

Self-Reliance of Zen and Reliance on other Power of Pure Land

When Buddhism arrived in China during the first BCE millennium, it was split up into many different schools. However, throughout time only two schools survived such as Chan school 禪宗 and Pure Land school 淨土宗.¹ In this paper, I am going to discuss their contrasts in general contexts, and I am going to present the syncretistic processes of these two schools. Afterward, I will negate some of scholars' claims about non-syncretistic process between these two schools in order to make the conclusion that there was syncretistic process to combine them as other scholars have proved and indicated.

Buddhism played an important role in the historical landscape of Chinese religion. While it was on Chinese soil, it was redefined and categorized by Chinese Buddhist monks, especially during the golden period of Buddhist influences during the Tang dynasty 唐朝 (618-904) when most of the Chinese Buddhist schools² emerged such as Chan school³ and Pure Land school.⁴

It is an assumption that Chan school of Mahāyāna Buddhism (which employs some unique techniques as sitting in meditation, “meditative topic”⁵ and gaining *satori*⁶) was modified from Indian Buddhist meditation of *Samatha*⁷ and Yoga traditions genealogically; it was initiated

¹ Here I treat them as two ‘conventional schools’ for the purpose of discussion.

² Many contemporary scholars reject the idea of school in Pure Land because of its lacking of continuous lineage. Please see note number seven in Robert Sharf, “On Pure Land Buddhism,” *T'oung Pao*, (Brill, Leiden, 2002), vol. 88, 284.

³ Chan (Sōn in Korean, Thièn in Vietnamese, and Zen in Japanese) is the Chinese transliteration of the Indian word for concentration meditation, dhyāna in Sanskrit and jhāna in Pali. McRae, John R. "Chan." *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Lindsay Jones. Vol. 3. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 1520. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Gale. University of the West. (accessed October 7, 2009).

⁴ A purified land where all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas dwell. Kōtatsu, Fujita. "Pure and Impure Lands." *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Lindsay Jones. Vol. 11. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 7502. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Gale. University of the West. (accessed October, 2009).

⁵ *gong an* 公案.

⁶ *Wu* 悟, Enlightened experiences.

⁷ Concentration and calming the mind.

by the spiritual transmission from Śākyamuni Buddha to Mahākāśyapa.⁸ Bodhidharma 菩提達摩(480-520) is considered the twenty-eighth Indian Chan patriarch and the first Chinese Chan patriarch who initiated the teaching of pointing directly to one's mind to see one's own true nature without relying on the scriptures.⁹ From him, it sprang out five generations¹⁰ and five houses¹¹ of Chan that had been making the great religious influence and impact on many Far East countries.

Regarding the Pure Land's genealogy, generally there was no concrete evidence of lineage and transmission.¹² Spiritually, according to Gregory Schopen, an important aspect of Pure Land school's aspiration in India and China is the desire to attain future rebirth in that Land of Bliss.¹³ Theoretically, most scholars agree that this school started with the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sūtra*¹⁴ and the *Smaller Sukhavativyuha Sūtra*¹⁵ in Northwest India around 100 CE during *Kusana* Dynasty.¹⁶ These sūtras were transmitted and translated from Sanskrit language to Chinese language in China around 200 CE, and they became sources of reference for Pure Land school generally. One of the earliest Pure Land Sanskrit texts that was rendered into Chinese language in 179 A.D was *Pratyutpannasamadhi Sūtra*¹⁷ by *Lokaksema* (b.147 CE)¹⁸ which

⁸ He is one of the most revered disciples of Śākyamuni Buddha and who convened and directed the first Buddhist council.

⁹ Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History in India and China*. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 85.

¹⁰ Huike 慧可(487-593), Sengcan 僧粲 (?-606), Daoxin 道信 (580-651), Hongren 弘忍 (601-674), and Huineng 慧能 (638-713).

¹¹ Guiyang house with experience in action, Linji house with threefold and fourfold formulas, Caodong house with the five ranks, Yunmen house with the one-wood barriers, and Fayuan house with the interpretation of attributes. (Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism*, 214-233.)

¹² Robert Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," *T'oung Pao*, (Brill, Leiden, 2002), vol. 88, p.284.

¹³ In India, Pure Land was considered a religious aspect of Mahāyāna Buddhism; it was not much developed and popular. (Sharf, "On Pure Land," 286.)

¹⁴ *Wuliang Shou jing* 無量壽經, T no. 360, 12.

¹⁵ *Amitābha Sūtra, Emituo jing* 阿彌陀經, T no. 364, 12.

¹⁶ Kenneth Tanaka, *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine: Pure Land Buddhist Development in India and China Prior to Huiyuan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 3.

¹⁷ *Banzhou samei jing* 般舟三昧經, T no. 417, 13.

¹⁸ Ch. *Zhilou jiachen* 支婁迦讖.

describes the contemplated technique to assist believers in seeing Buddha's appearance before their own eyes.¹⁹ Prior to Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (905-975) period, there were three distinct branches of Pure Land school in China: the Huiyuan 慧遠 (334-416) branch including contemplative *nian fo* 念佛 (recitation of Buddha's name), *prajna*²⁰ realization, and catering to the "superior"; the Shandao 善導 (613-681) branch including chanting *nian fo*, seeking the rebirth in Pure Land through "other power" of Buddha, and catering to the "inferior"; and the Cimin 慈愍 (680-748) branch including syncretistic *nian fo*, dual practices of Chan and Pure Land, and suitable for those of any potential, high or low.²¹ Generally, these *nian fo* practices encompassed from using *nian fo* for contemplation to chanting it for taking rebirth in Pure Land in both schools.

Now I am going to discuss the differences between these two schools generally. First, Chan masters mostly advocated "Self-Power."²² For example, Daoxin 道信 (580 - 651) said, "Apart from the mind there is no Buddha, apart from Buddha there is no mind."²³ That is, one should look within one's own mind to find one's Buddha nature. Shenxiu 神秀 (605-707) said, "All Buddhadharmas come forth fundamentally from the mind. If you waste effort seeking it outside, it's like rejecting your father and running away from home."²⁴ That is, one should look within oneself, not seeking another's power externally. Huineng 慧能 (638-713) said that while the ignorant men recite the Buddha's name to be reborn in the Buddha's Pure Land, the wise

¹⁹ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," 286-287.

²⁰ Ch. *Banruo* 般若, wisdom.

²¹ Heng-Ching Shih, *The Syncretism of Chan and Pure Land Buddhism* (New York, Berlin, Bern, Frankfurt: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1992), 38.

²² Self Power means one works on one's own salvation.

²³ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," 304.

²⁴ Andy Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese Heritage: the Masters and their Teachings* (Boston, MA: Wisdom Publication, 2000), 43.

men purify their own mind.²⁵ Here, he emphasized that the wise men purify within his own mind, not merely recite the Buddha's name to seek Pure Land outwardly. Huineng added further that people in the East [China] are without crime, just by making the mind pure.²⁶ Namely, since the mind is pure, one won't be incited by mental afflictions such as greed or anger to cause one to create bad karma. In addition, Huineng said, "Deluded, a Buddha is a sentient being. Awakened, a sentient being is a Buddha."²⁷ Namely, when our minds are deluded or covered by mental afflictions, we cannot recognize things clearly; for example, a greedy thief tries to break in people's houses, but he may not recognize the consequence of his acts that he may end up spending his life in jail. Also, according to Huineng, the mind is Buddha; outside the mind there is not one thing that can be established.²⁸ This is the whole Buddhist statement of mind's definition; the mind creates inner and outer phenomenon; if our minds are polluted by mental afflictions, we will conduct ourselves as common beings; if our minds are pure, we will act and talk in a mindful or "awakened"²⁹ manner. Following this paradigm, Mazu Daoyi's 馬祖道一 (688-763) main message had similar theme: "Apart from the mind, there is no Buddha. Apart from the Buddha, there is no mind."³⁰ His principles were, "Mind is Buddha" and "This place is itself true thusness."³¹ Damei FaChang 大梅法常 (752-839) addressed the monks, "All of you must reverse your mind and arrive at its root. Don't pursue its branches! Attaining its source, its end will also be reached. If you want to know the source, then just know your own mind. The

²⁵ Philip B. Yampolsky, trans. *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 157.

