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鳩摩羅什禪經中的「念佛三昧」觀

Study on *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*

in Kumārajīva's Meditation Texts

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ABSTRACT

Buddhānusmṛti (念佛/佛隨念), the Sanskrit term for recollection of the Buddha, has been popularised as a key liturgical and ritual formula in the form of invoking the Buddha's name in Mahāyāna Buddhism today. The study of *buddhānusmṛti* specifically as a form of meditative practice in this thesis provides significant discussions relevant to Buddhists, scholars, and those who are interested in understanding the deeper theoretical and historical underpinnings behind *buddhānusmṛti*, a practice traceable to the teachings of the historical Buddha and his accomplished disciples. *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* (念佛三昧), the absorption of recollection of the Buddha, is a potential attainment only when *buddhānusmṛti* is carried out as a structured meditation practice beyond the literal recitation of a Buddha's name. In Kumārajīva's (344–413 CE) biographies, he is not described as a master of meditation but is lauded for his prowess as a translator of texts and an exegete. Yet the meditation texts that he translated in the fifth century were among the earliest texts on this subject to appear in China, and are important material not only for understanding the kind of content to which fifth-century Chinese Buddhists interested in meditation would likely have been exposed to but also for their considerable influence on later developments of Mahāyāna meditation practice.

The present research attempts at exploring the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* within the context of Kumārajīva's corpus of four meditation texts, namely *The Sūtra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation* (T15n614, *Zuo chan sanmei jing* 《坐禪三昧經》); *The Essential Explanation of the Methods of Meditation* (T15n616, *Chan fa yaojie* 《禪法要解》); *The Discourse on the Essential Secrets of Meditation* (T15n613, *Chan mi yaofa jing* 《禪祕要法經》); and *The Outlining Way of Contemplation* (T15n617, *Siwei lue yaofa* 《思惟略要法》), establishing his contributions to the development of Buddhist meditation practice with his transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.

The methodology of textual studies is employed specifically on Kumārajīva's meditation texts in the Chinese Buddhist Canon, texts on *buddhānusmṛti* in early Buddhism, as well as related meditation and *samādhi* texts from the fifth century, to answer the following questions: What is the trajectory of development of the concept and practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in Buddhism? What is the practice and transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from the perspective of Kumārajīva's corpus of

meditation texts? How does the presentation of *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* compare across his meditation texts?

Through this study I hope to illustrate the significance of Kumārajīva's oft-overlooked contributions to Buddhist meditation practice, showing that Kumārajīva's varied transmissions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in his meditation texts are well-grounded in the teachings of early Buddhist texts, and serves as extremely valuable reflections of the meditative practices from northwest India and Central Asia in the third and fourth centuries. I also posit that these texts are valuable examples of the diverse meditation methods developed, which reflect a continuum process of change and diversification, stemming from practitioners' pragmatic activation and adaptation of doctrinal theory into practices.

Keywords: *Buddhānusmṛti*, *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, Meditation, Kumārajīva, Meditation Sūtras



中文摘要

Buddhānusmṛti，梵文術語為佛隨念，本文簡稱為念佛，已成為大乘佛教中關鍵的修行公式或方法。本論文以念佛為一種禪法實踐作為研究對象，為佛教徒、學者和那些有興趣瞭解念佛背後更深層次的理論和歷史基礎者提供相關的討論。當念佛超越了字面上持唸佛的名號時，念佛三昧（*Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*）即可作為架構分明的禪法修持成果。在鳩摩羅什（344–413 CE）的傳記中，他沒有被稱為禪師，反而是以他的譯經和釋經能力享譽。但他在五世紀時所編譯和撰集出的禪經，卻是在中國所出現關於禪法的早期重要經文，對於瞭解五世紀中國佛教徒所接觸到的禪法，和之後對於大乘禪法所產生的影響，是很重要的史料。

本研究試圖透過鳩摩羅什五世紀時所編譯的四部禪經（《坐禪三昧經》、《禪法要解》、《禪祕要法經》、和《思惟略要法》），探討其中的「念佛三昧」觀，以及鳩摩羅什對佛教禪法實踐的具體貢獻。

透過文獻分析法對鳩摩羅什所編譯的禪經、有關於念佛觀的初期佛教經典、以及同五世紀的相關禪經和三昧經進行分析和比較，試圖回應以下問題：何謂「念佛三昧」的傳承和實踐的發展脈絡？從鳩摩羅什禪經的角度而言，「念佛三昧」的實踐如何被詮釋？「念佛三昧」的詮解在鳩摩羅什所編譯的禪經中有何異同之處？

筆者希望通過本研究能夠釐清鳩摩羅什所傳的「念佛三昧」觀對於禪法發展的具體貢獻。本文推斷鳩摩羅什在禪經中所傳的「念佛三昧」觀是佛陀教誨的一種承先啟後，也是三至四世紀西北印和中亞禪修實踐方法的寫照。這些禪經蘊含著發展出來的多元禪修實踐方法，反映了禪修實踐者們具體將教義理論轉化為實踐的寶貴經驗。

關鍵詞：念佛、念佛三昧、禪修、鳩摩羅什、禪經

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ABBREVIATIONS

Note:

All references of Chinese Tripiṭaka texts are to the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* edition unless otherwise stated.

- AMTJ* *Shorter Sukhāvāṭīvyūha Sūtra* (*Fo shuo emituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經); T12n366.
- APSY* *Ānāpānasmṛti Sūtra* (*Anbo shou yi jing* 安般守意經); T15n602.
- BZSM* *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (*Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經); T13n418.
- CFYJ* *The Essential Explanation of the Methods of Meditation* (*Chan fa yaojie* 禪法要解); T15n616.
- CMYFJ* *The Discourse on the Essential Secrets of Meditation* (*Chan mi yaofa jing* 禪祕要法經); T15n613.
- CSZJJ* *A Compilation of Notices on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka* (*Chu san zang ji ji* 出三藏記集); T55n2145.
- DMCJ* *Chan Scripture of Dharmatrata* (*Da mo duo luo chan jing* 達摩多羅禪經); T15n618.
- DSSW* *The Sūtra of the Questions of The King of the Mahādruma Kiṃnaras* (*Da shu jin na luo wang suo wen jing* 大樹緊那羅王所問經); T15n625.
- DZDL* *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (*Da zhi du lun* 大智度論); T25n1509.
- FHJ* *The Lotus Sūtra* (*Miao fa lian hua jing* 妙法蓮華經); T9n262.
- GSMJ* *Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha* (*Fo shuo guan fo sanmei hai jing* 佛說觀佛三昧海經); T15n643.
- GSZ* *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (*Gao seng zhuan* 高僧傳); T50n2059.
- JDY* *Venerable Kumārajīva's Great Meaning* (*Jiu mo luo shi fashi dayi* 鳩摩

- 羅什法師大義); T45n1856.
- SLYJ* *The Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sūtra (Fo shuo shou lenyan sanmei jing 佛說首楞嚴三昧經); T15n642.*
- SWLYF* *The Outlining Way of Contemplation (Siwei lie yaofa 思惟略要法); T15n617.*
- SZL* *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā or Treatise on the Ten Bodhisattva Grounds (Shizhu pi po sha lun 十住毘婆沙論); T26n1521.*
- WMCF* *The Essentials of the Meditation Manual Consisting of Five Gates (Wumen chanjing yao yongfa 五門禪經要用法); T15n619.*
- YDSM* *Samādhirājasūtra or The King of Samādhi Sūtra (Yue deng sanmei jing 月燈三昧經); T15n639.*
- ZCBYF* *The Secret Essentials of Curing Meditation Ailments (Zhi chan bing mi yao fa 治禪病祕要法); T15n620.*
- ZCSMJ* *The Sūtra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation (Zuo chan sanmei jing 坐禪三昧經); T15n614.*

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CHAPTER ONE- INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Buddhānusmṛti (*nianfo* 念佛 /*fo sui nian* 佛隨念), the Sanskrit term for recollection of the Buddha, has been popularised as a key liturgical and ritual formula in the form of invoking the Buddha's name in Mahāyāna Buddhism today. This may reflect the significant role that *buddhānusmṛti* has for Buddhist monastics and laypeople in their cultivation practice towards the goal of an unshakeable deliverance of mind that their teacher, Śākyamuni Buddha attained.

The study of *buddhānusmṛti* specifically as a form of meditative practice in this thesis provides significant discussions relevant to Buddhists, scholars, and those who are interested in understanding the deeper theoretical and historical underpinnings behind *buddhānusmṛti*, a practice traceable to the teachings of the historical Buddha and his accomplished disciples. *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* (念佛三昧), the absorption of recollection of the Buddha, is a potential attainment only when *buddhānusmṛti* is carried out as a structured meditation practice beyond the literal recitation of a Buddha's name. Attaining this meditative state allows the practitioner to not only see the Buddhas for merit-producing worship but perhaps, more importantly, to also hear the dharma expounded directly from the Buddhas and ask questions to clarify any doubts. Hence, understanding *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* and thereby being able to confidently realize it as a proper and effective meditation practice is a topic of central relevance for practitioners keen on seeking the Buddha's path to liberation.

In addition, with *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* being recognized as one of the unique defining features in Mahāyāna meditation, tracing its genealogy through the body of fifth-century meditation texts which were found to have one of the earliest mentions of this doctrinal term in the Chinese canon would provide better insights into the development of Buddhist meditation that is not limited to dominant narratives from canonical representative texts, such as meditation texts translated by An Shigao 安世高 (148–170 CE) and texts centering on *Chan* Buddhism, which have been widely studied.

1.1.1 Research Aim

The present research attempts at exploring the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* within the context of Kumārajīva's corpus of four meditation texts, namely *The Sūtra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation* (T15n614, *Zuo chan sanmei jing* 坐禪三昧經; henceforth *ZCSMJ*); *The Essential Explanation of the Methods of Meditation* (T15n616, *Chan fa yaojie* 禪法要解; henceforth *CFYJ*); *The Discourse on the Essential Secrets of Meditation* (T15n613, *Chan mi yaofa jing* 禪祕要法經; henceforth *CMYFJ*); and *The Outlining Way of Contemplation* (T15n617, *Siwei lue yaofa* 思惟略要法; henceforth *SWLYF*), establishing his contributions to the development of Buddhist meditation practice through the perspective of his *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* transmission. These fifth-century texts would also be situated within the larger perspective of the development of Buddhism from the first to sixth centuries CE. Scoping this study within this period is reasoned as follows: The first century CE covers the period when various well-known meditation masters in India were especially active in research and practice, and when Mahāyāna sūtras were deemed to first appear; in the second to third century CE, various Buddhist texts on meditation were transmitted into China and Mahāyāna meditation was supposed to be first introduced; the fifth century saw a distinctively vibrant scene in the translations of various meditation texts in China; and in the fifth to sixth centuries, meditative practices were practically developed with the formation of schools, and was regarded as an essential practice for Chinese Buddhists.¹ Hence, to understand the evolutionary practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in its formation of, and significance within Buddhist meditation practice, the context of the first to sixth centuries would provide suitable breadth for this investigation.

1.1.2 Research Questions

The key questions involved in this research are as follows:

1. What is the trajectory of development of the concept and practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in Buddhism?
2. What is the practice and transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from the perspective of Kumārajīva's corpus of meditation texts?

¹ Cf. 冉雲華(1984, 63-99).

3. How does the presentation of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* compare across his meditation texts?

1.1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to:

1. Trace the development of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* within the context of the first to sixth centuries CE;
2. Examine the practice and transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from the perspective of Kumārajīva's corpus of meditation texts;
3. Evaluate the significance of Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.

1.2 Technical Details

1.2.1 Methodology

The methodology employed in this study is primarily textual research and interpretation of texts on *buddhānusmṛti* in early Buddhism, Kumārajīva's meditation texts, as well as other meditation and *samādhi* texts prior to the sixth century, which contain the doctrinal item of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the Chinese Buddhist Canon.

The focus of analysis would be placed on these key texts: *The Sūtra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation* (T15n614, *Zuo chan sanmei jing* 坐禪三昧經); *The Essential Explanation of the Methods of Meditation* (T15n616, *Chan fa yaojie* 禪法要解); *The Discourse on the Essential Secrets of Meditation* (T15n613, *Chan mi yaofa jing* 禪祕要法經); and *The Outlining Way of Contemplation* (T15n617, *Siwei lue yaofa* 思惟略要法).

Relevant texts are also used for analysis as secondary sources:

- (i) Texts that expound on and clarify the meaning of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* meditation technique — Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*

(T25n1509, *Da zhi du lun* 大智度論; henceforth *DZDL*), and *Venerable Kumārajīva's Great Meaning* (T45n1856, *Jiu mo luo shi fashi dayi* 鳩摩羅什法師大義; henceforth *JDY*);

- (ii) Texts that elaborate on the specifics of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice — Lokaksema's *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (T13n418, *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經; henceforth *BZSM*), and Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Ten Bodhisattva Grounds*, also known as the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā* (T26n1521, *Shi zhu pi po sha lun* 十住毘婆沙論; henceforth *SZL*);
- (iii) Catalogues containing records of Buddhist texts and their prefaces, as well as biographies of monks, which both provide some information on the historical and social contexts of transmission, reception, and actualized practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* — in particular, Sengyou's 僧祐 *A Compilation of Notices on the Translation of the Tripiṭaka* (T55n2145, *Chu san zang ji ji* 出三藏記集; henceforth *CSZJJ*), and Huijiao's 慧皎 *Biographies of Eminent Monks* (T50n2059, *Gao seng zhuan* 高僧傳; henceforth *GSZ*).

Due to differences in the translations and use of certain key words, it is necessary to first define the use of the three sets of closely-related terms, (i) *buddhānusmṛti* and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*; (ii) single-mindedness (*yi xin* 一心) and meditative concentration (*chan ding* 禪定); (iii) visualization (*guan xiang* 觀想) and contemplation (*guan* 觀), in the context of this thesis, as follows.

In its general usage, *buddhānusmṛti* broadly refers to the practice of being mindful of the Buddha through recollection of the different types of enumerations of the attributes of a Buddha: the Buddha's names or epithets, his qualities or virtues, past deeds, or his physical marks. These commemorations may be practiced for various purposes which are not mutually exclusive: (i) a soteriological purpose encompassing the promise of better rebirths, the providence of protection, and for spiritual purification; (ii) an emulation purpose in remembrance of the Buddha; or (iii) for meditation

purposes.² Aligning with the scope of this study, for its use largely as a means of meditation, the relevant notion of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* would be pertinent. This *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* refers to the accomplished state of meditative concentration resulting from the single-minded practice of *buddhānusmṛti*. *Buddhānusmṛti* becomes the basis from which one enters into *samādhi*, a higher state of absorbed concentration perceivable by the mental eye.³ In other words, *buddhānusmṛti* is the cause, and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is one of the results from its effective practice in meditation.⁴ With this inextricable relationship, tracing the historical transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* would thus necessitate an understanding of *buddhānusmṛti* in the earliest times from which it evolved.

The second set of terms is defined thus: Single-minded concentration refers to the undistracted state of mind that is fixed on the object of meditation, inclusive of a state that is prior to the first stage of meditative concentration or the first *dhyāna* (*chan na* 禪那).⁵ In this thesis, “meditative concentration” refers to the four stages of *dhyānas*,

² Cf. Legittimo (2012, 339).

³ Yamabe and Sueki’s English version of *ZCSMJ* translates *sanmei* 三昧 to “concentration” instead of retaining the reconstruct Sanskrit term *samādhi*. However, the latter term is chosen to be used in this thesis to facilitate a clearer distinction between the four meditative concentrations emphasized in Śrāvakayāna meditation and the various *samādhis* developed by the later Mahāyāna meditation system. The mentions of the various types of *samādhi* in *ZCSMJ*, when described, depict *samādhi* as the different meditative experiences that appear to the practitioner’s mental eye in concentration. For instance, in the *samādhi* on friendliness, “One sees sentient beings in the ten directions like seeing oneself. With the mental eye, one vividly sees those sentient beings obtain comfort. At that time one attains the concentration [*samādhi*] on friendliness.” Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 15). 見十方眾生皆如自見。在心目前了了見之受得快樂。是時即得慈心三昧。 T15n614, 277b16-17. Also, in the section on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, “the practitioner attains the concentration [*samādhi*] in which all the Buddhas in the ten directions over the three periods appear in front of the mental eye, and in which he sees all of them.” Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 63). 行者便得十方三世諸佛悉在心目前一切悉見三昧。 T15n614, 281a29-b1. (The brackets are my insertions.)

⁴ The other potential results are the several types of *samādhi* concentration and wisdom, seen from “if one calls the Buddha to mind and thereby acquires various types of concentration and wisdom, and [goes on to] attain Buddhahood.” Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 41). Therefore the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* may lead to, but is not limited to the attainment of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.

⁵ The definition of single-mindedness is clearly stated in, “If the practitioner [wants to] win over the mind, the best way is to control [the mind] and fix it. This is called “single-mindedness.” Ibid., 65. 行者若勝心。則不如制之令住，是名一心。 T15n614, 281c22. This attainment of single-mindedness is through the practice of returning the distracted mind to the meditation object, evident in “If the mind is distracted, one should concentrate it and return it [to the original objects of meditation].” Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 65). 常作是觀，不令外念；外念諸緣，攝之令還。 T15n614, 281c06. Note that Kumārajīva’s use of single-mindedness includes the concentrated state prior to the first stage of meditation and also recurs in the four *dhyānas* and five supranormal powers. For the former, it is stated, “though the practitioner has attained ‘single-mindedness,’ his power of concentration has not been

from the first *dhyāna* where the practitioner “is liberated from the fierce fire of desire” and “attains the joyful sentiment”⁶ through to the fourth *dhyāna* where “the purest equanimity (is attained).”⁷ Reaching the state of single-mindedness or meditative concentration then becomes the basis from which one enters into *samādhi*, the latter characterized as an even more advanced state of absorbed concentration.

The third set of terms, “visualization” and “contemplation,” are used in the description of *buddhānusmṛti* and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice. “Visualization” would refer to *guan xiang* 觀想, the act of formation of mental visual images, whereas “contemplation” refers to *guan* 觀, an act of observing, examining, and reflecting on a “given topic, thing, idea, or aspect of an already reported vision” with concentration.⁸ In other words, contemplation includes but is not limited to visualization, such as that of the contemplation of the dharma-body. In this regard, “contemplation” is used in the same vein as “meditation” in their similar engagement in the dual aspects of concentration and wisdom.

It should be noted that while these terms may be translated in diverse ways in different sūtras and treatises, this study will standardize their use according to the above

established. So he is still troubled with the defilements belonging to the realm of desire. He should employ [skillful] means to proceed to the first stage of meditation and eliminate desires.” Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 43). 爾時，行者雖得一心，定力未成，猶為欲界煩惱所亂，當作方便，進學初禪，呵棄愛欲。 T15n614, 277b16. For the latter, an example pointing to the presence of single-mindedness in the first *dhyāna* is seen in, “At that time, [the practitioner] attains the joyful sentiment of the first stage of meditation. He meditates on various merits in his meditation and observes the mental discrimination of likes and dislikes; thus he attains single-mindedness.” Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 44). 是時便得，初禪喜覺，思惟禪中，種種功德，觀分別好醜，便得一心。 T15n614, 277c12. Hence, single-mindedness is seen as a foundational and recurring practice for the various states of concentrations.

⁶ Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 44).

⁷ Ibid., 47. Note that the word “purest” is my modification from “most pure.”

⁸ The understanding of “visualization” references Greene, who, through his narration of the historical construction of this concept, states that “visualization” used in the context of Western scholarship on Buddhist meditation, refers to the claim to “produce, through [one’s] own will and volition, an internal, mental visual image possessed of the same or nearly the same objectivity as an external object.” This implies a certain degree of control, as contrasted with “visions” (*jingjie* 境界), which arise spontaneously. Cf. Greene(2016, 312). However, while Greene argues that such deliberate visualizations are “usually inappropriate in the context of visionary experiences aimed for in medieval Chinese Buddhist practices,” and that most of these meditation processes should instead be “best thought of as *visions* rather than visualizations,” I interpret visions differently as not to be synonymous with *guan* 觀 but only those indicated by the word *jian* 見 or “see” in the texts. Cf. Greene(2021a, 116-117; 158).

definitions to achieve clarity in the understanding of meditative techniques and experiences discussed.

1.2.2 Limitations

One of the extant problems in this study is the absence of the original Indic texts that Kumārajīva referred to, thereby the difficulty in not only establishing the exact sources of transmission, but also in ascertaining the extent of authorial hand and innovation in Kumārajīva's translations, arranged compilations, and compositions.⁹ This absence may be accrued to two reasons: firstly, the primacy given to the traditional practice of oral rather than scribal transmission meant that Indic texts might not have existed in the first place; and secondly, even with the presence of these texts, many would have been lost in the process of historical transmission. From another perspective, this absence of original Indic texts also points to the value of Kumārajīva's texts in being the rare surviving testament to the meditation practices in India and Central Asia, which were transmitted into China. In addition, while acknowledging that scholars are divided as to a couple of meditation texts ascribed to Kumārajīva, research into the question of authorship has thus far been inconclusive and would not be the focus of this thesis. It is also difficult to chart a clear chronology of the appearance and translations of these texts, as well as ascertain how these texts have been used in actual meditative practices or the time that lapsed between the practices and their appearances as texts. Despite the above, even if a full picture could not be obtained, these texts nevertheless provide some close semblance to enable our better understanding of meditation practices in these areas.

While Chinese sūtras are used as the primary sources for analysis, this study also references extant versions of their English translations where available. Herein lies another challenge, that various translations of doctrinal terminology from the Chinese into English are still at a formative stage, leading to inconsistency in word usage across different translations. To minimize ambiguity to their understanding, the use of certain

⁹ Based on recent findings from archaeological research in Central Asia, there were already evidence of Buddhist sūtras written in their local languages. Hence, the texts used by translators from the Western regions, including Kumārajīva, might have been written in various languages of Central Asia, besides Sanskrit, Prakrit or Gāndhārī. Cf. 孔慧怡(2005, 70).

terminologies used across these translations would be footnoted and standardized to facilitate a clearer and more coherent expounding of doctrines.

Additionally, this research remains at the level of theoretical analysis without practical authentication to inform and attest to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. However, this thesis seeks to be a modest setting of a clear basis of theoretical understanding for the inspiration of right faith and practice towards realization.

1.3 Literature Review

This section summarises current key research on the topics of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in early Chinese Buddhism and on Kumārajīva's meditation texts, providing an overview of the focus areas and viewpoints within these topics and the potential areas for further research which this thesis could add value to.

Firstly, research on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is deemed to be extensive, largely centering around the second century's *BZSM*, as well as *Nianfo sanmei baowang lun* (T47n1967, 念佛三昧寶王論) from the Tang Dynasty (618–907 CE), and associates *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* primarily with one of the earliest influences on Pureland school of Buddhism, Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416 CE). In addition, the scholar-monk Venerable Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005 CE) has, among his large corpus of writing, provided a useful overview survey of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism, positioning it as a path of skillful means (*fang bian dao* 方便道), which indicates a relatively early stage of practice on the cultivation pathway.¹⁰ Also, while there have been studies on Kumārajīva's corpus of meditation texts, these have mainly focused on his transmission of the mindfulness of breathing.¹¹ Comparatively, there is much fewer research on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in Kumārajīva's transmission

¹⁰ Cf. 釋印順(1993, 240-293). Similar to the introductory premise of this thesis, he defines *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as a practice that is not limited to faith or the incantation of the Buddha's name, but one that can lead towards deep realization of wisdom. Yin Shun also linked the popularity of this practice in Mahāyāna Buddhism to the Buddha's disciples expressing their reminiscence for the Buddha.

¹¹ Cf. Qing(2016) and 釋惠敏(1995).

of meditation,¹² though there seems to have been increasing research interest in recent years in examining these areas of omission.

These were mostly carried out to provide another inlet to a fuller picture of the formation and development of the Mahāyāna, through tracing the formation and uniqueness of Mahāyāna meditation. In two separate papers from a monograph on the development of *prajñā* (*bo re* 般若) doctrine in Mahāyāna Buddhism published in 2007, Lai Pen-jeu 賴鵬舉 investigated two of Kumārajīva's meditation texts, each on separate accounts, tracing their doctrinal sources and identified their meditation lineages corresponding to the geographical context of Central Asia.¹³ More recently, the sources of the meditative practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in one of Kumārajīva's texts were discussed by Zhao Wen 趙文, albeit through a comparison with a Sanskrit meditation manual in two papers published in 2017.¹⁴ In addition to such research that focuses on tracing the meditation lineages to understand the historical development of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, Yueh Jian Dong 越建東 also examined the Śrāvaka and Bodhisattva meditation methods in a Kumārajīva's meditation text in two papers collected in his 2018 monograph.¹⁵ Further, while not specifically focusing on

¹² This may be due to viewpoints such as that held by Yin Shun, that Kumārajīva's transmission of Mahāyāna meditation is relatively simplified, compared to others such as Kālayāśas' *Amitāyur-buddhānusmṛti-sūtra* (T12n365, *Guan wuliang shou fo jing* 觀無量壽佛經). Cf. 釋印順(1993, 285). However, I seek to argue that this view might have been influenced by a Pureland school inclination, and that for *ZCSMJ* at least, though not directly affiliated with any of the eight schools in Chinese Buddhism, is one of the few pioneering sūtras mentioning Bodhisattva meditation and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, making it deserving of scholarly attention as a precursory influence to later developments in Chinese Buddhism and Mahāyāna meditation.

¹³ Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 63-71; 168-177). In chapter five on the formation of contemplation of Buddhas in the ten directions in Central Asia towards the later fourth century, Lai traced the doctrinal genealogy of Kumārajīva's *SWLYF* to the *BZSM*. In chapter twelve on the subject of the meditation of Central Asia, Lai analyzed the Five Doors bodhisattva meditation in Kumārajīva's *ZCSMJ*, tracing Kumārajīva's text to be a work from Central Asia.

¹⁴ Cf. 趙文(2017a). In the article on *buddhānusmṛti* in the Chinese Five Doors Meditation and a Sanskrit meditation text, Zhao cites Kumārajīva's *ZCSMJ*, *SWLYF*, and *CMYFJ* as examples of fifth-century meditation texts that utilized the Chinese Five Doors meditation as structure, comparing the descriptions of *buddhānusmṛti* in these texts against a Sanskrit meditation text from Central Asia, concluding that the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* in Chinese meditation manuals probably stemmed from similar and earlier meditation manuals as the Sanskrit meditation text in Central Asia.

