

# The Gate of Praise in Vasubandhu's *Sukhāvativyūhopadeśa*

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## *Introduction*

OVER a thousand years, Pure Land Buddhism spread extensively from India to all parts of East Asia. One of the reasons for its great popularity and influence consisted in its special system of practice, especially the so-called *ch'eng-ming* 称名 (Jp. *shōmyō*), the chanting of the holy name of the Buddha Amitābha. In comparison with other practices of a Bodhisattva which are called “difficult practice” (*nangyō* 難行), chanting the Buddha's name is often called “easy practice” (*igyō* 易行), which, as a famous example states, is just like traveling in a ship guided by the Buddha's power, a pleasant journey as compared to walking up a steep path on foot. Due to the simplicity of this practice, Pure Land Buddhism opened the door for laypersons to seek the salvation of the Buddha Amitābha. However, this simplistic dichotomy of easy/difficult practice is frequently misleading, as it implies that everybody can easily attain enlightenment just by chanting the Buddha's name. Of course, the masters of Pure Land Buddhism such as Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262) did not hold such an absurd opinion. For instance, if we read through his masterpiece, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証, we will notice that he repeatedly

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emphasizes true faith as an important precondition for such chanting. This remarkable scholar of the Kamakura period tried to return to the origins of Buddhism as a mind-oriented religion, and his attempt to change the focus from practice itself to its motivation is verified by the number of quotations from authoritative works of Pure Land Buddhism from India, China, and Japan. Of them, one of the most influential treatises forming the backbone of Shinran's particular concept of Pure Land practice is the *Sukhāvativyūhopadeśa* (Ch. *Wu-liang-shou ching yu po-t'i-shê* 無量壽經優波提舍; hereafter SVyU) which is ascribed to Vasubandhu.<sup>1</sup>

This treatise, consisting of a verse text and prose auto-commentary, deals mainly with meditative practices used in order to be born in the Pure Land by the power of Amitābha's compassionate vow. In virtue of its well-systematized description, the treatise has been considered a basic manual for Pure Land practice in general. For instance, in his renowned work, *Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集, Genshin 源信 (942–1017) adopted the framework of the SVyU to explain the nembutsu, i.e., the mindfulness of the Buddha, the central issue of the text. Also Shinran often quotes the SVyU together with its authoritative commentary by T'an-luan 曇鸞 (476–542) in order to clarify that the chanting of the Buddha's name needs to be accompanied by true faith. As these examples suggest, this unique manual of meditation by Vasubandhu has fascinated Pure Land Buddhists in many different periods and cultures. Accordingly, by examining its contents and comparing it with other Pure Land concepts from China and Japan, an interesting picture of the historical and transcultural development of the *ch'eng-ming*-concept emerges.

In spite of its significance, however, few philological attempts have been made to analyze the SVyU due to certain methodological difficulties. First, there is a linguistic problem: The original Sanskrit text of the SVyU is now lost, and its Tibetan translation has not yet been found. It is available for us only in its Chinese translation. Second, for scholars who belong to the tradition of Pure Land Buddhism, its dogmatism is a barrier to the critical approach to this scripture. For instance, even in Yamaguchi's epoch-making monograph of 1963, *Seshin no Jōdoron* 世親の浄土論 (A Study of Vasubandhu's *Sukhāvativyūhopadeśa*), in which the author tries to separate

<sup>1</sup> In the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran argues over Vasubandhu's intention of the term *isshin* 一心 (single-mind) in the initial verse of his SVyU, specifically in connection with the three minds in Amitābha's Eighteenth Vow. Shinran regards this single-mind as being only one cause for birth in the Pure Land. Cf. T. 83, 604a1 ff.

the treatise from its dogmatic context, and to reconsider its philosophical-historical position in the broader context of Indian Buddhism, we can find that he read the text frequently relying on T'an-luan's commentary and Shinran's interpretations on its passages. Third, there is also the more complicated problem of the text's authorship in relation to Frauwallner's hypothesis that there were two persons named Vasubandhu.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, an inquiry into the SVyU is necessarily confronted with these linguistic, dogmatic, and historical problems. Keeping these difficulties in mind, in what follows, I will clarify Vasubandhu's ideas on chanting the Buddha's name by examining a passage relevant to the present theme in the context of Indian Buddhism.

### *Vasubandhu as Commentator on Mahāyāna Sūtras*

In his monograph (1951), through a careful examination of the information concerning the life and dates of Vasubandhu, Frauwallner reaches the striking conclusion that there were two persons of this name, an elder and a younger one. According to his working hypothesis, c. 400–480 C.E. are given as the dates of Vasubandhu the younger, the author of the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (hereafter AKBh), while c. 320–380 C.E. are those for Vasubandhu the elder, who was converted by his elder brother Asaṅga to Mahāyāna and composed numerous Mahāyāna works thereafter.<sup>3</sup>

Frauwallner's hypothesis was reinforced by Schmithausen, who expounded that the *Karmasiddhi*, the *Vimśatikā* and the *Trimśikā* must be attributed to the author of the AKBh, since among these works the "one-layered" mental series of the Sautrāntikas is commonly accepted. According to his criterion, therefore, other works based on the eightfold complex of mental series taught by the Yogacārin (esp. Asaṅga), such as the *Madhyantavibhāṅgabhāṣya* and the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkārabhāṣya* (hereafter MSABh), can only be ascribed to Vasubandhu the elder.