²⁶ Yampolsky, *The Platform*, 157.

²⁷ Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism*, 136.

²⁸ Yampolsky, *The Platform*, 83.

²⁹ Its meaning is Buddha.

³⁰ Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism*, 164.

³¹ Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese*, 65.

source of mind is the entire world.”³² Generally, the themes of Bodhidharma’s “seeing one’s own mind as one’s Buddha,” Daoxin’s “Buddha is the mind. Outside of the mind, there is no Buddha,” and Huineng’s “mind is Buddha and Buddha is mind” serve as the “Self-power” paradigms for the late generations to follow; everything starts from the mind; so, one should work on the mind to attain Buddha-hood.

On the other hand, Pure Land’s philosophy and practices emphasize on the “Other-Power” or saving powers of Amitâbha Buddha 阿彌陀佛. Namely, one must surrender oneself to the saving grace of Amitâbha Buddha. According to the *Treatise of Ten Questions Concerning the Pure Land*,³³ Zhiyi 智顓(538-597) defined “Other-Power” that if one’s vows to take rebirth in the Pure Land accord with Amitâbha Buddha’s vows of rescuing sentient beings, then one will be reborn in the Pure Land.³⁴ Theoretically, knowing sentient beings who used to attach to duality of good-bad, pure-impure, and others, Amitâbha Buddha (out of his compassion) made the vows to create a Pure Land (which provides a favorable condition for them to practice and achieve Buddha-hood) for them to rely on, instead of letting them falling down into the lower realms of existences (due to their attachments to the impurities).³⁵ Also, the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*³⁶ states, “If a man practices *nian fo* Samadhi with Bodhi-mind, all the devils and various hindrances pass by without causing him any trouble.”³⁷ Dharma Teacher Lianchi Zhuhong 蓮池祿宏 (1535-1615) said, “If people are willing to recite the words ‘Amitâbha Buddha’, then

³² Ferguson, *Zen’s Chinese*, 89.

³³ *Jingtu shiyi lun* 淨土十疑論, T no. 1961, 47.

³⁴ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 156.

³⁵ Lower realms of existence are hell, animal, and hungry ghost. Attachments to the impurities are sexuality, money, or power which may cause them creating bad karma for falling down to the lower realms.

³⁶ *Da fangguang fo huayan jing* 大方廣佛華嚴經, T no. 279, 10.

³⁷ Hsiao Inagaki, trans. *Tao-Cho’s An Le Chi: Introduction and translation from Chinese*, p 143.

it will surpass all the roots of goodness.”³⁸ That is, if one recites the Buddha’s name to take rebirth in the Pure Land, one will eventually become a Buddha who will endow with all merits and wisdom. Dharma teacher Gushan Zhiyuan 孤山智圓 (967~1022) said, “To seek birth in the Pure Land is to depend on ‘Other Power.’”³⁹ Namely, one could not create one’s Pure Land, but one could take rebirth in Buddha’s land by relying on the Buddha’s power. In short, the Pure Land advocates emphasize that one should rely on the Buddha’s power (other’s power) to escape the rebirth cycle.

Second, the Chan practitioners highlighted the importance of living at the present moment. For instance, a monk asked Hangzhou Tianlong 航洲天隆 (n.d), “How can one escape the three realms?” Tianlong replied, “Where are you right at this moment?”⁴⁰ Namely, Tianlong reminded the monk that you should live fully and face reality at the present moment instead of running away from them (three realms). After seeing a flock of wild geese flying overhead, Mazu asked Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (749-814) wherein they were. When Baizhang replied that the birds had flown away, Mazu then twisted Baizhang’s nose so hard that he cried out to awaken of the principle of living at present moment.⁴¹ Namely, Mazu wanted to teach Baizhang that instead of looking outwardly (to the flying birds) one should look inwardly (to the air through the nose which nourishes life). Here, both Tianlong and Mazu wanted their followers to live at the present moment internally, neither seeking to escape from the three realms nor letting the mind chase after wild birds on the sky.

Conversely, the Pure Land school encourages practitioners to seek rebirth in the Pure Land after death as a path of escaping from the vicious karma and rebirth cycle. For example, it

³⁸ Thomas Cleary J.C, trans. *Pure Land Pure Mind: the Buddhism of Masters Zhuhung and Zungpen* (New York, San Francisco, Toronto: Corporation of the Buddha Education Foundation, 1994), 161.

³⁹ Cleary, *Pure Land Pure Mind*, 161

⁴⁰ Ferguson, *Zen’s Chinese*, 132.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 77.

said that we should give thanks to Amitâbha Buddha. Why is that? Our parents, friends, the kings of humans, and *devas* can not save and bring us out of the sea of suffering. We can escape from the sea of suffering only because of Amitâbha Buddha's vows of delivering sentient beings to his Pure Land.⁴² *The Essential gate for Contemplating the Pure Land*⁴³ mentions, "For sentient beings in the last age, the Pure Land is the essential road out of birth and death and the boat to go across the ocean of birth and death."⁴⁴ By believing in the latter age notion, Pure Land followers have urgency that only Pure Land method can help them to cross the sea of birth and death. For example, the *Peace and Bliss Collections*⁴⁵ states:

...For this reason, the Mahâsattva Vaidehî pitied people of the Latter Age of the five defilements, including herself... Accordingly, the Great Sage compassionately exhorted her to take refuge in the Land of Utmost Bliss. ...It is only the Pure Land Path that we can enter by making an aspiration in the minds of ordinary people like us.⁴⁶

*The Sûtra on Contemplation of Amitayus*⁴⁷ mentions attaining the lowest grade in the Pure Land; if someone happens to commit the gravest offenses⁴⁸ and sees the hell's visionary sight, and if he recites Amitâbha Buddha's name sincerely for ten times at the moment of death by following the advice of good friends, then he will be reborn in a lotus bud in the Pure Land.⁴⁹ These texts encourage Pure Land believers to rely on Buddha's power to eradicate their karma and to take rebirth in Pure Land after death.

⁴² Cleary, *Pure Land Pure Mind*, 173.

⁴³ *Quanxiu jingtu qieyao* 勸修淨土切要, X no. 1186, 62.

⁴⁴ Cleary, *Pure Land Pure Mind*, 174.

⁴⁵ *An le ji*, 安樂集, T no. 1958, 47.

⁴⁶ Inagaki, *Tao-Cho's An Le Chi*, 136.

⁴⁷ *Fo shou guan wuliang shou fo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經, T no. 365, 12.

⁴⁸ They are killing one's parents and Arhats, shedding the Buddha's blood, and creating the schism within the Sangha.

⁴⁹ T no. 365, 12: 346a12-a22.

Third, Chan masters stress non-duality; namely the pure mind goes beyond the duality of good-bad, pure-impure, and others. For example, in the *Inscribed on the Believing Mind*,⁵⁰ Sengcan 僧璨 (d. 606) wrote, “In the higher realm of True Suchness, there is neither ‘Other’ nor ‘Self.’”⁵¹ That is, the Absolute Truth or the True Suchness goes beyond the concepts of “Self” and “Other.” In the *Platform Sūtra*,⁵² Huineng said, “In this teaching of mine, from the ancient time to the present, all have set up no-thought as the main doctrine, non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis.”⁵³ Namely, his main doctrine, substance, and the basis are non-duality in thought, form, and location respectively. Nanquan Puyuan 南泉普願(748-835) explained the commonality of Dao 道⁵⁴ and Chan 禪 as, “Dao does not belong to knowing or to not-knowing.”⁵⁵ His meaning of Dao goes beyond the mental discrimination. When a monk asked that how one can be in accord with the Dao, Nanyang Huizhong 南陽慧忠(675-775) reminded him that does not think of good or evil. One will personally see Buddha nature.⁵⁶ That is, if one wishes to see one’s own Buddha nature, one should put down the attachment of good and evil. Zhaozhou Congshen 趙州從諗 (778-897) reminded his students, “Attaining the Way is not difficult. Just disdain the choosing.”⁵⁷ Namely, just let go of the mental discrimination and one could attain the Way easily. Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄(d. 866) addressed his congregation, “If you love the sacred and hate the secular, you will float and sink in the sea of birth and death.”⁵⁸ That is, when one still plays around with the discriminative minds of like and dislike, one is

⁵⁰ *Xinxin ming* 信心銘, T no. 2010, 48.