¹⁵ Cf. 越建東(2018, 115-164). In chapter four on the comparison of the Śrāvakayāna Five Doors in Kumārajīva's *ZCSMJ* with Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, Yueh highlighted that while there are some aspects of similarities of *buddhānusmṛti* in these two texts in terms of recollecting the Buddha's merits, especially the contemplation on the Buddha's ten epithets, the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* seen in Kumārajīva's text may be a unique feature of the northern Mahāyāna tradition that the text is representative of. In chapter five on the investigation of the bodhisattva meditation method in

buddhānusmṛti-samādhi, Eric Greene’s research and translation of Kumārajīva’s *CMYFJ* within the context of medieval China in his 2021 publications also provide valuable insights into Kumārajīva’s transmission of meditation in terms of its visionary experiences entailed.¹⁶

This thesis seeks to build upon the efforts of this research which largely examines select few texts, and adopt an alternative, broader perspective to understand Kumārajīva’s transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* through (i) an encompassing and in-depth scope of the meditation texts ascribed to Kumārajīva in the Chinese Buddhist canon, (ii) linking this transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* with its earlier shapes in early Buddhism, and (iii) comparing this transmission with concurrent developments recorded in related texts as were transmitted to China during the fifth century. This may help provide insights into meditation cultures from northwest India and Central Asia that were transmitted into China, as well as lay the groundwork for understanding what Chinese practitioners did to evolve the particular practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* after Kumārajīva.

In addition, a survey of this literature also shows these potential areas for further research that this thesis seeks to build upon: with most of the current research placing efforts on tracing the sources of meditation lineages in the few Kumārajīva’s texts, what then, is the key doctrine taught, and its significance when viewed through a larger historical context? In addition, what are some underlying consistent tenets to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* despite its manifold presentations and developments through history? This thesis attempts to address these issues and highlight a deserved positioning of Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, which record approaches to Buddhist meditation that were the mainstream for considerable periods in Indian and Chinese Buddhist history. The next section outlines the structure of this thesis to address these problem statements.

Kumārajīva’s *ZCSMJ*, which includes the bodhisattva meditation of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, Yueh concludes that the Mahāyāna meditation tradition is closely associated with, and likely a further development from Śrāvakayāna meditation.

¹⁶ Cf. Greene(2021a) and Greene(2021b). From analyzing *CMYFJ* (with the non-conclusive argument of attribution of this text to either Kumārajīva or Dharmamitra) and other meditation texts, Greene posits that meditation practice in medieval China was used to attest to the success of practitioners’ repentance rituals, which formed the core of Buddhist liturgical life.

1.4 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organized into five chapters, as follows:

Chapter one outlines the research aim, questions, methodology, and structure. Chapter two examines the contextual background and lineages of Kumārajīva's meditation transmission, addressing first the historical development of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from India before its transmission into China. This is followed by an overview of Buddhist meditation history in China from the first to sixth centuries, positioning the relative significance of Kumārajīva's meditation texts and the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* within this history. Subsequently, Kumārajīva's background and a note on his translation rigor and style are provided to confer authority to the content of his texts, before presenting an overview of his body of meditation texts in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* (henceforth *Taishō*). In chapter three, the presentation of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in Kumārajīva's four meditation texts would be compared, before postulating a synthesized viewpoint of Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as a conceivable practice. Chapter four examines the significance of Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, surmised mainly based on comparisons with other relevant texts in the fifth century. Chapter five concludes with the summarized findings of the contributions of Kumārajīva's texts in the development of Buddhist meditation practice.

From excavating the content and significance of Kumārajīva's textual transmissions to early medieval China, I will show that the transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in his texts is well-grounded in the teachings of early Buddhist texts, and serves as an extremely valuable reflection of the meditative practices from northwest India and Central Asia in the third and fourth centuries.¹⁷ I also posit that Kumārajīva's varied transmissions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in his meditation texts are valuable examples of the diverse meditation methods developed, which reflect a continuum process of change and diversification, stemming from practitioners' pragmatic activation and adaptation of doctrinal theory into practices.

¹⁷ Cf. Chen(2014, 102), who notes that Kumārajīva's "fame as the chief proponent of the *Prajñā*-Madhyamaka doctrines in China has obscured his role as a meditation promoter."

CHAPTER TWO – HISTORICAL AND CONTEXTUAL OVERVIEW

2.1 Tracing the Development of *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from India to China

In this section that follows, I shall sketch a historical trajectory of the teaching of *buddhānusmṛti* from early Buddhism to its development into *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the period of Sectarian Buddhism and early Mahāyāna, showing that the meditation practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is not removed from the teachings of early Buddhism. Rather, the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* was prevalent in northwest India (comprising of the three main areas of southwest Gandhāra, northern Swat river valley, and northeastern Kashmir) during the first century, which fostered its further development as a structured, practical system of meditation practice leading to *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. This systematized practice was at its initial stage of development shared by both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation. Later, the Mahāyānization of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* then hinged upon the full development of contemplation of the dharma-body when it was transmitted from northwest India to Central Asia and later through Hexi 河西 into China, the transmission of which Kumārajīva played a crucial role in the late fourth and early fifth century.

Traced to the early Buddhist texts of the Pāli *Nikāyas* and Chinese translations of the Sanskrit *Āgamas*, *buddhānusmṛti* may be found existing either as part of the recollection of the triad of Buddha, dharma, and *saṅgha* or as the first remembrance of the various forms of the Buddhist practice of *anusmṛtis* — literally recollection, remembrance, calling to mind or keeping in mind, usually in a six-fold or ten-fold scheme. In an example of the former, the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* details a six-fold scheme involving six subjects of *anusmṛti*, which are recollections directed towards the Buddha, the dharma, the *saṅgha*, recollection of virtuous behavior, recollection of generosity, and recollection of the deities.¹⁸ For the latter ten-fold scheme, there are four more additional recollection objects of breathing, death, body, and peace.¹⁹ An example of this list of ten appears in the Chinese *Ekottarika-āgama*, where the Buddha told the monks to practice the ten remembrances single-mindedly, summarizing the list as

¹⁸ Cf. Bodhi (2012, 862).

¹⁹ Cf. Bodhi (2012, 116).

follows: Remembrance of the Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*), the dharma and the *saṅgha*, remembrance of the moral precepts, generosity and the gods, remembrance of putting one's thoughts to rest and of controlling one's in-breathing and out-breathing, remembrance of stopping mental activity, remembrance of the body and of death, now and in the future.²⁰

These remembrance practices, be it in the six-fold, ten-fold schemes or otherwise, were deemed as an essential part of the cultivation path which, when developed, were believed to lead to cessation, peace, direct knowledge, enlightenment, and *nibbāna*. These were presented as often dwelled on by the noble disciples who had arrived at the fruit and understood the teachings, and are practices which were juxtaposed and contrasted with the practices leading to the heavenly realms or the three lesser realms of hell, hungry ghosts, and animal.

Specifically for *buddhānusmṛti*, the practice is deemed primarily to remove unwholesome and discursive thoughts to establish the purity of mind, also as a means of allaying fears by providing protection against threats, and puts the mind at ease for concentration to arise. Hence, these recollection practices were not mere fond remembrances but observed to be tied to descriptions of meditative states. It is worth quoting the *buddhānusmṛti* practice at length here from another early Buddhist text, the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*:

...a noble disciple recollects the Tathāgata thus: “The Blessed One is an arahant, perfectly enlightened, accomplished in true knowledge and conduct, fortunate, knower of the world, unsurpassed trainer of persons to be tamed, teacher of devas and humans, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One.” When a noble disciple recollects the Tathāgata, on that occasion, his mind is not obsessed by lust, hatred, or delusion; on that occasion, his mind is simply straight, based on the Tathāgata. A noble disciple whose

²⁰ 佛、法、聖眾念戒、施及天念、休息、安般念身、死念在後 T2n125, 553c2-6; and 汝當念修行，念佛、念法、念比丘僧、念戒、念施、念天、念休息、念安般、念身、念死，當修行如是之法。T2n125, 739c29.

mind is straight gains inspiration in the meaning, gains inspiration in the Dhamma, gains joy connected with the Dhamma. When he is joyful, rapture arises. For one with a rapturous mind, the body becomes tranquil. One tranquil in the body feels pleasure. For one feeling pleasure, the mind becomes concentrated. This is called a noble disciple who dwells in balance amid an unbalanced population, who dwells unafflicted amid an afflicted population. As one who has entered the stream of the Dhamma, he develops recollection of the Buddha.²¹

The described states of joy, rapture, tranquility, and pleasure are usually feelings associated with the acquisition of concentration. However, what is this concentration state described here? Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, a fifth-century treatise of the ancient Buddhist postcanonical texts as contained in the five *Nikāyas* of the Theravada tradition, elucidated that these six recollections lead to access concentration, the unification of mind that precedes the absorption concentration of the *jhānas*.²² This shows that the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* may not be that far removed as a formalized meditation practice in the likes of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* even in early Buddhism, despite acknowledging the fact that their states of concentration achieved may be quite different.

However, the question is: what is the content of this recollection of the Buddha? The Pāli *Nikāyas* and Chinese translations of the Sanskrit *Āgamas* provide some clues to this content, which forms the foundation for the later developed practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. This content comprises mainly of recollection of (i) the Buddha's virtues presented through the Buddha's ten epithets (as cited in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* excerpt above); (ii) his awe-inspiring physical appearance of thirty-two major marks and eighty minor characteristics as a result from past meritorious deeds;²³ (iii) his accomplishments of ten powers, four fearlessnesses, four types of unimpeded knowledge, eighteen special dharmas, and his great kindness and great compassion;²⁴

²¹ Translation references Bodhi(2012, 862-863).

²² Cf. Ñāṇamoli(2010, 83).

²³ Cf. *Dīgha Nikāya* 30, *Lakkhaṇasutta: The Marks of a Great Man*, accessed 14 Aug 2021, <<https://suttacentral.net/dn30/en/sujato>>.

²⁴ *Aṅguttara Nikāya; The Book of the Tens*; 10.21. The Lion, accessed 14 Aug 2021,

(iv) significant milestones from the Buddha's life, particularly his birth, enlightenment, turning of the wheel of the dharma, and his *parinirvāṇa*; as well as (v) the kindness and benevolence of the Buddha which the practitioner endeavors to repay in gratitude. In the later developed practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* reflected in Kumārajīva's meditation texts, these foundational content of contemplation were organized and subsumed into the three larger aspects of (i) contemplation of the statue or image of the Buddha as a representation of the physical appearance of the Buddha; (ii) contemplation of the life of the Buddha; and (iii) contemplation of the dharma-body, which includes meditation on his virtues. Hence, we can clearly see the close connections of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the teachings of early Buddhism.

Nevertheless, while the content of *buddhānusmṛti* is described in various sūtras in the *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas*, its specific methodology as a meditative practice with detailed steps is not evident except for one rare occurrence in the *Ekottarika-āgama*:

<<https://suttacentral.net/an10.21/en/bodhi>>.

The ten powers are the virtues of the Buddha established to subdue *Māra*, including: 1. Power to know what is right and wrong in every condition, 2. Know the varied consequences of karma, 3. Know all the stages of meditation, liberation, *samādhi* and concentration, 4. Know the different capacities and faculties of all beings, 5. Know what sentient beings understand, 6. Know the actual condition of every individual, 7. Know the causes and effects of sentient beings in all worlds, 8. Know the results of karma in previous lives, 9. Know the death and birth of all beings, and 10. Be free from all faults. See T25n1509, 407a2-25.

The four fearlessness refer to the Buddha's virtues of: 1. His absolute faith in benefitting himself and others, 2. Fearlessness in proclaiming his omniscience, 3. Fearlessness in proclaiming his freedom from all faults, 4. Fearlessness in proclaiming the Way to end all sufferings, and in exposing barriers to the way. See *Ibid.*, 407a27-b22.

The four types of unimpeded knowledge refer to unimpeded knowledge with regard to the 1. Dharma, 2. Content and meaning of dharma teaching, 3. All languages, and 4. Ease in explanation. See *Ibid.*, 407b23-25.

The eighteen special dharmas refer to the virtue of the eighteen characteristics distinctive to the Buddha, which are: 1. Faultlessness of body, 2. Faultlessness of speech, 3. Faultlessness of thought, 4. Impartiality, 5. Perfect steadiness of mind, 6. Perfect self-sacrifice, 7. Undiminishing aspiration to save sentient beings, 8. Unflagging zeal, 9. Unfailing mindfulness, 10. Unfailing wisdom, 11. Unfailing liberation, 12. Unfailing knowledge and understanding of transcendence, 13. Unobstructed knowledge of the past, 14. Unobstructed knowledge of the future, 15. Unobstructed knowledge of the present, 16. Accordance of all deeds with wisdom, 17. Accordance of all speech with wisdom, 18. Accordance of all thought with wisdom. See *Ibid.*, 247b11-19.

He contemplates the image of the Tathāgata without taking his eyes off it. Not taking his eyes off it he then calls to mind the qualities of the Tathāgata – the Tathāgata’s body made of *vajra*, endowed with the ten Powers (*bala*), and by virtue of the four Assurances (*vaisaradya*) intrepid in assemblies; the Tathāgata’s countenance, upright and peerless, so that one never tires of beholding it; his perfection of the moral qualities (*sīla*) resembling *vajra* in indestructibility, like *vaiḍūrya* in flawless purity; the Tathāgata’s *samādhis* never diminishing, calm, ever tranquil, without any extraneous thought, having stilled arrogance, brutality, and the emotions, having eliminated thoughts of desire, of anger, of delusion, apprehension, and all meshes of the net; the Tathāgata’s body of wisdom (*prajñā*) its knowledge unlimited and unobstructed; the Tathāgata’s body perfected in liberation (*vimukti*), done with all destinies and no longer subject to rebirth with such words as: “I must again plunge into Saṃsāra!”; the Tathāgata’s body, a city of the knowledge and vision of liberation (*vimukti-jhāna-darśana*), knowing the faculties of others and whether or not they shall be liberated, whether, dying here, being reborn there, they shall go on revolving in Saṃsāra until Saṃsāra ends, knowing them all, those who possess liberation and those who do not.²⁵

Here we can see that the practitioner is to direct his concentration towards both the physical body of the Buddha and his moral and mental attributes, likened to various similes that connote indestructibility, flawless purity, without semblances of taints and possessing all-knowing deep wisdom. These modes of recollection bear close semblances to the descriptions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice which appear in Kumārajīva’s as well as other early Mahāyāna meditation texts. Notably, Western scholar Paul Harrison pointed out his observation that a salient feature of both the *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas* is that no one particular *anusmṛti* is valued above the others, whereas in the surviving Mahāyāna literature it is clear that only the first three

²⁵ 若有比丘正身正意，結跏趺坐，繫念在前，無有他想，專精念佛。觀如來形，未曾離目；已不離目，便念如來功德：如來體者，金剛所成，十力具足，四無所畏，在眾勇健。如來顏貌，端正無雙，視之無厭；戒德成就，猶如金剛，而不可毀，清淨無瑕，亦如琉璃。如來三昧，未始有減，已息永寂，而無他念；憍慢強梁，諸情擔怕，欲意、恚想、愚惑之心、猶豫網結，皆悉除盡。如來慧身，智無崖底，無所罣礙。如來身者，解脫成就，諸趣已盡，無復生分，言我當更墮於生死。如來身者，度知見城，知他人根，應度不度，此死生彼，周旋往來生死之際，有解脫者，無解脫者，皆具知之。T2n125, 554a20-554b4. Translation references Harrison(1978, 38).

traditional objects of *anusmṛti* (Buddha, dharma, and *saṅgha*) were accorded any importance, and that amongst these three, *buddhānusmṛti* was pre-eminent.²⁶ One of the plausible reasons is that Mahāyāna sūtras have many passages describing the rarity of a Buddha's appearance and the good fortune of being born in an age of the Buddha, thus foregrounding *buddhānusmṛti* and evolving practices that entailed not only a reminiscence of the Buddha but an imaginative evocation of his presence using structured meditative procedures.

The key differences between the descriptions in these early Buddhist texts and Kumārajīva's later meditation texts are that the latter includes the *samādhi* aspect of visualization and visions; the extension of the singular Gautama Buddha figure to that of limitless Buddhas in the ten directions; a shift of the attitude of meditation from that of individual liberation to the aspiration to benefit and liberate other sentient beings; and the formalization of the notion of the "dharma-body." The question here is: how did this evolution occur?

While this process of evolution entails many complex details that are beyond the scope of this thesis, I shall venture to provide, at the risk of oversimplification, a general overview for this development that has been put forth based on archaeological research on Buddhist art and architecture, a hypothesis which I believe to be on convincing grounds.²⁷ Beginning from the relatively consistent doctrines and meditation practices in northwest India (or Gandhāra, Jibin 罽賓) as early as the first century, this area with its presence of various well-known *Dārṣṭāntikas* (*piyu shi* 譬喻師) such as Aśvaghōṣa, extolled the virtues and merits of the Buddha in literature, inspiring practices surrounding the figure of the Buddha.²⁸ In line with this, the area's meditation practitioners and treatise masters, such as the second century's Saṃgharakṣa, developed a system of meditation method for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from the early Buddhist

²⁶ Cf. Harrison(1978, 37).

²⁷ For details of the key historical figures, sūtras and doctrines involved in the transmission, cf. 賴鵬舉 (2007).

²⁸ See Aśvaghōṣa's *Buddhacarita: In Praise of Buddha's Acts* (T4n192, *Fo suo xing zan* 佛所行讚), a biography of Śākyamuni Gautama Buddha. The Jātaka tales which extolled the merits and virtuous deeds of Gautama Buddha in his previous births in both human and animal forms, were also a significant influence on the formation of religious practices surrounding the figure of the Buddha.

sūtras, with Śākyamuni Buddha as the object of meditation. This was complemented by the creation of visual representations of the Buddha in the form of cave paintings and sculptures, depicting the physical features of the Buddha and scenes from his life, as aids to meditation for the process of contemplating the Buddha's appearance and qualities.²⁹

These practices in northwest India were subsequently transmitted to Central Asia, which was flourishing as a center for Buddhism from the fourth to sixth centuries. Kumārajīva, who was acquainted with the meditation practices in Jibin and was also active in Central Asia in the later part of the fourth century, was one of the key figures involved in the Mahāyānization of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Through the direct use of *vaipulya-sūtras* (*fang deng jing* 方等經)³⁰ and Nāgārjuna's treatises, these doctrines were transformed into practicable meditation methods in Kumārajīva's texts, thus developing a Central Asia *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* meditation method that is distinctive from that of northwest India in terms of the ultimate *prajñā* truth, the contemplation of the dharma-body and the contemplation of Buddhas in the ten directions.³¹

In short, the evolution of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, while rooted in the discourses on *buddhānusmṛti* in early Buddhist texts, was catalyzed by practitioners in northwest India and Central Asia finding ways of systematizing doctrines from sūtras into

²⁹ Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 18-37).

³⁰ Sanskrit term which translates to "extensive discourse", referring to the longer sūtra compositions in Mahāyāna Buddhism that have a broader and more inclusive philosophical basis. They contrast with shorter works that put forward a single, or more circumscribed, message. Sūtras falling into the *vaipulya* category include the *Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra*, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, the *Ratnakūṭa* collection of sūtras, and the Chinese *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. Cf. Buswell and Lopez(2013, 949). Examples of Kumārajīva's use of *vaipulya-sūtras* are as follows: First, he used the content from his translated *Sūtra of the World Upholder* (T14n482, *Chi shi jing* 持世經) as resource to form a new meditation text, the *Sūtra on Contemplating the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination* (*Shi er yinyuan guan jing* 十二因緣觀經), which is no longer extant. Second, Kumārajīva also used the *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* (T9n262, *Miao fa lian hua jing* 妙法蓮華經) which he re-translated, to develop the *saddharma-puṇḍarīka-samādhi* meditation. Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 182).

³¹ An example of Kumārajīva's use of *vaipulya-sūtras* is his application of *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (T13n418, *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經), to northwest India's meditation on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* towards a single Buddha statue, extending its contemplation to that of Buddhas in the ten directions. His use of Nāgārjuna's treatises include the *Treatise on the Ten Bodhisattva Grounds* (T26n1521, *Shi zhu pi po sha lun* 十住毘婆沙論), through which Nāgārjuna's *prajñā* view of reality allowed the limitations of northwest India's meditation to be superseded to progress to a different level of contemplation.

structured meditative practices. Putting these into actual meditation practice using visual representations of the Buddha, they gradually matured the practice of meditation into what would be deemed as Mahāyāna meditation with a different set of meditation content. This period of Indian Buddhism from the first to sixth centuries was characterized by a parallel practice of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna teachings, albeit with the Mahāyāna as zeitgeist.³² Kumārajīva, with his exposure to both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna teachings, as well as the meditation practices in both northwest India and Central Asia, was able to clarify the differences in the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in his texts.³³ Table 1 below summarizes these differences in content contextualized within the larger historical development and transmission:



³² According to Taixu's 太虛 (1890–1947 CE) classification of three periods in the development of Indian Buddhism, the first 500-year period from 500 BCE was where Śrāvakayāna was dominant and Mahāyāna was in concealment; the second 500-year period was where the Mahāyāna was dominant; and the third 500-year was where the Esoteric schools within the Mahāyāna came to prevail. Cf. 釋印順 (1972, 218-224).

³³ See in particular T15n614, 276a6-277b13; 281a22-281b25 and T45n1856, 123c4-8, both which reflect the differences between the meditation practices in northwest India and Central Asia.

Table 1: Development of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice

| <p>1. <i>Buddhānusmṛti</i> teachings in early Buddhist texts</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>2. Formation of religious practices surrounding the figure of the Buddha in northwest India</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>3. Development of systematized <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> meditation using visual representations of the Buddha</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> | | |
|--|---|---|
| Specific Meditation Content | 4. Śrāvakayāna <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> in northwest India | 5. Mahāyāna <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> in Central Asia |
| <p>Statue or image of the Buddha 像觀/色身觀</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 major, 80 minor marks • Centers upon the singular figure of Śākyamuni Buddha • Visualization in one direction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boundless Buddha bodies and manifested bodies • Visualization in ten directions |
| <p>Life of the Buddha 生身觀</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biography of Śākyamuni Buddha from his birth, attainment of enlightenment, turning the wheel of the dharma till his passing away into <i>parinirvāṇa</i> • Stories of past lives of Śākyamuni Buddha | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buddhas in the three periods |
| <p>Dharma-Body 法身觀</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten epithets • Ten powers • Four fearlessnesses • Eighteen distinguished characteristics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prajñā</i> reality of dharmas as neither arising nor ceasing • Forty dharmas exclusive to Buddhas |
| <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>6. Transmission of <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> practice into China via Hexi</p> | | |

Notably, the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice in Central Asia premised upon the *prajñā* reality of dharmas as a foundation to develop a new contemplation of the dharma-body and was unique from northwest India's meditation practice with the appearance of the contemplation of the Buddhas in the ten directions. This view of the reality of the dharma-body in the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, together with his understanding of the meditation practices in both northwest India and Central Asia, was brought into China by Kumārajīva after he arrived in Chang'an in 401 CE with his composition and translations of meditation texts. Before making a close examination of these texts that were introduced, it would be vital to understand the hitherto state of meditation transmission and practice in China to better appreciate the significance of Kumārajīva's introductions.

2.2 Context of Chinese Buddhist Meditation Prior to Kumārajīva's Arrival

Locating the placement of Kumārajīva's meditation texts within the broader history of medieval Chinese Buddhist meditation allows for a better understanding of the preceding conditions which Kumārajīva inherited, and the possible subsequent influence they might have played in the later development of Chinese Buddhist meditation. This section first provides an overarching view of these various developmental phases, before proceeding with details of these socio-cultural backgrounds inherited by Kumārajīva.

To begin with, the developmental history of medieval Chinese Buddhist meditation may be discerned through five phases of development:³⁴ (i) the "Translation Phase" (256–316 CE), from the Han, Wei to the Western Jin periods, where the earliest meditation texts were transmitted from India and Central Asia into China, and mainly translated by An Shigao 安世高 (148–170 CE) and Lokakṣema (*Zhi lou jia chen* 支婁迦讖; 147–189 CE). Centering on these text translations, meditation as a common practice was still lacking in favorable formative conditions; (ii) the "Beginning Phase" (317–approximately 400 CE), during the earlier Eastern Jin period, in which Dao'an 道安 (312–385 CE) was a key figure. This "Beginning Phase" was where research into

³⁴ Cf. 佐佐木憲德(1979).

the translated meditation texts of the earlier phase led to the setting of theoretical cornerstones for practice, though these were largely still limited to the “*chan numbers*” (*chan shu* 禪數), and were still limited in adequacy in Mahāyāna meditation practice;³⁵ (iii) the “Developmental Phase” (401–420 CE) describes the later Eastern Jin period, in which Kumārajīva was active in. Together with the other key figures of Buddhahadra (*Fo tuo ba tuo luo* 佛陀跋陀羅; 359–429 CE) and Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416 CE), meditation teachings were transmitted and actualized with a large number of followings in practice groups. During this time, a number of meditation texts, including Kumārajīva’s, were translated, fostering great developments in both the knowledge and practice of meditation; (iv) the “Progressive Phase” (420–502 CE) depicts the Song-Qi periods, where meditation content was gradually enriched with the inclusion of *dhāraṇīs*, or esoteric incantations, in meditative contemplation; (v) the “Distinctive Phase” (502–589 CE) is representative of the Liang to Chen dynasties, where key meditation masters developed their own distinctive styles of meditation. Here, to cite a couple of examples, Bodhidharma 菩提達摩 (382–536 CE) developed the “meditation on the wall” (*bi guan* 壁觀); and Hui Wen 慧文 (534–577 CE) developed the meditation of “three insights in one thought” (*yi xin san guan* 一心三觀) of viewing a phenomenon from the three views of emptiness, the provisional, and the mean within the same instant. These meditation practices were distinct from those transmitted from India and Central Asia, thus becoming the defining characteristic of the meditation development in China during this period.

From the above concise narration and wider perspective of the historical development of medieval Chinese Buddhist meditation in five phases, a few points may be noted. First, it is seen that Kumārajīva was active in a context where there were theoretical foundations on meditation procedures largely centering on *Chan* numbers that had been set in place by his predecessors to instill sufficient interest in this pursuit, but with the practical instructional transmission still lacking. This explains the demand

³⁵ The term “*chan numbers*” (*chan shu* 禪數) refers to the inclusion of “numbered teachings” — numbered for easier categorization, such as the four noble truths, twelve links of dependent origination, thirty-seven factors of enlightenment, and so forth, into Indic meditation that existed prior to Śākyamuni Buddha. “*Chan numbers*” mainly refers to the Śrāvakayāna Buddhist meditation, as opposed to “*chan wisdom*” (*chan zhi* 禪智), which refers to the inclusion of Mahāyāna teaching of *prajñā* into meditation. In this phase, Dao’an was a pioneer in using *prajñā* to develop the meditation method on the breath. Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 184).

for practical instructional manuals and teaching by meditation teachers, part of which Kumārajīva was able to fill in this lack. Second, much momentum was able to be gathered during the “Developmental Phase” that he was in, due to the collective efforts in teachings and numerous meditation texts made available at least by Kumārajīva, Buddhahadra, and Huiyuan, which altogether fostered a vibrant intellectual climate of mutual exchanges amongst themselves and with their disciples. Third, it remains to say that it was in part due to the efforts of Kumārajīva and his meditation texts, that meditation was able to manifest as an actual discipline among Chinese Buddhists during the “Developmental Phase,” and this further paved the way for the later modifications and innovations of practices that became unique and distinct from Indic meditation practices. These three observations above may be evidenced by taking a closer look into the texts circulated during this period, elaborated henceforth.

