

Chapter IV

The Similarities and Differences of Meditation Techniques Between Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions

The preceding chapters have introduced meditation practices in the Pāli and Chinese Canons, as well as the meditation techniques prevalent in Thai and Chinese Buddhism, from all of which we can find that in different Buddhist traditions there are different meditation practices developing. Meditation techniques of Theravāda Buddhism are mainly from Pāli Language Buddhism, especially the Tambapaṇṇiya School, while the early meditation techniques in Chinese Buddhism are mainly from the Sarvāstivāda School along with the translation of the sūtras concerning meditation from this School, but later a great change happened because of the influence from Mahāyāna thoughts. Meditation techniques in Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions, or meditation techniques prevalent in Thailand and China, though both are from the Buddha, differ from each other not only in the meditation subjects and process, but also in the aim they work on. This chapter will analyze the similarities and differences between them.

4.1 The Similarities and Differences of Meditation Techniques Between Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions

4.1.1 Comparison of the Way to Organize Meditation in Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions

The section will investigate how the practices of meditation techniques are organized in Thai and Chinese Buddhism.

4.1.1.1 Life Style: Forest Dwelling or Village Dwelling

In the middle of 19th century, though there were various meditation traditions existing in Thai Buddhism, people's spiritual life degraded. They were not only lax in observation of precepts, and were also uninterested in practicing Samadhi more than before. Perhaps most importantly, most of the contemporary Buddhists held the idea that no one could attain the Nibbāna, even attaining Jhāna was not considered possible, so there was a ground swell of meditation movements lead by the above-mentioned meditation masters and their techniques.

At that time, some monks dwelling in the forest still practiced meditation by living an austere life and strictly observing the precepts. They followed the 13 ascetic practices, spending days and nights in the remote forest practicing meditation, so monks in the villages and cities realized it was a good way to learn from these forest-dwellers to eliminate the problem of lax precepts observation in contemporary Thai Sangha. However, it is extremely difficult to follow the ascetic life in isolated places, and also it is not feasible to separate all the Sangha from local lay people, so they combined the two lifestyles, forest-dwelling and village-dwelling together to build meditation monasteries in some forest near the villages. They moved the meditation places from isolated forest into some easily-reached places. In the typical Thai Forest Practice Lineage, from Ajarn Chah, abandoning the life of wandering in the forest, they lived in temples like Wat Pah Pong though keeping to the austere lifestyle. By reclaiming the system of Three-Fold Training and the importance of precepts and concentration in pursuing wisdom, in some sense, urged the Sangha to pay more attention to the precepts.

For lay Buddhists, they found improvement in the Thai Sangha and became more and more confident in following the Buddhist path. More and more monks who strictly kept the precepts and had excellent accomplishments in Samadhi cultivation appeared. They cultivated a

number of outstanding disciples who later propagated their techniques together with them. Because of the charisma of these monks, as Scott wrote in his book “*Nirvāṇa for Sale: Buddhism, Wealth, and the Dhammakāya Temple in Contemporary Thailand*”, as early as the 1960s, urban lay Buddhists began to patronize monks in the Thai periphery whose authority and supra-normal powers stemmed from their skills in meditation and ascetic practices, not from their level of education or title within the centralized system.¹ And for the same reason, a great number of practitioners were attracted to join meditation courses. On the other hand, the moving out of meditation centers from remote forests opened a new door for village-dwelling monks and lay Buddhists. Most importantly, the meditation masters and the meditation monasteries were not out of reach and mysterious anymore, as we were able to see how they lived their lives and how the meditation monasteries ran, and it became very easy to travel to meditation monasteries and take courses there. This laicized the legitimating ascetic practice tradition. Previously, monks attained supernatural experiences by undertaking ascetic Dhutanga practices in intensive meditation retreats while pious Thai Buddhists patronized these forest monks in the hope of garnering merit for their generosity, but now the laity tapped directly into the power of forest practice through their own meditation.

What is more, in the traditional Theravāda Buddhism, it was believed practicing alone in an isolated environment was indispensable for the achievement of Nibbāna, as it helped to separate the meditators from busy daily life and enabled them to focus solely on meditation. However, though they still preferred to practice alone for beginners, the new meditation movement brought meditation into normal people’s life. They claimed that meditation did not mean to isolate oneself, and also it did not require abandoning daily life, but to live a usual life no matter

¹Scott, M.Rachelle, *Nirvāṇa for Sale: Buddhism, Wealth, and the Dhammakāya Temple in Contemporary Thailand*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009), P.63.

living in the forest or in busy cities, no matter being a monk or a lay person, everyone could attain enlightenment.

The situation in modern Chinese Buddhism is similar. During the 19th and 20th centuries, Master Xuyun promoted the practice system of “Sila, Samatha and Prajñā”. In modern Chinese Buddhism, monks were lax in the observation of precepts. Because of the promotion of “No-form precepts”, concrete precepts were rejected in Chan meditation practice. On the contrary, Xuyun insisted that precepts should be observed strictly. He underlined the importance of precepts by saying “meditator should keep the precepts as precepts are the basis of the supreme Bodhi. If one keeps the precepts, no matter whether he meditates, practices Nian-fo or talks about the texts, all are Buddha Dharma. If one departs from the precepts, even if meditating, practicing Nian-fo or talking about the texts, you are against the Buddha Dharma, and you will enter an alien path.”² He also said, “no matter which method you follow, you should always take precepts as the foundation.”³ He handed down the precepts to his disciples very strictly, and he personally was well-known for his lifelong ascetic practice, and according to some records, he showed super-natural talents or powers very often because of his attainment of deep concentration.

On the other hand, his disciple Jinghui realized the crisis faced by contemporary meditation practice. He found that meditation techniques were mainly practiced in remote forests and fewer and fewer people were interested in meditating. What is more, Xuyun’s ascetic practice was extremely difficult for normal people. Jinghui was impressed by Taixu’s description of the serious isolation between Chinese Buddhism and the real world. Therefore, he proposed his concept of “Sheng-huo

²Cen, Xuelv, ed, 《虚云和尚法汇年谱集》 (**A Chronicle of Xuyun’s Dharma life**), (Nantou: Chung Tai Shan Buddhist Foundation, 1999), p.325.

³Cen, Xuelv, ed, 《虚云和尚年谱》 (**A Chronicle of Xuyun’s life**), (Taiwan: The Great Compassion Buddhist Books, 1989), p158.

Chan” on the basis of Patriarchal Chan meditation and Taixu’s theory of “Engaged Buddhism” in 1992, and succeeded in holding the First Summer Camp of Life Chan in 1993. His “Shenghuo Chan” is to apply Chan’s spirit and wisdom to life in order to attain transcendence and embody Chan spirit in life. The tenet of “Shenghuo Chan” is “Awakening life, devoting your life”, emphasizing “practicing meditation in daily life and living in meditation practice”, in order to concretely embody belief in daily life, embody practice in the present moment, implement the Buddha Dharma in the real world, and bring individuals back to society.⁴

Meditation masters left the forests to bring meditation techniques to people in the cities. This trend displayed a linkage between urban lay religiosity and forest monastic religiosity.⁵ It adopted the life style of forest wandering monks to solve the problems of the Sangha, and on the other hand, used the way to run a village monastery to spread meditation techniques.

4.1.1.2 Organizational Form

The meditation practices are mainly followed in two ways: meditate individually and meditate in a group. Though personal meditation is very important as many eminent monks attained their accomplishments by meditating alone in the remote forests, its impact appears limited, as a large-scale spread and development of meditation practice depend more upon group meditation. It is indispensable to have a relatively fixed abode for group meditation, or sustained growth is nearly impossible. The Thai and Chinese meditators take charge of their meditation centers in quite different ways.

Firstly, meditation courses in Thailand are normally provided by various meditation centers. For example, there are fixed meditation

⁴Jinghui, 《中国佛教与生活禅》(**Chinese Buddhism and Shenghuo Chan**), (Beijing: Religion and Culture Press, 2005), p.121.

⁵ Scott, M.Rachelle, Op.cit, P.63.

centers teaching the meditation techniques mentioned in Chapter II respectively. These meditation centers can be roughly divided into two kinds. One is the meditation centers which are affiliated with some famous temples, in the way a temple built a meditation center to introduce some meditation techniques. The most representative one of this type is the Section 5 Meditation Centre in Mahathat Temple in Bangkok. Mahathat Temple, built in the Ayutthaya Period (1351-1767), is one of the six temples of the highest grade of first Royal temples. The Section 5 Meditation Centre was not been founded until the Mahasi Meditation system was brought in from Myanmar in the 1960s. The second type includes meditation centers built to meet the growth of some meditation techniques. It was built to accommodate the increasing number of meditators. Most of them are also named Wat (temple), though there are no fabulous halls or Buddha images inside, and take teaching and practicing meditation as their main task in daily life. Wat Phra Dhammakāya, Suan Mokkhabalarama(Suan Mokkh), Wat Pah Pong, etc., mentioned in Chapter II were founded owing to the meditation masters' accomplishments in meditation practice and their personal charisma. Limited to the scale of original temples, the meditation centers belonging to the first type are usually not so large, and the administration cannot be isolated from the temples. The second type is normally bigger as they are not attached to any temple and built in some new location. However, for that very reason these meditation centers are quite far away from the city. Wat Phra Dhammakāya is located 20 km from Bangkok, Mokkhabalarama (Suan Mokkh) and Wat Pah Pong were built in remote forests, and Wat Sanamrai was constructed in a small forest on the outskirts of Bangkok (however, because of the urban development in recent years, the area Wat Sanamrai is located in has already become one part of the city.) Most meditators in the meditation centers which are in or near towns or cities are not able to concentrate due to a lot of people coming and going, but also strict forest-dwelling is not easy for normal people in modern society, so the ways of town-dwelling and forest-dwelling are mixed in some new meditation centers.

However, whatever the styles, all meditation centers take meditation practice as their task of primary importance, providing free meditation courses for monks and the laity. The meditation centers have all the necessary fittings, and it is possible to put meditators up at night. There are experienced and expert meditation masters scheduling and instructing meditation courses, and also groups of laity responsible for the day-to-day management of meditation centers, such as receiving donations, preparing meals, doing the cleaning up and so on. The current operating expense of meditation centers mainly depends on donations by meditators, as meditation centers by themselves have no income. Meditation instruction is offered every day, and intense meditation courses are also organized very often, 10 days, 15 days, 30 days or even for months. Some meditation centers hold intense meditation courses regularly from the 1st to the 10th of each month while some organize courses on some important festivals, both of which attract participants many times over the normal days, with the participants being predominantly the laity.

In Chinese Buddhism, meditation courses are mostly organized by temples, with very few special meditation centers built. Meditation practice in Chinese Buddhism is composed of two main parts. The first part is routine meditation practice. Most of the meditators follow the way “preach Dhamma in the day time and meditate at night” or “take meditation as the main work in the slack seasons”,⁶ while very few of them could manage to work on meditation all the time. Meditation practices in the Chinese Sangha are always mixed with daily life, what Chinese meditation masters promoted as “meditate in daily life, and live within meditation”. Meditation and daily life go together, as only some specific periods of time could be spent on meditation in a meditation hall. It is advised in “The One Hundred Records of Guoqing Monastery” (《国清百录》) and the “Lotus Samadhi Repentance Ritual” (《法华三昧忏仪》) that monks should “meditate at four times and worship the Buddha at six

⁶ CBETA, T46, n1941, p.953c.

times”,⁷ thinking that “four-time-meditating cannot be totally given up, as long time sitting meditation is very indispensable”. “Master Yongping’s Monastic Rules” (《永平清规》) interprets that the four times mentioned are 8pm, 2am, 10am and 4pm, at which times monks should meditate together in the meditation hall.

The second part is intense group meditation, normally called “Chan-qi” (Chan Seven). “Chan-qi” originated from the Chan School, but now temples belonging to other Buddhist Schools also organize it. “Chan-qi” means meditators practice in meditation halls in a unit or units of seven days, and the maximum time of the retreat can be seven units, that is 49 days at most. Participants are doing these intense, strict meditation courses to improve their accomplishments in meditation. Temples normally schedule “Chan-qi” in the latter part of the year, especially around the Winter Solstice, when it is the slack season so that there is no farm work. The organizers, administrators and participants are mainly the monks or nuns from the same temple. The participants do fast walking meditation, sitting meditation and listen to Dharma talks during the retreat. Standing meditation and kneeling meditation are also allowed in order to eliminate sloth and torpor. Meditators participate in fast walking meditation and walking meditation together following the schedule of the organizer in “Chan-qi”. In Thai meditation centers, however, meditators only listen to Dharma talks and meditation technique instruction together, but arrange their walking meditation and sitting meditation by themselves.

Temples of the Pure Land School also organize Nian-fo Retreats, which also take seven days as a unit, with seven days being the shorter and 49 days the maximum. In contrast with the Nian-fo in daily life, these intense retreats help participants to improve quickly as cut off from interruptions.

⁷ CBETA, T46, n1934, p.793c.

In Thai meditation centers, the level of laity's participation in meditation practice is much higher than that in meditation halls in Chinese Buddhism. They are not only the main participants, but also the managers of the daily affairs of meditation centers as already mentioned. The Vinaya (monks' discipline) has very strict rules about monks' daily life in Theravāda Buddhism, with activities such as planting, cooking and driving all prohibited, and it is difficult for the Thai public to accept Monks' over-involvement in social affairs, so the laity are mainly responsible for Dhamma affairs. A managing committee that is mainly composed of laity is founded to take care of daily affairs in every meditation center. On the other hand, the re-interpretation of traditional Vinaya by Chinese Buddhism broke the shackles that prevent the Sangha to take care of their own daily affairs. The new monastic rules encourage the Sangha to be responsible for their own life, so the Sangha are in charge of meditation courses in Chinese temples. The Laity are only volunteers to assist the Sangha with the administration. Now there are activities such as Life Chan Camp, at which the laity are taught meditation, but still, there are very limited numbers of laity who attend. These activities are held by temples and monks.

4.1.2 Comparison of Theoretical Basis for Thai and Chinese Buddhist Meditation Techniques

The Thai and Chinese meditation traditions vary in the way to organize meditation practice. However, it is even more meaningful to study the differences in their ideas about Buddhist doctrine other than the differences in form, as it is more essential and helps to understand the objectives behind their practices.

