厭足心想現前傳注無味導利人天為上為最功德雖大猶未是智後多退沒是名身心禮也

This passage is important in at least two respects. First, we again see repentance and meditation united in the visualization of the buddhas. But the practice is not stable. The practitioner can backslide. What you need to do is advance further and perceive reality directly. The practices needed to accomplish this, however, are those of the third stage. While Zhiyan's version is not as explicit about the practices involved, based on our discussion so far we can, I think, glimpse their general outlines in his summary. In Zhiyan's version the third stage is as follows:¹²⁴

Third is the “veneration that reveres the qualities.”¹²⁵ You revere uppermost the characteristics (*xiang*) of the Tathāgata's immeasurable qualities (*gongde*), which are like a mountain of gold, and obtain a compliance that accords with the real. This is called “veneration that reveres the qualities.”

三敬德禮敬上如來無量功德相如金山得順如實名敬德禮

The title of the Zhiyan's fourth stage is *mieguoli* (滅過禮), the “veneration that annihilates transgressions.” Since the practitioner attains true realization of the path at this fourth stage, these transgressions are destroyed through the power of meditative realization, not rites of repentance. Yet together with the suggestion of some sort of visualization practice at the third stage, the title of the fourth stage indicates that some sort of repentance practice may well have accompanied the visualization practice employed at the third stage.¹²⁶ Given the testimony of Daoshi's and Daoxuan's version and the likelihood that Zhiyan received this text through the Lingyu lineage to which he was heir, it is not unreasonable to infer that the practice performed at Zhiyan's third stage, in fact, may have involved repentance and meditation united in the visualization of the buddhas seen in Daoshi's version.

Second, these three summaries firmly establish that meditative visualization and visionary repentance were an essential part of Ratnamati's program of practice. As such it is highly likely that these practices formed an important part of his Chinese disciples' training and

that repentance rites, meditative visualization, and visionary repentance were a key part of Ten Stages' practice from the beginning. That Daoshi, Daoxuan, and Zhiyan likely obtained their versions of these texts from monks in the Ten Stages school, or from monks who traced themselves back to this school, indicates also that some form of these techniques were probably still being handed down within the Ten Stages school through the mid-seventh century.

Ratnamati's program may have made more extensive use of repentance rites than we have already indicated. After the practitioner enters the path at the fourth stage, his realization stabilizes in the fifth stage and he sees that he has never been apart from the *dharmadhātu* (*fajie*, 法界), that he is not inside nor outside of the buddhas nor are they inside or outside of him, and that he and each of the buddhas is all encompassing. He sees that the buddha-nature, his own nature, is equally everywhere (*pingdeng*, 平等) and neither increases nor decreases. At the sixth stage the practitioner realizes that his body, his essence, is no different than the buddhas'.

The seventh stage is largely the same as the sixth, yet there is still a lingering sense of duality that must be eliminated. According to Daoshi's and Daoxuan's versions, "there still persists, in your veneration and in your visualization, [the concept] that self and other are both different" (*you cun you li you guan zita wuyi*, 猶存有禮有觀自他兩異).¹²⁷ Daoshi's version expanding on this says, "When you see the Buddha, he can be honored, can be revered; just when you see ordinary people, they can be despised, can be treated disrespectfully" (*ruo jian fo kezun kejing ji jian fan kebei keman*, 若見佛可尊可敬即見凡可卑可慢).¹²⁸ These passages appear to be speaking to the general problem in the Mahāyāna of eliminating the last lingering traces of dualism from your meditation, of viewing yourself as in some sense different than the object of your meditation. Since these passages tell us that at this stage there is still veneration and visualization of the buddhas, they suggest that not only the last, lingering traces of a devotional, meditative visualization of the buddhas that hesitates to erase the final boundary between the practitioner and the buddhas, but also the last traces of the view, inculcated through repeated repentance, that the practitioner and the common man are sinful.

CONCLUSION

This article has investigated a specific case of ritual and meditative practice in late sixth-century northeastern China. In particular it has argued for a reconstruction of ritual repentance and meditation united around the meditative visualization of the buddhas and bodhisattvas as an important set of practices used within the Ten Stages lineages/school. Such a recon-

struction coordinates well with the Ten Stages recognized emphasis on vinaya and serves to dispel the assumption that the school was primarily philosophical in nature with no significant spiritual practice.

Our investigation has also highlighted a number of areas that need further study. First, the repentance ritual “The Buddha Names in Seven Registers” probably originated within the Ten Stages school. The contemporary Three Stages school version of this ritual was an adaptation of this ritual. How the Ten Stages form of this ritual became so totally identified with the Three Stages school by the early eighth-century that its Ten Stages origins were lost will require further study. Second, the parallels (and differences) between the ritual and meditative scheme of the Ten Stages school and the ritual and meditative practices of the Tiantai school, a significant portion of which derive from this same northeastern area, suggest to this author a deeper regional concern with these sorts of Buddha devotional practices. If so, it may help to explain, for example, why five of the six meditative traditions Daoxuan identified as operating in late sixth-century China, and which Jinhua Chen has recently investigated, were in Daoxuan’s account, largely in accord.¹²⁹ Our investigation also indicates a possible method for isolating such regions of practice and communities of practice: begin by trying to triangulate persons, ritual, and meditative practices, and, where possible, archeological sites in order to try and characterize discourse communities, communities of practice, and discourses of practice. If it were then possible to begin to characterize larger, regional varieties of practice, this in turn might shed new light on the various recognized Buddhist “schools” in these areas and, in particular, on their varieties of doctrinal discourse. This is obviously a huge undertaking, but this article suggests that it may be possible.

Third, by reinserting specific practices of meditative visualization into a “mainstream” Chinese Mahāyāna school, this article suggests in a concrete way how mainstream Mahāyāna Buddhist meditative visualization may have looked and operated. As in the previous point, by turning our perspective around, we may be in a better position to appreciate contemporary Pure Land applications, and later tantric elaborations, of these techniques.

NOTES

1. I.e., the area surrounding the modern city of Nanjing (南京) and extending south and southeast, the so-called Jiangnan (江南) region. The Japanese scholarship on early Tiantai (Jpn. Tendai) meditative practices is enormous. For general surveys of the meditative corpus see, for example, Sekiguchi Shindai, *Tendai shōshikan no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1954); and Ikeda Rosen, *Maka shikan kenkyū josetsu* (Tokyo: Daitō Shuppansha, 1986). A useful treatment of the specific meditation manuals compiled by Zhiyi is Sekiguchi Shindai, *Tendai shikan no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969). The only treatment in English of the Tiantai corpus of meditative visualization practices, especially those organized under the rubric of the fourfold samādhi (*sizhong sanmei*, 四種三昧) system, is by Daniel Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi in Early T'ien-t'ai Buddhism," in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter N. Gregory, Kuroda Institute, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, no. 4 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986), pp. 45–97; and "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). For a discussion of Zhiyi's great meditative manual, the *Mohe zhiguan* (摩訶止觀), together with a translation of its first, synoptic chapter, see Neal Donner and Daniel Stevenson, ed. and trans., *The Great Calming and Contemplation: A Study and Annotated Translation of the First Chapter of Chih-i's Mo-ho chih-kuan*, Kuroda Institute, Classics in East Asian Buddhism (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1993). The *Mohe zhiguan* is being completely translated into English by Paul Swanson; for his annotated translation of the first six fascicles (*juan*, 卷), roughly 40 percent of the whole text, together with substantial quotations from Zhiyi's earlier meditation manuals and a dictionary of Tiantai terminology, see Paul Swanson, trans., *The Great Cessation-and-Contemplation (Mo-ho chih-kuan)* (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co., 2004), CD-ROM. Much of Swanson's material is online: <http://www.nanzan-u.ac.jp/SHUBUNKEN/staff/staff.htm>. Among the other writings on meditation attributed to Zhiyi two meditation manuals stand out: the *Shichan boluomi cidi famen* (釋禪波羅蜜次第法門; *Taishō*, vol. 46, no. 1916), known in the literature by a variety of names but commonly referred to as the *Cidi chanmen* and the *Xiuxi zhiguan zuochan fayao* (修習止觀坐禪法要) (*Taishō*, vol. 46, no. 1916), commonly known as the *Xiao zhiguan* (小止觀), or *Small Śamatha-Vipaśyanā*. In contrast to the *Mohe zhiguan*, which describes the "perfect and sudden" (*yuandun*, 圓頓) approach to meditation, the *Cidi chanmen* outlines the gradual approach. Although virtually unstudied by Western scholars, significant portions of this manual are quoted in the notes to Swanson's translation of the *Mohe zhiguan*. Perhaps because of its

brevity and generality the *Xiao zhiguan* has been the most accessible of the Tiantai meditation manuals outside of the Tiantai tradition. On the *Xiao zhiguan* see Sekiguchi, *Tendai shōshikan no kenkyū*. It has been translated into English at least five times: the concise, but incomplete, translation of Kakuso Okakura, "On the Method of Practising Concentration and Contemplation," *Harvard Theological Review* 16, no. 2 (April 1923): pp. 109–141; the incomplete translation in Swanson, *The Great Cessation-and-Contemplation*; and complete translations by Dwight Goddard and Bhikshu Wai-tao, "The Practice of Dhyaana for Beginners," in *A Buddhist Bible*, ed. Dwight Goddard, 2nd ed., revised and enlarged (Thetford, VT: E. P. Dutton, 1938; repr., Boston: Beacon Press, 1970), pp. 437–496; Lu K'uan Yü (Charles Luk), "Śamatha-Vipaśyanā for Beginners (T'ung meng chih kuan)," in *Secrets of Chinese Meditation*, ed. Lu K'uan Yü (London: Rider & Company, 1964), pp. 111–156; and Michael Saso, *Zen Is for Everyone: The Xiao Zhi Guan Text by Zhi Yi* (Carmel, CA: New Life Center; Honolulu: Tendai Institute; distributed by University of Hawai'i Press, 2000).

2. See Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi," pp. 50–51. Here northeastern China for our purposes includes the Yellow River watershed east of Luoyang and the area northeast of Luoyang and east of the Taihang mountain range.

3. Jinhua Chen provides a study of late sixth- and early seventh-century Buddhist meditative traditions from the vantage point of Daoxuan's essay, the "Xichan lun" (習禪論), or "Critical Discussion on the Practice of Meditation" appended to the fifth section (of six) of his biographies of monks characterized as meditators (*xichan*) in his *Xu Gaoseng zhuang* (續高僧傳, XGSZ, *Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, pp. 595c.26–597b.23). See, Julia Chen, *Monks and Monarchs, Kinship and Kingship: Tanqian in Sui Buddhism and Politics*, Italian School of East Asian Studies, Essays, vol. 3 (Kyoto: Scuola Italiana di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 2002). The translation and much of his discussion of this essay are also included in Chen, *Monks and Monarchs*, pp. 149–179.

4. See K. R. Norman, "Death and the Tathāgata," in *Bukkyō bunkagaku ronshū: Maeda Egaku hakushi shōju kinen*, compiled by the Maeda Egaku hakushi shōju kinenkai (Tokyo: Sankibō Busshorin, 1991), pp. 1–11.

5. Two good recent studies of relics in Buddhism are by John Strong, *Relics of the Buddha* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and David Germano and Kevin Trainor, eds., *Embodying the Dharma: Buddhist Relic Veneration in Asia* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004).

6. The rise of the visual and its implications for Buddhist culture, doctrine, and practice has recently been studied by David McMahan, *Empty Vision: Metaphor and Visionary Imagery in Mahāyāna Buddhism* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

7. *Daoxing Boruo jing* (道行般若經), ch. 10 (*Taishō*, vol. 8, no. 224, p. 476b.17–22). The eight similes of the Buddha's voice and body are as: (1) a lute, (2) a pipe, (3) an image, (4) a drum, (5) a painting, (6) a palace of the gods, (7) an echo, and (8) a magically created man. For a more complete discussion of these similes see Lewis Lancaster, "An Early Mahayana Sermon about the Body of the Buddha and the Making of Images," *Artibus Asiae* 36, no. 4 (1974): pp. 287–291.

8. This has recently been translated into English by Paul Harrison; see Paul Harrison, trans., *The Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*, BDK English Tripiṭaka, 25-II (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1998). For a critical edition of the later Tibetan versions of this sutra, as well as an English translation of this edition, see Paul Harrison, ed., *The Tibetan Text of the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Sammukhāvasthita-Samādhi-Sūtra*, *Studia Philologica Buddhica*, Monograph Series, no. 1 (Tokyo: Reiyukai Library, 1978); and Paul Harrison, trans., *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present: An Annotated English Translation of the Tibetan Version of the Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Sammukhāvasthita-Samādhi-Sūtra*, *Studia Philologica Buddhica*, Monograph Series, no. 5 (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1990).

9. See, e.g., Harrison, *The Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*, p. 18: "It is the same, Bhadrāpāla, for the minds of the bodhisattvas: when they perform this calling to mind, the famous great mountains and the Mount Sumerus in all the Buddha-realms, and all the places of darkness between them, are laid open to them, so that their vision is not obscured, and their minds are not obstructed. These bodhisattvas mahāsattvas do not see through [the obstructions] with the divine eye, nor hear through them with the divine ear, nor travel to that Buddha-field by means of the supernormal power of motion, nor do they die here to be reborn in that Buddha-field there, and only then see; rather, while sitting here they see the Buddha Amitābha, hear the sutras which he preaches, and receive them all. Rising from meditation they are able to preach them to others in full."

10. See, e.g., Harrison, *The Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra*, pp. 28 and 29.

11. See, for example, the division of late Six Dynasties and early Tang (唐) dynasty schools into philosophical and practice traditions in the very influential article by Stanley Weinstein, "Imperial Patronage in the Formation of T'ang Buddhism," in *Perspectives on the T'ang*, ed. Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 268–274. In addition to the Ten Stages lineages other schools classified as philosophical include Tiantai, Faxiang (法相), and Huayan (華嚴).

12. The most extensive treatment in English of Huiyuan's commentary to the *Guan Wuliangshou jing*, or *Visualization Sutra* as it is called by Pure Land scholars and adherents, is by Kenneth Tanaka, *The Dawn of Chinese*

Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine: Ching-ying Hui-yüan's Commentary on the Visualization Sutra (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990). Although Huiyuan's commentary is the earliest commentary to this sutra to survive, it has been relatively neglected until recently, since Huiyuan has not been considered "orthodox" by Japanese Pure Land scholars (both Jōdo Shū and Jōdo Shinshū). The *Dacheng yizhang* still awaits significant study. On Huiyuan's ambivalent attitude toward meditative practice see John McRae, "The Northern School of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1983), pp. 43–44.

13. See Cui Guang's (崔光) preface to the *Ten Stages Commentary* (*Taishō*, vol. 26, no. 1522, p. 123b.1–5). For a brief synopsis of the debate over the authenticity of this preface see Stanley Weinstein, "The Concept of *Ālaya-vijñāna* in Pre-T'ang Chinese Buddhism," in *Essays on the History of Buddhist Thought Presented to Professor Reimon Yūki* (Tokyo: Daizō Shuppan, 1964), p. 48 n. 4.

14. Chen, *Monks and Monarchs*, p. 25 and n. 41, argues for the alternative dates (after 476–after 560). The account of the different translations is given in Bodhiruci's biography in XGSZ (*Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 429a.5–16). The information that Huiguang was the one to combine the different translations is found in Huiguang's biography; see XGSZ, *Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 607c.19–20. The *Lidai sanbao ji* (歷代三寶紀), a catalogue of Buddhist scriptures compiled by Fei Changfang (費長房) in 597, states that in the beginning Bodhiruci helped Ratnamati in translating the text. Because of their different views, however, the two men quarreled over how to interpret and translate the text. Bodhiruci then withdrew and made his own translation (*Taishō*, vol. 49, no. 2034, p. 86b.27–c.1). For a brief account of this early sixth-century Yogācāra group and their attempts to come to grips with such Yogācāra concepts as the *ālaya-vijñāna* (storehouse consciousness) and whether Yogācāra advocated eight or nine consciousnesses, see Weinstein, "The Concept of *Ālaya-vijñāna*," pp. 34–35. Weinstein suggests that we may get some idea of the different views that divided Bodhiruci and Ratnamati by examining the debates that divided their disciples.

15. See below, section 7.

16. Pei Cui's (裴灌, ca. 665–736) "Inscription for Shaolin Monastery" ("Shaolinsi bei," 少林寺碑). For a transcription and translation, see Mamoru Tonami, *The Shaolin Monastery Stele on Mount Song*, trans. P. A. Herbert, ed. Antonino Forte, Italian School of East Asian Studies, Epigraphical Studies, no. 1 (Kyoto: Istituto Italiano di Cultura, Scuola di Studi sull'Asia Orientale, 1990), pp. 29–42. Huiguang and Buddha/bhadra's other disciples are mentioned on pp. 30 (line 32) and 37. A good introduction to this stele, its scholarship, and issues concerning it is provided by Tonami in *The Shaolin*

Monastery Stele, which includes revisions to the Japanese edition by the author and further annotations by P. A. Herbert.

17. On Sengchou's life and his influence in the sixth and early seventh centuries see McRae, "The Northern School of Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," pp. 31–50; and Chen, *Monks and Monarchs*, pp. 28–29, 151–154, and 170–179.

18. XGSZ (*Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 548c.15).

19. On Tanqian and his importance and contributions to the Ten Stages lineages and the Buddhism of this period, see Chen, *Monks and Monarchs*. For a translation of the relevant section of Tanqian's repentance prayer see pp. 62–63 of this essay and Chen, *Monks and Monarchs*, p. 96 n. 25.

20. The soteriological dimension derives from the claim that repentance rituals eliminated not only karma but *kleśa*, or defilements, as well. On how advancement on the Buddhist path to liberation was defined largely in terms of the *kleśas* eliminated, see, e.g., Collett Cox, "Attainment through Abandonment: The Sarvāstivādin Path of Removing Defilements," in *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. and Robert M. Gimello, Kuroda Institute, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, no. 7 (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), pp. 63–105.

21. Daoxuan, in his biography of Lingyu, refers to this cave temple as the "Jingang xingli zhuchi Naluoyan ku" (金剛性力住持那羅延窟), or "The Cave of Nārāyaṇa Upholder of the Residence of the Power of the Adamantine Nature"; see *Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 497b.11–12.

22. This contrasts, of course, with the practice of circumambulating a stūpa or central image of a buddha or bodhisattva. Here the practitioner moves clockwise, thereby showing respect to the buddha or bodhisattva by keeping his or her right shoulder toward the image.

23. All of the images in the cave are identified in the inscription written above the entrance on the outside; See Lee Yu-min, "Baoshan Dazhushengku chutan" (寶山大住聖窟初探, Preliminary Study of the Tu-chu-sheng Cave at Mt. Pao), *Gugong xueshu jikan* (故宮學術季刊) 16, no. 2 (Winter 1998): p. 8. Photographs of these images (only some of the thirty-five buddhas are represented) are provided in plates 2–20 in Lee, "Baoshan Dazhushengku chutan," pp. 43–52. A transcription of the text accompanying the images of the twenty-four Indian patriarchs is provided at Lee, "Baoshan Dazhushengku chutan," p. 42.

Tokiwa Daijō (常盤大定) and his team were the first modern scholars to investigate Mt. Bao, its inscriptions, and its structures. After they arrived there on November 30, 1921 they extensively photographed the site and took rubbings of every inscription. Transcriptions of many of the more important rubbings were published in Tokiwa Daijō and Sekino Tadashi,

Shina Bukkyō shiseki (Kyōto: Bukkyō Shiseki Kenkyūkai, 1927), text, 3, 159–210; photographs of the site and certain of the rubbings were published in Tokiwa and Sekino, *Shina Bukkyō shiseki* (1931), plates, 3, #127–147. The full set of rubbings and photographs is kept at Kyoto University's Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho (人文科學研究所). Many of the rubbings of the inscriptions have been recently republished, retranscribed, and translated into Japanese by Ōuchi Humio, "Hōsan Reisenji sekkutsu tamei no kenkyū" (寶山靈泉寺石窟塔銘の研究, "A Study of the Buddhist Pagoda Inscriptions in the Baoshan Lingquansi Grottoes: Baoshan Lingquansi of the Sui and Tang Dynasty"), *Tōhō gakuho* (東方學報) 69 (March 1997): pp. 287–355. He also provides a table for all of the Mt. Bao inscriptional rubbings kept at the Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūsho (pp. 336–345). In 1928 the Guomindang (國民黨) issued a law laicizing the Buddhist and Daoist clergy and confiscating their temples and monasteries; see, e.g., *Xu Anyang xianzhi* (續安陽縣志) (Beiping [北平]: Wenlan yigu songyin shuju [文嵐移古宋印書局], 1933), 12, ch. 11.1b–2b. Wei Juxian, in *Zhongguo kaoguxue shi* (中國考古學史), *Zhongguo wenhua shi congshu* (中國文化史叢書), vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), p. 197, quoting an article published in the December 27, 1934 issue of Nanjing's *Zhaobao* (朝報), notes that at that time all of the larger statues in the cave temples had had their heads chopped off by profiteers collaborating with locals. Presumably, the monastery was largely if not totally deserted by that time. See also Zhang Zhi, *Anyang kaoshi: Yin, Ye, Anyang kaozheng ji* (安陽考釋殷鄴安陽考證集) (Beijing: Xinhua Chubanshe, 1997), pp. 172–183.

24. For a diagram showing the relative placement of all of these elements in the cave see Lee, "Baoshan Dazhushengku chutan," p. 27. At the top of the same page she also provides a table that gives all of the names of the thirty-five buddhas still legible and their placement relative to Vairocana, Amitābha, and Maitreya.

25. All of the inscriptions on the inside and outside of the cave are transcribed as they now appear in the appendix to Lee, "Baoshan Dazhushengku chutan," pp. 34–42. See also note 24, above.

26. This has become the accepted translation for the name of this ritual. There are, however, indications that this translation may be misleading. As we shall discuss later, there are always at least eight "registers" of buddhas. In addition, the word *jie* does not properly mean "register." It normally refers to a "step, stage, or level." For a tentative, alternative suggestion regarding the meaning of the title of this ritual see section 7, below.

27. That a text was regarded as canonical did not always mean, however, that it was translated from an Indic original. Six of the registers listed in this ritual come from *The Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Visualization of the Two Bodhisattvas the King of Healing and Supreme Healer* (佛說觀藥

王藥上二菩薩經) (*Taishō*, vol. 20, no. 1161). This text, together with five other visualization texts supposedly translated in the first third of the fifth century, form a cluster known collectively as the Visualization Sutras (*guan jing*, 觀經). They all share a number of common features. The authenticity of at least two of these have been called into question: the *Foshuo Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* (*Taishō*, vol. 12, no. 365), and the *Guan fo sanmei hai jing* (觀佛三昧海經) (*Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643). For a discussion of the first text see Meiji Yamada, ed., *The Sūtra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life as Expounded by Śākyamuni Buddha* (佛說觀無量壽佛經), trans. and annotated by the Ryukoku University Translation Center (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1984), pp. xi–xl; for a discussion of the second, see Nobuyoshi Yamabe, “The Sūtra on the Ocean-Like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha: The Interfusion of the Chinese and Indian Cultures in Central Asia as Reflected in a Fifth Century Apocryphal Sūtra” (PhD diss., Yale University, 1999), pp. 115–124 and 186–215. Because of the many similarities among these six texts, questioning the authenticity of these two works in turn raises the issue of whether any of these texts are based on an Indic original.

28. *Jueding pini jing* (決定毘尼經) (*Taishō*, vol. 12, no. 325, pp. 38c–39a). The text is also known as the *Upālipariprcchā-sūtra*. It was later retranslated in the early eighth century by Bodhiruci as part of the Chinese *Ratnakūṭa* collection.

29. The text in curly brackets is supplied through reference to the parallel texts, Beijing 8344/Yu 16 from Dunhuang and the first fascicle of Zhisheng’s (智升, fl. 730 CE) *Ji zhu jing lichanyī* (集諸經禮懺儀) (*Taishō*, vol. 47, no. 1982, pp. 456c–457a) compiled in 730 CE. Beijing 8344/Yu 16, whose text is representative of this subgenre among the Dunhuang manuscripts, entitles this ritual “The Abridged Method of Repentance for Reverencing the Buddhas of the Seven Registers [Taken from] *The Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Visualization of the Two Bodhisattvas the King of Healing and Supreme Healer* (佛說觀藥王藥上二菩薩經等略禮七階佛懺悔法).”

The conventions followed in the numbering of these arrays of buddhas are: numbers in **bold** indicate those arrays of buddhas referred to in the *Scripture Spoken by the Buddha on the Visualization of the Two Bodhisattvas the King of Healing and Supreme Healer*; and underlined numbers refer to those arrays of buddhas for which the individual names are to be recited and whose names have been inscribed prior to the repentance prayer in the lower register on the wall outside Lingyu’s cave.

30. Other versions of this ritual indicate that this list begins with Akṣobhya Tathāgata; see, e.g., Beijing 8344/Yu 16 and *Taishō*, vol. 47, no. 1982, p. 456c.4.

31. I.e., the *mlecchas* (*miliche*, 彌戾車).

32. *Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* (*anouduoluo sanmiao sanputi*, 阿耨多羅三藐三菩提).

33. This last curly-bracketed portion has eroded away at Mt. Bao and has been supplied from the parallel versions. Whether the Mt. Bao inscription included the verses that normally conclude this prayer or any other supplementary text cannot be determined from any of the extant rubbings from the site.

34. Daniel Stevenson, "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), p. 281. The Dunhuang manuscript *kun* 96 is dated to the fifth day of the first lunar month of the third year of the *shangyuan* (上元) reign period. There are two periods with this title: 674–675 and 760–761. Both are thus officially only two years long. In the first instance the reign period was changed to *yifeng* (儀鳳) in the eleventh lunar month of 676; that year then retroactively became the first year of that reign period. In the second case the *shangyuan* reign period ended on the twenty-first day of the ninth lunar month of 761; the new reign period was used only after this date. There was no third year. If Beijing *kun* 96 was written or copied early in the third year of *shangyuan* this would have to have taken place prior to the eleventh lunar month of 676.

35. The dated manuscripts are listed by Hirokawa Gyōbin, "Tonkō shutsudo *Nanakai butsumyōkyō* ni tsuite: Sangaikyō to Jōdokyō to no kōshō," *Shūkyō kenkyū* 50, no. 4 [no. 251] (March 1982): p. 76.

36. The absence of these two names in P. 2849 also supports the thesis that the contents of the manuscript as we have them may indeed be early and represent these texts as the late sixth-century Three Stages communities knew them.

37. Forms of the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" that utilize a "Samantabhadra Repentance" prayer, rather than the "Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance" prayer, mostly omit this roster. Also, at least one text of the "Buddha Names of the Seven Registers" that uses the "Thirty-Five Buddha Repentance" prayer omits this roster; see S. 4781 (*Dunhuang baozang* [敦煌寶藏] [hereafter *DHBZ*] 37.664b).

38. *Taishō*, vol. 20, no. 1160, p. 664b.1–5. For a study and translation of this text and other texts related to the Healing Buddha (Bhaiṣajyaguru), see Raoul Birnbaum, *The Healing Buddha* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1989); this text is translated on pp. 115–148.

39. For a translation of this section see Hisao Inagaki, ed. and trans., *Ōjōronchū: T'an-luan's Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse on the Pure Land* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1998), pp. 139–147. In addition to translating the "Chapter on Easy Practice" (verses and commentary) as

well as all of the verses in the *Daśabhūmivibhāṣa*, Inagaki's work provides very useful tables and annotated lists for those buddhas whose names appear in this chapter. It is important to note that this chapter forms an introduction, or prologue, to the next chapter on the elimination of karma which outlines a four-limbed *pūjā* of repentance (*chanhui*, 懺悔), requesting the buddhas to stay in the world and teach (*quanqing*, 勸請), rejoicing in the merits of others (*suixi*, 隨喜), and transfer of merit (*huixiang*, 迴向). These two chapters in effect outline a repentance ritual where the first chapter parallels our rosters of buddhas and the second provides the repentance prayer and ritual format for the repentance.

40. *Taishō*, vol. 26, no. 1521, pp. 41b–42c.

41. *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, pp. 678a, 688b–c, and 694b–c. This text has recently been the subject of an extensive study by Nobuyoshi Yamabe, "The *Sūtra on the Ocean-Like Samādhi*."

