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BUDDHA-INVOCATION (NIEN-FO) AS KOAN

Pure Land and Ch'an have been the two most influential schools of Chinese Buddhism since the T'ang (618-907 A.D.). When people think of these two traditions, they usually like to stress their differences. In fact, there are certain neat contrasts between them. For instance, while Pure Land Buddhism stresses the saving power of Amitābha's original vow, Ch'an tells its practitioner to discover his true nature through his own effort. While Pure Land extols the beatitude of the land of Sukhavati, Ch'an is relentless in its denial of all dualities. While Pure Land recognizes the sufficiency of the simple and believing heart, Ch'an recognizes nothing short of the radical transformation brought about by one's experience of awakening. The Pure Land practitioner is deeply aware of his inherent human weaknesses and hopes to overcome them through egoless devotion to the Buddha. The Ch'an practitioner, however, hopes to transcend the human condition by re-enacting in his own life the enlightenment of the Buddha. In a sense, Pure Land is indeed the religion of "Other Power" and Ch'an, the religion of "Self Power".

It was understandable that there should be mutual criticism and even denigration between Pure Land and Ch'an dating from the early T'ang dynasty. For instance, among Pure Land believers, Hui-jih (679-748) and Fa-chao (d. 822)—although they never questioned the value of Ch'an practice itself—harshly criticized Ch'an people as arrogant and undisciplined. Ch'an monks, on the other hand, tended to regard Pure Land devotionalism as simple-minded, suitable only for the ignorant.[1] However, there was a

1. **Mochizuki Shinkō**, *Chugoku Jōdo kyorishi* (Kyoto, 1964) p. 330.

new development in the early Sung dynasty which attempted to harmonize the two schools. Yung-ming Yen-shou (904-975) argued vigorously for the compatibility between the Pure Land practice of *nien-fo* (Buddha-invocation, Buddha-contemplation), and Ch'an meditation. In contrast to the traditional Ch'an denigration of Pure Land, Yen-shou, a Ch'an monk himself, accorded Pure Land a position equal, if not superior, to Ch'an. His attitude is perhaps best illustrated by his "fourfold summary" of Pure Land and Ch'an:

> With Ch'an but no Pure Land, nine out of ten people will go astray. When death comes suddenly, they must follow it in an instant.
>
> With Pure Land but no Ch'an, ten thousand out of ten thousand people will achieve rebirth. If one can see Amltābha face-to-face, why worry about not attaining enlightenment?
>
> With both Ch'an and Pure Land, it is like a tiger who has grown horns. One will be a teacher to mankind in this life, and a Buddhist patriarch in the next.
>
> With neither Ch'an nor Pure Land, it is like an iron bed with bronze posters. For endless *kalpas* one will find nothing to rely on.[2]

Since Yen-shou's time, monks from both the Ch'an and the Pure Land traditions have also advocated the same idea and a self-conscious movement of commending "the joint practice of Pure Land and Ch'an" *(Ch'an ching shuang-hsiu)* became a characteristic feature of Chinese Buddhism after the Sung dynasty. In his description of Buddhism during the Republican period, Holmes Welch notes that a good many monasteries maintained the practice of Ch'an and Pure Land either through the establishment of both a meditation hall and a hall for reciting the Buddha's name or by the incorporation of the two practices in a single hall as was the case at Chino Shan.[3] A Japanese scholar who visited Taiwan in 1966 observed a similar situation. He reported that on the walls of the meditation hall of the great Lin-chi ssu in Taipei there were plaques asking "Who is the one calling on the name of the Buddha?" *(Chei nien-fo-t'e shih shei).*

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 341.
3. Holmes Welch, *The Practice of Chinese Buddhism* (Cambridge: Haryard University, 1967), p. 398.