Contrary to Frauwallner-Schmithausen's theoretical reconstruction of the history of Vasubandhu, Korean and Japanese scholars have kept the traditional opinion that the author of the AKBh is identical with the brother of Asaṅga. Most recently, Lee has presented a noteworthy reconsideration of the

<sup>2</sup> Yamaguchi (1963, p. 1) refers to this monograph by Frauwallner, but he expresses neither approval nor disapproval.

<sup>3</sup> For biographies of Vasubandhu and his works, Mejer (1991, pp. 3–13) has added more information to Frauwallner's research.

issue that focuses mainly on the *Vyākhyāyukti* (hereafter VyY) and its close linkage with other works ascribed to Vasubandhu, and has concluded that the VyY, MSABh and *Madhyantavibhāgabhāṣya* can only be attributed to the same author of the AKBh. As for the dates of Vasubandhu, Lee has consented to Ui's opinion, i.e., c. 320–400 C.E.<sup>4</sup>

Although it is beyond the scope of this presentation to comment extensively on the controversy surrounding the authorship problem of Vasubandhu, at least to me, Lee's conclusion is most convincing. However, aside from the authorship of Vasubandhu's independent works dealing with the Abhidharma and Yogācāra, equally problematic is the authorship of the commentarial texts that survive mainly in Chinese translations. Despite their significance for grasping the entirety of Vasubandhu's philosophy, little attention has been paid to this large Chinese corpus because of its linguistic difficulties. The list of Vasubandhu's commentaries on Mahāyāna sutras is as follows:<sup>5</sup>

1. The commentary on the *Pratītyasamutpādādivibhaṅganirdeśasūtra* (Tib. *rTen cing 'brel par 'byung ba dang po dan rnam par dbye ba bshad pa*, P. No. 5496)<sup>6</sup>
2. The *upadeśa* on the *Saddharmaṣūdarikasūtra* (T. 1519 [Tr. Bodhiruci]; T 1520 [Tr. Ratnamati])
3. The commentary on the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (T. 1522 [Tr. Bodhiruci]; *'Phags pa sa bcu'i rnam par bshad pa*, P. No. 5494 [Tr. Mañjuśrīgarbha, Prajñāvarman, Ye-shes sde, Dpal brtsegs])
4. The *upadeśa* on the *Sukhāvativyūha* (T. 1524 [Tr. Bodhiruci])
5. The *upadeśa* on the four *dharmas* of the *Pao ki king* (T. 1526 [Tr. Vimuktisena])
6. The commentary on the *Gayāśīrṣasūtra* (T. 1531 [Tr. Bodhiruci]; Tib. *'Phags pa gaya mgo'i ri shs bya ba'i mdo'i rnam par bshad pa*, P. No. 5492 [Tr. Surendrabodhi, Ye-shes sde])

<sup>4</sup> A crucial point for deciding the date of the author of AKBh relates to the identification of King Vikramāditya. Though Frauwallner identifies the king as Skandhagupta (455–467 C.E.), Lee (2001, p. 61) refers to Anacker as holding a different opinion, that the king is Candragupta II (375–415 C.E.).

<sup>5</sup> See Yamaguchi 1963, pp. 3–14; Sakurabe 1975, p. 99. As Sakurabe comments, there are other commentarial texts ascribed to Vasubandhu, for instance, that on the *Nivānasūtra* (T. 1529), and *Ārya-Bhadracaryāpranīdhānaṭīkā* (P. 5516), but their authorship is still uncertain. Furthermore, although the commentary on the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* is also ascribed to Vasubandhu, the text is a commentary on Asaṅga's commentary on the *Vajracchedikā*. Thus, Sakurabe 1975 does not count it as a direct commentary on a Mahāyāna sutra.

<sup>6</sup> See Muroji 1993.

7. The commentary on the *Viśeṣacintabrahmapariprcchāsūtra* (T. 1532 [Tr. Bodhiruci])
8. The *upadeśa* on the *Dharmacakraparivartasūtra* (T. 1533 [Tr. Vimuktisena])
9. The *upadeśa* on the *San kiu tsou king* (T. 1534 [Tr. Vimuktisena])

In the list above, as Sakurabe (1975) mentions, there are several points to be noted. First of all, of the nine commentaries, five (2, 4, 5, 8, 9) include the word *upadeśa*, as does the SVyU, while three (1,3,6) include *vyākhyā* or *vyākhyāna*. Moreover, all the Chinese texts in the list were translated by two people who were contemporaries in the first half of the sixth century, Bodhiruci (菩提流 (留) 支, n.d.–527) and \*Vimuktisena (Ch. P'i-mu-chinhsien 毘目智仙).<sup>7</sup> Of the two, Bodhiruci is well known through his translations of the *Lankāvataṛasūtra* and *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*. However, it seems strange that he translated only Vasubandhu's commentaries on Mahāyāna sutras, but not his independent works concerning Abhidharma and Yogācāra, which were translated by Paramārtha (Ch. Chên-ti 真諦) and Hsüan-Tsang 玄奘. If, as a traditional description states, this Indian translator, Bodhiruci, belonged to the transmission lineage leading directly from Vasubandhu,<sup>8</sup> why did he not bring Vasubandhu's masterpieces such as the *Trimśikā* to China? Should we consider this Vasubandhu to be a different person from the famous Yogācāra master, once again relying upon Frauwallner's hypothesis? These questions are interesting for understanding the history of the Chinese acceptance of Vasubandhu's thought, but the exploration of these will require another study.<sup>9</sup> An important fact for our present study is, however, that some of the texts he translated have corresponding Sanskrit texts and Tibetan translations. Thus, by using these materials, we can restore some passages and words of Vasubandhu's texts that survive only in Bodhiruci's Chinese translations.<sup>10</sup> A passage we will examine in this presentation is one such case.