42. See p. 50 of this essay.

43. In the ritual's prologue the practitioner is instructed to perform the repentance surrounded by the thirty-five buddhas (*sanshi wu fo qian*, 三十五佛邊; other versions of the text read *qian* [前] for *bian* [邊], "in front of the thirty-five buddhas"); see *Taishō*, vol. 12, no. 325, p. 38c.19. The injunction to visualize the thirty-five buddhas is given in the ritual's epilogue:

In this way the bodhisattva should visualize the thirty-five buddhas as if they were in front of your very eyes, meditating upon those qualities that the tathāgatas possess. In this way he should perform his purification and repentance. Should the bodhisattva be able to purify these offenses, at that time the buddhas will manifest their bodies before him and will also explain a variety of practices in order to convert sentient beings....

菩薩如是觀三十五佛如在目前思惟如來所有功德應作如是清淨懺悔菩薩若能淨此罪已爾時諸佛為其現身為度眾生亦說種種諸行....

44. P. 2849 (*DHBZ* 124.466b–472b). See also note 55, below.

45. P. 2849 (*DHBZ* 124.472b–474a).

46. P. 2849 (*DHBZ* 124.474a–476a).

47. See Nishimoto Teruma, "Sangaikyō shinshutsu shiryō P 2849 no kisoteki kenkyū," *Nanto Bukkyō* 72 (1995): pp. 75–85 (*Zhifa*), 85–86 (texts on eating), 86 (*Shou bajie fa*); *Sangaikyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1998), pp. 190–196, 196–197, and 197–198.

48. See Stevenson, "The T'ien-t'ai Four Forms of Samadhi," pp. 278–279.

49. *Taishō*, vol. 47, no. 1958, p. 14c. For an alternative translation see Inagaki, *Ōjōronchū*, p. 18. My translation of *jun* (均) as "constrain," i.e., focus, is based on the simile that Tanluan provides immediately following this passage:

"It is as when one drives an ox with some grass placed before it; its thought should be fixed on the manger" (Inagaki, *Ōjōronchū*, p. 18). Although we know from Daoxuan's biography of Tanluan (*Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 470a–c) that Emperor Jing respected Tanluan and even bestowed upon him the title "Divine Phoenix" (*shen luan*, 神鸞), the point here is not whether this exchange actually took place. The passage's importance lies rather in how, using Tanluan's position as a foil, it speaks to the general perceptions of Buddhist practice around Ye in the late sixth century.

50. See, e.g., B. 8309/*Run* (閏) 43 (DHBZ 109.609a–b), B. 8310/*Diao* (調) 81 (DHBZ 109.611a–b), B. 8317/*Yu* (玉) 91 (DHBZ 109.632b), B. 8319/*Hao* (號) 13 (DHBZ 109.643a–b), B. 8329/*Di* (帝) 2 (DHBZ 110.6a–b), S. 1306 (DHBZ 10.34a–b), S. 2360 (DHBZ 18.564a–b), S. 2574 (DHBZ 21.202b). This is also the title of chapter 10 of Xinxing's *Zhifa*; see DHBZ 124.470a. These Dunhuang manuscripts confirm that the "Text for Taking Vows at the Six Periods of the Day and Night" ends at this point. The short epilogue that follows was probably written by Zhisheng himself. Only one Dunhuang manuscript contains this epilogue, S. 2574 (DHBZ 21.202b).

51. *Taishō*, vol. 47, no. 1982, p. 465c.2–8. Reading *guang* (廣) in *Ji zhujiing lichanyi* as *ying* following VV as well as most Dunhuang manuscripts; see previous note. The ritual of the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" comprises the whole of the first *juan* (卷) (of two) of Zhisheng's *Ji zhujiing lichanyi*. Stevenson, "The T'ien-t'ai Four Forms of Samadhi," p. 277, has stated that Zhisheng's bibliographic catalogue, the *Kaiyuan shi jiao lu* (開元釋教錄), also completed in 730, may be the first catalogue to attribute liturgies of the "Buddha Name in Seven Registers" to Xinxing; it lists expanded (*guang*, 廣) and abbreviated (*lue*, 略) versions, both in one *juan*; see *Taishō*, vol. 55, no. 2154, p. 678c. Hirokawa Takatoshi [Gyōbin], "Tonkō shutsudo *nanakai butsumyōkyō* ni tsuite," p. 72, notes both that the *Ren ji lu du mu* (人集錄都目), a catalogue that slightly predates Zhisheng's catalogue, lists the abbreviated version in five sheets (*zhi*, 紙), and that the *Zhenyuan xinding shi jiao mu lu* (貞元新定釋教目錄), a catalogue completed by Yuanzhao (圓照) in 800, lists the expanded version in thirty sheets. Stevenson ("The T'ien-t'ai Four Forms of Samadhi," p. 278) and others have conjectured, rightly I believe, that most, or even all, of the Dunhuang manuscripts containing the so-called longer "Buddha Names in Seven Registers" ritual probably represent the abbreviated version. They do not seem to have noticed, however, that the version Zhisheng presents in his *Ji zhujiing lichanyi* matches the relative length of the expanded version rather closely, i.e., thirty sheets vs. twenty-four registers (in one *juan*) in the *Taishō* version of Zhisheng's text and five sheets vs. four registers for the shorter version, a 1:6 ratio. Consequently, I suspect that the text that Zhisheng gives us after the shorter version he provides at the beginning of the chapter (*Taishō*, vol. 47, no. 1982, pp. 457b.18–465b.9) is actually the expanded version.

52. See note 43, above.

53. The opening supplication to the buddhas in the vow text is, as we have noted, idiosyncratic to Three Stages' rituals: "May the buddhas of the ten directions and three periods of time bear witness to and hold in mind your disciple, so-and-so" (十方三世諸佛當證知弟子某甲等). This formulaic supplication also precedes each of the seven sections of the repentance prayer Xinxing uses in his version of the "Buddha Names in Seven Registers," opens the ritual recitation for the "Method for Receiving the Eight Precepts" ("Shou bajie fa," 受八戒法), and occurs as a constant refrain throughout that text; see P. 2849 (DHBZ 124.474a–476a).

54. B. 8317 (DHBZ 109.632b) has an abridged "Method for Taking Vows at the Six Periods of the Day and Night" that does not conclude with this set of instructions. This demonstrates that at least some medieval Chinese Buddhists regarded this set of instructions as a separate text.

55. In the Dunhuang manuscript containing the Three Stages' *Zhifa* (P. 2849; DHBZ 124.466b–72b), section 10, "The Method for Venerating the Buddhas" ("Lifo fa") (DHBZ 124.470a), contains the first part of these instructions—which rosters of the ritual are to be done in summary (*zong*, 總), i.e., reciting the roster name only, and which were to be recited separately (*bie*, 別), i.e., reciting each buddha's name in the roster, at which parts of the day or night—but does not include these last lines that are a virtual quotation from the VV. Instead it concludes these instructions with a description of how the group performing the ritual is to coordinate the chanting with the bowing and what to do if one did not have the strength to keep up with the group while practicing the ritual. Nishimoto Teruma ("Sangaikyō shinshutsu shiryō P 2849 no kisoteki kenkyū," p. 84) argues plausibly that this *Zhifa* is in fact the text referred to by Daoxuan in his biography of Xinxing as the *Shandong suozhi zhongshi zhufa* (山東所制眾事諸法), "The Rules for the Affairs of the Congregation Which Were Instituted East of the Mountains." "East of the Mountains" refers to the area east of the Taihang mountain range, i.e., while Xinxing was still residing in the Ye area. While it is unclear when Xinxing left Ye to go to Chang'an, it may have been as early as 583, but definitely no later than 589; See Nishimoto, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, pp. 60–61.

56. For a summary of this system in English as well as references to the relevant Japanese bibliography see Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi." For references to those practices specifically identified as coming from Huisi, see Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi," pp. 50–51. Of the six meditative practices organized into the fourfold samādhi system only the last, the *suizi yi* (隨自意), does not require any visualization practice; see Stevenson, "The Four Kinds of Samādhi," pp. 75–84.

57. The *Ocean Sutra* is divided into twelve sections: (1) "The Six Similes"

("Liu bi," 六臂), (2) "The Ground of Sequential Visualization" ("Xu guan di," 序觀地), (3) "Visualizing the Marks" ("Guan xiang," 觀相), (4) "Visualizing the Heart of the Buddha" ("Guan foxin," 觀佛心), (5) "Visualizing the Heart of the Four Immeasurables" ("Guan si wuliang xin," 觀四無量心), (6) "Visualizing the Four Awesome Qualities" ("Guan si weiyi," 觀四威儀), (7) "Visualizing the Organ of the Horse King" (a treatment of the Buddha's male organ) ("Guan ma wang zang," 觀馬王藏), (8) "The Fundamental Practices" (a small collection of *Jātaka* stories, i.e., stories of the Buddha's previous births) ("Ben xing," 本行), (9) "Visualizing the Image" ("Guan xiang," 觀像), (10) "Calling to Mind the Seven Buddhas" ("Nian qi fo," 念七佛), (11) "Calling to Mind the Buddhas of the Ten Directions" ("Nian shifang fo," 念十方佛), (12) "Secret Practices for Visualizing the Buddhas" ("Guanfo mixing," 觀佛密行). For the seven buddhas see *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, p. 693a–c; for the buddhas of the ten directions see *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, p. 693c–695b; for the buddhas filling all of space see *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, p. 690a–693c.

58. Charles Jones, "Toward a Typology of Nien-fo: A Study in Methods of Buddha-Invocation in Chinese Pure Land Buddhism," *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, 3rd ser., 3 (Fall 2001): pp. 224–225, summarizes Mochizuki Shinkō's discussion of four types of nianfo (念佛), buddhānasmṛti or Buddha mindfulness, ostensibly outlined by Zongmi (宗密, 780–841 CE). The second and third types are the "mindfulness of contemplating the image" (*guan xiang*, 觀像) and "mindfulness of contemplating the characteristics" (*guan xiang*, 相). Whether such a distinction between contemplating (or visualizing) the image and visualizing the characteristics (marks) was made during the time period under discussion here is not yet known. The fifth-century texts that treat meditative visualization appear to regard them as two variations on the same meditation, each supporting the other.

59. *Taishō*, vol. 10, no. 287, pp. 535c.12–536a.21. For a translation see Honda Megumu, "Annotated Translation of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*," in *Studies in South, East, And Central Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor, Śāta-Piṭaka Series, Indo-Asian Literatures, vol. 74, ed. Raghu Vira (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), pp. 118–121.

60. The sutra notes, for example, that Vajragarbha attained "the ultimate essence of meditation"; see *Taishō*, vol. 10, no. 287, p. 536a.16–17 and Honda, "Annotated Translation of the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*," p. 120.

61. *Taishō*, vol. 26, no. 1522, p. 124a.7. The *Daśabhūmika-sūtra* and the *Daśabhūmikavyūkyāna* were, of course, two fundamental texts for the Ten Stages lineages.

62. See *Huayan jing tanxuan ji* (華嚴經探玄記; *Taishō*, vol. 35, no. 1733, pp. 280a, 411a). Fazang was the main disciple of Zhiyan and the great

systematizer of Huayan thought. Zhiyan, later designated the second patriarch of the Huayan lineage, was also a member of the Ten Stages lineages, being a third generation successor of Lingyu. He attained direct realization through meditation on the “six characteristics” (六相) listed in the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*. For a detailed discussion of Zhiyan, his life, and his works, see Robert Gimello, “Chih-yen, (602–668) and the Foundations of Hua-yen Buddhism” (PhD diss., Columbia University, 1976).

63. The four great samādhis are: the radiance of the Mahāyāna; the king of compiling merit and virtue (*ji fude wang*, 集福德王); the Bhadrāpāla (*fahu sanmei*, 法護三昧); the Śūrangama (*shoulengyan*, 首楞嚴).

64. *Da fangguang fo huayan jing shu* (大方廣佛華嚴經疏) (*Taishō*, vol. 35, no. 1735, p. 879b).

65. Apart from Yamabe’s 1999 dissertation, the *Ocean Sutra* has been little studied; no translation into any Western language exists. A Sogdian fragment translated from the Chinese and corresponding to much of this chapter (*Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, pp. 690c.5–692c.28), however, exists and has been much studied. Now kept in the British Library it has been studied extensively by David MacKenzie, ed. and trans., *The Buddhist Sogdian Texts of the British Library*, Acta Iranica, vol. 10. Troisième Série, Textes et Mémoire, vol. 3 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), pp. 1.53–77, 2.49–70, 3.67–108) who has published a photographic facsimile of the Sogdian translation, an English translation, notes, a general glossary, and references to all of the previous scholarship on the text. Among the earlier studies of this fragment particular mention should be made of Friedrich Weller’s (“Bemerkungen zum sogdischen Dhyāna-Texte,” *Monumenta Serica* 2 [1936–1937]: pp. 341–404; *Monumenta Serica* 3 [1938]: pp. 78–129) extensive philological study of the Sogdian and Chinese versions, Émile Benveniste’s extensive notes to the text, and Paul Demiéville’s French translation, without notes, of the corresponding Chinese portion of the text.

66. *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, p. 690c.20–28.

67. *Chuan* (踰, also written 膾), usually glossed as “calf” (*feichang*, 腓腸). Some translate *chuan* as calf (Yamabe, “The *Sūtra on the Ocean-Like Samādhi*,” pp. 230, 242), some as “thigh” (William Soothill and Lewis Hodous, eds., *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd., 1937], p. 60a, q.v. 三十二). The Sanskrit *aiṇeya*(*eṇiya*)-*jaṅgha* (Pāli *eṇijaṅgha*) refers generally to the leg of the *aiṇeya* deer (or antelope). In *Mahāvīyūtpatti*’s list of the thirty-two marks (#236–267) it is the last mark. In *Mochizuki Bukkyō daijiten* (Tokyo: Sekai Seiten Kankōkyōkai, 1958), treatment of the thirty-two marks (vol. 2, pp. 1554–1560), it is number 8 (vol. 2, p. 1556a); see also Franklin Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, vol. 2 (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 155ab, and 158a.

68. *Ji* (髻), i.e., the topknot on the crown of the head.

69. The visualization of the individual marks is treated somewhat haphazardly and incompletely in chapter 3, which comprises almost 40 percent of the whole text; see *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, pp. 648c–668b.

70. Early on, of course, Buddhists created the model of the *trīṇi śikṣāṇi* (Ch. *san xue*, 三學): *śīla/sīla*, “morality or precepts”; *samādhi*, “concentration or trance”; and *prajñā/paññā*, “wisdom.” In this model each is the basis for the next: morality, or the observance of the precepts, reduces mental anguish and attachment and promotes the stability that nourishes the cultivation of concentration or trance; trance gives rise to clarity, which makes the penetrating vision of wisdom possible; see, e.g., Robert Buswell, Jr. and Robert Gimello, introduction to *Paths to Liberation: The Mārga and Its Transformations in Buddhist Thought* (see note 2), pp. 6–7. To the best of my knowledge, however, no Buddhist in India connected the purification of the precepts through repentance to the development of mental or transcendent clarity with such specificity.

71. *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, p. 691a.3–7.

72. *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, p. 691a.7–16.

73. *Tiao shen*, “regulate the body,” carries the sense of physically relaxing the body. This sentence may also be rendered, “Relax the body through massage.”

74. *Jingjie* here probably represents the Sanskrit word *viśaya*, “range, sphere, object of perception”; see Friedrich Weller, “Bemerkungen zum sogdischen Dhyāna-Texte,” *Monumenta Serica* 2 (1936–1937): pp. 392–394. Here it cannot indicate a buddha-field, since we have not yet covered that in the visualization. Rather it must indicate the buddhas as “objects of [mental] perception,” i.e., as objects of meditation. That the text does not expect the practitioner to actually see the buddhas at this point is made clear by its choice of terms: the practitioner is to visualize (*guan*) the buddhas, not see (*jian*, 見) them.

75. *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, p. 691b.10.

76. On the *Ugraparipṛcchā* see Jan Nattier, *A Few Good Men: The Bodhisattva Path according to The Inquiry of Ugra (Ugraparipṛcchā)*, Studies in the Buddhist Traditions (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2003); on the “Triskandha(ka),” the earliest known repentance ritual, see Nattier, *A Few Good Men*, pp. 117–121, 259–260, and note 336; and Nancy Barnes, “Rituals, Religious Communities, and Buddhist Sūtras in India and China,” in *Buddhism Across Boundaries: Chinese Buddhism and the Western Regions (Collection of Essays 1993)*, ed. Erik Zürcher and others (Taipei: Foguang Cultural Enterprise Co., Ltd., 1999), pp. 485–515.

77. Yamabe Nobuyoshi, “*Bonmōkyō ni okeru kōsōgyō no kenkyū*: Toku ni zenkan kyōten to no kanrensei ni chakumoku shite,” in *Hokuchō Zui Tō chūgoku bukkyō shisō shi*, ed. Aramaki Noritoshi (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2000), pp. 205–269. A revised English version of this paper has been published as Yamabe Nobuyoshi, “Visionary Repentance and Visionary Ordination in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*,” in *Going Forth: Visions of Buddhist Vinaya: Essays Presented in Honor of Professor Stanley Weinstein*, ed. William M. Bodiford, Kuroda Institute, Studies in East Asian Buddhism, no. 18 (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005), pp. 17–39.

78. Yamabe, “*Bonmōkyō ni okeru kōsōgyō no kenkyū*,” pp. 207–209.

79. *Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 496c.25–26. This is reminiscent of Daojing’s situation after he received the bodhisattva precepts; see Yamabe, “*Bonmōkyō ni okeru kōsōgyō no kenkyū*,” p. 208; and Yamabe, “Visionary Repentance and Visionary Ordination,” p. 20.

80. A yojana is most commonly defined as the distance an ox can go in one harnessing (usually within one day). Estimates of actual distance range from 2.5 to 9 miles.

81. *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, pp. 693c.28–695b.7.

82. *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, pp. 693c.29–694a.18.

83. Reading *yin* (隱), “secret, hidden,” as *wen* (穩), “stable; stability.” This name does not correspond exactly to the name of this buddha land known from other sources, Āśoka “Without Sorrow.”

84. When a bodhisattva attains the first stage of bodhisattva practice he or she obtains the ability to create up to one hundred multiple, or replicate, bodies (*fenshen*, 分身) in order to visit various pure lands and receive teachings. As the bodhisattva progresses along the bodhisattva path, the number of replicate bodies he or she can produce increases. A buddha can create an innumerable number of these bodies.

85. The transformation body (*huashen*, 化身) is a buddha’s *nirmāṇakāya*, the body a buddha manifests in the human realm when he attains buddhahood. By extension it represents the body through which he enters the realms of samsara in order to save beings.

86. *Shizi zuo*, 師子座, commonly stands for 獅子座, i.e., Simhāsana, the Lion Throne, the seat from which the Buddha teaches.

87. I.e., in the so-called “lotus position” (*padmāsana*).

88. The value of a nayuta/*niyuta* varies and may be more or less than a koṭi, usually translated as Krore and representing ten million (although this may vary); see Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, vol. 2, p. 98b, q.v. *niyuta*. Basing himself on the Tibetan, Edgerton remarks that a *niyuta* may be vary from one million to one hundred billion.

89. This is the second stage of the “ten stages of the pervasive teaching” (*shidi tongjiao*, 十地通教); see, e.g., Leon Hurvitz, “Chih-i (538–597): An Introduction to the Life and Ideas of a Chinese Buddhist Monk,” *Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques* 12 (1960–1962): pp. 260–262, 361.

90. *Taishō*, vol. 15, no. 643, pp. 694c.29–695b.7.

91. A similar situation can be inferred from Tanluan’s *Zan Amituo fo jie* (讚阿彌陀佛偈; *Taishō*, vol. 47, no. 1978, pp. 420c–424b), or *Verses in Praise of Amitābha Buddha*. These verses are to be recited while bowing before the Buddha; ostensibly the visualization these verses describe is to be performed at the same time. For a translation of these verses, or canticles, as Roger Corless has termed them, see Roger Corless, trans., “T’an-luan’s Canticles to Amita Buddha,” *The Pure Land*, n.s., 6 (December 1989): pp. 262–278; and 7 (December 1990): pp. 124–137.

92. See Buddhaghosa, *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*, trans. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, 4th ed. (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1979), pp. 129–130, 161, 165, and 171. These correspond to sections IV.29, IV.138, IV.152, and IV.181 in Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli’s translation.

93. Funayama Toru (“Masquerading as Translation: Examples of Chinese Lectures by Indian Scholar-Monks in the Six Dynasties Period,” *Asia Major*, 3rd ser., 19, nos. 1–2 [2006]: pp. 48–50) discusses this text as one in which translated sections are intermixed with commentary by Bodhiruci.

94. *Taishō*, vol. 25, no. 1512, p. 863b–c.

95. *Taishō*, vol. 40, no. 1819. This text has been translated, annotated, and discussed by both Roger Corless (“T’an-luan’s Commentary on the Pure Land Discourse: An Annotated Translation and Soteriological Analysis of the *Wang-sheng-lun-chu* [*Taishō* no. 1819]” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1973) and Hisao Inagaki (*Ōjōronchū: T’an-luan’s Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse on the Pure Land* [Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1998]). I am indebted to Professor Roger Corless for bringing Tanluan’s writings to my attention and showing me their importance for understanding late sixth-century meditative and ritual practice.

96. *Taishō*, vol. 40, no. 1819, p. 841b; see Corless, “T’an-luan’s Commentary on the Pure Land Discourse,” pp. 297–298; and Inagaki, *Ōjōronchū: T’an-luan’s Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse*, pp. 264–265.

97. *Taishō*, vol. 40, no. 1819, p. 832a; see Corless, “T’an-luan’s Commentary on the Pure Land Discourse,” pp. 171–176; and Inagaki, *Ōjōronchū: T’an-luan’s Commentary on Vasubandhu’s Discourse*, pp. 172–177.

98. The passage from the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing* occurs at *Taishō*, vol. 12, no. 365, p. 343a.19–22.

99. *Taishō*, vol. 40, no. 1819, p. 832a; see Corless, “T’an-luan’s Commentary on the Pure Land Discourse,” p. 172; and Inagaki, *Ōjōronchū: T’an-luan’s*

Commentary on Vasubandhu's Discourse, pp. 176–177. The underlined portions represent passages quoted from the *Guan Wuliangshou fo jing*.

100. On the development of the two / three truth theories in southern China from the fourth through the sixth centuries see, for example, Whalen Lai, "Chinese Buddhist Causation Theories: An Analysis of the Sinitic Mahāyāna Understanding of *Pratītya-samutpāda*," *Philosophy East and West* 27, no. 3 (July 1977): pp. 241–264; "Sinitic Understanding of the Two Truths Theory in the Liang Dynasty (502–557): Ontological Gnosticism in the Thoughts of Prince Chao-ming," *Philosophy East and West* 28, no. 3 (July 1978): pp. 339–351; "Further Developments of the Two Truths Theory in China: The *Ch'eng-shih-lun* Tradition and Chou Yung's *San-tsung-lun*," *Philosophy East and West* 30, no. 2 (April 1980): pp. 139–161; and "Sinitic Speculations on Buddha-nature: The Nirvāṇa School (420–589)," *Philosophy East and West* 32, no. 2 (April 1982): pp. 135–149; and Paul Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy: The Flowering of the Two Truths Theory in Chinese Buddhism*, Nanzan Studies in Religion and Culture (Berkeley, CA: Asian Humanities Press, 1989).

101. For overviews of these formulations, see Ming-wood Liu, *Madhyamaka Thought in China*, Sinica Leidensia, vol. 30 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), pp. 226–232; and Paul Swanson, *Foundations of T'ien-t'ai Philosophy*, pp. 115–156.

102. This aspect of Zhiyi's thought is brought out most clearly by Yu-Kwan Ng, *T'ien-t'ai Buddhism and Early Mādhyamika* (Honolulu: Tendai Institute of Hawaii and the Buddhist Studies Program of the University of Hawai'i, distributed by the University of Hawai'i Press, 1993), pp. 44, 62–89.

103. See also note 20.

104. The primary source for Tanqian's biography is the XGSZ (*Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, pp. 571b.12–574b.6); see Chen, *Monks and Monarchs*; for a translation of Tanqian's essay "Wang shifei lun" (亡是非論) see Whalen Lai, "T'an-ch'ien and the Early Ch'an Tradition: Translation and Analysis of the Essay 'Wang-shih-fei-lun,'" in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. Whalen Lai and Lewis Lancaster, Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, no. 5 (Berkeley, CA: Center for South and Southeast Asian Studies and The Group in Buddhist Studies, University of California, and The Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1983), pp. 65–87. Tanqian fled south to the Canton area after the Northern Zhou conquered the Northern Qi in 577 and extended its Buddhist persecution into the northeast. He appears to have been involved with the early history of the influential apocryphal text *Dacheng qixin lun* (大乘起信論), *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*; see Whalen Lai, "The *Chan-ch'a ching*: Religion and Magic in Medieval China," in *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, ed. Robert E. Buswell, Jr. (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1990), pp. 187–188. The Shelun (攝論) school, a

Yogācāra school that took its name from the *She dacheng lun* (攝大乘論, the *Mahāyāna samgraha* by Asanga), stems from Tanqian and his group who apparently obtained this text in the south and brought it back north.

105. His biography is found in the XGSZ (*Taishō*, vol. 50, no. 2060, p. 484a.11–b.2).

106. *Taishō*, vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 918b.6–8.

107. *Taishō*, vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 919a.19b–26.

108. *Taishō*, vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 918c.11–15.

109. This expression is found, for the first time I believe, in the apocryphal sutra *Datong fangguang chanhui miezui zhuangyan chengfo jing* (大通方廣懺悔滅罪莊嚴成佛經; *Taishō*, vol. 85, no. 2871, p. 1355b.10; S. 1847, DHBZ 14.124a), more commonly known as the *Datong fangguang jing*. We might also note that the phrase “A B *chengfo*” occurs in situations where “A B” describes the essential, if not sufficient, means to attain buddhahood, e.g., the later Chan Buddhist dictums “*kanxin chengfo*” (看心成佛), “Attain buddhahood through viewing the mind” and “*jianxing chengfo*” (見性成佛), “Attain buddhahood through seeing one’s nature.”

110. *Taishō*, vol. 46, no. 1911, p. 13c22–26. See also Donner and Stevenson, *The Great Calming and Contemplation*, p. 260.

111. *Taishō*, vol. 46, no. 1941.

112. This ritual has been translated in its entirety by Stevenson, “The T’ien-t’ai Four Forms of Samadhi,” pp. 468–537.

113. *Ibid.*, pp. 526–527.

114. *Ibid.*, pp. 534–535.

115. I.e., the *Guan Puxian pusa xingfa jing*.

116. *Taishō*, vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 916a10–c.29.

117. See Li-ying Kuo, *Confession et contrition dans le bouddhisme chinois du Ve au Xe siècle*, Publications de l’École Française d’Extrême-Orient, Monographies, n° 170 (Paris: École Française d’Extrême-Orient, 1994), pp. 71–77.

118. See Li-ying Kuo, *Confession et contrition*, pp. 71–74.

119. *Taishō*, vol. 47, no. 1982, p. 464b.10.

120. Yabuki Keiki, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1927), pp. 306–316, 523; Nishimoto, *Sangaikyō no kenkyū*, pp. 481–483; Hirokawa, “Tonkō shutsudo nanakai butsumyōkyō ni tsuite,” p. 79.

121. Daoshi’s version, the longer of the two, is found in his encyclopedia, the *Fayuan zhulin*, chapter 20, “Perfect[ing] Reverence” (“Zhijing,” 致敬); *Taishō*, vol. 53, no. 2122, pp. 435a.8–436a.7. Daoxuan’s version is found in

the second fascicle of his two fascicle work *Shimen gui jingyi* (釋門歸敬儀; *Taishō*, vol. 45, no. 1896, p. 815a.2–c.10). Ishii Kōsei (*Kegon shisō no kenkyū* [Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1996], pp. 493–501) mentions these three versions but only compares those by Daoshi and Daoxuan in very general ways. He further suggests (pp. 493–499) that the some of the terminology in the longer version presented by Daoshi shows the influence of *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*.

122. Zhiyan's version is found in his *Huayan jing neizhang mendeng za kongmu zhang* (華嚴經內章門等雜孔目章; usually known simply as *Kongmu zhang*; *Taishō*, vol. 45, no. 1870, p. 540b.4–c.16).

123. *Taishō*, vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 435a.23–28.

124. *Taishō*, vol. 45, no. 1870, p. 540b.16–17.

125. On *gongde* as the qualities to be visualized, see pp. 51–52 of this essay. This passage makes this explicit by adding the word “[major] characteristics” (*xiang*).

126. This suggests a model not unlike Zhiyi proposed with his distinction between *shichan* and *lichan*.

127. *Taishō*, vol. 45, no. 1896, p. 865b.28; *Taishō*, vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 435c.25–26.

128. *Taishō*, vol. 53, no. 2122, p. 435c.27–28.