⁵¹ Dumounlin, *Zen Buddhism*, 97.

⁵² *Liuzu dashi fabao tan jing* 六祖大師法寶壇經, T no. 2008, 48.

⁵³ Dumounlin, *Zen Buddhism*, 143.

⁵⁴ It means the way of life.

⁵⁵ Dumounlin, *Zen Buddhism*, 168.

⁵⁶ Ferguson, *Zen’s Chinese*, 53.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁵⁸ Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism*, 195.

bound to the rebirth cycle. In general, since common people are bounded by duality of good-bad, self-other, like-hate, and others, Chan masters liked to lead their adherents to the state of non-dual or ultimate experiences of the mind (i.e. Truth Suchness or Pure Nature).

On the contrary, the Pure Land's doctrine emphasizes the duality of life and locality. For example, the *Buddha's Contemplation Samadhi Sūtra*⁵⁹ states:

His father, the king Śuddhodana, asked the Buddha, "Why do you not recommend to me, your disciple, the practice of meditating on the ultimate virtue of the Buddha's stage, which is identical with true suchness, ultimate reality, or the highest principle of emptiness?" The Buddha answered his father, the king, "The ultimate virtue of the Buddhas is the boundless and profoundly subtle state and is possessed of transcendent faculties and the wisdom of liberation. This is not a state fit to be practiced by ordinary people. So I urge you, the king, to practice the *nian fo* samādhi."⁶⁰

Namely, in this sūtra, the Buddha states explicitly that since ordinary people cannot have the ability to fathom and penetrate the true suchness or non-duality, it is better for them to recite Buddha's name to take the rebirth in the Pure Land first. Then, they will achieve ultimate reality later under the favorable conditions in the Pure Land. Also, the *Vimalakṛti Sūtra*⁶¹ states, "In order to accomplish the [salvation of] sentient beings, Bodhisattvas vow to acquire the Buddha countries. The vow to acquire a Buddha land is not done in empty space."⁶² Namely, Bodhisattva should adorn the Buddha land in a realistic context for living beings to rely on, not in an empty space. In short, since living beings are attached to the dualistic conception of pure and impure land, Śākyamuni Buddha introduces Amitābha Buddha who creates Pure Land for them to rely

⁵⁹ *Fo shou guan fo sanmei hai jing* 佛說觀佛三昧海經, T no. 643, 15.

⁶⁰ Inagaki, *Tao-Cho's An Le Chi*, 141-142.

⁶¹ *Wei mojie suo shuo jing*, 維摩詰所說經, T no. 475, 14.

⁶² John R. Mcrae, trans. *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra*. T no. 475, 14:538a28-538a29.

upon so that they won't fall into the impure land of six realms of existences anymore. Also, Bodhisattvas should build a real and pure land for living beings to rely on.

Fourth, Chan masters emphasize self-liberation which starts from the mind. For example, when Daoxin 道信(580-651) inquired about showing him the gate of liberation, Sengcan asked that who had bounded him; so, when Daoxin replied that no one bound him, Sengcan told him that why did he need to seek liberation?⁶³ Namely, no one ties us except our mental attachment. When seeing Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷(700-790), Tianhuang Daowu 天皇道悟(748-807) asked, “By what method do you reveal liberating wisdom to people?” Shitou replied, “There are no slaves here. From what do you seek liberation?”⁶⁴ That is, since there is no real enslaver, one does not need to be liberated. When a monk asked about how a person can gain freedom, Baizhang replied, “If you attain it at this moment, then you have attained it.”⁶⁵ Namely, liberation is done at the present moment. Generally, being bounded or gaining freedom starts from the mind; if one can control one's mind, one is the owner or creator of one's life (i.e. having liberation from desire or anger). On the contrary, if one lets emotions control one's life, one will be enslaved by those emotions. Namely, one should work on one's self-liberation beginning in the mind, because there is no need for external salvation.

Conversely, the Pure Land's scriptures and the masters advocated one's liberation through the powers of Amitâbha Buddha. For instance, the *Amitâbha Sûtra*⁶⁶ states:

Śāriputra, if there is a good man or good woman who hears spoken 'Amitâbha Buddha' and holds the name, whether for one day, two days, three, four, five days, six days, as long as seven days, with one heart unconfused, when this person approaches the end of

⁶³ Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese*, 24.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁶ *Emi tou jing*, 阿彌陀經, T no. 364, 12.

life, before him will appear Amitâbha Buddha and all the assembly of Holy Ones. When the end comes, his heart is without inversion; in Amitâbha Buddha's Land of Ultimate Bliss he will attain rebirth.⁶⁷

Namely, this sūtra encourages Pure Land believers to rely on Amitâbha Buddha's power to take the rebirth after death by reciting His name. Also, master Tianru Weize 天如惟則 (14th century) said, "It is hard to escape birth and death by following other methods. By cultivating the Buddha's remembrance through recitation of the Buddha's name, it is easy to be liberated from the cycle of birth and death."⁶⁸ That is, one can escape from rebirth cycle only through the salvation of Amitâbha Buddha. Hence, one should recite the Buddha's name to take the future rebirth in Pure Land. Allan Andrews mentions the three characteristics of Pure Land's salvation: seeking spiritual fulfillment only after death; relying on the compassion of Amitâbha Buddha to bestow rebirth upon even those who are incapable of earning it themselves; assuming that virtually everyone is in need of Pure Land salvation; and regarding Amitâbha Buddha as a savior especially committed to the salvation of all human beings whatsoever, including those morally or intellectually deficient.⁶⁹ In short, according to Pure Land believers, without Amitâbha Buddha's salvation, there is no real liberation.

Fifth, there is no serious devotion in Chan school because of the emphasis on the mind. For instant, seeing Niutou Farong 牛頭法融 (594-657) attached to sitting in meditation, Daoxin wrote the word "Buddha" on Farong's meditation seat that caused him terrifying.⁷⁰ Here, Daoxin even wrote the word "Buddha" which was revered by most Buddhists, on his disciple's seat to help him be detached from the form (of seating place and the word 'Buddha'). When a monk

⁶⁷ Ronald Epstein, trans. *The Amitâbha Sūtra* (San Francisco: Buddhist Text Translation Society, 1974).

⁶⁸ Cleary, *Pure Land Pure Mind*, 160.

⁶⁹ Allan A. Andrews, "Lay and Monastic Forms of Pure Land Devotionalism Typology and History," *Numen* 40, no. 1 (1993): 19.

⁷⁰ Ferguson, *Zen's Chinese*, 33.

asked, “How one could become a Buddha,” Nanyang Huizhong (675-775) responded, “He should cast off the attachment to Buddha and all beings.”⁷¹ Namely, even the concept of “Buddha” should be discarded in order to achieve the enlightenment. A famous Chan story relates to Danxia Tianran’s 丹霞天然(739-824) burning the wooden Buddha’s statues that showed no reverence of the idol in Chan tradition.⁷² He also said that one just recognizes Śākyamuni as an ordinary person, and one should see for oneself.⁷³ Here, looking within one’s mind is more important than worshipping the wooden Buddha statue or even Śākyamuni Buddha. Base on the conception of “mind is Buddha” and “Buddha is mind,” Chan masters reminded their students that they should trust themselves, not others. Therefore, there is no serious requirement of devotion in Chan school.

On the other hand, Pure Land’s doctrine requires its practitioners’ devotion to Buddha and his Pure Land greatly. There are four kinds of approaches methodologically and psychologically: to think of the Buddha as fully enlightened and follow his moral model; to call upon the Buddha’s name because it contains innumerable merits; to call upon the Buddha’s name because of his saving power and the last resort for liberating beings from the worldly sufferings; and to recite Buddha’s name with single-mind.⁷⁴ For example, a gatha in the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sūtra* 無量壽經 says, “If a person hears the virtuous name of Amitâbha, praises him with joy and wholeheartedly takes refuge. Even but a single thought-moment, he gains the great benefit.”⁷⁵ The *Moon Matrix Section of The Great Assembly Sūtra*⁷⁶ states, “Buddhas Tathāgatas have innumerable names; some are general and some are specific. If sentient beings

⁷¹ Ferguson, *Zen’s Chinese*, 53.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 111.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁷⁴ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 159-161.