<sup>7</sup> For the two translators, see Kamata 1990, pp. 145–52; 164 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Frauwallner 1951, pp. 42 ff.

<sup>9</sup> Ōtake 2003 is one of the most recent attempts to compare Vasubandhu's commentarial texts with his Yogācāra works.

<sup>10</sup> This method was first employed by Sakurabe for determining the Sanskrit term corresponding to *ju-shih-hsiu-hsing* 如實修行 in the SVyU. Cf. Sakurabe 1975. In the same manner, Ōtake 2003 has examined Vasubandhu's commentaries that were translated by Bodhiruci, namely, SPU, SVyU, and the commentary on *Viśeṣacintabrahmapariprcchāsūtra* more comprehensively.

*The Structure of the Sukhāvativyūhopadeśa*

It is still obscure with whom and when the genre of “the commentary on Mahāyāna sūtra” first appeared in the history of Indian Buddhism. Certainly, we know of, for instance, the \**Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (Ch. *Ta-chih-tu-lun* 大智度論) and the \**Daśabhūmikāvibhāṣāsāstra* (Ch. *Shih-chu-p'i-p'o-sha-lun* 十住毘婆沙論), ascribed to Nāgārjuna, and Asaṅga’s commentary on the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, though the authorship of these texts is still under discussion. However, if one restricts the issue to *upadeśa*-style commentaries, the first text to be considered is Asaṅga’s *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, which is also known as the *Prajñāpāramitopadeśāsāstra*. This text consists of homage verses, explanations of the doctrine of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in eight chapters, and closing verses. The *Prajñāpāramitā* doctrine is summarized systematically in eight subjects, namely, three kinds of omniscience, four kinds of practices to become omniscient, and the Buddha’s Dharma body, and these eight are further divided into seventy points. Therefore, a characteristic of the text consists in the systematic summary of a sūtra by employing numbers to categorize the doctrine.

We find the same characteristic in Vasubandhu’s *upadeśa* texts. For instance, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikopadeśa* (hereafter SPU), translated by Bodhiruci, summarizes the contents of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarika* into the following topics: seven sorts of accomplishments of merits of the supreme Dharma (*ch'i-chung-kung-tê-ch'êng-chiu* 七種功德成就), five parts of teachings (*wu-fên-shih-hsien* 五分示現), seven sorts of metaphors (*ch'i-chung-p'i-yü* 七種譬喻), three sorts of equalities (*san-chung-p'in-têng* 三種平等), ten sorts of meanings of supremacy (*shih-wu-shang-yi* 十無上義). In this case, too, numbers are efficiently used in order to classify the contents of a sūtra. In fact, in his VyY, Vasubandhu himself defines *upadeśa*, one type of the Buddha’s twelve sorts of teachings, as follows:

*Upadeśa* is that in which those who see true nature and others (i.e., ordinary people) expose the meaning of a sūtra in accordance with the Dharma. This [*upadeśa*] ascertains the meaning of the [sūtra], and is called *mātrkā*, because [it] is the basis for exposing the meanings of other sūtras [as well]. [It] is also called *abhidharma*

because by correctly exposing the characteristics [of the Dharma], [it] directs [one] to the characteristics of the Dharma.<sup>11</sup>

As its synonym *mātrkā* denotes, *upadeśa* is defined as condensed statements of a sutra's contents, and plays the role of ascertaining its meaning, becoming the basis of expositions of other sutras.<sup>12</sup> The definition is suitable for Asaṅga's *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and Vasubandhu's SPU, both of which summarize the contents of their root sutras by employing numbers of characteristics of the Dharma. Now, turning to our main text, the SVyU, we can find the same format, in the summary of the content of both the Larger and Smaller *Sukhāvativyūhas*, where various merits of the Buddha Amitābha, his Pure Land, and its inhabitants are described as the results of the Buddha's compassionate vows.

In the verses of the SVyU, Vasubandhu poetically describes these characteristics of Pure Land as the vision reflected in the meditative mind of an aspirant for birth in that land: the land is full of illuminating pure light; various kinds of flowers on the lake are in full bloom; the great palace is surrounded by various trees with bells ringing beautiful Dharma-sounds; the Buddha Amitābha sits on a lotus-seat from which people are born as Pure Land inhabitants, who can enjoy both the Buddha-Dharma and various meditations; Amitābha's face shines with light; his voice reaches in all directions, and so on. In contrast, the systematization of Pure Land practices is offered in the prose commentary, which begins with an account of the primary purposes of Pure Land aspirants, namely, to cognize the Buddha Amitābha, to visualize his land and to wish to be born there. To attain these three, Vasubandhu describes the Five Contemplative Gates (*wu-nien-mên* 五念門), which constitute the main body of this text: (1) the Gate of Worship (*li-pei-mên* 禮拜門), (2) the Gate of Praise (*tsan-t'an-mên* 讚嘆門), (3) the Gate of Aspiration (*tso-yüen-mên* 作願門), (4) the Gate of Visualization (*kuan-ch'a-mên* 觀察門),<sup>13</sup> and

<sup>11</sup> VyY 160, 5 ff.: *gtan la dbab par bstan pa'i sde ni gang las de kho na mthong ba rnam dang | gzhan rnam kyis mdo sde'i don chos kyi rjes su mthun par gtan la dbab par bstan pa 'o || de nyid de'i don rnam par 'chad pas ma mo zhes bya ste | de las gzhan pa'i mdo sde'i don bshad pa'i rten yin pa'i phyir ro || chos mngon pa zhes kyang bya ste | mishan nyid phyin ci ma log par ston pa nyid kyis chos kyi mtshan nyid la mngon du phyogs par byed pa'i phyir ro ||* For translation, see Lee 2001, pp. 69 ff.