He was told that in other temples as well, the Ch'an practice of sitting was alternated with the Pure Land practice of calling on the Buddha's name.[4]

The joint practice of Pure Land and Ch'an is another manifestation of the Chinese predilection for synthesis. The basis for this synthesis is the claim that *nien-fo* (in the dual sense of Buddha-contemplation as well as Buddha-invocation) was really no different from Ch'an meditation, for both could lead to the realization that one's self-nature and the Buddha were identical. But just how was this claim established? What is the nature of *nien-fo?* What is the nature of Ch'an meditation? How did some meditation teachers use the calling of the Buddha's name as a means to achieve *samādhi?* And finally, in what way could one say—as did quite a number of Pure Land and Ch'an monks—that the calling of the Buddha's name could serve the same function as a Ch'an koan, namely, to generate the sensation of doubt and thereby lead to a breakthrough into enlightenment? These are some of the questions this paper will try to discuss.

What is Nien-Fo?

Nien-fo, the hallmark of Pure Land meditation, can mean either Buddha contemplation or Buddha-Invocation. The ambiguity is related to the Chinese character, *"nien",* for it means to recite aloud, to think a thought or, in the technically Buddhist sense, to be mindful and to recollect: it corresponds to the Sanskrit *smrti.*[5] Traditionally, as formulated by Tsung-mi (779-841), there were four kinds of *nien-fo.* He described the different methods of meditating involved in each kind of *nine-fo* in the following fashion:[6]

(1) *Ch'eng-ming nien* or meditating by calling on the name of the Buddha. According to the *Wen-chu-pan-jo ching,* there is a meditative absorption called *i-hsing san-mei (ekavyuha samādhi,* "single practice *samādhi").* If a person practices this

4. Fujiyoshi Jikai, *Zen jō sōshū no tenkai,* (Tokyo: 1974), p. 193.
5. Leon Hurvitz, "Chu-hung's One Mind of Pure Land and Ch'an Buddhism", *Self and Society in Ming Thought,* William Theodore de Bary and the Conference on Ming Thought (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 455.
6. *P'u-hsien hsing-yüan p'in shu-ch'ao* (Commentary on the P'u-hsien hsing-yuan Chapter of the Avatamsaka Sūtra *ZZ.* 1/7/5, pp. 457-458.

samādhi, he can speedily attain the enlightenment of the Buddha. In order to achieve this *samādhi,* one should retire to a quiet place and give up all confused thoughts. While not paying attention to the marks or the visage of the Buddha, one should concentrate one's entire attention on the Buddha by calling on his name exclusively. Sitting upright and facing the Buddha, one calls on the name uninterruptedly and sees all the Buddhas of the past, future and the present during the invocation. By realizing that the merits of one Buddha are as limitless as the merits of all Buddhas, one reaches an understanding that there is no difference in the Dharma realms of all the Buddhas.

(2) *Kuan-hsiang nien,* or meditating by the concentration on a cast image or a picture of the Buddha. According to the *Mahāratnakūta-sūtra,* when Sākyamuni Buddha was a *bodhisattva* in his previous life, he renounced the world after seeing a portrait of the Buddha drawn by a monk. He took this portrait into the mountain and meditated on it. When he observed that the picture was no different from the *Tathagata,* he attained the five levels of supernatural powers, *"samādhi"* of universal light *(pu-kuang san-mei),* and the vision of Buddhas in the ten directions.

(3) *Kuan-hsiang nien* or meditating by visualizing the Buddha without the aid of images or paintings. There are two ways of carrying out this meditation. One can either visualize one of the thirty-two marks or the entire body of the Buddha. The former method is described in the *Kuan-fo-san mei-hai ching* by the Buddha to his father. One should concentrate on the white curl between the Buddha's eyebrows and follow its right curve. Eventually, one obtains the vision of its thorough translucency which shines like a white gem or a bright star in the dark night. The second method of meditating on the entire body of the Buddha is described in the *Tso-ch'an san-mei ching.* It says that if a person desires to seek the way of the Buddha and fall into the meditative trance, he should concentrate his mind on the body of the Buddha and not on earth, water, fire, wind, mountain, tree, grass, wood or any other *dharma* in the universe. He should visualize the body of the Buddha as being situated in the empty space which is as clear as the ocean.