129. Jinhua Chen, *Monks and Monarchs*, pp. 170–179; and “An Alternative View of the Meditation Tradition in China: Meditation in the Life and Works of Daoxuan (596–667),” *T'oung pao* 88, nos. 4–5 (2002): pp. 360–367.

Nenbutsu and Meditation: Problems with the Categories of Contemplation, Devotion, Meditation, and Faith

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A DISCUSSION OF NENBUTSU and meditation serves to remind us of something that is very strange: that nenbutsu and meditation, or devotion and contemplation, are usually thought of as exclusionary activities by Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists on the one hand, as well as by Western followers of “meditative” forms of Buddhism such as Zen, Tibetan sects, and *vipassanā* traditions on the other hand. While this state of affairs may seem quite normal in the modern-day versions of these traditions, in fact it is quite a peculiar way of thinking about Buddhist practice. For most of the history of Buddhism, “devotional” practices like prayer, invocation, and offerings have not been at odds or even very distinctly separated from “contemplative” practices such as meditation, sutra copying, and sutra recitation. Often it is even difficult to determine whether a practice is devotional or contemplative.¹

The standard view that such practices are exclusionary is in part related to the history of Buddhism in Japan, especially sectarian formation that occurred in the Edo period, forcing Pure Land and Zen sects in particular to define their practices by excluding what seemed to belong to the other.² The idea that Buddhism “naturally” has sects with distinct doctrines, practices, and congregations also fits neatly with Western Christian views of religious formation (based on schisms and sectarian formations) that dominates the general view of “what religion is” among the general populace as well as in the academic study of religion. In this respect, Japanese Buddhism is “easy to understand” in contrast to Chinese, Korean, and other continental forms of Buddhism in which a variety of practices are performed regardless of sectarian monikers.

In the Japanese sects, any attempt to bridge the sectarian divide is viewed with extreme suspicion. This attitude seems to have translated into American forms of these sects as well. Many temple members do not seem inclined to consider meditation and have expressed a number of valid concerns: Why should Jōdo Shinshū temples now offer meditation sessions

when they have never done so before? Does seeking to perform meditation run counter to Shinran's teaching, which stresses the inadequacy of self-power (*jiriki*) and therefore seems to reject meditation and other ritual practices? These questions deserve serious consideration.

A discussion of the possible role of meditation in Shin Buddhism provides us with an opportunity to address these questions and to rethink many long-held ideas and assumptions about what Shin Buddhism is. This paper seeks to open discussion on the above questions while also considering whether *shinjin* has any correspondence with *zazen*. Bringing Shinran's teaching of *nenbutsu* and *shinjin* together with Dōgen's teaching of *zazen* (or *shikan taza*, "just sitting") will in fact force us into a larger consideration of what Buddhism is, both for these Kamakura-period thinkers and for people today. Is Buddhism about meditation and enlightenment, or is it about something else? Must the individual actively seek the goal, or is it already attained?

Below the paper first addresses the issue of *nenbutsu* in the context of early medieval Japan, looking at the roots of *nenbutsu* as a meditative practice and questioning whether the categories of "contemplation" and "devotion" are necessarily exclusive. Next, I will use this questioning of dichotomies as a basis for reexamining Shinran's ideas about *nenbutsu* and *shinjin* to argue that Shinran not only rejected the meditation practices of his day but also rejected *nenbutsu*. To understand how this is so, I examine the idea of *shinjin*, often translated as "faith" but more literally "entrusting-mind," in terms of how Shinran understood this term in connection with then current ideas about enlightenment, buddha-nature, and practice, briefly discussing how Shinran's teachings about *nenbutsu* and *shinjin* might be compatible with Dōgen's *zazen*. Finally, I would like to bring all of this history into the present, to consider what might be the benefits to Jōdo Shinshū temples and members of doing meditation, what might be some problems, and what might be the benefits of *not* doing meditation.

I. THE NENBUTSU'S ROOTS IN MEDITATIVE PRACTICES: MEDITATION OR DEVOTION?

Because of the sectarian nature of Buddhism in modern Japan, people who focus on Japanese Buddhism sometimes forget that the *nenbutsu* is not the sole province of the Japanese Pure Land schools. Reciting the *nenbutsu* is a practice commonly performed even today by all Buddhists, both lay and monastic, in other East Asian (Mahayana) nations such as China, Korea, and Vietnam. In medieval Japan, these practices had been brought from China and were popular at all levels of society. Although these practices are typically called meditative or "contemplative *nenbutsu*" (*kan nenbutsu*,

観念仏; *ukan nenbutsu*, 有観念仏), here I would like to overview the range of meditative nenbutsu practices found in medieval Japan and consider whether discreet categories such as contemplation and devotion accurately characterize them.

The practice of nenbutsu has since its beginnings been a meditative practice. In ancient and medieval India, the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*, “recollecting the buddha,” involved a range of activities, mostly centered on meditative techniques for visualizing a buddha.³ These techniques could be used to visualize any buddha, but even in India Amitābha (Amitāyus) already seems to have been an important focus. In medieval China, with the popularity of the *Contemplation Sutra* (*Guan wuliangshou jing*, 觀無量壽經; Jpn. *Kanmuryōjūkyō*) and the teaching that Amitou was the most compassionate of buddhas and most receptive of people’s supplications, this buddha became the main figure associated with “recollecting the buddha,” to the point that the term *nianfo* came almost exclusively to mean recollecting the Buddha Amitou.

Scholarship on the practices of nianfo as developed in China has tended to investigate nianfo as a meditative endeavor performed by monastics and recorded in monastic texts, like sutras, commentaries, and the biographies of monks. However, we should also remember that nianfo was advocated as a practice for laypeople and had a devotional aspect. But nor should we too quickly make a hard distinction, that meditative practice is for monks and devotional practice for laypeople. As Daniel Stevenson has shown in his work on Chinese Pure Land practices and ritual manuals, laypeople too performed meditative nianfo practices, such as seven-day mindfulness retreats, typically held at monasteries, involving rigorous schedules of practice and strict observance of precepts and monastic norms while in the monastery.⁴ Nor should we assume that monastic practice and lay practice were necessarily distinct: monks and nuns might call on the buddha as an act of faith in the same way that laypeople might. Indeed, even distinguishing between meditative practice and devotional practice may be a mistake. As Stevenson notes, “In nearly every case, recollection of the Buddha is integrated seamlessly within an extended framework of ritual worship and purificatory restraint, rendering it difficult to make any absolute distinction between meditative, devotional, or ritualistic aspects.”⁵

During the first few centuries of Buddhist history in Japan, meditative, devotional, and ritualistic practices focusing on Amida were popularized by monks (from the continent and native Japanese) and by lay immigrants from the continent (although we know little about this latter group). By the mid-Heian period, Japanese monks were beginning to create their own forms of practice. The following offers a brief overview of the different kinds of nenbutsu practice known in Japan in the early medieval period when figures such as Hōnen, Shinran, and Dōgen were at Mt. Hiei. In looking at these

practices, I would like to consider the question of whether they should be categorized as monastic or lay, devotional or contemplative.

1. *Jōgyō zanmai* and Other Visualization Practices

The *jōgyō zanmai*, or “constantly walking *samādhi*,” was a form of meditative nenbutsu that was created in Japan within the Tendai school. The monk Ennin (794–864) had brought back from China the popular practice of reciting the Name of Amida Buddha, and at Mt. Hiei this became combined with a walking meditation practice to create this new nenbutsu form. In this practice, the monk recites the Name of Amida Buddha while circumambulating an Amida statue with the intent of achieving a visualization of the buddha and therein realizing the nonduality of buddha and the practitioner.⁶ This practice is a monastic one and is typically considered to be contemplative.

Another popular monastic nenbutsu practice was the “contemplative nenbutsu” (*kan nenbutsu*) popularized by Genshin (942–1017). Genshin taught the contemplation of Amida Buddha through the visualization of the Buddha and his Pure Land. This method, like the above, was a type of meditative or *samādhi* practice, the goal being to achieve a vision of Amida rather than emphasis on the nenbutsu as chanting or oral practice.⁷ As the name “contemplative nenbutsu” implies, this practice is considered to be contemplative and monastic. However, both of these practices entail a large devotional component as the practitioner recites the Name and ardently focuses on the image of Amida. The devotional or emotive aspects of *samādhi* practice cannot be separated out from the contemplative.

2. Death-Bed Practices

Death-bed practices focusing on Amida Buddha and birth in the Pure Land were first introduced to Japan by Genshin for use by monks. However, these practices quickly gained popularity among laypeople as well, including aristocrats, warriors of all ranks, provincial officials, and commoners. Here it is not easy—or even necessary—to distinguish whether this was a lay or monastic practice: it was simply “Buddhist practice.”

Death-bed practices are generally described as visualization practice. The dying person recites the nenbutsu while visualizing Amida’s physical marks, his radiant light, and his descent to welcome the dying person to the Pure Land. The person might also look upon a statue of Amida and hold on to five-colored cords tied to that statue, to help the person visualize following Amida.⁸ Later in the medieval period, other physical practices were also encouraged, such as forming *mudrās*, holding ritual implements (*vajras* or incense burners), or holding a written statement of the person’s

vow to be born in the Pure Land.⁹ Death-bed practices involving visualization are often considered contemplative practices. However, just as these practices cannot be categorized as either simply monastic or lay, they should also not be forced into a description that emphasizes contemplation and ignores devotion—or vice versa. Death-bed practices might be considered both entirely contemplative and entirely devotional.

It should also be noted that the above practices influenced the creation of some of the most famous artistic and architectural treasures of Japan, such as paintings of Amida's descent (*raigōzu*), depictions of the Pure Land like the Taima Mandara, and the creation of temples such as the Byōdōin at Uji.

3. Dancing Nenbutsu

Although the dancing nenbutsu (*odori nenbutsu*) is most associated with the medieval figure Ippen (1239–1289), the practice originates with the Heian-period Tendai monk Kūya (903–972). Kūya is credited with moving the nenbutsu from the confines of the monastery out to the people. He became a wandering monk (*hijiri*), teaching the recitation of the nenbutsu that became combined with spontaneous ecstatic dancing.¹⁰

The dancing nenbutsu gained its greatest popularity in the medieval period with the teachings of Ippen and the Ji sect of Buddhism. The illustrated biography of Ippen's life, the *Ippen hijiri-e*, depicts scenes of monks in marketplaces erupting into spontaneous dance and recitation of the nenbutsu. The dancing nenbutsu is typically thought of as a non-contemplative, devotional practice, and it is often assumed to be a practice for laypeople. However, both the text and the images of the *Ippen hijiri-e* indicate that monks were the central participants and practitioners.¹¹ The practice became "popular" because of the strong monastic interest and the work of monks in spreading the Jishū teachings. Thus, here we have an example of a practice that is usually thought of as lay and devotional but in fact has a strong monastic base and is related to monastic practice.

4. Esoteric Nenbutsu Practices

The Shingon school also had its distinctive uses and interpretations of the nenbutsu and Amida. Shingon doctrines are based in the esoteric teaching of the "nondual" (*funi*), that everything in the world is in no way distinct from Dainichi, the primary buddha of the Shingon system. Thus any sound is the voice of Dainichi, and any location or any physical thing is co-existent with the buddha's body, the *dharmakāya* or *dharmadhātu*. Realization of this teaching results in the Shingon goal of *sokushin jōbutsu*, "buddhahood in this very body."

Based on these doctrines, we see examples like the monk Kakukai (1142–1223) who taught that the Pure Land is not different from this very

world we live in.¹² Kakuban (1095–1143) also saw in the chanting of the Name Amida a gateway into limitless wisdom and virtue, explaining in his *Amida hishaku* (Esoteric Explication of Amida) that “‘A’ stands for the One Mind’s equanimity in primordial non-arising; ‘mi’ stands for the One Mind’s equanimity as the selfless Great Self; ‘da’ stands for the multitudinous dharmas of the One Mind, which are both absolute and tranquil.”¹³

More generally, in the “secret nenbutsu” (*himitsu nenbutsu*) practices of the Shingon school, the recitation of the nenbutsu is not considered an invocation but is thought of as a “constituent element of the human body, innate, perfect, inherently pure.”¹⁴ The nenbutsu was identified with the breath, or life force, so that the simple act of breathing itself becomes a never-ending inhalation and exhalation of nenbutsu.

Esoteric Shingon practices such as these are often thought of as meditative and ritual practices devoid of aspects of faith and devotion. However, as Mark Unno has shown in his study of the Shingon-Kegon monk Myōe (1173–1232), contemplation and devotion, ritual practice and faith are intimately connected in these practices. Myōe was a famed meditator, but his major teaching was faith in the Mantra of Light. Although such things as mantra and mudrā are certainly part of practices the esoteric practitioner uses to understand identity with the buddhas, this understanding is not separate from faith. For Myōe in particular, salvation in this *mappō* age could only come through “[f]aith in the cosmic buddhas, and the embodiment of this faith through the mantra.”¹⁵ Myōe understood faith and enlightenment as interrelated, that “faith and enlightenment were always one, mutually sustaining.”¹⁶ Esoteric meditative practice was simultaneously the equivalent of faith and enlightenment.

In sum, the demarcation between contemplative practice (meditation) and devotion (faith) is not clear in these many examples of Buddhist practice from the Heian and Kamakura periods Japan. It is beyond the scope of this paper to demonstrate it, but practice, devotion, and even doctrinal study have never been distinct in the history of Buddhism throughout Asia. It is rather our modern affliction to make categories and posit them as exclusive that has skewed our perceptions of meditation and devotion. Equating practice, faith, and enlightenment was the general standard in Buddhist doctrine. And it is in this context that Shinran too creates his doctrine of faith and practice.

It is often simply stated that Shinran rejected the meditative practices. However, given the interrelation between contemplation and devotion, meditation and faith, if Shinran rejected one then we must also infer that he rejected the other. That is, Shinran rejected the entire Buddhist system of the day. Others—notably Dōgen—were involved in similar projects of rejecting past practices in order to formulate something new. Because these reformulations were so radical, I think it is helpful to think of Shinran as

rejecting nenbutsu, and Dōgen as rejecting meditation, in order to understand how they then reconstructed these categories.

II. SHINRAN'S REJECTION OF NENBUTSU PRACTICE

Shinran's teaching is not usually referred to as the rejection of nenbutsu. Nor is Dōgen's teaching usually referred to as the rejection of meditation. Rather, typically Shinran is said to have taught faith and nenbutsu practice, and Dōgen is said to have taught meditation. Although Shinran and Dōgen used the terms "faith" and "meditation," both were involved in an enterprise that completely rewrote the meanings of these terms so that their usage of these words must be understood rather as a code for something entirely new at this time when faith, practice, and enlightenment had become radically equated.

Dōgen's new "meditation" and Shinran's new "nenbutsu" were formulated in thirteenth-century Japan as part of what we might call the final resolution of the issues of buddha-nature and mappō that had plagued East Asian Buddhism since at least the seventh century. In short, the teachings of buddha-nature and mappō had resulted in a crisis of practice: given the "fact" of buddha-nature (that every being has the potential for buddhahood—often combined or elided with the idea of original enlightenment [*hongaku*], that every being is actually already enlightened), as well as the issue of mappō (that in the age of the decline of the Dharma no being can attain buddhahood because there is no access to a buddha or the true teaching), then what is the meaning of practice? If all beings are already bound for buddhahood (or are already enlightened), why practice? Or, from the contradictory viewpoint of mappō, if there is no hope for enlightenment, why practice?

This crisis of practice had already begun to be addressed in China with the development of the Chan school. Although Chan is called the "meditation" school, the Chan traditions have systematically rejected all traditional practices of meditation and created an entirely new doctrine, vocabulary, and ritual of practice, such as the use of *kung-an* (Jpn. *kōan*) to induce an "initial enlightenment" experience. Such "meditative practices" would hardly have been recognized as meditation at all by those who practiced *dhyāna* and *samādhi* in India. For the Chan schools, practice was not about progressing in increasingly difficult levels of meditation to attain a goal (enlightenment). It was instead a sudden moment of insight into one's true nature as already a buddha.

In medieval Japan, the redefinition of practice was elaborated further. Hōnen was the first to intimate the radical nature of what a new practice should be with his complete rejection of the necessity of the monastic life-

style. Perhaps inspired by Hōnen's example, others took up the challenge to reformulate Buddhist doctrine and practice. The most extreme of these reformulations were those created by Dōgen and Shinran. Each of these thinkers rejected prior Buddhist practices to create practices that were "no practice"—that is, practices that did not require the traditional Buddhist practices of the monk's life and meditation—and that answered the challenges of both doctrines of buddha-nature and mappō.¹⁷

Shinran's ideas are perhaps today not often discussed in terms of buddha-nature. The issue of mappō seems to dominate modern discourse on Shin Buddhism: that we are evil persons unfortunate to have been born in the age of the decline of the Dharma, without the possibility to escape samsara and attain enlightenment. However, Shinran's teaching of the nenbutsu and shinjin—which I will translate as "entrusting-mind"—was an approach based in understanding of both mappō and buddha-nature, as I shall attempt to show briefly.

Shinran's teaching is often characterized as a rejection of the monastic practices of the Tendai institution, particularly meditative practices. This is certainly true. But we should also remember that he rejected the practice of nenbutsu as well. That is to say, every one of the nenbutsu-related practices described in the preceding section of this paper Shinran rejected. He rejected the old nenbutsu practices in order to create a new "nenbutsu," a new definition of what practice means that in its details is hardly recognizable as practice at all.

Shinran's nenbutsu removes the nenbutsu from the realm of human practice and reformulates it as the expression of *tathatā*, suchness itself. One does not say the nenbutsu as a practice for achieving a vision of Amida. One does not say it to achieve a boon in this life, nor even to achieve salvation. One says it because one has already attained liberation, in other words, birth in the Pure Land and enlightenment. The nenbutsu is an expression of the One Mind or Suchness (*shinnyo*) that is Amida Tathāgata. The nenbutsu is the mental, verbal, and even physical expression through the person of Amida's working. Thus saying the nenbutsu is not a practice but simply how Amida is expressed through the person. It is also the rejoicing of shinjin, which Shinran describes in this way:

Shinjin is the aspiration to bring all beings to the attainment of supreme nirvana; it is the heart of great love and great compassion. This shinjin is Buddha-nature and Buddha-nature is Tathagata. To realize this shinjin is to rejoice and be glad. People who rejoice and are glad are called "people equal to the Buddhas."

*Notes on "Essentials of Faith Alone" (Yuishinshō mon'i)*¹⁸

In this statement, Shinran's definition of shinjin collapses the categories of faith, mind, practice, and enlightenment, thus completely changing the

discussion about practice. Following the general Mahayana teachings of his time, Shinran's discussion is based on the assumption that the mind of the sentient being is already the mind of the Buddha or Tathāgata.¹⁹ One's own mind is the mind of Amida; there is an inherent identity of the person and the Buddha. Thus, Shinran says, without controversy, that *shinjin*, the entrusting-mind of the individual, is equivalent to buddha-nature, which is to say that it is equivalent to the Tathāgata itself, and thus such people are already "equal to the Buddhas."

The question for Shinran, and other thinkers of the day, was not how to attain enlightenment. Enlightenment was already a given. The problem was how to recognize one's enlightenment, and how to practice it. Thus the issue of practice comes to constitute two aspects: (1) a recognition of one's enlightenment, and (2) the functioning of that enlightenment in the person's everyday life. Strictly speaking, these two are not Buddhist "practices" at all. One is oneself not doing anything to achieve enlightenment. For Shinran, the moment of recognition is called *shinjin*, when one realizes that "*shinjin* is Buddha-nature and Buddha-nature is Tathagata." Again, the person does not perform any traditional Buddhist practice to achieve this recognition. For Shinran, the functioning of enlightenment in the person's life is the *nenbutsu*. The person does not say the *nenbutsu* to achieve any goal but simply because this is how a person expresses and lives in joy and gladness and being "equal to the Buddhas." Shinran has taken what was once a Buddhist practice—the recitation of the *nenbutsu*—and turned it into something that is no longer a practice but a recognition and then state of being.

Although there is not space here to explore Dōgen's *zazen* in depth, it develops out of the same ideas of buddha-nature and original enlightenment.²⁰ Just as Shinran rejected the *nenbutsu* as a practice for getting something, Dōgen too stripped any implications of traditional Buddhist practice out of his conception of "just sitting." Compare, for example, Dōgen's statement in his *Fukan zazen gi* that "Fundamentally speaking, the basis of the way is perfectly pervasive; how could it be contingent on practice and verification? The vehicle of the ancestors is naturally unrestricted; why should we expend sustained effort?"²¹ One does not use meditation as a practice or means to achieve enlightenment. One sits in order to express—or acknowledge or fulfill—the fact that one is already identical to the buddhas, just as for Shinran the *nenbutsu* is an expression of the fact that one is "equal to the Buddhas."

III. IMPLICATIONS FOR JŌDO SHINSHŪ TODAY

In terms of basic doctrines and premises, Shinran's teaching of the *nenbutsu* shares much in common with Dōgen's teaching of "just sitting."

Indeed, at this foundational level, their ideas are very much the same. The issue was not the theory of enlightenment but the nature of practice. Shinran and Dōgen took the premises of the Mahayana teachings of buddha-nature and the mind of Tathāgata to their logical extremes: new formulations of practice as “no practice.” The difference between these two thinkers lies then only in their choice of a method for expressing or fulfilling what is already there.

The extreme closeness of the ideas of Shinran and Dōgen leads one to conclude that a nenbutsu practitioner and a zazen practitioner should feel free to use both methods. However, a doctrinal basis is not necessarily the main concern of an individual who seeks to practice both nenbutsu and meditation, nor is doctrinal agreement sufficient to form the basis for a movement that might seek to put these two together. The real issue for Jōdo Shinshū is not the doctrinal compatibility of the nenbutsu and Sōtō-style meditation but rather sociological issues regarding the identity of the sangha and general perceptions of Buddhism in American culture. People from outside of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition often come to a temple looking for meditative practice. People who are long-time members of BCA temples, on the other hand, have been reluctant to incorporate meditative practice into Jōdo Shinshū services.

The issue is in large part one of the perception in modern America of the role of meditation in Buddhism. There is a tendency to assume that the central Buddhist practice is meditation, despite the fact that most Buddhists do not meditate. A noted scholar of Zen has remarked on this misapprehension of the nature of Buddhist practice:

Such a view of Buddhist practice has been widespread not only in our academic literature but in the contemporary popular understanding of the religion, where the question, do you practice? is very often almost synonymous with do you meditate? Put this way, needless to say, the question is an awkward one not only for most Buddhist scholars but for most Buddhists. Put this way, the great majority of Buddhists throughout history have never practiced their religion.²²

Jōdo Shinshū, as a form of Buddhism that has historically minimized the importance of meditation, has sometimes been viewed by those outside of the tradition as not “real” Buddhism. However, in the greater context of the history of Buddhism as indicated in the preceding quotation, Jōdo Shinshū is clearly a normative form of Buddhism, and in fact has a great deal to offer toward the popular understanding of Buddhism. Practice in Jōdo Shinshū as in most (if not all) of the forms of Buddhism brought by Asian immigrants is based in community and family as opposed to the

“heroic quest” model of the individual searching for a profound experience of enlightenment.

Although the aim of this paper has been to show the compatibility—even identity—of practices labeled meditative versus devotional, or contemplative versus faith, and that Shinran’s ideas of nenbutsu actually line up quite well with Dōgen’s ideas of meditation, it is not my intention to conclude that Shin temples in America should therefore freely adopt the practice of meditation. There may be benefits to incorporating a “no practice” form of meditation into Jōdo Shinshū, especially if it were combined with nenbutsu. This might provide insight into the meditative or contemplative aspects of entrusting-mind in Shinran’s “no practice” nenbutsu, which is otherwise perceived to be “only” devotional, even by many Jōdo Shinshū members. But Shinran’s idea of entrusting-mind (*shinjin*) is after all not simply a devotional faith in Amida but a recognition of Amida as suchness (*tathatā*) working in the world and the individual. In this respect, *shinjin* is not devoid of the contemplative and wisdom aspects of Buddhism. While I certainly agree that Sōtō-style meditation is not incompatible with Jōdo Shinshū at a doctrinal level, simply putting Sōtō meditation into a Jōdo Shinshū service may be problematic, or even counterproductive, to both Jōdo Shinshū specifically and to the maturation of Buddhism in America generally. The problem is not whether meditation and nenbutsu can be practiced together, but why we should buy into the idea that meditation is the quintessential Buddhist practice, when, as the scholar of Zen noted above, the “great majority of Buddhists throughout history” have never practiced meditation.

The juncture that presents itself to American Shin Buddhism is, I think, an opportunity to provide a correction to the general assumption that Buddhism is primarily about meditation. As forms of Buddhism from other Asian nations—Vietnam, Thailand, Taiwan—gain in numbers and visibility in America, the fact that most Buddhists do not take meditation as their primary practice becomes more apparent. As these new immigrant communities become “Americanized,” the general American populace will also become more aware of the family and community aspects of Buddhism. We are perhaps on the brink of a new period of Buddhism in America in which a greater understanding or maturity is occurring. There is also the literal maturing of the people who have until now been interested in Buddhism as meditation. As they “grow up,” marry, and have children, they seem to be realizing that individual meditative practice may be inappropriate or less manageable in a family setting. For those looking to move beyond an individual meditative practice to a Buddhism that can be shared with a family, Jōdo Shinshū stands ready. Those who call or come to a temple asking only about meditation are already a self-selected population. There may be many looking for another kind of Buddhism who do not think to

call. I suspect that an advertising campaign in local newspapers, introducing Jōdo Shinshū as a family-based Buddhism, including Dharma School for kids, would draw quite a number of interested people.

This is not to say that there is nothing that Jōdo Shinshū temples need to do. Both for their current members and potential converts, temples remain faced with the perennial problem of making the nenbutsu and the teaching of shinjin relevant to people today. This might mean more experimentation with the inherently meditative aspects of nenbutsu (such as encouraging more nenbutsu retreats, or incorporating extended nenbutsu chanting into weekly services). Additionally, Shinshū concepts may need to be explained in relation to their greater Mahayana context, balancing traditional interpretation with aspects that appeal to modern concerns. Shinjin, for example, typically explained as “faith” or “entrusting,” could also be explained in terms of the idea of “mind” (*shin-jin*: “entrusting-mind”) that is an equal part of the concept. Discussing mind from a Jōdo Shinshū point of view would both appeal to modern interests in this Buddhist concept and help to deepen understanding of the Shin teachings on the relationship between the individual and Amida.

Discussing the issues, both doctrinal and sociological, that surround nenbutsu and meditative practices brings forward the tasks facing Shin temples in terms of growth and dealing with new members. While suggestions for change may remain controversial, they also spur thoughtful reflections on the teachings, practices, and roles of Jōdo Shinshū and Buddhism in America.

NOTES

1. On the issue of defining meditative and devotional practices, see Daniel B. Stevenson, "Pure Land Buddhist Worship and Meditation in China," in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp. 359–379.
2. In the early Edo period, Jōdo Shinshū had an inclusive attitude toward various Buddhist practices; see Eisho Nasu, "Ecumenical Understandings of Jōdo Shinshū and Possibilities for the Development of a Practical Theory of Practice," *Pacific World*, forthcoming. On Zen inclusion and then rejection of nenbutsu practices, see Richard Jaffe, "Ungo Kiyō's Ōjōyōka and Rinzai Zen Orthodoxy," in *Approaching the Land of Bliss: Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitābha*, ed. Richard K. Payne and Kenneth K. Tanaka (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, Kuroda Institute, 2004), pp. 202–235.
3. On the development of buddhānusmṛti in India, see Paul Harrison, "Commemoration and Identification in *Buddhānusmṛti*," in *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Janet Gyatso (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 215–238. However, recent work by Harrison also points out that these meditative techniques should not be seen as distinct from other aspects of Buddhist practice and teaching, such as the development of text and the practice of chanting. See Harrison, "Mediums and Messages: Reflections on the Production of Mahāyāna Sūtras," *The Eastern Buddhist*, n.s. 35, nos. 1 & 2 (2003): pp. 115–151.
4. Stevenson, "Pure Land Buddhist Worship," p. 366.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 368.
6. On the development of the jōgyō zanmai, see Honen's Senchakushū: *Passages on the Selection of the Nembutsu in the Original Vow* (Senchaku hongan nembutsushū), trans. and ed. with an introduction by Senchakushū English Translation Project (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1998), p. 3; see also Jacqueline Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), p. 33.
7. Honen's Senchakushū, pp. 3–4.
8. Jacqueline Stone, "By the Power of One's Last Nenbutsu: Deathbed Practices in Early Medieval Japan," in *Approaching the Land of Bliss* (see note 2), p. 80.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
10. Richard Bowring, *The Religious Traditions of Japan, 500–1600* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 203–204.