<sup>12</sup> For the two meanings of *mātr*, viz., *jananī* and *paricchetṛ*, see Lee 2001, p. 70, n. 129.

<sup>13</sup> The third and fourth gates relate to the traditional practices, viz., concentration (*śamatha*) and contemplation (*vipaśyanā*), respectively. Ōtake has found a similarity between the description of these practices in the SVyU and that in MSA XIV 20–21. Cf. Ōtake 2003, pp. 32–35.

(5) the Gate of Transfer of Merit (*hui-hsiang-mên* 回向門). Of them, the fourth gate, the visualization of Amitābha and his land is the most important part of the text, which is divided into three parts: (4-1) the visualization of the seventeen merits of his land, (4-2) the visualization of the eight merits of Amitābha and (4-3) the visualization of the four merits of Bodhisattvas.<sup>14</sup>

Thus, it is clear that the SVyU, which summarizes the practical essence of the *Sukhāvativyūhas* into these Five Contemplative Gates, belongs conceptually to *upadeśa* texts. Next, we will examine how the chanting of the Buddha's name is treated in Vasubandhu's summarized exposition of Pure Land practice.

*The Textual Problems of the Gate of Praise in the Sukhāvativyūhopadeśa*

In the context of Indian Pure Land Buddhism, the distinction between chanting the Buddha's name (*ch'eng-ming*) and the mindfulness of the Buddha (*nien-fu* 念佛) is not clear, and therefore, among modern scholars, there are two different opinions as to the status of the former: Kagawa maintains that no textual evidence is found to prove that the Indian Pure Land Buddhists chanted the Buddha's name; what is found in texts is only that they practiced the mindfulness of the Buddha, while Fujita tries to provide textual evidence of its existence in the Indian context. In his article (1963), Kagawa collects Sanskrit terms that could possibly denote the chanting of the Buddha's name, viz., (1) *nāmadheyam GRAH-* "to receive the name into the mind," (2) *nāmadheyam DHR-* "to hold the name," (3) (*sam-*) *ākrandam KR-* "to call for help," (4) *nāmadheyam ŚRU-* "to hear the name," and (5) *pari-KĪRT-* "to praise," and points out the difference in meanings between the Sanskrit terms and their Chinese renderings. Among them, (1) and (2) are not the chanting of the Buddha's name, but are rather similar to the mindfulness of the Buddha, (3) is used in certain emergency situations to call the Buddha's name for help, (4) is clearly different from chanting, and (5) is used to describe Buddhas in other worlds praising the Buddha Amitābha, and does not describe the practice of a Pure Land aspirant. From these facts, Kagawa assumes that the term "chanting the Buddha's name," which frequently appears in Chinese transla-

<sup>14</sup> Some scholars have pointed out that these twenty-nine merits of Amitābha, his land, and Bodhisattvas in his land, are closely related to the eighteen perfections of the pure lands of Buddhas, which are mentioned in the introductions of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* and the *Buddhabhūmisūtra* as well as Asāṅga's *Mahāyānasamgraha*. Cf. Yamaguchi 1966, pp. 92-100.

tions, is an interpolation by translators, such as Kumārajīva, who were familiar with the newly-developed Buddhist practice in Central Asia, where the so-called visualization sutras that proclaim the significance of the practice of reciting the Buddha's name, as in the *Kuan wu-liang-shou ching* 觀無量壽經, were compiled.

Contrary to Kagawa's highly interesting hypothesis, Fujita, a specialist in Pure Land Buddhism, provides a different opinion in his article (1989), "Nembutsu to shōmyō" 念仏と称名. Using almost the same sources as Kagawa, he also comes to the conclusion that the Chinese translation "ch'eng-ming" possibly denotes *nāmadheyam GRAH-*, *nāmadheyam DHR-* or (*sam-*) *ākrandam KR-*.<sup>15</sup> His major argument asserts that mindfulness (*nien* 念, Skt. *buddhānusmṛti*) is frequently identified with chanting (*ch'eng*, *nāmadheya-grahana*) in Pāli and Sanskrit texts, and thus, it can be assumed that the practice of chanting the Buddha's name existed in Indian Buddhism.

As such, the two opinions are antagonistic with regard to this, however, of the two, Fujita's position has two weak points. First, as Kagawa maintains, chanting the Buddha's name was more popular in Central Asia, and its influence upon the translators' thinking is undeniable. Second, as Fujita himself remarks, since *nien* and *ch'eng* are usually considered to belong to different activities, viz., mental and verbal, respectively,<sup>16</sup> their identification is difficult to accept. In spite of these weak points, however, I basically agree with Fujita's main claim of the existence of chanting the Buddha's name in Indian Buddhism for two reasons: first, the usual meaning of at least the term *nāmadheyam GRAH* is "to utter the name,"<sup>17</sup> therefore, it is possible to translate it as "ch'eng-ming." Second, as we will see below, Vasubandhu integrates this chanting into his system of Pure Land practices. On the premise that the SVyU was written in India, its content proves the existence of such chanting there.<sup>18</sup>

Now, let us consider pertinent passages of the SVyU. After having

<sup>15</sup> Of these three terms, *nāmadheyam GRAH-*, as Fujita (1989, p. 17) points out, is usually used in the sense of oral recitation of the name. However, it is still unclear whether *nāmadheya-DHR-* and (*sam-*) *ākrandam KR-* can also be understood in the same way.

<sup>16</sup> Fujita 1989, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Fujita 1989, p. 17.