4.1.2.1 Traditional Scriptural Studies

When the Buddha was going to pass away, he asked his disciples to be a refuge unto themselves and take Dhamma as their refuge,

rather than seeking any external refuge after his passing away. He explicitly advised that the Dhamma should be the only teacher, so great importance is attached to the scriptures that record the Buddha's teachings and familiarity with the scriptures is regarded as a basic skill for being a Buddhist. For monks, the study of the scripture is a compulsory course, as firstly they are the inheritors of the Dhamma, who should be able to preach the Buddha Dhamma to Buddhists. In the traditional Buddhist ideal, a monk spent the first part of his career studying the texts and transmitting them to the next generation of monks. In the final third of his life, he pursued Nibbāna by meditating for individual salvation.⁸

Having studied the biographies of the leading meditation masters, we can easily find that they all spent their early days in the monkhood studying scriptures. They also learnt Pāli language to master the skill to translate the scriptures. Later in their life as meditation masters, some of their instructions rigidly followed the scriptures while some primarily depended on their personal experiences. However, for the four main groups of meditation techniques found in Thailand, whether mixed with own personal experiences or not, we can find all of them try to find themselves a theoretical basis from the scriptures. Though, some innovation has happened in most of them, no one is brave enough to claim a complete invention of a new technique without the guidance of the scriptures.

However, when these meditation masters began to organize meditation courses, they lowered their standards by not requiring the meditators to study scriptures before practice. They thought the studying of scriptures was not necessary in meditation. Luangpor Teean said in chapter one of his book "Manual of Self-Awareness", "we do not have to thoroughly read the scriptures because they are only words. Studying the

⁸ Jordt, Ingrid, **Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement: Buddhism and Cultural Construction of Power**, (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), p.17.

scriptures is not the way to enlightenment”⁹, pointing out the practice is the way to enlightenment but not scriptural studies. Some meditation masters even hold the idea that reading scriptures like the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta before meditation is not beneficial, because if meditators know the process in advance, they will be eager for instant success and quick profits by forcing themselves to finish each step quickly. Mahasi Sayadaw pointed out that meditation with an air of expectancy would be very dangerous. What is more, if only the phenomena mentioned in the scriptures are sought, the special phenomena appearing will be neglected.

The reason for the relatively minor importance of the scriptural studies in practice, in my opinion, is to encourage additional participation and fully propagate the meditation movement. In the 19th century, the revival of the meditation movement happened in a very special period, when monastic education had decayed so that people were no longer going to temples to study traditional culture. More and more people received Western-style education and became unfamiliar with traditional culture, let alone the unintelligible scriptures. Reasonably lowering the importance of scriptures is kind of knocking down the barriers which isolate potential participants.

Chinese meditation masters’ ideas about doctrinal study vary in different Buddhist schools and even change in the different periods of the same School. In the Tiantan School, the same attention is paid to scriptural study and practice, and the construction of a religious and philosophical theoretical system has long been the basis for this School, so the learning and teaching of its scriptures and teachings are never neglected, though the importance of philosophical theory had been relatively reduced because of the prevalence of practices such as Nian-fo, Worship and repentance after the Song Dynasty.

⁹ Jittasubho, Teean, **A Manual of Self-Awareness**, (Bangkok: Luangpor Teean Jittasubho Foundation, 1994), p.17.

The Pure Land School is founded on the basis of thoughts from the three Pure Land sūtras Amitābha Sūtra (《阿弥陀经》), Aparimitayur Sūtra (《无量寿经》), and Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra (《观无量寿经》), and in the early days, a theoretical system was an important issue. In actual practice, three factors of Nian-fo are focused on, that is, belief, vows and action. “Belief” is to believe in the real existence of the Pure Land, and with Amitābha’s vows, rebirth in the Pure Land is possible by the recitation of Amitābha’s name. “Vows” means the meditator has the wish to reborn in the Pure Land. “Action” means the cultivation of virtue and goodness and recitation of Amitābha’s name should be really put into practice. When these three factors have been satisfied, it is possible for the meditator to be reborn in the Pure Land. The study of scriptures and Buddha’s teaching is therefore not paid much attention to, and this is also one of the reasons why people at the grass roots are widely attracted to join the Pure Land practice.

The situation in the Chan School is much more complicated. At the beginning, Bodhidharma transmitted dharma to his successor Huike with The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra in four fascicles, on the basis of which Daoxin assimilated Mahāprajñāpāramitā Mañjuśrīparivarta (Manjusri Bodhisattva Discourse on the Prajnaparamita Sūtra 《文殊说般若经》). Huineng attained his enlightenment immediately when he heard someone reciting The Diamond Sūtra, and Shenxiu of the North School also quoted sentences from sūtras and commentaries in his speeches. Therefore, it is not fair to judge that Buddhist scriptures were neglected at the beginning. Neither can we say the studies of Buddhist Scriptures and Buddha’s teachings were paid much attention to and were taken as the theoretical basis for building their own system.

However, if read in detail, we can find the tradition of “separate transmission outside of the texts” and “did not rely upon texts” had already been initiated from Bodhidharma’s time. When Bodhidharma was asked, “if the Nature of reality has not been seen, can I attain

Buddhahood by practicing Nian-fo, chanting, donating, observing precepts and collecting virtues?” he answered, “No, you can’t.”¹⁰ Bodhidharma also said, “my dharma is directly transmitted from mind to mind; do not establish written words or texts.”¹¹ This means that the transmission of Dharma in Chan Buddhism does not depend on texts, but transmission from mind to mind is focused on. It requires being directed right to the original mind. The Third Patriarch Sengcan said to the Fourth Patriarch Daoxin, “the Noble Path is so abstruse that we cannot catch it with language; the Dharma-body is empty that we cannot touch it by seeing or hearing. Words or languages are only established for nothing.”¹² The tradition of “Not based on the written word” (不立文字) was paid even more attention to until Huineng’s time, and was widely promoted as an important principle for the Chan School. “The Jingde Period Record of The Transmission of the Lamp” records,

When Huineng obtained the Dharma at Huangmei and returned to Saozhou, he met a bhikṣuṇī constantly reciting the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra. When he heard it, he instantly grasped its wonderful principle and explained it to her. The bhikṣuṇī held out a scroll and asked him about some characters because of his familiarity with Buddha’s teachings. Huineng said, “I cannot read; please ask me about the meaning.” “If you can’t even read, how can you understand the meaning?” asked the bhikṣuṇī. Huineng replied, “The wonderful mysteries of Buddhist enlightenment have nothing to do with the written word.”¹³

“Biographies of Eminent Monks Compiled in Song Dynasty” (《宋高僧传》) also records Huineng’s words, “if we judge the Buddha’s teachings according to words, it is not the Buddha’s opinion.”¹⁴ There are

¹⁰ CBETA, T48, n2009, p.374a.

¹¹ CBETA, T44, n1848, p.307a.

¹² CBETA, T85, n2837, p.1286b.

¹³ CBETA, T51, n2076, p.0235b.

¹⁴ CBETA, T50, n2061, p.754c.

also many words and sentences referring to the idea of “Not based on the written word” in The Platform Sūtra, such as “they know that Prajñā is inherent in their Essence of Mind and that they need not rely on scriptural authority, since they can make use of their own wisdom by constant practice of contemplation”,¹⁵ or “Purity has no form or mark and yet there are those who set up the mark of purity as an achievement. Those with this view obstruct their own original nature and become bound by purity”.¹⁶ In Huineng’s idea of Buddha-Nature, we should throw off the shackles of external forms such as language and words, or we will be trapped in them and cannot realize the Buddha dharma and attain Buddhahood.

In Huineng’s time, language and words served as the instruments to understand the Buddha’s teachings, so when we have the capacity to understand and interpret the Buddha’s teachings, they can be abandoned. However, from Huineng’s disciples, the principle of “separate transmission outside of the texts; do not rely upon texts” was taken to an extreme.

In fact, it is not fair to generalize about attitudes to the study of scriptures and Buddhist teachings by Huineng’s disciples, which can be roughly divided into two groups. The first group is the Shehui’s Lineage, who equally valued the Buddha’s teachings and meditation practice. They thought it was necessary to study Buddhist texts and establish additional texts for Dharma propagation. The idea held by this group is quite similar to the former patriarchs. On the other hand, the lineages led by Mazu Daoyi and Shitou Xiqian did not advocate the reading of Buddhist scriptures. For example, Mazu Daoyi’s disciple Baizhang Huaihai thought “if regarding the conditions of people, reading Buddhist sūtras and teachings will be the good deeds;”¹⁷ If not, it is better not to read

¹⁵ CBETA, T48, n2008, p.350b.

¹⁶ CBETA, T48, n2008, p.353b.

¹⁷ CBETA, T49, n2036, p.618b.

Buddhist sūtras and teachings. “Records of the Sayings of Ancient Monastic Elders” also mentions Baizhang Huaihai’s idea, “If not understanding the living or dead meaning of the sūtras, not seeing through the sentence of sūtras, it is better not to read the Buddhist sutras....Therefore, while teaching the Buddhist disciples it should not let them just read the Buddhist sūtras literally.”¹⁸ If the sūtras and teachings can be understood, it will be like the sweet dew; if not, it will like poison, which only shackles meditators. Baizhang Huaihai’s disciple Huangbo Xiyun also inherited this principle, “there is a great meditation master named (Xi)Yun...abandon the way of transmitting Dharma by words. Dharma can only be transmitted mind to mind but not in any other way...don’t do the meaning interpretation, don’t establish any authority and don’t set up any Schools.”¹⁹ Huangbo Xiyun’s disciple, meditation master Chunan thought the path to enlightenment is very easy and it is not necessary to read sūtras and study Buddhist teachings by saying “only put on clothes and eat. There is no need to read sūtras and study Buddhist teachings and no need to practice, worship, or burn some parts of the body. Isn’t it easy?”²⁰ And from the new meditation practices such as Gong-an (Koan), and Bang-he (the stick and the shout) which became popular from Mazu Daoyi’s time, reading sūtras and studying Buddhist teachings are not necessary. Silent Illumination Chan Meditation promoted by Hongzhi Zhengjue also refuses to using language and words. The meditation practice in the Chan School is ultimately on the mind or Buddha-Nature. Fang Litian pointed out the special way to enlightenment determines whether it should transcend thinking and inference, so it will reject language and words.

However, undue abandonment of the language and words also brought problems, so later, a return to language and words was started. Yongming Yanshou (904-975), an eminent monk at the end of the Tang

¹⁸ CBETA, X68, n1315, p.6a.

¹⁹ CBETA, T51, n2076, p.270b.

²⁰ CBETA, T51, n2076, p.292b.

Dynasty, expounded, “language is the ladder to enter the path, and the Buddha’s teachings are like the carpenter’s line marker of righteousness.”²¹ Zibai Zhenke (1543-1603), a famous monk in the Ming Dynasty, pointed out the importance of language and the disadvantages of abandoning it,

“all disciples of the Buddha, if you do not have the Prajñā of languages, you will not attain the Prajñā of contemplative illumination; if you do not have the Prajñā of contemplative illumination, you will not get the Prajñā of the characteristics of actuality....nowadays, Buddhist followers in this world always want to abandon words and enter the realm of Tathāgata directly. I am afraid one cannot feed on pictures of biscuits. Words are the words of the Buddha. When contemplating the Buddha’s mind, we can realize it through the words of the Buddha. This is the way of turning a normal person into a noble person.”²²

In modern time, Yinshun also thought it is necessary to read sūtras. Ven. Xingguang introduced, “he (Yinshun) thought, we should not neglect Buddhist theories, and also all the secular knowledge which is beneficial to all the sentient beings. If we cannot absorb wisdom from Buddhist scriptures, we are not able to understand the Buddha’s teachings thoroughly and correctly; if we do not know modern knowledge, we are not able to fully develop expedient methods which are suitable to modern times.”²³ Yinshun felt regretful that there may be very few people who paid equal attention to practice and doctrinal study. He thought if we partially emphasize the practice but refuse to study Buddhist teachings, it

²¹ CBETA, T48, n2017, p.974b.

²² CBETA, X73, n1452, p.148a.

²³ Shih, Shingkuang, “The Practice of Meditation in Humanism-Oriented Buddhism: Using the Instruction in ‘the Samatha & Vipassana Meditation Retreat for Intensive Training’ as an Example”, in **Hsuan Chuang Journal of Buddhism**, (Vol.1, 2006) :p.129.

will lead Buddhism to a way that is superficial,²⁴ so we must intensify our studies of Buddhist teaching and texts.

Fang Litian concluded that the linguistic views of Chan School had largely experienced a change from Dependence-of-words to Independence-of-words and the return to Dependence-of-words.²⁵ Of course, this only refers to the development of mainstream, as in the period of Independence-of-words, there are many people advocating the Dependence-of-words, and vice versa. For example, some of Mazu Daoyi's disciples, such as Fenzhou Wuye (761-823), also advised to read the sūtras. Zongmi (784-841), who lived at about the same time as Baizhang Huaihai, thought we should lay equal stress on practice and doctrinal study, as the Buddha's teachings and practice are not in conflict with each other.

4.1.2.2 The Theory of Nibbāna

The fast development of meditation practice is partly due to the less stress on the study of texts and the Buddha's teachings. However, an even more important factor is the re-interpretation and reform of some traditional teachings, a significant one of which is the re-thinking of Nibbāna, including the method and time needed to attain it.

Firstly, interest is shifted from collecting Kamma to the pursuit of Nibbāna. Though the function of Buddhism to keep away from evil things plays an important role in normal people's belief, they care more about collecting merit and virtue in order to get a better rebirth in samsara. Meditators do not deny it. Meditation centers also serve as places where Buddhists can come to donate for making merit, and meditation centers

²⁴Shih, Shingkuang (释性广), 《人间佛教禅学及其当代实践》 (**Engaged Buddhism Chan and Its Practice in Modern Time**), (Taipei: Fajie Publishing House, 2001), p.109.