(4) *Shih-hsiang nien* or meditating by realizing the true nature of reality. This last type of *nien-fo* is also called the meditation on the *Dharmakaya,* which means the meditation on the real nature of oneself as well as all the *dharmas.* The *Wen-chu-*

pan-jo ching says that the Buddha is he who is neither born nor extinguished, who neither comes nor goes away, who can neither be named nor characterized. If one contemplates the real nature of oneself, one will realize that the Buddha is the same as oneself.

According to Tsung-mi, these four types of *nien-fo* are suited to people of different capacities. They form an ascending order, the last being the most excellent. The fact that Tsung-mi was a hua-yen scholar and, moreover, formulated this classification in his commentary on a chapter of the *avatamsaka-sutra,* may explain why: (1) He did not specify the Buddha as Amitabha Buddha; (2) He did not quote from any one of the Pure Land sutras, but other scriptures dealing with meditation; (3) He recommended the invocation of the Buddha's name primarily because it was an expedient way to achieve *samādhi,* and not because of its devotional coloration. It was precisely because the name had this power that he so recommended it. For Tsung-mi at least, whether one invoked the name of the Buddha or contemplated on some aspect of the Buddha, (i.e., image, marks, true nature as the *Dharmakaya),* the final aim was to achieve *samādhi.*

Even though Tsung-mi did not limit meditation on the Buddha to that of Amitabha, his scheme of the four-fold *nien-fo* was adopted by Pure Land Buddhists. One example of later re-interpretations of this scheme came from Chu-hung of a Pure Land master, who advocated the joint practice of Pure Land and Ch'an. In his commentary on the *a-mi-t'o ching (The Lesser Sukhavati-vyuha-sutra),* he explained the four kinds of *nien-fo* in this manner: (1) *ch'eng-ming nien-fo* or calling on the Amitabha's name in the manner prescribed in the *A-mi-t'o ching;* (2) *kuan-hsiang nien-fo* or concentrating one's rapt attention on a statue of Amitabha made of earth, wood, bronze or gold; (3) *kuan-hsiang nien-fo* or contemplating the miraculous features of Amitabha with one's mind's-eye in the manner described in the *Kuan ching;* (4) *shih-hsiang nien-fo* or contemplating Amitabha as no different from one's own self-nature, as both Amitabha and self-nature Transcending birth and extinction *(sheng-mieh),* existence and emptiness *(yu-k'ung),* subject and object *(neng-so).* Indeed, since contemplation is free from the characteristics of speech *(yen-shuo hsiang),* name *(ming-tzu hsiang),* and mental cognition of external phenomena *(hsin-*

yuan hsiang), it is, therefore, contemplation of the Buddha in accordance with Reality.[7]

In his explanation of the four types of *nien-fo,* Chu-hung consistently identified the Buddha with Amitabha Buddha. Moreover, he only cited Pure Land scriptures such as the *A-mi-to ching* and the *Kuan ching* to support his interpretation. Chu-hung culminated the trend of the joint practice of Pure Land and Ch'an which was first started by Yen-shou some six hundred years before him. Before that time, Buddha-contemplation was practised primarily as an aid to achieve *samādhi,* the state of non-duality between the meditator and the meditated and, therefore, conductive to the realization of *prajña,* the insight which saw everything as sunya or nondual. It was, therefore, valued as one of several paths leading to one's goal of enlightenment. But for the monks belonging to the tradition of Yen-shou and Chu-hung, *nien-fo,* in its dual meanings of invocation and meditation, actually incorporated all other meditation paths, for instead of leading to *samādhi,* it directly brought about enlightenment, the same sudden breakthrough achieved by the successful meditation on a Ch'an Koan. For them, joint practice of Pure Land and Ch'an, then, did not mean the simultaneous pursuit of *nien-fo* and Ch'an, as the former already included the latter. In practising *nien-fo* one was already engaged in Ch'an meditation.

