

A Comparative Study of the Meditation Techniques between Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions

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Abstract

This is a comparative study of the meditation techniques between Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions. On the ground of the knowledge of meditation practices in Pali and Chinese Buddhist canon and meditation techniques prevalent in Thailand and China, this research is to find the similarities and differences between them in way to organize meditation practice, the theoretical basis for meditation techniques, and similar meditation techniques in these two Buddhist traditions. This research finds that both Thai and Chinese meditation masters try to bring meditation into normal people's daily life, by making meditation centers easily to reach, reducing the importance of studying scriptures, and leading meditators' being confidence in Nibbana. However, there are also some differences between the meditation techniques in Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions. In Thailand, meditation courses are normally organized by meditation centers, while in China, temples are organizing meditation practices. What is more, though there are some similar meditation techniques in these two Buddhist traditions, such as contemplation on breathing, as well as recitation of "Bodddho" and Nian-fo, they are from different Buddhist texts and belonging to different meditation subjects.

Keywords: Comparative Study, Meditation Techniques, Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions

Introduction

This is a comparative research on the meditation techniques in Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions. Meditation, as an ancient practice, is always referred as Jhāna or Bhāvanā in Pāli canon. Jhāna in Pāli and dhyāna in Sanskrit, derived from Jhāyati, is called ฌาน in Thai and 禪那(Chan na)¹

¹ Chinese word for meditation, it was translated as (Zen) by Japanese scholars and became well-known in English world. As the Chinese meditation will be discussed in this dissertation, the word "Chan" will be used instead of Zen here. And more information about Zen and Chan, see Faure, Bernard. **Chan Insight and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition**. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996, pp.3-4.

in Chinese. And in English, various translation has been offered, ranging from the feeble “musing” to the misleading “trance” and the ambiguous “meditation,” but now we prefer to leave the word untranslated and let its meaning emerge from its contextual usages². It is the technical term for a special religious experience, reached in a certain order of mental states³, which result from the centering of the mind upon a single object with such power of attention that a total immersion in the object takes place⁴, and it is always referred to the four jhānas (four mental states) which are the results of the mediation practice.

In Thailand, an increasing percentage of the population attends meditation practice, including not only monks but also lay Buddhists, and even non-Buddhists. Meditation is popular in most levels of the society. To teach students to control their mind and develop their wisdom, there are both academic studies and practice of meditation in many universities, primary schools and secondary schools, and it is a very important subject for students. Meditation practice has been a basic study in Thailand. What is more, meditation was embedded in the movement of Buddhist revival, working as the inducement for social movements and national independence movement, thus, scholars are accustomed to naming it as a movement.⁵ Like in the famous Dhammakaya movement in Thailand, Dhammakaya meditation is one of the most important tools to propagate their teachings. In these meditation practices, five meditation techniques are mainly taught and practiced: contemplation on Breathing in and out, contemplation on the rising and falling of the abdomen, contemplation of the image of crystal ball appearing in the abdomen, contemplation of the movement of the body, and recitation of the “Buddho”.

² Gunaratana, Henepola. **The Jhānas in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation**. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/gunaratana/wheel351.html> (Accessed 20 Dec, 2013).

³ Rhys, Davids, ed. 1921-1925. **The Pāli Text Society's Pāli-English Dictionary**. Oxford: PTS, 2007, p.322.

⁴ Gunaratana, Henepola. **The Jhānas in Theravāda Buddhist Meditation**. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/gunaratana/wheel351.html> (Accessed 20 Dec, 2013).

⁵ Meditation was embedded in the movement of Buddhist revival, working as the inducement for social movements and national independence movement, thus scholars are accustomed to name it as a movement. For example, Jordt named it “Mass Lay Meditation Movement”, see Jordt Ingrid. **Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement: Buddhism and the Cultural Construction of Power**. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007, p.xii; Bond named it “The Insight Meditation Movement”, see Bond, D.George. **The Buddhist Revival in Sri Lanka: Religious Tradition, Reinterpretation and Response**. Columbo: University of South Carolina Press, 1988, p.130; or Cook described it as “a widely popular and influential movement”, see Cook, Joanna. **Meditation in Modern Buddhism: Renunciation and Change in Thai Monastic Life**. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p.i.

