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# A Clue to the Authorship of the *Awakening of Faith*: “Śikṣānanda’s” Redaction of the Word “*Nien*”<sup>a</sup>

by Whalen W. Lai

This teaching . . . sets up *wu-nien*<sup>b</sup> (no-thought) as its doctrine, *wu-hsiang*<sup>c</sup> (no-form) as its substance and *wu-chu*<sup>d</sup> (non-abiding) as its basis. No-form is dissociation from form in the midst of form; no-thought is refraining from thought in the midst of thought; non-abiding is the entrance (*ju*<sup>1</sup>)<sup>e</sup> into Original Nature.  
—The *Platform Sūtra*

The text, *Ta-ch'eng ch'i-hsin lun*<sup>f</sup> (The Awakening of Faith in Mahāyāna, henceforth abbreviated as AFM), has been the center of a long controversy in the field of Buddhist studies. It has been suspected by Mochizuki Shinkō<sup>g</sup> and others to be a Chinese fabrication, while Tokiwa Daijō<sup>h</sup> and others defend its alleged Indian origin. The present short article will not review the past and present scholarship on the AFM or bring in my own studies on the matter.<sup>3</sup> It will be devoted to one tiny but crucial issue: the fate of a key concept in the two “translations”—Paramārtha’s original (AFM) and Śikṣānanda’s version (AFMS for short). The concept is *nien* and *wu-nien*. To state the conclusion here so as to simplify our discussion: the *nien* complex, in my opinion, cannot be understood without reference to a pre-Buddhist (Han Chinese) usage of the term. It is foreign or jarring enough to the person responsible for the AFMS that it has been systematically modified or outright substituted so as to bring the AFM in line with the Yogācāra (Wei-shih,<sup>i</sup> Vijñaptimātratā) philosophy. By showing the Sinitic character of the *nien* ideology, its centrality in the AFM, and the redaction of it by the AFMS, we can come one step closer to resolving the long controversy over the authorship of the AFM. From the limited evidence in this one short study, it would appear that the AFM was

authored in China and the AFMS was a conscious redaction of the AFM in China (or Korea?<sup>4</sup>) to bring this work into line with the demands of Hsüan-tsang's<sup>j</sup> Wei-shih philosophy.

We will begin with a survey of modern Sanskritists' attempts at identifying *nien* and why such attempts have ultimately failed. Then we will look at a similar attempt by the AFMS to edit off the *nien* ideology and how by so doing it violated the integrity of the original AFM message. The sinic meaning of the term *nien* and *wu-nien* will be demonstrated with precedents in Han thought, usages in the Six Dynasties and in Ch'an.<sup>k</sup> I will conclude with a word on why AFMS was produced.

### *Attempts at Identifying Nien and Wu-nien*

That *nien* and especially *wu-nien* are important concepts can be seen in the passage cited in the beginning from the *Platform sūtra*. *Wu-nien* is supposed to be the doctrine of Southern Ch'an and *li-nien*<sup>l</sup> that of the Northern Ch'an. If till now I have not rendered them into English, it is because of the controversial nature of these terms. Both *li-nien* and *wu-nien* came from the AFM. In 1900, when D. T. Suzuki<sup>m</sup> (then not yet the Zen spokesman he would later be) translated the AFMS, he added this note.

The term (*nien*) is usually rendered by recollection or memory (*smṛti*) but Aśvaghōṣa (sic) used it apparently in a different sense. It must mean subjectivity, or the perception of particularity, or that mental activity which is not in accordance with the suchness of things; if otherwise, the whole drift of the present Discourse becomes totally unintelligible.<sup>5</sup>

This simplistic re-Sanskritization is based on the popular Japanese word *nembutsu* (Chinese: *nien-fo*<sup>n</sup>) for *buddhānusmṛti*. Suzuki sidetracks the issue by using the English "subjectivity" to render the meaning of *nien*, drawing upon, no doubt, his study then on the *Lañkāvatāra sūtra*. Later, in 1949, as a Zenist introducing Hui-neng in the *Zen Doctrine of No Mind*, Suzuki suggested *kṣāṇa* for *nien*.<sup>6</sup> In this he is closer to one of the literal meanings of *nien*. He also changed his vocabulary in accordance with the current interest in the "Unconscious." The No-Mind (*wu-nien*, *wu-hsin*)<sup>o</sup> ideal was dubbed the discovery of the creative

Unconscious. In the end, neither *smṛti* nor *kṣāna*, subjectivity or Unconscious, exhausts the full range of meaning of *nien* or *wu-nien*.

Jacques Gernet in his study of Shen-hui, the leading disciple of Hui-neng who capitalized on *wu-nien*, offers *acitta*, *acittaka*, *asamjñisamāpatti* and *nirodhasamāpatti* for *wu-nien*.<sup>7</sup> All these Sanskrit words suggest the absence of mind or mental activity. They are better choices and justifiable as part of the Ch'an psychology. It is, however, risky to re-Sanskritize Ch'an terms since this tradition has always freely used words. *Acitta* etc., furthermore, cannot solve our problems with the AFM or the AFMS. Gernet works on the assumption, as Suzuki has to a large extent, that *wu-nien* is a synonym for *wu-hsin* (no-mind). Sometimes in Ch'an, *wu-hsin* is indeed just one more radical way of saying *wu-nien*, but in the case of the AFM, the two terms are not the same. In almost all cases, *nien* is an inferior reality to *hsin*. *Wu-hsin* is used once only. *Nien*, as we will see, is intrinsically "negative." It is something to be "negated" (*wu*), emptied, abolished, so as to free the Mind (*hsin*). *Hsin* does not share the same negative connotations. If a negative mind is intended, the prefix *wang*<sup>P</sup> (deluded) is usually added, but it is almost redundant to add *wang* to the negative *nien*.