11. On Ippen's nenbutsu and the Jishū, see Dennis Hirota, *No Abode: The Record of Ippen* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1986). The *Ippen hijiri-e* records that, the first time Ippen spontaneously broke into his dancing nenbutsu, "...Ippen began dancing, and many monks and laypeople gathered, all making their bonds with the Dharma by joining in the dance" (Hirota, p. xxxix). Monks were also the main dancing nenbutsu performers in the marketplace. Stage-like covered platforms were built in areas frequented by Ippen and his followers; but, as depicted in the pictures of the *Hijiri-e*, the performance of the dancing nenbutsu on these platforms seems to have been limited to the monks of the Jishū, not laypeople (see for example illustration 8 in Hirota, p. 128; for explanation, see Hirota, pp. xix and xl). Ippen was certainly concerned with spreading his nenbutsu teaching to the common people, but there was also a strong monastic component to his activities, as evidenced by the growth of the Jishū as a monastic institution after Ippen's death.

12. Robert Morrell, *Early Kamakura Buddhism: A Minority Report* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1987), pp. 89–90.

13. James Sanford, "Amida's Secret Life: Kakuban's *Amida Hishaku*," in *Approaching the Land of Bliss* (see note 2), p. 132.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

15. Mark Unno, *Shingon Refractions: Myōe and the Mantra of Light* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), p. 67.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

17. The reformulation of Buddhist practice and doctrine, however, should not necessarily be understood as a radical break with previous forms of Japanese Buddhism, such as the Tendai and Shingon, but as continuations of problems that had already been addressed to some degree within these other schools—and continued to be addressed by them as well. On the issues addressed by these reformulations, and how to conceive of the new Kamakura teachings in relation to Tendai et al., see Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, pp. 228–236.

18. *The Collected Works of Shinran*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanjiha, 1997), p. 463.

19. On the state of this doctrine (that the mind of sentient beings are equal to the mind of the Buddha) in the late Heian and Kamakura periods, see Stone, *Original Enlightenment*, pp. 190–99.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 88–90.

21. Carl Bielefeldt, *Dōgen's Manuals of Zen Meditation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1988), p. 175. Bielefeldt also points out how this rhetoric of universal enlightenment has its roots in China (from which the

medieval Tendai discourse in Japan was developed). See Bielefeldt's comments on this passage, pp. 125–126.

22. Carl Bielefeldt, "Practice," in *Critical Terms for the Study of Buddhism*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 230–231.

A Contemporary Re-examination of Shin Buddhist Notions of Practice

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INTRODUCTION

TODAY, I BELIEVE, Shin Buddhist religious institutions in Japan and abroad are facing a huge crisis. The problem is not simply the decline in the number of temples or temple members. Rather, the problem is more fundamental than that. I believe that Shin Buddhist institutions are losing touch with “reality,” the grounding in reality that will allow people to truly live in this present age. Some time ago, Nishitani Keiji said, with respect to the relationship between contemporary society and religion, that “Religion has no [sense of] the contemporary age. In the contemporary age, there is no [sense of] religion.”¹ His point was that religion is losing sight of the very meaning of its own existence in contemporary society, even as contemporary society is losing sight of the essential meaning of religion.

Nishitani’s assertion that “Religion has no [sense of] the contemporary age” indicates that religious institutions have become isolated within their own faith or tradition and are unable to address any real societal problems in their teaching. His point applies perfectly to Shin Buddhism, a Japanese religion that has a tradition and history of nearly eight hundred years since the time of Shinran. On the other hand, we should also fully appreciate Nishitani’s statement that “In the contemporary age, there is no [sense of] religion.” That is, if religion exists simply to offer up justifications for the demands of the current age, then the meaning for the existence of religion will be increasingly lost. The meaning for the existence of religion lies in its principles, which are able to provide a critical view, from the perspective of religion, of the situation we refer to as “the contemporary age.”

I believe that a careful consideration of Nishitani’s point will help us to understand the significance of this symposium, “Meditation and American Shin Buddhism.” In general, the practice of meditation plays an important role in Buddhist traditions in America today. However, Shin Buddhism has not accepted the practice of meditation in any affirmative way. This is because historically Shin Buddhism has rejected meditation as a self-pow-

ered practice. However, when we look at the place and role of meditation in American Buddhism, we find its significance to be extremely broad.

For example, meditation is understood to be the ultimate practice in the sense of *shikan taza* as taught by Dōgen. On the other hand, meditation is also seen as “the quieting of one’s thoughts,” which is intended to serve as spiritual concentration that would be a preliminary step toward the performance of supramundane practice. In America, the latter seems to be more often the case. In cases where meditation is accepted within American Shin Buddhism, it is often practiced as a way prepare one’s attitude in order to be able to hear the teachings. Among scholars of Shin Buddhist studies in Japan, there are those who react negatively upon just hearing the word “meditation.” However, for Shin Buddhist studies in Japan as well, the question of meditation poses significant challenges to accepted, traditional approaches to that study. In that case, it should be noted, it is not so much an issue of meditation itself, but rather of questions regarding the process for the realization of shinjin.

The traditional, sectarian study of Shin Buddhist doctrine has established the tenets that “shinjin is the true cause of birth” (*shinjin shōin*) and “saying the Name is an expression of gratitude” (*shōmyō hōon*). It has then interpreted a variety of doctrines from within that framework. Naturally, for a person who hears the doctrine that “shinjin is the true cause of birth” the great concern will be what can be done in order to attain shinjin. However, due to the doctrine that “saying the Name is an expression of gratitude” one cannot be encouraged to do anything since saying the nembutsu in order to attain shinjin would amount to a self-powered practice. Therefore, traditionally people are told, “Just listen to the teachings,” or “Hear how the Buddha’s Vow arose—its origin and fulfillment.” Listening, it is said, is the process.

Certainly, hearing the teachings is the starting point for practice on the Buddhist path and in that sense it is very important. However, listening to the teachings and understanding them deeply is something that all religions have in common. Does the path to buddhahood that was taught by Shinran really have that kind of structure? Does Shinran’s idea of hearing the Name, as expressed in the phrase, “Hear how the Buddha’s Vow arose—its origin and fulfillment” mean that we should just simply listen? In a certain sense, it could be said that the question of meditation in America is posing a fundamental challenge to the traditional framework, which has historically taken the negative attitude that all practices performed as a process for the realization shinjin, including meditation, are self-powered practices.

On the other hand, just where to situate meditation in the teachings of Shin Buddhism is a considerable problem. According to one way of thinking, meditation should be accepted as a method of propagation in American Shin Buddhism. However, if it is carried out simply with the

attitude of giving in to the current state of affairs, then there is a risk that it will lose sight of the meaning of its existence as Shin Buddhism. In order to avoid such a situation the question of "What is Shin Buddhism" must be constantly and continuously asked.

In any event, the theme "Meditation in American Shin Buddhism" poses some fundamental questions, in a variety of ways, for future Shin Buddhism in America and Japan. By no means should it be taken lightly or thought of simply as a problem of self-powered practice. Nor should the possibility of having meditation in Shin Buddhism be accepted as an attempt merely to respond to the current situation in contemporary life. Rather, this theme addresses problems that Shin Buddhism in America and Japan share in common, and, as such, I believe that we must combine our discussions and respond to those challenges together.

In this paper I will attempt to re-examine an issue related to the question of the practice or the process leading to the realization of shinjin, which is raised by the theme, "Meditation in American Shin Buddhism." That is, I will undertake a re-examination of the doctrines "shinjin is the true cause of birth" and "saying the Name is an expression of gratitude" (the latter in particular), which have become the framework for discussion in the traditional, sectarian study of Shin Buddhist doctrine. The reason is that the doctrine that "saying the Name is an expression of gratitude" has become the basis for the criticism that practices performed as a process for the realization of shinjin are all self-powered practices. However, I question whether Shinran's idea of the nembutsu can be in fact comprehended simply from within the framework of "an expression of gratitude." Through this study, I would also like to consider the fundamental structure that can be seen in Shinran's idea of practice.

THE PATH OF PRACTICE IN SHIN BUDDHISM

Buddhism constitutes the teachings expounded by the Buddha. At the same time it is a teaching through which one can become buddha.² Buddhism is neither mere idealistic thinking nor philosophical speculation, but the path leading to the attainment of buddhahood. This is the reason that the teaching of Buddhism is traditionally expressed as the way of Buddha, or the path to buddhahood. Buddhism clarifies the path of practice by which one comes to awaken to true wisdom. For this reason Buddhism is often referred to as the religion of practice. In contrast, Shin Buddhism has been called at times a religion of faith, since it emphasizes the importance of attaining shinjin or faith to realize buddhahood.

Needless to say, one of the characteristics of Shinran thought lies in his idea of shinjin or faith. For example, Shinran says "the truly decisive cause is shinjin"³ or "the true cause of attaining nirvana is shinjin alone."⁴ Shinran

explains that we can achieve buddhahood through attaining shinjin. Shinran also describes shinjin as “the straightforward mind directed to us through the selected Vow.”⁵ He further states:

The Tathagata, turning with compassion toward the ocean of living beings in pain and affliction, has given unhindered and vast pure shinjin to the ocean of sentient beings. This is called the “true and real shinjin that is [Amida’s] benefiting of others.”⁶

Shinran taught that shinjin becomes the true cause of nirvana because it is the true and real mind directed to us through the selected Vow. For Shinran, our attainment of shinjin arises from the heart and mind with which Amida Buddha selected the Vow. That is why Shinran calls shinjin “[s]hinjin that is the inconceivable working of the power of the Vow”⁷ or “this is shinjin-itself Other Power.”⁸

However, it should be noted that Shinran also asserted that the Pure Land path of practice, through which one attains buddhahood, is the path of saying the Name. For example, Shinran states:

The Name embodying the Primal Vow is the act of true settlement.⁹

Further, he states:

Nothing surpasses saying the Name of the Tathagata as the essential in attaining birth.¹⁰

The truly decisive act-as-cause is none other than the act of saying the Name of the Buddha.¹¹ Shinran explained that to say the Name is the decisive act, which is the essential for attaining birth. In other words, for Shinran, the path of shinjin and the path of nembutsu form the Pure Land path of practice.

But why did Shinran present both the path of shinjin and the path of saying the Name? Throughout the historical development of Shin Buddhist studies, the relationship between shinjin and saying the Name has been discussed intensively. Traditionally, this relationship has been dogmatically explained as “shinjin is the right cause of birth” and “saying the Name is an expression of gratitude.” However, it is doubtful whether this formula is fully adequate to explain the above-mentioned relationship between shinjin and saying the Name, as they are elucidated in Shinran’s thought. At the very least, it is clear that attempts to limit Shinran’s understanding of the act of saying the Name to the sole function of expressing gratitude are problematic. Moreover, I would like to point out that this traditional perspective is closely linked to attitudes that sought to reject any practices

before attaining shinjin, not only meditation but also saying the Name, as self-power.

RE-EXAMINATION OF THE DOCTRINE THAT
“SAYING THE NAME IS AN EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE”

A close examination of Shinran's writings will reveal that the phrases “shinjin is the right cause of birth” and “saying the Name is an expression of gratitude” do not exist therein. In fact, those tenets can be found for the first time in the writings of Kakunyo. Kakunyo was Shinran's great-grandson and it was his aim to establish the foundations of the Hongwanji denomination. By employing the phrases “shinjin is the right cause of birth” and “saying the Name is an expression of gratitude,” Kakunyo tried to make clear that the right cause of birth is shinjin and that one will be truly settled at the moment of attaining shinjin. Kakunyo, at the same time, was intent on criticizing the idea of Amida's coming at the moment of death, which was emphasized by other Pure Land denominations, especially by the proponents of many-callings of nembutsu.¹² It is also said that Kakunyo's interpretation of the idea that “saying the Name is an expression of gratitude” actually originated with the once-calling faction.¹³

However, Kakunyo's approach becomes problematic when we consider the following words of Shinran regarding the issue of once-calling versus many-calling:

The tradition of the true Pure Land teaching speaks of birth through the nembutsu. Never has there been mention of “birth through once-calling” or “birth through many-calling.” Please understand this.¹⁴

Shinran also states in a letter:

Since the selected Primal Vow of Amida has no room for the practitioner's calculation, it is wholly Other Power. It should never be said that once-calling alone is right, or that many-callings alone is right.¹⁵

Here, Shinran clearly rejects any understanding that would place the viewpoints of once-calling and many-callings in opposition to each other. Hence, one cannot simply conclude that Shinran's comprehension of the nembutsu is based upon the once-calling position. In this sense, we should understand that Kakunyo's interpretation of the idea that “saying the Name is the expression of gratitude” came into existence during particular

historical circumstances and that it represented a departure from Shinran's original teaching.

The difference between Shinran's and Kakunyo's understanding of the path of practice reflected the fundamental difference in their understanding of the relationship between shinjin and the act of saying the Name. For Kakunyo, the significance of saying the Name was as an "expression of gratitude" that takes place after one has attained shinjin. His position was based on Shinran's emphasis on "shinjin is the right cause of birth" and the sequential relationship between the portions of the Eighteenth Vow that pertain to the three minds and saying the Name ten times.

In Shinran's thought, on the other hand, the relationship between the practice of the nembutsu and shinjin is understood fundamentally from the standpoint of their inseparability. For instance, Shinran comments on the inseparability of practice and shinjin in the following passage:

As to the matter you raise, although the one moment of shinjin and the one moment of nembutsu are two, there is no nembutsu separate from shinjin, nor is the one moment shinjin separate from the one moment of nembutsu.¹⁶

That fundamental inseparability between the practice of nembutsu and shinjin is further elucidated in this passage:

The reason is that the practice of nembutsu is to say it perhaps once, perhaps ten times, on hearing and realizing that birth into the Pure Land is attained by saying the Name fulfilled in the Primal Vow. To hear this Vow and be completely without doubt is the one moment of shinjin. Thus, although shinjin and nembutsu are two, since shinjin is to hear and not doubt that you are saved by only a single pronouncing, which is the fulfillment of practice, there is no shinjin separate from nembutsu.¹⁷

Here, Shinran clearly explains that shinjin and saying the Name are inseparable, because this was fulfilled in the Primal Vow. In other words, shinjin without saying the Name is mere abstract concept, and, on the other hand, saying the Name without true and real shinjin is a fruitless voicing.

However, Kakunyo's approach was to impose a sequential order onto the occurrence of the shinjin and the nembutsu, in essence ignoring the dynamic relationship between them. And this interpretation remains as the fundamental interpretation found in traditional sectarian studies of the doctrine.

The scholastic character of traditional sectarian studies of the doctrine has been mostly restricted to exegetical and interpretative textual studies. Traditional doctrinal studies have not sought to interpret Shinran's texts in

order to uncover the meaning of the religious experience of Shinran or the psychological structure of nembutsu practice and the shinjin experience that lies concealed beneath the words and phrases. Those studies always take the subjective problems, which are transcendental or metaphysical in nature, and simply try to reduce all explanations to the side of the transcendence in a dualistic, conceptual, and abstract manner.

I also believe that this methodological attitude has led to the tendency in traditional doctrinal studies to neglect questions of social praxis or human existence. Although I also understand the historical background that compelled sectarian, doctrinal studies to move in that direction, we all need to bear responsibility for its consequences in the contemporary world. In any case, this attitude is apparent in Kakunyo's understanding of the relationship between shinjin and saying the Name.

What then is the path of practice of birth through the nembutsu in Shinran's thought, which he considered in context of the relationship of the inseparability of practice and shinjin? I would now like to examine the structure of the path of practice of birth through the nembutsu, which Shinran discussed.

THE PATH OF PRACTICE AS HEARING THE NAME

If I may begin with the conclusion, Shinran's path of practice of birth through the nembutsu has the structure of "hearing the Name." That is to say, the practice of "saying the Name" is in itself identical with the Buddha's "command of the Primal Vow calling to and summoning us."¹⁸ Being able to hear (the Name) is called shinjin.

In the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*, it states,

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy.¹⁹

Shinran interprets this passage in the following way:

The word *hear* in the passage from the Larger Sutra means that sentient beings, having heard how the Buddha's Vow arose—its origin and fulfillment—are altogether free of doubt.²⁰

Further, he explains that

Hear the Name is to hear the Name that embodies the Primal Vow. "Hear" means to hear the Primal Vow and be free of doubt. Further, it indicates shinjin.²¹

In other words, as we say the nembutsu, we hear the Buddha naming itself. And at the same time that the Buddha's calling voice comes to us to be heard, we realize shinjin, the experience of awakening. In each voicing of the Name, we come into contact with the truth of Amida Buddha's compassion and reflect upon our reality. Shinran explained that to "hear" is to realize the "origin and fulfillment of the Buddha's Vow" that has been established for our sake. In other words, it is to realize the truth of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow and the real state of our existence. As we come into contact with the truth and reality of the Buddha through saying and hearing the Name, at the same time, we are able to awaken to our delusion and ignorance. In this regard, the recorded words of Shinran reads:

When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida, which arose from five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of Shinran alone.²²

Furthermore, Shinran's assertion that saying the nembutsu and shinjin are in a relationship of inseparability, which we considered earlier, could be said to have been made in the context of this profound religious experience. Though a person may have shinjin, if he or she does not say the Name it is of no avail. And conversely, even though a person fervently says the Name, if that person's shinjin is shallow he cannot attain birth. Thus, it is the person who deeply entrusts himself to birth through nembutsu and undertakes to say the Name who is certain to be born in the true fulfilled land.²³

As I mentioned above, practice in Shinran's thought has the structure of "hearing the Name." If hearing the Name can be understood from the standpoint of the inseparability of practice and shinjin, then we can see that shinjin arises when the nembutsu that one recites is heard as the nembutsu of all the buddhas. This is the reason that Shinran calls recitation of the nembutsu the "act of true settlement." Accordingly, if we were to limit our understanding of the recitation of the nembutsu to that of "an expression of gratitude," as in the traditional understanding, we would lose sight of Shinran's essential understanding of saying the nembutsu.

The notion that "saying the Name is an expression of gratitude," first seen in the writings of Kakunyo, was in fact the position emphasized by the "once-calling" proponents of his time who gave great weight to abstract ideas. Shinran's standpoint, on the other hand, was to reject the intellectualized calculations of once-calling versus many-callings and instead emphasize birth through the nembutsu from the perspective of the inseparability of practice and shinjin. His perspective on birth through the nembutsu was that the practice of saying the Name possesses the same structure as that of hearing the Name. The path of saying the Name and hearing the Name involves a twofold structure in which sentient beings' recitation of the

Name and the “command of the Primal Vow calling to and summoning us”²⁴ arise in a dynamic relationship within the religious experience of the realization of shinjin.

In addition, Shinran understood the practice performed after the realization of shinjin to be the dynamic repetition of that experience. For instance, in the *Clarification of Once-Calling and Many-Callings* of Ryūkan, a work that Shinran copied and sent to many of his followers in Kanto during his later years, it states,

As life continues, this single calling becomes two or three callings; they accumulate, so that one moment becomes an hour, then two hours; a day or two; a month, a year, two years, ten or twenty years, eighty years.²⁵

This refers clearly to the continuation of the one thought-moment of hearing the Name. In that sense, the deepening of the religious experience of shinjin can be seen here. It can be said that this has essentially the same meaning as supramundane practice, which Śākyamuni alluded to when after his attainment of enlightenment he called himself “the man who has made constant efforts.”

On that point, the translation of the title of the “Chapter on Practice” in Shinran’s *Kyōgyōshō Monrui* as “Living” by D. T. Suzuki, a Zen Buddhist, is a unique interpretation that demonstrates a deep understanding of the unique character of practice in Shinran’s thought. Furthermore, Suzuki’s *Zen to Nembutsu to no Shinrigakuteki Kiso* (The Psychological Bases of Zen and the Nembutsu),²⁶ which examines common points in the process toward *satori* in both the nembutsu and Zen *kōans*, is highly suggestive to this discussion.

On the other hand, when examining the structure of practice in Shinran’s thought we can see that practice, performed in order to realize shinjin, has the same structure as that of hearing the Name. In the passage on turning and entering the three Vows (*sangan tennyū*), Shinran discusses his own process for the attainment of shinjin. There, he states that the Nineteenth Vow and the Twentieth Vow of self-powered nembutsu constituted the process through which he was able to have self-power overturned and enter into the Eighteenth Vow of the nembutsu of Other Power. Here, engagement in self-powered practice was a necessary process in order for him to turn and enter the Vow of Other Power practice. Shinran called the Nineteenth and Twentieth Vows, both of which set forth self-powered practices, “Amida’s Compassionate Vows.” In particular, the Twentieth Vow, which established the single practice of the nembutsu, is referred to as the “Vow that beings ultimately attain birth.” That is, he took careful note of the relationship between the process for realizing shinjin and the

content of the Primal Vow. In that sense, I believe that we can consider the question of the process for the realization of shinjin in the idea of turning and entering the three Vows.

In this paper, I have been critical of the doctrinal understanding that “saying the Name is an expression of gratitude.” It is also important to note, however, that the idea of “responding in gratitude” in Shinran’s thought possesses a broad societal character, which is not limited to the recitation of the nembutsu. For instance, Shinran sets forth the following in a letter:

Those who feel uncertain of birth should say the nembutsu aspiring first for their own birth. Those who feel that their own birth is completely settled should, mindful of the Buddha’s benevolence, hold the nembutsu in their hearts and say it to respond in gratitude to that benevolence, with the wish, “May there be peace in the world, and may the Buddha’s teaching spread!” Please consider this carefully.²⁷

Here we should note that Shinran instructs “[t]hose who feel uncertain of birth” to “say the nembutsu aspiring first for their own birth.” Moreover, he talks about the gratitude to the Buddha’s benevolence as both to say the Name and the wish for the world. This passage clearly demonstrates Shinran’s attitude toward society and his role within it.

Needless to say, certain aspects of the question of meditation, which is being raised in contemporary American Shin Buddhism, transcend the framework of traditional Japanese Shin Buddhist doctrinal studies. In that sense, the resolution of the various problems raised within American Shin Buddhism regarding meditation will not necessarily be connected to those doctrinal positions. Hence, rash criticism or attempts to dictate a solution by those currently situated within Japanese Jōdo Shinshū hit somewhat wide of the mark. What we must do is together recognize that there is another side to the issue, as Nishitani’s words at the beginning of this paper indicated, and work mutually to clarify the meaning of the Shin Buddhist path of birth through the nembutsu.

NOTES

1. Nishitani Keiji, "Jōdokyō to gendai," *Nishitani Keiji chosakushu*, vol. 18 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1990), p. 194.
2. Ui Hakuju, *Bukkyō shisō kenkyū* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1943), p. 341.
3. The Shin Buddhism Translation Series, *The Collected Works of Shinran*, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997) (hereinafter CWS), p. 72.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 93–94.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 370.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 511.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 513.
12. See Kakehashi Jitsuen, *Jōdokyōgaku no shomondai: Kakehashi Jitsuen sensei koki kinnen* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1998), p. 314.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
14. CWS, p. 490.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 562.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 538.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 474.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 679.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 539.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 701.
26. See Suzuki Daisetsu zenshū, vol. 4 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1970).
27. CWS, p. 560.

Seeing Buddhas, Hearing Buddhas: Cognitive Significance of Nenbutsu as Visualization and as Recitation

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IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN Buddhist English, the term “nenbutsu” is usually, if not exclusively, associated with reciting the name of Amitābha Buddha in the form “namu Amida Butsu.” The Japanese Buddhist term “nenbutsu” (念仏) derives from the Sanskrit *buddhānusmṛti*, which—like nenbutsu—means to think about the Buddha, to keep the Buddha in mind. In addition to keeping the Buddha in mind by recitation, one can also keep the Buddha in mind by visualization.

Such visualization practice is known to us from a variety of sources.¹ Among Pure Land practitioners probably the best known source is the *Contemplation Sutra*, which gives a progressive series of meditation instructions in which Sukhāvatī, the pure land of Amida Buddha, is visualized in increasing detail. This visualization progresses from first forming an eidetic image of the setting sun, to the lapis lazuli ocean upon which Sukhāvatī rests, to the trees, rivers, and central lake upon which one finds three massive lotus blossom thrones where Amitāyus, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, and Avalokiteśvara (Amida, Daiseishi, and Kannon; 阿彌陀, 大勢至, 觀音) are seated. This section of the sutra is structured as a conversation between the Buddha Śākyamuni, Ānanda, and Queen Vaidehī, who has been imprisoned by her own son. In the seventh step of the visualizations described in this section of the *Contemplation Sutra*, Queen Vaidehī has been given a vision of Amida, his retinue, and Sukhāvatī, and requests to be told how beings in the future will also be able to see Amida, his retinue, and Sukhāvatī. The Buddha replies,

Those who wish to see that Buddha should form an image of a lotus flower on the seven-jeweled ground. They visualize each petal of this flower as having the colors of a hundred jewels and eighty-four thousand rays of light issuing forth from each vein. They should visualize all of these clearly and distinctly. Its smaller petals are two hundred fifty *yojanas* in both length and breadth. Each of these

lotus flowers has eighty-four thousand large petals. Between the petals there are a hundred *koṭis* of king *maṇi*-gems as illuminating adornments. Each *maṇi*-gem emits a thousand rays of light that, like canopies of the seven jewels, cover the entire earth.

The dais is made of Śakra's pendent *maṇi*-gems and is decorated with eighty thousand diamonds, *kiṃśuka*-gems, *brahma maṇi*-gems, and also exquisite pearl-nets. On the dais four columns with jeweled banners spontaneously arise, each appearing to be as large as a thousand million *koṭis* of Mount Sumerus. On the columns rests a jeweled canopy similar to that in the palace of the Yāma Heaven. They are also adorned with five hundred *koṭis* of excellent gems, each emitting eighty-four thousand rays shining in eighty-four thousand different tints of golden color. Each golden light suffuses this jeweled land and transforms itself everywhere into various forms, such as diamond platforms, nets of pearls, and nebulous clusters of flowers. In all the ten directions it transforms itself into anything according to one's wishes and performs the activities of the Buddha. This is the visualizing of the lotus throne and is known as the seventh contemplation.²

The *Contemplation Sutra* visualization parallels, but does not duplicate in exact detail, the descriptions of Sukhāvātī found in the *Larger* and *Smaller Sukhāvattīvyūha* sutras. Although other sensory modalities, such as hearing, touch, and smell are referred to in the course of these sutras, these hyperbolic visual descriptions form part of the larger overall emphasis on vision as a primary sensory modality in early medieval Indian Pure Land Buddhism.³ Take for example the description of the trees of Sukhāvātī that is found in the *Larger Sukhāvattīvyūha Sutra*:

Again, seven jeweled trees completely fill that land. There are some made of gold, some of silver, and others made of beryl, crystal, coral, ruby, or agate. There are also trees made of two to seven kinds of jewels.

There are gold trees with leaves, flowers, and fruits of silver; silver trees with leaves, flowers, and fruits of gold; beryl trees with leaves, flowers, and fruits of crystal; crystal trees with leaves, flowers, and fruits of beryl; coral trees with leaves, flowers, and fruits of ruby; ruby trees with leaves, flowers, and fruits of beryl; agate trees with leaves, flowers, and fruits made of various jewels.

Again, there are jeweled trees with purple-gold roots, white-silver trunks, beryl branches, crystal twigs, coral leaves, ruby flowers, and agate fruits. There are jeweled trees with white-silver roots, beryl trunks, crystal branches, coral twigs, ruby leaves, agate

flowers, and purple-gold fruits. There are jeweled trees with beryl roots, crystal trunks, coral branches, ruby twigs, agate leaves, purple-gold flowers, and white-silver fruits. There are jeweled trees with crystal roots, coral trunks, ruby branches, agate twigs, purple-gold leaves, white-silver flowers, and beryl fruits. There are jeweled trees with coral roots, ruby trunks, agate branches, purple-gold twigs, white-silver leaves, beryl flowers, and crystal fruits. There are jeweled trees with ruby roots, agate trunks, purple-gold branches, white-silver twigs, beryl leaves, crystal flowers, and coral fruits. There are jeweled trees with agate roots, purple-gold trunks, white-silver branches, beryl twigs, crystal leaves, coral flowers, and ruby fruits.

These jeweled trees are in parallel rows, their trunks are evenly spaced, their branches are in level layers, their leaves are symmetrical, their flowers harmonize, and their fruits are well arranged. The brilliant colors of these trees are so luxuriant that it is impossible to see them all. When a fresh breeze wafts through them exquisite sound of the pentatonic scales, such as *kung* and *shang*, spontaneously arise and make symphonic music.⁴

It is important to note an aspect of this description of the trees of Sukhāvati. This is the way that the different kinds of jewels are identified with the different parts of the trees in a regular, progressive fashion. Taking one example, “ruby” is introduced for the flowers of the trees, and then moves downwards to leaves, twigs, branches, trunks, and roots, until at the end it comes back to the top as the fruit. And the same systematic progression is found for each of the different kinds of jewels. But this is not simply a random or accidentally effusive display, rather, it is very systematic—one is tempted to say, disciplined.