²⁵Fang, Litian, “《禅宗的“不立文字”语言观》 (Chan School's Linguistic Views of Independence-of-words)”, in **Journal of Renmin University of China**, (Beijing: Renmin University of China, Vol. 1, 2002): p.34.

also finance themselves mainly by receiving these donations. However, they shift their emphasis to some meditation practices which are beneficial to the attainment of Nibbāna. In daily life, the rituals and activities for collecting good Kamma, such as chanting, Dharma talks are reduced, while meditation practice almost occupies all their time.

Second, fast and sudden enlightenment is highlighted while the importance of time-taking and gradual preparation for enlightenment is lessened. Early Buddhism proposes a gradual development before a sudden enlightenment, which may happen in one second, like Gethin concludes, the path is something that is gradual and cumulative; on the other hand this gradual and cumulative path comes to a quite specific and definite culmination or climax.²⁶ There is a simile comparing the progress towards realization to a hen sitting on her eggs. Hatching of the chicks will take a long time, while the chick's emergence from their shells will need only one second. Similarly, the sudden breakthrough to Nibbāna depends on a gradual process of inner development and mental cultivation just like the hatching of chicks depends on a gradual process of inner development through the hen incubating.²⁷ A sentence from the commentaries can be quoted to implicitly express the relation between “gradual” and “sudden”, ‘the path to Arahant-ship is acquired gradually’,²⁸ explaining that the finer and finer examination of mental processes and events is needed for the sudden enlightenment. In the progressive practice, once sati is well established, every moment is pregnant with potential awakening.²⁹

Early Buddhism cares more about the necessity of gradual development for the eventual sudden breakthrough to enlightenment,

²⁶ Gethin, Rupert, **The Buddhist Path to Awakening**, (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001), p.246.

²⁷ Analayo, **Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization**, (Bangkok: O.S. Printing House, 2003), p.253.

²⁸ Gethin, Rupert. Op.cit, p.247.

²⁹ Analayo, Op.cit, p.252.

while the meditation masters pay more attention to the absolute and instantaneous nature of the transition. On the one hand, the good kamma collection valued by traditional Buddhism takes a much longer time than expected. Few people can attain enlightenment in this lifetime, so they are inclined to place hopes on the next lifetime. On the other hand, meditation masters in modern times think it is unnecessary to have good kamma collected as the basis for Nibbāna, and only if practiced in the right way, Nibbāna will be available in this lifetime. For some meditators, even a period ranging from a minimum of one day to a maximum of seven days is enough for the achievement. Coming to meditation techniques, Theravāda meditation practice involves a progressive development, so it is difficult to finish it very quickly. In the system of “Sila, Samatha and Paññā”, we must start from the observation of Sila, then cultivate concentration, and lastly develop wisdom. The Seven Purifications and the Sixteen Meditation Knowledges also explain a progressive development in detail. In Satipaṭṭhāna practice, we start to contemplate on the grossest and external body, so does the Ānāpānasati Practice where the gross meditation subjects should always be contemplated first. However, meditation masters in modern times think the time required for the realization varies greatly according to the individual. For some people, it is possible to start his practice in the morning and achieve his enlightenment in the evening.

However, the theory is one thing, reality is another. Though meditation masters think it is possible to achieve enlightenment in a short time in this lifetime, their own achievement was not attained all at once. For example, Luangpor Sodh’s “suddenly perceived a bright and shining sphere of Dhamma” actually took a long time practice as preparation. Normal meditators are more inclined to take enlightenment and Nibbāna as a beautiful wish, and they will not force themselves to attain it in this lifetime, as Eugenia Kaw pointed out, “whether or not they were striving to attain Nibbāna at any one moment within this life, the Buddhist time frame for achieving salvation may be much longer, involving at least a

few more lifetimes in the round of rebirths. In fact, many lay meditators often returned to their worldly life because they were not trying to attain Nibbāna in this life....many lay meditators postponed Nibbāna without departing from it as an ultimate goal.”³⁰

When Theravāda meditation practice was popular in China, this progressive development was also followed, and the four jhānas and eight concentrations were cultivated one by one. Meditators should strictly follow the meditation system step by step, which will take a long time, so Chinese meditators got tired of it. On the contrary, the thought of “Easy Path” proposed by Nāgārjuna was paid more and more attention to. The thought of “Easy Path” is expounded in *Dasabhumika-Vibhasa Śāstra* by Nāgārjuna, in which it is explained, there are both difficult and easy paths in the world. It is suffering to walk on the land while very comfortable to take a boat on the river. So does the Bodhisattva path. Some paths need hard work and effort; some paths are very convenient and easy, only with belief, these paths will quickly lead to Non-Returner fruit....if someone wants to attain the fruit of the Non-Returner, he should recite the Buddha’s name with respect.³¹ The *Dasabhumika-Vibhasa Śāstra* makes a classification between Difficult Path and Easy Path, explaining that the recitation of Buddha’s name with belief is the Easy Path, which should be followed by those with low capacities. If one meditates well on the merits and virtues of the immeasurable power of this Buddha, he enters immediately into the state of steadfastness or the stage of Non-Returner.

The Pure Land School assimilates Nāgārjuna’s thought of “Easy Path” and explicitly states that the Buddha referred to is the Amitābha Buddha and anyone who seeks rebirth in the Pure Land is going to attain the Non-Returner fruit, as is explained in the *Commentary to the Treatise on Rebirth*, “‘Easy Path’ means only with the belief in the Buddha, the

³⁰ Kaw, Eugenia, *Buddhism and Education in Burma: Varying Conditions for a Social Ethos in the Path to ‘Nibbana’*, **Ph.D. Dissertation**, (Department of Anthropology, Princeton University, 2005), p.36.

³¹ CBETA, T26, no1521, p.41a.

vows to be reborn in the Pure Land and the power of the Buddha, one can be reborn in that Pure Land, be protected by the Buddha, and then they become the group of people whose future fate is to follow correct paths (Samyaktva-niyata-rāśi), that is to say, become the Non-Returner. Just like on the water, it is comfortable to take a boat.”³² The Amitābha Sūtra also points out, “Furthermore, Śāriputra, sentient beings reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss are at the spiritual level of Non-Returner (Avinivartanīya).”³³ Summarizing the definitions of “Easy Path”, the following are the several characteristics. Firstly, it is easy to follow, and the basic practice is the recitation of the Buddha’s name. Secondly, it can be followed by people with all kinds of capacities. Thirdly, it brings us achievement in a short time. The Recitation of Amitābha Buddha’s name is quite easy, as it is not a progressive development that should be strictly done step by step. Even if we begin to mindfully recite Amitābha Buddha’s name at the last moment of our life, we are able to be reborn in the Pure Land depending on the saving power of the Amitābha Buddha. What is more, when we reach the Pure Land, a systematic instruction will still be given, so a fast development along the Bodhi Path is available.³⁴

“Sudden and Gradual” is an important issue in the Chan School, which involved the method and time to attain enlightenment, and until now, no final agreement has been reached about it. Fang Litian pointed out, “Sudden and Gradual” concerns the fact that meditators could see the path and realize the truth fast or slowly, that is to say, the time taken is short or long, and length of the process is short or long.³⁵ Bernard Faure made an analysis of “sudden” from the perspective of semantics, pointing

³² CBETA, T40, no1819, p.826a.

³³ CBETA, T12, no0366, p.347b.

³⁴ Zhou, Guihua, “《净土思想简论》 (A Brief Discussion of Pure Land Thoughts)”, in **Research of Buddhism**, (Beijing: The Research Institute of Buddhist Culture of China, No.00, 2011): p.254.

³⁵ Fang, Litian, “《论南顿北渐》 (A Discussion on the Sudden Enlightenment in South School and Gradual Enlightenment in North School)”, in **Studies in World Religions**, (Beijing: Institute of world religions of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Vol. 01, 2000): p.34.

out that “sudden” is connected to “fast”, “absolute”, “immediate”, etc., and also a deny to the necessity of practice in “sequence”³⁶. From the perspective of Mind-nature theory, Yang Weizhong thought the meditation practice from Bodhidharma and Shenxiu’s North School belongs to Tathāgata Chan, the basis of which is the empty original mind and what meditators should do is to hold and calm this original mind, so they normally advocate Gradual Enlightenment. However, the mind Patriarchal Chan works on is the original enlightenment mind, which emphasizes a sudden enlightenment with self-power.³⁷ In fact, the complicated situation in the real world could not be concluded generally. Even now, it is debatable whether the Bodhidharma’s meditation technique belongs to the gradual enlightenment system or the sudden enlightenment system, as meditators from the South School and the North School only interpreted it from their own standpoint. Du Fei from the North School discussed in the “Record of the Transmission of the Dharma Treasure” that in the beginning Bodhidharma’s meditation practice depended on some expedient methods to develop his achievement progressively, after which a sudden attainment of enlightenment was available.³⁸ On the other hand, Zongmi from the South School thought expedient methods were not necessary for Bodhidharma’s meditation practice, which leads sentient beings to become Buddha and realize the Bodhi suddenly and quickly. Later after Bodhidharma, Daoxin designed different meditation practices for people with different capacities. On the one hand, he advised meditators with low capacities to do sitting meditation to purify themselves progressively, as he thought sitting is the basis, and one should sit meditation alone for three to five years without reading texts and talking to others. On the

³⁶ Gong, Jun, 《禅史钩沉：以问题为中心的思想史论述》 (**Theses on the History of Chan Buddhism: a Question-focused Interpretation on its Intellectual Fabric**), (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 2006), p.131.

³⁷ Yang, Weizhong, “《论禅宗心性思想的发展》 (The Development of Zen’ s Mind-Nature Thinking)”, in **Chinese Studies**, (Taipei: Chinese Studies Editing Section, Vol. 19, No.2, 2001): p.142.

³⁸ CBETA, T85, no2838, p.1291c.

other hand, he advised a sudden enlightenment for those with superior capacities. Scholars reached an agreement that Daoxin's idea of "Sudden and Gradual" foreshadowed the later schism of the North and South School in Chan School later.³⁹

East Mountain Teaching led by Hongren was inclined to pay more attention to Gradual Enlightenment. And after him, because of the different views to "Sudden and Gradual", a schism of the North and South Schools, represented by Shenxiu and Huineng respectively, happened. It is expounded in *The Assembling of Five Lamps*, "(Hongren) has two disciples: one, named Huineng, was handed down the robe and dharma and regarded as the Sixth Patriarch, after which he went to stay in Lingnan region. Another one, named Shenxiu, spread Buddha Dharma in the North....though they were taught the same Dharma, their enlightenment was different in speed, so they were named Nan-dun (the South is Sudden Enlightenment) and Bei-jian (the North is Gradual Enlightenment)."⁴⁰ Shenxiu's view of "Sudden and Gradual" can be understood through his verse, "The body is a Bodhi tree, the mind like a bright mirror stand. Time and again brush it clean, and let no dust alight,"⁴¹ so that on the basis of Mind-nature Theory, he promote a way to sweep away the dust and observe the inherent purity. Shenxiu thought the pure mind is the key to attain enlightenment, which is now contaminated by defilements, desire, etc., so meditation practice is to clean these contaminated minds and find the original purity and luminosity of the mind, that is rightly the so-called "sweeping away the dust". On the other hand, "observing the remaining purity" is to observe one's own mind to find the original pure mind, making the mind enlightened by itself. "Sweeping away the dust" and "observing the remaining purity" is a progressive development. We should do it in

³⁹ Scholars like Dumoulin (杜默林) and MaRae (马克瑞) all hold this idea, see Gong, Jun, Op,cit, p.160.

⁴⁰ CBETA, X80, n0026, p.583.

⁴¹ CBETA, T48, no2008, p.348b.

sequence, in order to slowly eliminate the disturbance of falseness such as desire, defilements and find the pure original mind. This is the way to final enlightenment by Shenxiu.

On the other hand, Huineng's South School preferred Sudden Enlightenment, which could be proved by his own experience that he attained his enlightenment immediately when he heard someone reciting The Diamond Sūtra. In the previous chapter, it is mentioned that Huineng replaced traditional precepts with "Wuxiang jie"(No-form Precepts), which paid no attention to any precept. He took concentration and wisdom as the foundation of his dharma.⁴² His definition of "Chan" is given in The Platform Sūtra, "what is meant by 'Chan concentration?' Being separate from external phenomena is 'Chan.' Not being confused inwardly is 'concentration...If the mind remains unconfused when any state is encountered, that is true concentration,'" ⁴³ thinking that there is no fixed form of Chan. Only if our mind is not wandering and is concentrated, no matter whether we are walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, it is Chan. He also promoted the ideas "concentration and wisdom are one substance" and "balanced study of concentration and wisdom" to highlight the key role wisdom plays in meditation practice, and denied the traditional thought of "producing wisdom from concentration". Actually, Huineng thought everyone has wisdom inherently, so it is possible to realize Buddhahood in one moment. As it is said "A foolish passing thought makes one an ordinary man, while an enlightened second thought makes one a Buddha". Only one second is needed to turn one from a confused to an enlightened one. The Platform Sūtra also gives some examples recalling Huineng's leading several of his disciples to sudden enlightenment, such as Zhicheng spontaneously recognized the original mind and became enlightened immediately after hearing Huineng speaking. It is also recorded in The Platform Sūtra, "Learned Audience, without enlightenment there would be no difference between a Buddha and other sentient beings; while a gleam of

⁴² CBETA, T48, no2008, p.338a.

⁴³ CBETA, T48, no2008, p.338a.

enlightenment is enough to make any living being the equal of a Buddha. Since all Dharmas are immanent in our mind, there is no reason why we should not realize intuitively the real nature of Tathāgata (Suchness). The Bodhisattva Sila Sūtra says, ‘Our Essence of Mind is intrinsically pure, and if we knew our mind and realized what our nature is, all of us would attain Buddhahood.’”⁴⁴ Shenhui not only took up Huineng’s thought of “Sudden Enlightenment”, but also further proposed that Sudden Enlightenment is available in this lifetime. A conversation between Zhiyuan and Shenhui is recorded in “Records of the Sermons By the Chan Master Heze Shenhui”, “Zhiyuan asked, ‘All sentient beings say that they are practicing. Can they attain the Buddhahood in one lifetime?’ ‘yes, they can,’ answered Shenhui. Zhiyuan asked, ‘Why do you say this?’ Shenhui answered, “Like in Mahāyāna Buddhism, the numerous hindrances of karma as many as the sands of the Ganges River can be eliminated in a thought-moment, and will not arise again. Buddhahood is attained in one instant. So how could we not attain Buddhahood in a whole life time?”⁴⁵ He thought a meditator is able to be enlightened in a moment, so why can they not attain it in an even longer lifetime?