Philip Yampolsky's translation of the *Platform Sūtra* (1967) appeared at the same time as Yoshito Hakeda's translation of the AFM. Yampolsky has offered no-thought for *wu-nien* (with a reference to Gernet<sup>8</sup>). Hakeda however consistently departs from his colleague in not using "no-thought." Instead he equates *vikalpa* with *nien* and takes *wu-nien* to imply its opposite, *avikalpa*, or else *acintya*. His choice is based on the assumption that *nien* is short for *wang-nien* (deluded thought), a synonym of *wang-hsiang*<sup>9</sup> (deluded thought), or *fen-pieh*<sup>r</sup> (differentiation), the preferred translations for *vikalpa* (differentiation, differentiating consciousness). The AFM does use the term *wang-nien*, and even *wang-hsin* (deluded mind). However, there are two technical problems here: (a) the AFM often uses *nien* simply by itself without the adjective *wang*, and (b) Hakeda also associates *vikalpa* with the AFM discussion on the *ming-tzu-hsiang*<sup>s</sup> function of the mind (the form of mind that differentiates names and realities).

It is *wu-nien* that poses the greatest challenge to Hakeda's reading. Avoiding "no-thought," Hakeda takes *wu-nien* to mean *acintya* (the unthinkable) and the *avikalpa* (what is not analyzable by the intellect). In English, he stays with either "beyond empirical predication or determination" and "beyond what they are thought to be."<sup>9</sup> To do so, however, he often has to go around the original by using qualifiers.

*Ironically, Hakeda is often only doing what the AFMS has tried to do. "Śikṣānanda," the alleged translator to the AFMS, had had the same trouble with nien and wu-nien.*

### *The AFMS' Attempts at Editing the Nien Ideology*

Through a comparison of the AFM and the AFMS ideology,<sup>10</sup> we see, very interestingly, how the AFMS consistently (a) adds the adjective *wang*, deluded, to *nien*, thought, and (b) drops all references to *wu-nien*, even at the risk of tampering with the organic whole of the discourse. Because the AFM has more internal consistency than the AFMS in this and other areas<sup>11</sup>, it can be assumed that the AFM is the original and the AFMS a redaction, and not the other way around. Below is one passage of the AFM (in my literal translation), followed by the same in the AFMS (Suzuki's, somewhat edited) and Hakeda's translation. The AFMS drops *wu-nien*, and adds such a long substitute passage that I have to skip some part of it.

AFM: The object-realms of the five senses and the mind are ultimately *wu-nien* (no-thought). . . . Sentient beings . . . deluded by ignorance mistake the mind as thought (*nien*) but the mind itself never moves (*tung*).<sup>1</sup> If a person can so examine it and realize that the mind itself is *wu-nien* (no-thought), he would smoothly and in due accord enter the gate of Suchness.<sup>12</sup>

The AFM reference to *wu-nien* does not make the best of sense. How can the first five senses (matter, smell, etc.) be thoughtless? However, the basic message in Chinese is: the mind is passive ("never moves") until it is deluded ("moved") by thought, *nien*. To know that mind and reality are essentially free from thought, *wu-nien*, is to return the mind to Suchness. Suchness is, says the AFM, "free from thought."<sup>13</sup>

AFMS: These modes of existence such as matter etc. (the *skandhas*) are imperfect. Why are they imperfect? When we divide some gross (or composite) matter, we can reduce it to atoms (*anu*). But as the atom will also be subject to further division, all forms of material existence, whether gross or fine, are nothing but the shadow of particularization produced by a subjective mind [*vikalpa*], and we cannot ascribe any degree of (absolute or independent) reality to them. [The same applies to the other *skandhas* and the *asamkṛtadharmas*—the AFMS goes on at length to

enumerate.] All beings, because of their misleading ignorance, imagine that the mind is being disturbed, while in reality it is not. But when they understand that the disturbance of the mind is “neither birth nor death”<sup>14</sup> [Suzuki’s translation: immortality]<sup>15</sup>, they would then enter into the gate of Suchness.<sup>16</sup>

The AFMS passage here realizes precisely that one cannot appropriately refer to the five senses (eyes, ears, nose, mouth and touch) as having “thought.” Thought at best can be correlated to the sixth faculty, the mind. Therefore the AFMS “very logically” re-interprets the passage by dropping the reference to *wu-nien* and reads the message as one of “absence of substance” in the *skandhas* misperceived by the “subjective mind.” The AFMS then has to resurrect the theory of atoms, *anu* (used in the *Abhidharma-kośa* and more recently incorporated into the *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi*) to fill the gap left by its dropping *wu-nien*. This brings in the whole discussion of the compounded and un-compounded *dharma*s that have played no role in the AFM and no role in the rest of the AFMS. It is logical to assume that this is the result of redaction by the AFMS.

Hakeda: The objects of the five senses and of the mind are in the final analysis beyond what they are thought to be (*wu-nien*). . . . People, because of their ignorance, assume Mind (Suchness) to be what they think it to be, though Mind in fact is unaffected (*tung*) even if it is falsely predicated. If a man is able to observe and understand that Mind is beyond what it is thought to be, then he will be able to conform to and enter the realm of Suchness.<sup>17</sup>

Hakeda’s translation is rather round-about. Probably relying on the AFMS, it manages to make better (Sanskrit) sense of *wu-nien*. It also follows the AFMS in taking the word *tung* (move) in the passive voice to mean “being disturbed” or “being affected.” The mind is “unaffected even if it is falsely predicated.” This reading is not warranted by the grammar.<sup>18</sup> It also does not concur with the discussion on *hsin* and *nien* elsewhere in the AFM. *Tung* is clearly the movement brought about by *nien*; this is called at one point *wang-tung*, deluded movement.<sup>19</sup> The mind by itself does not move; the *nien* naturally does. To mistake the movement of *nien* for the immovable mind is the mark of the ignorant; the reversal is the entrance into Suchness. So elsewhere the AFM well says, and Hakeda himself acknowledges:



AFM (Hakeda): Water and wind are inseparable; but water is not mobile by nature (*tung*. . . . Likewise, man's Mind, pure in its own nature, is stirred (*tung*) by the wind of ignorance. . . . Yet Mind is not mobile by nature. . . .<sup>20</sup>

The AFMS, incidentally, has changed somewhat this crucial passage in the AFM.<sup>21</sup>

The immutability of mind is as clearly set forth in another crucial passage in the AFM.