Prior to Kumārajīva’s arrival, the following meditation manuals which were translated in the Later Han capital of Luoyang, namely the *Ānāpānasamṛti Sūtra* (T15n602, *Anbo shou yi jing* 安般守意經; henceforth *APSY*) translated by the Parthian An Shigao, and the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (T13n417, *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經; henceforth *BZSM*) translated by the Indo-Scythian Lokakṣema had been influential.³⁶ In short, An Shigao’s *APSY* is possibly the oldest Chinese sūtra on mindfulness of in and out breathing, in which the four meditation methods of *ānāpāna* (安那般那; inhaled and exhaled breath) and the six stages of breathing (*liu shi* 六事), namely: counting, following, fixing, contemplating, turning, and purifying are explained. Lokakṣema’s *BZSM* propounds a particular *samādhi* called the *pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi* (*banzhou sanmei* 般舟三昧), “the meditation in which one is brought face to face with the Buddhas of the present” or “the meditation of direct encounter with the Buddhas of the present.” This meditation is a developed form of the earlier practice of *buddhānusmṛti*, or “calling the Buddha to mind.” It also holds close connections with *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, which would be further elaborated in chapter four. Later scholars have traditionally considered these two meditation sūtras as representative of the two main streams of meditation in China before the fifth century: the Śrāvakayāna meditation of

³⁶ The larger and smaller *APSY* were initially the most widely circulated meditation in China during the Han to Jin dynasties. Lokakṣema’s *BZSM* also advanced the popularity of Mahāyāna meditation. See the second section of chapter 28 on meditation studies in the Han and Jin dynasties in 方立天(2002).

An Shigao with attribution to Indian yogic practices, and the Mahāyāna meditation of Lokaksema propounding Mahāyāna philosophy on emptiness.

However, despite the availability of these meditation manuals, they were still deemed ineffective in practical transmission. In Sengrui's 僧叡 (371–438 CE) preface in the *CSZJJ's Guanzhong chu chanjing xu* (關中出禪經序, T55n2145), he recorded that in the mid-fourth century in China, there was no complete and practical transmission of meditation:

The practice of *chan* is the first gate in the path leading to the Way, the route which leads to *nirvāṇa*. Formerly in this land [of China] the [*Scripture on the Stages of*] *Cultivation*, the large and small versions of the [*Scripture of the Twelve Gates*], and the larger and smaller *Ānāpāna* [*Scriptures*] were translated. Though these texts do indeed pertain to this matter [of *chan* practice], they are not comprehensive, and furthermore [despite the presence of such texts] there have been no [masters] from whom one can receive instructions. A proper course for those studying [*chan*] has thus been wanting.³⁷

In other words, Sengrui recorded that even though there exists a number of texts treating the subject of meditation, they were deemed to be ineffective without actual transmissions or guidance by qualified meditation teachers. Observation of this long-standing condition prior to the fifth century was also corroborated in two other historical sources. Firstly, in Dao'an's preface to An Shigao's *Yin Chi Ru Jing* (陰持入經; T15n603), Dao'an stated that the practice of *chan* contemplation has since An Shigao's time in the second century been neglected, such that though there are many Buddhist followers, there are none who have extinguished their defilements. Secondly, Huiyuan laments in his preface to Buddhahadra's translation of the *Chan Scripture of Dharmatrata* (T15n618, *Da mo duo luo chan jing* 達摩多羅禪經; henceforth *DMCJ*), a contemporaneous fifth-century text, albeit which appeared slightly later than Kumārajīva's *ZCSMJ*, that the teachings and practice of meditation have been limited

³⁷ 此土先出《修行》、大小《十二門》、大小《安般》，雖是其事，即不根悉，又無受法，學者之戒，蓋闕如也。T55n2145, 65a20-22. Translation references Greene(2012, 15).

even though the great teaching of Buddhism has spread to China, with the three trainings of precepts, meditation and wisdom being incomplete.³⁸

Amid this historical background, Kumārajīva became one of the key figures in ushering in a new era of development in Chinese Buddhist meditation history, transiting from the “Beginning Phase” to the “Developmental Phase.” As stated in Sengrui’s preface:

The master Kumārajīva came to Chang’an from Guzang on the twentieth day of the twelfth month of the Xinchou year [February ninth 402], and on the twenty-sixth day of that month, I [Sengrui] received from him instructions for *chan* practice. Only having been blessed with this edifying instruction did I know that study [of *chan*] has a prescribed standard and that its teachings have a prescribed arrangement. As said in the *Sūraṅgama-sūtra*, though one studies the Way in the mountains, without a master one will never succeed. Thereupon I was fortunate enough to obtain these three fascicles [from Kumārajīva], compiled from the *chan* manuals (*chan yao* 禪要) of various masters.³⁹

In other words, Sengrui who personally received Kumārajīva’s meditation transmission only thereby learned that there were standard methodology and guidelines to the learning of meditation. The receiving of teachings here “in three fascicles” refers to *ZCSMJ*, the very first text composed when Kumārajīva arrived in Chang’an, China in 401 CE. The fact that Kumārajīva’s first text upon arrival was a meditation text, seems to be a rather clear indication that there was keen interest and need of the Chinese for clarifying and practical expositions on meditation. As a meditation manual compiled in Chinese based on and clearly structured by the five main meditation practices in India — specifically from seven meditation masters predominantly active in northwest India from both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna traditions, this possibly was the “prescribed arrangement” which Sengrui lauded. A search through the Chinese meditation texts

³⁸ 每慨大教東流，禪數尤寡，三業無統，斯道殆廢。T15n618,301a26-27.

³⁹ 究摩羅法師，以辛丑之年十二月二十日，自姑臧至常安。予即以其月二十六日，從受禪法。既蒙啟授，乃知學有成准，法有成條。首楞嚴經云：人在山中學道，無師道終不成。是其事也，尋蒙抄撰眾家禪要，得此三卷。T55n2145, 65a22-27. Translation references Greene(2012, 15).

prior to Kumārajīva and the fifth century proves this; none of Kumārajīva's predecessors had included all five main meditation practices within a single text. In addition, with its structured meditation pathways for becoming an arhat, a solitary awakened one (*pratyekabuddha*), and for the Bodhisattva, this conceivably aligns with what Sengrui mentioned as having a “prescribed standard” for meditation. Before Kumārajīva, while Dao'an had differentiated Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna in terms of doctrinal teachings, these had not been differentiated in terms of practice.⁴⁰ Therefore, with *ZCSMJ* alone, Kumārajīva had made an organization of meditation techniques as well as clarified the differences in Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation practices, hitherto not seen in Chinese Buddhist meditation history.

Besides being able to respond to the lack of practical instructional manuals and teaching, Kumārajīva and his texts were part of the reason for the vibrant intellectual climate of the fifth century. Kumārajīva, viewed as an authority giving the true dharma, attracted the gathering of eminent people from all directions. Based on records in *GSZ*, Buddhist activity was flourishing in fifth-century Chang'an, well-supported by the then ruler Yao Xing 姚興 (366–416 CE), who endeavored to spread the Buddhist teachings through the invitation of eminent monks and provided infrastructure for the translation of scriptures and teaching of meditation. The records stated that extraordinary scriptures and eminent monks have been brought from distant lands, with these new scriptures translated by Kumārajīva at the Dashi 大石 temple and meditation master Buddhahadra instructing several hundred disciples diligent in meditation at the Waguan 瓦官 temple.⁴¹ The mutual exchanges of learning amongst Kumārajīva, Buddhahadra and Huiyuan may be evidenced as follows: From Buddhahadra's biography in *CSZJJ*, it is understood that not only did Buddhahadra go to follow Kumārajīva upon hearing that he was in Chang'an, they had edifying discussions on the teachings and consulted each other where there were doubts.⁴² In *JDY* — Huiyuan's written exchanges with Kumārajīva, Huiyuan sought clarification on a dozen topics, and to

⁴⁰ Cf. 佐佐木憲德(1979, 108).

⁴¹ 什法師於大石寺出新至諸經，法藏淵曠，日有異聞。禪師於瓦官寺教習禪道，門徒數百，夙夜匪懈，邕邕蕭蕭，致可欣樂。三藏法師於中寺出律藏，本末精悉，若覩初制。毘婆沙法師於石羊寺出舍利弗阿毘曇。T45n1858, 155c8-18.

⁴² 聞鳩摩羅什在長安，即往從之。什大欣悅，共論法相振發玄緒，多有妙旨。T55n2145, 103c16-18. 什每有疑義必共諮決。T55n2145, 103c20.

the interest of this thesis, amongst them was that of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.⁴³ Even amongst Kumārajīva’s audience, there were active questioning and records of intellectual disagreements, pointing to the rigorous intellectual climate of learning.⁴⁴

It may thus be surmised that the collective efforts in teachings and a significant number of other new Chinese compositions specifically devoted to meditation aided the taking up of meditation as actual practice in an organized and regular form during the “Developmental Phase” in the early fifth century. This was evidenced by at least three phenomena reflected through biographical records and architectural developments that suggested changes in the types of cultivation activities engaged. Firstly, Buddhist missionaries from the western regions were unprecedentedly mentioned in entire chapters as having mastery of meditation practice in the early sixth-century *GSZ*.⁴⁵ These missionaries wore the newly minted title of “meditation master” (*chan shi* 禪師), signaling the recognition of meditation practice and attainments as more common and achievable, deserving of mention in its own right rather than just the traditional areas of specialization such as translation. Secondly, studying meditation under a qualified meditation master became an expected part of training. From the records in *GSZ*, the historicity of discipleship under a foreign and eventually native Chinese meditation teacher became increasingly apparent after the fifth century. Thirdly, monastery architecture reflected the pervasive presence of meditation practice, with the presence of elements of “meditation cloister” (*chan fang* 禪房), “meditation hall” (*chan tang* 禪堂), or “meditation chamber” (*chan ge*

⁴³ See T45n1856, 134b4-135a11 for the section on “the question and answer on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*” 「次問念佛三昧并答」.

⁴⁴ An example of an intellectual disagreement was Sengrui’s view of Kumārajīva’s translated term *si yi* 思益, where he deems the use of *chi yi* 持意 or the previously translated *chi xin* 持心 would be more appropriate. While Sengrui did not change Kumārajīva’s choice of term, his view was nevertheless recorded in the preface to the sūtra *Si yi jing* 思益經, reflecting the openness of the intellectual exchanges between Kumārajīva and his followers. Cf. 蕭世昌(2010, 130).

⁴⁵ At the beginning of the sixth century, the scholar-monk Huijiao 慧皎 (497–554 CE) drew on literary sources and epigraphy as well as personal interviews to compile a collection of 257 biographies of Chinese monks, which he termed *Biographies of Eminent Monks*. The biographies were divided into ten categories: (1) Translators (*yijing* 譯經); (2) Exegetes (*yijie* 義解); (3) Divine Wonders (*shenyi* 神異), devoted to wonder-workers; (4) Practitioners of Meditation (*xichan* 習禪); (5) Elucidators of the Regulations (*minglü* 明律), devoted to scholars of the Vinaya; (6) Those Who Sacrificed Themselves (*wangshen* 亡身), devoted to monks who sacrificed their bodies to feed animals, or as offerings to Buddhas or bodhisattvas; (7) Chanters of Scriptures (*songjing* 誦經); (8) Benefactors (*xingfu* 興福), devoted to monks who solicited funds to construct monasteries or for other Buddhist enterprises; (9) Hymnodists (*jingshi* 經師); and (10) Proselytizers (*changdao* 唱導).

禪閣) recorded.⁴⁶ These biographical records and architectural developments add up to attest that organized meditation practice began to play a more significant role in Chinese Buddhism from the fifth century onwards. With the study and practice of meditation in place, this further laid the grounds for the later modifications and innovations of meditation practices unique to the Chinese soil.

At this point, the question arises: How can Kumārajīva, despite being lauded for his prowess as a translator of texts and an exegete more than being described as a master of meditation in his biographical records, be deemed to be considered as one of the key persons to effect a transformational shift in the history of Chinese Buddhist meditation history? How can his meditation texts be considered significant records of meditation practice? In the next section, a look into his background and translation will provide the context for Kumārajīva's favorable standing in these respects.

2.3 Kumārajīva's Background and his Translation Style

While not usually described as a master of meditation, the meditation texts that Kumārajīva translated were among the earliest texts on this subject to appear in China, and are important material not only for understanding the kind of content to which fifth-century Chinese Buddhists interested in meditation would likely have been exposed to but also for their considerable influence on later developments of Chinese Buddhist meditation practice. Kumārajīva's biographical background, which reflects his ability to have an integrated understanding of both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna teachings, as well as the language capacity to render these teachings well-suited for a Chinese audience, would contextualize a better understanding of his corpus of translated texts through the lens of authorship.

Worthy of highlight is Kumārajīva's familiarity with the cultures and practices of northwest India and Central Asia, for, in terms of geographical transmission, the Buddhism in both of these regions hold the closest proximity to the form of Buddhism that was transmitted into China, especially during the period of the Han, Wei and two

⁴⁶ Cf. Greene(2012, 28-29).

Jin dynasties — from the “Translation Phase” to “Developmental Phase” in Chinese Buddhist meditation history.⁴⁷ Kumārajīva was born around 344 CE in Kucha, a central Asian country in the Tarim Basin (present-day Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region, China) that was one of the earliest centers of Buddhism, where the area's flourishing Buddhist communities were noted in a fourth-century Chinese chronicle. A novice monk since the age of seven, Kumārajīva was familiar with the *Abhidharma* 阿毘達磨, and in the latter part of the fourth century, from the age of nine, he went to Jibin 罽賓 (Kashmir) in northwest India and studied traditional forms of Buddhism, such as the *Dīrgha Āgama* (*Chang ahan jing* 長阿含經) and *Madhyama Āgama* (*Zhong ahan jing* 中阿含經). At the age of twelve, Kumārajīva re-acquainted with the Sarvāstivāda *Abhidharma*.⁴⁸ Later, he learned the Mahāyāna teachings under a Mahāyānist monk, Suryasoma at Kashgar, one of the main places for the propounding of the Mahāyāna, where he was acquainted with Nāgārjuna's (Longshu 龍樹; 150–250 CE) *Madhyamika* (T30n1564, *Zhong lun* 中論; *Treatise on the Middle*). Upon his return to Kucha, Kumārajīva propagated Mahāyāna teachings, the doctrine of the emptiness of all dharmas, resulting in the popularisation of the Mahāyāna. Hence, it is evident that Kumārajīva's early learnings, which centered on Sarvāstivāda teachings, set an important cornerstone for his later ability to propound the differences between the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna vehicles. A particular example of this is his clear explication of the differences between Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation methods in his earliest meditation text, the *ZCSMJ*, which, despite using the Indian meditation tradition of Five Doors (*wu men chan fa* 五門禪法; meaning five approaches) as a common framework across the two teachings, sets out different meditation content for the two pathways.⁴⁹ This distinction of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation, with

⁴⁷ Cf. 釋印順(1972, 224).

⁴⁸ The Sarvāstivāda School (*shuo yi qie you bu* 說一切有部) was regarded as an influential school in north-western India, established around 300 BCE and flourished in Kashmir and Central Asia to about the 7th century CE. One of the main doctrinal positions that the Sarvāstivādas posit is that all dharmas exist in the three time periods of the past, present, and future. The Sarvāstivāda lineage involves Mahākāśyapa, Ānanda, Sāṅghavāsi and Upagupta. Not only were they well-versed in doctrines, they were known to be great meditation masters as well. Notably for our purpose, the works of Sarvāstivāda meditation masters came to influence the compilation of Kumārajīva's *ZCSMJ*. Cf. Chan(2013, 2-19).

⁴⁹ Cf. 越建東(2018, 145-164) for an analysis of the differences between Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna (Bodhisattva) meditation methods in *ZCSMJ*. While Śrāvakayāna meditation developed to have an emphasis on forty meditation objects, Mahāyāna meditation developed to emphasize on *prajñā*, and with its distinctive meditation methods of contemplation of white bones, contemplation of the twelve dependent origination for the practice of *samādhi*, and contemplation of the Buddha to obtain

the presentation of Mahāyāna meditation as one that builds upon and transcends Śrāvakayāna meditation, was to become one of Kumārajīva's distinctive contributions to Chinese Buddhist meditation history.

In addition, it is also noteworthy to consider the general context of the developments of Indian Buddhism broadly from 1 CE to 500 CE in which Kumārajīva was situated, which was characterized by the parallel developments of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna Buddhism, albeit with Mahāyāna doctrines being the dominant social current.⁵⁰ This explains the special characteristic of Śrāvakayāna teachings in medieval China, which were not seen to be at odds with the teachings of the Mahāyāna.⁵¹ Kumārajīva's and other fifth-century meditation texts, as would be shown in the later analysis in chapters three and four, reflect this co-existent state through their composite presentations of both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation methods.

Interrupting Kumārajīva's propagation of teachings at Kucha was his capture by the Chinese general Lü Guang 呂光 (337–399 CE) in 384 CE, the latter who established his kingdom, Later Liang, in the Gansu and Xinjiang regions. These experiences, spanning a total of sixteen years in detention, were to be formative to fostering his understanding and familiarization of the Chinese culture and language, along with equipping him with the necessary translation skills. When the Later Liang dynasty was conquered by Yao Xing, he invited Kumārajīva to Chang'an (present-day Xi'an), his established capital of the Later Qin. Kumārajīva eventually arrived in Chang'an in 401 CE in the twelfth month, aged fifty-eight. Under Yao Xing's patronage, the translation center known as Xiaoyao Garden (*xiao yao yuan* 逍遙園) was constructed for Kumārajīva. Aided by a translation team of more than 800 Buddhist elites, supplemented with his profound knowledge of both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna

buddhānusmṛti-samādhi. Cf. *Ibid.*, 143. While these two traditions developed different focus in meditation methods, the attainment of single-mindedness in Śrāvakayāna meditation is seen to be a necessary foundation for the practice of Mahāyāna meditation. *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁰ According to Venerable Taixu's 太虛大師 (1890 - 1947 CE) division of the development of Indian Buddhism into three periods, the period from 500 BCE to the beginning of the century was characterized by a predominance of Śrāvakayāna over Mahāyāna teachings (小行大隱時期); the period of the first 500 years from the beginning of the century was characterized by Mahāyāna as the mainstream, with a parallel following of Śrāvakayāna teachings in the background (大主小從時期); the period of the subsequent 500 years was characterized by the dominance of esoteric teachings, with a parallel following of exoteric teachings in the background (密主顯從). Cf. 釋印順(1972, 220-221).

⁵¹ 釋印順(1972, 230).

Buddhism, and his knowledge of both Indic and Chinese languages and cultures, Kumārajīva was adept to translate Buddhist texts from India, including many Mahāyāna sūtras, philosophical treatises, as well as meditation texts.

According to the conservative estimation in the *CSZJJ*, in Kumārajīva's duration of stay in Yao Qin 姚秦 period of about eight years before his passing in 413 CE, he translated a total of thirty-five sūtras and treatises, totaling 294 fascicles. His translations mainly propound Mādhyamaka thought, a tradition of Buddhist philosophy and practice founded by the Indian philosopher Nāgārjuna, which refers to the ultimate nature of phenomena as empty of inherent nature, as well as the non-conceptual realization of ultimate reality that is experienced in meditation. Amongst the Mahāyāna sūtras and philosophical texts that he translated were the *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* (T9n262, *Miao fa lian hua jing* 妙法蓮華經; also known as the *Lotus Sūtra*, henceforth *FHJ*), the *Shorter Sukhāvativyūha Sūtra* (T12n366, *Fo shuo emituo jing* 佛說阿彌陀經; henceforth *AMTJ*), *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* (T8n227, *Xiao pin bo re jing* 小品般若經), *Treatise on the Ten Bodhisattva Grounds* (T26n1521, *Shizhu pi po sha lun* 十住毘婆沙論; *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*), *Treatise on the Middle* (T30n1564, *Zhong lun* 中論) and the *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* (T25n1509, *Da zhi du lun* 大智度論). Various doctrinal correspondences in these sūtras and treatises can be found in his meditation texts. For instance, the meditation on the content from the *FHJ* and *AMTJ* are present in *SWLYF*, and the contemplation on emptiness based on Mādhyamaka philosophy can be found in all of his meditation texts. These would be elaborated in detail in chapter three.

Justifiably, Kumārajīva is frequently considered as one of the four great translators of Buddhist texts into Chinese, together with Paramārtha (*Zhendi* 真諦; 499–569 CE), Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664 CE), and Amoghavajra (*Bukong jingang* 不空金剛; 705–774 CE). Distinguishing from these other translators was Kumārajīva's unique style of translation, which is not a word-for-word translation but interspersed with other sources, and may even be conjectured as including his own creations and interpretation to some extent. For instance, the form and arrangement of *ZCSMJ* was the outcome of an active selection, editing, and compilation process from the works of various Indian meditation masters, and hence it is plausible that this mode of translation may also have

been used for his other meditation texts. While there is no way of determining the actual extent of authorial hand involved in the translation of all his meditation texts due to the absence of original texts for comparison, what can be certain is Kumārajīva's rigor in ensuring the accuracy of his translations, a fact that adds authority to their content. Amongst the various examples of the strict standards he held to the accuracy of his translations, was the case of *ZCSMJ*, his first meditation text, which though produced in 401 CE, was nevertheless subsequently vetted and thenceforth only deemed as completed in 407 CE.⁵²

However, meditation instructions in these “manuals” were not just confined to the end-produced text. What needs to be highlighted is also the teachings that were carried out. Through the component of teaching, explanation, and responding to questions integral to his translation process, Kumārajīva played a significant role in advancing the Chinese audience's structured understanding of meditation and its integrated practice with Mahāyāna doctrines. This development and practice of meditation contemplation were also continued by his followers such as Sengrui, Hui Shi 惠始 (undated–438 CE), Dao Heng 道恆 (346–417 CE), Seng Dao 僧導 (362–457 CE), Seng Bao 僧苞 (undated) and Tan Jian 曇鑿(343–444 CE).⁵³

With the above understanding of Kumārajīva's background and his translations to contextualize the content and derivation of his meditation texts, an overview of this body of meditation texts in the *Taishō* would be examined next.

2.4 Kumārajīva's Meditation Texts in the *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* Canon

Regarding his meditation texts, catalogues and prefaces of the Chinese Buddhist canon connect Kumārajīva to these four works:⁵⁴

⁵² Cf. 蕭世昌(2012, 107-157).

⁵³ Cf. 佐佐木憲德(1979,125-132) and Chen(2014, 103) for the meditation practices of these disciples. For instance, Chen's research reflects Sengrui's proficiency in meditation, who, in addition to being an Amitābha devotee, began to practice meditation diligently under the guidance of Kumārajīva, to a swift mastery of the “Five Gates” and “Six Meditations” (*liujing* 六淨).

⁵⁴ The Chinese Buddhist bibliographical catalogues include: the *Catalog of Scriptures* (T55n2146, *Zhong jing mu lu* 眾經目錄) by Fa Jing 法經 from 594 CE; *Records of the Three Treasures throughout*

1. *The Discourse on the Essential Secrets of Meditation*
(T15n613, *Chan mi yaofa jing* 禪祕要法經), in three fascicles;
2. *The Sūtra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation*
(T15n614, *Zuo chan sanmei jing* 坐禪三昧經), in two fascicles;
3. *The Essential Explanation of the Methods of Meditation*
(T15n616, *Chan fa yaojie* 禪法要解), in two fascicles; and
4. *The Outlining Way of Contemplation*
(T15n617, *Siwei lue yaofa* 思惟略要法), in one fascicle.

The gist of the content covered in these meditation texts is as follows. *ZCSMJ* is seen as a manual that outlines the paths for the three vehicles of an arhat, a solitary awakened one (*pratyekabuddha*; *bi zhi fo* 辟支佛), or a Buddha. This manual consists mainly of a discussion of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna Five Doors methods of meditation practice. In *CFYJ*, the essentials of Sarvāstivādin meditation are listed, albeit with parts infused with Mahāyāna doctrine: the contemplation on purity, impurity; removing the five hindrances; marks of the four *dhyānas*; the four immeasurables; the four meditation on the formless realms; the meditation on the four noble truths; the four bases of supranormal powers, which overall parallel the Sarvāstivādin meditation

Successive Generations (T49n2034, *Li dai san bao ji* 歷代三寶紀) by Fei Chang Fang 費長房 from 597 CE; and *Catalog of Scriptures* (T55n2148, *Zhong jing mu lu* 眾經目錄) by Yan Cong 彥琮 from 602 CE. Translations of names of catalogues reference Tokuno(1990). I wish to thank Professor Teng Weijen for providing me with this reference. In the fifteenth volume of *Taishō*, *The Sūtra of the Bodhisattva's Denunciation of Physical Desires* (T15n615, *Pu sa he se yu fa jing* 菩薩訶色欲法經) in one fascicle, is also one of the meditation texts attributed to Kumārajīva. However, as this extremely short text of no more than 19 lines (17 characters per line in the *Taishō*) describes only the failings of being attached to the female form and has no mention of *buddhānusr̥ti-samādhi* nor of other meditation techniques nor meditative states, it is deemed as differing too starkly in format, style, and content from his other meditation texts and thus is not included as part of Kumārajīva's corpus for analysis in this thesis. In addition, Sengyou recorded that Kumārajīva also translated a no longer extant meditation text, called the *Sūtra on Contemplating the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination* (*Shi er yinyuan guan jing* 十二因緣觀經); see T55n2145, 11a11. While *ZCSMJ* and *CFYJ* are unanimously recognized as Kumārajīva's translations, scholars are divided as to the authorship for the other texts. Cf. Chen(2014, 116). However, being an inconclusive matter, the debate on authorship will not be in the purview of this thesis, and focus will be placed on what these ascribed texts have to say.

progression. *CFYJ*'s Mahāyāna parts consist of the meditation on white bones inserted between fascicles one and two, as well as the concluding part on five supranormal powers that is overtly framed with Mahāyāna teachings, containing descriptions of bodhisattvas' supranormal powers, and Buddhas in the ten directions. *CMYFJ* lists approximately thirty types of meditation to counteract various defilements, with the contemplation of impurities, meditation on the breath, and meditation on the four elements as the central teachings. *SWLYF* gives a general outline on Mahāyāna meditation, describing ten key types of contemplation with an emphasis on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, including three kinds of visualizations: (i) the visualization of Amitābha Buddha; (ii) the visualization of the *FHJ*, and (iii) the visualization of the true characteristic of factors. Suffice to say, there is a wide range of meditation subjects covered in Kumārajīva's meditation texts — according to analysis, not less than fifteen subjects are presented in each meditation text alone. In this regard, one of his contributions to the development of Chinese Buddhist meditation may be said to be his compilation and organization of the various subjects of meditative contemplations, which is not evident in prior texts circulated.