<sup>18</sup> Although the practice of chanting the Buddha's name is also mentioned in the \**Daśabhūmikāvibhāṣaśāstra* ascribed to Nāgārjuna, it is uncertain whether the author wrote of the practice or its translator, Kumārajīva, mixed his own thought in the translation. Cf. Kagawa 1963, pp. 45 ff.

expounded upon the purpose of his treatise, Vasubandhu explains the Five Contemplative Gates, the necessary conditions for rebirth in the Pure Land, as follows:<sup>19</sup>

- (1) How does one worship? With physical action, one worships Amitābha [who is] a Tathāgata, an *arhat*, [as well as] correctly and completely enlightened (*samyaksambuddha*),<sup>20</sup> and aspires to be born in his Land.<sup>21</sup>
- (2) How does one praise? With verbal action, one praises [the Buddha]: One chants the name of the Buddha and wishes to connect oneself with the proper practice<sup>22</sup> in accordance with the Buddha's light, which is characterized by wisdom, and the meaning of his name.
- (3) How does one aspire? With single-mindedness, one constantly aspires (*prañidhānaṃ KR-*) to be necessarily born in the Land of Bliss (*sukhāvātī*)<sup>23</sup> and wishes to practice concentration (*śamatha*) properly.
- (4) How does one visualize? With wisdom, one visualizes [Amitābha]: One visualizes him with a correct mind and wishes to practice contemplation (*vipaśyanā*) properly. There are three types of visualizations: the visualization of the virtues of the adornments of his land, the visualization of the virtues of the adornments of Amitābha, and the visualization of the virtues of the adornments of Bodhisattvas [in the land].
- (5) How does one transfer merits? Without abandoning any suffering living being, one aspires constantly [for their salvation] and accom-

<sup>19</sup> T. 26, 231b13–24.

<sup>20</sup> T. 26, 231b14: 阿弥陀如来應正遍知. For an assumption of the corresponding Sanskrit, see Ōtake 2003, p. 39, n. 3.

<sup>21</sup> According to Ōtake 2003, p. 41, n. 12, Bodhiruci uses the term *ku* 故 to denote not only ablative case-endings, but also instrumental ones and *iti*. In the present sentence, I would like to assume *iti*, as corresponding to the question *katham* (Ch. *yün-hê* 云何), as well. Moreover, if one compares the sentence with the description of the result of this First Contemplative Gate, it is clear that *ku* in the present sentence does not denote the ablative case-ending. Cf. T. 26, 233a8 ff.

<sup>22</sup> For *ju-shih-hsiu-hsing* 如實修行, see Sakurabe 1975 which assumes *anudharmapratipatti* as its original Skt. However, I surmise that *yathāvat* is equivalent to *ju-shih* 如實.

<sup>23</sup> For T. 26, 231b17 ff.: 心常作願一心專念畢竟往生安樂國土, a similar passage can be found in MSABh 83, 4 ff.: *ye sukhāvatyām prañidhānaṃ kariṣyanti te tatropapatsyanta iti kālāntarenety abhiprāyah*.

plishes great compassion, regarding the transfer of merits as the foremost important [practice].<sup>24</sup>

Here, physical, verbal, and two kinds of mental actions correspond to the first four kinds of practices. It clearly shows that Vasubandhu makes a distinction between the chanting of the Buddha's name (the second gate) and the mindfulness of the Buddha (the third/fourth gates). Strictly speaking, in this system, chanting of the Buddha's name is considered to be a preliminary stage for the mindfulness of the Buddha.

In this respect, then, how and for what purpose does one chant the name of Amitābha? Let us look in detail at the account of the Gate of Praise. Vasubandhu portrays the praise of the Buddha Amitābha as a verbal activity, and subsequently paraphrases it as "chanting the Buddha's name" (*ch'eng pi ju-lei ming* 稱彼如來名). Following this phrase, Vasubandhu explains the purpose of such chanting, which is one of the most problematic portions in the SVyU. I present the text and some of its modern translations below:

Text 1 (T. 26, 231b15 ff.): 口業讚嘆 稱彼如來名 如彼如來光明智相  
如彼名義 欲如實修行相應故

Kiyota (1978: p. 278): We praise [his name] through vocal action [*vāk-karma*]: we chant the name of the Tathāgata, because, by observing these practices as truly as they should be, we seek to bring about the unity [between those practices] and what his name-essence and illumination-wisdom [stands for]. (Cf. n. 66.: This sentence means that the practice of chanting the name of Buddha Amitāyus, referred to *nien-fo* in Chinese and *nembutsu* in Japanese, brings about a response from Buddha Amitāyus.)

Matsumoto (1986: p. 107): One praises with one's words. One calls the Name of that Tathāgata in accordance with that Tathāgata's Light, which is the embodiment of Wisdom, and in accordance with the significance of the Name, for one wishes to practice in accordance with reality and attain unity with it.

Fujimaru (2002: p. 77) [my translation from the Japanese]: [With verbal action, one praises the Buddha<sup>25</sup>]. One chants the name of

<sup>24</sup> For T. 26, 231b24: 回向為首, I assume the following Sanskrit: *parināmapūrvamgamam/-puraskṛtatvād*. Cf. DBh 11, 23: *mahākaruṇāpūrvamgamam* ... = T. 26, 135b2: 以大悲為首; DBh 13, 14 ff.: *mahākaruṇāpuraskṛtatvād* = T. 26, 137a12: 以大悲為首.

<sup>25</sup> My addition.

that Tathāgata, and wishes to practice properly and to attain unity with the aspect of wisdom [that is called] the light of that Tathāgata, and with the meaning of his name.