Referring to the meditation practice in Chinese Buddhist tradition, it had a history of more than 400 years before the well-known Bodhidharma's practicing and teaching meditation⁶, in the fact that Indian Buddhist meditation techniques had been brought into China early in the 2nd century and later the Mahayāna Buddhist meditation techniques in the middle of the 3rd century, owing to the translation of meditation sutras⁷. The situation of meditation practice and techniques we see today is by no means the same in the early stage of Chinese Buddhism, because during the nearly 2000 years past, the practice of meditation techniques in Chinese Buddhism underwent a lot of changes. In recent decades, Theravada Buddhist meditation techniques such as the five above mentioned meditation techniques prevalent in Thailand are widely brought into China.

Considering the diversity of Mahayana meditation techniques and its long history in China, I am wondering that why Theravada meditation techniques are brought into China? Is there any problem with Mahayana meditation techniques? So it is meaningful to investigate on the meditation practices in the Pali and Chinese Buddhist canon and meditation techniques prevalent in the society respectively, and then make a comparison of the meditation techniques between Thai and Chinese Buddhism traditions to find the similarities and differences as well as the integration and exchanges between them.

Objectives

This research will study the similarities and differences of meditation techniques between Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions, on the ground of the knowledge of meditation practice in Pali and Chinese Buddhist canons,

⁶ Jan Yunhua(冉云华). “《中国早期禅法的流传和特点—慧皎、道宣所着「习禅篇」研究》(The Propagation and Characteristic of Early Meditation in China: A Study on the Chapter of Meditation Practice by Huijiao and Daoxuan)”, in **Hua-Kang Buddhist Journal**. Taipei: The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, No. 07 (1984):p.65. Dr.Xuan Fang also said, when Buddhism was brought into China in Western Han Dynasty(202 B.C.--9 A.D.), it attracted a lot of attention as a foreign religion mainly because of the miraculous phenomenons along with it. And Chan, as a main way to miracles in Buddhism, may be one of the parts in Buddhism which was firstly brought into China. See Xuan, Fang(宣方). “《汉魏两晋禅学研究》(A Study on Chan Meditation in Han and Wei Dynasties)”. **Ph.D. Dissertation**. Institute for the Study of Buddhism and Religious Theory, Renmin University of China, 1998, p.9.

⁷ Jan Yunhua(冉云华). “《中国早期禅法的流传和特点—慧皎、道宣所着「习禅篇」研究》(The Propagation and Characteristic of Early Meditation in China: A Study on the Chapter of Meditation Practice by Huijiao and Daoxuan)”, in **Hua-Kang Buddhist Journal**. Taipei: The Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, No. 07(1984): p.63.

and meditation techniques in Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions.

The Methodology of the Research

This research not only involves the meditation practices recorded in the Theravāda and Mahayāna Buddhist canon, but also prevalent meditation techniques and their development in Thailand and China. So three different methods are used to collect data: literatures studies, social investigation, and interviews.

1. Literatures studies: It is extremely necessary to trace the original teaching about meditation techniques in Theravāda and Mahayāna Buddhist canons to built the basis for the research. In the Theravāda tradition, meditation techniques in the Pāli Tipiṭaka and other Buddhist Texts have been studied. Coming to Chinese tradition, the Taishō Tripiṭaka, which is now most popular in Chinese Buddhist research, is used as the source. Though the Taishō Tripiṭaka is arranged into 3 Collections, 31 divisions,⁸ the meditation techniques are mainly recorded in two parts, that is Indian Collection, including the sutras translated from Indian Buddhist Schools, and the Chinese Collection, composed of scriptures from the Chinese Buddhist Schools. Besides the Pāli and Chinese canon, the works of the meditation masters, such as Mahasi, Buddhadasa, are also studied, which are of great importance to clarify the masters' thought and meditation techniques.