To provide clarity to the similarities and differences in meditation content between these texts, a comparison of the meditation subjects covered in each of Kumārajīva's four meditation texts is illustrated in Table 2 on the following page. In Table 2, the symbol “●” indicates mention in the text with a greater emphasis, inferred either from its presentation as the main meditation method, having extended or repetitive discussions, or having a unique presentation in verse form. The other symbol “△” indicates brief mention in the text, subsumed under the main meditation method, and is neither discussed extensively nor repeated in other parts of the same text. The comparisons of emphasis are effective within each text and are not fully representative of the lateral comparisons across texts. In addition, for ease of reading, the first five lists of meditation objects are numbered according to the traditional Five Doors framework.⁵⁵ Where closely associated or partially overlapping meditation objects exist, such as in the case of the cultivation of friendliness and cultivation of the four

⁵⁵ In this thesis, “traditional” Indic or Sarvāstivādin meditation practice would broadly refer to the Five Doors of meditation on: one, *ānāpāna*; two, impurities; three, loving-kindness; four, dependent causation; five, *dhātu-prabheda*, as stated in the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* (T30n1579, *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論). See T30n1579, 526c28-527a03.

immeasurables — where the former may be considered as a subset of the latter, they are sub-divided under the same categorical list number (i.e. 2a,2b).

In addition, Table 3 lists the meditation subjects in sequence of appearance in each of these four texts, to provide their respective outlines of content. The sections of texts in which *buddhānusmṛti-samādhī* practice is mentioned are highlighted in grey. The double-lined segregations (====) pertain to divisions within each text: *ZCSMJ* into its two fascicles; *CFYJ* into its two fascicles; and *CMYFJ* into its four frame narratives, which structure the sequence of meditation methods within their respective contexts. *SWLYF* is not divided here as it comprises solely of one fascicle.



Table 2: Comparison of content in Kumārajīva's meditation texts

| English Title of Meditation Text | <i>The Sūtra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation</i> | <i>The Essential Explanation of the Methods of Meditation</i> | <i>The Discourse on the Essential Secrets of Meditation</i> | <i>The Outlining Way of Contemplation</i> | |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Chinese Title | 坐禪三昧經 | 禪法要解 | 禪祕要法經 | 思惟略要法 | |
| Abbreviations | ZCSMJ | CFYJ | CMYFJ | SWLYF | |
| Taishō Canon No. | T15n614 | T15n616 | T15n613 | T15n617 | |
| No. of Fascicles | 2 | 2 | 3 | 1 | |
| Meditation Objects | | | | | |
| 1a | Impurities 不淨 | ● | ● | ● | |
| 1b | White bones 白骨 | △ | ● | ● | |
| 2a | Friendliness 慈心 | ● | ● | △ | |
| 2b | Four immeasurables 四無量心 | △ | ● | ● | |
| 3 | Dependent origination 因緣 | ● | | △ | |
| 4 | Mindfulness of breathing 念出入息 | ● | | △ | |
| 5a | Analysis according to the elements 界分別 | △ | △ | ● | |
| 5b | Recollection of Buddha 念佛三昧 | Contemplation of image 像觀 | ● | △ | ● |
| | | Contemplation of Buddha's life 生身觀 | ● | | ● |
| | | Contemplation of dharma-body 法身觀 | ● | △ | ● |
| | | Contemplation of Buddhas in ten directions 十方諸佛觀 | ● | △ | ● |
| | | Contemplation of Amitābha Buddha 觀無量壽佛 | | | ● |
| 5c | Contemplation of <i>saddharma-puṇḍarīka-samādhi</i> 法華三昧觀 | | | ● | |
| 6 | Four foundations of mindfulness 四念處 | ● | | ● | |
| 7 | Four noble truths 四聖諦 | △ | ● | △ | |
| 8 | True nature of all dharmas 諸法實相 | ● | ● | ● | |
| Meditative Attainments | | | | | |
| 1 | Four stages of meditation 四禪 | △ | ● | △ | |
| 2 | Four stages of concentration on formless realms 四無色定 | △ | ● | | |
| 3 | Five supranormal powers 五通 | △ | ● | △ | |
| 4 | Four bases of supranormal powers 四如意 | | ● | △ | |
| 5 | <i>Pratyutpanna-samādhi</i> ⁵⁶ 般舟三昧 | △ ⁵⁷ | | △ ⁵⁸ | |
| 6 | Concentration in which bodhisattvas appear 菩薩出現於三昧中 | | △ | ● | |

⁵⁶ *Pratyutpanna-samādhi*, the "samādhi of the one who stands (*avasthita*) face-to-face with, or in the presence of (*sammukha*), the present (*pratyutpanna*) Buddhas," refers specifically to the state of actualization of patient acceptance based on awareness of the nonarising of phenomena (*wu sheng faren* 無生法忍), a distinctive level of enlightenment attained by high level bodhisattvas, usually described as a mental function occurring within the seventh *bhūmi* or above. Definition references Harrison(1978, 42).

⁵⁷ In ZCSMJ, there is a distinction between three types of fruitions from the practice of *buddhānusrīti-samādhi* where the Buddhas appear before the self: (i) From the Śrāvakayāna practice of meditating on the Buddha statue, life of the Buddha, and the dharma-body, the single, then two, then boundless Buddhas appear before the self; (ii) From the Mahāyāna practice of meditating on the Buddhas in the ten directions and three periods of time as well as the dharma-body and vows-making, Buddhas in the ten directions and over the three periods directly appear before the self; (iii) From the recognition of non-arising elements, the attainment of concentration in which Buddhas appear is considered the fruits of the bodhisattava path for one close to being established in the ten stages. The item in this table refers specifically to the third description here.

⁵⁸ Here the exact term of *pratyutpanna-samādhi* (*banzhou sanmei* 般舟三昧) is not specifically used, but it is described in the practitioner who is accomplished in concentration, that the attainment of non-arising of phenomena accompanies the appearance of the Buddhas in the ten directions who teaches the dharma to the practitioner: 定心成就者，即於定中十方諸佛皆為說法，疑網雲消得無生忍。T15n617, 299c14.

Table 3: Sequence of content in Kumārajīva's meditation texts

| <i>ZCSMJ</i> | | <i>CFYJ</i> | <i>CMYFJ</i> | <i>SWLYF</i> |
|---|--|--|---|--|
| Śrāvakayāna 聲聞 | Impurities 不淨 | Two types of impurities 二種不淨 | Fix one's mind 繫念法 | Five Doors 修五門禪法 |
| | Friendliness 慈心 | Reject five desires 訶五欲 | Impurities 不淨 | Contemplate five desires 觀五欲 |
| | Dependent origination 因緣 | Discard five kinds of obscuration 去五蓋 | Shame 慚愧 Bloating, pus, blood 膨脹膿血 | Discard five kinds of obscuration 去五蓋 |
| | Mindfulness of breathing 念出入息 | Four stages of meditation 四禪 | Thin skin 薄皮 Thick skin and mass of worms 厚皮蟲聚 | Four immeasurables 四無量 |
| | Recollection of Buddha 念佛三昧 | Four immeasurables 四無量心 | Red bones, skin stained with dirty muddy water 極赤淤泥濁水洗皮雜想 Fresh corpse 新死想 | Impurities 不淨 White bones 白骨 |
| Four elements 四大 | White bones 白骨 | Skeleton with separated bones 節節解觀 | Contemplation of the Buddha(s) 觀佛三昧 | |
| Four stages of meditation 四禪 | Four stages of concentration on formless realms 四無色定 | Radiant light of white bones 白骨流光觀 | Life of the Buddha 生身觀 | |
| Four stages of concentration on formless realms 四無色定 | Four noble truths 四聖諦 | Vision of the ninety-eight defilements 九十八使境界 | Dharma-body 法身觀 | |
| Five supranormal powers 五通 | Four bases of supranormal powers 四如意 | Roots of defilements 結使根本觀 Earth element 地大 | Buddhas in the ten directions 十方諸佛觀 | |
| Four foundations of mindfulness 四念止 | Five supranormal powers 五通 | Emptiness 漸解學觀空 Four elements 四大 | Amitābha Buddha 觀無量壽佛 | |
| Sixteen aspects of the four noble truths 四法緣十六行相 | | Mindfulness of body 身念處 First gate (of impurity) 一門觀 | True nature of dharmas 諸法實相 | |
| Four roots of the merit of recognition 四善根位 | | Contemplation of the Buddha(s) 觀佛三昧 | <i>Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-samādhi</i> 法華三昧觀 | |
| Sixteen moments of mind 見道十六心 | | Breath 數息觀 Stage of heat 暖法觀 Stage of summit 頂法觀 Expedient support to stage of summit 觀助頂法方便 | | |
| Four śrāvakayāna fruitions 聲聞四果 | | Fire element 火大觀 Non-self within fire element 火大無我觀 | | |
| Three types of <i>pratyekabuddhas</i> 三種辟支佛 | | <i>Śrotāpanna</i> path 得須陀洹道 Real non-self 真無我觀 <i>Anāgamin</i> vision 阿那含相應境界 | | |
| Mahāyāna 菩薩 | Recollection of Buddha 念佛三昧 | | Contemplation of Buddha(s) 觀佛 Friendliness 慈心 | |
| | Impurities 不淨 | | Dependent Origination 因緣觀 Mindfulness of breathing 念出入息 | |
| | Friendliness 慈心 | | Formless Buddha body 觀佛無相 Lotus flower at heart 觀心蓮花 | |
| | Dependent origination 因緣 | | Dharma-body 觀諸佛法身 Purification of the four great elements 四大清淨觀 | |
| | Mindfulness of breathing 念出入息 | | <i>Samādhis</i> of emptiness, wishlessness, non-intention 空、無 願、無作三昧 | |
| Three receptivities 三法忍 | | | | |

From the above tables, a few observations may be drawn about Kumārajīva's transmission of Buddhist meditation methods in his corpus of meditation texts, based on their perceived commonalities and differences.

To begin with, common to all of Kumārajīva's meditation texts are the following meditation objects: the contemplation of impurities and white bones; cultivation of friendliness and four immeasurables; the recollection of the Buddha; and the reality of all dharmas. What might be the possible reasons and significance for this commonality? Considering Kumārajīva's background of having a Mahāyāna orientation, these might conceivably be the meditation objects that are deemed to be important supports for cultivating a Mahāyāna perspective, as elaborated below.

In the case of contemplation of impurities and white bones, they are both reckoned as contemplation of impurities, albeit of different types. As stated in *CFYJ*, the former is the impure subject that invites disgust and loathing, whereas the latter is the impure subject that does not invite disgust and loathing.⁵⁹ The turn to the contemplation of white bones thus transcends the dualistic signs of impurity and purity, and guards practitioners against deep revulsion from the world such that they do not seek the bodhisattva path of remaining in the world to help other worldly sentient beings. Corroborating this as a uniquely Mahāyāna practice is the fact that the contemplation of white bones with light is not a practice found in canonical Śrāvakayāna meditation literature, such as the *Visuddhimagga*.

With regard to the cultivation of friendliness and four immeasurables, this is viewed as an important and necessary condition for the arising of the Mahāyāna aspiration to liberate sentient beings.⁶⁰ Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume its recurrences across Kumārajīva's meditation texts as being to some extent related to a Mahāyāna outlook. Next, the contemplation on the true nature of the dharmas is decidedly Mahāyānan and a clear emphasis in Kumārajīva's larger oeuvre of translated works. Here, the incorporation of this contemplation from the *prajñāpāramitā* sūtras finds its way into Kumārajīva's meditation texts as a form of direct practice, where the

⁵⁹ 不淨有二種：一者惡厭：不淨、二者非惡厭不淨。T15n616, 286b19.

⁶⁰ 大乘發心為度眾生，以慈為本。T15n616, 291a26.

practitioner contemplates that all phenomenon is accepted as existent, but as lacking in self-nature. In spite of the variety of meditation objects stated in the texts, all these contemplations ultimately round off with this contemplation of reality. Therefore, in Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, the Mahāyāna doctrine of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) may be regarded as an underlying constant that the practitioner works towards realizing through meditative contemplation. A closer analysis of this *prajñā* contemplation in the texts will be provided in the later segment of this chapter.

Significant for this thesis is the repetitions of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice across his texts, particularly that of the Mahāyāna practice of contemplating boundless Buddhas in the ten directions. This suggests the value accorded to this practice, and also affirms Kumārajīva’s textual affiliations with Central Asian meditative traditions. Notably, from Table 3, we see that *SWLYF* not only has a significant portion of its content dedicated to this practice, it also uniquely incorporates content from the *vaipulya*-sūtras into meditation in the contemplation of Amitābha Buddha and *saddharma-puṇḍarīka-samādhi* from *FHJ*, making it clearly a Mahāyāna-oriented text. In *ZCSMJ*, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is expounded for both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna paths, and in *CMYFJ*, contemplation of the Buddhas is repeated across three of its four frame narratives. Here significantly in *CMYFJ*, the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice becomes the first and basis of practice for the *anāgamin* striving towards arhatship in the fourth frame narrative. These altogether suggest the importance of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in these meditation texts. Interestingly, we also observe how these texts have a mixture of the traditional Śrāvakayāna Five Doors with Mahāyāna aspects, corroborating the historical context of northwest India and Central Asia with their parallel practice of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna teachings, albeit with the dominance of the Mahāyāna, from which these texts draw their sources of meditative traditions from.

A search on the doctrinal item of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* across the body of texts classified as “meditation sūtras” (*chan jing* 禪經) shows that Kumārajīva’s meditation texts could be considered as one of the pioneering mentions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.⁶¹ Dharmarakṣa’s (*Zhu fa hu* 竺法護; 229 – 306 CE)

⁶¹ “Meditation sūtras” refer to texts no. 602-620 in the Volume 15 of the *Taishō*.

**Yogācārabhūmi* (T15n606, *Xiuxing dao di jing* 修行道地經) was the only meditation text prior to Kumārajīva’s which mentions *buddhānusmṛti* (*nianfo* 念佛) first as part of a triad of the remembrance of the Buddha, dharma, and *saṅgha* in fascicle five, and later in fascicle seven as part of the meditation method of the bodhisattva vehicle, which, though this exact term was not used, suggests the notion of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.⁶² The only other meditation text in the *Taishō* which used the term *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is Dharmamitra’s (*Tan mo mi duo* 曇摩蜜多; 356–442 CE) *The Essentials of the Meditation Manual Consisting of Five Gates* (T15n619, *Wu men chan jing yao yongfa* 五門禪經要用法; henceforth *WMCF*). However, Kumārajīva’s texts were likely to have appeared before Dharmamitra’s; Nobuyoshi Yamabe’s comparison study concludes that Kumārajīva’s two texts (T15n617; T15n613) were incorporations into Dharmamitra’s.⁶³ Further, even across the body of texts classified as “*samādhi-sūtras*” (*sanmei jing* 三昧經), the only other significant text with the anomalous widespread use of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is Buddhahadra’s *Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha* (T15n643, *Fo shuo guan fo sanmei hai jing* 佛說觀佛三昧海經; henceforth *GSMJ*).⁶⁴ What this shows is noteworthy in establishing Kumārajīva’s key role in the widespread institutionalizing of the doctrine of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as a form of formalized meditation practice in fifth-century China through his meditation texts.

An analysis of these four texts shows that the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, while appearing in all of Kumārajīva’s meditation texts as one of the various meditation

⁶² [菩薩]一心念佛，其所在方，專精向之未曾懈廢。七日、十日、三月、一載不為俗想，一心向佛并化眾生。乘摩訶衍無極之教，見十方佛，受教得定。 T15n606, 228a6. [The bodhisattva] single-mindedly recollects the Buddha wherever he is, concentrating on this relentlessly without any indolence. For seven days, ten days, three months, or [up to] a year without any worldly thoughts, [the bodhisattva is] single-minded towards the Buddha and the teaching of sentient beings. Riding on the limitless teachings of the Mahāyāna vehicle, [this results in the] seeing of Buddhas in the ten directions, attaining concentration with these teachings. (The translation is mine.) The length of time stated for practice are reminiscent of the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* in the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*. Research shows that the last three chapters, of which the citation here from fascicle seven is a part of, was a later addition to Dharmarakṣa’s text during the time of Dao’an (312-385 CE). Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 178).

⁶³ Cf. Franco and Zin(2010, 1045-1057).

⁶⁴ This comprises an astonishing count of 87 mentions across eight of its ten fascicles. The other mentions were also Kumārajīva’s works: *Da shu jin na luo wang suo wen jing* 大樹緊那羅王所問經 (T15n625) and *Fo shuo shou lenyan sanmei jing* 佛說首楞嚴三昧經 (T15n642), as well as Narendrayāśas’ (*Na lian ti ye she* 那連提耶舍; 490–589 CE) *Yue deng sanmei jing* 月燈三昧經 (T15n639), dated to 557 CE. These would be analyzed in chapter four of this thesis.

methods, have but varying angles of approach and weightage of importance in each of their contexts. This might be due to the different overall focus that each text purports. In what follows, I shall present the details of this analysis through examining the occurrences of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhī* in each, showing each of their uniqueness across Kumārajīva’s corpus.



CHAPTER THREE – ANALYSIS OF *BUDDHĀNUSMṚTI-SAMĀDHI* IN KUMĀRAJĪVA’S MEDITATION TEXTS

3.1 *The Sūtra on the Concentration of Sitting Meditation*

(T15n614, *Zuo chan sanmei jing* 坐禪三昧經)

Within Kumārajīva’s corpus of meditation texts, *ZCSMJ* is the first text that Kumārajīva produced upon arrival at Chang’an, and may therefore illuminate the propelling ideas that Kumārajīva wished to bring to the Chinese. Particularly, it contains a rare integration of meditation methods of both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation. It is also worthwhile to note Kumārajīva’s more distinctive authorial hand in this text; while the extent of his authorial hand in translation cannot be ascertained in his other meditation texts, *ZCSMJ* might be understood as his composition. Presented across two fascicles in an orderly arrangement, the Śrāvakayāna portion is a collation of essentials from various well-known meditation treatises in India from the first to third centuries, whereas the Mahāyāna portion with its meditation of Buddhas in the ten directions and three periods may be traced to the *BZSM* that was likely influential in Central Asia.⁶⁵ The bulk of fascicle one describes the paths for becoming an arhat, introducing the Five Doors meditation, namely (i) the meditation on impurities, (ii) cultivation of friendliness, (iii) observation of dependent origination, (iv) mindful inhalation and exhalation, and (v) recollection of the Buddha. These are the respective remedies for (i) lust, (ii) hatred, (iii) delusion, (iv) discursive thoughts, and (v) multiple afflictions. Fascicle two begins with the fruitions of the above-mentioned practices, with a smaller section setting out the path for becoming a solitary awakened one (*pratyekabuddha*), before proceeding with the Mahāyānist portion of the Bodhisattva path. In the latter, the afore-mentioned five methods for becoming an arhat in fascicle one are set out, albeit with Mahāyānist interpretations given to the same methods to see the Mahāyānist truth of the empty and non-arising reality of all elements. Fascicle two then concludes with the practice of the

⁶⁵ The compilations based on multiple sources are specifically from seven meditation teachers. These seven teachers hail from both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna traditions and were variously active from the first to third century; Upagupta 漚波掬多 (3rd century), Pārśva 勒比丘 (2nd century), Vasumitrā 婆須蜜 (2nd century), Kumāralāta 鳩摩羅陀 (3rd century), Aśvagoṣa 馬鳴 (1st – 2nd century), and Saṃgharakṣa 僧伽羅叉 (2nd century) were Śrāvakayāna meditation masters affiliated with the Sarvāstivāda school, while Saṃghasena 僧伽斯那 was a Mahāyāna meditation master. For the influence of *BZSM* on *ZCSMJ*’s Mahāyāna portion, cf. 趙文(2017b).

three elements of recognition (recognition of sentient beings, recognition conforming to the dharma, and the recognition of non-arising elements), and an exhortation on the importance of utilizing the right method, place, and time based on the appropriate measure of one's practice.

Within this content, the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is significant in this text for (i) being structured within the Five Doors of meditation; (ii) its clear differentiation between Śrāvākayāna meditation and Mahāyāna meditation; and (iii) the exposition of its practice for three different levels of practitioners. Particularly, the enumeration of ten epithets of the Buddha and the making of vows are aspects of the practice that are not mentioned in his other meditation texts. These would be covered in the following discussion.

Firstly, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is seen framed as part of the structure of the Five Doors of meditation. In the traditional Sarvāstivāda's Five Doors, such as that transmitted in Buddhahadra's *DMCJ*, *dhātu-prabheda* (*jie fen bie guan* 界分別觀), the analysis according to the elements, was in place of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. This historical transition from *dhātu-prabheda* to *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* could be traced back to northwest India in the period after the Common Era, where the fertile nurturing of religious practices surrounding the figure of Śākyamuni Buddha, reflected through his centrality in their doctrines, image creation, and meditation practices, led to the Sarvāstivādins replacing the meditation on *dhātu-prabheda* with *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.⁶⁶ It might also have been influenced by developments in Mahāyāna doctrine, or from the wave of a meditation culture of visualizations that were prevalent in fourth century northern India.⁶⁷ This revised Five Doors meditation method was apparently succeeded by Dharmamitra in his translation of *WMCF*, but significantly, transmitted more completely by Kumārajīva in this collation of the essences of India's meditation treatises.⁶⁸ The choice of this revised fivefold scheme

⁶⁶ Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 35).

⁶⁷ Cf. Yamabe(1999, 157), where he opines that there was a wide popularity of visionary theism that was influencing both Hinduism and Buddhism at the same time.

⁶⁸ The opening lines to T15n619 introduces the revised fivefold structure of this meditation scheme, without mention of *dhātu-prabheda*: 坐禪之法要有五門：一者安般；二、不淨；三、慈心；四、觀緣；五、念佛。 T15n619, 325c11-12. The essentials of seated meditation comprise of five approaches:

may also be viewed as an adaptation to the Chinese propensity for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, which was held in esteem by practitioners such as Huiyuan and gradually flourished in the early fifth century.⁶⁹ Hence, from the framing of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* within a Five Doors structure in *ZCSMJ*, we can surmise that its lineage can be traced to meditation practices in northwest India and was also furthered by Kumārajīva's transmission.

Secondly, *ZCSMJ* is unique in its dual presentation of each of the methods of the Five Doors from a Śrāvakayāna perspective in fascicle one, and a Mahāyāna perspective in fascicle two. This allows a clarification of the differences in the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* for our purpose in this paper, as juxtaposed in Table 4 below. The underlined parts are highlighted areas of comparison:



one, *ānāpāna*; two, impurities; three, loving-kindness; four, contemplation of causation; five, recollection of the Buddha. However, as would be shown in chapter four of this thesis, there is no complete exposition of the five approaches in T15n619 after the opening line, whereas Kumārajīva's *ZCSMJ* provides the complete exposition, making this a significant text.

⁶⁹ Cf. 方立天(2002, 767) and 趙文(2017a, 121).

Table 4: Differences in the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in ZCSMJ

| | Śrāvakayāna <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> | | Mahāyāna <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> |
|------------------------------|---|--|--|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cure people equally troubled with multiple problems. • Seek help from the Buddha for grave transgressions committed. | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek full awakening of the Buddhas. |
| Contemplation Method | Elementary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe the <u>physical form</u> of the Buddha statue. • Single-mindedly observe the statue with the mental eye without letting the mind be distracted. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, fix his mind and concentrate on the <u>living bodies of the Buddhas</u> [staying in the air (lit., space)] in the <u>ten directions</u> and of the <u>three periods of time</u>. • The body of the Buddha has <u>thirty-two major and eighty minor bodily marks</u> which always <u>emit boundless pure rays of light into the blue color that has the characteristics of space</u>. • Call to mind the Buddha's manifold virtues, the <u>four types of fearlessness, five eyes, ten powers, and eighteen distinctive features</u>. • Makes <u>three vows</u>. |
| | Intermediate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect that it is by mental imagination that the image of <u>Śākyamuni Buddha</u> is seen, that the statue has not come here, nor have the practitioner gone there. • Contemplate the <u>thirty-two major marks and eighty minor marks</u> of the Buddha. • Contemplate the <u>life of the Buddha</u> – his birth, renunciation, the practice of austerities, subduing of Māra, enlightenment, turning the dharma wheel, nirvāṇa. | |
| | Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call to mind the meritorious <u>dharma-body</u> with the <u>ten epithets</u>. • Call to mind the divine virtues of two Buddhas, three, four, five, up to boundless Buddhas filling the [whole of] space. | |
| Contemplation Outcome | Elementary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The mind becomes fixed. • Sees light emanating from the Buddha statue. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>All the Buddhas</u> in the <u>ten directions</u> over the <u>three periods</u> appear in front of the mental eye. |
| | Intermediate | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees one, two Buddhas, up to the physical bodies of the Buddhas in the boundless worlds in the ten directions. • Listen to the words of their preaching, or raise questions for the Buddha to solve doubts. | |
| | Advanced | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees only <u>one Buddha</u>. That <u>one Buddha</u> becomes the <u>Buddhas in the ten directions</u>, and that the Buddhas in the ten directions become one Buddha. | |

The comparison above illuminates a few things about the differences between the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Firstly, the impetus for practice for Śrāvakayāna meditation bears a strong soteriological slant whereas the Mahāyāna meditation has an emulation and aspirational quality of being Buddhas. For the former, it echoes Kumārajīva's other meditation texts in their similar purpose of attenuating negative karma but is distinctive in stating that *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is able to cure people equally troubled with multiple problems as well.⁷⁰ This seems to position *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* favorably as a comprehensive remedy for the problems of lust, hatred, delusion, and discursive thoughts. Nevertheless, we can note that these soteriological and emulation purposes recall those in the early Buddhist texts, leaving us with the conviction that despite its later developments into a systematized mode of practice with its distinctive *samādhi* states, the primary motivations of calling the Buddha to mind remain largely similar.

The second observation is that there is again the familiar structure of the contemplation proceeding from the contemplation of the physical body to the life of the Buddha, and then to the dharma-body in the Śrāvakayāna practice, re-affirming this as the foundational meditation system for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. However, in the contemplation of the physical Buddha body, the Śrāvakayāna practice begins with the contemplation of the singular Śākyamuni Buddha statue before proceeding to its gradual multiplication at the advanced level, whereas the Mahāyāna practice does away with the contemplation of the life of Śākyamuni Buddha, and directly visualizes the multiple living bodies of Buddhas in the ten directions and three periods of time, extended within blue space. These differences show how the Mahāyāna doctrine has expanded the Śrāvakayāna meditation worldview of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* through its extended view of space, time, and conceptualization of Buddhas beyond the singular Śākyamuni figure. Nevertheless, the Mahāyāna's visualization of multiple Buddhas is able to manifest due to a foundation from the Śrāvakayāna practices, which on the one hand,

⁷⁰ 第五法門治等分行，及重罪人求索佛，如是人等當教一心念佛三昧。T15n614, 276a8. The fifth method is a practice to cure people equally (troubled with multiple problems). (This method is also intended for) people who have committed grave transgressions and who seek for (help from) the Buddha. (The master) should teach such people the single-minded concentration on calling the Buddha to mind. All English translations of ZCSMJ reference Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 33) unless otherwise stated.

fosters familiarity with visualizing the various marks of the Buddhas, and on the other, leads to a foundation of single-mindedness that is required for fixing of the mind on the living bodies of the Buddhas. In other words, the Mahāyāna practice is not a separate set of practices distinct from the Śrāvakayāna, but a building upon of the Śrāvakayāna foundation, where the acquisition of single-mindedness then becomes the point of transition to the Mahāyāna practice.⁷¹

In addition, the contemplation of the dharma-body, while both focusing on the virtues of the Buddhas, also differs. The Śrāvakayāna practice gives a detailed enumeration of the ten epithets not seen in his other meditation texts, while the Mahāyāna practice focuses on the four types of fearlessness, five eyes, ten powers, and eighteen distinctive features. These differences highlighted through the parallel juxtaposition show how the distinctiveness of Buddhas' virtues was also used to develop this meditation practice from the Śrāvakayāna to Mahāyāna. Overall, these developments of the inclusion of Mahāyāna doctrines in meditation practice led to the realization of new meditative states, where all the Buddhas can simultaneously appear in the ten directions and over the three periods, with the practitioner able to ask the Buddhas questions to resolve any doubts. These realizations from both the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditations of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* were neither apparent in the early Buddhist texts nor meditation texts of the southern meditation transmission.⁷² Therefore, this text underscores how Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is one of the plausible distinctive characteristics of the northern meditation tradition.