Paul Harrison has noted that these sections of the Pure Land sutras “may strike contemporary readers as strangely inaccessible.”⁵ Harrison recognizes, however, that the problem is with the modern reader’s expectations, specifically that such a text is “straight description.” What if we step back from our own preconceptions about the nature of the text? “What then, if we try to read it differently, not as describing a world, but as constructing it, that is, as prescription?”⁶ Harrison has identified here an important hermeneutic principle for understanding Buddhist texts—they are not simply narratives as one who is accustomed to reading novels would expect. Frequently, one also needs to consider whether such texts are describing practices, perhaps within a larger narrative frame.

More specifically, however, the way in which the context of the imaginal world being prescribed are systematically organized has cognitive implications that suggest that this is not simply based on a visionary

experience. The systematic character of the prescriptions evidence the text having been systematically—and perhaps repeatedly—restructured, which is only possible because it is a written text. In other words, writing has mediated between whatever visionary experience may have originally inspired this work and the text as we know it today.⁷ Superficially, this is obvious. What is more significant is that writing is not simply an otherwise transparent tool for recording such an experience, but itself structures the text and allows it to be systematically and reflectively reworked. The cognitive implications of this, discussed more fully *infra*, apply to many Mahāyāna works.

In addition to the *Sukhāvatīvyūha-sūtra*, other textual sources within the Mahāyāna corpus, such as the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra*, emphasize the visual sensory mode. Two sections of this latter text are of particular interest in connection with the development of nenbutsu as visualization. In the first, there are directions for enabling one to see the Buddha Amitābha.⁸ Many Pure Land figures commented on the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra*, and as Harrison says, the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra* “is well-known for containing the earliest dateable mention of the Buddha Amitābha / Amitāyus.” Despite this and the large number of commentaries by Pure Land figures that the work generated, Harrison goes on to caution, “however, because of the later history of the text in China and Japan its Pure Land aspect has often been over-emphasised.”⁹ He sees the text as much more in line with the Prajñāpāramitā teachings of emptiness than with later, more explicitly devotional forms of Pure Land teachings.¹⁰ While philosophically there may be a difference between the devotional quality of the Pure Land sutras and the emphasis on emptiness that forms the central teaching of the Prajñāpāramitā, I would also suggest that there is a stylistic similarity between the Pure Land sutras and the Prajñāpāramitā sutras. In the same way that the *Larger Sutra* systematically went through different possible combinations of jewels to form the different trees described as filling Sukhāvatī, so also do the Prajñāpāramitā texts pursue their metaphysical negations in a systematic fashion. We will consider this more fully *infra*, when we consider the cognitive significance of these works.

In the second section of the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra* there are general directions regarding a visualization leading to the ability to see all the buddhas of the present era.¹¹ It is the purpose of this meditation to allow the practitioner to gain direct access to the presence of a buddha, to hear the teachings directly for oneself, and to bring those teachings back for propagation. As Harrison puts it, it is “one of the main aims of the *samādhi* that gives our *sūtra* its title is to provide practitioners with the means to translate themselves into the presence of this or that particular manifestation of the Buddha-principle for the purpose of hearing the Dharma, which they subsequently remember and propagate to others.”¹² The practitioner of this

samādhi does not need to acquire the divine eye or actually travel to the lands of the buddhas of the present, but is able to directly see them in their many myriads.

We also find visualization practices throughout the tantric traditions of Buddhism. These practices are a central part of the ritual practices (*sādhana*), but are also—perhaps most dramatically—evidenced in the complex visual imagery of the *maṇḍalas*.

An important implication that is worth noting at this point is the transformation of vocal nenbutsu from a practice in which one engages into an experiencing of the sound of the nenbutsu passively, that is, as coming to one from Amida. I believe that it was Rennyo who emphasized that one is not simply to recite the name of the Buddha Amida, but rather that the goal is to hear the Buddha Amida reciting the nenbutsu. So recitation is no longer experienced as an activity that I am undertaking, but rather becomes transformed into an experience that comes to me. It seems quite plausible that there is a strong link between this kind of experience, the experience of hearing Amida calling to me, and the ideas of Other Power.

Given the descriptions found in the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra*, I believe that the same experience of the sensory object as existing separately from one's own active creation of it is the goal of visualization. The goal is not so much the actual mental capacity to form a mental visual image, but rather to be thereby enabled to see all the buddhas in the ten directions.

FROM SENSORY MODALITIES TO STAGES OF HUMAN COGNITION

The two forms of nenbutsu—recitation and visualization—are reflected in a variety of religious experiences and religious practices reported from around the world.¹³ It seems likely that these also reflect the dominance of visual and auditory sensory modalities in these religious cultures. But we can take this analysis a step further and suggest that the existence of these two ways of keeping the Buddha in mind may in fact also point to different kinds of cognitive functioning related to different sensory modalities.

It is common to talk of humans as having five senses, or in the case of the *abhidharma* system, six. From the perspective of cognitive science, however, it is more appropriate to speak of sensory modalities. This is a distinction that does make a difference—each of the sensory modalities actually includes a variety of different senses within it. For example, rather than the sense of touch—implying a single sense—Antonio Damasio refers to “somatosensory,” which he explains “includes varied forms of sense: touch, muscular, temperature, pain, visceral and vestibular.”¹⁴

Sometimes, three sensory modalities are identified as the main ones—visual, auditory, and somatosensory.¹⁵ The latter is also sometimes

referred to as kinesthetic. Recent developments in educational psychology have led to the promotion of the idea that students differ in which of these sensory modalities are dominant, and that consequently, students also have different styles of learning. Some are thought to be more visual learners, while others are more auditory or kinesthetic.¹⁶ It appears, however, that such distinctions are not inherent. According to Bradd Shore, dominance is culturally constructed (and, it is worth noting, culturally constructed does not mean culturally determined). Discussing Samoan culture, Shore says that “For example, the experience of muscle tone and body posture is centrally involved for Samoans in the distinction between center and periphery in numerous contexts, with central experiences associated with muscular tension and postural centering, while peripheral meanings are experienced through muscular relaxation and freeing up of bodily extremities.”¹⁷ The forms of nenbutsu seem to correspond to the different main sensory modalities and learning styles. Visualization practices of remembering the Buddha would perhaps be more effective for those whose dominant sensory modality is vision. Similarly, recitation would be more appropriate for those having the auditory sensory modality dominant. And, though it is no longer actively practiced, dancing nenbutsu¹⁸ (*odori nenbutsu*, 踊念仏) would be effective for kinesthetic learners. Given that the dominance of one sensory modality over the others is culturally constructed would seem to suggest that such dominance can change over time.¹⁹ The rise of visualization practices would seem to be such a change.

In his essay “Notes on the Vision Quest in Early Mahāyāna” Stephan Beyer hypothesized a relatively sudden rise in early medieval India of a religious culture centered on visual experiences, what he refers to as “the great wave of visionary theism of the early centuries AD” and identifies as “having three major components: the technique of visualization, the sense of devotion, and a metaphysical need to explain the soteriological potential of the new contemplative technique.”²⁰

This third characteristic of “the great wave of visionary theism” identified by Beyer—“a metaphysical need to explain the soteriological potential of the new contemplative technique”—is evidenced in the section of the *Contemplation Sutra* that immediately follows the one we recounted *supra*:

The Buddha said to Ānanda and Vaidehi, “After you have seen this, next visualize the Buddha. Why the Buddha? Because Buddhas, Tathāgatas, have cosmic bodies, and so enter into the meditating mind of each sentient being. For this reason, when you contemplate a Buddha, your mind itself takes the form of his thirty-two physical characteristics and eighty secondary marks. Your mind produces the Buddha’s image, and is itself the Buddha.

The ocean of perfectly and universally enlightened Buddhas thus arise in the meditating mind. For this reason, you should single-mindedly concentrate and deeply contemplate the Buddha, Tathāgata, Arhat, and perfectly Enlightened One.²¹

One of the consistent themes in the interpretation of visualization practices has been the presumption that they reflect visionary experiences. As Beyer puts it, visualization techniques represent a quest “for the control—for the conscious return—of the originally uncontrolled and given visionary revelation.”²² This is the pattern we have seen *supra* with the vision of Amida being first given to Vaidehī by the Buddha, and then followed by her request for a meditation practice, a technique that will allow beings in the future to have the same visionary experience. It would be easy for us to treat this as a general rule, an idea that is itself rooted in the three different explanations for the appearance of new texts given by Mahāyāna authors. Harrison explains that one of these three is the idea given in the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi-sūtra*: “this text, and other Mahāyāna sūtras as well, are the residue of visionary experiences in *samādhi*.... Through their access to visions of the Buddha, practitioners are assured of the constant possibility of hearing the dharma, and thus authentic *buddhavacana* may be brought into the world at any time.”²³ Given that this is a rhetorical claim for the authority of a text, while noting that it was apparently considered a meaningful and effective claim by the authors, we need not simply accept it as given. If we give serious consideration to Corless’s suggestion regarding differing sensory domains, and take into account the differing stages of human cognitive development, a more complicated picture suggests itself.

In his study of the developments in human cognition, Merlin Donald has described four distinguishable stages in the development of contemporary human cognition.²⁴ In sequence he refers to these four as episodic, mimetic, mythic, and theoretic. At all four stages these cognitive styles are linked to memory systems, while the latter two are also linked with distinct cultural systems. The first of these, the episodic, is one that we share with all animals. This is the ability to learn from episodes, and is recorded in what is known as episodic memory. The example that comes to my mind is the ability of rats to learn their way around a maze.

Some animals, particularly what are called the higher primates, are able to do more than this in that they can learn by imitation. This is the second or mimetic stage of cognitive development identified by Donald. This form of learning is a major advance over episodic in that it begins the process that allows for the transmission of knowledge from one individual to another. It is, in other words, the basis for culture. The fact that children learn so much more rapidly by imitating others is evidence of the power of this mimetic cognition.

The creation of language constitutes the third stage of cognitive development, one in which knowledge is recorded in oral transmissions of myth organized according to narrative forms. Now knowledge can be abstracted from particular situations in which one individual learns on their own (episodic), or learns by imitating another (mimetic), and is retained in verbal formulae. Such verbal formulae are given structure by the forms of narrative—storytelling—which in turn become the basis for extended narratives—myths. Perhaps the most impressive instances of this verbal, narrative, mythic culture are the Vedas and the Homeric epics, which evidence what we today consider to be phenomenal feats of memorization. The Vedas are often identified as being instances where verbatim memorization of texts has been accomplished, as distinct from the Homeric texts which were “re-created” each time they were recited through the use of fixed recitative formulae. Walter J. Ong points out, however, that in the absence of written texts against which to check, this claim cannot be confirmed.²⁵ Two additional considerations may be relevant here. First, within the conceptual space of many religions, the characteristics of being old, original, or unchanged have high value and lend authority to a text or teaching. The rhetorical impact of the claim of being “timeless” as found in such phrases as “timeless truths” (or, more classically “the eternal verities”) provides evidence of the continuing positive value of this characteristic. This is certainly true of the Indic religious world where the claims for an unchanging Veda originate. Thus, we can see that there is an important payoff in the form of religious authority if one claims to be simply representing the “original” teachings. This dynamic is particularly relevant for contemporary Buddhism in the continuing claim of authority based on the idea that the Pāli canon represents the “original” teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha. (This is, of course, not to dismiss the importance of understanding the history of textual production, only to highlight the rhetorical assertion of authority inherent in the claim of being “original.”)

There is, however, another dimension that needs to be considered when comparing the question of the relative textual stability of Homeric and Vedic texts over time, and that is the different mnemonic technologies employed. The transmission of Homeric texts from bard to bard was probably much less highly structured and institutionalized than the kind of Vedic training discovered by Staal existing today among the Nambudiri Brahmins.²⁶ From an early age, significant amounts of children’s time was devoted to memorization of the texts, and this training included a sophisticated program of systematic bodily gestures related to the recitation—indicating a large investment of social capital. Thus, the textual stability of Vedic texts was maintained by a different mnemonic technology from that found in bardic culture, and was supported by a different social-institutional structure.

In the case of Buddhism, social-institutional support was provided by monasteries and the investment of their social capital in the process of

memorizing texts. Discussing the oral character of early Buddhist texts and the issues involved in their preservation, Joseph Walser comments that "In order for such oral preservation to take place, however, there has to be a degree of institutional organization and commitment to the labor of textual preservation. In the Buddhist case, oral preservation required countless hours of repetition and training."²⁷

No matter how extensive the mnemonic skills maintained in oral cultures, the oral or mythic stage still depends on the individual human's capacity for memory. As such, oral culture allows for very little reflective discussion about the mythic narrative. Ong identifies some of the characteristic forms of reflective thought that become possible upon the development of externalized forms of memory when he says that "an oral culture simply does not deal in such items as geometrical figures, abstract categorization, formally logical reasoning processes, definitions, or even comprehensive descriptions, or articulated self-analysis, all of which derive not simply from thought itself but from text-formed thought."²⁸

Writing, in the sense of visual representations of information in symbolic form, marks the fourth of Donald's stages. Now memory has moved outside the limits of an individual's memory and taken up residence in external systems of memory. Where previously memory only existed in the mind-brain of an individual, when humans created systems of symbols for recording thoughts, memory could then be stored in forms external to the individual. It seems that initially these were mnemonic in character, just like today when someone puts a rubber band around their wrist in order to remember to pick up milk at the grocery store.

The most powerful of these symbol systems was writing, which allows for communication of ideas or thoughts rather than simply their recall. Writing has in turn given rise first to printing and, much more recently, to electronic forms of external memory. It may also be argued that pictorial representations have also served the same purpose, and have had a similar trajectory of development into first photographs, then into movies, and now into electronically recorded forms. Memory which is externalized and preserved in a written (or printed, or photographic, or electronic) record allows for greater intellectual freedom in relation to what is recorded.

According to Ong, interiorization of writing by the Greeks, that is, when writing became the cognitive norm for Greek society, required several centuries even after the Greek alphabet was developed "around 720–700 BC." This transformed Greek culture. "The new way to store knowledge was not in mnemonic formulas but in the written text. This freed the mind for more original, more abstract thought."²⁹ As indicated above in Ong's list of characteristic forms of thought not practiced in oral cultures, this "more original, more abstract thought" includes the possibility of critical reflection, which Donald suggest by identifying this as the "theoretic stage."

Most of the authors in this field—Ong, Goody, Donald, and others—focus attention on the Greeks. For our purposes here, however, we need to move beyond the Western academic habit of privileging the Greeks and their accomplishments—which seem to have overly emphasized the importance of *alphabetic* writing systems in the creation of external memory systems and literate cultures. Syllabic writing systems, such as those developed for Sanskrit, and graphemic writing systems, such as found in China, are simply close alternatives. Further afield one might suggest that the graphic systems involved in Mayan calendrics and Egyptian hieroglyphics constitute external memory systems allowing for *communication*. Even further, the variety of astronomical observatories in the ancient world, from Stonehenge to the Bighorn Medicine Wheel and many others, indicates complex reflective cognition only possible through the externalization of memory in the form of the observatories themselves.

I find that, given the variety of forms that external memory systems can take, and the key role of visual perception in the creation and use of those external memory systems, “graphic” may be more appropriate as a label for this stage of development.³⁰ This is not to claim that the development of writing systems was not an important advance. Writing in any form—not just alphabetic³¹—allows the reader to find out what is recorded, rather than simply being reminded. In this way it goes beyond being a mnemonic device and becomes a communicative device. As revolutionary as the advance of writing was, it itself could have only taken place within the context of an already developed capacity for externalizing memory through mnemonic devices.

Given Donald’s fourfold structure of human cognition in which all previous stages are retained, I would suggest that what we see in the rise of a visionary religious culture is largely motivated by the spread of graphic cognition. In other words, it is not simply that individuals had visionary experiences that provided the basis for visual descriptions and visualization practices, as Beyer suggests. While this may have provided an essential stimulus, I think that the complex visual forms described in the Pure Land sutras, found in maṇḍalas, and promoted as a form of meditative practice can only be explained when we consider that they are the end result of a process of elaboration that was made possible because they existed as graphic forms in external memory.

Consider in contrast to the hyperbolic descriptions of Sukhāvati that we heard previously, the following description of an island taken from the *Odyssey*:

Six whole days we rowed, six nights, nonstop.
On the seventh day we raised the Laestrygonian land,
Telepyus heights where the craggy fort of Lamus rises.

Where shepherd calls to shepherd as one drives in his flocks
 and the other drives his out and he calls back in answer,
 where a man who never sleeps could rake in double wages,
 one for herding cattle, one for pasturing fleecy sheep,
 the nightfall and the sunrise march so close together.
 We entered a fine harbor there, all walled around
 by a great unbroken sweep of sky-scraping cliff
 and two steep headlands, fronting each other, close
 around the mouth so the passage in is cramped.
 Here the rest of my rolling squadron steered,
 right into the gaping cove and moored tightly,
 prow by prow. Never a swell there, big or small;
 a milk-white calm spreads all around the place.
 But I alone anchored my black ship outside,
 well clear of the harbor's jaws
 I tied her fast to a cliffside with a cable.
 I scaled its rock face to a lookout on its crest
 but glimpsed no trace of the work of man or beast from there;
 all I spied was a plume of smoke, drifting off the land.³²

This is the island of the giants, from which only Odysseus's ship will manage to escape. The Homeric epics are well-known to be from an oral culture, and there are stylistic features here that reflect that culture—Odysseus's description of his "black ship" and other similar formulae are part of the strategies for oral reproduction of these epics.³³ Here we are also induced to vivid visual imagery—the "wine dark sea" familiar from other passages is contrasted here with the "milk-white calm." But how different these are from the kind of Pure Land imagery recounted above. Here we find no repetition of a variety of characteristics through a systematic combination, such as the descriptions of the jeweled trees. The dependence of the oral text on a narrative structure, on a story-line, differs from the written text's existence as external to individual memory. This "stylistic" difference is made possible by writing or graphic representation. Having been externalized and objectified in a way that an oral narrative is not, it becomes possible to engage in the kind of systematic progressions found in the descriptions of the trees in the *Sukhāvatīyūha-sūtra*.

Turning back to a comparison with the style of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, consider the following description of the "great vehicle of the Bodhisattva" from the *Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom*:

Moreover, Subhūti, the great vehicle of the Bodhisattva, the great being, that is the emptiness of the subject, the object, of both subject and object, of emptiness, of great emptiness, of ultimate

reality, of conditioned emptiness, of unconditioned emptiness, of infinite emptiness, of emptiness without beginning or end, of nonrepudiation, of essential nature, of all dharmas, of own-marks, of unascertainable emptiness, of the nonexistence of own-being, of existence, of nonexistence, of own-being, and of other-being.

What is the emptiness of the subject? Dharmas on the subject-side are eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Therein the eye is empty of the eye, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. And why? Because such is its essential nature. And so the ear is empty of the ear, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. And why? Because such is its essential nature. And so the nose is empty of the nose, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. And why? Because such is its essential nature. And so the tongue is empty of the tongue, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. And why? Because such is its essential nature. And so the body is empty of the body, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. And why? Because such is its essential nature. And so the mind is empty of the mind, on account of its being neither unmoved nor destroyed. And why? Because such is its essential nature.

What is the emptiness of the object? Dharmas on the object-side are forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touch objects, and mind objects. Therein form is empty of form....³⁴

When confronted by such contrasting literary forms as those found in the Pure Land and Perfection of Wisdom literatures when compared with the Homeric epics, some might be tempted to fall back on the old clichéd stereotypes about the so-called “Indian mind” as versus the “Greek mind.” More recent developments in critical theory, however, suggest that such “explanations” serve as little more than thinly-veiled value judgments and virtually racist claims about ethnic identity. Instead, if we consider these as having their origins in different stages of the development of human cognition—Homeric epics in the mythic-narrative stage of cognitive development, and Pure Land and Prajñāpāramitā sutras as well as tantric maṇḍalas in the graphic stage—then certain characteristics of each style of (what I am loosely calling) “literature” makes sense.³⁵ The Homeric formulae assisted the poet by allowing the use of fixed narrative forms, maintaining the rhythmic cadences of the presentation. The systematic working through of different items—the jewels of which trees consist, the emptiness of various philosophic concepts, or the categories and descriptions of different deities in different locations in the maṇḍala—would seem to evidence the kind of reflective reworking of materials only possible when they are recorded externally, that is, in what Donald designates as external memory.

BIOLOGICAL EVOLUTION AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION

There is loose usage of the term “evolution” that is simply a synonym for progress. Here, however, it is important to distinguish between “evolution” in this popular usage and the more technical use, that of biological evolution. This will allow us to be clearer about the nature of the cognitive changes being described.

Biological evolution involves changes in the genetic structures of an organism that are expressed in new biological structures or processes—this is usually referred to as the relation between the genotype and the phenotype. Such genetic changes require much longer periods of time to take place than the period of time involved in the rise of literate cultures. The difference between those people living in oral cultures and those living in literate cultures is not biological—there are no new brain structures involved—and, therefore, are not genetic or evolutionary in the more restricted, biological sense. The cognitive differences are a consequence of adaptations to different cultural environments.

Although there is not literally a new biological structure in the brain that has been created as an evolutionary process, Donald does discuss the change from mythic to theoretic cultures involves a new “hardware” for memory:

This change, in the terms of modern information technology, constitutes a *hardware* change, albeit a nonbiological hardware change. A distinction should be made between memory as contained within the individual and memory as part of a collective, external storage system. The first is biologically based, that is, it resides in the brain, so we will refer to it as *biological memory*. The second kind of memory may reside in a number of different external stores, including visual and electronic storage systems, as well as culturally transmitted memories that reside in other individuals.³⁶

It is also important to emphasize that the various stages of cognition are cumulative. Describing the way in which he has presented the developmental stages of cognition, Donald says,

From the start, I have made the simplifying assumption that each cognitive adaptation in human evolutionary history has been retained as a fully functional vestige. The simplest working hypothesis, by far, is that, when we acquired the apparatus required for mime and speech, in that order, we retained the knowledge structures, and the cultural consequences, of previous adaptations.³⁷

We might simply say that writing and its cognitive structures has not replaced spoken communication and its cognitive structures. Instead, one has been added to the other. External memory has not replaced individual internal memory, but rather been added to it. In a loose analogy, television has not replaced radio, but rather been added to it. In other words, because this development is cumulative, there is no we—they dichotomy—no evolutionary dichotomy between we, the literate, and they, the oral—to the extent that we are first they before we became we and we are still they. The oral / aural still functions as an important cognitive mode, despite having been augmented by externalizable systems of symbolic representation. In his study of the oral character of scripture, William A. Graham has stated that

there is much evidence to support our widespread association of writing with civilization, although this should not be used to support either the once fashionable assumption that preliterate are “simpler” or have lesser intellectual capacities than literates, or the argument that literacy automatically conveys new intellectual capacities.³⁸

In other words, the distinction between oral cultures, which employ individual, internal memory, and graphic cultures, which employ public, external memory, is not a judgment regarding superiority or a suggestion that new intellectual capacities have evolved, but rather a techno-cultural one in which intellectual capacities otherwise unavailable become possible. That the technology of systematic external symbolization of thought has had a corresponding cognitive consequence should be in no way surprising. Imagine how differently the world looks to two children, one of whom has a bicycle and knows how to ride it, and a second who neither has a bicycle nor knows how to ride. For the former, a playground that is beyond the reach of the latter quickly becomes part of his or her home territory. This may give us some sense of the cognitive implications of a technology itself so profoundly cognitive as writing.³⁹ Having a “text” externalized in written—or other graphic—form creates the possibility of reflecting critically on that text in ways not possible when the “text” is spoken, recited, and retained in individual internal memory. A new opportunity for the application of cognitive skills all humans share on the basis of biological evolution is created by the development of technologies supporting external memory.

IMPLICATIONS FOR OTHER ASPECTS OF BUDDHIST THOUGHT AND HISTORY

Two additional aspects of the Buddhist tradition would seem to be, if not explained by, then at least given greater context by the historical

transformation from an oral to a graphic culture and its cognitive consequences. These two are the stylistic differences between the Pāli suttas and the Mahāyāna sūtras—which are striking to anyone who has read both—and the rise of Buddhist nominalism, particularly as expressed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature and Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamikakārikā*.

Textual Stylistics

One of the areas where the distinction between oral and literary cultures is suggestive is the difference between the Mahāyāna sūtras and the Pāli sutta literature. Historically, the tradition maintains that what became the Pāli literature was an oral tradition, retained and “passed down orally by groups of memorizer-reciters known as *bhāṇakas* and were only written down around 70 B.C.E. in Sri Lanka during the fourth Buddhist council...after which they were still transmitted orally for many centuries.”⁴⁰

The Pāli suttas are strongly narrative in form, reflecting the oral culture in which they originated, while the well-known florid character of the Mahāyāna sūtra literature points toward a graphic culture. Just at the time that the Theravāda literature was being recorded, that is when the value of writing it down came to be institutionally recognized, the Mahāyāna was beginning as well, and integrated a positive valuation of writing from its origins.⁴¹ Taking just as a suggestive example, consider the difference between the opening of a Pāli sutta and one of the Mahāyāna sūtras. The *Mahāniddana-sutta* opens with the following very brief description:

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was living among the Kurus. Now, the Kurus have a town named Kammasadhamma. There Ven. Ananda approached the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to the Blessed One: “It’s amazing, lord, it’s astounding, how deep this dependent co-arising is, and how deep its appearance, and yet to me it seems as clear as clear can be.”⁴²

Following on this, the Buddha Śākyamuni goes on to give one of the most famous explanations of the links in the chain of causation. In contrast, consider the opening of the *Vairocanaḥbhisambhodi-sūtra*:

Thus have I heard. At one time the Bhagavān (Lord) was residing in the vast adamantine palace of the Dharma realm empowered by Tathāgatas, in which all the *vajradharas* had all assembled; the great pavilion [comparable to] the king of jewels, born of the Tathāgata’s faith-and-understanding, play, and supernatural transformations, was lofty, without a center or perimeter, and variously adorned with

great and wondrous jewel-kings, and the body of a bodhisattva formed a lion throne.⁴³

Another three—even lengthier—paragraphs follow this before the initial question that starts the sutra is asked.

While evaluating Buddhist literature in terms of the oral-graphic distinction does not add to our historical knowledge *per se*, it does, however, contribute to our understanding of why there are such sharp stylistic differences between different strata of Buddhist literature.

Buddhist Nominalism

As used in contemporary Western philosophy, “nominalism” is employed to label the idea that only particular things actually exist, and that universals or essences are only names (*nomos*, from which nominalism is itself named).⁴⁴ To take a mundane example, according to the nominalist view, the red of a cover of a book on my shelf does not exist anywhere else or in any other form than as found on that particular book cover. In other words, it does not exist as some universal or essence of which this particular book cover is an instance, as is held by Platonists and some of the non-Buddhist Indian philosophic schools. Given the highly psychological character of so much of Indian Buddhist thought, thoughts about general categories are themselves particulars—person P’s thought about general category X at time T, as it were. Such particular thoughts have the name of the general category as their objective referent, not some independently existing universal or essence. Buddhist thought, however, also maintains philosophic reasons for its rejection of metaphysical universals or essences.

Tom Tillemans comments on the use of the term nominalism in relation to Buddhist thought by explaining that nominalism “in the modern sense as found in Nelson Goodman and W.V. Quine, [is] where the essential requirement is that what exists must be particular; [however, the idea of] nominalism need not be, and indeed is not for the Buddhists, a philosophy where universals are just mere words alone, or *flatus vocis*.” Tillemans goes on to clarify this, saying “The peculiarly Buddhist contribution is that abstract entities are not just dismissed, but are *accounted for* as mere absences of differences and are hence unreal, as are all other absences for Buddhists.”⁴⁵ Universals or essences are abstractions, and abstractions are simply the absence of difference. Saying that the book cover and the pen are both red does not establish the metaphysical reality of redness. It just leaves out the differences between the actually existing red book and the actually existing red pen. In this sense then, nominalism has long been considered a characteristic of Buddhist thought.