⁷⁵ Yoshifumi Ueda, ed. *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pureland Way*, trans. Shinran’s Kyogyoshinsho, vol. 1 (Kyoto: Shin Buddhism Translation Series, Hongwanji International Center, 1983), 100.

⁷⁶ *Da ji jing, Yuezang fe*, 大集經 (月藏分), T no. 397, 13: 373c13.

recite them with singleness of heart, their hindrances are removed, and they gain benefit; they never fail to be reborn in the presence of the Buddhas.”⁷⁷ In short, having strong devotion in Amitâbha Buddha, Pure Land believers can gain those four benefits.

Sixth, Chan tradition follows some techniques such as contemplation of *gong an*,⁷⁸ *Silent Illumination*, and others. A *gong an* is a story, dialogue, question, or statement in the history of Chan Buddhism; it generally contains aspects that are inaccessible to rational understanding, yet may be accessible to intuition. For example, there is a case of number twenty-three of the *The Gateless Gate*,⁷⁹ a *gong an* relates to Huineng questioning Huiming 慧明,⁸⁰ "Without thinking of good or evil, show me your original face before your mother and father were born." In a case number eighteen of the *The Gateless Gate* as well as case number twelve of the *Blue Cliff Record*,⁸¹ a monk asked Dongshan Shouchu 洞山守初(910-990), "What is Buddha?" Dongshan said, "Three pounds of flax." The *Silent Illumination* style of Chan began with Hongzhi Zhengjiao 宏智正覺 (1091-1157) of the Caodong house 曹洞宗. *Silent Illumination* is the method of illuminating the mind through quiescent sitting. This practice contains some elements of the earlier *Samatha-Vipassana* practice of the Theravāda and is also closely related to the Chan practice of just sitting. The stages of *Silent Illumination* may be described as: entering the practice through "just sitting" in a relaxed manner; body and mind becoming one, and there is no distinct body sense; one is united with the environment; the mind is bright and spacious, silence

⁷⁷ Inagaki, *Tao Cho's An Le Chi*, 135.

⁷⁸ 公案.

⁷⁹ *Wu men guan* 無門關 is a collection of 48 Chan *gong ans* which were compiled in the early 13th century. T no. 2005, 48.

⁸⁰ According to the *Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sūtra*, Huiming was a coarse-natured man whose lay name had been Chen, had formerly been a fourth class military official. (Xuan Hua, *Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sūtra: with the commentary of Tripitaka Master Xuan Hua* (Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2002), 103.)

⁸¹ *Bi yan lu*, 碧巖錄 is a collection of Chan *gong ans* which were originally compiled in China during the Song dynasty 宋朝 (960-1279). T no. 2003, 48: 140a.

and illumination become simultaneous. In short, these techniques were the means for Chan practitioners to realize their pure nature.

On the contrary, Pure Land practice takes different approaches such as reciting Buddha's name, contemplation of the Buddha's or Bodhisattva's great virtues, recitation of the sūtra, and veneration of Buddhas' and Bodhisattvas' names.⁸² For example, in the Amitâbha Sūtra, Śākyamuni Buddha encouraged people that if anyone recites Amitâbha Buddha's name sincerely from one day to seven days, he would be reborn in the Pure Land of this Buddha.⁸³ There are sixteen vivid techniques of visual contemplations of Amitâbha Buddha, *Avalokiteśvara* Bodhisattva, *Mahāsthāma* Bodhisattva, and others in *The Sūtra on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Lifespan*.⁸⁴ In general, these methods assist believers to pacify the mind and take the rebirth in Pure Land.

Seventh, there is no vow in Chan tradition, because there is no need to attach to the form. For example, once Master Guishan Lingyou 澚山靈祐(771-853) taught the assembly, "After I die I will become an ox at the foot of this mountain. ... If you call me an ox, I will be a monk of Guishan."⁸⁶ Namely, being a monk or even an ox is not very important to him. Also, since Chan deals with present moment, there is no need to make any vow for future inclination. For instance, Baiyun Shouduan 白雲守端(1025-1072) said that while Śākyamuni Buddha taught Buddhists to make four great vows (to save living beings, to cut off defilement, to study dharma, and to embody Buddhadharma), he also made four differences vows to enjoy the present moment,

⁸² *Amitâbha Sūtra's* encouragement of recitation of Buddha's name, the *Sūtra of Meditation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life* (T no. 365, 12.), etc.

⁸³ Ronald Epstein, trans. *Amitâbha Sūtra* (San Francisco: Buddhist Text Translation Society, 1974).

⁸⁴ J. Takakusu, trans. *The Sūtra on the Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Lifespan*, ed. Richard St. Clair. http://www.nalanda-university.com/buddhist-ayurveda-encyclopedia/sutra_sutta_jing_buddhist_scripture.htm.

⁸⁵ Ch. *Fo shuo guan wuliang shou fo jing* 佛說觀無量壽佛經, T no. 365, 12.

⁸⁶ Tenzo kyokun, *Cooking Zen: Instructions for the Tenzo by Eihei Dogen Zenji*, trans. Yasuda Joshu Dainen roshi and Anzan Hoshin roshi (Great Matter Publications, 1996).

“When I’m hungry, I eat; when it’s cold, I put on more clothes; when I’m tired, I stretch out and sleep; and when it gets warm, I like to find a cool breeze.”⁸⁷ That is, he just liked to enjoy his present moment. Since Chan teachings and techniques are the paths to attain Buddhahood gradually and naturally in this world, there is no need to make any vow even though some of them might have taken some forms of Mahāyāna vows such as the Bodhisattva vows individually.

In opposition, making the vows to be reborn in Amitābha Buddha’s Pure Land is one of the three essential principles.⁸⁸ Pure Land master Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭(1599-1655) said that one could be reborn in the Pure Land depending on the degree of the vows’ seriousness.⁸⁹ According to him, even if one recites Buddha’s name single-mindedly and firmly, one could not be reborn in the Pure Land without having firm faith and vows, except by obtaining the merits and blessings of the human and celestial realms.⁹¹ The Amitābha Sūtra 阿彌陀經⁹² encourages people to make the vow to be reborn in the Pure Land, “Therefore, Śāriputra, all good men and good women, if they are among those who have faith, should make the vow, 'I will be born in that country.’”⁹³ A part in the last chapter of *Avatamsaka Sūtra* explains that after passing away, one could not bring anything to next life except the vows which might guide the intermediate being to be reborn in the Pure Land.⁹⁴ However, according to Pure Land’s doctrine, making the

⁸⁷ Ferguson, *Zen’s Chinese*, 398.

⁸⁸ Having the Faith, making the Vows, and doing the Recitation of Buddha’s names.

⁸⁹ There are nine grading classes of rebirth in Pure Land.

⁹⁰ Thich Thien Tam, *Buddhism of Wisdom and Faith*, trans. and ed. the Van Hien Study Group (New York, San Francisco, Toronto: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1994), 97.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 97-99.

⁹² T no. 364, 12.

⁹³ Ronald Epstein, trans. *Amitābha Sūtra*.

⁹⁴ Chihmann, trans. *The Ten Great Vows of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra*. Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc. http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/samantabhadra.pdf.

vows to be reborn in the Pure Land does not mean to run away from the *Samsara* world⁹⁵ and ignore others' sufferings; ideally, one makes the vows to seek rebirth in Pure Land for attaining enlightenment; afterward, one will return to the *Samsara* world as an enlightened being who endows with complete characteristics of wisdom, Samadhi, moral, and expedient means to rescue others.⁹⁶ If one does not make any vow, one may not take rebirth in the Pure Land because it does not accord with Amitâbha Buddha's vows of creating Pure Land. In short, making the vows to take rebirth in Pure Land is one of the most essential practices of Pure Land believers.