Another distinctive feature of the presentation of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in *ZCSMJ* is the inclusion of vows-making within the meditation practice, which occurs after the Mahāyāna contemplation of the dharma-body. Here, the practitioner arouses an aspiration to “attain a Buddha's body whose merits are as stately as this,” to “seek for

⁷¹ This is corroborated through an analysis of the structures of the Mahāyāna Five Doors practices in *ZCSMJ*, which shows that single-mindedness acquired from the Śrāvakayāna Five Doors practices is the common basis for the transition to Mahāyāna practices. Cf. 越建東(2018, 162).

⁷² This is evident through a comparison of the meditation practice in *ZCSMJ*, a text representative of the northern transmission, with Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, a text representative of the southern transmission. Cf. *Ibid.*, 141.

the full awakening of the Buddhas,” and to arouse great compassion “to save all sentient beings and make them attain the full awakening of the Buddhas.”⁷³ This highlights a distinctive feature of Mahāyāna *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, that *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may not be limited to a practice that primarily focuses on the self, but may also extend to the consideration and aspiration of others to likewise attain to the meritorious body of the Buddha that one is meditating on. In this aspect, it is worthwhile to note that the Mahāyāna *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is significantly named as the “bodhisattvas’ concentration on calling Buddhas to mind,” thus highlighting the altruistic bodhisattvas’ attitude that practitioners should adopt when undertaking this practice, with the inclusion of vows-making. Also notably from the order of exposition in the text, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* becomes framed as the primary foundation for Mahāyāna practice, from which the other Five Doors methods follow. As illustrated in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Difference in the sequence of Five Doors meditation

| Fascicle One (Śrāvakayāna meditation) | Fascicle Two (Mahāyāna meditation) |
|--|--|
| Method of meditation on: | |
| impurities ↓ friendliness ↓ dependent origination ↓ mindful inhalation and exhalation ↓ Buddha | Buddha ↓ impurities ↓ friendliness ↓ dependent origination ↓ mindful inhalation and exhalation |

⁷³ Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 64). 我何時當得佛身、佛功德，巍巍如是。 T15n614, 281b11-12; 一切眾生甚可憐愍，諸佛身功德巍巍如是，眾生云何更求餘業而不求佛。T15n614, 281b13-15; 以大悲心，我當拯濟一切眾生，令得佛道度生死岸，以佛種種功德法味悉令飽滿，一切佛法願悉得之。T15n614, 281b19-21.

In other words, the Mahāyāna practitioner who seeks the full awakening of the Buddhas is instructed foremost in the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* with vows-making, which becomes the foundational motivation for bodhisattva meditation in the choice of the subsequent Five Doors. As seen in *ZCSMJ*, “If the practitioner seeks the full awakening of the Buddhas, in meditation he should first fix his mind and concentrate on the living bodies of the Buddhas in the ten directions and of the three periods of time.”⁷⁴ Hence, while *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may be shared by both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation, it is especially valued and highlighted in the latter, as a premise for the Mahāyāna goal of the attainment of Buddhahood.

Further, *ZCSMJ* clarifies the fruits of this practice, where accomplished practitioners “attain the concentration in which Buddhas appear, attain great compassion for sentient beings, and enter the gate of the perfection of wisdom.”⁷⁵ While all three of these fruits from the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* are present in every of Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, the latter two are usually more subtly expressed in his other texts. It is thus a valuable feature that besides the manifestation of Buddhas, *ZCSMJ* concisely makes these other lesser spotlighted but nevertheless significant fruits of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice more apparent in its concluding verses.

3.2 The Essential Explanation of the Methods of Meditation

(T15n616, *Chan fa yaojie* 禪法要解)

While *CFYJ* holds the least number of mentions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* among Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, it is nevertheless interesting to note its unique positioning of this practice. In this meditation text, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is not elevated as an independent meditation method in its own right but is used to support the more traditional methods to aid in the deepening of meditation states, and also with the purpose of getting rid of obstructions. This text opens with the different types of meditation on impurities, seeming to place primacy on this method, known as one of the

⁷⁴ 若行者求佛道，入禪先當繫心專念十方三世諸佛生身。T15n614,281a22-23. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 62).

⁷⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 84. 是時得般舟三昧，於眾生中得大悲，入般若波羅蜜門。T15n614, 285b21-22.

Five Doors in traditional Indian meditation practices.⁷⁶ Following the introductory segments on the ways of contemplation that leads one to renounce the five sensual desires as preparation for the beginning practice of meditation, and of discarding the five kinds of obscuration, single-mindedness is attained and the practitioner arrives at the first *dhyāna*. The first mention of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* then appears:

After one has attained the first *dhyāna* already, one thinks about the original practice of spiritual path or other conditions, namely the *samādhi* of Buddha names' recitation, or the mindfulness of the body's impurity, or the contemplation of the loving-kindness mind, or others. Why is that? Utilizing the power of contemplation helps the cultivator to attain the meditative *samādhi* and again enter deeply. Then, the original contemplations will become many times more pure and clear.⁷⁷

Here we can see that the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is merely mentioned as a supportive practice to what seems to be the main goal of the deepening of *dhyāna* concentration. The text then invests a large portion of its content to the description and explanation of the marks and characteristics of the subsequent second to fourth *dhyāna* states. Practices of the four immeasurable minds, the four kinds of mindfulness, four states in the formless realms, and the supranormal powers are described to be easy to enter and attain with the fourth *dhyāna* as a basis.⁷⁸ Hence it seems that despite the

⁷⁶ These five objects or approaches to meditation delineate five kinds of meditation for settling the mind and ridding it of the five errors of desire, hate, ignorance, the self, and a wayward or confused mind. The Five Doors are: For those who have a propensity toward craving (貪欲), it is beneficial to focus the mind on the contemplation of impurity (不淨觀); For those who have a propensity toward anger (瞋恚), it is beneficial to focus the mind on the contemplation of loving kindness (慈悲觀); For those who have a propensity toward folly (愚癡), it is beneficial to focus the mind on the contemplation of causes and conditions (因緣觀); For those who have a propensity toward pride (慢行), it is beneficial to focus the mind on worldly discrimination (界分別觀); For those who have a propensity toward discursive thinking (尋思行), it is beneficial to focus the mind on mindful breathing (出入息觀).

⁷⁷ 既得初禪，念本所習修行道門，或有異緣，所謂念佛三昧，或念不淨、慈心觀等。所以者何？是行思力令得禪定轉復深入，本觀倍增清淨明了。 T15n616, 288c3-5. Cf. Thich(2011, 64). All English translations of *CFYJ* reference Thich(2011) unless otherwise stated.

⁷⁸ 行者得此第四禪，欲行四無量心隨意易得，欲修四念處修之則易，欲得四諦疾得不難，欲入四無色定易可得入，欲得六通求之亦易。 T15n616, 290a17-19. When the cultivator attains to this fourth *dhyāna*, if he wishes to cultivate the four immeasurable minds, he could attain them easily according to his mind. If he wishes to cultivate the four kinds of mindfulness, it will be easy for him to practice. If he wishes to attain the four noble truths quickly, it is not hard to attain. If he wishes to enter the four

consequent content that elaborates on the description and correct views to adopt for each of the above attainable states, the entire text positions the attainment of the four *dhyānas* as of paramount importance and foundation for further levels of meditation practice. *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* then is seen as one of the expedient and secondary means of practice towards the attainment of other meditative states. This is again corroborated in the text's second mention of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, seen as one of the contemplations to undertake for the arising of pleasure and joy, within the context of the practice of the four immeasurables, particularly that of the practice of immeasurable joy (own insertions in parenthesis, as contextualized from the preceding text):

One should think that all of this beneficial dharma comes from the Buddha's kindness. The Buddha attained the path naturally. He spoke and explained it for others. If one follows the Buddha's teaching and practices it, he would attain these benefits [freedom from desire and immeasurable meritorious virtues] in the same manner. At that time, the mind visualizes all the Buddhas of the ten directions, the Buddhas whose bodies have the golden color, beautiful, and adorned features, the ten powers, immeasurable meritorious virtues of the dharma-body, and others. Due to the recollection of the Buddha, pleasure, and joy arise in the mind.⁷⁹

This mention relates to our earlier discussion that one of the impetuses for *buddhānusmṛti* is the remembrance of the kindness and benevolence of the Buddha which the practitioner endeavors to repay in gratitude. Therefore, the practitioner visualizes the Buddhas in their awe-inspiring physical appearances and various virtues, which leads to the fulfillment of the arising of joy.

It is noteworthy that despite its brief mention, it is the Mahāyāna development of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice from Central Asia with the contemplation of multiple

formless *samādhi*, it is easy to attain and enter. If he wishes to attain six supranormal powers, it also is easy for him to seek for them. Cf. Thich (2011, 76).

⁷⁹ 復作是念：「如是法利皆由佛恩，佛自然得道與人演說，隨教修行得如是利益。」是時心念十方諸佛，身有金色相好莊嚴，及十力等無量功德法身，因是念佛心生歡喜。 T15n616, 291b29-c01. Cf. Thich(2011, 88) with slight modifications, changing Thich's use of "mindfulness of the Buddha" to "recollection of the Buddha."

Buddhas in the ten directions instead of the singular meditation subject of Śākyamuni Buddha from northwest India that is foregrounded for practice. We can therefore infer that the source for *CFYJ* might possibly be a text from Central Asia, where its meditation practices are conceivably being reflected. Also, while the text appears to be structured sequentially according to the Śrāvākayāna cultivation pathway found in the Pāli *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas* — the doctrines of five hindrances; remedy for five hindrances; four *dhyānas*; four formless *samādhi*; the four nobles truths; four immeasurable minds; eightfold paths; four steps to supranormal powers; and five supranormal powers, there were also mentions of bodhisattvas and the presence of innumerable Buddhas interspersed within the teachings. What this might suggest is that Kumārajīva was an advocate of both Śrāvākayāna and Mahāyāna meditation, with the former as a foundational basis for the latter. This is again reflected in the final segment of this text, where with the acquisition of the heavenly eye, the practitioner is able to enter into the state of *samādhi* akin to that realized from the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, in which he can see numerous Buddhas and lands:

After the cultivator has attained this heavenly eye, all of the mountains, trees, the circular ‘iron’ enclosure, *Sumeru*, and other countries could not obstruct [his heavenly eye]. With his unobstructed eye, he can see through the adorned Buddhas’ lands in immeasurable and incalculable eons kalpas in ten directions. At that time, the cultivator knows that all Buddhas are one Buddha. He also sees one Buddha as all Buddhas, because their dharma natures are not destroyed. As he has seen the Buddha’s appearance, he sees his own body appearance in the same way. Since his body’s appearance is pure, all dharma’s appearances are also the same.⁸⁰

Here we see that, unlike Kumārajīva’s other meditation texts which state the necessity of and elaborate on the specific steps to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in order to attain the meditative state where one is able to have a vision of the Buddhas, *CFYJ* is

⁸⁰ 行者得是天眼已，諸山樹木、鐵圍、須彌及諸國土，都無障蔽、以無礙眼，能見十方無量阿僧祇諸佛及莊嚴國土。爾時行者能知一切佛為一佛，又見一佛為一切佛，以法性不壞故。如見佛相，自見身相亦如是。自身相淨故，一切法相亦如是。如見佛清淨。弟子亦爾，無有二相。 T15n616, 297b24-b29. Cf. Thich(2011, 129).

unique in its relative “sideline” of this meditation method in favor of the practice to the attainment of the heavenly eye to attain to a similar meditative state. While this might on the outset appear to devalue the importance of the meditation method of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, I venture to propose an alternative viewpoint: It is precisely the fact that in the usual scheme of cultivation pathway that requires one to attain the heavenly eye in order to be able to see Buddhas, that the method of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* becomes foregrounded as an excellent expedient means through which the practitioner is able to, without the acquisition of a heavenly eye, attain to similar results of seeing the Buddhas.

3.3. The Discourse on the Essential Secrets of Meditation

(T15n613, *Chan mi yaofa jing* 禪祕要法經)

Moving on to another of Kumārajīva’s text, *CMYFJ* is unique in its presentation of four contexts of interlocutors who go to the Buddha with a problem in their cultivation practices that they are facing, seeking for advice. This presentation is unlike the other three meditation texts, which are devoid of the context of the teachings and presents the meditation methods in the form of instructional manuals. In *CMYFJ*, following the interlocutors’ questions, the Buddha then provides answers to their queries, followed by an elaborate guide to meditation methods that are perceived to be most suitable to their needs. The four main meditation methods that were put forth by the Buddha in response to the four interlocutors were the meditation on impurities, the meditation on the breath, meditation on white bones, and meditation on the four great elements. What also stands out strongly in this meditation text is the rather pervasive presence and elaboration of visions. Eric Greene terms these as confirmatory visions, which are not what the practitioner actively brings to mind or visualizes, but unpremeditated visions that naturally arise, and are used by a teacher skilled in interpreting these signs to ascertain the extent of progress or attainment in the practitioners’ meditation practices.⁸¹ Rather than the confirmatory visions of Buddhas, visualization of Buddhas as a method — *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, while not presented

⁸¹ Cf. Greene(2021a, 33).

as one of the main solutions to the interlocutors, is nevertheless present in four parts of the text.

Firstly, in the first fascicle and as part of the twelfth meditation on the contemplation of the four elements, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is presented as a method of inverse contemplation (*yi xiang* 易想) to counter the fright from a vision of *yakṣa*-demons threatening the practitioner with burning pitchforks. The practitioner is taught the inverse contemplation to contemplate an image of the Buddha, and imagine a sixteen-foot Buddha image within the tip of each flame, thenceforth which the vision of innumerable transformation Buddhas appears.⁸² This relates to our previous discussion in early Buddhist texts about *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* being a practice to allay fears by providing protection against threats. In this particular scenario, it becomes a method to counteract the negative effects of the previous contemplation exercise and generates a contrary mental state, where the fearful vision of fires and *rākṣasa* demons is dramatically transformed into that of lotuses, golden mountains, white-jade men, and Buddhas in the air. Hence from this example, we can see that *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* can be employed not just as a method to enter into meditative concentration, but that within meditative concentration itself, it can be a useful remedy to counteract fears from visions and thus enabling the practitioner's meditative state to proceed further.

The next mention of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in *CMYFJ* occurs in the middle fascicle, in the second contextual background of a bhikkhu who is unable to get visions from meditation. Deemed as contemplation number nineteen, *buddhānusmṛti* is offered

⁸² 見諸夜叉，在火山中，吸火負山，毛孔出風，周樟馳走，遍閻浮提。復驚夜叉，以逼行者。見此事時，心大驚怖，求易觀法。易觀法者，先觀佛像。於諸火光端，各作一丈六佛像想。此想成時，火漸漸歇，變成蓮華，眾多火山，如真金聚，內外映徹。諸夜叉鬼，似白玉人。唯有風大，迴旋宛轉，吹諸蓮華。無數化佛，住立空中，放大光明，如金剛山。 T15n613, 248c3-11. [The practitioner then] sees the various *yakṣa*-demons within the mountains of fire, inhaling the mountains of burning flames, spewing wind from their pores. They rush about frantically throughout Jambudvīpa. They further grab hold of burning pitchforks with which they threaten the practitioner. When he sees these things he becomes frightened, and [must] seek out a method of inverse contemplation. The method for the inverse contemplation is as follows. He first contemplates an image of the Buddha. [Then], within each tip of flame he imagines a sixteen foot Buddha-image. When this meditation is complete, the flames of the fire gradually diminish and transform into lotus flowers. The mountains of fire [become] like heaps of transparent gold. The *rākṣasa* demons [become] like white-jade men. There [remains] only the wind element, blowing gently back and forth against the lotus flowers. Innumerable transformation-Buddhas stand in the air like adamantine mountains shining brightly. Cf. Greene(2012, 386). All English translations of *CMYFJ* reference Greene(2012) unless otherwise stated.

as a method for the removal of obstructions or negative karma caused by deeds, retribution, and defilements, which is largely consistent in Kumārajīva's other meditation texts.⁸³ Of value to our present study is its detailed elaboration of the steps to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Table 6 below provides an outline of the specific steps indicated:



⁸³ 尊告禪難提及勅阿難：「汝等當教未來眾生罪業多者，為除罪故，教使念佛。以念佛故，除諸業障、報障、煩惱障。 T15n613,255a23-25. Note that the term “zui 罪” has been translated to “negative karma” in this thesis, a word choice opted over “sins,” wherein “negative karma” more correctly conveys its potential to be attenuated.

Table 6: Contemplation number nineteen in *CMYFJ* –*samādhi* of the contemplation of the Buddha(s)

| Category | Type | Excerpt from <i>CMYFJ</i> ⁸⁴ |
|--|-------------------------------|--|
| Forward contemplation of the Buddha's image | Statue or image of the Buddha | 1. When the mind is concentrated and fixed, first contemplate an image of the Buddha. |
| | | 2. Contemplate the ground all around, imagining a fifteen-foot by fifteen-foot square of earth, making it extremely clear, white, and pure. |
| | | 3. Imagine a lotus flower with a thousand petals, adorned with the seven precious substances. |
| | | 4. Further imagine a golden image of the sixteen-foot Buddha seated with legs crossed atop the lotus flower. |
| | | 5. Contemplate the protuberance and the eighty-four thousand hairs on it, making them all clear. |
| | | 6. Contemplate the face of the image, as round and full as the moon on the fifteenth day of the month. Further contemplate the forehead with the tuft of hair between the eyebrows, the image's nose, the mouth of the image, and the teeth. |
| | | 7. Contemplate the neck and the auspicious swastika on the chest of the image. Make all the marks very clear in the mind. Each mark radiates light of five colors. |
| | | 8. Contemplate the image's arm, hands, ten fingers, double-jointed wrists, the hair growing on the back of the hand, the red copper nails, and the seamless palms. |
| | | 9. Contemplate the body sitting squarely and stably, like a mountain of pure gold. |
| | | 10. Contemplate the legs, flat soles of the feet, with the [marks of] the lotus flower and the complete one-thousand spokes of the wheel on the bottom of the feet, the even toes, and nails. |
| | | Reverse contemplation of the Buddha's image |
| 12. Contemplate in reverse, starting with the feet and proceeding to the protuberance on the crown of the head. Making the mind clear, he sees only this single image. | | |
| Multiply the number of Buddhas contemplated | | 13. Further contemplate until two images are seen. Make the body of the Buddha images become beryl, radiating various kinds of light, the flames of their halos burning continuously like golden mountains immersed in flames, surrounded by innumerable transformation-Buddhas. |
| | | 14. Multiple the images until ten images are seen. Then, the entire continent of Jambudvīpa within the four oceans is filled with Buddha images. |
| Repentance for impure vision | - | 15. If a different vision such as various impurities within these lights is seen, this is retribution for past [negative karma]. Cultivate various repentance practices. Then, again steady his thoughts in a single place, and as before, contemplate the image. |
| Vision of seated Buddhas | Statue or image of | 16. See various Buddha images seated on lotus flowers filling the whole world within the four oceans, their august bodies fully endowed with thirty-two marks. |

⁸⁴ T15n613, 255a25-256c18. Cf. Greene(2012, 433-446). My modifications of words are bracketed: modified from "sins" to "negative karma;" from "supernatural" to "supranormal;" from "consecrates" to "anoints;" from "bases of mindfulness" to "foundations of mindfulness;" from "four bases of magic power" to "four bases of supranormal powers;" from "eightfold holy path" to "eightfold noble path," for consistency in this thesis.

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| | the Buddha | |
| Vision of walking and flying Buddhas performing [supranormal] feats | Life of the Buddha / Dharma- Body | 17. Repent further, to see that the seated images all stand up, then walking, carrying alms-bowls and holding staffs, surrounded by assemblies of gods and humans. |
| | | 18. Further there are Buddha images that fly through the air radiating golden light, performing the eighteen miraculous bodily transformations in the sky; they walk, stand, sit, and lie down [while in the air] just as they so desire. |
| Vision of reclining Buddhas | | 19. The images fold their saṃghāṭi [outer robes], and placing their heads on their right forearms lie down on their right sides. |
| | | 20. Beneath their right sides golden beds [made of] radiant golden sandalwood spontaneously appear, with lotus flowers for the bedding. Above there is a jeweled canopy from which various garlands hang. |
| | | 21. The Buddha radiates a great light filling the interior of the jeweled canopy, like masses of clouds. Within the innumerable jewel-like lights that appear in the sky are transformation-Buddhas that fill the sky. |
| Contemplation of emptiness of image (<i>Prajñā</i> reality of dharmas) | Dharma- Body | 22. Consider that these many images in arriving do not arrive from somewhere, and when going do not go anywhere. I falsely see them only through the imagination of my mind. |
| | | 23. When he considers in this way [the images] gradually disappear. When the images have vanished [the practitioner] sees only a single image sitting with legs crossed atop a lotus flower. |
| Contemplation of transformation- Buddhas | | 24. Contemplate again the image, with the naval emitting light. In each of these light beams, there are transformation-Buddhas that fill the sky and three-thousand great thousand-fold worlds. |
| | | 25. Sees the seated image before him as but an emanation of the Buddha, manifested by the august power, wisdom, and mastery of the World-honored One. (Therefore, to) contemplate the Buddha's true body. |
| Contemplate the Buddha's true body | | 26. He then sees the true body of the Buddha, marvelous like pure beryl within which lies adamantine. The thirty-two major and eighty minor marks appear. |
| Buddha [anoints] the practitioner | - | 27. Holding a pitcher of water in his hand he stands in the air. The Buddha pours it on the practitioner's head [from where] it fills the inside of his body. Within his body wherever the water touches, the eighty families of worms gradually shrivel up. |
| Buddha preaches the dharma | - | 28. (Upon the wish of the practitioner), the Buddha preaches the four [foundations] of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of [supranormal powers], the five roots, the five powers, the seven factors of awakening, and the eightfold [noble] path. |
| | | He further teaches the contemplations of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, and non-self. |

Interestingly, this part of the text provides various aspects of contemplation of the image that are not present in his other meditation texts.⁸⁵ For example, transformation-Buddhas are contemplated within the halo of the main Buddha image; there are various visualizations of the Buddha in his seated, walking, and reclining positions; and miraculous bodily transformations are performed by the Buddhas. While not stated explicitly in the meditation text, these are in actuality part of the descriptions of the dharma-body contemplation of the forty dharmas exclusive to Buddhas. As we see from Nāgārjuna's *SZL*:

As for the forty dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas, they are as follows: 1) Sovereign mastery of the ability to fly; 2) [The ability to manifest] countless transformations; 3) Boundless psychic powers of the sort possessed by aryas; ...⁸⁶

Elaborating on the manifestation of the sovereign mastery of the ability to fly, the *SZL* describes that the Buddhas are able to sit, stand, walk through, or lie down in space to depart entirely as they wish. Hence, the ease with which Buddhas can exercise flight through the four means of comportment becomes the content for meditation on the dharma-body in *CMYFJ*, where the practitioner, first recalling how the historical Buddha comports himself in these manners, extends his visualization to that of the various Buddhas.

⁸⁵ Aspects of image contemplation that are not present in his other meditation texts are namely: the prior contemplation of the ground and lotus seat before the visualization of the seated Buddha figure; the rich visual descriptions to each of the physical features; the contemplation of transformation-Buddhas within the halo of the main Buddha image; the various visualizations of the Buddha in his seated, walking, and reclining positions; miraculous bodily transformations performed by the Buddhas; the need to include repentance practices should visions not be present or appear impure; visualizing the emission of light from the naval; clarifying the distinction between true emanation of the Buddha and the true body of the Buddha; and the anointing from the Buddha which kills the worms – a sign of impurity, within the practitioner's body. However, investigation into this full list would necessitate a separate study.

⁸⁶ 四十不共法者：一者、飛行自在，二者、變化無量，三者、聖如意無邊。T26n1521, 71c19-20. Translation references Dharmamitra(2019, 709). For the full exposition of the forty dharmas in the treatise, cf. (Ibid., 709-845).

In addition, the meditation on the presence of various transformation bodies within the halo of the Buddha correlates with the description within the forty dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas, that the Buddhas are able to manifest countless transformations and universal radiance in a single mind-moment. Further, the eighteen miraculous bodily transformations of the Buddhas depicted in *CMYFJ*, where they emit water from the upper part of their bodies and fire from the lower part; manifest bodies so large that they fill the sky and then become so small as the size of mustard seeds; fly in the ten directions as they desire, are also paralleled in the forty dharmas as part of the various kinds of boundless psychic powers that they manifest.

In short, what emerges from this exposition, is a matured practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* that proceeds in various stages: First, the practitioner takes up the practice of recollection of the Buddha in reliance on the thirty-two marks and eighty secondary characteristics of the Buddha’s form body, following which the practitioner then relies on the dharma-body of the forty dharmas exclusive to Buddhas. With deepened practice, the practitioner should then take up the recollection of the Buddha in accordance with the true character of all dharmas to remain free from attachment. Unique to *CMYFJ*, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* also needs to be complemented with repentance rituals that are not just a form of preliminary purification as presented in Kumārajīva’s other meditation texts.⁸⁷ Here, repentance rituals are integrated as part of the meditation instructions following the appearance of certain visions that imply the presence of “karmic hindrances” which, if not treated through repentance, will obstruct the meditation from progressing further. From these elaborations of the steps to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, it is evident from the presence of boundless Buddha bodies, the contemplation of dharma-body, and *prajñā* reality of dharmas, that this practice follows the Mahāyāna meditation tradition from Central Asia. Interestingly, however, this section of the text concludes with the achievement of this practice that is not Mahāyāna in its inclination, that “because he has seen the Buddha and heard the marvelous dharma he will suddenly understand, and as surely as water follows its course in a short time he will attain the path of arhatship.”⁸⁸ What this may suggest is

⁸⁷ Cf. Greene(2021a), where he highlights the pervasive incorporation of repentance rituals in *CMYFJ*, with the view that repentance is the most fundamental practice that traditional meditation methods will assist.

⁸⁸ 教此法已，以見佛故，得聞妙法，心意開解，如水順流，不久亦成阿羅漢道。T15n613, 256b18-20.

that Mahāyāna meditation retains a close relationship with Śrāvakayāna meditation, hence the cultivation of the Mahāyāna should not be dissociated from the basis of the Śrāvakayāna.