However, if we consider the history of Buddhist philosophic thought from the perspective of its treatment of words and language, while attending

to the cognitive differences implied by the existence of different strata of Buddhist thought, we find that there is a significant shift toward nominalism with the Mahāyāna—which as noted above is more closely affiliated with writing. In the pre-Mahāyāna abhidharma literature, the predominant understanding of words is as speech, and “that speech, being the physical sound of words, is itself a real entity.”⁴⁶

Turning to the Prajñāpāramitā literature, we find that the ontological problems raised appear to be stimulated by reflections on the difference between things and their designations. For example, a bodhisattva “who courses in the perfection of wisdom, develops it, makes efforts about it” does not think, “‘I grow in perfect wisdom,’” but “on the contrary it occurs to him, ‘a mere designation is that.’”⁴⁷ Later in the same text we find the view of language as involving a difference between things and their designations expressed more clearly:

Verbal expression does not necessarily imply a settling down in names and signs. Only with reference to suffering do I use verbal expressions, not for the settling down in name and sign. For a Tathagata, or his disciple does not settle down in name and sign. If name could settle down in name, sign in sign, emptiness in emptiness... then the Tathagata, or his disciples, would settle down in name or sign. But since all dharmas are mere words, they do not abide in them. It is thus that a Bodhisattva, having taken his stand on mere words or signs, should course in perfect wisdom, but not settle down in it.⁴⁸

In light of our considerations regarding the cognitive consequences of writing, such different understandings of language—as speech contrasted with as designations—appear to be informed not simply by philosophic reflections but also by the differences between oral and literate cultures. Ong has noted that members of literate cultures

tend to think of names as labels, written or printed tags imaginatively affixed to an object named. Oral folk have no sense of a name as a tag, for they have no idea of a name as something that can be seen. Written or printed representations of words can be labels; real, spoken words cannot be.⁴⁹

Thus, as with the differences between the textual stylistics of Theravāda literature and Mahāyāna literature, the philosophic differences in how speech and language is conceived may be explained—at least to some significant extent—by the cognitive differences between oral and literate cultures.

CONCLUSION

One of the conclusions that we can draw from this inquiry is that the expansion of visionary religion hypothesized by Beyer is probably a literary accomplishment rather than a literally visionary one. The hyperbolic descriptions of Sukhāvati, the complexity of maṇḍala, and the emptiness of various philosophic concepts suggest a religious culture dependent on external memory—writing and drawing. Exception may need to be made, of course, for the existence of (probably very few) religious virtuosi who, like the bards who recited the Homeric hymns and other lengthy oral productions, were able through extensive practice and training to develop the skill to actually create such complex visual images. The two kinds of nenbutsu practice—verbal recitation and visualization—would seem to reflect oral culture and literate culture respectively. Hearing the voice of Amida reciting the nenbutsu formula is a direct appeal not only to the aural/oral sensory modality, but also to the cognitive functioning of oral cultures. As suggested by the *Contemplation Sutra*, and emphasized by Hōnen and Shinran, nenbutsu recitation is available to all of us as a religiously effective practice or as an expression of our religious experience.

NOTES

My thanks to the suggestions made and questions raised by Natalie Fisk Quli and Eleanor Rosch in the course of preparing this revised version.

1. For a systematic examination of the various texts that teach buddhānusmṛti (Pāli *buddhānusati*), see Paul Harrison, “Commemoration and Identification in Buddhānusmṛti,” in *In the Mirror of Memory: Reflections on Mindfulness and Remembrance in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*, ed. Janet Gyatso (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 215–238.

2. Inagaki Hisao with Harold Stewart, trans., *The Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus*, in *The Three Pure Land Sutras*, BDK English Tripiṭaka 12-II (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995), § 15, p. 102.

3. The *Larger Sukhāvativyūha Sutra* was translated into Chinese in the second or third century (Robert. E. Buswell, Jr., ed., *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* [New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003], s.v. “Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra,” by Mark Blum). Convention then would place its original composition to approximately the period from the middle of the first to the middle of the second century.

4. Inagaki Hisao with Harold Stewart, trans., *The Larger Sutra on Amitāyus (The Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life)*, in *The Three Pure Land Sutras* (see note 2), § 14, pp. 46–47.

5. Paul Harrison, “Mediums and Messages: Reflections on the Production of Mahāyāna Sūtras,” *Eastern Buddhist* 35, nos. 1–2 (2003): p. 121.

6. Ibid.

7. Direct inspiration of each specific text by some specific visionary experience, however, need not be presumed—despite its being argued for as a source of authority (see Harrison, “Mediums and Messages,” p. 124). Such texts did not appear in isolation, but rather within the context of a well-developed literate culture. In other words, the referents may well be other texts, rather than visionary experiences. This is, in fact, a situation with which we are well familiar. A contemporary noir mystery, for example, is referring probably at least as much to the writings of Mickey Spillane and Dashiell Hammett as to their own personal experiences.

8. Paul Harrison, *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present*, Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series, vol. 5 (Tokyo: International Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1990), ch. 3.

9. Harrison, *Samādhi*, p. xxii n. 18.

10. Ibid., p. xviii.

11. Ibid., ch. 5.

12. Ibid., p. xx.

13. While I wish that I could claim this particular piece of analysis as my own, it is not. Unfortunately, and with apologies, I have been unable to locate the specific source from which this idea came to me. I thought that I recalled reading this in something that Roger Corless wrote, however, an extensive review of his publications, with the added assistance kindly given by Eisho Nasu, failed to turn it up. Although in some of his essays, Corless does speak of a different kind of pairing, that of apophatic and cataphatic, that particular pair does not match the cognitive and sensory analysis being developed here.

14. Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness* (San Diego, New York, and London: A Harvest Book, Harcourt, 1999), p. 318.

15. Ibid., p. 159.

16. <http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/articles/learningmod/start.htm>, accessed Wednesday, December 19, 2007.

17. Bradd Shore, *Culture in Mind: Cognition, Culture, and the Problem of Meaning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 275.

18. Richard Bowring, *The Religious Traditions of Japan: 500–1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 329.

19. It is speculative at this point, but it might be worth considering the possibility that for the same person different sensory modalities may be dominant in different social settings. Consider, for example, a person who has grown up in a culture that is predominantly visual, such as contemporary America, but has consistently experienced a highly auditory religious life, such as a BCA temple where nenbutsu recitation and sutra chanting are the main focus of their religious life. Might it not be the case that dominance is contextual as well as cultural—that in one setting they are more visual, while in the religious domain they are more auditory? The difference in contextual emphasis on one modality over another might be strengthened when other sensory modalities—less conscious ones, such as the olfactory stimuli of incense—are also consistently conjoined in the same social context. Taking these reflections another step, one might also consider the effects of experiences that are directed at non-dominant sensory modalities, such as extended rhythmic group dancing for someone who is predominantly visual. Might such situations produce a sense of disorientation, and be experienced as numinous?

20. Stephen Beyer, "Notes on the Vision Quest in Early Mahāyāna," in *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*, ed.

Lewis Lancaster (Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1977), p. 339. His evidence for this included both Buddhist sources and Hindu ones, but most important for his argument is Arjuna's vision of Krishna as all-consuming time in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

21. Inagaki and Stewart, *Contemplation Sutra*, p. 103.

22. Beyer, "Vision Quest," p. 332.

23. Harrison, "Mediums and Messages," p. 124.

24. Merlin Donald, *Origins of the Modern Mind: Three Stages in the Evolution of Culture and Cognition* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1991).

25. Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy* (1982; repr. London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 65.

26. Frits Staal, *Agni: The Vedic Ritual of the Fire Altar* (Asian Humanities Press, 1983).

27. Joseph Walser, *Nāgārjuna in Context: Mahāyāna Buddhism and Early Indian Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 136.

28. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 55.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

30. I believe that Donald has unfortunately been seduced by the idea of "Greek exceptionalism" and focuses to too great an extent on theoretical thinking for his description of this stage of cognitive development. I think that more important than the ability to form abstract generalizations about causal relations (perhaps too limited a description of his understanding of "theoretic"?) is the opportunity for iterative refinement that external memory systems provide.

31. Donald and Ong both focus on alphabetic systems of writing. The issue, it seems to me, is not the character of the writing system, but rather the shift from a mnemonic device to a communicative one—that is, from one that depends on the "reader" already knowing what the "text" says, whether that text is charcoal sketches on a cave wall or knots in a string, to one like, well, hopefully this, in which the reader is learning something that he or she did not already know, whether the text is recorded in an alphabetic or an ideographic system. There would also seem to be some differences based on differing kinds of graphic representations. Heinrich Zimmer, for example, discusses differences between figurative and geometric representations. See, Heinrich Zimmer, "Yoga and the Linear Sacred Image," in *Artistic Form and Yoga in the Sacred Images of India*, trans. and ed. Gerald Chapple and James B. Lawson with J. Michael Knight (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), ch. 3, "Yoga and the Linear Sacred Image (the *yantra* and the *Mandala*)," pp. 65–180.

32. Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), p. 233.
33. For an extended discussion of the mnemonic technologies of oral cultures, see David C. Rubin, *Memory in Oral Traditions: The Cognitive Psychology of Epic, Ballads, and Counting-out Rhymes* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).
34. Edward Conze, trans., *The Large Sutra on Perfect Wisdom, with the Divisions of the Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1975), p. 144.
35. A. C. Graham seems to have taken a similar approach to the comparison of Chinese and Western thought. Rather than “building a contrastive framework between China and the West on the purported distinctiveness of correlative thinking, Graham pointed instead to the relative weight that each philosophical tradition placed on correlative and analytic thinking. China embraced correlativity; the West ultimately divorced analytic thinking from correlative thinking and came to value analytic thinking more highly” (Michael J. Puett, *To Become a God: Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-Divinization in Early China* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002], p. 16).
36. Donald, p. 308.
37. Ibid., p. 269.
38. William A. Graham, *Beyond the Written Word: Oral Aspects of Scripture in the History of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 12.
39. See for a similar consideration of the impact of technology Ong’s discussion of orchestral technology. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 80–82.
40. Daniel Veidlinger, “When a Word Is Worth a Thousand Pictures: Mahāyāna Influence on Theravāda Attitudes towards Writing,” *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* 53, no. 4 (2006): p. 406. For additional discussion of place of orality and literacy in Theravāda culture, see idem., *Spreading the Dhamma: Writing, Orality, and Textual Transmission in Buddhist Northern Thailand* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2006).
41. Idem., “When a Word,” p. 406.
42. <http://www.accesstosight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.15.0.than.html>, accessed Thursday, March 1, 2007.
43. Rolf Giebel, trans., *The Vairocanaḥśambodhi Sūtra*, BDK English Tripiṭaka, 30–I (Berkeley, CA: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2005), p. 3.
44. Like most philosophic terminology, nominalism has a variety of

overlapping but not identical usages in the literature (see for a summary discussion of the different versions of nominalism <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/platonism/>, accessed March 17, 2007). To this complexity is added the further difficulty of employing terminology deriving from the Western philosophic tradition to talk about Buddhist philosophy. Fortunately, in this area of relatively technical philosophy, the positions and concerns of Western and Indic philosophers are very closely analogous to one another.

45. Tom J. F. Tillemans, *Scripture, Logic, Language: Essays on Dharmakīrti and His Tibetan Successors* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), p. 4.

46. José Ignacio Cabezón, *A Dose of Emptiness: An Annotated Translation of the sTong thun chen mo of mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 476 n. 641.

47. Conze, *The Large Sutra*, p. 411.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 517.

49. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, p. 33.

Transforming Reality through Vocalization of Salvific Truth

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IN ORDER TO STIMULATE reflection on the Shin Buddhist concept of practice in relation to other Buddhist traditions, I believe that the idea of practice in Pure Land can be productively pondered by considering not only the diversity of contemporary and historical notions of nembutsu within the Shin tradition, but also the diversity of analogous, even related, practices in the broader religious context of East Asia.

Such considerations could of course extend not only throughout the East Asian context, but also into the Buddhist traditions of India and Tibet, and even into traditions that are usually thought of as Hindu, as Richard Payne and others have been showing through their far-reaching research. I lack the expertise to range far into Indian or Tibetan forms of religious practice, but I do believe that I can stimulate reflection on the nature of nembutsu practice by comparing and contrasting such forms of practice with analogous traditions of practice in other forms of East Asian Buddhism, and even in the Taoist tradition of China. What I shall attempt to do here is to identify, in the broadest interpretive terms, points at which the paradigms and practices of those historically contiguous traditions seem to agree, and the points at which they diverge.

Of course, in order to identify those points of agreement and divergence, one must first identify the nature of nembutsu practice itself, which of course brings us right to the very focal point of the symposium. It goes without saying that over the course of Pure Land Buddhist history, varieties of nembutsu practice have encompassed what might seem to comprise a quite incongruent variety of assumptions. Indeed, the very fact that Jōdo Shinshū exists—as a form of Buddhism distinct from other Japanese forms of Buddhism—rests in part upon Shinran’s carefully nuanced explication of the nature of nembutsu practice and of the soteriological implications of such practice. Various expositors over the generations—indigenous to the tradition and beyond it—have attempted to explain this or that form of nembutsu practice, sometimes in illuminating ways, sometimes in misleading ways. Some have called nembutsu practice a “devotional” activ-

ity—assuming that it is essentially comparable to Christian “worship” or “prayer.” Others, more insightfully, have explained nembutsu practice in terms of what we think of as meditation. Certainly, the etymology of the term *nembutsu* itself supports the latter approach.

But the historical usage of the term *nienfo* also indicates that from the time of T'an-luan in sixth-century China, Pure Land practitioners often understood the practice of nienfo in terms of what the practitioner does with his or her *voice* as well as with his or her consciousness. It is upon that point that I shall focus here, because it is a concept of practice that we see also in the distinct but analogous practices of Shingon Buddhism—and its broader “esoteric” antecedents throughout South, Central, and Eastern Asia—and even in Taoism as well. And it is from the basis of those analogies that one can appreciate the nuances of Shinran's perspective.

In sum, we might say that some religious practitioners saw salvific potential in a practitioner's vocalizational actions, just as others saw salvific potential in a practitioner's visualizational actions. But for Shinran, of course, it was always important for the practitioner to realize that the salvific power of both types of action was a power that derived in the first instance from Amida himself, not from the individual body, voice, or consciousness of the practitioner.

Some might wonder what such issues of practice could have to do with Taoism. But that is because it was only very, very late in the twentieth century that scholars began to rediscover many important elements of the Chinese Taoist heritage by research into texts in the *Tao-tsang*—the so-called Taoist “canon.” That immense collection of texts was completely unknown to non-Taoist scholars in China until the late twentieth century as well. Hence, all who read or wrote about Taoism in previous generations had little idea of the richness and diversity of Taoist models of religious practice.

For instance, late in the fourth century, Taoists in south China began to circulate a new set of scriptures that they called the Ling-pao scriptures. As I recently wrote:

Ling-pao scriptures, such as the *Tu-jen ching*, “Scripture for the Salvation of Humanity,” told of a great cosmic deity—a personification of the Tao simply called Yüan-shih T'ien-tsun, “The Heavenly Venerable One of the Primordial Beginning.”¹ Anxious to save humanity, that deity sends an emissary to reveal the *Tu-jen ching*, which is itself an emanation of the Tao. The practitioner was instructed to recite the text, thereby re-actualizing its primordial recitation by the deity and participating directly in its salvific efficacy. Though materials like the *Tu-jen ching* had significant influence upon later generations of Taoists, the entire Ling-pao corpus remained unknown, even to most specialists, until nearly the end of the twentieth century.²

Scholars such as Stephen Bokenkamp have demonstrated the extent to which the Ling-pao scriptures had been inspired by certain texts of Mahayana Buddhism. But there are also certain specific models of visualizational Buddhist practice that can be shown to have been inspired by earlier elements of Taoist practice.

Certainly, no religious tradition—even Hinduism—has had a more diverse and expansive array of religious practices than Taoism. But on Taoist terms, all models of ritual and/or meditative practice—including both visualization and vocalization—can ultimately be explained as models by which the individual practitioner personally takes part in a process through which reality itself is transformed. The assumption that religious practice actually transforms reality is a model that Taoism shares with many, if not all, traditions of “esoteric” Buddhist practice in India, Tibet, China, and Japan, including the Shingon tradition.

At the most basic level, certain assumptions are common to both the “esoteric” tradition of Buddhism—sometimes called “tantric Buddhism”—and to China’s indigenous Taoist tradition. One common assumption is simply that most people live fundamentally unaware of the true nature of the reality within which their lives take place. As a consequence, they live their lives on terms that are not in accord with the true nature of their *own* reality. Such lives are thus inherently flawed and ultimately fruitless. However, the true nature of people’s reality is not ontologically alien to them. So the issue is not that people must learn about something that is basically other than themselves. Rather, they must learn about the actual basics of who they now are. Such a learning process is not an intellectual process, but rather a process involving a change in *experiential* awareness. This is one of the few points at which we can see a fundamental continuity between the ancient Chinese text called *Chuang-tzu* and the many later forms of Taoist religious practice.

In some Zen traditions, we are told quite similar things. For example, we generally learn in Zen—even in its Chinese antecedents—that for a person to learn how to swim does not imply a need to bridge some ontological gulf between “the person who can swim” and “the person who cannot swim”: rather, the ability to swim is inherent within each of us, though most people have not yet become aware of, and have not yet begun to practice, any such ability. In addition, becoming aware that one is, indeed, a swim-capable person is not something that one learns from being told so, not even by someone whose views we deeply value. Rather, becoming aware that one can indeed engage in swimming is a process that requires that one personally undergo the actual experience of being in the water, of bringing to bear one’s motor skills, etc., in a manner that allows one to manage effectively within the watery environment. Here, of course, I am echoing ideas of Dōgen, the twelfth-century founder of Japan’s Sōtō Zen tradition.

Both Taoism and esoteric Buddhism seem to assume something quite similar: both are directed toward teaching capable individuals how to gain an experiential access to a reality that has been there all along, but was merely not previously realized. And yet, as to some degree in Hinduism, Buddhism, and even Confucianism, both Taoism and esoteric Buddhism assume that certain specific sets of practices have the proven capability to help bring a practitioner into an experiential awareness of dimensions of his or her own reality to which he or she hitherto remained oblivious.

It is here that we find fruitful ground for comparing such notions of practice with the range of Pure Land nembutsu practices, and the range of ideas about nembutsu practice, within the broader Pure Land tradition. Even Shinran would have agreed that Pure Land practice might be said, in a very broad sense, to be “directed toward teaching capable individuals how to gain an experiential access to a reality that has been there all along, but was merely not previously realized.” Other Pure Land theorists seem to have differentiated the practice of the living person from the eventual realization of the ultimate goal of what Westerners persist in terming “enlightenment”: in earlier Pure Land thought, the goal of “becoming (a/the) Buddha,” *jōbutsu*, seems generally to have been associated with the practitioner’s ultimate fruition after having undergone *ōjō*—a rebirth of personal consciousness within the realm called Jōdo, which Amitābha has created and opened to us. And that earlier Pure Land soteriology—even up to Shinran’s teacher, Hōnen—seems always to have assumed that the individual’s practice of nembutsu represented an essential personal investment in a salvific technique that the Buddha had shown us to be necessary for effecting *ōjō*—that is, for transforming oneself sufficiently to be able to pass beyond this impure world of suffering called *sahā*, and into the pure world of bliss called *Sukhāvati*. However, Shinran—to some degree prefiguring John Calvin—feared that such a theoretical model lapsed from an appreciation of *tariki*—the salvific power of Amitābha—into what he felt to be a virtually heretical investment in *jiriki*—a belief that the practitioner can, by his or her practice, save him or herself. Here we see what could be called a doctrinal insistence that *soteriological models of practice* must be carefully distinguished from *models of soteriological practice*. To Shinran, no personal practice can, in itself, have salvific power or efficacy, for all true salvific power rests entirely in Amida himself. (The difference between Shinran and Calvin, of course, is that Calvin argued that God has “elected” that some souls will receive salvation and that others will not, whereas Shinran—like all Buddhists, to my knowledge—was more of a Universalist, believing that Amida has provided salvation for all, and that all will eventually accept it.)

To facilitate comparison of Pure Land nembutsu models with soteriological models of practice in other East Asian traditions, let me interject

here an insightful comment about Taoism that Professor Donald Harper made several years back. At a meeting in the year 2000, Harper said:

Taoism is about personal transformation within a universe that is set up for such transformation.

The same can generally be said about the esoteric Buddhist tradition, including Shingon. In Shingon thought, if I understand Kūkai correctly, personal religious practice results in an experiential awareness that one's own reality is in fact nothing *other* than the reality of the Buddha himself. And yet, inversely, it seems that one cannot realistically expect one's personal religious practice to *result in* such an experiential awareness of buddhahood unless one's practice also is performed *with* such an experiential awareness to begin with. Here we see some of the many subtle nuances of the term *sokushin jōbutsu*—"becoming (a/the) Buddha in this very person."

At a conference in Boston a few years ago, I argued that what esoteric Buddhism shares with Taoism is a set of closely related, though I think still distinct, sets of practices. I argued that in both cases, those sets of practices are designed to facilitate or effect a meaningful personal transformation. And I argued that in both cases, the nature of those practices, and the nature of that transformation, are rooted in the act of learning to experience, and work with, the true structures and energies that subtly link our personal experience to the rest of our living world.

It is true that, to a large degree, even Confucianism fits that general model, at least in certain of its formulations. But the so-called "cultivation of sagehood" pursued by some late-imperial Confucians diverges from the paradigms that esoteric Buddhism shares with Taoism on certain significant points. For instance, with the apparent exception of Mencius—whose call for a cultivation of "a flood-like *ch'i*" might seem to qualify him as a Taoist—Confucians were seldom interested in exploring the transformative implications of the practitioner's own bodily energies, or the connectedness of those energies with the life-field in which our lives are embedded. It was perhaps for that reason that one young aspirant in Ming times, Wang Yang-ming, was frustrated, and in fact sickened, by his attempt to gain an experiential awareness of the continuity between the subtle informing structures of his own being—his *li*, usually translated as "principles"—and the subtle informing structures of a nearby grove of bamboo. An enduring tradition for most Confucians has been an assumption that any such subtle informing structures fall within the range of things that "the Master" (i.e., Confucius) did not speak about—things that living practitioners should perhaps "respect, but keep at a distance." In other words, because of the overriding social/political vectors that Confucian tradition always valued, an individual's efforts to engage in such transformational practices was generally assumed to be suspect.

Among Taoists and esoteric Buddhists, by contrast, the “practices designed to facilitate or effect a meaningful personal transformation” are perceived to lie specifically and directly within “the subtle informing structure of one’s own being,” and even, to a large extent, within what might be called “the practitioner’s own bodily energies.” In both traditions, the fundamental activity in which one should ideally engage is a “cultivation of reality” that takes place through a newly experiential engagement with certain subtle forces, structures, and energies that are inherent to our reality. In part, one learns—as the unfortunate young Confucian was unsuccessful in learning—that all such structures and energies stretch throughout all that is real, both within one’s own personal form and throughout what unperceptive minds regard as the external universe. And yet, one “learns” such things only in the way that a person learns to swim—by engaging in a process of experiential immersion. The practice of swimming is one that can take place only as we take action within the water, as we experience its buoyancy and its currents, and as we learn to integrate our bodily actions and indeed our very perceptions with the subtleties inherent to the substance that we call water. Moreover—to extend the metaphor—the truly perceptive practitioner may even come to a realization that the nature of that substance and the nature of our own substance are ultimately not other than each other. Indeed, the truly perceptive could actually become aware that all that is true of the liquid environment in which one swims is also quite true of what we usually take to be our own internal, individual endowment. In other words, “as without, so within,” and vice versa.

It is here, in what might be crudely called the affirmation of the body, that we see something shared by esoteric Buddhists and Taoists, while not fully shared by other traditions. In esoteric Buddhism, as in Taoism, our personal bodily realities have salvific significance, and in certain key ways those realities are, or at least can be, fundamental for one’s spiritual practice. The physicality of Taoist practitioners is, like that of esoteric Buddhists, something that the practitioner learns to engage with, and consciously activate, in a new way, in a manner somewhat like a swimmer learning to engage his or her own perceptions and movements with the subtle properties of water. But there are also subtle differences between how esoteric Buddhists and Taoists have generally understood such processes. And by examining those differences, we may more fully appreciate the range of subtle differences in how Buddhist practice is understood among Shin theorists, other Pure Land theorists, and the wide array of theorists within Shingon Buddhism and Zen Buddhism.

Let me begin with the earliest known model of Taoist cultivational practices, the model vaguely suggested in the classical text called the *Nei-yeh*, and more fully particularized in the *Huai-nan-tzu*. In the *Nei-yeh* (to which many elements of later Taoist imagery and practice can be traced),

the term *tao* is used as a vague and imprecise synonym for terms such as *ch'i*, which refer, imprecisely, to the salubrious life-forces that the practitioner must work to cultivate. In terms of such theory—if the word “theory” may even be applied to such an inchoate set of ideas—the term *tao* was a nebulous marker for something that we might articulate as “the realities that one ought to cultivate.” Within that context, the term *tao* was often used synonymously with such terms as *shen*, a term that corresponds quite nicely with the English word *spirit*. I have styled the practices that such texts commend forms of “bio-spiritual cultivation.” But in that model of practice, one does not see the practitioner using his or her *voice* at all, any more than one sees him or her engaging in any form of visualization.

In later centuries, those who self-identified as “Taoists” developed a wide range of conceptual frameworks, along with a wide range of individual and group practices. Many of those practices can easily be understood as meditative practices, while others cannot. But then again, we have today no living practitioners or theorists who actually understand and perform many of them. Consequently, our understandings of such religious practices have depended, and continue to depend, upon the sensitivity and expertise of scholars who have, to some degree, studied and interpreted a set of surviving texts that may, or may not, truly describe those practices fully or meaningfully.

For instance, the T'ien-shih, or “Heavenly Master” Taoist tradition is generally believed to have begun in the second century CE, though all our extant “Heavenly Master” texts seem to date from later centuries. In many such texts, we find references to religious practices involving use of the practitioner's voice. But most of them have usually been interpreted as referring to practices that we today would probably simply call chants, or prayers, or invocations of divine blessings—practices that have never been understood as very comparable to nembutsu practice.

During the fourth century CE, however, two new Taoist traditions emerged, both derived from sacred texts claimed to contain revelations from beings within higher realms. The Shang-ch'ing revelations do instruct the practitioner to visualize the “realized ones” (the *chen-jen*, a term derived ultimately from *Chuang-tzu*) and to visualize one's own personal bodily realities, one's *ch'i*, being projected into and merging with the *ch'i* of the “realized ones” themselves. However, Shang-ch'ing soteriological models, to my knowledge, do not feature vocal practices at all.

But the Ling-pao revelations, at the end of the fourth century, certainly do. As I mentioned earlier, the primary Ling-pao scripture, the *Tu-jen ching*, “Scripture for the Salvation of Humanity,” was itself a salvific reality: it invites the practitioner to participate directly in its salvific efficacy by vocalizing the words of the text, thereby re-actualizing its primordial recitation by the great cosmic being who, long ago, embodied his own salvific power in the text's words.

In the Ling-pao model, as in the several interrelated Shang-ch'ing models, one sees the practitioner taking part in activity that can be said to have soteriological overtones, as indeed one can, broadly, say about nembutsu practice. But I am not quite sure that I would see the earlier Taoist model of "bio-spiritual cultivation" in those terms. I believe that that is because the bio-spiritual model laid out in the classical *Nei-yeh* seems to suggest that the practitioner is ultimately not transforming him- or herself into a new state or condition, as much as he or she is restoring and revitalizing his or her natural condition—a condition of holistic integration with all of Life's life-giving energies. In the *Nei-yeh*, we do read that a practitioner who successfully takes part in such practices can have a subtle, transformative effect upon the qualities of other persons. But we do not seem to find the idea that the practitioner is somehow transforming reality itself, or even transforming his or her own personal reality on any fundamental level.

The Ling-pao model of practice seems to have marked a turning point in these regards. That is because the model of practice envisioned in the *Tu-jen ching* itself is a model that expects the individual practitioner to engage in a vocalization whereby the salvific power of a great cosmic being is integrated with the practitioner's own reality. The practitioner is not said to become one with that being, or fully to become that being. So we do not have anything here that seems to constitute a jōbutsu. Hence the Ling-pao model of practice seems to resemble the Pure Land practice of nembutsu more than either of them seem to resemble the practices of Shingon Buddhism or Zen.