The differences among these translations may be summarized as follows:

- (a) The understanding of the structure of the sentence.
- (b) The translation of *ju* 如, which appears three times in this phrase.
- (c) The interpretation of “unity” (*hsiang-ying* 相應) and how the related items are referred to.

Before investigating these points, let us look at Vasubandhu’s exposition of the results of the practice of praising the Buddha, which is helpful to the understanding of this passage, as suggested by Fujimaru.<sup>26</sup> In the final section of the SVyU, Vasubandhu explains the results of the Five Contemplative Gates:<sup>27</sup>

- (1) As a result of worshipping the Buddha Amitābha, one is reborn in the Pure Land. This is called the “Gate of Approach” (*chin-mên* 近門).
- (2) As a result of praising the Buddha Amitābha, one is numbered in the great assemblage of Buddhas. This is called the “Gate of the Great Assemblages” (*ta-hui-chung-mên* 大会衆門).
- (3) As a result of aspiring to be born in the Pure Land, one enters the Lotus World. This is called the “Gate of the Palace” (*chai-mên* 宅門).
- (4) As a result of visualizing the Buddha and his Land, one reaches his Land and enjoys various Dharma-flavors. This is called the “Gate of the Room” (*wu-mên* 屋門).
- (5) As a result of the transfer of merits, one freely acts for the salvation of all living beings. This is called the “Gate for Playing in the Garden and Forest” (*yüen-lin-yo-hsi-ti-mên* 園林遊戲地門).

In this way, Vasubandhu describes the results of the Five Contemplative Gates as a metaphor for entering the palace of the Buddha Amitābha and leaving it to enter its garden and forest. That is to say, through the perfection of these five kinds of practices, one will be born in the Pure Land, see the Buddha Amitābha, and act for the salvation of all living beings. It is significant, however, that Vasubandhu describes these results with expressions that are very similar to those of the passages of the Five Contemplative Gates. For instance,

<sup>26</sup> Fujimaru 2002, pp. 78–80.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. T. 26, 233a9–22.

the second gate, which corresponds to the Gate of Praise, is described as follows:

Text 2 (T. 26, 233a, 11–13): 入第二門者 以讚嘆阿彌陀佛 隨順名義  
稱彼如來名 依如來光明智相 修行故 得入大會衆數

The entrance to the second gate means that one can be numbered in the great assemblage [of Buddhas], because one praises Amitābha, [namely] chants the name of the Buddha to practice in accordance with the meaning of [his] name, relying on the Buddha's light, which is characterized by wisdom.

If one compares the two passages (Texts 1 and 2), both similarities and dissimilarities can easily be seen. Both passages contain the phrases, “to praise / chant the name of the Buddha” (*tsan-t'an* 讚嘆 / *ch'eng pi ju-lei ming* 稱彼如來名), “the Buddha's light, which is characterized by wisdom” (*ju-lei kuang-ming chih-hsiang* 如來光明智相), “the meaning of the name” (*ming-yi* 名義), and “practice” (*hsiu-hsing* 修行). However, changes can be seen in the particle, the adverb, the verb, and the word order. While Text 1 contains the particle *ju* 如 three times, it does not appear in Text 2. Instead, particles indicating “in accordance with/relying on” (*sui-shun* 隨順 / *yi* 依) are used in the latter. Moreover, the adverb “properly” (*ju-shih* 如實) and the verb “to become unified” (*hsiang-ying*) are lacking in Text 2. Lastly, the word orders are different in both texts, seen specifically in the reversed position of *ming-yi* and *ju-lei kuang-ming chih-hsiang*. What has happened between these two parts? Should we assume two different texts? Or did Bodhiruci translate the same or almost the same text in two different ways?

First of all, let us try to restore Text 1. Here, we find conspicuous usages of the particle *ju*, which is usually equivalent to the Sanskrit *yathā*. Thus, *ju pi ju-lei kuang-ming chih-hsiang* 如彼如來光明智相 and *ju pi ming-yi* 如彼名義 might be restored as \**yathā*tad*tathā*gataprajñā*lakṣaṇā*loka and \**yathā*tad*nāmārtha*/*nām*ad*heyārtha*/*yathā*tad*ruta*, respectively. Now, if we consider these compounds to be *avyayībhāva*-compounds, then, as Apte (s.v., *yathā*) states, “*yathā*- is usually translated by ‘according to, according as, in accordance with, in conformity to, in proportion to, not exceeding.’” On this assumption, turning to Text 2, in which “in accordance with” (*sui-shun*)<sup>28</sup> and

<sup>28</sup> The term *sui-shun* (agreeable to/conformity with/following) is probably equivalent to \**anubandha/anugata/anuloma*. Cf. DBh 17, 4 ff.: *kāmabhavāvidyāsravānubandhaiś* = T. 26, 142a6: 隨順欲漏有漏無明漏; DBh 94, 26: *bodhisattva evamjñānānugato* = T. 26, 200a20: 菩

“relying on” (*yi*) are used instead of *ju*, one can find the conceptual similarity between the two phrases in Text 1 (*ju pi ju-lei kuang-ming chih-hsiang* and *ju pi ming-yi*) and those in Text 2 (*yi pi ju-lei kuang-ming chih-hsiang* 依彼如來光明智相 and *sui-shun ming-yi* 隨順名義). Therefore, these both have a similar basic structure so as to connect the practice of chanting the Buddha’s name with the subsequent practice, in accordance with the Buddha’s light of wisdom and the meaning of his name.