However, despite the lengthy exposition of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice, the subsequent section states that this practice is deemed as unbeneficial for a practitioner with excessive lust, where the practitioner would be unable to attain the fruits of the holy path and is advised to instead employ the method of breath meditation.⁸⁹ Here it seems that *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as a method of removing negative karma becomes a preliminary method for advancement onto the path of fruition, and cannot be the only effective method of practice for practitioners of different temperaments.

The third and fourth occurrences of the mentions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as a premeditated practice, appear in the fourth frame-story in the last fascicle. In this context, the Buddha preaches to the disciple Agnidatta about the practices that would enable him to advance further from the stage of the *anāgamin* to an arhat. These are the preliminary practices of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, friendliness, and dependent origination, followed by the main method that is a meditation on the four elements. The two mentions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in this frame-story suggest that the direct contemplation of the dharma-body is appropriate for advanced practitioners such as *anāgamins*. In other words, the meditation on the Buddha's material body with his

Cf. Greene(2012, 443).

⁸⁹ 佛告阿難：貪婬多者，雖得如此觀佛三昧，於事無益，不能獲得賢聖道果。次當更教自觀己身，令如前法，還作骨人，使皎然大白，猶如雪山。復當繫念注意在臍中，或在腰中。隨息出入。一數二隨，或二數三隨，或三數四隨，或四數五隨，或五數六隨，或六數七隨，或七數八隨，或八數九隨，或九數十隨，終而復始。隨息往反至十，復捨數而止。 T15n613, 256c22-29. The Buddha said to Ānanda: One with excessive lust, however, will gain no benefit even if he obtains this *samādhi* of the contemplation of the Buddha. He will still be unable to attain any of the fruits of the holy path. [Accordingly] he must next be taught to contemplate his own body in the manner given previously and again create a skeleton, making it brilliantly white like a snow-covered mountain. He should then fix this thought and concentrate his mind on his navel, or between his hips, and follow the breath as it goes in and out, counting one breath and following two breaths. Or else counting two and following three. Or else counting three and following four. Or else counting four and following five. Or else counting five and following six. Or else counting six and following seven. Or else counting seven and following eight. Or else counting eight and following nine. Or else counting nine and following ten. Having finished, he should begin again, following the breath as it goes in and out until reaching ten. Then he should put aside counting and [practice] stopping [the mind]. Cf. Greene(2012, 447).

thirty-two major marks and eighty minor marks may be circumvented in the sequential training of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* afore-established. As seen in the third occurrence towards the beginning of the frame-story, as the immediate response that the Buddha provided to Agnidatta's imploration:

For one in whom there is an abundance of wind-element sickness, entering the trance of the wind element is likely to cause madness born of the wind element. [Instead, such a person] must be taught to contemplate the Buddha. As for how he should be instructed to contemplate the Buddha, he must be instructed to contemplate the Buddha's ten powers, four kinds of fearlessness, eighteen unique qualities, great compassion and great love, and three bases of mindfulness.⁹⁰

This excerpt shows that the contemplation of the dharma-body through meditating on the Buddha's qualities and virtues are directly invoked without prior visualizations of the Buddha's image. This leads to a vision of innumerable material bodies of the Buddhas flying through the air and performing miraculous displays, following which the practitioner is then taught to contemplate the non-materiality of these Buddha forms, as they are formed through the convergence of virtues. Similarly in the fourth occurrence, without beginning with the contemplation of the Buddha's physical body, the practitioner is taught to directly contemplate the emptiness of the dharma-body by realizing that these manifestations of the Buddhas were but constructs of a false imagination:

At this time [the practitioner] should contemplate the dharma-body of the Buddhas [as follows]: "The dharma-body of the Buddhas relies on the material body for its existence. The material body is like a golden vase. The dharma-body is like the maṇi jewel [within the vase]. [I] must carefully contemplate that within the material body there is [the dharma-body comprised of] the ten powers, four kinds of fearlessness, eighteen unique

⁹⁰ 若風病多者，入風大定時，因風大故，喜發狂病。當教觀佛。教觀佛者，教觀如來十力、四無所畏、十八不共法、大慈、大悲、三念處法。 T15n613, 264b11-14. Cf. Greene(2012, 501).

qualities, great compassion and great love, unobstructed liberation, and limitless spiritual knowledge. But a vision of such things cannot be had by the eyes or known by the mind. All things neither come nor go, do not abide and do not decay, and are equal to the ultimate limit of reality.⁹¹

Hence, different from its earlier presentations where the practitioner is usually first taught to visualize the physical form of the Buddha, these two occurrences show that this step may be circumvented for the direct contemplation of the dharma-body, likely suitable for more advanced practitioners, as is the *anāgamin* in this context. Nevertheless, what is similar is the subsequent process of the contemplation of the emptiness of dharmas, and the meeting of the Buddha to hear his teachings.

To sum, through the analysis of the mentions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in *CMYFJ*, I have shown that Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is a well-structured, sequential practice containing specific details of its visualization components and visions that would be encountered in practice. Contemplation of the physical form of the Buddha, while a common entry-point, might not be an emphasis for more accomplished practitioners, whose primary subject of contemplation is the dharma-body and its true nature of emptiness. Nested as part of a larger succession of meditation practices, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is here largely positioned as a pre-requisite meditation to allay fears or eliminate negative karma before the progression on to other practices. However, it is also mentioned as a means to liberation should its accomplished practice render the true emanation of the Buddha to be seen, where the practitioner gets to listen to the dharma preached by the Buddha. It thus seems that the practitioner's inclinations and extent of karmic obstructions need to be considered for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice to be effectively factored into the choices and sequences of meditation methods. In addition, while *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is reckoned to be a matured Mahāyāna transmission from Central Asia, it does not proclaim that these meditation practices constitute a

⁹¹ 爾時當觀諸佛法身。諸佛法身者，因色身有。色身者，譬如金瓶。法身者，如摩尼珠。應當諦觀色身之內，十力、四無所畏、十八不共法、大慈、大悲、無礙解脫、神智無量。絕妙境界，非眼所見，非心所念。一切諸法，無來無去，不住不壞，同如實際。 T15n613, 265b28-c4. Cf. Greene(2012, 512).

bodhisattva or Buddha path, but only the attainment of the four fruits.⁹² Finally, what remains to note is the interesting presence of anointing by the Buddha in the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, not mentioned in his other meditation texts, the source of which entails further investigation in another separate study.

3.4 The Outlining Way of Contemplation

(T15n617, *Siwei lüe yaofa* 思惟略要法)

In the shortest meditation text in Kumārajīva's oeuvre, *SWLYF* nevertheless devotes a significant proportion of its content to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* following brief accounts of the practices of the four immeasurable minds, impurities, and white bone. The presentations of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* follow a similar structure to that discussed in the earlier meditation texts, which is a clear sequence from the contemplation of the image, to the life of the Buddha, to the dharma-body, and then to the visualization of the Buddhas in the ten directions, albeit condensed to the essentials. With the accomplished practice of visualization of the Buddhas in the ten directions, the practitioner would be able to, in the state of *samādhi*, see the Buddhas teach the dharma, dispel one's doubts and achieve the patient acceptance based on awareness of the non-arising of phenomena (*wusheng ren* 無生忍). What sets this text apart from the rest, is its subsequent presentation of the meditation on a specific Buddha — Amitābha Buddha, as well as the meditation on Śākyamuni Buddha seated together with the *Prabhūta-ratna* Buddha (*Duobao fo* 多寶佛) in the seven-jeweled stūpa within the *Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka-samādhi* meditation (*fahua sanmei guan* 法華三昧觀). The meditation on the real nature of dharmas, a recurrent feature in Kumārajīva's texts but here especially singled out as a separate meditation method, is positioned between these two expositions. Such presence of the meditation on specific Buddhas may suggest that the corresponding sūtras from which these Buddhas feature as key protagonists, namely the *Saddharma Puṇḍarīka Sūtra* (commonly known as the *Lotus Sūtra*) and the sūtras on the Amitābha Buddha, may have gained popularity in their circulation and inspired needs for a systematized meditation practice based on religious practices premising on

⁹² In the dissemination section of this text, one of the names that were given to this scripture is "the meditation on the successive attainment of the four fruits" (「亦名次第四果想」) T15n613, 267c18.

these Buddhas and sūtras. What we can know for certain from this text, however, is that a structured meditation practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* centering on specific Buddhas aside from Śākyamuni Buddha, was already in circulation by the early fifth century in China.

Interestingly, the meditation on Amitābha Buddha follows not the standard sequence of beginning with an image of the Buddha but derives its envisioning from illuminating conception (*guang ming xiang* 光明想). The text elucidates two such procedures for practitioners of different faculties.

For those with duller faculties, the practitioner is taught to first establish the concentration on white bone, first using the mind's eye to remove the skin and flesh of an inch on the forehead to reveal the bones, which becomes the object that the mind will fix on without letting other thoughts arise. The practitioner then clearly visualizes his entire body to comprise only of pure white bones, before turning it into the color of beryl. From this beryl body, the practitioner emanates white light, which fills up the whole of Jambudvīpa. This white light re-enters the practitioner's body before its emanation again, increasing in purity with each visualization.⁹³ Amitābha Buddha is then visualized from within this white light:

Emanate this white light from the (practitioner's) body and contemplate Amitābha-Buddha from within this light. The body of the Amitābha-Buddha is wondrously big and bright; contemplate each of the specific marks of this western-facing seated Buddha, before contemplating his body generally, seated cross-legged with countenance lofty like mountains of purple gold.⁹⁴

⁹³ 鈍根者，先當教令心眼觀察額上一寸，除却皮肉但見赤骨。繫念在緣不令他念，心若餘緣攝之令還。得如是見者，當復教令變此赤骨辟方一寸令白如珂。既得如是見者，當復教令自變其身皆作白骨，無有皮肉色如珂雪。復得如是見，當更教令變此骨身使作琉璃，光色清淨視表徹裏，既得如是見者，當復教令從此琉璃身中放白光明，自近及遠遍滿閻浮，唯見光明不見諸物，還攝光明入於身中。既入之後，復放如初。凡此諸觀從易及難，其白亦應初少後多。 T15n617, 299c20-300a2.

⁹⁴ 當從身中放此白光，乃於光中觀無量壽佛。無量壽佛其身殊大光明亦妙，西向端坐相相諦取，然後總觀其身，結跏趺坐顏容巍巍如紫金山。Ibid., 300a2-5. All English translations of SWLYF are mine unless otherwise stated.

The above excerpt shows that there is little difference when it comes to the contemplation of physical marks of the Amitābha Buddha when compared to the contemplation of a non-specific Buddha as we have seen in Kumārajīva's other meditation texts, except for the former being western-facing. However, the preparatory stage for this contemplation stands out for its emphasis on the basis of pervasive light. The procedure for practitioners of sharper faculties skips the part on the white bones meditation, but emphasizes the direct visualization from light in a similar vein:

If practitioners are of sharp faculties, he may first conceive of bright, empty, and pure illumination, and from within this light contemplate the Buddha in order to envision it.⁹⁵

Thus, the meditation practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* centering on the Amitābha Buddha works from a unique basis of illuminating conception. In addition, the impetus for this practice is positioned from a different angle. Rather than the obtaining of *samādhi* where one can see Buddhas and hear them teach, the meditation on this particular Buddha is for practitioners who wish to attain birth in Sukhāvātī, the land of Amitābha Buddha.⁹⁶ Not mentioned in Kumārajīva's other meditation texts, the soteriological purpose of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* that encompasses the promise of better rebirths is made explicit here.

The other mention of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* relates calling to mind Śākyamuni Buddha as he appears within the context of *FHJ*:

For twenty-one days, single-mindedly and diligently practice as instructed. The practitioner who correctly recalls *The Lotus Sūtra* should call to mind Śākyamuni Buddha sharing a seat with *Prabhūta-ratna* Buddha in the seven-jeweled stūpa at Vulture Peak, with transformation Buddha-bodies in the ten directions pervading the lands of sentient beings. All the Buddhas each

⁹⁵ 若利根者，但當先作明想，晃然空淨，乃於明中觀佛，便可得見。 T15n617, 300a7-8.

⁹⁶ 行者若欲生於無量壽佛國者，當作如是觀無量壽佛也。 T15n617, 300a9-10. If a practitioner wishes to be born in the Land of Amitābha Buddha, he should contemplate Amitābha Buddha as such.

have a bodhisattva in the position of aiding for one life as an attendant, such as Śākyamuni Buddha having Maitreya as his attendant. All the various Buddhas perform displays of miraculous powers, with light pervasively shining on boundless lands, showing their tongue-characteristic to authenticate to the true nature of dharmas, with sounds filling the worlds of the ten directions.⁹⁷

Here, the imagery unique to *FHJ* is evoked in contemplation. The distinguishing feature of this contemplation is also the presence of bodhisattvas as aides, hitherto unmentioned in Kumārajīva's other meditation texts. Here we can see how content from various Mahāyāna sūtras are explicitly used to develop the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, extending its contemplation to a worldview of ten directions and three periods that includes various Buddhas as well as bodhisattvas.

To sum, *SWLYF* is a significant text in its broad overview of the key developments in the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. This text not only reflects the earlier practice in northwestern India, with the structure of the contemplation of the image, life of the Buddha, and dharma-body but also its later historical developments. These later developments are the emphasis on the complementary practice of the *prajñā* contemplation of reality, and the contemplation of specific Buddhas from Mahāyāna sūtras for the specific purposes of rebirths in their lands, or for the manifestation of bodhisattva realms from the Mahāyāna sūtras. Unlike Kumārajīva's other texts, *SWLYF* neither explicitly highlights the attainment of all four *dhyānas* nor the attainment of the four fruits. Rather, it seems to propose the first *dhyāna* as a sufficient basis of meditative concentration for the various meditation methods that are mentioned, and foregrounds instead the realization of the emptiness of phenomena.⁹⁸ A large proportion

⁹⁷ 三七日一心精進如說修行，正憶念《法華經》者，當念釋迦牟尼佛於耆闍崛山與多寶佛在七寶塔共坐，十方分身化佛遍滿所移眾生國土之中，一切諸佛各有一生補處菩薩一人為侍，如釋迦牟尼佛以彌勒為侍。一切諸佛現神通力，光明遍照無量國土，欲證實法出其舌相，音聲滿於十方世界。T15n617, 300b26-300c2.

⁹⁸ The various mentions of *dhyāna* in the text only pertain to the state of the first *dhyāna*. For example, see in the text's introduction: 凡求初禪先習諸觀，或行四無量、或觀不淨、或觀因緣、或念佛三昧、或安那般那，然後得入初禪則易。Ibid., 298a2-3. Those who seek for the first *dhyāna* should first practice the various contemplations, either the four immeasurables, the contemplation of impurities, the contemplation of dependent origination, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, or mindfulness of breathing, after

of the text is devoted to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, and the benefits of their practice are highly extolled even if this practice is not fully accomplished, leading one to surmise that this text is persuasive for the practitioner to follow the Mahāyāna bodhisattva path of practice.⁹⁹ Indeed, this is corroborated by the observation that even in its description of what seems to be a traditionally Śrāvakayāna meditation on impurities, practitioners are further encouraged to aspire towards the Mahāyāna, promising either of rebirth in the presence of various Buddhas, or in Tuṣita heaven to see Maitreya bodhisattva.¹⁰⁰

3.5 *Prajñā* Contemplation in Kumārajīva's Meditation Texts

Having analyzed the occurrences of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in each of Kumārajīva's meditation texts, it is now apt to examine the common underlying philosophy behind this practice: the inclusion of *prajñā* to contemplate on the reality of all elements as they really are — that is, empty in nature, where emptiness and nominal existence are synthesized as one. This section will evidence how this philosophy of *prajñā* contemplation is consistently manifest across every of his meditation texts.

To begin with, *ZCSMJ* highlights *prajñā* as the right understanding to meditation, and quotes from the Mahāyāna *Sūtra on the Perfection of Wisdom*, “correct view is [the

which the entry into the first *dhyāna* becomes easy; and 修習慈心，常念眾生令得佛樂，習之不息，便得離五欲、除五蓋、入初禪。得初禪相者喜樂遍身，諸善法中生歡喜樂，見有種種微妙之色，是名入佛道初門禪定福德因緣也。 Ibid., 298b10-b13. In the practice of loving-kindness, always be mindful that sentient beings will be able to obtain Buddha's joy. This incessant practice will lead to the renouncing of the five desires, the elimination of the five hindrances, to enter into the first *dhyāna*. The practitioner who obtains the first *dhyāna* experiences joy that pervades the entire body, delights in various wholesome dharmas, and sees various subtle and pleasant forms. This is known as the merits, causes and conditions for the first gateway of meditative concentration in the path of Buddhahood.

⁹⁹ For example, in the meditation on the dharma-body: 若不得定，六欲天中豪尊第一，飛行所至宮殿自隨。或生諸佛前，終不空也。 Ibid., 299b29-c1. If meditative concentration is not obtained, (one will be) a great lord foremost in the six heavens of the desire realm, flying to lofty palaces as one wishes. Or, he will be born in the presence of various Buddhas, eventually not futile.

¹⁰⁰ 若極厭惡其身，當進白骨觀，亦可入初禪。行者志求大乘者，命終隨意生諸佛前，不爾必至兜率天上得見彌勒。 Ibid., 297c17-18. If the practitioner abhors one's body to the extreme, one should advance to the contemplation of white bones, to enter into the first *dhyāna*. The practitioner who aspires to the Mahāyāna, will follow one's wishes at the end of one's life to be reborn in the presence of Buddhas, or definitely to Tuṣita heaven and get to see Maitreya.

understanding] that various elements do not arise or cease; that they are empty without entity; and that they have one characteristic, [namely] no characteristic.”¹⁰¹ In other words, the true character of dharmas has no inherent existence, and all elements are all of this single character. This is deemed as the view to adopt in contemplating all of the meditation subjects across the Five Doors in bodhisattva meditation.

Besides affirming the contemplation of the true characteristic of all dharmas as one of the two types of *samādhis*,¹⁰² a similar view that premises wisdom in meditation is echoed in *CFYJ*, to “rely on the ultimate truth, not on relative truth.”¹⁰³ We see a specific example of this use of *prajñā* applied to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* evidently in *CMYFJ*; where the practitioner is reminded to contemplate the sight of the Buddhas appearing in meditation as follows:

The Buddha has said that all dharmas neither come nor go, their nature being empty and quiescent. All Buddhas-tathāgatas are in truth the body of liberation, and the body of liberation is nothing other than true thusness. And within true thusness, there are no dharmas that can be seen or grasped.¹⁰⁴

Hence, the practitioner who contemplates with *prajñā* develops non-attachment to the form of the Buddhas, which cannot be sought for as they neither come nor go. One who contemplates the Buddha and thusness would find these to be singular in characteristic.

Finally in *SWLYF*, where the contemplation using *prajñā* is perhaps the plainest amongst his texts, with a specific section — one that is most extensively elaborated

¹⁰¹ 如《摩訶衍般若波羅蜜》中言：諸法不生不滅，空無所有，一相無相，是名正見。 T15n614, 283c11. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 75).

¹⁰² 定有二種：一者觀諸法實相、二者觀法利用。 T15n616, 290b15. There are two types of *samādhi*. First is the contemplation of the true characteristic of all dharmas. Second is the contemplation of beneficial function of dharmas. Cf. Thich(2011, 79) with slight modifications, using “true characteristic” instead of “true mark,” and “dharmas” instead of “phenomenon.”

¹⁰³ 復次行者依了義經不依非了義經。了義經者，若能依義，一切諸經皆是了義，義畢竟空不可說相故。 T15n616, 296b15-17. (The translation is mine.)

¹⁰⁴ 若見此(一丈六佛)時，慎莫作禮，但當安意諦觀諸法。當作是念：佛說諸法無來無去，一切性相皆亦空寂。諸佛如來是解脫身，解脫身者則是真如，真如法中無見無得。 T15n613, 248a16. Cf. Greene(2012, 382).

amid all the contemplations within this text, dedicated to the “contemplation of the reality of all dharmas.” Following the contemplation of the Buddhas in the ten directions and Amitābha Buddha, the opening line to this section captures the essence of contemplation that is to be applied to *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*:

Those who observe the true character of all dharmas should know that all dharmas are born from causes and conditions, and thus they are independent of a sovereign self. Because they are independent of a sovereign self, they have the ultimate character of emptiness, yet these are but nominally established names without an inherent nature.”¹⁰⁵

Hence, the clear message of using *prajñā* to contemplate on the true nature of things as being empty of inherent nature, including that of the meditative visions of Buddhas and their realms, is manifested consistently across Kumārajīva’s meditation texts. Being immersed in the sought-for meditative states of seeing Buddhas before oneself is a form of grasping and ultimately has to be relinquished in place of, provisionally speaking, *prajñā* insight of the reality of things as they are.

3.6 Summary of the *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* Practice

Bringing together analysis from the previous sections, an overall picture of the practice for Kumārajīva’s attributed transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may be obtained:

Available to both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practitioners, it is known as part of the Five Doors meditation system and may either be practiced singularly on its own or combined with other meditation methods. The *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice largely follows a well-structured, sequential practice of contemplation of the physical bodily characteristics of the Buddha through an image or statue, before reproducing the image

¹⁰⁵ 諸法實相觀者，當知諸法從因緣生，因緣生故不得自在，不自在故畢竟空相，但有假名無有實者。T15n617, 300a12. (The translation is mine.)

with the mental eye. This is followed by contemplating on the life of the Buddha, and then the dharma-body. However, there are differences in the specific content of these contemplations for Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practitioners.

For Śrāvakayānas, contemplation centers upon the singular figure of Śākyamuni Buddha, the eight junctures of his life, and his dharma-body constituting of the virtues of the ten epithets, ten powers, four fearlessnesses, eighteen distinguished characteristics. Successful practice results in being able to see one Buddha transform into many Buddhas, appearing before the self. For Mahāyāna practitioners, with the single-mindedness obtained from the foundation of the Śrāvakayāna contemplation, meditate upon boundless Buddha bodies in the ten directions and three periods, his past lives in bodhisattvas acts, and the forty dharmas exclusive to Buddhas. Accomplished practice results in being able to see boundless Buddhas, where the practitioner would be able to clarify doubts and be inspired with great compassion to make vows conducive to the bodhisattva practice, of attaining Buddhahood for self and others. This is the basic framework of Kumārajīva's transmission of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice.

However, the inclinations and tendencies of practitioners, as well as the motivations for the practice, need to be considered for the approach towards *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice. These factors would determine:

- (i) the positioning of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, either as a preliminary practice or the main practice;
- (ii) the sequencing of practice, whether one begins with an image contemplation or the contemplation of the dharma-body;
- (iii) how *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may be blended with other meditation methods (e.g. combining with the contemplation of white bones for the visualization of Amitābha Buddha; combining with breath meditation for people with excessive lust). This shows that in some instances, other traditionally Śrāvakayāna methods may be used as a basis for furthering the practice of Mahāyāna *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Vice versa, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may be used as a basis for furthering the practice for Śrāvakayāna methods and fruitions (e.g. to support the arising of pleasure for the practice of immeasurable joy; to deepen *dhyāna* concentrations). Therefore, the important principle is how these methods may be used to

complement each other such that they would be fit for purpose. On this note, it is perhaps also more of a difference in attitude and mindset that identifies a meditation method as either Śrāvakayāna or Mahāyāna in orientation, rather than a definitive classification based on techniques.

Despite the varied presentations and emphases of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in Kumārajīva's meditation texts due to the different needs of practitioners, the practices eventually all round off with a *prajñā* contemplation of emptiness — the reality of all dharmas which neither arises nor ceases.

Combined with rituals of repentance, the accomplished practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* would lead to the attenuation of afflictions and transgressions; attainment of concentration in which Buddhas appear; attainment of great compassion for sentient beings; and entrance into the gate of the perfection of wisdom. Further, the value of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice is highlighted, as even without the fruition of seeing Buddhas, this practice may still lead one to rebirths in the heavens or be born in the presence of Buddhas.

As a practice that can be traced to the *buddhānusmṛti* in early Buddhist texts of the *Nikāyas* and *Āgamas*, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* underwent a historical process of development over centuries, particularly from northwest India to Central Asia, before its transmission into China. These meditation traditions of northwest India and Central Asia are reflected in varying proportions through Kumārajīva's meditation texts, which show a blend of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practices. These practices are no mere theory; testimony of its actual practices can be seen in the architectural layout of the Gandhāran Takhi-i-Bāhi (*Ta ke te yi ba yi* 塔克特依巴依) monastery; meditation cave paintings and sculptures in the Qizil Caves (*Ke zi er shi ku* 克孜爾石窟) in Xinjiang along the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor; Afghanistan caves; Bingling Temple (*Bingling Si* 炳靈寺) in Hexi from the fourth century; and Tuyuq Buddhist Grottoes (*Tu yu gou shi ku* 吐峪溝石窟) from the fifth century, which match descriptions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*

contemplation (*nianfo sanmei guan* 念佛三昧觀) of the Buddha's image, life, dharma-body and Buddhas in the three periods and ten directions in Kumārajīva's meditation texts.¹⁰⁶

With this understanding of Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in place, the subsequent section will look into how his body of texts triangulates with related texts circulated in the fifth century to ascertain its relative significance.



¹⁰⁶ Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 17-37; 55-91) and 賈應逸(1995) for detailed analysis of the cave paintings and their correspondences with Kumārajīva's meditation texts.

CHAPTER FOUR – SIGNIFICANCE OF KUMĀRAJĪVA’S TRANSMISSION OF *BUDDHĀNUSMṚTI-SAMĀDHI* VIA TEXTUAL COMPARISONS

The following section presents an analysis of the Chinese canon for mentions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* (*nianfo sanmei* 念佛三昧) in its earliest precursor, the *BZSM*, other meditation and *samādhi* texts in the fifth century, as well as an overview of the development of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* after the fifth century to situate the relative significance of Kumārajīva’s transmission within these textual histories.

Considering that doctrinal terms might not have been standardized across different translations despite them having similar referents, the suggested two criteria for determining whether or not a practice is considered as the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* would be used. First, the practice should be judged according to its content, meaning that the preliminary object of meditation is associated with the figure of the Buddha or his virtues; secondly, the goal of the practice should also be considered, which is to see the Buddha(s) appear as a result of the concentration practice. In other words, other meditation practices not premised on the Buddha but which also lead to visions of the Buddhas would not be included as *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practices. Conversely, practices that fulfill the above two criteria but which might not use the doctrinal term of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* would nevertheless be considered. However, in some of these texts where *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* are not mentioned, the correlated practice of *buddhānusmṛti*, where present, would be analyzed to provide an understanding of how *buddhānusmṛti* is regarded despite not being explicitly mentioned as a form of deeper meditation practice.