Nien-fo-san-mei: Nien-fo meditator before Yen-shou's Time

As we stated before, *nien-fo* could lead to *samādhi.* According to the biographies of Hui-yüan (337-417) and Fa-Chao, both these patriarchs of the Pure Land school experienced *nien-fo san-mei* or *samādhi* of Buddha-contemplation.[8] To be specific, they were said to have seen the Amitabha face-to-face. The attainment of this divine vision has always been treated as the apex of the religious lives of these men. This is because the vision was understood as a guarantee that the beholder would be reborn in the

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7. *A-mi-to ching shu-chao, Yün-chi fa-hui* (Ching-ling k'e-ching ch'u, 1867) Vol. 8, pp. 66b-67a; Hurvitz, pp. 455-456.

8. Hui-yüan's biographies are found in *Lo-pang wen-lei,* (block printed by Chao, Chin-ting, date unknown), Chinan 3, pp. 36-38, *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi* Chüan 26, T49, pp. 261-263, Fa-chao's biographies are found in *Fo-tsu t'ung-chi,* Chüan 26, T49, pp. 263-264.

Western Paradise after death. But I would argue that what is more significant is that this vision symbolized the mystic union between the meditator and the Amitabha—the object of his meditation. It was because *nien-to* had the power to obtain *samādhi* that both the T'ieh-t'ai master Chih-j (538-597), and some of the Ch'an monks during the early T'ang, recommended it as an effective means for breaking through the mind of delusion and reaching the state of non-duality.

Nien-fo san-mei is based on the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* and *the Kuan ching*. Hui-yuan seems to have been especially influenced by the former.[10] The *Pan-Chou san-mei ching* defines *nien-fo san-mei* as a form of mental concentration which enables the devotee to behold all Buddhas "as if they were standing before his eyes." *(hsien-tsai fo hsi tsai ch'ien-li san-mei)*. The sutra states that the devotee should spend from one day and one night to seven days and seven nights contemplating the Buddha, at the end of which Amitabha Buddha will appear to him in a dream if not when he is awake. When his mind is engaged in this contemplation, the Buddha-lands, Mt. Sumeru as well as hidden places, will all become accessible to him. Without acquiring divine feet he can go to the Buddha-land (i.e., Amitabha's land), sit by the Buddha, and listen to his preaching. The devotee is especially enjoined to contemplate the thirty-two excellent marks of the Buddha's body. This contemplation will enable him to achieve the "*samādhi* of emptiness" *(k'ung san-mei)*. Just as he dreams of eating delicious food but wakes up feeling hungry, he comes to realize that everything is a creation of the Mind and has as much reality as his dreams. Contemplating the fact that the Buddha comes from nowhere and goes nowhere, he realizes that he himself also comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. By this contemplation, he reaches the awakening that his Mind is no different from the Mind of the Buddha, and that neither can be seen or conceptualized. When there is thought, it is the mind of delusion, but when there is no thought, it is *Nirvāna*.[11]

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9. There are two versions of *Pan-chou san-mei ching* in the Taisho Tripitaka (T 417-418). One is eight chapters and the other is sixteen. Both are supposed to have been translated by Lokakshema of the Later Han. See Mochizuki, p. 12; E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), p. 35. The passages in the sutra dealing with *nien-fo-san-mei* are gathered together in *Lo-pang wen-lei*, Chüan 1.

10. Mochizuki, pp. 24-28. Zürcher, pp. 220-221.

11. *Lo-pang wen-lei*, Chüan 1, p. 29b.

The *sutra* goes on to say that four things will enable the devotee to achieve this *samādhi* speedily. For a period of three months he should (1) be free from worldly thoughts, (2) not lie down, (3) walk constantly without rest and never sit down except to eat and relieve himself, (4) not expect reward in the form of clothes or food offered when one preaches the sutra to others. When these four conditions are fulfilled, the *sutra* assures the reader that he will be able to achieve *samādhi*. No matter which of the ten directions he faces, he will see Buddha face-to-face.[12]

According to the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* then, Buddha-contemplation is a two-step process beginning with the visual or mental contemplation of the Buddha and leading to the realization of the non-duality between the Buddha, the object of contemplation, and the Mind of the contemplator. The key-factor in the transition to the second step lies in the experience of *samādhi*. The intense contemplation of the Buddha, which can be accomplished either with a statue (equivalent to the second type of *(nien-fo* in Tsung-mi's classification) or through mental visualization equivalent of the third type of *nien-fo*, leads to the state of *samādhi,* a coalescence of the meditating subject and the meditated object. Once *Samādhi* is reached, the devotee awakens to the reality of emptiness whereby he sees everything non-dualistically, i.e., without discrimination between subject and object.