The problem that remains is the interpretation of *hsiang-ying*, which appears only in Text 1. This term usually corresponds to the Sanskrit (*sampra-*) *YUJ* (to connect, to unite, to join).<sup>29</sup> Concerning this term, Fujimaru points out that in Bodhiruci’s translation, *ju* is rarely linked to *hsiang-ying*.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Kiyota’s translation shows a similar understanding. According to both interpretations, one chants the Buddha’s name because one wishes to be united with its meaning, namely, to be united with the illumination characterized by wisdom.<sup>31</sup> In this case, however, it is difficult to explain the similarity between Texts 1 and 2, since “uniting” (*hsiang-ying*) and “in accordance with / relying on” (*sui-shun / yi*) cannot be identified. Instead, taking into consideration that Text 2 refers only to *hsiu-hsing*, I would like to interpret the term “to unite / to connect” as relating to “proper practice” (*ju-shih hsiu-hsing* 如實修行). Thus, the phrase *ju-shih hsiu-hsing hsiang-ying* means “to connect oneself to the proper practice,” that is, “to practice properly,” which corresponds to Text 2. On the above assumptions, I would propose the following translation for Text 1:

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薩隨順如是智慧; DBh 53, 27 ff.: *eṣāṃ dharmānāṃ yathāvad anulomatayā* = T. 26, 172c20: 隨順如實法。Of them, *anu-GAM* has also the meaning of “to comprehend,” and Kiyota (1978, p. 289) gives the translation “understanding” to the term *sui-shun*. However, since its original Sanskrit is not identified, I take the common meaning of these three Sanskrit terms, “in accordance with.”

<sup>29</sup> Cf. DBh 8, 6: *paramārthasamyuktām* = T. 26, 130a3: 真實義相應; DBhu 11, 4: *dṛṣṭāntayuktām* = T. 26, 132b27: 喻相應; DBhu 17, 4: *viparyāśasamprayuktaiḥ* = T. 26, 142a4 ff.: 與顛倒相應。

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Fujimaru (2002, p. 77, n. 1) refers to a passage in Vasubandhu’s SPU (T. 26, 1c27).

<sup>31</sup> Certainly, as one of the purposes of chanting the Buddha’s name, one can count attaining unity with the meaning of the Buddha’s name, namely his virtue. For instance, concerning the twenty-fourth chapter of the SP, in his SPU, Vasubandhu claims that there are two effects of worshipping and holding the name of Avalokiteśvara, viz., the power of faith 信力 and absolute knowledge (畢竟知). Of the two, the former is explained in two ways, viz., (a) one who calls his name believes himself to be Avalokiteśvara, and (b) one worships him in order to obtain his virtue. Cf. T. 26, 10b11 ff. In my opinion, however, this aim is not intended in Text 1 of the SVyU.

With verbal action, one praises [the Buddha:] One chants the name of the Buddha and wishes to connect oneself with the proper practice in accordance with the Buddha's light, which is characterized by wisdom, and the meaning of his name.

In this short passage, Vasubandhu's basic concept concerning the chanting of the Buddha's name is summarized concisely. The point is to consider the chanting of Amitābha's name to be the preliminary stage for its subsequent practice that requires the help of the Buddha's light of wisdom and learning the meaning of his name. This is comparable to the general process of the Buddhist practice consisting of learning the Buddha's teaching (*śruti*), reflecting upon its meaning (*cintā*) and meditating on it (*bhāvanā*). In the following, I will show several passages in order to support this interpretation, in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (hereafter DBh) and Vasubandhu's commentary on it.

#### *Chanting the Buddha's Name as a Preliminary Practice*

An important background to the passage in the SVyU is the DBh. As Haseoka has already pointed out in his article (1958), this sutra had a certain influence on Vasubandhu's SVyU, especially in his description of the merits of the adornments of the Pure Land and Bodhisattvas in that land, the Five Contemplative Gates and Five Merit Gates. As for the basis of the Gate of Praise, Haseoka assumes the following description of the fifth stage of the DBh:

DBh 46, 7 ff.: *tāṃś ca tathāgatan arhataḥ samyaksambuddhān paryupāste teṣāṃ ca sakāśād gauravacitrikāreṇa satkṛtya dharmadeśanām śrṇoty udgrhṇāti dhārayati.*

However, since this sentence appears repeatedly as a stock-phrase in the DBh, it is meaningless to restrict the quotation to just the fifth stage of Bodhisattvas. Moreover, in the above sentence, we can find no word that corresponds to Vasubandhu's exposition of the Gate of Praise. Despite this, the DBh is not irrelevant to the SVyU. In fact, we can find, for instance, the following passage in the sixth and seventh stages:

DBh 53, 31 ff.: *śrutvā ca yathāvat samāpattiprajñājñānālokatayā prayujyate. pratipattitaś cādhārayati* (= T. 26, 173a18 ff.: 聞受持已 得如實三昧智慧光明 隨順修行 行已憶持).

DBh 62, 19 ff.: *śrutvā ca yathāvat samāpattiprajñājñānālokena prayujyate. pratipattitaś cādhārayati* (= T. 26, 178b1 ff.: 聞受持已 得如實三昧智慧光明 隨順修行 行已憶持).