2. Social investigation: As this research will cover the development and present situation of meditation in both Thailand and China which we can not read from the books, social investigation could be the only way to collect these data. The researcher had already visited some famous meditation center in these two countries, and more trips to some other meditation centers are already in schedule.

3. Interviews: The researcher has already interviewed some meditation masters and practitioners both in Thailand and China, but more interviews are still in process. Their opinions about the development and techniques of meditation will be collected. Among them, some practitioners have already attended many meditation courses taught by masters from different techniques, therefore, their rich and profound experience will also be very useful information for this research.

Results and Discussion

Meditation techniques prevalent in Thai Buddhist tradition are

⁸ Bantaokul, Sudarat. An analytical Study of the Developmental Structure of the Taishō Tripiṭaka. Research report, Faculty of Buddhist, MCU, 2011, P.7.

mainly from the Pāli Language Buddhism, while the early Meditation techniques in Chinese Buddhism are mainly from the Sarvāstivāda School along with the translation of the sūtras involved 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, so this research will make a comparison from three aspects: the way to organize those meditation techniques, the theory behind and similar meditation techniques, and further analyze the exchanges and integrations between them.

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

Firstly, the life style of forest-dwelling and village-dwelling are combined in modern meditation practice. Until the middle of 19th century, Thai Buddhists were not only lax in observation of precepts, and also were uninterested and confident in getting Nibbana in this life time. Meditation practices were mostly preserved in remote forest together with the ascetic practice. So monks in the villages and cities realized it was a good way to learn from these forest-dwellers to get rid of problem of lax precepts observation in contemporary Thai Sangha. However, it is extremely difficult to follow the ascetic life in isolating places, and also, it is not feasible to separate all the Sangha from local lay people, so they combined the two life styles, forest-dwelling and village-dwelling, together to build some meditation monasteries in some forest near the villages. They moved the meditation places from forest into some easily-reaching places. Having learnt from the monks in the forest, Thai Sangha was found to have improvement in their observation of precepts and meditation. On the other hand, a great number of practitioners were attracted to join the meditation courses because of the monks' accomplishment. The moving out of meditation centers from remote forest opened a new door for village-dwelling monks and lay Buddhists. The most important, the meditation masters and the meditation monasteries were not reachless and mysterious any more, as we were able to see how they lived their life and how the meditation monasteries ran, and it became very easy to arrive the meditation monasteries and take courses there.

The situation in modern Chinese Buddhism is similar. In modern Chinese Buddhism, monks were also lax in the observation of precepts. Eminent Chinese monks such as Master Xuyun promoted the revival of practice system of “*śīla, samatha and prajñā*” by strict observation of precepts. At that time, meditation practice was also mainly preserved in remote forest, monks like Xuyun was well-known for his lifelong ascetic practice. For the other hand, the Engaged Buddhism was paid more and

more attention to, but there was no effective way to promote it. Being impressed by Taixu's description of the serious isolation between Chinese Buddhism and real world, Jinghui proposed his concept of "Sheng-huo 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. "Shenghuo Chan" is to apply Chan's spirit and wisdom into life, in order to fulfill 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 present moment, implement Buddha dharma in the real world, and make individuals back to the society.⁹

Secondly, meditation practices are organized by different organizers in different ways in Thai and Chinese Buddhism. Meditation courses in Thailand are normally provided by various meditation centers, which can be roughly divided into two kinds: the meditation centers which are affiliated with some famous temples and meditation centers built to meet the growth of some meditation techniques. In these meditation centers, meditation practices are taken as their task of primary importance, providing free meditation courses for monks and laities.

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. Meditation practices in Chinese Sangha always mixed with daily life, that is what Chinese meditation masters promoted as "meditate in daily life, and live within meditation". Meditation and daily life are going together. The second part is intense group meditation, normally named "Chan-qi"(Chan Seven). "Chan-qi" means meditators practice in meditation hall in a unit or units of 7 days, the time of the retreat can be 7 units, that is 49 days at most. Participants are doing this intense, strict meditation courses to improve their accomplishment in meditation.