AFM (My translation): In other words, the nature of the mind is always *wu-nien* (without thought); therefore it is said to be immutable (*pu-pien*).<sup>u</sup> Because the mind may not (always) attain the One Dharmadhātu, therefore it fails to correspond (to Suchness). Suddenly a thought rose and this constituted ignorance.<sup>22</sup>

AFM (Hakeda): What is called the essential nature of Mind is always beyond thoughts. It is, therefore, defined as "immutable." When the One World of Reality is yet to be realized, the Mind (is mutable and) is not in perfect unity (with Suchness). Suddenly, (a deluded) thought arises; (this state) is called ignorance.<sup>23</sup>

In long notations, Hakeda suggests *akasmāt* for the Chinese *hu-jan*.<sup>24v</sup> The AFMS preserves the sense of the changless mind, but typically, it edits off all reference to *wu-nien*.

AFMS (Suzuki, with minor changes): While the essence of the mind is eternally clean and pure, the influence of ignorance makes possible the existence of a defiled mind. But despite the defiled mind, the mind (itself) is eternal, clear, pure, and not subject to transformation. Further as its original nature is free from particularization (*fen-pieh*, *vikalpa*), it knows in itself no change whatever, though it produces everywhere the various modes of existence. When the (Dharmadhātu) is not recognized, there is lacking the correspondence (with Suchness). Ignorance and particularization then arise, giving rise to various defiled consciousnesses.<sup>25</sup>

### *The Sinitic Meaning of Nien and Wu-nien*

*Nien* is a complex concept involving several layers of meanings drawn from Indian and Chinese connotations. Of the Sanskrit, *smṛti* is

tangential, even though the *Platform sūtra* later would make free use of it (*nien chen-ju*<sup>26</sup>,<sup>w</sup> mindfulness of Suchness as the meaning of *nien* in *wu-nien*). *Kṣāna* is often implied. *Vikalpa* is the most relevant. The AFM and AFMS accept the inspiration of *wu-nien* as coming from a *sūtra*. The *sūtra* is suspected to be the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra*.

AFM (My translation): Thus a *sūtra* says, "If there is any sentient being who can perceive *wu-nien*, he would be advancing toward Buddha-wisdom." (Hakeda gives "that which is beyond thought" for *wu-nien*.)<sup>27</sup>

AFMS (Suzuki): Therefore it is said in the *Sūtra* that those who have an insight into the nonreality (*wu-hsiang* [characterlessness]) of all subjectivity (*wang-nien*, *vikalpa*) attain the wisdom of the Tathāgata.<sup>28</sup>

The cited passage is not found in the *Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* but the AFMS is probably right in prudently re-constituting *wu-nien* as *wu-hsiang* and *wang-nien* (*vikalpa*). It is safe to assume that the AFM simplifies the *sūtra*'s denunciation of *vikalpa* into *wu-nien*.

*Wu-nien*, however, is more than *vikalpa*. Even Suzuki, Gernet and Yampolsky accept a Taoist source for *wu-hsin* or *wu-nien*. The boldest statement is that of Wing-tsit Chan commenting on the *Platform sūtra*:

The doctrine of the absence of thought (*wu-nien*) is no cult of unconsciousness. Nor is it a Zen invention (in the *Platform Sūtra*). It goes back to Taoism, Neo-Taoism and the Early Seven Schools of Buddhism, all of which taught "having no mind of one's own," that is, having no mental attachment which would keep the mind in bondage.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, one can find the idea of *wu-hsin* or *hsin-wu* in *Chuang-tzu*<sup>z</sup> and in the commentary on it by Kuo Hsiang.<sup>y</sup> Below are offered a few samplings from the Eastern Chin and the Six Dynasties period, up to T'an Ch'ien,<sup>z</sup> the first known scholar of the AFM:

- a) Chih Min-tu<sup>aa</sup> of the *hsin-wu*<sup>ab</sup> school: "When the *sūtra* teaches that all *dharmas* are empty, it is intending that the people would empty their minds so as not to hold on to the empty illusions."<sup>30</sup>
- b) Ho Ch'eng-t'ien,<sup>ac</sup> an anti-Buddhist thinker: "The Great Man and the gentleman make humanity (*jen*)<sup>ad</sup> their concern. Their minds do not harbour *nien*, but take on form and shapes

- as [expedient] ornaments . . . so that they be approachable to common men."<sup>31</sup>
- c) Hui-yüan,<sup>ae</sup> defender of faith: "That which receives *karma* is without a master or lord. It is the mind. The mind has no permanent master. It receives stimuli from things without, and reacts accordingly. The responses can be speedy or slow, therefore the karmic retribution can be immediate or delayed."<sup>32</sup> And, "Do not let emotions burden down *sheng*<sup>af</sup> (read *hsing*,<sup>ag</sup> nature) or *sheng* burden down *shen*<sup>ah</sup> (spirit)."<sup>33</sup> Read *hsin*<sup>ai</sup> for *shen*.
- d) Tsung Ping,<sup>aj</sup> his student: "The Sage is without a permanent mind; he uses the mind of things as his mind," i.e., he goes along with things as his guide.<sup>34</sup>
- e) T'an-ch'ien, first known student of AFM: "There being no mind, all pros and cons (*shih-fei*,<sup>ak</sup> conflicts) would cease."<sup>35</sup>

There is, however, a fallacy in equating *nien* with *hsin*. Chuang-tzu did not know of *wu-nien*. *Wu-nien* has a shade of meaning, not available immediately in *wu-hsin*. After it has incorporated Sanskrit overtones, *nien* has the meaning of *kṣāna*, "one sixtieth of a snap of a finger," that is not in its classical sense. Therefore *nien* is often best rendered as "thought-instance" or an "instance of thought," so as to preserve both the time element (momentariness) and its ideational content (thought). Because of the suggestion of "impermanence" (*kṣāna*), *nien* is repeatedly contrasted with the permanence or invariability, *pu-tung* or *pu-pien*, of the absolute, pure mind, Suchness or Buddha-nature. Thus we have the set phrase, *nien-nien hsiang-shü*,<sup>al</sup> "moment-to-moment continuity" (implying actually also discontinuity, or *pu-ch'ang*<sup>am</sup>). *Hsiang-shü* stands usually for *santāna* as in *citta-santāna* (*hsiang-shü hsin*,<sup>an</sup> or, *hsiang-shü shih*,<sup>ao</sup> mental continuum). In the AFM and the AFMS, this is associated with the *ālayavijñāna*.<sup>36</sup> A review of all the passages in the AFM involving *nien* would substantiate our contention that *nien* should be read within this larger matrix of meanings. The translations are mine; reference is given to the page number in Hakeda's translation.