The *sutra* does not mention the Buddha-Invocation. *Chih-i* however, using the method of *nien-fo* introduced in the *Pan-chou san-mei ching* as a basis, formulated the meditative technique of "constant walking *samādhi" (ch'anghsing sna-mei,* one of the four types of meditation discussed in his *Mo-k'o chih-kuan, Great Concentration and insight).* Here Chi-i was employing both meanings of *nien-fo* namely, Buddha-contemplation and Buddha-Invocation. In practising this form of meditation one devotes a period of ninety days during which time he undergoes training in body, speech and mind. He goes to a quiet, isolated place, avoids contact with evil friends, begs for food, purifies both the place where he carries out this meditation, and his own body. He vows that until he achieves *samādhi,* he will walk around without ever resting. Then he constantly calls out the name of Amitabha aloud—hence the name "constant walking *samādhi."* At the same time, he also contemplates the Amitabha. He can invoke the Buddha's name

12. Ibid., pp. 29b-30a.

and contemplate him simultaneously, or first contemplate and then invoke the name, or first invoke the name and then contemplate. In any event, he is enjoined to practise both invocation and contemplation in succession. *(Ch'ang-nien hsiang-chi)* Each step, each sound and each thought must centre on Amitabha *(pu-pu sheng-sheng nien, wei tsa Mi-t'o).* Finally, contemplating the thirty-two marks of the Buddha's body, he goes through a realization on three levels. He first realizes that he can obtain the Buddha through his own mind and body. Then he realizes that the Buddha cannot be obtained through the mind on the body. He eventually realizes that one cannot obtain the Buddha's form through mind or the Buddha's mind through form. Enlightenment is achieved when one understands that there is originally not a thing.[13]

This kind of realization, achieved through Buddha-contemplation, bears striking similarity to the state of awakening reached in Ch'an meditation. In this case, one uses the contemplation of Amitabha as a means to reach the non-dual state of no-mind or no-thought. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that before Yung-ming Yen-shou, there were some Ch'an monks in the seventh and eighth centuries, who were already using Buddha-contemplation and Buddha-Invocation as methods of meditation. These Ch'an monks, practising the "Ch'an of Buddha-contemplation," *(nien-fo Ch'an)* were all disciples of the fifth patriarch. They were closely connected with Chih-hsien, (607-702) of Szechuan.[14]

Chih-hsien had a disciple, named Ch'u-chi, who was the teacher of both Wu-hsiang (684-762) and Ch'eng-yüan. (711-802). According to Tsung-mi, his teaching can be condensed into three terms: no recollection, no thought, and no forgetting. He instructed his students once a year (from December to January) on the method of Buddha-Invocation. First, one must call on the name of the Buddha in a loud voice *(yin-sheng nien-fo).* Then he ought gradually to lower his voice until he becomes silent as he uses up his breath. The purpose of this invocation was to stop thought and to reach the state of no-thought.[15]

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13. Mochizuki, p. 112.
Lo-pang wen lei, Chüan F., pp. 30-31.
14. Tsung-mi, *Yuan-chueh ching ta-shu-chao ZZ* 1/14/3. p. 579b. Ui Hakuju, *Zenshu shi kenky* (Tokyo, 1939) Vol 1, pp. 169-194. Philip Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch,* (N.Y. Columbia Univ. Press, 1967) pp. 43-44.
15. Yampolsky, p. 44.