However, the distinction between Sudden Enlightenment and Gradual Enlightenment is not clear-cut, both of which exist in the South School and North School. The Gradual Practice in the South School is to completely eliminate the habit energies after Gradual Enlightenment. In a word, it advocates to start meditation practice after Sudden Enlightenment; on the other hand, the South School advised gradual practice for final Sudden Enlightenment. In fact, there is the idea of Sudden Enlightenment in Shenxiu’s Gradual Enlightenment. Fang Litian commented, Shenxiu’s lineage advocated a progressive development when practicing, while enlightenment is sudden, so they only attained the

⁴⁴CBETA, T48, no2008, p.351a.

⁴⁵Fang, Litian, “《论南顿北渐》(A Discussion on the Sudden Enlightenment in South School and Gradual Enlightenment in North School)”, in **Studies in World Religions**, (Beijing: Institute of world religions of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Vol. 01, 2000): p.41.

sudden enlightenment on the ground of long-term progressive practice, so it is a path requiring gradual practice first and then sudden enlightenment. However, Huineng's lineage held the idea, that a meditator attained sudden enlightenment first, then started gradual practice later. Shenhui pointed out, "a meditator should suddenly be enlightened and gradually practice...like the mother gives birth to a child suddenly, she brings up this child with her breast milk little by little. Her child's wisdom is improved naturally, so does the Buddha-Nature for sudden Enlightenment."⁴⁶ He thought progressive practice is needed to consolidate the achievement after sudden enlightenment, to collect more virtue and to become the Buddha.

Huineng's "Sudden Enlightenment, Gradual Practice" had been developed into "Sudden Enlightenment without practice" until Mazu Daoyi, Shitou Xiqian and their disciples. Mazu Daoyi preferred a Sudden Enlightenment of the appearance of original mind in the present moment. He said to one audience, "we don't need to practice, only not to contaminate the mind....if you want to realize the way directly, the ordinary mind is the way."⁴⁷ The thought of "Ordinary mind is the Way" emphasizes that walking, standing, sitting and lying down in daily life are all Chan meditation. All our behaviors, speech, actions are all also Chan meditation. There is Chan everywhere in our life and we can practice Chan everywhere. We do not need to choose some special time or place for our practice. The key to practice the way is to realize our original mind. Mazu Daoyi compared the original mind to "one's own treasure", which we do not need to search for here and there. Only if we realize the existence of this "treasure" is it the realization of the Way. Daoyi's thought was taken up by later disciples, illustrated by a conversation between Yangshan Huiji and his disciple,

⁴⁶ Lou, Yulie and Shi, Jun, ed, 《中国佛教思想资料选编》 (**Selected Materials of Chinese Buddhist Thought**), Vol.II, Part 4, (Beijing: Zhonghua Bookstore), p.112.

⁴⁷ CBETA, T51, no2076, p.440a.

Asked the disciple, “Master, you still observe the precepts?”

The master (Huiji) said, “No, I don’t observe the precepts.”

The disciple asked, “You still do sitting meditation?”

The master answered, “I don’t do sitting meditation.”⁴⁸

They paid less attention to traditional meditation practice such as observation of precepts and sitting meditation, thinking that life is Chan, so they normally used some new methods which are more relevant to life to inspire meditators, such as Gong-an, Bang-he (stick and shout), and abusing the Buddha and ancestries.

Therefore, it is not correct to define the development of the Chan School generally with the words “Sudden Enlightenment” in the South School and “Gradual Enlightenment” in the North School. Scholars such as Faure, think there is no fundamental difference between the two Schools and in fact no real conflict happened between them. The competition between “Sudden and Gradual” actually was proposed for the superiority of one Sect over the other.⁴⁹ McRae thought the contradiction between the North School and the South School was a “slogan” produced by Shenhui for the legal constituted authority, as the radical teaching of the North School is also Sudden Enlightenment, and what Shenhui promoted is only a different mode of expression of the North School’s thought. However, in the later development of the Chan School, the South School is praised while the North School is damned, and sometimes the North School is regarded as an emblem of heterodoxy, from all of which, it is not difficult to find the Sudden Enlightenment is valued while the Gradual Enlightenment is relatively denied. Though there is such a long and complicated evolution in Chinese Buddhist Chan meditation practice, we can roughly conclude that the strict step-by-step practice is paid less and less attention to, some traditional meditation practices have been neglected or even abandoned, in order to shorten the

⁴⁸ CBETA, T47, no1990, p.584c.

⁴⁹ Gong, Jun, *Op.cit*, p.133.

time needed for enlightenment. Thus, there is the same inclination to simplify practice and quicken one's pace in the way to enlightenment in Thai and Chinese meditation practice.

4.1.3 Comparison of Meditation Techniques in Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions

So far we have analyzed the similarities and differences of the way meditation courses are organized and financed in Thai and Chinese meditation traditions and also the dependency theory behind them. In this section, we will analyze the similarities and differences of the practices of meditation techniques in both traditions.

4.1.3.1 The Contemplation on the Breathing

The previous two chapters of this dissertation have analyzed the meditation techniques in Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions, from which we find that contemplation on the breathing in and breathing out is the most fundamental technique and was highly valued by the Buddha. Actually, this technique was widely practiced in India before the Buddha's time. Meditators were advised to be aware of breathing in and out, long and short breaths, as well as strong and weak breaths, in order to attain concentration of both the body and mind and the harmony between them. However, the Buddha not only provided a very systematic instruction of it, but also developed it into a technique that provokes wisdom.

In “Meditation Practice in Pāli Tipiṭaka and Canonical Texts” Chapter II, the suttas concerning the practice of breathing and a quite detailed instruction have been reviewed. In addition, Buddhaghosa's Visuddhimagga is also a very important manual for this technique, which takes breathing as one of the forty meditation subjects and gives a very detailed and systematic instruction of it. On the basis of four tetrads of Contemplation, the Visuddhimagga expounds seven stages in giving

attention to the breath, that is, counting, following, touching, fixing, observing, turning away, purification and looking back on these. In Chinese Buddhism, the instructions of contemplation on the breath have been reviewed in the parts of “Meditation Sūtras in the Chinese Āgama” and “Meditation Sūtras in Sūtrasannipāta Division” of Chapter III. In a word, the technique mentioned in the Chinese Āgama is the “Sixteen Extraordinary Methods of Contemplation” while on the basis of these sixteen methods, the Ānāpānasmṛti Sūtra translated by An Shigao explains the “Six Steps of Ānāpānasmṛti” in detail, which means counting, following, stopping, contemplating, returning and purification. This “Six Steps of Ānāpānasmṛti” is quite similar to the seven stages in giving attention to the breath, only combining touching and fixing into one. Having studied all these scriptures, we are able to roughly divide the methods into two types, contemplating the breathing in and breathing out according to the Sixteen Extraordinary Methods of Contemplation and counting the breath according to the Six Steps of Ānāpānasmṛti.

Practices on the breath are highly valued in both Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions. However, the emphasis is quite different. In Thai Buddhist meditation, the techniques of contemplating on breathing mentioned in the Ānāpānasati Sutta and Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta are widely used. Mahasi’s lineage, which was brought in from Myanmar, the Dhammakāya meditation and the Thai Forest Tradition⁵⁰ all use contemplating breathing-in and breathing-out to improve or assist their

⁵⁰Thai Forest Tradition uses Contemplating breathing-in and breathing-out to assist their recitation of Buddhho. When breathing in, recite “Bud”, when breathing out, recite “dho”. However, Ajarn Lee Dhammadharo also used the technique of counting the breath. He divided “buddho” into two syllables, “bud” and “dho”. Recite “bud” with the in-breath, “dho” with the out, then count one. Then again, do it for up to ten times. Then begin again, “bud” with the in-breath, “dho” with the out-breath, nine times...eight times...seven times...six, five, four, three, two, one and zero. Ajarn Lee Dhammadaro, 1998. **Mental Power, Step By Step**, or Wen, Tzungkuen, 《当代泰国佛教东北森林禅修传统中“称念佛陀”法门之研究》(A Study of “The Repetition of Buddhho” in the Northeast Forest Meditation Lineage in Modern Thailand), <ftp://ttbc.no-ip.org/%A5@%AC%C9%A6U%A6a%A4W%AEy%B3%A1%B8%EA%AE%C6%2F%ABn%B6%C7%A6F2%B1%D0%B9%CF%AE%D1%C0%5D%201%2F037%20%BD%D7%A4%E5%2F%BA%D9%A9%C0%A6F2%AA%FB%AAk%AA%F9%A4%A7%AC%E3%A8s.pdf> (accessed 3 Oct, 2013).

own meditation technique. Thai Forest Tradition and Buddhādāsa taught a meditation technique that on the basis of the instruction in the *Visuddhimagga*. The *Visuddhimagga* points out that counting is a device for setting mindfulness on the in-breath and out-breath as its object by cutting off the external dissipation of applied thoughts, so it should be done until, without counting, mindfulness remains settled on the in-breath and out-breath as its object.⁵¹ When counting, the meditator should not stop short of five or go beyond ten or make any break in the series. When counting, he should at first do it slowly, and when he gets familiar with it, he can do it faster and faster. Buddhādāsa developed a new way to count the breath. He taught that when the mind becomes subtle, we can count by using ‘five’ as a unit, which requires counting ‘five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five....’ when the breath touches the above-mentioned spot, or taking ‘ten’ as a unit, counting ‘ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty....’ On the other hand, Thai Forest Tradition developed the counting breaths by integrating with the recitation of “Buddho”.

However, the situation in Chinese Buddhist meditation is quite different. Since in all the *sūtras* concerning meditation practice, the *Ānāpānasmṛti Sūtra* translated by An Shigao can be regarded as the most influential and most popular one. The technique of counting breathing-in and breathing-out taught in this *sūtra* became the most widely used one. With the completion of one breathing-in and breathing-out, we count one, so counting is counting the breaths. Some count when breathing in while others count when breathing out. After sitting down, meditator adjusts his breath and establishes mindfulness on the tip of the nose where the breath goes in and out, then counts from one to ten. When he reaches ten, he should start again from one, and if he loses count because of restlessness, he should begin again from one. Thus, keeping the mindfulness on the counting, count from one to ten again and again. We cannot stop following the breath until gross falseness has been reduced, subtle

⁵¹ Buddhaghosa, **The Path of Purification**, trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli, (Kandy: BPS, 2011), p.273.

falseness also will not disturb the mind and mindfulness is completely fixed on the breath. Thus, we find that the practice of counting the breath does not differ in essence from the instructions in the sūtras. However, later, it is sinicized. Taking the instructions in Zhiyi's "The Six Perfection Doors" (《六妙法門》) as an example, where he used the word "Buddha-Nature" twice,

When counting the breath, we are able to eliminate defilements, and also we are able to enter the Stream even when Nirvāṇa is still not attained. We should not become attached to birth or death, that is, not be bound by The Twenty-Five Stages of Existence;...with the equal wisdom, namely the neutral and indifferent mind, we enter the Middle Path, namely, seeing the Buddha-Nature, attaining the insight into the Non-Arising of Dharmas, staying in the great Nirvāṇa, in the pure and ultimate happiness of permanence, bliss, true self, and purity.⁵²

The instructions in Theravāda Buddhist meditation practice focuses on faithfully contemplating the phenomena of the body and mind, while Zhiyi's instruction focuses on the mind directly, that is, "contemplating the nature of mind is enough".⁵³ This mind is a neutral and indifferent mind and is the Buddha-Nature. They thought when a meditator practice the Guan in Zhiguan practice, the Buddha-Nature will appear slowly, namely the pure self-nature. If he is not attached to anything, he realizes this pure nature. It is mentioned in The Six Perfection Doors, "do not attach to all Dharmas, accomplish all Dharmas, prevent the purity of self-nature from being contaminated by all kinds of Dharmas....mind is not contaminated by defilements, defilements will not go to contaminate the mind, the meditator realizes the pure nature of his own mind."⁵⁴

⁵² CBETA, T46, no1917, p.552a.

⁵³ CBETA, T46, no1917, p.553c.

⁵⁴ CBETA, T46, no1917, p.553c.

Zhiyi thought, “Mahāyāna meditators, enter the Bodhisattva Stages when counting the breath...the Perfection Door of counting breath is universally effective for normal people, noble people, Mahāyāna Buddhists and Theravāda Buddhists.”⁵⁵ He assimilated the Buddha-Nature theory to integrate Mahāyāna with Theravāda Buddhism in his Ānāpānasmṛti practice. Ven. Nenghu (能护) commented that Ānāpānasmṛti Sūtra teaches to produce a revulsion towards birth and death and enters Nibbāna by uncovering the fact that our life is impermanent, suffering, non-self and impure; on the other hand, Zhiyi’s The Six Perfection Doors interprets the “Six Steps of Ānāpānasmṛti” for the perspective of Buddha-Nature, developing the “Six Steps of Ānāpānasmṛti” from Theravāda meditation practice into Mahāyāna Zhi-guan practice.

In conclusion, the instructions on the contemplation of breathing in and out by Thai meditation masters are mainly according to the instructions in Pāli suttas, and also the method of counting breathing in the Visuddhimagga. Because of the translation and propagation of the Ānāpānasmṛti Sūtra, Chinese meditation masters pay more attention to the Six Steps of Ānāpānasmṛti, especially counting the breath. Meanwhile, they assimilate some Mahāyāna thought, such as the Buddha-Nature, to integrate Mahāyāna with Theravāda Buddhism.

4.1.3.2 Recitation of “Buddho” and Nian-fo

The meditation techniques prevalent in Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions have been introduced respectively in Chapters II and III, and we find the recitation of Buddha’s Name is used both in the Thai Forest Tradition and the Chinese Pure Land School, so this section will compare them.

⁵⁵ CBETA, T46, no1917, p.552a.