In addition, early Northern Chan texts criticized people who practiced the *nian fo* technique to attain a vision of the Buddha such as the *Treatise on the Transcendence of Cognition*⁹⁷ or *The Important Treatise of Cultivating The Mind*,⁹⁸ which attributed to the *Ox-head* 牛頭 sect and fifth Chan patriarch Hongren 弘忍 (601-674), respectively.⁹⁹ Similarly, in *Chronicle of the Laṅkāvatāra Masters*,¹⁰⁰ when some monks asked how to have an understanding of Dharma's characteristics and to purify the mind, Daoxin replied, "Not contemplating the Buddha,... Just allow things flowing naturally." Namely, one just needs to live with the present moment fully. When some monks asked him if they need to turn their face to the West of Amitâbha Buddha before they pass away or not, he replied, "If you understand that the mind originally neither rise nor pass away, that it is ultimately pure, then it is the pure Buddha's

⁹⁵ Samsāra (Sanskrit: संसार) is the endless cycle of suffering caused by birth, death and rebirth (i.e. reincarnation) within Buddhism, Bön, Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism and other related religions.

⁹⁶ Thich Thien Tam, *Buddhist Wisdom*, 106.

⁹⁷ *Jue guan lun* 絕觀論. This text was mentioned in the 'Record of the Axiom Mirror' *Zong jing lu* 宗鏡錄, section T no. 2016, 48:0941a25.

⁹⁸ *Xiuxin yao lun* 修心要論. This text was mentioned in the first book of the 'Treatise of Greatest Supreme Vehicle' *Zui shang cheng lun* 最上乘論, T no. 2011, 48: 377a18.

⁹⁹ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," 302.

¹⁰⁰ *Leng jia shizi ji* 楞伽師資記, T no. 2837, 85.

land. There is no need to face to the West.”¹⁰¹ That is, the Pure Land will appear if the mind is pure; there is no need to face to the West (of Amitâbha Buddha’s Pure Land). Generally, Chan is monistic, because of its requirements of looking into the non-duality of Self and Reality, rather than seeking for an external Amitâbha Buddha and his Pure Land. It is also speculative, because of its approach of seeing into one’s self nature. In the *Platform Sūtra*, Huineng criticized the Pure Land devotees, “If inside and outside are clear, this will be no different from the Western Land.”¹⁰² Namely, if the mind is pure and clear, the Eastern land (rebirth cycle) and the Western land (Pure Land) are the same. “The sūtras say to take refuge in the Buddha within you; they do not say to rely on other Buddha.”¹⁰³ That is, one should take refuge within one’s Buddha nature, not to external Buddha.

In responses to these Chan criticizes, Pure Land master Cimin Huiji 慈愍慧日 (680-748) counterattacked with many critiques about Chan monks’ faults while he was staying in *Guangzhou* 廣州 of Southern China after spending almost twenty years in India and receiving *Avalokiteśvara*’s revelation of the Pure Land. In general, David Chappell lists twelve main criticisms of Huiji to Chan monks.¹⁰⁴ Generally, Huiji pointed out that Chan practitioners had violated the dialectic balance inherent in the *Perfection of Wisdom* tradition of Buddhism: although one aware that there are neither good nor bad, all things are ultimately empty, and there is nothing to be achieved, one should practice conventional Buddhism for the sake of others; even one may not practice conventional Buddhism, one inwardly dwells in the highest level of achievement just short of Buddhahood.¹⁰⁵ His arguments were echoed by Guishan Lingyou in

¹⁰¹ Sharf, “On Pure Land Buddhism,” 303.

¹⁰² Yampolsky, *The Platform*, 159.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 146.

¹⁰⁴ David W. Chappell, “From Dispute to Dual Cultivation: Pure Land Responses To Chan Critics,” in *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. Peter Gregory (The Kuroda Institute, 1986), 173-174.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 187.

Guishan's *Admonishing Stick*¹⁰⁶ text which admonished Chan monks as arrogant, undisciplined, and uninformed people.¹⁰⁷

Instead of having aggressive attacks on Chan practitioners as Huiji, Feixi 飛錫 (n.d., active 740-780) pointed out that Chan monks who rejected and understated the religious activities and moral practices are in danger of reaping future retribution.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, he reconciled the differences between these two traditions by pointing out that people have the potential to achieve to Buddhahood, but their approaches are different because of their faculties and other conditions.

In general, these are the differences in theory and practice of Chan and Pure Land schools. The Buddha's intention was to provide his expedient teachings according to each sentient being's potential that is why there were many different teachings and practices which the later masters divided into many subcategories such as Mahāyāna, Theravāda, Chan, Pure Land schools, and others. These discriminations created unnecessary conflict and argument among Buddhist schools and practices such as Chan and Pure Land. Therefore, in order to reconcile the drift between these two schools, some masters from both schools advocated the syncretism of them. Before discussing the syncretistic works of these two schools' masters, let's define the meaning of syncretism. By definition, syncretism always contains truth-claims or insight gained from the preceded elements which makes it possible to compare, combine, and interchange elements from tradition.¹⁰⁹ That is why the masters of both schools compared and combined the interchange elements of Chan and Pure Land schools in order to assist practitioners with

¹⁰⁶ *Guishan jing ce* 滄山警策. This text is in the *Guishan jing ce zhu* 滄山警策註, X no. 1239, 63:224b.

¹⁰⁷ X no. 1239, 63:225b10-24.

¹⁰⁸ Chappell, "From Dispute," 190.

¹⁰⁹ Carsten Colpe, "Syncretism [First Edition]." *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Lindsay Jones. Vol. 13. 2nd ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 8933. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Gale. University of the West. (accessed November 5, 2009).

attaining ultimate truth of either recognizing one's own nature or taking rebirth in Pure Land for the purpose of achieving Buddhahood. For example, in the *Fundamental Expedient Teachings for Attaining Enlightenment Through Pacifying the Mind*, Daoxin (580-651)¹¹⁰ used the *Samadhi of Oneness or Reciting the Buddha's names* to calm the mind, "...When their thoughts are continuously fixed on the Buddha, they can see in their minds all Buddhas of the past, present, and future."¹¹¹ Later on, Hongren adopted his master's contemplating the Buddha method to train his disciples, especially the beginners. In *The Important Treatise of Cultivating the Mind*,¹¹² Hongren said, "Those who just begin to learn meditation can follow the method of meditation in *The Contemplation Sūtra*."¹¹³ Afterward, some of Hongren's disciples practiced and developed the method of reciting Buddha's name as follows: Fachi 法持(635-702);¹¹⁴ Zhishen 智誥 (609-702);¹¹⁵ Zhishen's disciple Chuji 處寂;¹¹⁶ the founder of Jingzhong 淨眾 school, Chuji's disciple Wuxiang 無相;¹¹⁷ Wuxiang's dharma brother Chengyuan 承遠¹¹⁸ who taught *nian fo* Samadhi in Cimin tradition and built Amitâbha Terrace 彌陀臺; and Chengyuan's disciple Fazhao 法照¹¹⁹ who was well known for creating five-tones *nian fo*, author of many Pure Land texts, and built Sanctuary Facing the Western Pure Land 西方道場 on Mount Lu 廬山 in which he entered Samadhi and saw an old monk attending Amitâbha Buddha in the Pure Land.¹²⁰ In the *Great Various Treatise of Perfect Enlightened Sūtra*,¹²¹ Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰 宗密(780-841)

¹¹⁰ Considered as fourth patriarch in Zen school.

¹¹¹ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 62.

¹¹² Ch. *Xiuxin yao lun* 修心要論.

¹¹³ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 64.