T. 576a/Hakeda 32: All the various *dharma*s, realities, are differentiated only because of *wang-nien*, deluded thoughts. If one *li-nien* departs or dissociates oneself from thought, then there would be no form to the object-realm at all.

*Wang-nien* is explicitly named here; it is *vikalpa* that creates the uncalled-for differentiations. *Li-nien*, departure or freedom from thought, would bring us back to the undifferentiated state.

T. 576a/Hakeda 34: [In truth] although all the various *dharma*s appear as thought-moments, there is neither that which can conceive of them (*k'o-nien*)<sup>ap</sup> nor that which can be perceived of such (*neng-nien*).<sup>aq</sup>

The disappearance of the object-realm (the object to the senses) as well as the subject is dramatically put forth.

The last part is not easily intelligible unless one is familiar with the usage of *nien* in meditation (*smṛti*). As early as the third century A.D., Chinese following the *Anāpāna sūtra* (*An-pan shou-i ching*)<sup>ar</sup> began to understand and use the word *nien* with reference to the psychological reduction of self and phenomena into thought-instances (*nien, kṣaṇa*) that the mind is mindful of (*nien, smṛti*) at the moment. All realities are momentary, and are due to the *nien* (not due to the mind, *hsin*). In so far as *nien* (*vikalpa*) is false, the True itself is beyond *nien* (*wu-nien*), beyond the conceiver or the conceived of (*so-nien*<sup>37, as</sup> *neng-nien*). In Suchness, there is neither the subject nor the object. (See citations later.)

T. 576a/Hakeda 34: By the Emptiness of Suchness is meant . . . that it is free (*li*) from the all the differentiated forms of the *dharma*s because [the Suchness Mind] has no *hsü-wang-hsin-nien*,<sup>at</sup> vain, deluded, psychic thoughts (*vikalpa*).

In contrast to this ideal, there is the deluded mind of sentient beings.

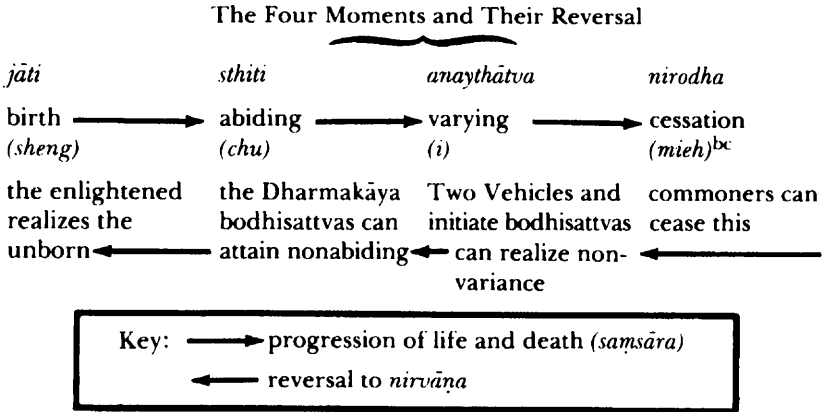
T. 576b/Hakeda 35: Because all sentient beings, possessing the *wang-hsin*, deluded mind, experience *nien-nien*, the succession of thought-moments, each being different and not mutually corresponding, therefore (they have to be told that) everything is empty. However, once free from the deluded mind, *li-wang-hsin*, (they would know that) there is actually nothing here to be emptied.

Here we see the several meanings of *nien* entering into the overall definition of the "deluded thought." This passage also shows the properly qualified use of the term *wang-hsin*. One can say *li-nien* or *li-wang-hsin* but never *li-hsin*<sup>au</sup> by itself.

T. 376b/Hakeda 38-39: The common people may attain (some) *chüeh*,<sup>av</sup> (realization): in knowing that a former *nien*, thought, has given rise to evil, they can stop a succeeding thought from rising. . . . The Two Vehicles of the *śrāvaka* and the *pratyekabuddha* as well as the initiate *bodhisattva* may realize, within *nien-i*,<sup>ay</sup> the variant thought, *nien-wu-i*,<sup>ax</sup> the nonvariance of thoughts. . . . The

*Dharmakāya bodhisattva* may (further) realize, within *nien-chu*,<sup>ax</sup> the abiding thought, *nien-wu-chu*, the nonabiding thought. . . . (Only) he who completes all the *bodhisattva bhūmis* and the *upāyas* can in *i-nien*,<sup>az</sup> a single instant, align (his mind with Suchness), realizing that when the mind is first aroused, the mind itself has no initial form, because, in itself, the mind is far from (*yüan-li*)<sup>ba</sup> even the smallest of *nien* [that rises]. . . . Therefore a *sūtra* says “If there is any sentient being who can perceive *wu-nien*, he would be advancing toward Buddha-wisdom.”

The above passage involves an unorthodox use of the four forms (*ssu-hsiang*),<sup>bb</sup> i.e., the Sarvāstivādin analysis of four “moments” in any *dharma*-event, what I translated (in keeping with the meaning of the Chinese) as the rise, the abiding, the variance and the cessation of *nien*.



The second half of the diagram shows where the AFM places the achievement of the various *yānas*. (The classification is itself a problematical innovation.) The logic is based on a gloss of the term *sheng-mieh*<sup>bd</sup> (*jāti* and *nirodha*) for *samsāra*. This is possible only in Chinese. *Sheng-mieh* happens also to be one Chinese rendition of *samsāra*. The argument then goes: the progression from *sheng* to *mieh* means *samsāra*; the regression from *mieh* to *sheng* is therefore *nirvāna*. *Nirvāna* is the Unborn (that which is prior to even *jāti*). Such liberal usages of *sheng-mieh* are found as early as the fourth century A.D. in China.