In the Thai Forest Tradition, the recitation of Buddha's Name is mainly the recitation of the word "Buddho". It can be roughly divided into two types, taking recitation of Buddho as the main meditation subject or taking it to assist the contemplation on breathing in and out or other techniques. However, both these two types belong to the recollection of the Buddha in the Visuddhimagga, which is mindful of the Enlightened One's special qualities as its object in order to cause the recollection inspired to by the Enlightenment One. Recitation of "Buddho" in the Thai Forest Tradition simplifies the recollection of the Buddha in the Visuddhimagga by only choosing one of ten epithets of the Buddha as the object for contemplation, and only constantly repeating the Buddha's epithet without being mindful of his special qualities.⁵⁶ Because Buddha's special qualities are not the key issue in this practice, the recitation of "Buddho" is only to make the mind concentrated by preventing it from wandering here and there, so some other words, such as "Dhammo", "Sangho", can be recited in place of "Buddho".

In the four kinds of Nian-fo in Chinese Buddhism, the Recitation of the Buddha's Name is the most prevalent owing to its spread by the Pure Land School, adding that this kind is rightly the most similar one to the recitation of Buddho in the Thai Forest Tradition. Therefore, the Recitation of the Buddha's Name will be focused on here. The Recitation of the Buddha's Name in the Pure Land School is mainly according to the The Amitābha Sūtra, Aparimitayur Sūtra, and the Amitāyurdhyāna Sūtra, and what they recite is Amitābha Buddha's name and his special qualities. As the key to being reborn in the Pure Land is the vows and power of Amitābha Buddha, we cannot recite any other word instead of Amitābha Buddha's name.

⁵⁶Wen, Tzungkuen. 《当代泰国佛教东北森林禅修传统中“称念佛陀”法门之研究》 (A Study of "The Repetition of Buddho" in the Northeast Forest Meditation Lineage in Modern Thailand).

The recitation of “Buddho” in the Thai Forest Tradition should be practiced in the system of “Sila, Samatha and Paññā”. The Visuddhimagga points out that the Recollection of the Buddha is only effective for the cultivation of access concentration, “Owing to the profundity of the Enlightened One’s special qualities, or else owing to his being occupied in recollecting special qualities of many sorts, the jhana available is only access concentration and does not reach absorption.”⁵⁷ As the recitation of “Buddho” is only one kind of recollection of the Buddha, meditators can attain momentary concentration or access concentration, thus it is one of Samatha practices. When the meditator has attained some degree of concentration, he should continue to develop his wisdom, that is to say, turn to the Vipassanā practice.⁵⁸ Wen Tzungkuen also commented in his article that, the recitation of “Buddho” in this tradition is only one link for the cultivation of concentration on the Path, which aims to develop concentration and mindfulness and lays the foundation for wisdom cultivation.⁵⁹ The Recitation of Buddha’s Name with low barriers to entry is not that complicated, no matter the precepts have been fully observed or not, or how long the Buddha’s name has been recited, only if the Amitābha Buddha’s name is recited constantly will he come to take the meditator to the Pure Land.

In the Pure Land School, when Amitābha Buddha’s Name is recited, even without the assistance of any other practice, the meditator is able to be reborn in the Pure Land with the help of Amitābha’s power. The key to the attainment is Amitābha Buddha’s vows and power, so it depends on Other-power. On the other hand, recitation of “Buddho” in the Thai Forest Tradition is effective for access concentration, and we cannot

⁵⁷ Buddhaghosa, Op.cit, p.209.

⁵⁸ Take Ajarn Sao’s practice as an example. He advised the meditator to achieve access concentration by recitation of “Buddho”, then attain Absorption concentration by the contemplation of impurity, and lastly develop Vipassanā to faithfully observe the nature of phenomena of body and mind.

⁵⁹ Wen, Tzungkuen (温宗堃). 《当代泰国佛教东北森林禅修传统中“称念佛陀”法门之研究》(A Study of “The Repetition of Buddho” in the Northeast Forest Meditation Lineage in Modern Thailand).

turn to the development of wisdom and attain Nibbāna directly in this practice without combining other practices. In addition, in this practice, there is no Other-power saving us. Progressive practice is the only choice for final enlightenment. Thus, it depends on Self-power.

4.2 Integration and Exchanges of Meditation Techniques Between Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions

4.2.1 Exchanges of Meditational Theory Between Thai and Chinese Meditators

The similar thoughts in Thai and Chinese Buddhist meditation provide a theoretical basis for the exchanges between them both in theory and practice. This section will focus on the theoretical exchanges, especially the influences Mahāyāna Buddhist thought exert on Thai meditation masters.

4.2.1.1 Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu and Chan Meditation

Buddhādāsa kept working for his three aspirations his whole life: instruct human-being to abandon selfishness; hope every religion could understand each other; hope every religious believer could really understand the spirit of his belief.⁶⁰ Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu highly valued harmony between all religions and gave some speeches about religious dialogues. He was regarded as the first Thai Theravāda thinker who explicitly used materials from Mahāyāna for his own teaching.⁶¹ He thought Mahāyāna and Vajrayana are not inferior to Theravāda

⁶⁰ Zheng, Zhenhuang, 《不出世的奇葩：南传佛教第一人佛使尊者》 (**Wonderful Flower out of the World: the First Person in Theravāda Buddhism Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu**), (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Publishing House, 2011), p.6.

⁶¹ Boonsri Ratanachai, อิทธิพลของพระพุทธศาสนานิกายเซนในงานของท่านพุทธทาสภิกขุ, **Master thesis**, Mahachulalongkorn University, 2002, p.88. or Saengsin, Chamnian; Nimanong, Veerachart, **Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu's Concept of Empty-Mind(Cit Wang): Analytical Study**, KCU Res J HS(GS)1(1): 2013, p.2.

Buddhism.⁶² He played a key role in the propagation of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Thailand, and himself was influenced by Mahāyāna thought.

1. Chitwang, Emptiness and Mind-Nature Theory

Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu proposed a new concept “Chitwang” (empty mind, void mind or free mind in English), and took it as a central concept in his interpretation of Theravāda Buddhist teachings and also regarded it as the end-result of his meditation practice. This concept assimilates the concept of “emptiness” from Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially Chan Buddhism.⁶³ Chitwang is the original and natural state of mind. It means to be free from the meanings of “me” and “mine”, to be void of the thought, the perception of “me”, of the understanding that this is “me”, of clinging to the idea of a “self”, of the underlying tendency of the mind to “self” belief, and void of the familiarity with “me” and “mine”.⁶⁴ That is to say, the attachments to “me” and “mind” are totally cut off even under the disturbance of desire, hatred, ignorance and defilements. If there is still desire, hatred and ignorance in our mind, it is not Chitwang; if all these three poisons are wiped out from our mind, it is Chitwang. In a word, Chitwang means desire, hatred and ignorance have been cut off, attachment had been eliminated and enlightenment has been attained. These thoughts at least received influence from the thought of “emptiness” of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Mind-Nature Theory of Chinese Chan Buddhism.⁶⁵

⁶² Boonsri Ratanachai, Op.cit, p.88.

⁶³ Veerachart Nimanong commented, “In placing cit-wang at the centre of his presentation of Theravāda doctrine, Buddhadāsa has in fact drawn heavily on the concept ‘emptiness’ (sunyata) of Mahāyāna and Zen Buddhist teachings”. Nimanong, Veerachart, **Thai Theravāda Buddhist Understanding of Non-attachment: The Middle Way for Culture and Hermeneutics in a Global Age**, See <http://www.crvp.org/book/Series07/VII-26/chapter-11.htm> (accessed 23 March, 2015)

⁶⁴ Buddhadāsa, **Void Mind**, Trans. Dhammavidu Bhikkhu, (Bangkok: Buddhadāsa Foundation & Buddhadāsa Indapanno Archives, 2015), p.12.

⁶⁵ Chamnian Saengsin and Veerachart Nimanong thought Buddhadāsa borrowed the Mahayanist concept of “empty-mind” as one of his key concepts for interpreting Buddhism. Saengsin, Chamnian; Nimanong, Veerachart, **Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu’s Concept of Empty- Mind(Cit Wang): Analytical Study**, KCU Res J HS(GS)1(1): 2013, p.1.

Buddhadāsa explained the concept of “empty” again and again in his book “Chitwang”. He thought, everything is empty, the Buddha is empty, the Dhamma is empty, the Sangha is empty, even defilements and suffering are empty, arising, abiding, changing and extinction are empty; emptiness is the core belief in Buddhism, and emptiness is the reason why the Buddha is able to become the Buddha. He also advised to “marry” emptiness, in order to know Chitwang better. In his mind, the moment when the mind is unattached to “me” and “mine”, that means we are “married” emptiness. This moment could be very short and maybe end very soon, which could be compared to divorce. We are able to re-start again, or even marry and divorce again and again for many times in one single day. Practices are needed to extend the moments. Practice more and more, and we are able to “marry” emptiness for longer and longer. Buddhadāsa’s “Chitwang” emphasizes the moments when the attachments are eliminated. The key is the mind. Thus, he connected emptiness to mind. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, for the law of Dependent Origination, the concept of “emptiness” means everything comes into being from a combination of the five aggregates, so everything is empty without any self-nature. Therefore, though the thought of Chitwang by Buddhadāsa and Emptiness in Mahāyāna Buddhism are essentially the same in promoting the un-attachment and non-self-nature, the emphasis is a little different somehow.

Early in the year 1947, Buddhadāsa had translated Master Huineng’s The Platform Sūtra (สูตรเหยยหลวง) and in 1969 he translated Master Huangbo’s “Essentials on the Transmission of Mind-Dharma” (คำสอนของท่านฮวงโป) from English into Thai and published them in his magazine Buddhasasana. It is not difficult to find the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhism on his later works. He quoted Huineng’s words again and again in his book “Chitwang” (จิตว่าง). We have mentioned above that Chitwang is breaking up the attachment to “I” and “mine”, and this is very similar to Huangbo’s thought of “Non-intentional mind”. It is said in Master Huangbo’s Essentials on the Transmission of

Mind-Dharma, “Having detached from all forms, all sentient beings and Buddhas are not different. It is essential to be non-intentional.”⁶⁶ If we treat everything equally without attachment, that is non-intentional. This mind itself is the Buddha, as Master Huangbo’s “Essentials on the Transmission of Mind-Dharma” also mentioned that this mind is rightly the Buddha, and the Buddha is rightly all sentient beings. Buddhādāsa also thought that Buddha is Chitwang, Dhamma is Chitwang, Sangha is Chitwang, so Chitwang is the key reason that the Buddha is the Buddha.

Secondly, Buddhādāsa was influenced by Huineng’s Mind-nature theory in putting forward his concept of “chitwang”. Though we are born in different places, either south or north, and in different families, either rich or poor, we all have the same Buddha-Nature, so that the possibility to become the Buddha exists in everyone. Buddhādāsa also thought Chitwang universally exists inside human-beings, but not owned only by those who have attained enlightenment. Chitwang is in our body from the first moment of our life and exists from the first consciousness, so Chitwang is the essence of our life but not mind abashed and nervous. However, we lost it later because of the effect of desire and defilements. Similarly, the Buddha-Nature in the Chan School is also pure in essence, though it is covered by dark clouds. All we should do is to clear the clouds and find the moon behind them, that is to say, rediscover the pure Buddha-Nature behind desire and the defilements. So does Buddhādāsa’s Chitwang, as he thought only if we kept practicing, could we find the Chitwang. Both the Chan School and Buddhādāsa thought this mind decided whether we could attain enlightenment or not, and it was the key. Essentials on the Transmission of Mind-Dharma states, if the meditator cannot be non-intentional, he will always be fettered by samsara and could not attain enlightenment.⁶⁷ Buddhādāsa advised that meditators should “marry” Emptiness, as in his opinion, Chitwang, which was free from “me” and “mine”, could solve all kinds of problems.

⁶⁶ CBETA, T48, no2012A, p.379c.

⁶⁷ CBETA, T51, no2076, p.271a.

However, though Buddhādāsa's idea was similar to some Mahāyāna thought, he did not adopt the concepts such as pure mind, luminous mind or mind of detachment, but formulated a new one, Chitwang, the empty mind, because he thought emptiness was a concept which was more radical. The idea of emptiness is held by both Theravāda and Mahāyāna Buddhists or even all Buddhist traditions, not only found in Mahāyāna, which had already become a central realization of Buddhism before the schism of Buddhism. The Buddha also said, Emptiness is a very profound concept and is the central idea in Buddhism. Though concepts such as pure mind are not forbidden, Chitwang is more beneficial to understand the Buddhist central theme and is more profound.

2. Buddhādāsa and the Practices of Bodhisattva

In the book “Dhammic Socialism”, Buddhādāsa advised to build more Rong Than (โรงทาน) which was a communal place where a person of great material wealth could share his surplus wealth with those in need. He required that the interests of the collective should come before the interests of the individual. It is easy to say that taking the practices of the Bodhisattva (Bodhisattva-caryā) of Mahāyāna Buddhism as the faith, value and visions, helping others and working for all is the true philosophy of Dhammic Socialism.⁶⁸

Different from Marxism's regarding unequal wealth as the main contributor to social problems and using force and power to solve problems, Buddhādāsa thought the natural law would be the real way. He placed hopes on people's compassion and kindness, which means they only took what they need and shared surplus materials with others, so his Dhammic socialism ultimately depends on compassion and kindness, and

⁶⁸ Huang, Xianian, “《现代泰国佛教的活动及思潮》 (Movements and Thoughts in Modern Thai Buddhism)”, in **Around Southeast Asia**, (Guangxi: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies of Guangxi Academy of Social Science, No.4, 1992):p.50.

the best example to fulfill the Dhammic socialism is the Bodhisattva who vows to save all sentient beings before he himself attain Buddhahood.