¹¹⁴ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," 306.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 307.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 308.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ *Yuanjiao jing da shu chao*, 圓覺經大疏鈔, X no. 245, 09.

mentioned Hongren's disciple Xuanshen 宣什 as the founder of the *nian fo* Chan lineage of Southern Mountain,¹²² *nian fo* Chan school of the monk Wei of Guozhou 果州未和上, Yunyu of Langzhou 閩州蘊玉, and a nun Yicheng of Xiangru 相如尼一乘.¹²³ Also, in the *Treatise of Contemplating the Mind*¹²⁴ and *Gateway of unborn Upaya in the Mahāyāna*,¹²⁵ Shenxiu 神秀(605?-706) mentioned the differences between the empty recitation of Buddha's name and true contemplation and instruction of *nian fo* within the precept ceremony, respectively.¹²⁶ After explaining seven gates of Chan, *The Contemplated Gateway of Bodhidharma Chan Master*¹²⁷ discussed in detail the ten kinds of merit of reciting the Buddha's name aloud.¹²⁸ Also, according to Robert Sharf, many Dunhuang's 敦煌 manuscripts contained the writing of encouragement of *nian fo* practice that prevailed during seventh and eighth centuries.¹²⁹

In general, prior to actual Chan-Pure Land syncretism, there were three characteristics of early Chan practice of reciting Buddha's name: it just used the word "Buddha" for recitation, not much devotion in any particular Buddha; it was self-powered practice neither relying any saving grace of Buddha nor seeking rebirth in Pure Land; and it was used as a skillful mean to pacify the mind.¹³⁰ After Tang persecution of Buddhism in 845, most popular schools such as Avataṃsaka school 華嚴宗 and *Three Treatise school* 三論宗 lost their vitality, except Chan and Pure Land schools because of their focus on the practice and lesser reliance upon the sūtras.¹³¹ These conditions fertilized the syncretism of the Chan and Pure Land, as the *The Five Expedient*

¹²² Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," 308.

¹²³ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 67-69.

¹²⁴ *Guanxin lun* 觀心論, T no. 2833, 85.

¹²⁵ *Dacheng wusheng fangbian men* 大乘無生方便門, T no. 2834, 85.

¹²⁶ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," 304-305.

¹²⁷ *Damo chanshi guan men*, 達摩禪師觀門, T no. 2832, 85.

¹²⁸ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," 305-306.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹³⁰ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 71.

¹³¹ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 2.

*Gateway to Recite Buddha's Name*¹³² had implemented during the eight century.¹³³ This text gave five basic principles that combined the multidimensional views of many different schools such as *Lotus school* 法華宗, *Tiantai school* 天台宗, *Huayan school* 華嚴宗, and others which paved the way for reconciliation between Chan and Pure Land schools later on.¹³⁴ Specifically, it provided five kinds of Chan and five methods of *nian fo* Samadhi.¹³⁵ The five kinds of Chan are: freezing the mind Chan; subduing the mind Chan; true essence Chan; expedient methods for conforming to circumstances Chan; and eliminating the distinctions of the two extremes Chan. The first and second relate contemplating an image which are similar to that of traditional *nian fo* practice. The third represents realizing the true nature of things as empty. The four assists practitioners returning from emptiness to enter the realm of temporary existence. The fifth transcends the two extreme of emptiness and expediency.¹³⁶

In addition, Zhiyan 智儼(602-668), second Huayan patriarch, classified *nian fo* Samadhi into five types: calling the Buddha's name to attain rebirth in the Pure Land; visualizing the form of Buddha to eradicate bad karma; realizing that all mental perception are mind-only; transcending both the mind and its objects of perception; and the perfect understanding of nature origination.¹³⁷ The first notion of reciting the Buddha's name to incline for taking rebirth in Pure Land belongs to the Shanxi Pure Land 山西淨土 movement of Tanluan 曇鸞(476-542), Daochao 道綽 (562-645), and Shandao 善導 (613-681). The second involving visualization of Buddha and Pure Land relates to Shandao's approach. The third method prevents the harmful

¹³² *Wu fangbian nianfo men* 五方便念佛門, T no. 1962, 47:81c23.

¹³³ Chappell, "From Dispute," 179.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹³⁵ Chappell does not list the five types of *nian fo*; he just mentions that they are in the expanded version of the text; he just makes the comparison of the Chan and *nian fo* on page 182.

¹³⁶ Chappell, "From Dispute," 180.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

sluggishness and attachment. The fourth method focuses on the mind and its objects as equally non-substantial. The fifth method goes beyond the state of deep objectless and subjectless meditation to the perfect understanding of natural origination.¹³⁸

The first and second *nian fo* methods (in calming and redirecting the mind by focusing on a Buddha image) partly are in parallel to that of the first two forms of Chan (mentioned in *The Five Expedient Gateway to Recite Buddha's Name*). While the third kind of Chan relies on recognition of the true nature of things as empty, the third *nian fo* method emphasizes understanding all phenomena as mind-only and empty of enduring distinctions. In contrast to the fourth Chan method of returning from emptiness to reenter the expedient manifold phenomena with penetrating understanding, the fourth *nian fo* method brings the attention to the mind and its objects as equally non-substantial. The fifth stage of *nian fo* (one transcends the notions of Nirvana and birth-and-death or mind and its objects), is similar to that of the fifth Chan method (of transcending the two extreme of emptiness and expediency), but their descriptions are different.¹³⁹

In general, these texts present the views that Pure Land and Chan practices are neither opposite nor static religious options, but they are multidimensional and interrelated methods which could be adapted by practitioners depending on their different levels of spiritual developments leading to the Buddhahood.¹⁴⁰ The integration of Pure Land and Chan practices in term of stages of spiritual growth was commonly developed by Tiantai and Huayan schools. For instance, Chengguan 澄觀 (738-820) classified *nian fo* Samadhi into twenty-one types of five

¹³⁸ Chappell, "From Dispute," 182-183.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 182-184.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 192.

categories¹⁴¹ in the chapter on the practice and vows of *Samantabhadra Bodhisattva*¹⁴² from the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*.¹⁴³ However, later on Guifeng Zongmi 圭峰 宗密 (780-841) reworked Chengguan's five categories into four groups¹⁴⁴ to show that there are not merely lists of various kinds of *nian fo*, but they represent ascending levels of spiritual growth.¹⁴⁵ He also defined three aspects of the phenomenal minds¹⁴⁶ which are in parallel with three phenomenal aspects of *nian fo*.¹⁴⁷ All are unified in the *nian fo* on the absolute which is similar goal of Chan. Moreover, he categorized Chan into three convenient groups: stopping of the false mind and cultivation of the mind; complete emptying; and direct revelation of the mind-nature.¹⁴⁸ Later, Yanshou used Zongmi's idea to classify all of Buddhism and other dual practices: the teaching of form which relates to historical practice of Pure Land; the teaching of emptiness which relates to the iconoclastic Chan; and the teaching of true nature which includes both practices.¹⁴⁹

Also, as discussed above, Feixi tried to settle the sectarian rivalry between these two schools by criticizing both Chan and Pure Land thinkers' rejection and labeling each other; his argument was that all sentient beings have potential to become Buddha, but they have not yet

¹⁴¹ Recitation of the Buddha's name in reference to an externally perceived Buddha and Pure Land; Mind-only *nian fo*; extinction of both mind and the object of its visualization as non-substantial; the non-obstruction of the mind and its object of perception based on mutual interpenetration, and the mutual embrace of principle and phenomena, existence and emptiness; and the inexhaustible identity of oneself with all things. (Chappell, "From Dispute," 185.)

¹⁴² *Puxian pusa* 普賢菩薩 meaning *Universal Worthy*, is a Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism associated with Buddhist practice and meditation. Together with Śākyamuni Buddha and fellow bodhisattva Manjusri he forms the *Śākyamuni trinity* in Buddhism. He is the patron of the *Lotus Sūtra* and, according to the *Avatamsaka Sūtra*, made the ten great vows which are the basis of a bodhisattva. In China he is associated with action, whereas the bodhisattva Manjusri is associated with wisdom. In Japan this bodhisattva is often worshipped by the Tendai and Shingon sects, and as the protector of the *Lotus Sūtra* by the Nichiren sect.

¹⁴³ T no. 279, 10.

¹⁴⁴ Vocally chanting the Buddha's name; visualizing the form of Buddha as an image in a painting; visualizing the Buddha's major and minor marks to eradicate bad karma; and contemplating of the absolute. (Chappell, "From Dispute," 185-186.)

¹⁴⁵ Chappell, "From Dispute," 185-186.

¹⁴⁶ Physical mind, object-perceiving mind, and accumulating and general mind. (Chappell, "From Dispute," 186.)