How and when did the whole process of *nien-nien sheng-mieh*<sup>be</sup> (the arising and the dying of the continuous *nien*) begin? The answer is: The *nien* is beginningless.

T. 576bc/Hakeda 40: As to the arousing of the Mind, there is no incipient form that can be known. To say that it can be known is

(to attain) *wu-nien*, no-thought. (Failing this) therefore all sentient beings are not said to be enlightened. This is because (for them), from the very beginning, thought has succeeded thought, *nien-nien hsiang-hsü*, and (they have) yet to *li-nien*, dissociate themselves from that stream of thought. Therefore they are said to be in “beginningless ignorance.” If a person attains *wu-nien*, no-thought, then he realizes how the forms of the mind undergo (the four forms of) rise, abiding, variance and cessation. This is because he is one with no-thought.

Before the “beginningless ignorance” is *wu-nien*. The *wu-nien* (suchness) mind is free from the vicissitude of thought-moments. For the deluded, there has always been *nien* in endless succession, *hsiang-hsü* from the beginning. To know the ultimate paradox—how an incipient thought can emerge from a thought-free mind—is the same as attaining *wu-nien* itself. Free from *nien*, a person can perceive the rising, abiding, varying and ceasing of *nien* itself. To do that, a person must break the “continuous mind,” the *hsiang-shü hsin*, *citta-santāna*, that is, says the AFM, the *ālaya-vijñāna*.

T. 376/Hakeda 41: He destroys the compound consciousness [the *ālaya-vijñāna*] and brings an end to the forms of the continuous mind, thereby letting manifest the Dharmakāya . . . because all *hsin-shih chih-hsiang*,<sup>bf</sup> forms of mind and consciousness, are ignorance itself.

But where does the continuity consciousness itself come from? From the mind! The *hsin* “somehow” gives rise to *nien* which then continues on by itself with no end.

T. 577a/Hakeda 45: Concerning the form of continuity: . . . the Mind gives rise to *nien*, thought, and it correspondingly continues with no end.

T. 577b/Hakeda 48: Concerning the continuity consciousness [evolved from the Mind]: as it corresponds to *nien*, it continues with no end.

*Nien* is the form of ignorance itself. Sometimes it is ignorance that is the root of *nien*. Elsewhere, it is said that the sudden emergence of *nien* constitutes ignorance. Both ignorance and *nien* are beginningless. It is also ignorance acting as Suchness<sup>38</sup> that gives rise to *wang-hsin*,<sup>bg</sup> a

deluded mind (*vikalpa*) within. Then, later, the deluded objects appear without.

T. 755c/Hakeda 50: Suddenly a thought arises; this is called ignorance.

T 578a/Hakeda 56: Because (ignorance) perfumes Suchness, there is the deluded mind. . . . The unenlightened *nien*, thought, arises and thereby the deluded object-realm is manifested.

*Nien* is, within man, the deluded thought; in consciousness, it is the momentary frame by which all things are known; in time, it is a moment; in contrast with the immovable mind, it is the ever-changing *santāna*. But is *nien* real? No.

T. 579c/Hakeda 73: The object-realms of the five senses and the mind are ultimately *wu-nien* (not structured according to our thoughts). . . . Sentient beings . . . deluded by ignorance mistake the mind as *nien* [which changes], but the mind never moves. If a person could so examine it and realize that the mind itself is *wu-nien* (without thoughts), he would smoothly and in due accord enter the gate of Suchness.<sup>39</sup>

Aside from those passages in which *nien* means “meditative recollection,” these are virtually all the key passages in the AFM involving *nien*. The AFMS edited some of these, did away with *wu-nien* all together but, as with Hakeda, it is unable to abandon the tone of other *nien* passages. The editing being haphazard, the AFMS is better considered a redaction. *Nien* being somehow non-Sanskritic yet integral to the AFM, the AFM is better considered Chinese in origin.

Differences between *nien* and *hsin* mean that *wu-nien* cannot be simply traced back to Chuang-tzu’s “no-mind” as so many scholars suggest. The deeper nuance of *nien* has to be found elsewhere. In the chapter on (human) nature and feeling, *hsing-ch’ing*,<sup>bh</sup> in the *Po-hu-t’ung*<sup>bi</sup> (Comprehensive Discussion at the White Tiger Hall [in A.D. 39 under imperial sponsorship]),<sup>40</sup> we find this subtler Han classification of *hsin* and *nien*: “What do *hsing* and *ch’ing* signify? *Hsing* is the work of *yang*<sup>bj</sup> as *ch’ing* that of *yin*.<sup>bk</sup> Man is born out of the reception of the *yin-yang* ethers and is thus endowed with the Five Natures [the five virtues] and the Six Emotions [joy, anger, grief, happiness, love, hatred]. *Ch’ing* also means passivity (*ching*)<sup>bl</sup> while *hsing*<sup>bm</sup> is existence (*sheng*).<sup>bn</sup> Their reception procures life. Therefore, the *Kou ming chüeh* says: ‘Emotions

rise from *yin*; it desires based on *shih nien*<sup>bo</sup> (momentary thought). Nature comes from *yang*; it is always in tune to the *li*<sup>bp</sup> (Principle). 'Yang is considerate of other; *yin* knows only selfish gain. Therefore, emotions are greedy and nature is directed at humanity.'<sup>42</sup>

T'ang Yung-t'ung<sup>bq</sup> cites a slightly different edition, which reads in part:

*Nien-lü*<sup>br</sup> (thinking and pondering) is in accordance with *shih* (time) . . . and *hsing* (human nature).<sup>42</sup>

*Hsing* should be read as *ch'ing* in the last line, i.e. *nien-lü* is associated with activated *hsing* or the emotions.