4.2.1.2 The Dhammakāya and Buddha-Nature

In order to clearly interpret the symbolic concept “Dhammakāya” in Dhammakāya meditation, the Dhammakāya meditators adopted the concept of “Buddha-Nature” from Mahāyāna Buddhism, thinking that the Dhammakāya, like the Buddha Nature, cannot be produced or created by meditators, but already exists within them inherently rightly from the moment of their birth. It is immortal, according to those in the Dhammakāya tradition, because it is not composed of the five aggregates and is not subject to the three characteristics of Anicca (impermanence), Dukkha (suffering) and Anattā (non-self). Within Dhammakāya reside all ultimate truths and qualities that make the Buddha a Buddha⁶⁹, from which we can find it does have something to do with the Buddha-Nature and Tathāgatagarbha, even though Thai scholars and meditators who argue for Nirvāṇa as the true self do not consider it to be in any way a Mahāyāna doctrine that they are adopting, as well as rejecting completely the notion of Mahāyāna influence, and also we are short of evidence of direct influence of Tathāgatagarbha thought on recent Thai Buddhism.⁷⁰

The thought of Buddha-Nature was paid attention to due to the translation of the Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, which bears the central theme “Buddha-Nature”. Buddha-Nature, a synonym for Tathāgatagarbha, Buddhadhātu in Sanskrit, includes two meanings: the essence of the Buddha and the reason to become a Buddha. It was recorded in the sūtra, “if anyone sees the twelve links of dependent origination, he sees the dharma, he sees the Buddha. The Buddha is rightly the Buddha-Nature. Why? All Buddhas take the Buddha-Nature as

⁶⁹ Mackenzie, Rory, Op.cit, p.101.

⁷⁰ Williams, Paul, 2nd edition, **Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundation**, (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp.127-128

their essence”.⁷¹ According to the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, all sentient beings equally possess the seeds of Buddhahood and therefore have the potential to realize Buddhahood. Illusion and evil Kamma prevent these seeds from growing, but once illusion and evil Kamma are destroyed, the seeds will become activated and perfect enlightenment will ultimately be attained. The highest goal of Buddhism is the attainment of Nibbāna and to be the Buddha. The Buddha delivered the concept of Buddha-Nature to teach all sentient beings with different temperaments to lead them to walk on the way to enlightenment.

In the ideology of Buddha-Nature in Mahāyāna Buddhism, all sentient beings have the same nature with the Buddha, so all sentient beings that are wandering in samsara are able to attain Buddhahood. However, all sentient beings are still empty in essence. The Tathāgatagarbha has the characteristics of emptiness and non-emptiness in different contexts. It is explained in the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, “we cannot partially say it is empty or non-empty. Emptiness means there are no Twenty-five Stages of Existence, defilement, all suffering, all forms and all conditioned volition; just like there is no cheese in the bottle, so it is empty. Non-emptiness means it is true, wholesome, permanent, blissful, self, pure, eternal and unchanging; like the bottle has the form, odor, taste, and tangibility, so it is not empty.”⁷² The Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra (《胜鬘经》) also mentions, “World-Honored One, there are two wisdoms concerning the emptiness of Tathāgatagarbha. World-Honored One, the empty Tathāgatagarbha includes all defilements which are departed, separated, or changing; World-Honored One, non-empty Tathāgatagarbha is the numerous inseparable, un-departed, unchanging and inconceivable Buddha Dharma.”⁷³ The emptiness of Tathāgatagarbha means Tathāgatagarbha is essentially pure though it is stained by defilements, and if all the defilements and evil karma are eliminated, we can see the

⁷¹ CBETA, T12, no0374, p.523c.

⁷² CBETA, T12, no0375, p.632a.

⁷³ CBETA, T12, no0353, p.221c.

emptiness of Tathāgatagarbha. The non-emptiness of Tathāgatagarbha means it possesses all merits and virtues.

In addition, the concept of “Dharmakāya” is used when the meaning of Tathāgatagarbha is interpreted. In The Śrīmālādevī Siṃhanāda Sūtra, it is recorded that, “whoever does not doubt that the Tathāgatagarbha is liberated from all the defilement store, he will not doubt that Dharmakaya is liberated from all the defilement store....thus, the Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata when not free from the store of defilement is referred to as the Tathāgatagarbha.”⁷⁴ Here, it is pointed out in this sūtra that the Tathāgata is Dharmakāya, and the Dharmakāya is the ‘Dharma-body’ of the Buddha, it is what the Buddha really is. Those who are not free from the store of defilement, what they have is Tathāgatagarbha; Those who are already free from the store of defilement, what they have is the supreme Dharmakāya. The Dharmakāya is generally the final, true, ultimate, reality or state of things.

In a word, the Buddha-Nature thought of Mahāyāna Buddhism points out that Buddha Nature is empty essentially on the one hand, and Buddha Nature is non-empty or self according to its properties such as Permanence, Bliss, Self, and Purity on the other hand. Obviously, the Dhammakāya meditation system puts undue emphasis on the second implication unilaterally and denies the emptiness of Buddha Nature.

Before the Dhammakāya meditation appeared on the scene in the 20th century in Thailand, the non-emptiness of Tathāgatagarbha had already been discussed in Thai Buddhism. From the book of Paul Williams, Mahāyāna Buddhism, in 1939 the Samgharaja of Thailand, Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatanana, who is the head of the state-supported hierarchical national Sangha structure, gave up the accepted Theravāda Buddhist notion of Non-Self (anatta) and switched to the doctrine of the

⁷⁴ CBETA, T12, no0353, p.221b.

Self (ātman), insisting Nibbāna is the true Self.⁷⁵ Paul Williams cites Cholvijarn’s summary of Sangharaja’s argument, “the Buddha realized “atta” that is different from conditioned Dhammas. Nibbāna is the purity of an object, it is void of defilements (cf. the Tathāgatagarbha) and once it is reached there is no more clinging. As purity, it must be situated within an object. That object is self. Anatta is a tool that the Buddha uses for his disciples to reject the conditioned dhamma and to accept Nibbāna.”⁷⁶ Further, he argues that in common with Tathāgatagarbha texts, the Sangharaja makes a great deal of the purity of Nibbāna, and since Nibbāna is pure, there must actually be something there to be pure. That is “atta”, the “self”. We can say that the Sangharaja puts more emphasis on the true self and non-emptiness of Nibbāna because of the properties of Tathāgatagarbha and Nibbāna. Fifteen years after that, the Dhammakāya meditators proposed an unconditioned “Dhamma Body” in the form of a luminous, radiant and clear Buddha figure free of all defilements and situated within the body of the meditators. They hold the idea that Nibbāna is the “true self” and this is also the Dhammakāya, so Dhammakāya is “self”. Dhammakāya meditators insist the true self of Nibbāna is held to be the actual teaching of the Buddha. Nibbāna is not vague, intangible, and insubstantial, but is a hopeful goal which meditators could really work for.

4.2.1.3 Luangpor Teean and Buddha-Nature, Sudden Enlightenment

There is on Wat Sanamnai’s website an article “The Instruction of Luangpor Teean’s ‘Self-Awareness’” which states,

The Buddha-Nature is the mind that is clean, clear, calm, pure, bright and quick. This mind exists in everybody. Water and mud are not the same thing. It is the mud that makes the water look turbid,

⁷⁵ Williams, Paul, Op.cit, pp.125-128.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.126.

but the water itself is clear. Our mind is the same. If we realize this, we will gradually follow the Path. The Buddha-Nature is the mind that is clean, clear, calm and pure. When the mind is pure, the mud cannot pollute the water anymore. When the mind is bright the mud will transform into sediment and break through the bottom. When the mind is quick, it is light and can see everything.⁷⁷

Thus, it can be seen that similar to the Dhammakāya Meditators, Luangpor Teean also borrowed the concept of Buddha-Nature when he was building his theoretical system. He thinks there is pure, luminous Buddha-Nature within human beings. The Buddha-Nature is not something outside our body like clothing, but in actuality, it is already within us right now. However, just like the clean water always becomes turbid because of the pollution of mud, in reality Buddha-Nature is easy to be tainted by the defilement, greed, hatred, and delusion, so that its existence is always ignored. Even though the water is still essentially clean, because if the mud is removed, recovery of the clean water is possible. So is the Buddha-Nature. So long as we dispel the defilements through meditation practices, the Buddha-Nature will be realized.

Luangpor Teean also thought that the clean, pure Buddha-Nature exists in everybody without exception. He mentioned in his book “To One That Feels”, “There is Buddha-mind already existing in everyone, the nature of which is “ordinary”, that is neutral, in a state of equanimity, clean and calm. It could be achieved by anyone in the present life rather than only after death.”⁷⁸ The Buddha-Nature is covered by defilement temporarily, and it is possible for us to realize it and achieve Nibbāna. There is a conversation between Luangpor Teean and a layman who wished merit-making will result in his entering Nibbāna in the future.

⁷⁷The website of watsanamnai, <http://en.watsanamnai.org/index.php?lay=show&ac=article&Id=539158057&Ntype=10> (accessed 29 Feb, 2016)

⁷⁸Jittasubho, Teean, **To One That Feels**, Trans, Tavivat Puntarigvivat&Bhikkhu Niirodho, Bangkok: Luangpor Teean Foundation, 2005, p.61.

Luangpor asked him (the villager), “When do you expect to arrive at Nirvāṇa?”

“After I have died,” the villager replied.

“Do you really want to get to Nirvāṇa?” Luangpor inquired.

“Yes, I really want to get there.”

Luangpor then said, “Well, if that’s the case, then you should die as soon as possible and then you’ll reach Nirvāṇa very quickly.”

The villager was bewildered: “But I don’t want to die yet.”

“But since you want to go to Nirvāṇa, why don’t you want to die quickly? This shows that you have misunderstood,” Luangpor pointed out to the villager. “The Buddha never taught people to go to Nirvāṇa when they had already died, but he taught living people to reach Nirvāṇa while still alive.”⁷⁹

Luangpor Teean never mentioned anything about the life after death. He thought Nibbāna is not anything we should wait for in the next life but can be gained within this lifetime. What is more, we can even achieve Nibbāna suddenly. Thus, Luangpor Teean’s meditation system was always connected to “Sudden Enlightenment”, and he himself was even regarded as a meditator of Sudden Enlightenment. Tavivat Puntarigvivat compares Luangpor Teean to Master Huineng, thinking that Luangpor Teean attain a sudden enlightenment like Huineng did. He wrote in his article, “His (Luangpor Teean) experience of Dhamma involved a sudden way of knowing, which is more common in the history of Chan Buddhism in China. In contemporary terms, Luangpor Teean can be seen as a teacher of ‘Sudden Enlightenment’ in a Theravāda context. From a historical perspective, his story is similar to that of Hui-neng (638-713), the Sixth Patriarch of Chan Buddhism in China, who also attained sudden enlightenment while a lay person.”⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Supromajakr, Vatana, **An Interview With An Awakened Master Luangpor Teean**, See <http://the-wanderling.com/tean2.html> (accessed 3 Aug, 2015).

⁸⁰ Puntarigvivat, Tavivat, “Luangpor Teean: The Dynamic Practice of a Thai Meditation Master”, in **Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies**, (Vol.7, No.1, 1992): pp.69-70.

Though Luangpor Teean himself mentioned the word “Sudden” many times, and indeed also thought Nibbāna was possible in very short time, he should be regarded as one of the “gradual practice, sudden enlightenment” group. Firstly, from his own experience in meditation, though very similar with Master Huineng in their experiences of sudden enlightenment, actually he practiced meditation for quite a long time before that. He was ordained as a monk twice in order to join meditation because he was doubtful about the effectiveness of collecting good kamma, and finally achieved enlightenment by meditation for many years. On the other hand, in Luangpor Teean’s teaching, thought and awareness are two basic elements in a human being, and he thought the most important thing in meditation practice was to cultivate and develop awareness. When awareness is weak, thought will drag us away from the reality, forming a strong chain. The process of awareness accumulation is a cumulative one. We could strengthen it through rhythmic bodily movement. The chain of thought could not be broken until awareness is strong enough. Only if we could go against the chain of thought could we be able to see the true nature of thought and gain final enlightenment. In conclusion, only if we strengthen awareness by progressive meditation practices could we realize the truth of Nibbāna in one single minute.

4.2.1.4 Conclusion

From all above, it can not be denied that meditation masters in contemporary Thai Buddhism indeed assimilated some Mahāyāna Buddhist thoughts, among which the idea of Buddha-Nature was most popular, in response to special social situations. The most important problem which faced meditation masters at that time is how to get normal people interested in joining meditation. There are two main problems which should be solved by them: first, is Nibbāna possible or not? Second, if possible, when can Nibbāna be achieved?

The Mahāyāna Buddha-Nature belief answered these questions just in time. The meaning of “non-self” is adequately represented in Theravāda Buddhism, thinking that everything is existing without a true self, that is, it is empty, Nibbāna is also empty. Then where is Nibbāna? Are normal people also able to pursue it? Most people gave negative responses as they found there was no substantial progress made after joining a series of activities like Buddhist rituals, making merit, meditation practices and so on. Buddha-Nature thought, because of its peculiarity of “leading the understanding from true emptiness to marvelous existence”, is able to give them courage, confidence, and hope. It is believed that there is Buddha-Nature within everyone and there is neither lowliness nor nobleness in the possibility of becoming a Buddha. Anyone who meditates properly to dispel the defilements is welcomed to Nibbāna.

In contemporary Thai society, it was generally believed that Nibbāna was not available in this life, even if we practice properly and hard enough. Nibbāna or enlightenment is like a promise that is so far away that no one knows whether it is true or not. On the other hand, in the Buddha-Nature belief, the seed of Buddhahood exists in everyone. It is only covered by defilements temporarily. Everyone who practices in the right way can clear the clouds and see the moon behind in a very short time. Meditation masters such as Huineng, who hold high the great banner of Buddha-Nature in the history of Chan Buddhism, were always looked upon as models by Thai meditators, and their experiences in meditation were taken as successful cases to encourage others. For example, Chamnian Saengsin and Veerachart Nimanong thought the ideology(Chitwang) has encouraged many people, including monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, to aspire to the attainment of Nibbāna.⁸¹

⁸¹ Saengsin, Chamnian; Nimanong, Veerachart, **Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu's Concept of Empty-Mind (Cit Wang): Analytical Study**, KKU Res J HS(GS)1(1), 2013: p.3.

Huineng's works and his story of sudden enlightenment are still on the best-known list of Chinese Buddhism for Thai people to this day.

4.2.2 The Present Situation of Meditation Practice in Thailand and China

4.2.2.1 The Present Development of Meditation Techniques in China.

Nowadays, Mahāyāna and Theravāda meditation practices are both followed in China. As mentioned above, there are now two ways doing Mahāyāna meditation practice: meditation in daily life and intense meditation courses. The intense meditation courses are not only organized in the traditional way in temples, but also are provided for the public in the way of summer camps and meditation camps.