¹⁴⁷ Chappell, "From Dispute," 186.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 186-187.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

achieved that ultimate stage. He also provided the mutual interdependent features of these dialectic schools in term of two poles: Chan as principle, tranquility, and vipassana (無念); Pure Land as special practice, movement, and samatha (*nian fo*).¹⁵⁰

During the Song dynasty 宋朝(960-1279), Yongming Yanshou (904-975) (considered the third patriarch of the Fayuan lineage of Chan and the six patriarch of the Lotus Society in ‘*The Record Integration Of Buddha and Patriarch Fo zu tong ji 佛祖統紀*’),¹⁵¹ laid out the Chan-Pure Land syncretistic foundation for the later Chinese Buddhism to modern time. There were three reasons for Yanshou aligning Chan and Pure Land together. First, his approach was nonsectarian toward all Buddhist systems’ thoughts. Second, there were strong antagonism between Chan and Pure Land during his time; namely, Pure Land believers criticized Chan followers for being arrogant and undisciplined because of rejecting sūtras and vinaya whereas the Chan people looked down the Pure Land people as simple-minded believers of the external instead of the self-nature. Third, during his time, due to the socio-political situations of turbulences and chaos, people called out instant salvation instead of following rigid Chan.¹⁵² Setting as an example for others to combine many different techniques, Yanshou did one hundred and eight types of Buddhist practices of medieval monastic observances daily as described in *The Self Diary Record of the Chan Master Zhijue*.¹⁵³¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, in order to accomplish the syncretistic task, Yanshou advocated One-mind *nian fo* which connected with the Chan principle of “Seeing into One Own Nature” or “Having pure mind is attaining pure land,” as the *Vimalakirti Sūtra* states, “If one desires to purify the Buddha-land, one should first purify one’s Mind; if the Mind

¹⁵⁰ Chappell, “From Dispute,” 191.

¹⁵¹ Sharf, “On Pure Land Buddhism,” 312.

¹⁵² Shih, *The Syncretism*, 153-154.

¹⁵³ *Zhijue chanshi zixing lu*, 智覺禪師自行錄, X no. 1232, 63.

¹⁵⁴ Sharf, “On Pure Land Buddhism,” 312.

is purified, the Buddha-land is also purified.”¹⁵⁵ Applying the Chan view, Yanshou advocated the principle of mind-only Pure Land 唯心淨土; namely Pure Land exists within a pure mind which detaches from external circumstances, and if one awakens from the mind, one is reborn into the Pure Land of Mind-only.¹⁵⁶ Yanshou also utilized the molding analogy from the *Baozang lun* 寶藏論¹⁵⁷ to elaborate his *nian fo* practice.¹⁵⁸ In *Wangsheng lun* 往生論,¹⁵⁹ Yanshou explained that if sentient beings living in the suffering states know how to employ *nian fo* technique and make the vow to be reborn in the Pure Land, they will obtain the rebirth on that land, and they will return to sentient beings’ realms to teach and save them.¹⁶⁰ Also, due to the influences of the doctrines of the *Chan school* 禪宗, *Huayan school* 華嚴宗, and *Faxiang school* 法相宗, Yanshou’s Pure Land viewed in three aspects: the *nian fo* was a training method for internal realization; the easy approach of *nian fo* and the favorable physical existence of Pure Land facilitating one to practice the Dharma; and theory and practice internally and externally are not contradictory due to the non-duality of the two truths.¹⁶¹

In addition, Yanshou argued that only when one could move from Conventional Truth of duality to the Ultimate Truth of emptiness and vice versa, one could gain true understanding of the two Truths. Those attached to the Conventional Truth of duality might be trapped in worldly matters; their practices might bring only the worldly virtues and merits. Also, those attached to the Ultimate Truth of emptiness could not be able to recognize the Conventional Truth of duality; then their practices might not have relevant or realistic experiences. Even Bodhisattvas

¹⁵⁵ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 147.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 146-147.

¹⁵⁷ T no. 1857, 45:143b15.

¹⁵⁸ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 147.

¹⁵⁹ I could not find it number exactly, but it was mentioned in many different sources: *Jingtu lun*, 淨土論 (No. 1963) 0084c09 - 0085a13; 淨土論 (No. 1963) 0089b02 - 0089c21; and others.

¹⁶⁰ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 152.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

know that Pure Land is ultimately empty, but they still practice One-mind *nian fo* to seek the rebirth on the Pure Land of the Conventional Truth¹⁶² so that they can attain the Ultimate Truth of Buddha-hood under the favorable conditions of the Pure Land.¹⁶³ Generally, Yanshou's syncretism brought a positive impact on Chinese Buddhism. It redirected Chan followers to avert the trap in quietism, intellectualism, and moral degeneracy. It also assisted Pure Land practitioners to use *nian fo* as either returning oneself nature of Amitâbha Buddha or seeking the rebirth in Pure Land.¹⁶⁴

In addition, according to Sharf, during Song dynasty, many Chan texts contained *nian fo* in various ritual settings such as the *Chanyuan Qinggui* 禪苑清規¹⁶⁵ which used *nian fo* during pre-meal or death ceremony for the monk, and the *Ruzhong riyong Qinggui* 入眾日用清規¹⁶⁶ which incorporated *nian fo* into minor rituals and pre-meal ceremony.¹⁶⁷ *Pure Rules of Baizhang* 敕修百丈清規¹⁶⁸ included the instructions of *nian fo* for the sick monks to be better and for the deceased monks to be reborn in Pure Land.¹⁶⁹

According to Chappell, Chan and Pure Land became integrated into a unified vision of spiritual growth due to the efforts of Zongmi and Yanshou.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, the early syncretistic trends and Zongmi's and Yanshou's syncretism of Chan and Pure Land left tremendous influential impact on both schools' eminent monks such as Zhongfeng Mingben 中峰明本(1262-1323),¹⁷¹ Tianru Weize 天如唯則,¹⁷² Lianchi Zhuhong 蓮池祿宏(1535-1615),¹⁷³ Hanshan

¹⁶² The distinction between Impure Land of Samsara and Pure Land of Amitâbha Buddha.

¹⁶³ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 164-165.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 192.

¹⁶⁵ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism", 310.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 311.

¹⁶⁸ T no 2025, 48:1109c17.

¹⁶⁹ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism", 311.

¹⁷⁰ Chappell, "From Dispute," 192.

¹⁷¹ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 175.

Deqing 憨山德清(1546-1623),¹⁷⁴ and others in modern time. Especially, *nian fo gong an* (a byproduct of Chan and Pure Land syncretism) was used prevalently in many Chan monasteries from eleventh century onward. *Gong an* is a short statement provided by the master to train his students for having an insight into reality without analyzing it but contemplating it. For example, when a monk asked that “Does the dog have Buddha nature?” Chan master Zhaozhou replied “No.” The whole conversation is considered as a *gong an*, and the “No” serves as *hua tou* 話頭.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, many monks used the sentence, “Who is doing *nian fo*” to invoke the doubtful mind. Chushan Shaoji 楚山紹奇(1404-1473) explained that one should inquire about the word “Who” in order to recognize that the thought of reciting the Buddha’s name is neither the mind nor the Buddha.¹⁷⁶ In addition, Weize elaborated the outcome of *nian fo gong an* further and named it as Chan of the Pure Land or Pure Land of the Chan; namely, if one’s mind does not separate from the Buddha and vice versa, then one will see the Buddha everywhere and one will perceive Buddha of one’s nature. Afterward, one would exercise one’s great function of compassionate mind to teach and save sentient beings.¹⁷⁷ Hanshan Deqing (1546-1623) also encouraged people to utilize *nian fo gong an* that was similar to meditation on a regular *gong an* or *hua tou*, as it was a proper and safe approach which allowed the innate and bright wisdom to flow forth.¹⁷⁸

Additionally, the syncretism of Chan and Pure Land also greatly impacted on the practices and teachings of many eminent monks through the Qing dynasty 清朝(1644-1912), Republic era (1912-1949), and modern time. For example, a renowned Chan master and an

¹⁷² Shih, *The Syncretism*, 175.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ An eminent monk during Ming dynasty.

¹⁷⁵ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 179.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 180.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 180-181.