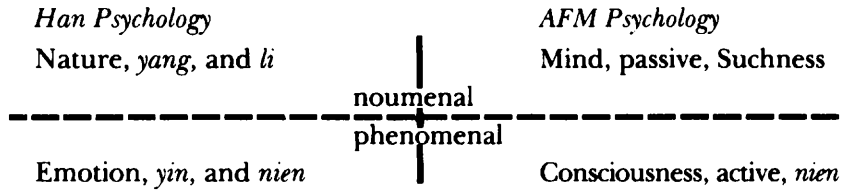
The Chinese character *nien* is a combination of "present" and "mind." Its ties with *shih* (time) explain why it was chosen to render *kṣana*, moment. *Nien* usually is employed to denote "to think of, to remember; thought, recollection." This is the reason for its being chosen to translate *smṛti*, to recall or be presently mindful of. The word did not have as yet a negative connotation in the classical period, but by Han, under the influence of *yin-yang* classification, the mind (*hsin*) is aligned with *yang* and *nien* (and a host of other mental functions like *i* and *lü*) came to be regarded as *yin*. Such mental activities distract the mind from its originally passive, wholesome state. The mind becomes active, extroverted and restless in its mental activities (*nien*). This *yin-yang* division parallels the more basic one attending *hsing* and *ch'ing*. The Music chapter of the *Book of Rites* says:

A human being at birth (*sheng*) is passive; this is his nature. In contact with things, [emotions] are activated; this is the desiring aspect of his nature.<sup>43</sup>

The *yang* nature is the *pen*,<sup>bs</sup> basis; the *yin* emotions are *mo*,<sup>bt</sup> the subsequents. One should always preserve or return to the *pen* and not be misled by the *mo*. In the psyche, this means abiding with the passive mind, *hsin*, and not being pulled down by the active *nien*. In Han thought, the Sage abides with the *pen* so much so that he is said to be *wu-ch'ing*,<sup>bu</sup> without emotions. He is impassive as impartial Heaven itself. Although the original ideal in Confucian anthropology is not to eliminate feelings (*jen-ch'ing*<sup>bv</sup>) altogether but to find the harmony between *hsing* and *ch'ing* (cf. the *Doctrine of the Mean*), post-Han thought leans more and more toward ascetical denial, being more aware of the harm



the *i* or the *nien* can do to the immobile mind. When the AFM describes the mind as basically *pu-tung* (not moving) and blames all deluded movements, *wang-tung*, on the *nien*, it is following this Han tradition much more than any known legitimate Indian Buddhist precedent.



The structural continuity is diagrammed above. The disjunction of having *yang* and passivity together on the “noumenal” side is a problem native to the Han classificatory system itself.

*Wu-nien* is an early Chinese Buddhist ideal, a gateway to *nirvāṇa* and enlightenment long before Chinese knew all the fine points about *vikalpa* as the differentiating consciousness. *Wu-nien* was used as is, with no apology, and in need of no prefix, i.e. *wu-wang-nien* (*avikalpa*). Together with *i* (a close cousin of *nien*, meaning also the first stirring of mind), *nien* was understood as the incipient thought in the early *An-pān shou-i* (Ānāpāna) meditative tradition. K’ang Seng-hui’s<sup>bw</sup> preface to this *sūtra* describes the freedom gained through the four *dhyānas*, or how the extraneous *nien* or defiled *i-nien* can be finally removed:

The mind is then controlled. The *nien* (thought process) has been reversed. The various *skandhas* are dead. This is called “returning.” The various desires having died down, the mind is *wu-hsiang* (without thought). This is called “purity.”<sup>44</sup>

*Vikalpa* is not an issue here. The *Lankāvatāra sūtra* was then unknown, even to India. In the running commentary to the first chapter of the *Ming-tu-ching*<sup>bx</sup> (Chih Ch’ien<sup>by</sup> polished retranslation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*)<sup>45</sup> from the same period (ca. 222-229), we encounter the same general use of *nien* and *wu-nien* by the commentator.

Concerning consciousness as the root of all realities, the *Dharma-pāda* has said, “The mind is the root of all realities. All good and evil come from it. Misfortune and punishment are likewise due to consciousness.” When (our) *skandhas* are flawed (by desires and activity), we cannot recognize the truth of *wu-nien*. *Wu-nien* is without a source.<sup>46</sup>

Not only is *wu-nien* beginningless, the emergence of the first thought or *nien* from the originally *wu-nien* mind is just as mysterious. Since *nien* gives rise to life and death of phenomena (*jāti-nirōdha*), the reversal of *nien* is freely seen as the negation of life and death or *samsāra* (*sheng-mieh*):

By activity is meant the mind of life and death (*samsāra*). The dark *skandhas* give rise secretly to the *nien*. Erase the *nien* and one can, in one step, attain the *wu-pu-wei*<sup>bz</sup> (the *wu-wei*, nonaction, that is *wu-pu-wei*, accomplishing all).<sup>47</sup>

The *Ming-tu* commentary contains more explanations of the native concepts of *i* and *nien*. Examples from this early period can be multiplied, but perhaps the most lucid usage that reveals its link with the *Po-hu-tung* is from Hsi Ch'ao,<sup>ca</sup> a student of Chih Tun,<sup>cb</sup> in the fourth century. In his *Feng-fa-yao*<sup>cc</sup> (*Essentials of Faith*), he returns to the familiar theme of the mind as the creator of all realities, spoken of by the *Dharmapāda*.<sup>48</sup> The word *i* (intention) is often chosen in this period to render that active side of *citta* (mind, *cetana*, will) as well as the psychic predispositions, *samskāra*, in the twelve *nidānas*.