In Thai meditation centers, the level of laities' participation in meditation practice is much higher than that in meditation halls in Chinese Buddhism. They are not only the main participants, but also managers of daily affairs of meditation centers as mentioned. The Vinaya has very strict rules about monks' daily life in Theravāda Buddhism, with activities like planting, cooking and driving all prohibited, and it is difficult for the public to accept Monks' over involvement in social affairs, so they are mainly responsible for Dhamma affairs. A managing committee that is

⁹ Jinghui. 《中国佛教与生活禅》(**Chinese Buddhism and Shenghuo Chan**). Beijing: Religion and Culture Press, 2005, p.121.

mainly composed of laities is founded to take care of daily affairs in every meditation center. On the contrary, 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 is in charge of meditation courses in Chinese temples. Laities are only volunteers to assist the Sangha with the administration. Besides, now there are activities like Life Chan Camp, in which laities are taught meditation, but still, there are very limited number of laities could attend. And also, these activities are hold by temples and monks.

2. Comparison of Theoretical Basis for Thai and Chinese Buddhist Meditation Techniques.

a. Traditional Scriptural Studies

The scriptures that record the Buddha's teachings are attached great importance to and familiarity of the scriptures is regarded as a basic skill for being a Buddhist, and for monks, study of the scripture is a compulsory course. In 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.¹⁰

Having studied the biographies of the leading meditation masters, we can easily find that they all spent their early days in 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, no matter mix with own personal experience or not, we can find all of them try to find themselves a theoretical basis from the scriptures. 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 scriptures is no the way to enlightenment"¹¹, pointing out the practice is the

¹⁰ Jordt, Ingrid. 2007. **Burma's Mass Lay Meditation Movement: Buddhism and Cultural Construction of Power**. Athens: Ohio University Press, p.17.

¹¹ Jittasubho, Teean. **A Manual of Self-Awareness**. Bangkok: Luangpor Teean Jittasubho Foundation, 1994, p.17.

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 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 ones appearing will be neglected.

In Chinese Buddhism, when the Chinese Buddhist Schools were founding, scriptural study and practice are paid the same attention to, 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. But later, the importance of scriptural studies is more or less reduced. In Pure Land School, three factors of Nian-fo are focused, namely, belief, vows and action. When these three factors have been satisfied, meditator is possible to reborn in Pure Land, even without the study of scriptures and Buddha teaching. In Chan School, the tradition of “separate transmission outside of the texts” and “did not rely upon texts” had already initiated from the Bodhidharma’s time. As when Bodhidharma was asked “if the Nature has not been seen, can I attain the Buddhahood by Nian-fo, chanting, donating, observing precepts and collecting virtues?” He answered, “No, you can’t.”¹² Bodhidharma also said, “my dharma is directly transmitted from mind to mind; do not establish written words or letters.”¹³ It means that transmission of Dharma in Chan Buddhism doesn’t depend on texts, but the transmission from mind to mind is focused. It requires to direct right to the original mind. The tradition of “Not based on the written words”(不立文字) was paid even more attention to until Huineng’s time, and was widely promoted as an important principle for Chan School.

b. The Theory of Nibbāna

Firstly, the interests are shifted from collecting kamma to the pursuit of Nibbāna. Though traditional rituals such as collecting merit are not denied, meditators 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 the time.

Second, the fast and sudden enlightenment is highlighted while the importance of time-taking and gradual preparation for the enlightenment is lessened. The Early Buddhism proposes a gradual development before

¹² CBETA, T48, n2009, p.374a.

¹³ CBETA, T44, n1848, p.307a.

a sudden enlightenment, which may happen in one second, like Gethin concludes, the path is something that is gradual and cumulative; second and on the other hand this gradual and cumulative path comes to a quite specific and definite culmination or climax.¹⁴ The Early Buddhism cares more about the necessity of gradual development for the eventual sudden breakthrough to the enlightenment, while the meditation masters pay more attention to the absolute and instantaneous nature of transition. Meditation masters in modern time think it is unnecessary to have good Kamma collected as the basis for Nibbāna, and only if practice in 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.