¹⁷⁸ Lok To, trans. *Pure Land of The Patriarchs, Excerpt from Master Hanshan’s Dream Roaming*, p. 7.

influential Buddhist teacher of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Xuyun 虛雲(1840-1959), incorporated Chan and Pure Land doctrines in his practices and teachings. Although he emphasized Chan practices, he also did the *nian fo* techniques whenever he was at the Pure Land temples. On one occasion, he encouraged Chan practitioners to read Yongming Yanshou's *Treatise on The Unification of Myriad Goods*¹⁷⁹ and Pure Land followers to read the chapter *Mahàsthàma*¹⁸⁰ in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra¹⁸¹ to recognize the inner reality of Pure Land's self nature.¹⁸² His Dharma heir, Xuanhua 宣化(1918-1995), also emphasized sectarian harmony by combining altogether the practices of Chan, Pure Land, Disciplines, and Teachings. He said that by reciting the Buddha's name, one will attain the "Samadhi of Buddha's mindfulness."¹⁸³

In addition, early syncretistic trends and Zongmi's and Yanshou's syncretism left a great impact not only on monastic communities as discussed above, but also to the lay Buddhist communities starting from late Tang such as "*Society for reciting Buddha's name*" (*nian fo hui* 念佛會), "*Society for Pure Land Practice*" (*Jinghang she* 淨行社), and others.¹⁸⁴

In summary, Pure Land and Chan syncretism has been bringing reconciliation and harmonious spirit within Chinese Buddhism. However, some contemporary scholars reject this notion of syncretism between these two schools. For instance, Robert Sharf lists five points to negate the syncretistic notion that Pure Land does not have a historical lineage, Chan monastic life always involved in *nian fo* practices, and so forth.¹⁸⁵ There are some acceptable claims, except

¹⁷⁹ *Wan shan tong gui ji*, 萬善同歸集, T no. 2017, 48.

¹⁸⁰ T no. 945, 19: 128a21-128b06.

¹⁸¹ *Da foding rulai miyin xiuzheng leyi zhu pusa wan hang shou lengyan jing*, 大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經, T no. 945, 19.

¹⁸² Charles Luk, trans. *Empty Cloud: the autobiography of the Chinese Zen Master: Master Xuyun's Sermon at the Prayer Meeting in Shanghai, December 17, 1952* (Element Books, 1988), 147.

¹⁸³ Dharmamitra, Beta Translation, trans. *Lotus in the Spring Sun: Some Recorded Saying of the Venerable Master Xuanhua* (Kao-Hsiung, Taiwan: Wisdom Source Publishing 1995).

¹⁸⁴ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 183.

¹⁸⁵ Sharf, "On Pure Land Buddhism," 320-321.

the argument that Chan monastic life always involved in *nian fo* practices and the aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land. Actually, there were various options of Chan techniques from which each Chan practitioner might have chosen, such as the distinct meditative techniques of the five “houses”: Guiyang house 潯仰宗 with experience in action; Linji house 臨濟宗 with threefold and fourfold formulas; Caodong house 曹洞宗 with the five ranks; Yunmen house 云門宗 with the one-wood barriers; and Fayan house 法眼宗 with the interpretation of attributes.¹⁸⁶ In addition, after *nian fo* was introduced among Buddhist communities during Song dynasty 宋朝, it was used besides other Chan’s *gong an* or *hua tou* according to each individual choice. In many popular Chan literatures such as the *Blue Cliff Record*¹⁸⁷ and *Gateless Barrier*¹⁸⁸ which were compiled in 1125 and 1228 respectively, there were rarely *nian fo gong an*’s cases. Probably, after Baizhang set up the monastic rules to chant Buddha’s name for the sick and deceased monks or for other special ceremonies, most Chan monasteries followed the suit.¹⁸⁹ However, it does not mean that all Chan monks did *nian fo* seriously, because they might have chosen various Chan techniques according to their branches (of five Chan houses) for themselves while following the monastic schedules to chant *nian fo*. If we read the biographies of eminent Chan monks in the Song, Ming, and Qing dynasties, it is very rare to see some of them specializing in *nian fo* techniques. There are numerous incidents of Chan monks who demystified the Buddha such as the cases of: Daoxin wrote the word “Buddha” on Farong’s meditation seat;¹⁹⁰ Tianran burn the wooden Buddha;¹⁹¹ or Zhaozhou said, “Buddha is affliction.

¹⁸⁶ Dumoulin, *Zen History*, 214-233.

¹⁸⁷ Thomas Cleary, trans. *The Blue Cliff Record*. Compiled by Ch’ung-hsien (Numata Center for Buddhist Translation Research, 1998).

¹⁸⁸ Robert Aitken, trans. *The Gateless Barrier* (subtitle) *The Wu-Men Kuan (Mumonkan)* (Strauss and Giroux, New York: North Point Press/Farrar, 1991).

¹⁸⁹ According to Johnston, this textual Chan rules attributed to Baizhang is contradicted by historical fact. Please see William M. Johnston, *Encyclopedia of monasticism*, vol 1, p. 614.

¹⁹⁰ Ferguson, *Zen’s Chinese*, 33.

Affliction is Buddha.”¹⁹² If they ever venerated or devoted their practices for taking the Pure Land rebirth, they would not have those kinds of sayings or behaviors. Therefore, Sharf’s notion of Chan monastic life always involving in *nian fo* is not entirely true. Also, many Chan masters passed away peacefully while sitting in meditation, even right after their lectures. For example, in *Zen’s Chinese Heritage*, there are at least eleven cases of Chan masters passing away while mostly sitting in meditation or laying down;¹⁹³ there are twenty-eight cases of Chan masters passing away right after giving their last instructions.¹⁹⁴ When Touzi Yiqing 投子義青(1032-1083) was near death, he composed a poem, “As the abbot of two temples, I couldn’t assist the Buddha way. My parting message to you all, don’t go seeking after something.”¹⁹⁵ Namely, right before passing away, he advised practitioners that don’t seek outside (for heaven or Pure Land); just seek within one’s own nature. In another case, Furong Daokai 芙蓉道楷(1043-1118) wrote a poem before he died, “I’m seventy-six years old. My causal existence is now completed. In life I do not favor heaven. In death I don’t fear hell. Hands and body extend beyond the three realms. What stops me from roaming as I please?”¹⁹⁶ That is, after living for seventy-six years on the earth, he recognized his physical causal existence was completed. However, while living he didn’t crave for heaven (how much more seeking for Pure Land), and before death he was not afraid of hell; explicitly, since he neither attached to heaven nor ran away from hell, his mind was free from either having a desire for better rebirth or being terrified of bad destiny; he lived with present moment regardless of his bodily condition. Before leaving his impermanent body, he attained the mental state that his mind extended vastly to the three realms, and he was free to

¹⁹¹ Ferguson, *Zen’s Chinese*, 111.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 138.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 50, 57, 61, 71, 96, 131, 142, 370, 376, 428, and 438.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 100, 107, 110, 116, 158, 161, 164, 187, 189, 196, 200, 203, 234, 283, 308, 312, 332, 340, 362, 364, 388, 403, 422, 428, 432, 436, 446, and 448.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 362.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 388.

take rebirth with any form he liked. Since common people do not know how they came into their mother womb and whereabouts they are going after death, they seek for heaven or Pure Land to secure their better future rebirth (rather than accepting the earthly life in the present and future). In general, most Chan masters did not make any vow or show any inspiration for taking the rebirth in Pure Land. Hence, the claim of Sharf (that Chan monks had aspiration for rebirth in the Pure Land) is practically and scholastically wrong and misleading.

In short, Chan and Pure Land schools were indigenous to Chinese Buddhism. They had been preserving their own unique approaches during many centuries of their existences (from Song dynasty to Republic period). As a result, from time to time they were at odds with one another. However, since being influenced by Chinese holistic approach, the syncretism of these two schools was unavoidable. This conclusion is in agreement with the opinions of other contemporary scholars such as Heng-chin Shih¹⁹⁷ and Chappell¹⁹⁸ who suggested that there was syncretistic process to combine these two schools.

¹⁹⁷ Shih, *The Syncretism*, 192.

¹⁹⁸ Chappell, "From Dispute," 192.

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