More material for fruitful comparison is found in elements of Taoism that emerged during the T'ang period (618–907). The Taoist leaders of T'ang times came to envision their tradition as a comprehensive synthesis, a synthesis now said to include all such potent non-Buddhist traditions of practice—the *Nei-yeh*'s model, the Shang-ch'ing model, the Ling-pao model, and many, many others. However, the formulators of the comprehensive Taoist synthesis—a synthesis that the Taoists entitled *tao-chiao*—maintained a stress on "bio-spiritual cultivation." Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen, for instance, an illustrious Taoist master who lived from 646 to 735, explained the Taoist life in a variety of terms, including such terms as *cultivating reality* (*hsiu-chen*). One text attributed to Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen is the *Fu-ch'i ching-i lun* (On the Essential Meaning of the Absorption of Ch'i), part of which is also known by the title *Hsiu-chen ching-i tsa-lun* (Miscellaneous Discourses on the Essential Meaning of Cultivating Reality). Instead of a simple outline of useful physiological practices, the *Fu-ch'i ching-i lun*—which has now been well-explicated by Western scholars like Ute Engelhardt and Livia Kohn—is an organized explication of the nature of bio-spiritual reality, with guidelines to help the practitioner sublimate personal deficiencies and establish a healthy, ch'i-filled personal existence.

As many scholars of East Asian Buddhism know, it was around Ssu-ma's period that Taoists and the so-called tantric Buddhists of the Chen-yen, or "Shingon," tradition were learning each other's ideas and practices. Few would call Ssu-ma's *Fu-ch'i ching-i lun* a text about tantric practices. But I will argue that the term "cultivating reality"—hsiu-chen—is a key to understanding those two traditions' theoretical links.

T'ang Taoists like Ssu-ma were of an ecumenical bent: they were happy to explain their tradition's ancient practices on any terms that facilitated their understanding and acceptance among the learned audience of their day. Such terms included not only the various new Taoist models that appeared during earlier times, but also various models that their Buddhist associates had expressed—as long as the label "Buddhist" was not visible on the outside of the shirt, so to speak. It seems that what qualified any given religious model for acceptance into the Taoist synthesis of T'ang times was simply (a) that it was textually articulated and (b) that it made at least some effort to avoid being seen as exclusively Buddhist. (Even the Ling-pao scriptures *pretended* to be non-Buddhist.) And it was for these reasons that Taoists who encountered the tantric traditions of Buddhism had no more trouble finding useful elements in tantric models of practice than they had had finding useful elements in such otherwise disparate items as the *Chuang-tzu* and the *Tu-jen ching*.

Before I turn entirely away from the historical arena, let me make sure to mention what seems to be a fundamental and deeply meaningful point of contact between the Taoists of the Six Dynasties onward and the tantric practitioners of China and Japan—Buddhist and otherwise. First, I shall note with regret that I cannot even to begin to attempt to ponder the highly pertinent Japanese tradition known as Shugendō. Shugendō—the origins of which seem to be at least as old as the Shingon tradition that was planted in Japan by Kūkai—is a tradition whose practitioners cultivate the abstruse spiritual properties of life without necessarily tagging their practices to any canonized texts, any recognized lineages, any temple institutions, or any conceptualized theories. Rather, they keep their activities to themselves, living as *yamabushi* in the mountains of Japan, and engaging in what their tradition is called: Shugendō, a term which translates quite literally as "the Tao of Cultivation and Refinement." The very term *shugen*—in Chinese, *hsiu-lien*—is the generic Taoist term for self-cultivation, from the formative period onward, through T'ang times to the present day. The connections between Shugendō and Taoism deserve fuller attention.

Here I can only mention a few specific continuities between Taoist cultivational traditions and those of the East Asian Buddhists of the so-called "esoteric" traditions. Though there were elements of esotericism—hence perhaps "esoteric Buddhism"—in several schools of Heian Buddhism, they are best known in the forms that have come down to us in what is called

Shingon. When I teach Shingon to my students, one thing that I make sure to do is to explain the ramification of that tradition's very name. Conventional wisdom says that the term *shingon* (Ch. *chen-yen*) translates the hoary old Indian term, *mantra*. But those standard translations tend to obfuscate the religious and cultural realities by translating the Japanese term *shingon* as "true words." Surely no educated person would find much meaning in such a vague term, for we all know that members of virtually any tradition would tend to consider their tradition as resting upon "true words." It is only from a study of Chinese Taoism—specifically, its grandly ecumenical T'ang incarnation—that we learn that the term *chen-yen* means much more than "words that are correct in their meaning."

Throughout the pre-T'ang Taoist tradition—and indeed, down to modern times—the word *chen* was a constant favorite used by Taoist writers and practitioners to denote life's deepest and most rarefied realities, the realities at which Taoist practice is always aimed. The *chen-jen*, or "realized person," was a standard Taoist term for a person who has fulfilled Taoist spiritual ideals. And into Sung and Yuan times, the great Taoist masters of the past were often commemorated with the honorific *chen-jen*.

However, the word *chen* was not merely the core of a Taoist term for a person who had achieved the goal of Taoist practice: it was, more enduringly, a term that denoted the goal of practice itself. One of the earliest classics of Taoist "Inner Alchemy" theory is entitled *On Awakening to Reality* (*Wu-chen p'ien*), by the eleventh-century writer Chang Po-tuan. "Inner Alchemy," as most here know, was a constantly evolving system of spiritual transformation through meditational discipline and refinement.

Not usually associated with "Inner Alchemy," however, was the twelfth-century figure Wang Che or Wang Ch'ung-yang, the reputed founder of the Ch'üan-chen tradition—the primary living Taoist tradition in China today. While some of the texts attributed to Wang may well have been composed by later followers, it is noteworthy that one such text was entitled the *Wu-chen ko*. That title is usually translated as *The Song of Awakening to Reality*. The word *wu* in the title is the same Chinese word that Ch'an Buddhists in China used to refer to their ideal of "awakening," and it endures in Japanese Zen as the word *satori*. However, seen in the historical context of earlier Taoist ideals, perhaps the title of Wang's work should be translated as something more like *The Song of Awakening and Realization*. For in Taoism, the term *chen* seems never to have been reified as an ontological "thing-in-itself." Rather, the term *chen* is always used in a context that involves the practitioner's growing connection with the deeper dimensions of things. Hence, the term *chen* generally seems to translate better if we use words that suggest a process of intentional spiritual change or transformation, a progressive process of realization or perfection. In fact, one distinctive Taoist soteriological assumption—emphasized explicitly in many Taoist texts

from T'ang times onward—is that the process of realization or perfection must always be a gradual or progressive process—not something that can happen suddenly, as we know that many Ch'an and Zen models assume. I will note in passing that the importance of the term *chen* as an expression of the Taoist spiritual goal is shown by its integration into the very name of the Ch'üan-chen tradition, which perhaps means something like “the Completion or Perfection of Realization.”

When, in early T'ang times, the tantric traditions of Buddhism were formulated into what would become the Shingon of Japanese history, the term by which those traditions became known employed the same highly resonant term that Taoists, from Chuang-tzu to Wang Che, had embraced—the term *chen*. The term *chen-yen* or *shingon*, like the term *mantra*, never denoted merely “words that are correct in their meaning.” Rather, these terms relate to a personal practice by which one transforms one's fundamental reality through a specific and efficacious vocalization, a practice comparable to the vocalizations of the primordial salvific Word advocated in the Ling-pao *Scripture of Human Salvation*. So while a few emperors up to the late seventh century—in Tibet as well as in China—amused themselves by staging debates between and among Buddhists and Taoists, many of the leading participants in all such traditions were quite happily learning from each other, in terms of both theory and practice.

The fact that East Asian Buddhists and Taoists were intensively studying each others' practices, and even assimilating useful elements of each others' practice and theory, was little-known to scholars of the twentieth century. And that interplay was not just a one-way street, with members of either tradition slavishly copying from the other. Rather, it has begun to become apparent that during the heyday of Taoism in China—during T'ang times—practitioners of Buddhism and Taoism seldom looked upon each other with suspicion or sectarian disdain. For example, the name that Saichō gave to his “Tendai school” in early Heian times was originally the name of a mountain in China, Mt. T'ien-t'ai, where Buddhists and Taoists had practiced in close proximity to each other for generations. Ssu-ma Ch'eng-chen himself lived at Mt. T'ien-t'ai, and the Buddhist elements in some of his teachings likely owe more to his personal interaction with Buddhists there than to any reading of Buddhist texts.

Another example is the Shingon tradition, which took form when two foreign *ācāryas* took residence in the Chinese capital, Ch'ang-an, in the early eighth century. Their first Chinese convert, I-hsing, had evidently been a master of Taoist learning before his conversion. The T'ang emperors in those days knew and loved Taoism, the dominant religion among that era's upper classes, and it seems that it was largely at the T'ang imperial court that “Chen-yen and Taoism influenced each other,” as Charles Orzech has written.³ Though such forms of “esoteric Buddhism” are now commonly

called “tantric,” it is clear that these particular traditions—indeed, like the traditions that we call Ch’an or Zen—took form in T’ang China, as new translations of Buddhist texts were grasped to give new depth and meaning to ritual traditions that were rooted as deeply in Taoism as in earlier Buddhist traditions. These profound links between Taoism and the “tantric” traditions of East Asia are not coincidental, and they are not merely of historical interest. Rather, they demonstrate a profound and ongoing interaction between the two traditions, by which characteristic practices and teachings of each were enriched.

So to conclude, let me compare the various models of spiritual practice that I have touched upon here. In regard to the “bio-spiritual” model of self-cultivation found in the ancient *Nei-yeh*—and preserved in certain later strands of Taoism, down to the present—a metaphor comes to mind, the metaphor of a radio receiver. The radio waves being broadcast this moment by any local radio station are invisible, and they flow, undetected, all around, and through, each person in the local area. In the later Taoist conceptual model, such unseen forces can be called *chen*, “the truer or deeper dimensions of reality concerning which non-practitioners remain unaware.” In the case of the life-forces called *tao*, “spirit” (*shen*), or “life-energy” (*ch’i*), as in the case of the radio waves, very few people have any awareness that such invisible forces permeate not only our individual persons but also the continuum of time and space and matter and energy in which all persons exist. To become aware of such forces—much less to gain proper benefit from them—it is necessary to have a properly tuned receiver. That receiver must not only be properly designed, but its user must also see that it is properly powered and properly tuned. In Taoism and in esoteric Buddhism, each person’s personal life-matrix may be compared to just such a receiver. And the practices articulated in each tradition are designed to effect the proper tuning of the practitioner’s bio-spiritual receiver.

Yet, such is not to say that tuning my own receiver is more real or more important than the tuning that my neighbor is doing, or that tuning my receiver is somehow a turning inward upon myself, a rejection of my interconnectedness with others. Rather, it is simply a given of my situation that I am capable of learning to tune my own receiver, but I cannot, in any direct sense, attune the reception of Tony Blair, or even that of my dearest friends. Prime Minister Blair is the only person who can learn to do the tuning necessary for *him* to gain the benefit of the unseen forces that flow around and through us all. So in that sense, the spiritual practices envisaged by esoteric Buddhists and Taoists are, by necessity, practices that only the individual can undertake and perform—though in so doing he or she is intrinsically working to engage him- or herself more fully with a set of invisible realities that connect his or her personal reality with all of reality. Any person may engage in such practices, and appropriate teachings

are offered for anyone willing and able to learn them. Yet, in both Taoism and esoteric Buddhism, such practices are not assumed to be proper for *all* individuals to undertake, for many do not have the proper awareness, and the proper self-discipline, to engage in such practices in safety. The invisible forces needed to use a radio receiver include not only the harmless radio waves themselves, but also an invisible force called electricity. If a person misuses, or has improper contact with, that invisible force, the results can be catastrophic, even deadly. So in both traditions, the process of self-transformation is offered for all individuals who have a seriousness of purpose, a trust in the teachings of those who have real knowledge of all the factors involved, and enough respect for others, and for the realities of life, seen and unseen, to guard those who are not properly engaged and attuned to the possible perils of improper action.

In part for these reasons, the Taoist tradition, like Shingon and other esoteric Buddhist traditions, has held a special place for men—and sometimes women—who have mastered such processes, and can tune their own beings in such a way as to extend the resulting benefits to others around them. These are people who accept the role of bridging the gaps between the practitioners who have mastered life's invisible forces and those who do not themselves engage in such practices. Taoism has never disdained such non-practitioners, but has rather, from the days of the *Nei-yeh* and *Tao te ching*, taught that a practitioner can and should exert him- or herself so as to extend the benefits of his or her practice into the lives of others who cannot or will not engage in such practices themselves. For Taoist priests and priestesses, the basis on which their other activities are founded has always been a life of self-cultivation: that life requires them to labor productively—through what we might call moral discipline, meditation, and appropriate ritual action—to participate fully in the reality of life's subtle, unseen forces, the forces that they often called *chen*. In senses that are thus impossible in Western religions, Taoists could—and indeed were expected to—effectively *become* the Tao, and to act in this world as its living embodiment. In those senses, the performative liturgical activities of the Taoist priest or priestess always constituted a meditative and ritual embodiment of the Tao itself.

In other words, Taoist models of practice have generally assumed that proper practice results in something quite analogous to the jōbutsu of East Asian Buddhist models found in Shingon and elements of other subtraditions. In the Ch'an and Zen traditions, one finds divergent ideas as to whether proper practice results in jōbutsu in any transformative sense. Some Ch'an/Zen theorists suggest that it does, as we see in the old Rinzaï adage, *kenshō jōbutsu*—one perceives the true inner nature and becomes (a) Buddha. Dōgen, of course, argued to the contrary, since assuming that practice results in a transformation from “non-buddhahood” to “buddha-

hood" requires the quite heretical assumption that there is an inherent ontological dichotomy between the two. Indeed, one could say that the entire Mahayana tradition—back to the earliest sutras of *Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* of Nāgārjuna—rests on the insistence that, from the level of perception characteristic of a Buddha, there is no ontological dichotomy between anything and anything else. Therefore, in the Perfection of Wisdom, one already has *buddhatā*—the state or condition of being a Buddha—and must merely engage in such intellection or religious practice that might be necessary for the practitioner's mistaken belief that he or she is *not* already the Buddha to be eliminated. The sword of Mañjuśrī, which cuts through that illusion, is nothing other than *Prajñāpāramitā* itself.

Let us go further, into Pure Land thought. Hōnen insisted that in our unfortunate age of *mappō*—the last days of the truth—the subtly nuanced practices of earlier Buddhist traditions cannot truly be expected to result in the soteriological result that may have been quite possible in earlier days. For Hōnen, it was not so much that such earlier practices—including visualizational meditations—were false, or even theoretically inferior. For him, the issue is merely that we are now living under a state of emergency, in which it would be foolish to try to rely upon any soteriological model or practice other than the "single-practice nembutsu." We can simply take comfort in the blessed reliability of the salvific power of that nembutsu, which Amida established for us to use in case of need, such as ours today. For other Buddhists of his day, however, such thinking seemed to undercut certain ideas of practice that were soteriologically essential, if not actually necessary, to qualify as a practitioner of Buddhism in the first place.

I shall leave it to others to take these issues further into the subtleties of Pure Land thought. We all know that Shinran, for instance, assumed the soteriological necessity of trusting ourselves to *tariki*, for the *ōjō* or "rebirth in the Pure Land" provided by Amida is not to be attained by means of any personal practice: it already inheres within all sentient beings as *shinjin*, which has been instilled in all of us by virtue of the "Original Vow" of Amitābha. So we do not actually transform reality, or even our own human reality, by our practice of nembutsu. Perhaps, in a sense, Shinran's perspective is more analogous to that of Dōgen than we may have usually imagined. For Shinran, one cannot generate *ōjō* by means of the practice of nembutsu. Much less can one use the practice of nembutsu to generate a personal transformation that constitutes *jōbutsu*. To assume so would be to assume that a foolish little mortal like you or me could, in this very life, do what Amitābha did. Amitābha, through lifetimes of diligent practice as a bodhisattva, experienced *jōbutsu*. Having learned from his own personal experience how long and arduous that path always is, Amitābha vowed to extend the salvific power of his own buddhahood to all sentient beings whose consciousness is fully opened to it. And it is within that conceptual

framework that all nembutsu practice must be situated in the Shin Pure Land tradition.

So the vocalization of salvific truth in Shin practice is ultimately quite reminiscent of the Ling-pao model of early medieval Taoists: the practitioner's soteriological success is ultimately dependent upon the salvific power of a great cosmic being, who has revealed himself (or, in the case of Yüan-shih T'ien-tsun in the *Tu-jen ching*, possibly "herself") and has offered us all an opportunity to connect oneself and engage oneself in that being's salvific power by means of properly focused vocalization. That practice, in each case, is not a matter of experiencing some *kenshō*, some new awareness of the nature of one's own reality. Nor does it result in the practitioner experiencing jōbutsu: the Ling-pao Taoist practitioner does not actually become Yüan-shih T'ien-tsun, just as the Shin Pure Land practitioner certainly does not transform him- or herself into a being comparable in nature to Amida. Nor does he or she somehow transform his or her own nature in such a way that he or she becomes merged or identified with Amida.

Further comparative analysis of the soteriological models found in these interrelated religious traditions may result not only in greater insights into all of them, but also in a greater appreciation of the uniqueness of Shinran's thought within an extremely rich and varied context of religious thought.

NOTES

1. Yüan-shih T'ien-tsun seems to have been an abstract figure created by the composer of the *Tu-jen ching*, not the focus of any pre-existing cultus. One should also note that scholarly references to Yüan-shih T'ien-tsun nearly always assign a masculine gender to this figure, though the scripture itself does not seem to specify any gender.
2. Russell Kirkland, *Taoism: The Enduring Tradition* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 88. The first full translation and study of the *Tu-jen ching* appears in Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 373–438. A recent summation of our knowledge of Ling-pao traditions is Yamada Toshiaki, "The Lingbao School," in *Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 225–255.
3. Charles Orzech, "Chen-yen," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 3:237.

American Women in Jōdo Shin Buddhism Today: Tradition and Transition

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INTRODUCTION

FROM THE TIME OF ŚĀKYAMUNI BUDDHA in ancient India until the present day, the participation of women in Buddhism has been hampered by the limitation of gender constructs imposed on them by their Asian societies. Today in America, those limitations are loosening in a mainstream society that is being transformed by developments as wide-ranging as democratization, pluralism, and feminism. It would seem the perfect environment for the flowering of a Buddhist doctrine that professes non-discrimination and universal liberation. Indeed, scholars and adherents now speak of American “Buddhisms” with attributes reflective of their new progressive surroundings. Yet largely excluded from this phenomenon have been the various schools of ethnic Buddhism, considered too Asian to suit Americans. Counted among these is Japanese Jōdo Shinshū, which, although it has been in this country for five generations, appears to have resisted adaptation and thus kept itself on the margins of a growing trend in this country.

The purpose of this paper is to present views of female practitioners of Jōdo Shinshū in America with regard to the doctrine and the institution of the Buddhist Churches of America (hereafter referred to as the BCA).¹ There is ample reason to give women a platform to express their thoughts on these matters. Throughout Buddhist history, women have played a significant role in the practice and development of its traditions, yet they have been marginalized at best, and most often rendered invisible. Rarely have their writings been preserved, their stories recorded, or their opinions asked. Undoubtedly, the women themselves have been accomplices to their own silence, conditioned by the patriarchal cultures in which Buddhism thrived. Nonetheless, one can piece together enough information from scriptures, historical records, literature, and other writings to realize that social developments had a palpable influence on women in Buddhism,

and that Buddhism in its turn affected the image of women in society.

How does the historical link between women, society, and religion relate to Jōdo Shin Buddhism in contemporary America? Clearly, female members, their roles in the temple, and their perspectives have changed since the first-generation immigrant Issei brought Jōdo Shinshū to America over a century ago. Viewed against the backdrop of institutional practice and attitudes, the transformation of women could provide a measure of the assimilation of Shin Buddhism to the West. Asking them directly is the most accurate way to get a picture of what they as practitioners of Buddhism feel about their involvement in this religion. It has never sufficed to try to appreciate women's religious experiences and aspirations as interpreted and assumed by men, even though this was the accepted practice until only recently.² On the contrary, the input of women imparts an essential wholeness to the understanding of a doctrine aimed at all beings.

The response of female members to my research proposal was immediate and enthusiastic, indicating that such an investigation was timely for their concerns. Respondents of all ages and generations were earnest and frank in the sharing of their thoughts. What they revealed tells much about the relevancy of both the doctrine and the institution in contemporary times. It also provides indications of what this may portend for the future of Shin Buddhism everywhere.

METHODOLOGY

The method I used to gather information was administering surveys and conducting personal interviews. Two anonymous surveys were created. The first was for BCA youth, aged fourteen to eighteen, both male and female. I selected this group for analysis because they represent, for the most part, fourth-generation members of Japanese descent, as well as children of mixed heritage. Given that sociological studies suggest that this generation is the most acculturated to the American host society, I wanted to investigate whether their views were more egalitarian than those of their forebears, which tended to exhibit influences, to varying degrees, of a patriarchal and hierarchical society. Surmising that the teenage subjects would reflect American social views of equality, I surveyed males as well as females to test this theory, the results of which are noted further on. A total of 161 responded, split almost evenly between male and female.

I also surveyed English-speaking female congregants of all generations, who make up a large portion of the mainly ethnic Japanese organization. This survey was widely distributed at a national conference and some participants further provided copies to members at their individual temples. One hundred eighty-six responses were returned and they were

still trickling in, replete with heartfelt commentary, long after the unofficial deadline closed.³

The personal interviews involved twelve women who demonstrated a breadth of experience in BCA organizational activities, or a commitment to studies in Jōdo Shinshū, or both. I also interviewed female ministers of Shin Buddhism in America to get their perspectives from a teacher's point of view. I did not survey men, though it would be useful to target further research on their views to uncover similarities and contrasts to those of the women.

KEY ISSUES

Responses to the surveys showed that the women and youth perceived a great contrast between what they understood as an egalitarian teaching and the male-dominant institution:

- The doctrine is neutral regarding sexes. However, nearly all *sensei* are men.
- [The doctrine treats all equally], except all the Hongwanji heads are men.
- The doctrine appears to be gender neutral, however the reality finds very few women in upper positions and as role models.
- I believe there is equality, even though I have never heard of any famous women.
- In stories I hear more about men, but in the doctrine there is no specification of gender.
- Yes and no [equality] because the doctrine was written in a time of male dominance—and to them that's how it was, a given.

In further comments, members find the doctrine acceptable, but they equivocate greatly on the delivery system, questioning whether the institution, its ministers, and its leaders have made accommodations and adjustments so that Jōdo Shinshū will match modern American social expectations:

- Culturally, I think that a male dominant society is still an influence in the religious community as well.
- To the extent that our teachings are intermixed with Japanese cultural views, those influences have different expectations of different genders.

- Nothing that I have learned in listening to the Dharma suggests that [equality can't exist]. In the politics of the BCA, however, I see that there are old world, traditional approaches from Japan that do not recognize the talent and rights of women.

The ambient society factors strongly into this because Americans, and this includes Japanese Americans, are more sensitive than ever before to issues involving equality. The responses to the youth surveys indicated that across the board, the notion of universal equality was fully integrated into their value system:

- [The doctrine] never says that a man or woman can do something the opposite gender can't.
- Our country is encouraging of equal opportunities. (male and female respondents)
- Women are just as good as men; perspectives on Buddhism should be told from both a man's and a woman's perspective. (male respondent)
- I think we should all have the same opportunity and either everyone or no one should be encouraged [to become a minister]. (male respondent)

Both teenaged males and females saw no reason why there should be any distinction made between the sexes in terms of their function in the temple or elsewhere, whether applied to clergy or laity. In fact, they felt women should be encouraged to enter the ministry for the following reasons:

- Because I believe in Jōdo Shinshū everyone is equal.
- So the church is not so sexist.
- Women's issues are important.
- As long as they do a good job it's okay.

Pair this with the women's comments, which indicated that androcentric, patriarchal, and cultural attitudes were a source of frustration both operationally and spiritually, and the urgency to address the situation appears all the more pressing:

- The board members and committee heads are mostly male who make all of the decisions and *seldom* show up for service. This causes me to question their commitment to the religion.

- We need a minister who is receptive and sensitive to the cultural and social challenges of American women in transition.
- I believe the ministers from Japan who carry Japanese notions about women need to learn the Japanese American culture quickly....
- Our previous minister was not only a male chauvinist, but favored certain people. I chose not to be involved heavily and did not really return until we had a new minister...who is very open and respects women. The ministers have to change and as long as they are trained in Japan, they will think and act like a Japanese rather than an American Japanese.
- Perhaps not all temples are like this, but at ours I see the women deferring to the men all the time. Not easy to take for a forty-something Sansei.
- There are Buddhist women out there who don't show up or aren't actively involved. It's not that they are against Buddhism. It's that they're against the way the organization is structured and the position of women. What happens is that because they're raised Buddhist and Japanese, a lot of them feel the way they should react is to be polite and not cause problems....
- I think I am constantly running into barriers and frustrations in the temple/BCA due to being a woman. If I say something at a board meeting or speak out...I am often frowned upon by the men. They see me as a bossy, pushy woman. However, the same thing said by a man is more likely to be seen as being assertive and "having guts." It is more likely to be viewed as a leadership quality. Men on temple boards tend to like more passive styles and wait for things to happen rather than make them happen. They see a problem and wait for someone to fix it rather than attempt to delegate it out.

Whether prevailing social attitudes will contribute to reshaping this tradition of Buddhism remains to be seen, but if historical patterns are observed, the potential does exist, and this presents exciting possibilities for the development of a contemporary and truly universal form of Jōdo Shinshū.

BACKGROUND AND SOCIOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

Over a century ago, Jōdo Shin Buddhism came west when Japan ended its long isolation from the rest of the world. Japanese immigrants brought with them not only their religion, but also their patriarchal values of the Meiji era. Not long afterwards, the Oriental Exclusion Act (1924) came

into effect, followed by further discrimination during the war years with "evacuation" and internment camps (1942–1945). The community, by then augmented by American-born second-generation Nisei, drew closer together in ethnic unity. The most conservative bastion of the community, the Buddhist temple, signified for many a link with their cultural heritage, and thus perpetuated the Japanese character of the institution. Indeed, sociologists point out that often the goal of the ethnic church is to play a major role in the preservation of customs, language, and group solidarity for the first generation of immigrants. However, they note, as subsequent generations acculturate, the institution is compelled to adapt and reorient its goals or risk extinction. In his 1987 study on the life-cycle of ethnic churches, Mark Mullins poses the critical question: "Are the *religious* goals, activities, and values of this organization worth perpetuating even if it requires the loss or abandonment of its original goal and identity?"⁴

ACCULTURATION

According to some researchers, the assimilation of ethnic Japanese into mainstream American society is complete in all but physical appearance, and due to the high rate of outmarriage, it is foreseeable that even visibility will soon no longer be a critical factor in identity.⁵

Issei women were generally submissive; their role in the temple was to prepare food, hold fundraisers, and participate in social activities. Their American-born Nisei daughters, however, straddled not only cultures but also radically changing social times before, during, and after World War II. While many remain outwardly passive, deferring to men and fulfilling traditional roles in the temple, their comments in the surveys and interviews were virtually indistinguishable from those of later generations. Their reluctance to "rock the boat" has not stopped them from anonymously expressing forthright opinions about temple shortcomings and the effect these failings are having on younger people.

Third-generation Sansei women came of age in the era of civil rights, feminism, and other sweeping social transformations in mainstream society. They have become accomplished lawyers, judges, doctors, educators, business executives, and public policy makers. They are known to Americans as newscasters, writers, and community leaders who are not afraid to share their views. Indeed, by the early 1980s, they and the fourth-generation Yonsei had become notably absent from the BCA ranks of the *fujinkai*, the venerable Buddhist Women's Association that had been the supportive mainstay of the traditional temple.⁶ Where Nisei women have been more apt to persevere with the status quo, younger women, with various options for both spiritual and social life at hand, have quietly chosen to withdraw

their involvement. Kenneth Tanaka estimates, “Even if we took the most optimistic figure...two-thirds of the *sansei* who attended the temple in youth are no longer regular members or attendees of the temples.”⁷

In response to a survey question asking if women and men were perceived to be equal in the temple and in temple activities and duties, answers varied widely. Types of responses could be divided into roughly six categories:

- (1) Those who felt comfortable with the traditional paradigm of distinct duties and roles for men and for women, which were termed “separate but equal.” Most of the respondents in this group were in their seventies and eighties. In all other responses to this question, age did not appear to have a particular bearing.
- (2) Those who expressed their perception of equality in relative terms, such as “Getting better but a long way to go.”
- (3) Those who noted that women, mostly Sansei, now fill leadership positions in temples, at the district level, and on the BCANational Board. This is a relatively new phenomenon that began in the last decade and is gradually gaining acceptance.
- (4) Those who expressed discontentment with the expectation that women should automatically do the cooking and cleaning, pointing out that people should do whatever they are good at without having gender roles imposed upon them.
- (5) Those who felt that the system was entrenched in an “old boys’ club” mentality that was difficult to breach. It was said that the older women often acted in complicity with this arrangement, either because they agreed with it, or because they were resigned to it.
- (6) Those who maintained that Japanese socio-cultural values, including patriarchal attitudes toward women, still exerted a strong influence in the temple, whether by “older Niseis,” or by ministers from Japan.