Here we will take Huayan Temple, a famous temple located in Chongqing, China, as an example to learn the present situation of meditation practice in Chinese temples. The practice in Huayan Temple is also mainly composed of daily practice and intense practice. This temple organizes intense “Chan-qi” retreats each year. In the first half of the year 2015, they finished five units, 35 days of “Chan-qi”, attracting more than 100 participants to join; and in the latter half of the same year, three units, 21 days of “Chan-qi” were finished, with about 80 meditators attending. “Chan-qi” retreats in Huayan Temple are open to the public, monks, nuns, laymen or laywomen are all allowed to join, and lay meditators account for more than 50% of the total. New “Chan-qi” retreats of 2016 started in March, and seven units are scheduled. All these “Chan-qi” retreats are sponsored by Huanyan Temple, so the temple should make sure the retreats will be finished without any financial problems. However, the meditation master in charge of the retreats said that donations from devotees were enough to pay daily operating expenses. Besides these “Chan-qi” retreats being scheduled, intense meditation courses are also

offered to some groups, but normally these courses are organized temporarily, and only last for one day or several days. The main aims are rather to experience meditation practice or Buddhist culture.

As a temple belonging to the Chan lineage, Huayan Temple takes up the way of Patriarchal Chan. Agricultural Chan is promoted and meditators are organized to work in the fields. Meditators are led to develop compassion by attending social relief activities in poverty-stricken areas. On other occasions when there is no “Chan-qi” retreat, meditators normally meditate at four fixed times, clocked by burning incense sticks. According to the different size of incense sticks, each incense stick takes from 45 to 60 minutes to burn down. There are fewer meditators attending daily practice than intense “Chan-qi” retreats in the meditation hall, with about ten participants.

There are some meditation halls in Chinese temples which are not open to the public, such as Wolong Temple, Guanghua Temple in Fujian. The laity are only allowed on some special days. For example, the meditation hall in Guanghua Temple in Fujian only allows the laity to attend “Nian-fo qi” which is held during Amitābha’s birthday in November. Huayan Temple in Zhiti Mountai of Ningde accepts male meditators to meditate in the meditation hall, and females can only attend some special meditation courses.

Besides the meditation practice in temples, in recent years, there are more and more summer camps or meditation camps organized by temples, among which the most famous one is the Summer Camp of Life Chan held by Bailin Temple in Hebei Province. Starting from the first camp in 1993, this Summer Camp of Life Chan has been held 22 times by 2015. There are also summer camps held by temples like Qixia Temple in Jiangsu Province, Dashengzhulin Temple in Wutaishan Mountain, Pushou Temple and Dajue Temple in Yunmen Mountain. These camps, mainly open to young and middle-aged male and females aging from 18 to 45,

are mostly held in July and August, when it is the summer vacation of Chinese schools and universities, so that students are able to join. The educational requirements for these camps are relatively high, ranging from at least high school to university. What is more, these camps are not traditional meditation courses, as all kinds of activities, worshipping the Buddha, lectures about Buddhist knowledge, Dharma talk, chanting, tea drinking, calligraphy, etc., are included, so these camps are more like Buddhist cultural courses, aiming to let more and more people experience and recognize Buddhist culture, as well as accept and even spread Buddhist culture to others.

It is easy to say that the tradition of meditation practice according to the Chinese translation of the *Smṛtyupasthāna Sūtra* had been broken off because of the influence of Mahāyāna Buddhist meditation practice. In recent decades, however, Theravāda meditation practice is being revived in China, as meditation techniques are brought into China from Myanmar and Thailand and speedily spread. As this dissertation mainly focuses on the four meditation techniques prevalent in Thailand, the meditation practices led by Pa-Auk and Goenka's lineages will not be involved here, though both of them are very popular in China.⁸²

⁸²Actually, these two lineages are very influential in China. Ven. Pa-Auk himself went to many places to instruct meditation courses for many times, such as Taiwan, Hongkong. During April to June 1998, he offered meditation course in Taiwan for the first time. He visited Taiwan for 4 times during 1998 to 2001 for meditation instruction, when famous nuns in Taiwan, Ven. Zhaohui and Ven. Shingkuang, studied from him. Ven. Mahinda, born Lin Xin, was a key propagator of Pa-Auk's meditation technique in the Mainland China. He started to practice this technique with Pa-Auk from 1999, and ordained at Pa-Auk Forest Monastery in southern Myanmar in 2002. From 2005, he began to work as a translator and assistant of meditation courses, and became a meditation teacher finally in the year 2006. In 2007, in the invitation of Jiangxi Buddhist Academy, Mahinda opened a course at Baofeng Temple in Jiangxi Province, from when Pa-Auk's meditation technique was introduced into China in the form of meditation courses. The meditation technique of Goenka's lineage was brought into China as early as 1999, with the first course starting in Bailin Temple of Hebei Province, which attracted 117 meditators to join. In 2005, the first meditation center named Nanchan Temple Meditation Center had

At the end of 20th century, Chinese monks, nuns and laity began to study meditation in Myanmar or invited meditation masters to teach in China. There are a lot of influential meditation centers and masters in Thailand teaching Mahasi's meditation practice, but Chinese meditators prefer to go to meditation centers in Myanmar or invite meditation masters directly. Mahasi's meditation practice was firstly brought into Hongkong in 1996, when a group of meditators who had learnt from Malaysian meditation master Sujiva founded the Hongkong Insight Meditation Society (香港慧观禅修会) and invited Ven. Visuddhacara to be the instructor for this Society. Now this Society provides weekly meditation courses and monthly meditation courses, and also organizes some of their meditators to attend intense meditation courses in Myanmar. Later, a branch of Hongkong Insight Meditation Society was set up in Tunmen district. More meditation groups such as The Association of Godwin's Spiritual Friends, Chi Lin Nunnery and Hongkong Theravāda Meditation Society began to offer Mahasi's meditation courses.

Mahasi's meditation technique was introduced into Taiwan in December 2000, when Sayadaw U Janaka went to Taiwan to teach meditation course for the first time. Later, Sayadaw U Jatila, Sayadaw U Pabbathami, Sayadaw U Pandita, among others, went to Taiwan, one after the other. Now, there are some meditation groups such as Mahasi Meditation Society offering courses regularly.

Mahasi's meditation technique was brought into Mainland China later than Hongkong and Taiwan. In 2004, recommended by a scholar who had attended a meditation course in Taiwan, Baofeng Temple in Jiangxi Province got in touch with Sayadaw U Jatila, the abbot of Mahasi Meditation Centre at that time, and cooperated to hold the first meditation course in July 2005, in Baofeng Temple. It was a 20-day

been founded, and then more centers such as Henan Meditation Center, Baotou Meditation Center, Taining Meditation Center, have one by one been established in different regions. And now Ten-day meditation courses, Satipaṭṭhāna meditation courses, etc., are provided in these meditation centers.

course that attracted more than 50 participants, and around 30 of them finished the course.

During 2005 and 2006, a total of three courses were opened in Mainland China, and since then, more and more courses are provided to meditators each year. Here, the list of Mahasi meditation courses in 2015 is given as an example for a clear understanding of the present development in Mainland China (Chart 4.1).

Time	Place	Meditation teacher
10-30 Mar (three courses)	Luzhou, Sichuan	Khemanandi (Malaysia) ⁸³
13-27 Apr	Baofeng Temple, Jiangxi	Ven.Zhiguang (Malaysia) ⁸⁴
22-28 Apr	Shifo Temple, Zhejiang	Sayadaw U Jatila
1-7 May	Shifo Temple, Zhejiang	Sayadaw U Jatila
30 Apr-10 May	Longhua Temple, Fujian	Unindaka Sayadaw
8-15 May	Shengshou Temple, Zhejiang	Sayadaw U Jatila
30 May -19 Jun (two courses)	Luzhou, Sichuan	Khemanandi

⁸³ Khemanandi, born 1962 in Malaysia and ordained in 1993, intensely practiced meditation for eight years under the supervision of Sayadaw U Pandita at Panditarama Meditation Centre.

⁸⁴ Ven.Zhiguang, born 1960 in Malaysia, received his ordination under the supervision of Chanmyay Sayadaw in 1995. He accompanied Chanmyay Sayadaw to travel Taiwan, Thailand and from 2003, he started to instruct meditation courses in the Buddhist Association of Malaysia.

Time	Place	Meditation teacher
26 Jun-7 Jul	Baofeng Temple, Jiangxi	Unindaka Sayadaw
18 Jul	Xincheng Chamber, Beijing	Ven. Zhiguang
9-24 Aug	Luzhou, Sichuan	Khemanandi
26 Sep- 9 Oct	Neijiang, Sichuan	Khemanandi
1-11 Dec	Baofeng Temple, Jiangxi	Chanmyay Sayadaw

(Chart 4.1, available statistics)

Referring to Luangpor Teean's Dynamic Meditation, it was taught in Taiwan by his disciple Luangpor Kam Kien early in 1994, and in 1995, another his disciples Luangpor Thong also went to Taiwan to teach a Dynamic Meditation course. Later in 2002, the Mahasati Meditation Association (中华民国正念动中禅学会) was founded in Taiwan. The propagation of Dynamic Meditation in Mainland China was much later. The first Dynamic Meditation course with more than 80 participants was opened in Puzhao Temple of Sihuan Province instructed by Luangpor Thong in 2007. In 2008, the Mahasati Dynamic Meditation Centre (正念动中禅禅修中心) was founded which offered meditation courses in provinces such as Sichuan, Hubei, Hunan, Zhejiang and Fujian. Nowadays, some Chinese meditation masters have been trained and a lot of courses are instructed by them. The following chart shows the Dynamic Meditation courses opened in Mainland China in 2015.

Time	Place	Meditation Teacher	Style of course
3-11 Jan	Jinjiang, Jiangsu	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
3-11 Feb	Jiaxing, Zhejiang	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
21 Feb –1 Mar	Jinan, Shandong	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
28 Mar – 5 Apr	Sunde, Guangdong	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
29 Apr-7 May	Ezhou, Hubei	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
30 May-7 Jun	Jiaxing, Zhejiang	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
20 Jun-5 Jul	Thailand	Luangpor Anek	Fifteen-day Course
21-28 Jun	Ezhou, Hubei	Ven, Xuzhi	Seven-day Course
13-21 Jul	Jinjiang, Jiangsu	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
22-30 Jul	Jinjiang, Jiangsu	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
31 Jul -8 Aug	Jinan, Shandong	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
10-24 Aug	Taiwan	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
30 Sep-7 Oct	Jiaxing, Zhejiang	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
24 Oct –1 Nov	Jinan, Shandong	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
7-15 Nov	Sunde, Guangdong	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course
18 Nov – 6 Dec	Sunde, Guangdong	Mr. Yansong	Seven-day Course

(Chart 4.2, available statistics)

The lineage of Phra Dhammakāya was introduced into Taiwan in September 1995, and the Taiwan Phra Dhammakāya Meditation Society was founded there in 2008. Besides, Wat Phra Dhammakāya Hong Kong was also built, where some meditation retreats are given every year. In Mainland China, there has not been any meditation course opened for meditators, so meditators who are interested in Dhammakāya

meditation normally travel to Thailand to attend courses personally or in a group. International cooperation and academic exchange activities are also carried out between Wat Dhammakāya and Buddhist or academic groups in Mainland China, the most influential one of which is the cooperation in the Program of translating the Pāli Tipiṭaka into Chinese with Peking University. The meditation practice of Buddhādāsa's lineage is in a similar situation. No meditation course has been opened and meditators should come to Thailand. Buddhādāsa is popular in China because of his books.

Luangpor Pramote's meditation technique has become more and more popular to Chinese meditators from 2014, and it has grown swiftly. In July 2014, a group of 20 meditators was organized to go to Chonburi Province in Thailand for Luangpor Pramote's meditation courses, and until now, five 10-day meditation courses have been finished in Thailand and three 2-day courses in China. Meditation courses in Thailand were taught by Luangpor Pramote and his disciples, and the 2-day courses in China were instructed by Luangpor Pramote's lay disciple Ajarn Prasan. The following chart lists the basic information of all these meditation courses held in 2014, 2015 and the meditation courses scheduled for 2016 both in Thailand and China.

Time	Place	Meditation master	Old meditator
10-22 Jul, 2014	Chonburi, Khao yai, Thailand	Luangpor Pramote and his disciples	20
11-21, Sep, 2014	Chonburi		25
27 Nov-8 Dec, 2014	Chonburi		35
7-18 May, 2015	Chonburi		50
20-21 Jun, 2015	Shengshou Temple, Zhejiang	Ajarn Prasan	60
23-24 Jun, 2015	Ziguo Temple, Fujian		100

Time	Place	Meditation master	Old meditator
27-28 Jun, 2015	Guanyin Mountain, Guangdong		100
10-21 Sep, 2015	Chonburi	Luangpor	50
5-16 May, 2016		Pramote and	50
6-17 Oct, 2016		his disciples	50
8-9 Jun, 2016	Baolin Temple, Jiangsu	Ajarn Prasan	110
13-14 Jun, 2016	Shengshou Temple, Zhejiang		100
19-20 Jun, 2016	Nanshan Temple, Guangxi		300
24-25 June, 2016	Dayunfeng Temple, Beijing		150

(Chart 4.3)

4.2.2.2 The Present Development of Meditation Techniques in Thailand

The Theravāda meditation practices in Thailand have been analyzed in Chapter II, so this part will mainly focus on the Mahāyāna meditation practices. Mahāyāna temples, including the temples built and supervised by Chinese-Thai and Chinese, and some Buddhist groups organized by monks in Bangkok were investigated, finding that Mahāyāna meditation techniques are only taught in temples newly built and supervised by Chinese monks, and only I.B.P.S Bangkok (International Buddhist Progress Society Bangkok) affiliated to Fo-Guang-Shan Temple and the Great Buddha Monastery affiliated to Chung Tai Chan Monastery of Taiwan hold meditation courses regularly.