4.1 *The Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*

(T13n418, *Banzhou sanmei jing* 般舟三昧經)

One of the earliest examples of visionary *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* can be seen in the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra* (*BZSM*), translated into Chinese in 179 CE by Lokaksema, which presents the *pratyutpanna-samādhi*, the “*samādhi* of the one who stands (*avasthita*) face-to-face with, or in the presence of

(*saṃmukha*), the present (*pratyutpanna*) Buddhas.”¹⁰⁷ This *samādhi* of direct encounter with the Buddhas of the present is also understood to be a developed form of the earlier practice of *buddhānusmṛti*. Similar to the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, practitioners can see all the Buddhas in the ten directions without having the divine eye, hear the sound of the *dharmadhātu* (*fa jie* 法界; dharma realm) without the divine ear, go to the border of the ten directions without divine feet, and always see the Buddhas before them. It also significantly contains one of the first recorded accounts of concentrating one’s mind on the Buddhas of the ten directions, which has been deemed to be the source for the bodhisattva meditation in Kumārajīva’s *ZCSMJ*.¹⁰⁸ Due to the close similarities and precursory relationship *BZSM* has with *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, it is useful to compare the presentation, method of practice, and fruition of the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* with the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as transmitted by Kumārajīva, to understand the possible significance of the latter’s texts to his Chinese audience. First, let us look at the presentation and method of practice, mainly delineated in the second chapter on “Practice” in *BZSM* as follows:

By what means does one bring about the meditation in which the Buddhas of the present all stand before one? In this way, Bhadrāpāla: if there are any monks or nuns, laymen or laywomen who keep the precepts in their entirety, they should settle down somewhere all alone and call to mind the presence of Amitābha Buddha in the western quarter; then, in accordance with what they have learned, they should reflect that a thousand million myriad Buddha fields away from here, in his land called Sukhāvātī, in the midst of a host of bodhisattvas, he is preaching the sūtras...They should not break the precepts and call him to mind singlemindedly, either for one day and one night or for

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Harrison(1978, 42). The *BZSM* is deemed to have been composed sometime in the first century when there was a heterogenous Mahāyāna movement, reflecting its synthesis of various tendencies such as Pure Land, *Prajñāpāramitā* and *Yogācāra*. Cf. (1998, 5). A ninth-century Tibetan translation and four Chinese translations, T13n416-419, exist for this text. Cf. Harrison(1978, 40-41) for their respective overviews in detail. All English translations of *BZSM* reference Harrison(1978) unless otherwise stated.

¹⁰⁸ 若有菩薩所念現在定意向十方佛，若有定意，一切得菩薩高行。 T13n418, 904b24-25. Any bodhisattvas whose thoughts are at present concentrated and directed toward the Buddhas of the ten quarters, will, if they possess mental concentration, achieve all the exalted practices of a bodhisattva. Cf. Harrison(1998, 19). Cf. 趙文(2017b) regarding the sources for *ZCSMJ*. On this note, I observe closer correspondences of the bodhisattva meditation in *ZCSMJ* with *BZSM* in line with this hypothesis, but this is perhaps potential for another separate paper.

seven days and seven nights. After seven days they will see Amitābha Buddha.¹⁰⁹

And further in the same chapter:

Because of this calling to mind of the Buddha, these bodhisattvas will succeed in being born in the realm of Amitābha Buddha. They should always call him to mind in this way: The Buddha's body is endowed with all the thirty-two marks, he radiates light, he is fine and upstanding beyond compare, in the midst of the assembly of monks he preaches the sūtras... Because of calling the Buddha to mind, one obtains the meditation of emptiness. Such is the calling to mind of the Buddha.¹¹⁰

Comparatively, consider the exposition of meditation on Amitābha Buddha in *SWLYF*, where the practitioner is instructed to fix the mental eye on the forehead and meditate on the white bones, before extending the white light outwards, in which Amitābha Buddha will appear thenceforth, for the practitioner to meditate on each and every one of his physical characteristics.¹¹¹

While we can parallel the single-minded contemplation of the physical attributes of the Buddha with his thirty-two marks and radiance in these texts with the first of the sequential framework of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhī*, as well as notice the similarity of the realization of emptiness as an object of meditation, there are evidently also a few areas of differences. First, the exposition in *BZSM* to recollect the Buddha and his realm follows after a considerable list of “dharmas of conduct” (*xing fa* 行法) which are posited as pre-requisites to achieving this concentration. In contrast, such accounts of practices prior to meditation are hardly mentioned or usually kept to a minimum exhortation of maintaining pure precepts in meditation texts.¹¹² In the latter, the process

¹⁰⁹ T13n418, 905a5-17. Cf. Harrison(1998, 21-22).

¹¹⁰ 佛言：「是菩薩用是念佛故，當得生阿彌陀佛國。常當念如是佛身有三十二相悉具足，光明徹照，端正無比。在比丘僧中說經，說經不壞敗色。...用念佛故：得空三昧，如是為念佛。」 T13n418, 905b13-19. Cf. Harrison(1998, 23).

¹¹¹ Cf. chapter 3.4 of this thesis.

¹¹² Interestingly, some of these practices, such as repentance and making offerings, began to play a more important role, becoming infused with the meditation process in the later appearances of meditation texts. See the exposition in the later part of this chapter.

of meditation is usually more focused and detailed in its technicalities, making them function as operational, practical meditation manuals. Second, specifics on the frame of time for practice, a particularly named Buddha and his land, are usually not seen in Kumārajīva's texts, with the exception of *SWLYF*.¹¹³ This makes the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* a more specific form of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.¹¹⁴ Thirdly, *BZSM* does not have explicit, instructional references to the contemplation on the life of the Buddha and the dharma-body. Despite the fact that mentions of the Buddha's teaching may be considered as an act of the Buddha's life, and that there is the recollection of the Buddha's meritorious virtues nested within the long lists of "dharmas of conduct" to practice, these are, however, subtle and brief mentions. The Buddha's eighteen distinguished characteristics and ten powers are also enumerated rather as the fruition of practice in a short chapter within the last fascicle.¹¹⁵ Apparently, this notion of contemplation on the living bodies of Buddhas and the dharma-body entered the lexicon of Buddha contemplation only later, and hence they are not especially foregrounded here in this earlier text.¹¹⁶

Also notably in Kumārajīva's texts are the fusion of traditional meditative techniques for inculcating single-mindedness with the contemplation of the Buddha, such as the meditation on white bones in the *SWLYF*. Therefore, what was deemed to be the essence for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice has been selected from *BZSM* and reorganized purposefully, sometimes with the innovative fusion with traditional meditative techniques for concentration, into formal meditation procedures. Through this process, the general framework for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* with the contemplation on the living bodies of Buddhas and the dharma-body was gradually developed.

¹¹³ Harrison posits though, that Amitābha Buddha is only "adduced as an example," that the practitioner may also recollect other Buddhas in other lands. Cf. Harrison(1998, 4). On this point I agree with Harrison, as the sūtra does not elaborate on the specific characteristics of Amitābha Buddha nor his land, and elsewhere in the sūtra is an exhortation to always recollect the Buddhas of the present. T13n418, 906b5-6. However, this is not particularly explicit and the differences in presentation should still be foregrounded and accounted for.

¹¹⁴ These two terms are noted to be used interchangeably in Kumārajīva's translation of the *DZDL*. See the exposition on these two terms in the later part of this thesis.

¹¹⁵ See T13n418, 904c22; 916b13 for the brief mentions on recollection of the Buddha's virtues, and chapter twelve on the eighteen special characteristics and ten powers of the Buddha. Ibid., 916b13-917b5.

¹¹⁶ Cf. 趙文(2017b, 24-25), who suggested these lexicon in the Sanskrit 2500-line *prajñāpāramitā* text and Kumārajīva's *Mohe bore boluomi jing* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經 (T8n223, *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*).

In addition, to corroborate, textual correspondences for the contemplation of the Buddhas in the ten directions show that *SWLYF* has built upon a general contemplation method of the Buddhas in the ten directions from *BZSM* to make it more detailed and specific for the meditation practitioner as well. For instance, nested within lists of “four things” that bodhisattva practitioners should practice to attain the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* in *BZSM*, is one that says:

...when the bodhisattvas who possess the numinous power of the Buddha and are established in the meditation look toward the east, they see many hundreds of Buddhas, many thousands of Buddhas, many myriads of Buddhas, many millions of Buddhas; in the same way, they see all the Buddhas of the ten quarters as well.¹¹⁷

Compare this with *SWLYF*, which states that the method for contemplating the Buddhas in the ten directions is to begin by carefully contemplating a seated teaching Buddha in the eastern direction, before increasing this contemplation to ten Buddhas, hundreds, thousands, and boundless Buddhas.¹¹⁸ The similarities in terms of the direction and the gradual increment in concentration of Buddhas between the two texts are apparent. After seeing these various Buddhas in conterminous light, *SWLYF* continues:

Turn the body southeast and repeat the above contemplation. Accomplishing this, the same goes for the southern, southwest, western, northwest, northern, northeast, zenith, and nadir directions. One will get to see various Buddhas in

¹¹⁷ 菩薩持佛威神於三昧中立，東向視見若干百佛、若干千佛、若干萬佛、若干億佛；如是十方等悉見諸佛。 T13n418, 906b24-26. Cf. Harrison(1998, 29).

¹¹⁸ 念十方諸佛者，坐觀東方廓然明淨，無諸山河石壁，唯見一佛結跏趺坐舉手說法。心眼觀察，光明相好，畫然了了。繫念在佛，不令他緣。心若餘緣，攝之令還。如是見者，更增十佛。既見之後，復增百千，乃至無有邊際。 T15n617, 299c4-9. The practitioner who [practices] recollection of the various Buddhas in the ten directions, sits and visualizes in the eastern direction, the quiet expanse [which is] bright and clear, without various mountains, rivers, and cliffs, only seeing one Buddha seated in the cross-legged position, hands raised in the teaching of the dharma. Observe with the mind's eye the rays of light, and the major and minor bodily marks, which are clearly known. Fix one's mind on the Buddha without other distractions. If the mind is distracted, return it to the original object of meditation. The practitioner who sees thus, further increases [this contemplation] to ten Buddhas. After seeing this, again increase [this contemplation], to hundreds, thousands, and up to boundless [Buddhas]. (The translation is mine.)

all these directions. Returning to the eastern direction, contemplate in overall, the Buddhas in the ten directions.¹¹⁹

Here is an example of the specifications that have been introduced in Kumārajīva's later transmissions, which are not seen in *BZSM*. By comparison, the tone in Kumārajīva's meditation texts is evidently instructional and specific in progressive steps, useful for practical application. In short, while the Mahāyāna meditation on Buddhas can be found in *BZSM*, it was significantly in Kumārajīva's later transmissions that we see a systematized mode of instructional practice for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* that has been formalized specifically for the method of meditation.¹²⁰

However, there are differences to the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the specific sense. The *pratyutpanna-samādhi* is seen as the advanced, accomplished fruition specific to a bodhisattva practitioner who has realized the non-arising of dharmas, and its practice involves an arguably more physically demanding, rigorous practice whereby the practitioner should neither sleep nor stop or sit for three months.¹²¹ As seen in *ZCSMJ*, the *pratyutpanna-samādhi* is attained only with the fruits of the bodhisattva path.¹²² On the other hand, *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, as we have seen, is shared by both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna, and is accessible to the practitioner with single-mindedness and not necessarily at an advanced state of meditative concentration. However, the fruition of both *samādhis* in common results in the seeing of Buddhas in the ten directions.

¹¹⁹ 迴身東南，復如上觀。既得成就，南方西南方，西方西北方，北方東北方，上下方都亦如是。既得方方皆見諸佛，如東方已，當復端坐總觀十方諸佛。 T15n617, 299c10-13. (The translation is mine.)

¹²⁰ Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 69-71), in which he illustrates how contents from the *BZSM* was transformed into a formalized meditation method in *SWLYF* in the later part of the fourth century in Central Asia. He states that there are guiding principles for meditation in *BZSM*, only that these are overly simplified and brief.

¹²¹ 菩薩復有四事疾得是三昧。...不得臥出三月，如指相彈頃；三者、經行不得休息、不得坐三月，除其飯食左右。 T13n418, 906a16-21. If bodhisattvas possess a further four things, they quickly master this meditation...for three months they should not go to sleep, even for the time it takes to snap the fingers. Third, continually walking, they should not stop or sit down for three months, except for around mealtimes. Cf. Harrison(1998, 27).

¹²² 得菩薩真行果，是名菩薩道果。是時得般舟三昧。 T15n614, 285b20-21. They attain the true fruits of the practice of bodhisattvas. They are called the fruits of the bodhisattva path. At that time, they attain the concentration in which Buddhas appear, attain great compassion for sentient beings, and enter the gate of the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*). Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 84).

While these different practices resulting in what appears to be the same results may seem like a paradox, Kumārajīva's response to Huiyuan's question about *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the *JDY* might provide some clarification. In *JDY*, Kumārajīva states that there are varying degrees to the realization of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Though these are all commonly recognized as *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*; these three types vary from practitioners in possession of the five supranormal powers to those who constantly practice, and those who might still have afflictions.¹²³ *Pratyutpanna-samādhi* may then be seen as a deeper degree of realization of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.

In view of this, we may establish that compared to the preceding *BZSM*, Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is significant in providing not only a more systematic meditation method but perhaps also a relatively more approachable form of practice and promise of a possibly more attainable realization in which one can see Buddhas, a meditative state that the Śrāvakayāna practitioner is also not excluded from.

In the subsequent sections, other meditation texts recorded in the *Taishō* that were translated in the fifth century would be analyzed. These texts are:

1. *Dharmatrāta-Dhyāna-Sūtra* (T15n618, *Da mo duo luo chan jing* 達摩多羅禪經; henceforth *DMCJ*), in two fascicles, with translation attributed to Buddhahadra;
2. *The Essentials of the Meditation Manual Consisting of Five Gates* (T15n619, *Wu men chan jing yao yong fa* 五門禪經要用法; henceforth *WMCF*), in one fascicle, with translation attributed to Dharmamitra; and

¹²³ 見佛三昧有三種：一者菩薩或得天眼天耳，或飛到十方佛所，見佛難問，斷諸疑網。二者雖無神通，常修念阿彌陀等現在諸佛，心住一處，即得見佛，請問所疑。三者學習念佛，或以離欲，或未離欲，或見佛像，或見生身，或見過去未來現在諸佛。是三種定，皆名念佛三昧，其實不同。T45n1856, 134b22-29. There are three types of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*: first, the Bodhisattva may have obtained the heavenly eyes and ears, or flown to the dwelling of Buddhas in the ten directions, to ask the Buddhas questions, and dispel all doubts. Second, although without supranormal powers, one always practices the recollection of Amitābha and various other Buddhas in the present. With the mind dwelling in one place, one can see the Buddhas, and ask questions about all doubts. Third, one who is learning to recollect the Buddhas, be it one who is free from desires, or not yet free from desires, may either see the Buddhas' image, or see their living bodies, or see the past, future, and present Buddhas. These three types of concentration are all called *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, though they are actually different. (The translation is mine.)

3. *The Secret Essentials of Curing Meditation Ailments* (T15n620, *Zhi chan bing mi yao fa* 治禪病祕要法; henceforth *ZCBYF*), in two fascicles, with translation attributed to Juqu jingsheng (沮渠京聲).

On the translators, it is worth noting that Buddhabhadra and Juqu jingsheng both pursued meditation under the same lineage and teachings of Buddhasena (*Fo tuo si na* 佛陀斯那 or *Fo da xian* 佛大先), regarded as one of the most outstanding Sarvāstivāda meditation masters during the period of the fourth century, when practitioners specially devoted to the specialized practice of meditation were flourishing in Jibin. It was under this lineage and his teachings that Buddhabhadra and Juqu jingsheng practiced and transmitted to China. This might account for the observation that their meditation texts and teachings have a relatively greater emphasis on the gradual meditation methods on the breath and impurities.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, as there was a blend of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna teachings in Jibin then, other texts that Buddhabhadra and Juqu jingsheng translated and transmitted were not limited to Śrāvakayāna doctrines and some contained aspects of Mahāyāna meditation, such as the visualizations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as the Mahāyāna practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the ten directions. For instance, Buddhabhadra also translated *The Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha* (T15n643, *Fo shuo guan fo sanmei hai jing* 佛說觀佛三昧海經; henceforth *GSMJ*) which would be discussed in the later segment in this chapter; Juqu jingsheng translated the *Meditation on Maitreya Bodhisattva's Birth in Tuṣita Heaven* (T14n452, *Fo shuo guan mi le pusa shang sheng dou shuai tian jing* 佛說觀彌勒菩薩上生兜率天經).

Dharmamitra, who also translated texts centering on the visualization of bodhisattvas, namely *The Sūtra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra* (T9n277, *Guan pu xian pusa xing fa jing* 觀普賢菩薩行法經) and the *Meditation on*

¹²⁴ The summary of the section on meditation masters in the *Biographies of Eminent Monks* states the key teachings that Buddhabhadra transmitted to China: 沙門智嚴躬履西域，請罽賓禪師佛馱跋陀更傳業東土。玄高、玄紹、等亦並親受儀則。出入盡於數隨，往返窮乎還淨。 T50n2059, 400b28-c2. The monk Zhiyan personally went to the western regions to invite the Jibin meditation master Buddhabhadra to transmit teachings on the eastern soil. Xuan Gao, Xuan Shao and others personally received instructions, on in and out breathing which is none other than counting, following, up until turning and purifying. (The translation is mine.)

Bodhisattva Space Treasury Sūtra (T13n409, *Guan xu kong zang pu sa jing* 觀虛空藏菩薩經), had textual content which consistently focuses more on Mahāyāna visualizations of Buddhas in the ten directions, as evident in *WMCF*. Hence, the translators' different lineages are to some extent reflected through their associated texts.

4.2 *Dharmatrāta-Dhyāna-Sūtra*

(T15n618, *Da mo duo luo chan jing* 達摩多羅禪經)

Translated from Sanskrit into Chinese in around 411 CE, *DMCJ* is a detailed account of the meditational methods of Buddhasena and Dharmatrāta. Written largely in verses, the subject and style of this text reflect the characteristic tradition of the Sarvāstivāda Dārṣṭāntika masters. The opening of the text shows this clear lineage: from Mahākāśyapa, Ānanda, Śāṅkavāsī, Upagupta, Vasumitra, Śaṅgharakṣa, Dharmatara, Puṇyamitra, Puṇyara, and Buddhasena.¹²⁵ It was from Buddhasena that Buddhahadra received this textual transmission, which could be considered representative of the traditional Sarvāstivādin meditation techniques.

In *DMCJ*, the emphasis is clearly the meditation methods of inhalation and exhalation (*ānāpāna*) and on impurities (*aśubhā*); the exposition of these account for twelve out of the seventeen chapters in two fascicles. The text subsequently covers sequentially in each chapter, the meditations on *dhātu-prabheda*, the four immeasurables, *skandhas* (*yin* 陰), entrances (*ru* 入), and the twelve links of dependent origination. Compared with Kumārajīva's meditation texts, the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as one of the main practices is conspicuously absent.

A distinctive feature of this text is its progressive description of meditation practice in four stages: (i) retrogression (*tui fen* 退分); (ii) abiding (*zhu fen* 住分); (iii)

¹²⁵ 佛滅度後，尊者大迦葉、尊者阿難，尊者末田地、尊者舍那婆斯、尊者優波崛、尊者婆須蜜、尊者僧伽羅叉、尊者達摩多羅，乃至尊者不若蜜多羅。諸持法者，以此慧燈，次第傳授。我今如其所聞，而說是義。 T15n618, 301c06-10. After the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, the sustainers of the doctrine successively transmit this wisdom: From Mahākāśyapa to Venerable Ānanda, to Venerable Madhyāntika, to Venerable Śāṅkavāsa, to Venerable Upagupta, to Venerable Puṇyamitra. I now expound on it in accordance with what has been heard. Cf. Chan(2013, 171), with slight modification, replacing "dharma-dharas" with "sustainers of the doctrine." All English translations of *DMCJ* reference Chan(2013) unless otherwise stated.

transcending (*sheng jin fen* 升進分) and (iv) penetration (*jue ding fen* 決定分). Each stage is further divided into two sections of the preparatory path (*fang bian dao* 方便道), and the path of distinctive progress (*sheng jin dao* 勝進道).¹²⁶ Table 7 illustrates this content, and highlights the sections in which *buddhānusmṛti* is mentioned:

Table 7: Content of DMCJ

| S/N | Stage of Path | Section | Meditation Method | Form |
|-----|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Preparatory | Retrogression | <i>Ānāpānasmṛti</i> | Verse |
| 2 | Distinctive Progress | Retrogression | | |
| 3 | Preparatory | Staying | | |
| 4 | Distinctive Progress | Staying | | |
| 5 | Preparatory | Higher Advanced | | |
| 6 | Distinctive Progress | Higher Advanced | | |
| 7 | Preparatory | Penetration | | |
| 8 | Distinctive Progress | Penetration | | |
| 9 | Preparatory | Retrogression | <i>Aśubhā</i> | |
| 10 | Preparatory | Staying | | |
| 11 | Preparatory | Higher Advanced | | |
| 12 | Preparatory | Penetration | | |
| 13 | - | - | <i>Dhātu-prabheda</i> | Prose |
| 14 | - | - | Four immeasurables | |
| 15 | - | - | <i>Skandhas</i> | |
| 16 | - | - | Entrances | |
| 17 | - | - | Twelve links of dependent origination | |

The table thus clearly shows a clear sequence of progressive training in a frame different from Kumārajīva’s meditation text of a progression via the three pathways of

¹²⁶ In the “preparatory stage,” application practices at the phenomena level are emphasized, whereas in the “distinctive progress stage,” practices that lead to accomplishment in analytical meditation are emphasized.

the Śrāvakayāna arhat, the *pratyekabuddha*, and the Mahāyāna bodhisattva; the three classes of introductory, intermediate, and advanced practitioners, and the five different affliction tendencies. As *ZCSMJ* states:

(the master) should explain the method of practicing the path according to the disease (of the practitioner). If (the master) has not attained such [supranormal] abilities, he should observe the marks of the practitioner. Alternatively, (the master) asks (him) as follows: ‘Which of the three poisons predominates in you? Lust, anger, or ignorance?’¹²⁷

Here, it is clear that the meditation method may differ based on the dominant habitual afflictions that the practitioner is afflicted with. The various afflictions are then remedied by the respective five corresponding methods as detailed in the previous chapter. In this regard, Kumārajīva’s texts appear to contain instructions that emphasize more on instructions that flexibly respond to the inclinations of the practitioner, whereas *DMCJ* seems to posit a singular, linear path of gradual practice that fits all regardless of proclivities. *DMCJ* states:

Practitioners having the merits of practicing first the *ānāpānasmṛti* and the meditations on impurity and then the meditations on realms (*dhātu*) will stay calm and joyful and surely attain the ultimate goal of spiritual practice.¹²⁸

This evidently positions the methods of mindfulness of inhalation and exhalation, the meditation on impurity, and meditation on realms as the core of meditation practice, which should be administered in sequence for attainment. The use of the former two meditation methods are also known as the “gateways of immortality” (*er gan lu men* 二甘露門), primarily for the achieving of tranquility (*śamatha*) with the contemplation of specific characteristics (*zi xiang guan* 自相觀). This is henceforth supplemented with

¹²⁷ Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 7). The word “supernatural” is modified to “supranormal” for consistency in this thesis.

¹²⁸ 有因先修習，安般不淨念；然後觀諸界，安樂速究竟。自以方便度，此苦難成就。 T15n618, 317c11-13. Cf. Chan(2013, 405).

the contemplation of common characteristics (*zong xiang guan* 總相觀) of the *dhātus*.¹²⁹ This constitutes the traditional Sarvāstivāda meditation method.

However, this difference in the presentations of meditation methods may be seen as reflections of the different historical development of the understanding of meditation practices. The traditional Sarvāstivāda meditation method was later advanced by Sarvāstivāda *Dārṣṭāntikas* in the fourth century, who acknowledged the need to counteract the different affliction tendencies of practitioners. Echoing the Five Doors of meditations on impurities, friendliness, dependent origination, *dhātu-prabheda* and mindfulness of breathing expounded in the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* (T30n1579, *Yuqie shidi lun* 瑜伽師地論) and the *Sūtra of the Path of Stages of Cultivation* (T15n606, *Xiuxing dao di jing* 修行道地經), the traditional scheme in *DMCJ* was expanded to include the meditations on *skandhas*, entrances, and dependent origination. This later addition is evidenced by the different stylistic forms within *DMCJ*, where chapters fourteen to seventeen are rendered in prose instead of its earlier chapters in verses.¹³⁰ In short, the difference in presentations in *DMCJ* and Kumārajīva's texts may be accounted for as reflecting different historical developments in meditation practice in northwest India and Central Asia. Kumārajīva's transmission of the Five Doors, evidently a later development of meditation practice, not only responds to the different inclinations and needs of practitioners but also replaces the earlier item of *dhātu-prabheda* with *buddhānusmṛti*. This replacement, while rooted in the gradual development and solidification of religious practices surrounding the figure of the Buddha from the earlier centuries (see chapter two), might not have been that dissociated from earlier meditation methods. Scholars have noted the structural similarity of catching an image and contemplating it in *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* with the Indian meditative techniques of the *kaśiṇas* and impurities.¹³¹ In these techniques, one first observes concrete external objects, captures the visual image in the mind, before leaving the object to meditate on its mental image in gradual spatial extension.

¹²⁹ The specific characteristics refer to the contemplation on form and the four elements, while the contemplation on the common characteristics refer to the contemplation of impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, emptiness, and non-self.

¹³⁰ Cf. 釋印順(1968, 611-621).

¹³¹ *Kaśiṇas* refer to a method of meditation in which one meditates that the entire space is filled with the elements of blue, yellow, red, white, earth, water, fire, wind, ether, and consciousness. Cf. Buswell and Lopez(2013, 425).

This is also known as *adhimokṣa-manasikāra* (*shengjie zuoyi* 勝解作意) or imaginative visualization (*jiaxiang guan* 假想觀). Hence, the practice of visual *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may have been a natural continuity and development of Indian meditative methods.¹³² Therefore, from this comparison with a relatively traditional meditation treatise, we can see Kumārajīva’s meditation texts as reflective of the more developed and innovated practices in the historical context.

Given this background, there are nevertheless three areas in *DMCJ* which merit attention on understanding how *buddhānusmṛti* was received as a practice. The first inference of *buddhānusmṛti* appears as part of the three recollections in chapter six:

...the various signs of counteraction will serve to enhance the arising of positive effects in other stages. Because one had already practiced during the initial stage of the abode of mindfulness, all the three recollections, the warm-up; the summits, the receptivities; and the worldly supreme dharmas.¹³³

The three recollections here refer to the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*), dharma, and *saṅgha*, and is viewed as one of the practices of mindfulness at the beginning stage of practice. It is worthwhile to note that *buddhānusmṛti* is affirmed at this higher advanced section of distinctive progress of the path, as a necessary and fundamental pre-requisite that supports the cultivation of *samādhi*, which will help with the subsequent arising of positive effects — referring to the opening of the practitioner’s eyes of wisdom, at this higher advancement stage.¹³⁴

The second mention occurs as a fruition of practice, in chapter eight:

He will be able to perceive the Buddha’s thirty-two marks and eighty secondary marks which are of immeasurable positive effects and form the

¹³² Cf. Yamabe(1999, 10-14) and 釋印順(1993, 271).