Research respondents indicated that the institution has not kept up with the times, the culture outside of the temple, or the needs of its members. One of the major requirements, they said, was that the religion be made understandable, relevant, and vibrant for today’s membership:

- We need a minister who will make Jōdo Shinshū more user-friendly, without a lot of Japanese terminology.
- Every minister has strengths and weaknesses, but the strength we want to build on is the minister’s ability to connect with the

sangha so that they're learning. Just that alone will bring them back into the fold.

- The selection of ministers should include laypeople because the ministers will be serving them. If only ministers choose, they will always choose people like themselves. We will never progress if we continue with the same kind of people. We see the results of that. Young people are leaving; they go to their partners' religions.

Many respondents maintain that religion should be made the main focus of attention, to which social and cultural activities would be secondary. In order to fulfill this objective, they see a need for ministers who can relate to them as Americans, and a temple environment that is representative of what they accept and laud as a doctrine of equality for all people:

- BCA could serve women (and men) better with more religious outreach. I don't attend the temple because it tries to be a cultural center as well as a religious institution. I come to hear and learn the Dharma.
- All BCA members can be better served by being encouraged to attend services. BCA would do well to engage in more outreach and public service. Raise the profile in the community so we can be found.
- We have lost many members and countless more that I have gotten to the temple who never return because we are so focused and concerned about the Japanese Americans to the exclusion of all other Americans.... If the BCA does not support change within its temples and produce English-speaking *kyoshi*⁸ and *kaikyoshi*,⁹ Jōdo Shinshū in the United States will either die or become a tiny ethnic religious practice for the elite few. It will not have a seat at the table of the exciting movement underway, now being called American Buddhism.
- I think we have something that's of value that would be helpful to mainstream Americans because as Americans, we have lots of problems and a lot of it has to do with people being selfish and egotistical.... There's something to be learned from Jōdo Shinshū, a different way of looking at things, seeing how we're interconnected and influence each other, so there's a value...but ministers should learn presentation skills, not just doctrine.
- If the BCA had a vision, it should include identifying and encouraging people to become ministers and to become Jōdo Shinshū followers. Both men and women have tried but if they didn't "fit

the mold," they were not encouraged. Women have a harder time trying to "make the cut." The "good ole boy" network is culturally ingrained, as well as a long-standing practice....

For the first time in history, perhaps, prevailing social values and the tenets of Buddhism are more in accord on the subject of non-discrimination and universality. Yet within the BCA organization, women still notice a male-dominant, culturally Japanese attitude on the part of some ministers and some elders—an attitude that starkly contrasts with the outlook of today's youth, who have been raised on the principle of equality and unlimited possibility, regardless of sex, race, or other distinctions. Some respondents venture that if the temple and the teaching are not made more accessible to everyone, the rapid attrition in membership that started a few decades ago will continue unabated.

RELIGION IS THE GOAL

Have the goals of the organization changed? One hundred years ago, devout immigrants requested that ministers be sent from Japan to serve their religious needs. Many members can still recount stories of mothers and grandmothers who lived daily in the Jōdo Shin teaching. In the circumstances of their day, the Issei also came to see the temple as an ethnic gathering place. The events of modern history sustained this focus and prolonged it beyond their own generation. Perhaps due to the dearth of ministers who could truly communicate and relate well to later generations, the religious underpinning of the institution has lost much of its meaning for today's members, and the temple often seems to be held together by other activities. Yet despite or perhaps because of this trend, it is striking that so many women of all generations voice the need to bring religion back as the central aim. What is significant is that they express an opinion that the Jōdo Shin doctrine can still be viewed as a viable spiritual path. If they know about the Thirty-Fifth Vow¹⁰ at all, it is a non-issue to them in this day and age as they focus on the principal import of the doctrine, that of universal liberation:

- The Eighteenth Vow encompasses all.¹¹
- The basic truths of Buddhism were there whether man was there or not; the gender thing is created; religion is created. Truth is not.
- I think [the doctrine] was written at a time when men and women were not equal. Our job now is to "reinterpret" the actual words to fit today's society.

- The teachings were written and translated from a male perspective. Therefore, we must analyze and rethink a lot of what is written and develop new interpretations of the teachings.

Accordingly, they add, the Shin Buddhist teaching should also be made available to people outside of the ethnic enclave:

- If we are a Buddhist religion we can't be hypocritical. The BCA has got to change to adapt to a new wave and not be so much of an ethnic Japanese organization...the religion itself can work; it works in America, it's just to find ways to get people to understand that it can work whether you are Japanese or gay or whatever. If the Dharma is the main strength of Buddhism, then it will survive; it's just that the way in which it's propagated may have to change....
- Apparently there is something in the message that appeals to those [who were not born into Jōdo Shinshū]. I begin to realize that the future and the hope for Jōdo Shinshū might have to lie outside the ethnic Japanese community.... As long as people are interested in the doctrine, there will be some institution whether it's BCA or not, even if it's not here. I would be sad to see the demise of my temple, but the important thing is the doctrine because I think the teachings are worthwhile.

Female converts have added their voices to this, indicating a very real opportunity to share Jōdo Shinshū with the wider community. One of the attractions of Shinshū is its aspect of "practice in everyday life." Explains one person who had tried other forms of Buddhism:

- I went on a Jōdo Shinshū retreat, and what I learned was a completely smooth transition [in and out of my daily life]. More came into my life than being lifted up and out of my life and crash landing back in. You were removed [on a Zen retreat] from your life, from your relationships, you were relieved of them so maybe you felt better for a time, but you didn't bring anything back that was useful in your daily life, whereas the Jōdo Shinshū retreats were very healing. We could talk to the *sensei* about the Buddha moving in each of our personal lives. You didn't rise out of your life to do the retreat; you were talking but you had to go and do the dishes, too. It was in life.

CHANGING NEEDS, CHANGING ROLES

If male-dominant attitudes are an obstacle, the women are proving that they have been able to transcend them without stridency, simply by being who they are—American Buddhists raised to know that the worth of all beings is equal.¹² This does not mean that they want to be the same as the men, nor that they aspire to replace them as the group in power. Instead, they see themselves as working together effectively with the men by contributing their considerable insight, intelligence, and skills in leadership to create a religious institution that will serve everyone more effectively. Says one such person:

- I don't mind doing anything for the church on any level, but it's got to be productive. If it's just to get your name recognized, it's not worth it. You realize that one person doesn't do it, though I did stick my neck out and do a few things because I saw the need.

Knowing what it is to be marginalized may also afford women an informed view on broader issues of access, which are so important to the future of Jōdo Shinshū in America.

Related to this is the realization that young people feel the need to see that this religion is relevant to the diversity of the world in which they live, both through the issues it addresses and the impression it gives. Their typical image of a minister is an older man who speaks Japanese and performs funerals and memorial services. This may be the accepted norm in Japan, but it is hardly inspiring for Americans. Yet here too the difference can be viewed as an opportunity. For while routinization of the tradition may have become entrenched in Japan, the respondents feel it is not too late to recognize that Jōdo Shinshū now finds itself in a completely new environment that is conducive to positive change. Their optimism and enthusiasm toward the survey clearly seem to suggest that the possibility exists to revalorize the teaching and interpret it in new ways that speak to contemporary people not only in America, but everywhere. This is not without precedent. Hōnen and Shinran went through a similar process in their time, departing from Indian and Chinese traditions to create a Japanese Buddhism that worked for them and for their contemporaries.

THE MINISTRY

Accordingly, respondents say that it is important that the ministry understand and adapt, if necessary, to differences in socio-cultural viewpoint. Without this, there might soon be no listeners to hear them. It is acknowl-

edged that a number of ministers, both Japanese and American, have done much to reach out to congregants to make the teaching relevant to them. However, judging by the comments of the women interviewed, there are not enough ministers in the system with fluency in English, a diversity of perspective, or attitudes conducive to suitably transmitting the Dharma in America. Respondents understand that those who are comfortable with current conditions deserve to have such service continued. But will younger members who remain with the BCA receive a religious education appropriate to their needs? And what of the droves of disenchanted Buddhists who are leaving the organization to seek religion elsewhere—or who have simply become disillusioned by religion altogether?

For many reasons, relatively few young Americans are called to the ministry, and this applies to the Shin Buddhist ministry as well. Without role models with whom they can identify, then, it is difficult for Shinshū followers to find the necessary motivation, even if they can overcome the other factors responsible for the decline in the ministry. Japanese ministers who sincerely wish to share the teaching are greatly appreciated, but their training, say the women, must go beyond learning rudimentary English. It is also necessary that they learn about American society and its cultural values so that they can relate to congregants in a suitable manner. Further, they need to be educated in America, and particularly in areas that congregants identify with the ministry, such as counseling and social outreach. One interviewee gave an example of the urgency for adequate and suitable training of ministers:

- In the United States...it's a very common thing to see your teacher or doctor or minister for counseling. So if your minister cannot give you help and doesn't have a clue, it's terrible. I know of [a member] who had marital problems and went to his minister to get help. The minister couldn't do it, so he went to a Christian minister and got counseling and advice and now he goes to a Christian church. To be turned off by your own minister is not going to be helpful at all to Buddhism in America. This is another course that ministers are going to have to take, and I don't mean some ministers who are interested, I mean every minister because every temple will have people who will request counseling. It's an opportunity for every minister to teach because Buddhism can help you in these kinds of issues...but they're not going to do it if they can't even begin to talk about marriage or problems with children. And if you don't know English, you've got to master it. It's foremost.

Members' expectations of the minister's role is based not only on long-standing temple convention, but is also informed now by social norms in

the surrounding environment. With alternatives readily accessible, people choose what satisfies their needs, and as products of a pluralistic society, are not bound by family religious tradition. Repeatedly, people emphasized that the clergy had to reflect the needs of the sangha here and now in America.

On the topic of women in the ministry, respondents were almost unanimous in saying that they should be encouraged to pursue the vocation if they are qualified. Respondents gave ample reasons to show that the inclusion of female ministers would benefit everyone. Notably, they would add another perspective to what has been an almost exclusively androcentric orientation. The only barrier, it seems, has been the discriminatory stance of some people, which has then fostered an unfounded attitude that women cannot be ministers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

It can be seen that many related issues arose out of the examination of women in American Jōdo Shinshū today. It was useful and instructive to ask them to share their views, for though they may not always have been at the head of the temple, they have always been at the center. This has enabled them to identify problems that exist and offer concrete suggestions that address the long-term needs of the congregation. Gender issues are not the only problem, but they are indicative of the enormous chasm that has grown between the majority of the American sangha and the traditional culture of the old country. Indeed, the inevitable acculturation of those in leadership, both male and female, will undoubtedly mitigate discriminatory tensions in the laity.

Some of the women made a clear distinction between their faith in the teaching and their trepidation about the institution. In the past decade, more women have begun to push for change by taking leadership roles. Does their presence create holes in the fabric of the institution? Perhaps it does from a traditional point of view, although the transition appears to have been both timely and natural. In any event, the case at hand demonstrates that the BCA needs to be fluid and flexible, as several members question what they call lack of relevance and vision. Therefore, the inclusion of women on a level of parity could be viewed positively as a welcome change, rather than as a threat, that may shake the organization out of its lassitude and bring in new energy.

What do these findings portend for the future? Since they hint at a wide and sometimes contradictory range of opinions, it is difficult to forecast what lies ahead. The negative view might be that the BCA as a religious institution will have run its course if it cannot accommodate the changed profile of its

members. Would Jōdo Shinshū be able to survive in America without this structure? From the creative responses of the women surveyed, it seems as if it would, at least in spirit. Women might even be the ones to lead the way, accustomed as they are to adjusting to changing circumstances.

Listening to many of those who contributed to this research, the hope for the future lies in focusing on religion rather than on ethnic culture. Such a move could change the direction of Jōdo Shinshū in America, but would require that greater efforts be made to adapt the dissemination of the religion to serve all generations as well as non-ethnics. For women, it would mean that gender issues might finally be put to rest as the organization becomes more mainstream.

It is telling that some women are willing to pursue Jōdo Shinshū with or without the institution of the BCA. Some speak of smaller *howakai* study groups and others speak of parallel organizations for people who are not interested in Japanese culture but simply want to study Shin Buddhism. In fact, recently installed Bishop Koshin Ogui was already making innovative adaptations to meet the needs of the American sangha when he was serving as a minister in the Eastern District. While it remains to be seen how he will lead the national organization during this crucial time of cultural transition, the move to create parallel organizations reinforces the idea that in one way or another, change is inevitable. Whether the institution can embrace it or not is another question.

CONCLUSION

Women have always been a strength in the temple both for their active support and for their influence on younger generations, yet even today they are seldom asked for their views, much less listened to. Their responses to the surveys and interviews show that many of them are eager for change in both the institution and in the way they are perceived. Regardless of generation or age, what most shared contradicted the stereotype of the acquiescent Japanese woman who kowtows to men. A number of respondents expressed displeasure with the traditional status quo and several are taking the initiative to demonstrate leadership capabilities that appear, until recently, to have been ignored. They contribute many insights that stem from their women's experience, which some of them are now applying as they participate in the temple and in the BCA in new ways.

Future research could include a larger sampling of members to enable comparisons between various kinds of temples based on location, size, age of members, and cultural orientation. It would also be useful to determine the views of male members and of the clergy on the same

topics, to verify differences between perception and reality, and to balance the input gathered from the women. Ultimately, this could lead to better mutual understanding and a stronger sense of direction for all involved. Research involving former members would also enable the organization to address problems and deficiencies.

Throughout its history, Buddhism has influenced society, and society in turn has influenced the development of the doctrine and the institution. As it traveled eastward through various cultures and societies, the Dharma has taken root by harmonizing where fitting or necessary with the social environment. Along with the progress of Buddhism, women have often played a key role in fostering the mass appeal of the tradition through their own dedication and devotion. Now Buddhism has arrived in a social environment where women are much less limited by gender constructs. They are free to explore a new sense of self both in their worldly lives and on the level of Ultimate Reality, and they see Shinran's doctrine as offering one possible path in this quest.

In Jōdo Shinshū the word *fukashigi* describes the inconceivable working of Amida Buddha that is beyond conceptual understanding. It seems like an appropriate term to apply to the remarkable confluence of Buddhism, feminism, pluralism, egalitarianism, and the acculturation of Jōdo Shin Buddhists in America. Perhaps beyond all human conditioning and calculation, Shin Buddhism, too, will transcend its bounds.

NOTES

1. Buddhist Churches of America, *Buddhist Churches of America: 2004 Annual Report* (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 2005), p. 19. BCA membership is reported to be almost seventeen thousand nationwide. There is no breakdown by sex, but it is safe to say that women constitute more than half the membership.
2. With few exceptions, women have been relegated to a secondary role throughout Buddhist history. Most of what is written about them has been penned by men who were often monks. Most decisions made regarding roles and doctrine relating to women have also been made by men, often based on cultural tradition. In the past few years, steps have been taken at both the mother temple in Kyoto and in the BCA to respond not only to the reality of social change, but also to the reality of the tenet of "different but equal."
3. Topological breakdown by age: 30–39 (8 respondents); 40–49 (20 respondents); 50–59 (39 respondents); 60–69 (37 respondents); 70–79 (55 respondents); 80+ (26 respondents). By generation: Issei (7); Nisei (93); Sansei (68); Yonsei (2); Other (incl. dual generation, Kibei, non-ethnic; 15 respondents).
4. Emphasis mine. Mark Mullins, "The Life-Cycle of Ethnic Churches in Sociological Perspective," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14, no. 4 (1987): p. 327.
5. For example, see Harry Kitano, *Generations and Identity: The Japanese American* (Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press, 1993), pp. 124 and 163; and Mei Nakano, *Japanese American Women: Three Generations 1890–1990* (Berkeley and Sebastopol: Mina Press Publishing, 1990), p. 225.
6. Zen Lotus Society, "Chronology of Events Involving Women and Buddhism," in "Women and Buddhism," special issue, *Spring Wind: Buddhist Cultural Forum* 6, nos. 1–3 (1986): pp. 235–270.
7. Kenneth Tanaka, "A Prospectus of the Buddhist Churches of America: The Role of Ethnicity," *The Pure Land*, n.s., 12 (December 1995): pp. 121–141.
8. Fully ordained minister.
9. Overseas minister (i.e., not serving in Japan).
10. The Thirty-Fifth Vow of Dharmākara Bodhisattva, appearing in the main sutra of Jōdo Shinshū, the *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*, allows for women to be transformed into men in order to attain buddhahood.

11. The Eighteenth Vow, or Hongan, is the primary vow of Jōdo Shinshū, whereby Amida Buddha promises to liberate all beings.

12. According to the *BCA 2004–2005 Directory*, some eighteen women are now presidents and some twenty-seven fill positions as vice-presidents on roughly sixty temple boards across the nation. Buddhist Churches of America, *Buddhist Churches of America 2004–2005 Directory* (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 2004).

Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku. By Ian Reader. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005. 350 pages including text, photos, maps, appendices, notes, character glossary, bibliography, and index. Hardcover, \$55; paperback, \$29.

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Ian Reader's *Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* is based on a decade and a half of extensive field research, including participant observations and over one thousand interviews, in addition to extensive primary textual research. Reader's principal research question has implications for the study of pilgrimage in particular, but also for ritual studies in general: How is pilgrimage produced? Pilgrimage, as a product of human action, is impacted by time, technological advancements, economic developments, and so on, and hence, is predisposed to countless changes and transformations, which Reader documents in his example of the Buddhist pilgrimage in Shikoku, dedicated to Kūkai/Kōbo Daishi. The book is divided into eight chapters and a short conclusion.

In chapter 1 Reader provides a brief overview of the history of Shikoku pilgrimage beginning with Kūkai/Kōbo Daishi, and ending with modern-day Japan. He points out the different ways pilgrims were viewed and received over time, from pious, religious pilgrims to unwanted criminal elements who transmitted diseases. He also positions his definition and methodological parameters in this investigation, which he brings full circle in his conclusion. Reader discusses the changes, evolutions, and adaptations in the pilgrimage, from changes in material culture (e.g., pilgrims' clothing) to adaptation in modes of transportation, which, in turn, produced new markets and industries affecting pilgrimage as it confronts tourism. Reader also discusses the tensions between "traditional" pilgrims versus "tourist-pilgrims," and takes an inclusive position that privileges neither "pilgrims" nor "tourists" because, together, they inform, structure, and make the pilgrimage of Shikoku what it is today.

Chapter 2 focuses on the components of the pilgrimage landscape, the geography, symbols, legends, traces, and emotions. It briefly presents the background of Kūkai/Kōbo Daishi and the legendary founding of the Shikoku pilgrimage. Reader points out that the emotional and physical landscapes of the pilgrimage, although based on "historically invalid" stories, are, nonetheless, important in the construction of the fundamental pilgrimage beliefs, even if the "historical evidence thus tells us that the pilgrimage could not have been founded by the historical Kūkai and that

he could not have selected the eighty-eight temples on it" (p. 45). Reader notes that together, the historical, mythic, legendary, and real experiences constructs the pilgrimage landscape, both geographically and emotionally, because pilgrimage is perceived and experienced on the interplay of the real and symbolic, the physical and the emotional. Beyond its foundation by Kūkai / Kōbo Daishi, the pilgrimage route is constantly being made and remade, in what Reader calls "moving text." Moving texts include the varied material culture encountered by pilgrims en route: stone inscriptions (big and small, grand and simple), as well as markers, prayers, posted stories, and guideposts.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the pilgrims, their profiles (e.g., background, age, and gender), motives, as well as the implicit and explicit meanings behind the pilgrimage. Reader concludes that there are multifarious forces at play, as some pilgrims are clearly motivated while others are ambiguous. Reader highlights a shift in gender participation, wherein studies of the 1930s–1940s reveal that 65 percent were male, while a current gender configuration is overwhelmingly female (p. 78). Of particular interest is Reader's discussion of "cultural inheritance," which is the conduit through which the history, ritual, culture, and meaning of the Shikoku pilgrimage is transmitted to the next generation via parents and grandparents (p. 99), as well as the increasing sense that it is not just religious, but rather, a symbol of Japanese national culture.

Chapter 4 provides a more comprehensive discussion of the making of the Shikoku, focusing on the "real" history. The history of the Shikoku pilgrimage is characterized by periodic oscillation of support, contempt, and ambivalence, all mirroring state attitudes and the mass media's portrayal. As a result, this history is one of ascetic beginnings, which earned mass support and practice, attracting a wide variety of participants from ascetics, the sick and dying in search of miraculous cures, to local youths in search of and in preparation for marriage, to modern-day pilgrims who travel the route in style and leisure. The result of this evolution resulted in the disappearance of sick and impoverished pilgrims, but also brought the development of an organized pilgrimage structure that, since the 1920s, made it a symbol of traditional Japanese culture in light of rapid modernization (p. 144).

Chapter 5 discusses changes and developments in the visual landscape, infrastructure, temple networks, commercialization, modes of transportation, changing gender dynamics, as well as the overall shifting conceptions of those experiencing the pilgrimage first hand and those experiencing it indirectly via TV documentaries and/or publications. The forces of modernization, with helicopter use and improved roads, displaced foot pilgrims. However, developments since the 1990s, stressing "tradition" and "physical fitness," has renewed the infrastructure for foot pilgrims

and, more recently, the possible innovation of cyberspace communities may foster the development of cyber pilgrimage. These changes, fueled by Japan's economic development from the mid-1950s onward, coupled with media coverage, has transformed a local regional cultic pilgrimage into a "national pilgrimage," with participants coming from every region of Japan (p. 155). Following this transformation is an ambivalent development concerning the two faces of pilgrimage: that connected to Shingon orthodoxy, and the other as symbol of Japanese folk culture (p. 178). The changes and transformations that Reader points out reflect a dimension of pilgrimage that is important to remember and consider—"pilgrimage can change" just as religion can and will change (p. 186).

In chapter 6, Reader provides a detailed phenomenological discussion of walking pilgrims: what they see, hear, feel, eat, do, think, and why. Moreover, he examines the same for people that the walking pilgrims encounter: temple priests; locals giving alms (*settai*); and shop, restaurant, and lodge owners. The pilgrimage experience is not all positive, and Reader makes this clear in his discussion of pilgrim complaints, regrets, hardships, and dilemmas. Reader also highlights the physical pain of walking a 1,400-kilometer pilgrimage, not to mention the toll of natural forces and exposure, the torment of getting lost, or encounters with death. However, this reviewer wishes Reader had further developed his discussion of the role of the body; Reader's view of the body is as a conduit through which the emotional landscape of the pilgrimage is experienced, culminating for many in uncontrollable sobbing when the final destination is reached.

Chapter 7 is a phenomenological discussion of pilgrims who purchase a package tour, a concept developed by the forces of modernity and the demands of contemporary life. For many the automobile is the preferred method of transportation to experience the Shikoku pilgrimage, bringing with it added layers of commercialization and criticism of these "non-genuine pilgrims" by some self-righteous walkers. Reader explores the motivations of those taking the package tour, and additionally debunks the notion that riding a bus is an easy copout to walking. The pilgrims, although in a tour/pilgrimage group, are respectful of each other's individual religious style and motivations, as well as their prerogative on whether or not, or to what extent, they observe the recommended regulations while en route. Of importance to the theoretical understanding of pilgrimage, Reader, due to his experiences on bus pilgrimages, finds Michael Sallnow's notion of pilgrimage as *contest*, or Victor Turner's notion of pilgrimage as *communitas*, insufficient because ambivalence, individuality, and group solidarity were all at play in shaping and making the pilgrimage experience (p. 237).

Lastly, in chapter 8 and in his conclusion, Reader re-examines the theoretical discourses on pilgrimage, highlights their shortcomings, and advances his position. Again, commenting that pilgrimage is neither *contest*

nor *communitas* alone, Reader holds that “pilgrimage cannot be viewed solely through the lenses of marginality and liminality or as one-off activity. Rather than being a practice existing as an appendage on the margins of mainstream Japanese religious life, the Shikoku pilgrimage is something far more central, a core motif in the social and religious lives of the pilgrims. As such, pilgrimage may be as much about continuities and providing a centralizing theme to its participants’ lives and religious orientations as it is about departures, disjunctions, and transience” (p. 266).

Reader discusses the time and factors involved in shaping and reshaping the Buddhist (for some “folk”) Shikoku pilgrimage of Kūkai/Kōbo Daishi. He presents tales, real and fictional, of pilgrims, past and present, who impacted the physical and emotional pilgrimage landscape, and hence, the lives of its participants, pilgrims and non-pilgrims alike. In addition, he documents the changing landscape brought on by modernization and advances in Japan’s infrastructure, coupled with the demands of contemporary life, all of which have introduced new commercial aspects to the Shikoku pilgrimage, that is, advertise it as both a religious experience and a symbol of national culture. Reader moves beyond traditional studies of pilgrimage; not only does he focus on the goal, the sacred site, and the pilgrim, but rather on all players, major and minor, who influence, implicitly or explicitly, the pilgrims’ experience. Thus, Reader says: “The process of making pilgrimage and of creating meanings is not static.... It is through the multiplicity of meanings thereby created that the pilgrimage is understood by participants, and it is through the seeming chaos and cacophony of sounds, practices, beliefs, legends, miraculous tales, tourism, and the like that the complexity of pilgrimage—a complexity that cannot be reduced to simple theoretical narratives—may be viewed and understood as a continuing process of meanings that are made and remade with every act of every one of its participants” (p. 271).

This book is recommended for scholars of religion interested in pilgrimage or ritual studies, Buddhologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and historians of modern Japan, and is a welcome addition to university libraries. It is smooth and, more importantly, fun to read and, hence, recommended for undergraduates in upper division courses.

BDK ENGLISH TRIPITAKA SERIES: A Progress Report

In 2005, three new volumes were published, comprising the Eleventh Set of the BDK English Tripiṭaka Series: Zen Texts [Taishō 2012-A, 2543, 2586, 2543]; The Awakening of Faith [Taishō 1666]; and The Vairocanaḥhisambodhi Sutra [Taishō 848].

The following texts from the Taishō Tripiṭaka (listed by year of publication) have been published to date, for a total of sixty-five texts in thirty-four volumes.

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The Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research as well as the Editorial Committee of the BDK English Tripiṭaka Project look forward to continuing to publish volumes of the English Tripiṭaka Series. Through this work we hope to help to fulfill the dream of founder Reverend Dr. Yehan Numata to make the teaching of the Buddha available to the English-speaking world.

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The *Pacific World*—Its History

Throughout my life, I have sincerely believed that Buddhism is a religion of peace and compassion, a teaching which will bring spiritual tranquillity to the individual, and contribute to the promotion of harmony and peace in society. My efforts to spread the Buddha's teachings began in 1925, while I was a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley. This beginning took the form of publishing the *Pacific World*, on a bi-monthly basis in 1925 and 1926, and then on a monthly basis in 1927 and 1928. Articles in the early issues concerned not only Buddhism, but also other cultural subjects such as art, poetry, and education, and then by 1928, the articles became primarily Buddhist. Included in the mailing list of the early issues were such addressees as the Cabinet members of the U.S. Government, Chambers of Commerce, political leaders, libraries, publishing houses, labor unions, and foreign cultural institutions.

After four years, we had to cease publication, primarily due to lack of funds. It was then that I vowed to become independently wealthy so that socially beneficial projects could be undertaken without financial dependence on others. After founding the privately held company, Mitutoyo Corporation, I was able to continue my lifelong commitment to disseminate the teachings of Buddha through various means.

As one of the vehicles, the *Pacific World* was again reactivated, this time in 1982, as the annual journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies. For the opportunity to be able to contribute to the propagation of Buddhism and the betterment of humankind, I am eternally grateful. I also wish to thank the staff of the Institute of Buddhist Studies for helping me to advance my dream to spread the spirit of compassion among the peoples of the world through the publication of the *Pacific World*.

Yehan Numata
Founder, Mitutoyo Corporation

In Remembrance

In May of 1994, my father, Yehan Numata, aged 97 years, returned to the Pure Land after earnestly serving Buddhism throughout his lifetime. I pay homage to the fact that the *Pacific World* is again being printed and published, for in my father's youth, it was the passion to which he was wholeheartedly devoted.

I, too, share my father's dream of world peace and happiness for all peoples. It is my heartfelt desire that the *Pacific World* helps to promote spiritual culture throughout all humanity, and that the publication of the *Pacific World* be continued.

Toshihide Numata
Chairman, Mitutoyo Corporation