Ch'eng-yüan was Fa-chao's teacher. Although we have little information about Ch'eng-yüan's technique of Buddha-contemplation, it is very likely that he influenced Fa-chao's method of meditation. Fa-chao instituted the practice of *"Wu-hui nien-o"* which resembled Wuthsiang's *yin-sheng-nien-fo* and the "constant walking *samādhi*" of Chih-i. *Wu-hui nien-fo* refers to a method of collectively invoking the Buddha's name in five consecutively altered voices. The tempo of invocation changes from slow to fast and the level of voice from low to high as one progresses from the first to the fifth sequence *(hui),* while throughout this same sequence, one concentrates one's mind on the three treasures (i.e., *Buddha, Dharma,* and *Sangha)* and keeps his mind free of all extraneous thoughts. During the first sequence, one calls out *"nan-wu A-mi-t'o-fo"* slowly and in an even voice *(p'ing-shenq).* During the second sequence, one still calls out the invocation slowly, but now in a slightly higher voice *(p'inq-shanq-shenq).* During the third sequence, one invokes *"nan-wu A-mi-t'o-fo* in a way which is neither slow nor fast. The same invocation is called out at a much faster tempo during the fourth sequence. Finally, during the fifth sequence, one simply calls out the four characters: *"A-mi-t'o-fo"* at an extremely fast tempo.[16] While Wu-hslang's *yin-sheng nien-fo* starts in a loud voice and ends in silence, *wu*-huli *nien-fo* starts in a low voice and builds up to a crescendo. Both use the sound of invocation as a device for achieving mental concentration. To some extent, this method is similar to the chanting of *nāmajapa* in Hinduism of *dhikr* in Sufism. Through ones concentrated invocation of the Name, the meditator achieves a single-pointed absorption. Much later, during the Yüan and Ming dynasties, as a result of Yen-shou's joint practice of Pure Land and Ch'an a number of monks saw the similarity between this repetition of the Name and the Ch'an koan. For a koan, just like the Name, serves a function similar to that of a *mantra,* a mandala or other devices used in what Naranjo calls "concentrative or absorptive meditation."[17] Here the meditator actively focuses his entire attention on a single object, sound, or idea and reaches a new level of consciousness as a result of this concentration and restriction of his awareness. It is very different in approach, technique and goal from the type of meditation Naranjo calls "the

16. Ui, p. 190.

17. Claudio Naranjo and Robert Ornstein, *On the Psychology of Meditation* (N.Y. The Viking Press, 1971), pp. 19-74.

negative way"[18] of which the exercise in mindfulness of the *Theravāda* tradition and the quiet-sitting of the Ts'ao-tung Ch'an are good examples. In this latter case, the meditator relinquishes any active control but remains aware of everything in a state of passivity and receptivity. He relaxes his concentration and expands the domain of his attention.

When the Name was treated as a Ch'an koan or "hua-t'ou (the critical part of a koan), this method of meditation was called *tsan-chiu nien-fo* or *nien-fo* of intensive inquiry. This was really a synthesis of *ch'eng-ming* and *shih-hsiang,* the first and the fourth types of *nien-fo in Tsung-mi's* classification. According to its practitioners, one could gain insight into the real nature of everything by the constant repetition and the concentrative examination of the Name. *A-mi-t'o-fo* was then known as nien fo kung an.

Nien-fo kung-an

Chu-hung, as we noted before, was an enthusiastic advocate of the joint practice of Ch'an and Pure Land. He also believed in the effectiveness of the Name as a koan. He was very aware of historical precedents and liked to refer to ideas of earlier masters to support his own. A survey of his various writings, yields a roster of monks who carried out the joint practice of Ch'an and Pure Land. Among them were Yung-ming Yen-shou, Yüan-chao Sung-pen (1020-1099), Chen-hsieh Ch'ing-iiao and Tz'ushou Hual -shen of the early Southern Sung; three monks of the Yüan dynasty: Chung-feng Ming-pen (1262-1323), and his disciple T'ien-ju Weitse (1354), Tuan-yün Chih-ch'e (1309-1386), and five monks of the Ming dynasty: Ch'u-shih Fan-ch'i K'ung-ku Ching-lung, Tu-feng chi-shan (d. 1482), Ku-yin Chingch'in, and Hsiao -yen Te-pao (1512-1581), under whose direction Chu-hung himself studied Buddhism for a short time. Chu-hung cited these twelve Ch'an monks as exemplary models, even though he made it clear that a far greater number of Ch'an monks actually practised *nien-fo* along with other forms of Buddhist cultivation.