In 1996, Fo-Guang-Shan Temple set up a Buddhist association in Bangkok, which changed its name to I.B.P.S Bangkok in 2000. In this branch of Fo-Guang-Shan Temple, a lot of activities have been successfully held, chanting, transcribing Buddhist scriptures, Fo-Guang three-day meditation, dharma ceremonies, cooking courses, and so on. Now regular meditation courses are given at 19:00 to 21:00 pm every Saturday. When these meditation course were first opened, there were less than ten meditators attending every day. However, the number of participants now often increases to 50, most of who are Chinese-Thai or Chinese who work or study in Thailand. There are also Thai people coming to learn Mahāyāna meditation, normally three to ten meditators every day. Some translators will do Thai-Chinese translation for them.

Chung Tai Chan Monastery of Taiwan rented space to set up its Bangkok branch, Great Buddha Monastery, in December 2003, and built its own building in 2006 to meet the needs of increasing numbers of devotees. The Great Buddha Monastery opens free regular basic, intermediate and advanced meditation courses and scriptural reading courses, as well as Chinese courses and Thai courses for the public, in order that more and more people can come to study Buddhist culture and apply Buddhist culture in their daily life. The daytime class is from 10 am to 12 am, while the evening class is from 7 pm to 9 pm from Mondays to Fridays, both of which teach the same content, so that meditators can choose to attend the class according to their own schedule. The basic course is on Monday, intermediate on Tuesday and advanced on Wednesday. There are around 40 meditators attending the basic course, while fewer participants attend the higher level classes, about ten normally. Most of the participants are Chinese-Thai or Chinese who work or study in Thailand. There are few Thai meditators here though the organizers provide translators for them. Very few of these meditators could continue attending the classes, and the turnover of the meditators is quite high. Although two hours are scheduled for the meditation course, actually only 40-45 minutes is spent in meditation practice, as there are

chanting and worshipping the Buddha before meditation and Dharma talk after it. The Great Buddha Monastery hopes more people will become interested in Mahāyāna Buddhist culture because activities such as Chinese and Thai courses are free. However, the results is not remarkable as people only come for language study but not religious activities.

4.2.2.3 Some Characteristics of the Development of Meditation Techniques in Thailand and China

In order to learn about the present situation of the development of meditation practice in Thailand and China more deeply, meditators from both countries were interviewed, and the following characteristics can be found.

1. The meditation techniques of the Thai Buddhist tradition are exported into China at a higher level than Mahāyāna meditation techniques exported to Thailand are still in the initial stage. Theravāda Buddhist meditation practice went ahead like wildfire in China from the end of the last century, and at present, more and more meditation courses have been opened, which can be illustrated by the numerous meditation courses listed in Charts 4.1, 4.2, 4.3. On the other hand, the spread of Mahāyāna meditation practice in Thailand started fairly late, and also very slowly. The author interviewed ten Thai meditators in Bangkok, not including the one met at the Great Buddha Monastery, none of whom has been exposed to Mahāyāna meditation practice and some of whom knew almost nothing except the name Huineng. In contrast to this, Chinese meditators who have never studied Theravāda meditation technique are more interested and willing to study it.

Secondly, having studied and practiced in the long term in Myanmar or Thailand, some Chinese meditators began to work as translators for meditation courses, and have even become meditation teachers. These Chinese meditation teachers are very familiar with China,

Chinese religious environment, and also they can speak Chinese, English, Thai or Burmese, so they can do a very good job in propagating Theravāda Buddhist meditation techniques. They lead Chinese meditators to practice in Thailand and Myanmar, or open meditation courses in China, so that meditators can choose to attend some courses according to their own schedule or financial condition. At present, no Thai local meditation master has been trained to lead Mahāyāna meditation practice, and there are very limited channels of information distribution.

Even though, the development of Theravāda meditation practice in China is still in its initial stage, the rapid growth of the number of meditators, the meditation courses and activities held nowadays are always in short supply. For example, in the special meditation courses opened for Chinese by Luangpor Pramote and his team in Thailand every year, the limit has been increased from 20 to the present 50 meditators, even though, the limit is soon reached when registration is opened. In addition, the meditation centers founded in China are different from the meditation centers in Thailand and Myanmar in the way of giving meditation instruction. There are regular meditation masters and administration committees in Thai and Burmese meditation centers in Thailand, so these centers are open every day. Meditators are allowed to join at any time and they can stay there for any length of time--one hour, half a day, one day, a week, a month-- but in Chinese meditation centers, besides of the limited meditation courses, meditators cannot come for practice at other times. What is more, the meditation courses are not open to everyone, so only meditators who have successfully registered can attend.

Lastly, what is very significant is Mahāyāna meditation techniques, especially the techniques in the Chan School, advise to work on the mind, with the new method such as Gong-An, Bang-He, which are extremely difficult for foreigners. Theravāda Meditation techniques teach to faithfully contemplate on the phenomena appearing in our body and

mind, which is much easier even for people with different cultural backgrounds. Ven. Zhaohui commented, “Theravāda Buddhist meditation practice starts from the Four Foundations of Mindfulness to contemplate the body and mind. This instruction excesses culture gaps so that it is easy even for Westerners. Chinese Buddhism teaches us to start from the mind, but, the contemplation of mind is abstruse.”⁸⁵ Ven. Shingkuang also thought Mahāyāna meditation techniques are difficult to teach through any language, “Nian-fo, worshiping Buddha, no eating, no drinking, no sleeping, etc., are all experienced. However, experiences about all these meditation practices are not progressive and cannot in any way be copied or taught.”⁸⁶ Methods such as Gong-An are used to enlighten meditators in Chinese meditation practice, and everyone’s personal experience is unique and cannot be copied, so methods like Gong-An are not suitable for normal meditators and are very difficult to spread widely.

2. Most the meditators have attended several kinds of meditation practices. Among the ten Thai meditators and ten Chinese meditators the author interviewed, half of them have studied two or more than two meditation techniques, and most of the remaining half are willing to know more about other meditation techniques. Take Bhikṣuṇī Shan as an example. She had followed the meditation practice in the Goenka, Pa-Auk and Mahasi’s lineages respectively before her ordination in the Mahasi Meditation Centre. After that, she attended meditation courses of Ajarn Chah, Luangpor Teean and Luangpor Pramote’s lineages. When she went back to China for Mahasi meditation courses in Baofeng Temple in Jiangxi Province, she received Mahāyāna precepts and ordained as a Bhikṣuṇī there. Others have also studied two or three of the meditation techniques which are prevalent in China, such as Mahāyāna

⁸⁵ Shi, Zhaohui, “《传道法师对南传佛教在台湾之观察与评议》 (Ven. Chuan-dao’s Observation and Evaluation on Theravāda Buddhism in Taiwan)”, in *Journal of Dharma Seals*, (No.1, 2011): pp.11-12.

⁸⁶ http://read.goodweb.cn/news/news_view.asp?newsid=59187

meditation techniques, Goenka, Mahasi and Pa-Auk's meditation techniques. The situation of Thai meditators is similar. Thai meditators are also very interested in trying more meditation techniques. For example, Luangpor Pramote's lay disciple Ajarn Prasan studied and practiced under the supervision of Buddhādāsa when he was still in university. In 1994, he started to study the recitation of Buddhho, later he also studied the Dynamic meditation and the technique of contemplating on the rising and falling of the abdomen, and at last he followed Luangpor Pramote for his practice.

Firstly, meditators are very open-minded to all meditation techniques, and they do not look down on each other. They think all meditation techniques have their own advantages and disadvantages which are suitable for meditators with different capacities. No improvement from some meditation technique does not mean this technique is not good but rather it is not suitable. Everyone should choose some suitable techniques according to his own capacity and objective. Meditator Miss Li said, she had attended meditation courses offered by Goenka, Mahasi and Luangpor Teean's lineages, but for her, Goenka's technique is good to cure her restlessness, while the walking meditation taught by masters from Mahasi and Luangpor Teean's lineages helps to eliminate drowsiness. Meditator Miss Feng had studied the Patriarchal Chan meditation, Mahasi's technique and also Ajarn Chah's recitation of Buddhho. For her, Mahāyāna meditation techniques are too profound and too difficult to understand, while Theravāda meditation techniques teach a progressive development. However, she also explained that when her knowledge about meditation practices have improved, she will go back to study Mahāyāna meditation techniques again. Besides, Mahāyāna monk, Ven. Yang thought he had quite a lot of falseness and delusion, so Theravāda meditation technique was suitable for him, as it taught him to contemplate but not force oneself to suppress them.

Secondly, having studied and practiced several meditation techniques, some meditators are inclined to mix them with his own experience and sum up some suitable method for himself. For example, Miss Li thought that counting breathing in Mahāyāna meditation and bodily scan in Goenka's meditation practice was beneficial to her. However, she did not prefer long-term sitting meditation, so she mixed her practice with walking meditation which she learnt from Mahasi meditation course. Another Chinese meditator, Ven. Yan also replaced contemplation on the rising and falling of the abdomen with counting the breathing when he was attending Mahasi meditation course. Meditators think all sentient beings have various defilements and kamma, so for most people, it is difficult to eliminate all with one single meditation technique. Thus, it is helpful to know more techniques to eliminate the problems respectively. Ven. Zhaohui agreed to practice several techniques, and she thought Mahāyāna meditation techniques are very difficult, so she could practice Theravāda meditation techniques as an expedient method, "Theravāda meditation teaches step-by-step practice starting from four mindfulness, from the mindfulness of body to the feelings, then establishing mindfulness on the mind and mental factors. Mahāyāna meditation practice, on the other hand, focuses directly on the mind. If someone cannot leave the defilements aside, it means capacity in practice is not good, so if he is not good at focusing on the mind, doesn't he need some expedient way to lead him?"⁸⁷

Thirdly, they think Sudden Enlightenment and Nibbāna are a long-term program. The thought of Sudden Enlightenment is a very influential concept in Mahāyāna and it has also exerted some influence on Thai meditation masters. However, from the interviews, it is found that few of the meditators were confident in attaining Sudden Enlightenment. They think a long-term accumulative practice is needed to prepare for the

⁸⁷ Shi, Zhaohui, "《传道法师对南传佛教在台湾之观察与评议》(Ven. Chuan-dao's Observation and Evaluation on Theravāda Buddhism in Taiwan)", in *Journal of Dharma Seals*, (No.1, 2011): pp.11-12.

Sudden Enlightenment at some moment, so in conclusion, they normally hold the idea of “Gradual Practice for Sudden Enlightenment”. They thought Nibbāna is available, but few of us could attain it. We should practice constantly for it, but they are not sure when they can attain it. Even though just considering meditation practices brings us purity in both body and mind as well as mindfulness, it is more valuable to practice even though Nibbāna is not available in the near future.

Lastly, Ven.Yinshun’s idea about the practice of different meditation techniques is quoted to end this discussion, “Intriguing various expedient techniques actually share the same principle, so it is called in the sūtras the ‘ancient immortal path’, ‘one-vehicle path’, ‘one path’ or ‘not two paths’. If someone wants to go out from a room, he can go through the door or window, and it is also possible to break the wall, uncover the tiles or make a tunnel. Anyhow, the principle is that he can only go out through some open space. The diversity of expedient techniques doesn’t mean the differences in personal experience (we can get the same experience through different techniques).”⁸⁸

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the similarities and differences of meditation techniques between Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions in three aspects and the integration and exchanges between them.

1. The meditation courses in Thailand are normally organized by meditation centers, where there are regular meditation masters teaching meditation techniques and administration committee taking care of the daily affairs. Mahāyāna meditation courses are held by temples and monks play a key role in both administration and instruction. When Theravada meditation techniques are brought into China, more and more

⁸⁸ Shi Yinshun, 《中国禅宗史》(The History of Chinese Chan School), (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2010), p.7.

meditation centers are also soon founded. However, they are different from the ones in Thailand and Myanmar. These meditation centers are not able to provide meditation instruction every day like those in Thailand do. Thus, only very limited courses are given and they also limit the number of meditators allowed to attend, so the meditation courses are always in short supply. Meditators in good financial condition will try to attend some courses abroad, while some will practice at home by following books and videos.

2. Theravāda and Mahāyāna meditation techniques share something in common in theory. They think it is necessary to have a correct idea about reading suttas or other scriptures, which is an important part of Buddhism. The ideas of meditation masters can be roughly divided into three kinds. Firstly, it is useful to read some suttas and know the Buddha's teachings. Early Buddhism held this idea, and in Chinese Buddhism, when any new Buddhist Schools were founded, the suttas and Buddha's teachings were highly valued as they must find their theoretical basis from them. Secondly, reading suttas and learning Buddha's teachings are the only expedient for better practice. Meditation masters in this group think reading and learning help us to know the Buddha's thoughts in order to practice following the right way. However, if we are not able to understand the meaning of the scriptures, it is better not to read them. Third, there is no need to read or learn Buddha's teachings. Meditation practice cannot be taught or done through language or words. Meditation is in every daily behavior and meditation is in the mind, so reading and learning are not necessary.

Also, Chinese and Thai meditation masters are inclined to an enlightenment in this lifetime. Both of them think Nibbāna is not far away from us. If we practice according to the right way, we can attain it very fast. It is not necessary to wait until a next life to attain Nibbāna. Meditation masters represented by Huineng thought we are able to attain a sudden enlightenment as everyone has a pure mind inherently, so only

when we realize this, are we able to be enlightened suddenly. Some Thai meditation masters also received the influence of Buddha-Nature or sudden enlightenment from Mahāyāna Buddhism. Through her interviews, the author finds this is one reason why some Chinese meditators prefer to go meditation in Myanmar. They thought Thai meditation practices had assimilated some Mahāyāna thought, so that it was better to learn the authentic Dharma from Myanmar, but when they learnt that Thai meditation techniques are still following the Tipitaka, they start to come to Thai meditation centers.

3. Theravāda meditation techniques are more and more universally spread in China, while Mahāyāna meditation techniques are still in their initial stage in Thailand. The contemplation on the phenomena of the body and mind is very intuitional and the progressive development of Theravada meditation is easy to follow for people from different cultural backgrounds. A group of Thai and Chinese meditators are very zealous in propagating Theravada meditation. On the other hand, the key to Mahāyāna meditation techniques is mind, which is extremely difficult to observe and understand. It is even difficult for meditators from the same language or same cultural background. Chinese meditators do have a long way to go to attract more participants in Mahāyāna meditation practices.