3. Comparison on Meditation Techniques in Thai and Chinese Buddhist Traditions

a. The Contemplation on the Breathing

Having studied Buddhist texts involved Ānāpānasati, we are able to roughly divide the methods into two types, contemplating the breathing in and breathing out and counting the number of breath.

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 tation and Thai Forest Tradition¹⁵ all use Contemplating the Breathing in and Breathing out to prove or assist their own meditation technique. Only Buddhadasa taught a meditation technique that covers these two types, and also mix with his personal experience. Visuddhimagga points out that counting is a device for setting mindfulness on the in-breaths and out-breaths as object by cutting off the external dissipation of applied

¹⁴ Gethin, Rupert. *The Buddhist Path to Awakening*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2001, p.246.

¹⁵ Thai Forest Tradition uses the Contemplating the breathing in and breathing out to assist their recitation of Buddha, 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 ten times. Then begin again again, "bud" with the in-breath, "dho" with the out, nine times...eight times...seven times...six, five, four, three, two, one and zero. 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 Buddha" in the Northeast Forest Meditation Lineage in Modern Thailand), <ftp://tbc.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).

thoughts, so it should be done until without counting, mindfulness remains settled on the in-breaths and out-breaths as its object.¹⁶ 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. Buddhadasa creates 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 to count ‘five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five.....’ when the breath touches the above mentioned spot, or taking ‘ten’ as a unit, which asks to count ‘ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty.....’

However, the situation in Chinese Buddhism meditation is quite different. Since in all the sūtras involved meditation practice, the *Ānāpānasmṛti Sūtra* translated by An Shigao can be regarded as the most influential and most popular one, the technique of counting the breathing in and breathing out taught in this sūtra become the most widely used one. In practice, the instructions of counting the breath in the sūtras are put into practice. However, later, it is sinicized. Take the instruction in Zhiyi’s *The Six Perfection Doors* (《六妙法门》) as example, where he used the word “Buddha-nature” twice¹⁷ and related his instruction to mind directly. 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.”¹⁸ He assimilated the Buddha-nature theory to integrate Mahāyāna with Theravāda Buddhism in his *Ānāpānasmṛti* practice.

b. Recitation of the “Buddho” and Nian-fo

In 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, take recitation of Buddho as the main meditation subject or take it to assist the contemplation on the breathing in and out or other techniques, however, both of these two types are belonging to the recollection of the Buddha in *Visuddhimagga*, which is mindful of the Enlightenment One’s special qualities as its object in order to arise the recollection inspired by the Enlightenment One. Recitation of the “Buddho” in Thai Forest Tradition simplifies the recollection of the Buddha in *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

¹⁶ Buddhaghosa. *The Path of Purification*, trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli. Kandy: BPS, 2011, p.273.

¹⁷ CBETA, T46, no1917, p.552a.

¹⁸ CBETA, T46, no1917, p.552a.

with his special qualities.¹⁹ Because Buddha's special qualities are not the key issues in this practice, the recitation of "Buddho" is only to make the mind concentrate 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-fo²⁰ in Chinese Buddhism, the Recitation of the Buddha's Name is the most prevalent one owing to the spread by Pure Land School, adding this kind is rightly the most similar one with recitation of Buddho in Thai Forest Tradition, therefore, the Recitation of the Buddha's Name will be focused here. The Recitation of the Buddha's Name in Pure Land School is mainly according to the The Amitābha Sūtra, Aparimitayur Sūtra, and Amitāyurdhyāna-sūtra, and what they recite is the Amitābha Buddha' name and his special qualities. As the key to be reborn in Pure Land is the vows and power of Amitābha Buddha, we can not recite any other word in stead of Amitābha Buddha' name.