The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* says: All the various *dharma*s take form (*hsing*) according to *i* (intention, thought).<sup>cd</sup> The sign of good fortune stirs (within) as the incipient elements and the affairs (of the world) respond accordingly as the result. As a *nien* rises, there is *yu*<sup>ce</sup> (being). As a *lü* ceases, there is *wu*<sup>ct</sup> (nonbeing). Where the *i* (intentions) is at peace, all encounters run smoothly. Where the *ch'ing* (feelings) are obstructed, hazards abound. Therefore it is said: Causes for penetration and impediment lie within ourselves and not in things.<sup>49</sup>

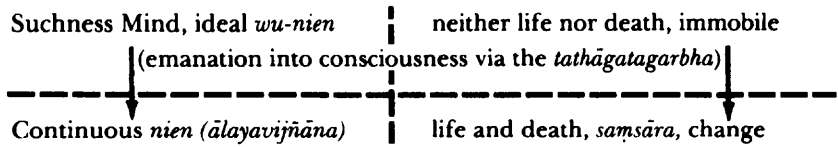
It is also said:

In his mind (the man of the Way) should guard against the tiniest beginning of *lü*. With the ultimate *li* (Principle) as his castle, he commands over the fundamental (*pen*) and restrains the secondaries (*mo*, subsequents). He would not, prior to the events taking shape (*hsing*), ever so lightly arouse any *hsin-nien* (mental thoughts).<sup>50</sup>

Here we see the more detailed parallel structure to the *Po-Hu-tung*:

changeless <i>li</i> (Principle)	passive <i>hsing</i> (nature)	formless <i>wu</i> (nonbeing)	<i>pen</i> (origin)
active <i>ch'ing</i> (emotions)	<i>i</i> (intention) <i>nien</i> (thought) <i>lü</i> (pondering)	<i>yu</i> (being) <i>hsing</i> (form)	<i>mo</i> (subsequents)

The same structure then emerges in the AFM in the form of:



Decidedly the AFM structure is much more complicated. The descent from *pen* (*hsin*, mind) into the *mo* (subsequent consciousness) alone is extremely intricate. Suchness is also given a double aspect just under the effable side of its essence: the *śūnya* and the *aśūnya* (empty and not empty) etc. Still, the sinic stamp of aligning *hsin* (mind) with an invariable principle (Suchness) and *shih* (consciousness)—and the culpable *nien*—with momentary changes is unmistakable. There is indeed this basic thread running through Han reflection on *hsin-nien* and the AFM quasi-Yogācāra psychology. The key concepts of *nien* and *wu-nien* in the AFM cannot be understood outside this native framework.

### *Reasons for the Redaction of the AFM into the AFMS*

The above study shows that *nien* and *wu-nien* are problematical concepts in the AFM. They have defied the Sanskritist's attempts at direct correlation because they contain elements drawn from a Chinese pre-Buddhist use of the term. We have seen how Hakeda has repeatedly tried to make sense of the terms by remolding them so as to accord with Indian logic. The same motivation lies behind the AFMS redaction of the AFM. Within fifty years after the appearance of the AFM in China, there were already charges that the AFM was a six-century forgery by the masters of the *Daśabhūmika śāstra* in the North. The criticism came from the Saṃgraha school founded by Paramārtha in the South. Hsüan-tsang was frustrated enough with this unsettled controversy, so it is said, that he went to India to bring back the definitive answer. Due

to his translation of the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi*, Ch'eng Wei-shih-lun,<sup>49</sup> the AFM was further discredited. We might never know who produced the AFMS or even where, but the AFMS preface shows what might be the motive for producing it. There the AFMS is said to be translated under Śikṣānanda into two scrolls:

However, there are discrepancies between it and the older translation. This may be due to the different intention of the translators or that there might be different Sanskrit originals.<sup>51</sup>

These are still the reasons offered by people for arguing Indian authorship. I think the real reason is found in this other statement:

The more mysterious the principle, the more difficult it is for people to believe it. The more sacred the Way, the more active is the Devil (who seeks to discredit it). How much more so in this defiled and degenerate age! Therefore men of biased opinions, holding on to the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi*, denounce this work (and its doctrine of) the mutual perfuming of Suchness and *avidyā*. (The ineffable truth) being given in words can be obstructed because of the audience of that time. The previous dew of *Mahāyāna* can thus be turned (by irresponsible persons) into poison.<sup>52</sup>

The preface then listed canonical justification for what the AFM preface characterized as its unique message of *ju-li yüan-ch'i* ch (causality from out of the suchness principle).<sup>53</sup> The AFMS was probably produced in China, during that debate or in Wŏnhyo's ci Korea, known for "harmonious" teachings.

Given these remarks in the AFMS preface, I would suggest that the AFMS was authored to counter the attacks of the new Wei-shih school. At that time, someone, comparable to Hakeda in our time, tried to rectify the AFM by rendering it in such a way that it would not be too offensive to the better Yogācāra rationality. Those troublesome passages involving *nien* and *wu-nien* were therefore changed, to make the text "acceptable." It is not that the redactor consciously changed the text. He sincerely believed that the AFM concurred with the *Vijñaptimātratā-siddhi* logic but had a deeper message. The discrepancies, he thought, could be smoothed out. In the end, they cannot be smoothed out. The AFMS is so much love labour's lost. It never attracted the attention that the AFM did, nor resolved the conflict. The conflict between AFM and Wei-shih was a standoff. Fa-tsang then defended

the superiority of the Fa-hsing<sup>cl</sup> position of the AFM and henceforth demoted Wei-shih to the dubious inferiority of Fa-hsiang<sup>ck</sup> . . . All that, however, would belong to another study for another occasion.<sup>54</sup>