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18. *Ibid.*, p. 75-89.

19. These include *Ch'an-kuan ts'e-chin* (*YCFH* 14), *Wang sheng chi* (*YCFH* 16), *Huang-Ming ming-tseng chi-lüeh* (*YCFH* 17), and *Chu-ch'uang erh-pi* (*YCFH* 25).

Among these Ch'an monks, six seemed to have specifically advocated the use of the Buddha-invocation as a koan. They are: Tien-ju Wei-tse and Tuan-yün Chih-ch'e of the Yüan, Ch'u-shih Fanch'i, K'ung-ku Ching-lung, Tu-feng Chi'-shan, and Ku-yin Ching -ch'in of the Ming. Chu-hung compiled two works, the *Ch'an-kuan ts'e-chin (Progress in the Path of Ch'an)*[20], and the *Huang-ming Ming-tseng chi-iueh (Selected Biographies of Famous Monks of the Ming Dynasty),* in which he quoted their sayings on this question.

T'ien-ju Wei-tse regarded Ch'an and Pure Land as two equally useful paths toward released from delusive thoughts.

> *The kàrmic* root of transmigration lies with this one thought which chases after sounds and forms and causes man's delusions. Therefore, the Buddha, because of his infinite compassion, teaches you either to practise Ch'an or to call on Buddha's name. Either one enables you to sweep away your delusive thought and recognize your original face so that you can finally be a free man...some people think that Ch'an meditation and Pure Land *nien-fo* are different. They do not know that in realizing one's nature through Ch'an and in awakening to the truth of 'self-nature is Amitabha, mere Mind is Pure Land' through *nien-fo,* there is no difference. ...Treat the four characters *"A-mi=t'o-fo"* as a *hua-t'ou.* Work on it twenty four hours a day. When you reach the state where no thought arises, you are already a Buddha even though you have not traversed any Bodhisattva stages.[21]

According to Ch'u-shih Fan-ch'i, this realization of no-mind can be accomplished by the constant repetition of the Name, *"A-mi-t'o-fo"*

> You need not avoid daily noise and seek out a quiet place. Just sweep your breast clean of ordinary knowledge and views which you have accumulated every day, but fill it with the phrase, *'A-mi-t'o-fo'.* Try to become identified with it *(t'i-chiu)* totally. Always generate the doubt, 'Who is this one doing *nien-fo* after all?' Dwell on this question constantly. You should not discriminate between existence and non-existence. Neither should you purposely wait for awakening.

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20. This book has been translated into Japanese by Fujiyoshi Jikai and published as Vol. 19 in the *Zen no goroku* series (Tokyo: 1970).

21. *Ch'an-kuan ts'e-chin,* YCFH 14, pp. 21b-22a.

> The least bit of delusive thought will create obstacle. Empty your chest of everything. In walking, standing, sitting, or lying, in either solitude or company, leisure or engagement, always make your thoughts succeed one another and your mind uninterrupted. After a long time, your effort will become pure and concentrated. When you persist in this way without sliding backward, one day all of a sudden the ball of doubt *(i-t'uan)* will be smashed to smithereens and your worries of endless *kalpas* will dissolve away like ice.[22]

As presented here, the effect of concentrating on this "Who is this one invoking the Buddha's name?" clearly resembles that of a *huat'ou* or koan of the Lin-chi Ch'an tradition. For, like the koan *"Wu"*, it enables the meditator to (1) dwell upon this thought to the exclusion of everything else, and (2) generate a sense of doubt within himself which will disrupt his habitual discursive mode of thinking and thus help him to realize the state of "no thought". In this way, Buddha-invocation, similar to koan meditation, serves the dual function of inhibiting one's delusive thoughts and shocking the mind into a new awareness through the sense of doubt. As for the first function, the invocation of the Name, just as in the case of a koan, is essentially a device to stop the incessant monologue which goes on inside oneself. According to Chu-hung and others, even though the Mind is originally devoid of thought, we have been accustomed to delusive thoughts since time immemorial due to our ignorance. It is very difficult to make people stop their random thoughts. But when they recite the name of Buddha, this one thought can crowd out the multitude of other thoughts. It is like "using one poison to counteract another poison, or using war to stop all wars."[23]