The recitation of "Buddho" in Thai Forest Tradition should be practiced in the system of "Sīla, Samatha and Paññā". The Visuddhimagga points out that the Recollection of Buddha is only effective for cultivation of access concentration, "Owing to the profundity of the Enlightenment One's special qualities, or else owing to his being occupied in recollecting special qualities of many sorts, the jhana is only access and does not reach absorption."²¹ When meditator has attained some degree of concentration, he should continue to develop his wisdom, that is to say, turn to the Vipassanā practice.²² Wen Tzungkuen also commented in his article that, the recitation of "Buddho" in this tradition is only one link for the cultivation of concentration in the Path, which aims to develop the concentration and

¹⁹ 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 Buddho" 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%A6%F2%B1%D0%B9%CF%AE%D1%C0%5D%201%2F037%20%BD%D7%A4%E5%2F%BA%D9%A9%C0%A6%F2%AA%FB%AAk%AA%F9%A4%A7%AC%E3%A8s.pdf> (accessed 3 Oct, 2013).

²⁰ Oral Recitation Buddha's Name, Self-nature Buddha Contemplation, Contemplation by Thought and Contemplation of an Image.

²¹ Buddhaghosa. **The Path of Purification**, trans. Bhikkhu Nanamoli. Kandy: BPS, 2011, p.209.

²² Take Ajarn Sao's practice as an example, he advised meditator to achieve access concentration by recition of "Buddho", then attain Absorption concentration by the contemplation of impurity, and lastly develop Vipassanā to faithfully observe the nature of phenomena on body and mind.

mindfulness and lays the foundation for wisdom cultivation.²³

In Pure Land School, when the Amitābha Buddha's Name is recited, even without the assistance of any other practice, meditator is able to rebirth 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 contrary, recitation of "Buddho" in Thai Forest Tradition is effective for access concentration, and we can't 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 the final enlightenment, thus it depends on Self-power.

Discussion

This research analyzed the similarities and differences of meditation techniques between Thai and Chinese Buddhist traditions, and two points can be concluded from this research.

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 the key role in both administration and instruction. When Theravada meditation techniques are brought into China, more and more meditation centers are also founded following. However, they are different from the ones in Thailand and Myanmar. These meditation centers are not able to provide meditation instruction everyday like those in Thailand do. Thus, only very limited courses are given and also limited number of meditators are 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 teachings. The original Buddhism hold this idea, and in Chinese Buddhism, when any new

²³ 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), [ftp://ttbc.no-ip.org/%A5%AC%C9%A6U%A6a%A4W%AEy%B3%A1%B8%EA%AE%C6%2F%ABn%B6%C7%A6%F2%B1%D0%B9%CF%AE%D1%C0%5D%201%2F037%20%BD%D7%A4%E5%2F%BA%D9%A9%C0%A6%F2%AA%FB%AAk%AA%F9%A4%A7%AC%E3%A8s.pdf](http://ttbc.no-ip.org/%A5%AC%C9%A6U%A6a%A4W%AEy%B3%A1%B8%EA%AE%C6%2F%ABn%B6%C7%A6%F2%B1%D0%B9%CF%AE%D1%C0%5D%201%2F037%20%BD%D7%A4%E5%2F%BA%D9%A9%C0%A6%F2%AA%FB%AAk%AA%F9%A4%A7%AC%E3%A8s.pdf) (accessed 3 Oct, 2013).

Buddhist Schools were founded, the suttas and Buddha teachings were highly valued as they must find the theoretical basis from them. Secondly, reading suttas and learning Buddha teachings are only the expedient for better practice. Meditation masters in this group think reading and learning helps us to know the Buddha's thoughts in order to practice following the right way. However, if we are not able to understand the means of scriptures, it is better not to read. Third, it is no need to read or learning Buddha teachings. Meditation practice can't be taught or done in languages or words. Meditation is in every daily behaviors and meditation is in the mind, so reading and learning is 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. Nibbāna is not need to wait until the next life. Meditation masters represented by Huineng thought we are able to gain a sudden enlightenment as everyone has a pure mind inherently, so only if we realize it, we are able to enlighten suddenly. Some Thai meditation masters also received the influence of Buddha-nature or sudden enlightenment from Mahāyāna Buddhism. And in interview, the author finds it is one reason why some Chinese meditators prefer to go meditation in Myanmar. They thought Thai meditation practices assimilated some Mahāyāna thoughts so 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.

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