## NOTES

1. Given as *jen*<sup>cl</sup> (thus often translated as "man's original nature"); it could be *ju*<sup>cm</sup> ("to enter"). Translation mine.
2. Mochizuki, *Daijō kishinron no kenkyū*<sup>cn</sup> (Kyoto, 1922).
3. Ongoing project since my dissertation (Harvard, 1975).
4. Mochizuki suggests Korea because of the discovery of the AFMS in Korea.
5. Suzuki, *Śvaghosa's Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahayana* (Chicago: Open Court, 1900), p. 56.
6. *Op. cit.* (London: Rider & Co., 1949), pp. 29-30, 56.
7. Gernet, *Entretiens du Maître de Dhyana Chen-houei du Ho-tso* (Hanoi, 1949), pp. 12-13, note 5. He offers the French "absence de pensée."
8. Yampolsky, *The Platform Sutra of The Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia Uni. Press, 1967), pp. 137-39, with note 69 devoted to *wu-nien*.
9. Hakeda, *Awakening of Faith Attributed to Śvaghosa* (New York: Columbia Uni. Press, 1967), p. 73 note.
10. Kashiwagi Hiroo failed to do this in his "Shikushananda no yaku to tsutaareru Daijō kishinron," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū*, 10.2 (1962), pp. 124-25.
11. Another test-case is AFMS' redaction of the "water-wave" metaphor.
12. T. 44, p. 579c.
13. T. 44, p. 576ab.
14. Often taken in China to mean *nirvāṇa*, but AFMS might have in mind the original dialectics of Mādhyamika.
15. Suzuki trans. cit., p. 104. Unwarranted reading.
16. T. 44, p. 588a.
17. Hakeda, trans. cit., pp. 72-73.
18. The passive voice is not intended; the AFMS of Suzuki is probably the model.
19. T. 44, p. 580a.
20. Hakeda, trans. cit., p. 41.
21. Dealt with in my dissertation.

22. T. 44, p. 577c.
23. Hakeda, trans. cit., p. 51.
24. The more immediate precedent of *hu-jan* is Hsi Ch'ao's *Feng-fa-yao* or, further back, Kuo Hsiang's use of *k'uai-jan*;<sup>CO</sup> this issue is to be dealt with in companion pieces on "*hu-jan nieh-ch'i*"<sup>CP</sup> in the AFM.
25. Suzuki, trans. cit., p. 79.
26. *Platform sūtra* but only in the later popular version.
27. T. 44, p. 576b and Hakeda, trans. cit., p. 39.
28. Suzuki, trans. cit., p. 65.
29. *A Source Book of Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton Uni. Press, 1963), p. 435.
30. As reported by Chi-tsang<sup>CQ</sup> in his *Chung-lun-shu*.<sup>CF</sup>
31. T. 52, p. 19b.
32. T. 52, p. 34b.
33. T. 52, p. 30c.
34. From my translation in an ongoing study of his *Ming-fo-lun*,<sup>CS</sup> T. 52, p. 18c.
35. From his *Wang shih-fei-lun*,<sup>CT</sup> see my translation in "T'an-ch'ien and the Early Ch'an Tradition," *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. by W. Lai and Lewis Lancaster, forthcoming from the Berkeley Buddhist Series.
36. T. 44, pp. 577b, 586a.
37. AFM gives *k'o-nien*<sup>CU</sup> ("can be thought of"); AFMS gives the preferred *so-nien*<sup>CV</sup> ("that which is being thought of"); see T. 44, pp. 576a, 584c.
38. Touchy issue in the AFM philosophy. Wōnhyo<sup>CW</sup> realized that to posit this is contrary to the logic of Yogācāra as listed in the *Samgraha*.
39. Translation slightly different from one offered earlier.
40. See translation by Tjan Tjoe Som, *Po Hu Tung*, in *Sinica Leidensia* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952).
41. My translation; compare *ibid.*, vol. II, p. 565.
42. T'ang, *Han-Wei liang-Chin Nan-pei-chao Fo-chiao-shih* (Peking reissue: Chung hua, 1955).
43. My translation; see Theodore de Bary ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia Uni. Press, 1960), p. 168.
44. T. 55, p. 43b. *Wu-hsiang* is close to meaning *wu-nien*.
45. T. 8, no. 225, pp. 478-508.
46. T. 8, p. 480b. From my completed translation of this running commentary.
47. T. 8, p. 479a.
48. The first chapter in the Pali *Dhammapāda*.
49. My translation, from T. 52, p. 88b; compare Zürcher's version in *op. cit.*, I, p. 172.
50. My translation, from T. 52, p. 87a; compare Zürcher's, *ibid.*, p. 167.
51. T. 52, p. 583c.
52. *Ibid.*
53. T. 52, p. 575a.
54. See my "Fa-tsang's<sup>CX</sup> Criticism of Wei-shih," paper read at the national conference of the Association for Asian Studies (1979) in the North American Buddhist Association session; this is based on a translation of the *hsin-shih-lun*<sup>CY</sup> chapter in the *Wu-chiao-chang*,<sup>CZ</sup> see also an accompanying piece to the present study, "Suddenly a Thought Rose: Chinese Understanding of Mind and Consciousness" (mn., 1980).

## Chinese Glossary

a 念	aa 支慳度	ba 遠離	ca 郝超
b 無念	ab 心無	bb 四相	cb 支遁
c 無相	ac 何承天	bc 生住異滅	cc 奉法嬰
d 無住	ad 仁	bd 生滅	cd 隨意生形
e 人	ae 慧遠	be 念念生滅	ce 有
f 大乘起信論	af 生	bf 心識之相	cf 無
g 望月信亨	ag 性	bg 安心	cg 成唯識論
h 常盤大定	ah 神	bh 性情	ch 如理緣起
i 唯識	ai 心	bi 白虎通	ci 元曉
j 玄奘	aj 宗炳	bj 陽	cj 法性
k 禪	ak 是非	bk 陰	ck 法相
l 離念	al 念念相續	bl 靜	cl 人
m 鈴木大拙	am 不常	bm 性	cm 人
n 念佛	an 相續心	bn 生	cn 大乘起信論之研究
o 無心	ao 相續識	bo 時念	co 塊然
p 妄	ap 可念	bp 理	cp 忽然念起
q 妄想	aq 能念	bq 湯用彤	cq 吉藏
r 分別	ar 安般守意經	br 念慮	cr 中論疏
s 名字相	as 所念	bs 本	cs 明佛論
r 動	ar 虛妄心念	bt 末	ct 亡是非論
u 不變	au 離心	bu 無情	cu 可念
v 忽然	av 覺	bv 人情	cv 所念
w 念真如	aw 念異	bw 康僧會	cw 元曉
x 莊子	ax 念無異	bx 明度經	cx 法藏
y 郭象	ay 念住	by 支謙	cy 心識論
z 曇遷	az 一念	bz 無不為	cz 五教章