Tr. And after having heard [the Dharma], [a Bodhisattva] applies himself properly to [the Dharma] by means of the light of knowledge [that has arisen from] concentration and wisdom. And after practicing, he holds [the Dharma in his mind].<sup>32</sup>

Here, we see the close relationship between the proper practice and the light of knowledge. The superior knowledge of the Dharma arises in a Bodhisattva who hears the Buddha's teaching. Under the guidance of this knowledge, which is like a light illuminating a path, he goes forward to higher stages. As was mentioned before, the same process is paraphrased in Vasubandhu's SVyU, where, instead of hearing the Dharma, one chants the Buddha's name, and practices properly in accordance with Amitābha's light of wisdom. The similarity of both processes is clear. Only one difference is that in the SVyU, one practices while relying on Amitābha's wisdom, whereas in the DBh, a Bodhisattva walks on a path that is illuminated by his own wisdom.

Next, a relevant passage to "in accordance with the meaning of his name" (*ju pi ming-yi / sui-shun pi ming-yi*) is found in 'Phags pa sa bcu'i rnam par bshad pa (hereafter DBhV), Vasubandhu's commentary on the DBh:

DBhV (P. nGi. 152a2 = D. nGi 119b5 ff.): *de bzhin du thos pa dang bsam pa dang ldan pa'i don sgrub pa bsgom pa la brtson na . . .*

Tr. In this manner, he commences to meditate for realizing the object which he has learned [from the Buddha's teaching] and upon which he has reflected, . . .

= T. 26, 130b25 ff.: 如是具聞思慧隨順正義如法修行 . . .

Tr. In this manner, he has learned and reflected upon [the Buddha's teaching], he follows [its] correct meaning and practices in accordance with the Dharma, . . .

Here, Bodhiruci's Chinese translation is different from that of its Tibetan counterpart. While translating the process of practice consisting of learning, reflecting and meditating, Bodhiruci probably added the term *sui-shun*, which has no equivalent in the Tibetan translation, in order to emphasize a condition of practice, namely, "following the correct meaning of the teaching." The same process of practice can be assumed in SVyU's two passages translated by the same hand: Replacing the Buddha's teaching with Amitābha's name,

<sup>32</sup> For the translation, see Aramaki 2003, pp. 197 and 230.

the author of the SVyU aimed to incorporate the practice of chanting the Buddha's name into the traditional system of Buddhist practice, and the translator Bodhiruci clarified the point by using the terms *ju* and *sui-shun*. In this case, chanting the Buddha's name is considered to be nothing but learning and reflecting upon the Buddha's teaching, which is represented here by Amitābha's name. In line with what his name signifies, one can properly practice for birth in the Pure Land.

### *Conclusion*

To conclude, I will once again turn to the traditional interpretations of the Gate of Praise in East Asia, and attempt to clarify certain philosophical and cultural differences between South and East Asia in understanding the role of chanting the Buddha's name. The earliest and most authoritative commentator on the SVyU, T'an-luan, connects the Gate of Praise with the single-mind (*isshin*) in Vasubandhu's homage verse in the SVyU, and claims that such a pure mind needs to precede the chanting of the Buddha's name, in order to distinguish mere chanting without true faith from that of true chanting. Furthermore, T'an-luan explains that chanting the Buddha's name removes ignorance and fulfills the wishes of living beings. According to T'an-luan's expositions, such chanting can be considered to be an independent practice without any connection to other practices such as *śamatha* or *vipaśyanā*, in contrast to the context of Indian Buddhism in which chanting the Buddha's name is just a preliminary stage for the primary practice of visualization.<sup>33</sup> The tendency to isolate this chanting from other practices grew among the Chinese and Japanese heirs of Pure Land Buddhism such as Shan-tao 善導 and Hōnen 法然, and finally Shinran, who even rejected the chanting of the Buddha's name and emphasized only the true faith of the Buddha Amitābha.<sup>34</sup> As for the relationship between the former and the latter, Shinran clearly states: "True faith is necessarily accompanied by [chanting] the name, though

<sup>33</sup> If one agrees with T'an-luan's exposition, the passage of the Gate of Praise will be construed as follows: One chants the Buddha's name [and removes the ignorance], as the Buddha's light characterized by wisdom [removes our ignorance], for one wishes to practice properly (i.e., to obtain true faith), and to become unified with the meaning of that [Amitābha's] name (i.e., to know the Buddha's two bodies). For more details of T'an-luan's interpretation of the Gate of Praise, see Fujimaru 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Vasubandhu also admitted faith was a significant element for birth in the Pure Land, but unlike Shinran, he assumed faith to be a result of the Five Contemplative Gates. Cf. T. 26, 233a1 ff.

[chanting] the name is not necessarily accompanied by true faith based on the power of Amitābha's Vow."<sup>35</sup> In this way, in Vasubandhu, T'an-luan, and Shinran, we find three different concepts concerning chanting the Buddha's name. For Vasubandhu, it is a preliminary practice enabling the mind to follow the path of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*; for T'an-luan, chanting the Buddha's name has the value of an independent practice; Shinran sought strictly true faith and saw no practical value in the chanting of the Buddha's name. The shift in their interests can also be seen as the three different practices of Pure Land Buddhism, viz., (a) the visualization of the Pure Land/the mindfulness of the Buddha Amitābha, (b) the chanting of the name of the Buddha Amitābha, and (c) the pure faith of the Buddha Amitābha. Among them, Vasubandhu's SVyU takes an important role in the integration of chanting the Buddha Amitābha's name into the system of Pure Land practice, in which one chants the Buddha's name in order to motivate oneself to practice, being illuminated by the Buddha's light of wisdom. Vasubandhu's original idea was gradually changed by later Pure Land thinkers who lived in cultures far removed from India. Of course, I cannot judge whether these changes can be called developments or not, but it may at least be said that an aspiration to be born in the Amitābha's Land underlies the arising and changing of *ch'eng-ming* thought in Pure Land Buddhism.

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<sup>35</sup> T. 83, 606b25 ff.

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