The second function of Buddha-invocation is to generate a sense of doubt. Several teachers emphasized the critical importance of "doubt" in their instructions to their disciples. For instance, Chih-ch'e of Yüan dynasty:

> Call on Buddha's name once, three, five, or seven times. Every time you do so, ask yourself silently where this sound of invocation comes from. Also ask yourself who is this

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22. *Ibid.*, p. 41b.
23. *A-mi-t'o ching shu-chao*, YCFH 6. pp. 28b-29a.

> person who is doing the Buddha-invocation. When you are seized by doubt, then just go ahead and doubt.[24]

Another monk of the early Ming dynasty, Chi-shan, elaborated on this point further:

> When you work on 'Who is the one doing *nien-fo?*' concentrate your effort on this word 'who'. Deepen your sense of doubt. 'Great doubt produces great awakening; little doubt produces little awakening.' How true this saying is! If there is uninterrupted concentration, that means your doubt has become great. At that time, the *hua-t'ou* will naturally appear before you. Following one another closely, your pure thought is continuous...Hold on securely and do not let it break off. (The result is) that not one thought arises. There is, then, only emptiness outside and nothingness within.[25]

If the meditation can sustain the sense of doubt by concentrating on the Name, then what other koans does he need to have? Therefore, Chu-hung could say that the four syllables constituting the Name were all that a meditator ever needed.

> *Nien-fo* of 'total experience and embodiment' *(t'i-chiu)* has the same effect as working on *kung-an* or generating great doubts which were taught by Ch'an Masters of earlier times. That is why there is a saying that a person interested in Ch'an meditation should just concentrate on the four syllables, *A-mi-t'o-fo,* and needs no other *hua-t'ou.*[26]

Conclusions

I have discussed the important role this sense of doubt plays in the meditation process in another paper.[27] It seems that a koan can create a sense of doubt and the accompanying feelings of bewilderment, frustration and anxiety, etc. because it works as a shock, which makes the meditator momentarily stop short in

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24. *Ch'an-kuan tse-chin, YCFH* 14, p. 22b.
25. *Huang-Ming ming-tseng chi-lüeh, YCFH* 17, pp. 13a-14a.
26. *A-mi-t'o ching shu-chao, YCFH* 8, p 59a.
27. "Ta-hui Tsung-kao and k'ung-an Ch'an", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy,* Spring, 1977 (forth coming).

his ordinary mental discriminations, associations, and other incessant monologues. Moreover, this shock can breach the meditator's taken-for-granted expectancies and thus make him a stranger. Being estranged from the familiar matter-of-fact world reasonableness and common sense, he becomes vulnerable and open to transformation, ideally speaking, as soon as the meditator starts to ask himself seriously the question, "Who is this calling on the Buddha's name?" he has allowed himself to be overtaken by the sense of doubt. After this, he can no longer remain complacent and live his life matter-of-factly as before. The process of erosion and destruction of his habituated view of the world will end only with the enlightenment experience.

The joint practice of Ch'an and Pure Land, then, did not mean the simultaneous meditation on the name *A-mi-t'o-fo* and a Ch'an koan. For Chu-hung and others belonging to this tradition, *nien-fo* was not inferior to Ch'an, (2) *nien-fo* could achieve the same goal as Ch'an—the realization of one's Self Nature or Original Mind, (3) *nien-fo* was more effective than Ch'an, not only because of the efficacy of the Name, but because of its suitability to the needs of the people in the age of *mo-fa* (the age of the Degenerate Law).

In a sense, Ch'an practice could be incorporated within the Pure Land path. Since the Sung, many thoughtful people had long lamented the decline of Ch'an discipline. The koan of Buddha-invocation *(nien-fo kung-an)* could be regarded as an expedient means to resuscitate the sagging life-spirit of Ch'an. But if one is Ch'an purist, this might also be taken as the factor which contributed to the eventual disappearance of a vital and exclusive Ch'an tradition in late imperial China.