¹³³ 種種對治相，他地功德起。謂於初念處，三念兼已修；煖來及頂忍，世間第一法。T15n618, 308b4-6. Cf. Chan(2013, 273).

¹³⁴ The definition of “positive effects”(功德) may be understood from an earlier verse in the same chapter: 修行三摩提，巧便隨順念；智者開慧眼，說名為功德。T15n618, 308a13-14. The practitioner should also be able to practice *samādhi* skillfully. By skillfully applying the methods in the preparatory path and determining to follow the teaching, the practitioner’s eyes of wisdom will be opened. Cf. Chan(2013, 269).

unique way towards nirvāṇa. He then remains pure and clean, staying away from distress. He will also see the noble ones and the bottomless sea of their positive effects. All the wonderful sights of the various bodies or manifestations and realms in which the Buddhas and bodhisattvas reveal themselves can be witnessed vividly by him with joy in his heart. This is the sign of the full achievement of the dharmas of summits.¹³⁵

Here at the penetration stage of distinctive progress, with the accomplishment of the stage of heat, the Buddhas manifest themselves in their various marks and virtues to the practitioner, and this is seen as an indication of the accomplishment of the stage of summit. Interestingly, despite practicing the method of mindfulness of breathing rather than *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, the vision of Buddhas and their realms will appear naturally at the stage of summit. This was apparently a discovery from practice by the meditation masters in the third and fourth centuries, which was new to the textual traditions of the Śrāvakayānas.¹³⁶ Evidently, while *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* was not highlighted as deliberate practice, it was at least considered as an indispensable experience on the progress of meditation practice. It is also apparent that the sight of the Buddhas alleviates afflictions from the practitioners since its effect is that the practitioner can thus stay away from distress.

The third indirect mention appears in the later additions, under the section on dependent origination. In this instance, *DMCJ* references the story of Śākyamuni Buddha reproaching Ānanda for thinking that the twelve links of dependent origination are easy to understand, telling Ānanda that he should “follow him in meditating on the Buddha-realm.”¹³⁷ Whereupon through his supranormal powers, the Buddha manifested the boundless and wondrous Buddha realms, shown as far exceeding the realms realized by the śrāvakas, the *pratyekabuddhas*, and bodhisattvas. What is significant here to our understanding is the affirmation of the existence of multiple Buddhas in a largely Śrāvakayāna meditation text, and the possible access to these rarefied realms, albeit in different degrees of realization, through the act of meditation

¹³⁵ Cf. Chan(2013, 341). 見佛身相好，無量諸功德，第一寂滅法，清淨離煩惱。聖眾功德海，甚深無崖底，種種微妙相，現身及境界。見已心歡喜，頂法具足相。 T15n618, 313c20-25.

¹³⁶ Cf. 釋印順(1968, 632).

¹³⁷ 汝當隨我觀佛境界。 T15n618, 324a21. Cf. Chan(2013, 489).

and cultivation practice. Thus, the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practitioners, while striving for different ends to liberation, share similar meditation experiences of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, and this has become an important part of cultivation and meditation practice during that period. It cannot be too far away from a conjecture to state that such realized experiences were also formative to the eventual foregrounding and systematizing of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as a formalized meditation practice.

To sum the various findings from the above analysis: *Buddhānusmṛti* is seen as a fundamental meditation preliminary as part of the threefold scheme, necessary in the cultivation of a state of *samādhi* for the subsequent arising of the wisdom eye. The fruition of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is seen to be a natural occurrence that attests to the attainment of the fruit of summit and the realization of profound dharmas, such as that of dependent origination, even by Śrāvakayāna practitioners. Such newly realized meditative states led to the development of the traditional Sarvāstivāda meditation method and possibly also the eventual formalization of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as a systematized practice towards the conscious seeking of this meditative realization. Therefore, while the doctrinal item of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is not explicitly seen in *DMCJ*, these are the various areas that hint at its unformalized practice and its later development into a systematized form of practice, which Kumārajīva's meditation texts significantly serve as valuable records. In other words, Kumārajīva's meditation texts are significant in being reflections of these developments and innovation of the Sarvāstivāda meditation practices, not only containing revision of the older scheme of Five Doors to replace *dhātu-prabheda* with *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* for new meditative realizations but also in response to the different tendencies of practitioners.

4.3 The Essentials of the Meditation Manual Consisting of Five Gates

(T15n619, *Wu men chan jing yao yong fa* 五門禪經要用法)

The beginning of this text states that it is written by the eminent Indian meditation master Buddhāmītra (*Fo tuo mi duo* 佛陀蜜多), with translation ascribed to the Jibin meditation master Dharmāmītra in the Liu-Song dynasty. As Dharmāmītra arrived in China in 424 CE, it may be established that the appearance of *WMCF* in China is

subsequent to Kumārajīva’s meditation texts. Also, with the knowledge that Buddhāmītra was likely to be active around the third to fourth centuries, this text may reflect some of the meditation practices during that period.¹³⁸ However, the rather complex structure of the content of *WMCF* reveals that it is highly likely to be a pastiche of meditation instructions from various sources.¹³⁹

The structure of *WMCF* is shown in Table 8. Yamabe’s and Yin Shun’s hypothesis of the original *WMCF* are indicated, along with the results from my comparisons with Kumārajīva’s meditation texts. Again, mentions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* are highlighted in the relevant segments.

Table 8: Content of *WMCF*

| S/N | Content | Reconstruct | Comparisons |
|-----|---|-------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 | Overview of Five Doors | # | |
| 2 | <i>Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> | # | |
| 3 | Meditation on impurities | # | |
| 4 | Meditation on white bones | | |
| 5 | <i>Samādhi</i> of visualization of the Buddha | | Similar to |
| 6 | Visualization of Buddhas in the ten directions | | <i>SWLYF</i> |
| 7 | Preliminary method of sitting meditation: Meditation on impurities | | Few correspondences |
| 8 | Meditation on four elements | | with <i>CMYF</i> ¹⁴⁰ |

¹³⁸ Buddhāmītra is said to have been the teacher of the Indian Buddhist philosopher Vasubandhu (*Shi qin* 世親), who was active from the fourth to fifth century. Cf. Buswell and Lopez(2013, 153).

¹³⁹ This complex structure is noted in a few areas. For instance, what seems to be an introductory mention of the five doors of meditation appears in two parts of the text and in different sequences; the introduction to the meditation on impurities also appears in at least two distinct sections; further, the part on visualizations of the Buddha is interrupted with the meditation on impurities and the four elements with seemingly illogical flow. Cf. Yamabe(1999, 87-89) for a detailed discussion on the “structural disorder” of *WMCF*.

¹⁴⁰ In the comparisons with Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, while Yamabe argues that these parts of *WMCF* were summarized from *CMYF* due to the sharing of key terms and with the topics from the stage of heat to the elements being presented in similar sequence, I seek to disagree with his hypothesis, as a close examination between these two texts show that the manner of descriptions differ to a fair extent. The sequence from the meditation on impurities leading to the stage of heat and the meditation on the four elements might have been a rather common Sarvāstivāda meditation sequence, hence the observation that these texts share similar key terms and sequence is not necessarily conclusive of a summarized derivation. For Yamabe’s comparison of correspondences, cf. Yamabe(2001, 1050).

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|----------------------------|
| 9 | Visualization of the Buddhas: 30 aspects | # | * | |
| 10 | Meditation on friendliness: 16 aspects | # | | |
| 11 | Continued meditation on friendliness: 20 aspects | # | * | |
| 12 | Four immeasurables | | | Similar to <i>SWLYF</i> |
| 13 | Five gates for the attainment of first <i>jhana</i> | | | |
| 14 | Meditation on impurities | | | |
| 15 | Brief description of meditation stages | | | |
| Proposed reconstructs of original text: # =Yamabe; * =Yin Shun | | | | |

While Yin Shun opines that Buddhamitra's original text consisted only of the portions on the thirty aspects of *buddhānusmṛti* and twenty aspects of friendliness, Yamabe has a different view.¹⁴¹ From his detailed comparisons of this text with Kumārajīva's *SWLYF* and *CMYF*, in addition to a Dunhuang manuscript and a Mongolian manual, Yamabe posits that the original *WMCF* text only consisted of the segments on meditation on impurities, *buddhānusmṛti*, and friendliness, which was circulating as a tripartite meditation manual before the influence and insertions from other texts.¹⁴² While there is at present no definite way to ascertain either hypothesis, what can be certain is that there are definitely close relationships between *WMCF* and Kumārajīva's meditation texts, especially *SWLYF* due to their strikingly similar segments, to the extent of word-for-word reproduction. These repetitions across different sources, notably that of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, are revealing of the mainstream meditative traditions in Central Asia in the third to fourth centuries. Particularly, archaeological findings in Central Asia, corroborated with frequent indications for the practitioner to be led to a Buddha statue from these texts, suggest that the popularization of figurative representations of the Buddha, such as Buddha sculptures in meditation caves and stūpas, supported the cultivation practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.

Additionally, while *WMCF* appears to present the meditation on the Five Doors as indicated in its title as well as mentions in the opening and closing, scrutiny into the text shows that the meditations on dependent origination and mindfulness of breathing were

¹⁴¹ Cf. 釋印順(1993, 248).

¹⁴² Cf. Yamabe(2001).

not at all elaborated. In terms of emphasis, this text has considerable segments dedicated to *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* and the meditation on friendliness, and some mention of the contemplation on impurities and white bones. In other words, the title is misleading as no complete five items can be gleaned from the available material. Comparatively, Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, especially *ZCSMJ*, present a more complete version of the Five Doors (refer to Table 2). Despite its incompleteness perhaps in the process of assembling the *WMCF*, this might nevertheless still be indicative of the regard for the revised Five Doors with *buddhānusmṛti* instead of *dhātu-prabheda*, as a system of meditation practice.

For the following analysis of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in *WMCF*, only the segments which do not overlap with *SWLYF* (i.e. items 1,2, and 9 in Table 8) would be highlighted to provide additional insights into this practice. Close examination and comparison with Kumārajīva’s meditation texts show that aside from the overlapping paragraphs, *WMCF* contains rather different specifics to the accounts of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice. The differences will be discussed in the following four areas of (i) Confirmatory descriptions of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* realm, (ii) the locus for concentration, (iii) indication of “-yanas”, and (iv) stages of contemplating the Buddha.

To begin with, *WMCF* has different descriptions of what constitutes the attainment of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* realm. There are two descriptions provided in *WMCF*. The first description comes after the practice of single-mindedly recalling the Buddha’s image with its characteristics clearly in the mind without distraction. An image of the Buddha appears on the practitioner’s forehead, which then multiplies to ten, and then to boundless numbers. These Buddhas return close to the practitioner’s body after moving away at a distance. Henceforth:

The three types of manifested Buddhas return close to (the practitioner’s) body. The ground becomes a golden color, whereupon the various Buddhas enter into the ground. The ground becomes level like one’s palm, bright and

pure like a mirror. Observe one's own body to be bright and pure like the ground. This is called the attainment of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* realm.¹⁴³

The second description follows the emergence of four Buddhas from the practitioner's body, whereupon the light radiated from the Buddhas allows the practitioner to perceive the highest of the form realm:

...he will then see four Buddhas enter the locus from where they have emerged. After [the Buddhas] have entered [into that locus], he then sees a brilliant light. If it enters in the front, it will then emerge from the back; if it enters in the back, then it emerges from the front. If it emerges from the left, then it enters from the right; if it emerges from the right, then it enters from the left. Like this, he finally sees his own body as bright and clear, until [it is like] water, which has on all four sides perfectly pure light. This is called *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* at which one dwells in the realm of the fourth *dhyāna*.¹⁴⁴

In both descriptions, the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* realm is consistently described with the appearance of multiple Buddhas, and the practitioner's body is bright and clear, merging as one with the surroundings. Compare this with the descriptions in *ZCSMJ*, *SWLYF*, and *CFYJ*, referring to Table 9 below:

Table 9: Descriptions of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* realm
in Kumārajīva's meditation texts

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>ZCSMJ</i> (Śrāvakayāna section)</p> | <p>He can transform one color [of the Buddhas] into the colors of gold, silver, crystal, and beryl; according to the wish of the people, he can show anything. At that time, he meditates on only two things: the [dharma] body of the Buddha [like] space, and the virtues of the</p> |
|---|--|

¹⁴³ 三種所出佛還近身，作地金色，此諸佛盡入於地，地平如掌明淨如鏡。自觀己身明淨如地，此名得念佛三昧境界。 T15n619, 325c27-29. All English translations of *WMCF* are mine unless otherwise stated.

¹⁴⁴ 見如此已，還見四佛隨出處還入。四佛入已，復見白焰諸光，前入後出、後入前出，左入右出、右入左出。如是四種出入竟，見自身明淨，及水四邊圓滿淨光。此為名明淨境界。見此光已，名成念佛三昧，在四禪中。 T15n619, 326b13-18. Translation is slightly modified from Ponampon(2019, 50), replacing “the *Samādhi* of Calling the Buddha to Mind” with “*buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.”

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| | Buddhas. He has no other thought. The mind attains full control and is not distracted [anymore]. This is when the concentration on calling the Buddha to mind is achieved. ¹⁴⁵ |
| <i>ZCSMJ</i> (Mahāyāna section) | At that time, the practitioner sees thirty trillion types of boundless Buddhas in the east. Likewise in the south, west, north, the four sub directions, above, and below—in every direction [where the practitioner] puts his mind, he sees all [its] Buddhas. It is like a man who looks at constellations at night, and who sees all of the hundreds of thousands of boundless sorts of constellations. ¹⁴⁶ |
| <i>SWLYF</i> | Thereupon [the practitioner] sees an increment from ten to hundreds, thousands, and boundless Buddhas. Coming close, [the Buddhas] narrowly turn away; those further turn away widely. But the various Buddhas are seen as interconnected with light...Those who accomplish this concentration will have, in his state of concentration, the various Buddhas in the ten directions expounding the dharma, whereupon one's doubts will be dispelled and the state of non-arising of dharmas will be attained. ¹⁴⁷ |
| <i>CMYF</i> | He should further contemplate the water. Beneath the water is pure emptiness. He must further contemplate. Beneath the emptiness is a ground of purple beryl, beneath the beryl ground is a golden-colored ground, beneath the golden ground is an adamant ground. Beneath the adamant ground, he further sees empty space. He sees this empty space, a vast emptiness devoid of anything. When he has seen this, he must again restrain his mind and as before contemplate a single Buddha image. The brightness of this Buddha is now even more manifest, and cannot be fully described. [The Buddha] again [anoints] the practitioner's head with a pitcher of water. The water appears radiant as described above. [It |

¹⁴⁵ 能令一色作金銀水精毘琉璃色，隨人意樂悉令見之。爾時惟觀二事、虛空佛身及佛功德，更無異念。心得自在意不馳散，是時得成念佛三昧。 T15n614, 277a23-24. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 40).

¹⁴⁶ 是時便見東方三百千萬千萬億種無量諸佛。如是南方西方北方四維上下，隨所念方見一切佛，如人夜觀星宿，百千無量種星宿悉見。 T15n614, 281b2-5. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 40).

¹⁴⁷ 如是見者，更增十佛，既見之後復增百千，乃至無有邊際，近身則狹轉遠轉廣，但見諸佛光光相接 ... 定心成就者，即於定中十方諸佛皆為說法，疑網雲消得無生忍。 T15n617, 299c7-15. (The translation is mine.)

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>is to be done] like this seven times. The Buddha said to Nandika: “This is called the <i>samādhi</i> of the contemplation of the image. It is also called the [concentration] of bringing to mind the Buddha.”¹⁴⁸</p> |
|--|---|

From the juxtaposed paragraphs in Table 9, it is clearly the case that the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* realm generally involves the appearance of multiple Buddhas, and is associated with vivid imageries of brightness, clarity, light, and a notion of space. However, the specifics of the visionary encounters may differ; Buddhas may be seen as teaching, anointing the practitioner, changing in colors or movements. In this regard, the vision in *CMYF* is perhaps the closest depiction to that in *WMCF* with the perceived ground of empty space and Buddhas having direct interactions with the practitioner’s bodily form. Nevertheless, what the differences indicate is that there exist varying degrees and experiences to the confirmatory attainments of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. This may be corroborated by *ZCSMJ*, which states that “there are three types of people who practice the concentration on calling the Buddha to mind: elementary, intermediate, and advanced.”¹⁴⁹ Particularly for the Mahāyāna section of *ZCSMJ*, the bodhisattva’s *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is a further constituent of the vows to seek for Buddhahood, the arousing of great compassion for suffering sentient beings, and the seeking for their full awakening. It thus seems that the fruition of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may also consist of a change in the attitude of mind beyond a purely visual experience. Hence, with different levels of practices and motivations, the confirmatory attainments of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* would also vary, and its fruition would not consist of an identical experience.

Next, the accounts of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice in *WMCF* also differ in the specified locus for concentration, where the practitioner is instructed to, after observing and being able to retain the Buddha’s image before the self, contemplate the image of the Buddha on one’s forehead, heart, and the naval in sequence. The relevant passages for these loci of concentration are juxtaposed in Table 10:

¹⁴⁸ 復觀此水，水下淳空。復更當觀空下有紺琉璃地，琉璃地下有金色地，金色地下有金剛地，金剛地下復見虛空。見此虛空，豁然大空都無所有。見此事已，復還攝心，如前觀一佛像。爾時彼佛，光明益顯不可具說，復持澡瓶水灌行者頂，水相光明亦如上說。如是七遍。佛告禪難提：「此名觀像三昧，亦名念佛定。」 T15n613, 256c1-8. Cf. Greene(2012, 444-5). The bracketed word “anoints” is modified from “consecrates” for consistency in this thesis.

¹⁴⁹ 念佛三昧有三種人，或初習行、或已習行、或久習行。 T15n614, 276a8-9. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 33).

Table 10: Loci of concentration in *WMCF*

| | |
|----------|---|
| Forehead | The teacher instructs, “Return to your seat, fixing attention on your forehead, single-mindedly recalling the Buddha.” At this time, the Buddha image appears on the forehead, from one to ten and even up till boundless numbers. ¹⁵⁰ |
| Heart | The teacher then instructs to fix the attention on the heart and contemplate the Buddha, whereupon various Buddhas are seen emerging from the heart. ¹⁵¹ |
| Naval | “From now on, you shall forsake the previous two contemplations, and fix your mind on the naval.” One then carries out the teacher’s instructions, single-mindedly contemplating the naval. ¹⁵² |

Interestingly, these specific localizations of the Buddha’s image were not emphasized in Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, which simply state to fix one’s thought on each of the Buddha’s physical features, reflecting upon them with closed eyes in a quiet place, and not letting one’s attention waver to other thoughts.¹⁵³ The closest associative examples may be seen in *CMYF*, which mentions contemplation of the naval, but which is tied to the meditation on breathing, and contemplation of a flowering tree at the heart, under the contemplation of the four elements;¹⁵⁴ *SWLYF* mentions contemplation of the forehead, to remove its skin and flesh to reveal the bones beneath as the contemplation of white bones before the white light emitted enables a vision of Amitābha Buddha. Elsewhere in *WMCF*, there are also several signs of Buddhas that emerge from the navels of the practitioner and other Buddhas, leading to an interesting proposition that contemplation of the navel, in particular, may be regarded as the meditative technique of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* which allows for a connection between the practitioner and the Buddhas.¹⁵⁵ The significance and use of these bodily loci for meditative contemplation to access a different state may perhaps be seen as another form of meditative practice,

¹⁵⁰ 師言：「汝還本坐，係念額上，一心念佛。」爾時額上有佛像現，從一至十乃至無量。 T15n619, 325c23-24.

¹⁵¹ 師復教係念在心然後觀佛。即見諸佛從心而出。 T15n619, 326a2-3.

¹⁵² 「汝從今捨前二觀，係心在齊。」即受師教，一心觀齊。 T15n619, 326a14-15.

¹⁵³ 如是相相諦取，還於靜處閉目思惟，繫心在像不令他念。 T15n617, 299a8-13.

¹⁵⁴ 復當繫念住意在臍中、或在腰中，隨息出入。 T15n613, 256c25-26. He should then fix his thoughts and concentrate his mind on his navel, or between his hips, and follow the breath as it goes in and out. Cf. Greene(2012, 447); 復當更教觀心蓮華，猶如華樹。 Next [the practitioner] must again be instructed to contemplate his lotus-flower heart. Cf. *Ibid.*, 511.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Ponampon(2019, 50).

attesting to the rich panoply of techniques in Central Asia that were transmitted to fifth-century China, one which might not have been sufficiently captured or foregrounded in Kumārajīva's meditation texts alone.

The third interesting area for comparison is the indication of “-yanas” in *WMCF* and Kumārajīva's meditation texts. Consider how *WMCF* identifies which vehicle of Buddhist teachings the practitioner belongs to based on the visions generated from *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice:

Should the practitioner see the many Buddhas which emerge from his forehead leave the practitioner's body for not far a distance before returning, the teacher should know that this is a seeker of the Śrāvakayāna. If (the Buddhas leave the body) for a short distance before returning, he is a seeker of *pratyekabuddha*. If it is of a long distance, he is a seeker of the Mahāyāna.¹⁵⁶

Under the meditation on impurities, a similar situation is described:

If [the practitioner then] sees the entire world [filled with skeletons], he should be instructed in the great vehicle. If he [only] sees [bones] nearby, he should be instructed in the small vehicle.¹⁵⁷

Hence there seems to be a predictive aspect to the visions arising from meditative practice, which are telling of the cultivation pathway in which the practitioner should be instructed. Compare these with instructions in *ZCSMJ*:

If the practitioner seeks the full awakening of the Buddhas, in meditation he should first fix his mind and concentrate on the living bodies of the Buddhas in the ten directions and of the three periods of time.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ 爾時額上有佛像現，從一至十乃至無量。若行人所見多佛從額上出者、若去身不遠而還者，教師當知此是求聲聞人。若小遠而還者，求辟支佛人。若遠而還者，是大乘人。 T15n619, 325c23-27.

¹⁵⁷ 先教注意觀右脚大指上見洪脹，以意發抓却之，令黃汁流如膿血出，肌肉爛盡已唯見白骨。盡見，應廣教骨觀。若見滿一天下者，宜教大乘。若見近者，宜教小乘。 T15n619, 327c18-21. Translation references Greene(2012, 102).

¹⁵⁸ 若行者求佛道入禪，先當繫心專念十方三世諸佛生身。 T15n614, 281a22-23. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki

Rather than being dependent on visions arising from meditation, which presumably are indicative of past karmic causes and conditions, here the tone differs in placing ownership of one's “-yana” pathway on present deliberate choice and intention. It seems that there is a greater degree of openness and free choice presented in Kumārajīva's texts. This attitude towards the practice of meditation is also echoed in the different kinds of teacher-disciple relationships implied in *WMCF* and Kumārajīva's texts. While *WMCF* contains more prescriptive and didactic instructions responding to the visions encountered in meditation, the general tendency in Kumārajīva's *ZCSMJ* and *CFYJ* are of questions and answers that extend beyond instructional steps to the deepening of doctrinal understanding behind the practice of meditation.¹⁵⁹ If we assume the questions and answers to be records of Kumārajīva's own experiences in teachings during his translation process, here we see what potentially appears to be different styles of meditation instructions that were given in fifth-century China.¹⁶⁰ To return to the question of different “-yana” instructions in meditation, Kumārajīva's position on this might perhaps be inferred from *CFYJ*:

Should there be one in the multitude who seeks for the Śrāvakayāna, know his mind and teach the dharma accordingly; however, in teaching the dharma, know that the nature of dharmas does not have smallness. For the seeker of *pratyekabuddha*, know his mind and teach the dharma accordingly; however, in teaching the dharma, know that the nature of dharmas does not have intermediacy. For the seeker of Mahāyāna, know his mind and teach the dharma accordingly; however, in teaching the dharma, know that the nature of dharmas does not have expansiveness.¹⁶¹

Hence, the instructions on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* or other meditation methods may differ according to the practitioner's predictive visions or expressed motivations, but the

(2009, 62).

¹⁵⁹ The form of "If the meditator sees X, then the master should teach Y" in *WMCF* is also observed by Yamabe. Cf. footnote in Yamabe(1999, 307).

¹⁶⁰ On this topic, it is curious to note that in *ZCSMJ*, questions abound for the meditations on impurities, friendliness, dependent origination and on mindfulness of breathing, while there is virtually none for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. This might be an interesting case for a separate study.

¹⁶¹ 若眾中求聲聞乘者，亦知其心而為說法；雖為說法，知法性亦無有小。求辟支佛道者，亦知其心而為說法；雖為說法，知法性亦無有中。若求大乘者，亦知其心而為說法；雖為說法，知法性亦無有大。 T15n616, 297a1-5. (The translation is mine.)

true nature of such teachings is emptiness without discrimination. This eventual contemplation of the true nature of reality is what I contend to be, relatively speaking, a more distinctive and significant feature in Kumārajīva’s meditation texts.

The final thing to highlight is the thirty stages of contemplating the Buddha in *WMCF*. Premised as the beginning teachings on visualization of the Buddha, the practitioner is taught to observe the image in front of him clearly, until the image appears vividly in the mind’s eye. This begins the numerically itemized list. Henceforth, in a presentation not seen in Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, the instructions commence from the contemplation of the practitioner’s own body, before returning to the contemplation of the Buddha, upon which successful contemplation results in the vision of Buddhas. This concludes each stage of practice. Such a cycle of alternating from the contemplation of the body to the Buddha recurs for each stage. As summarized in Table 11 below:

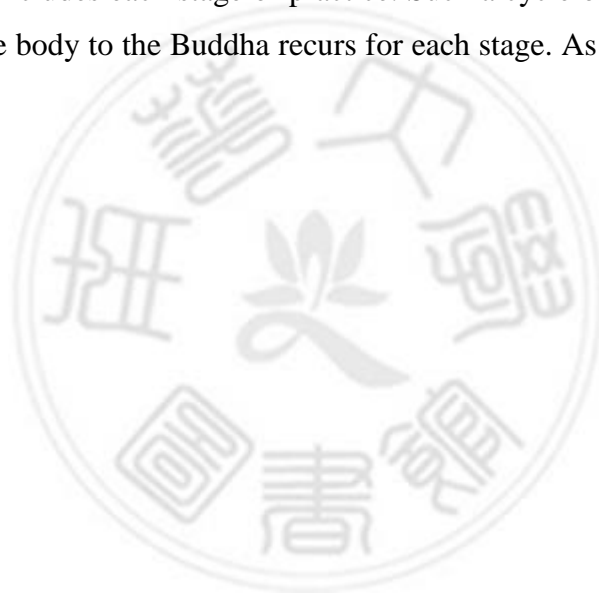


Table 11: Thirty stages of contemplating the Buddha(s) in *WMCF*¹⁶²

| S/ N | Preliminary instructions in contemplating the practitioner's body | Secondary instructions | Resulting vision of Buddhas |
|---------|---|--|---|
| 1 | - | With the thought of concentrating one's mind without other thoughts, go to a Buddha's image and contemplate its characteristics clearly. | Buddha's image before the practitioner appears vividly in the mind's eye. |
| 2 | Observe the body to make it sit comfortably. | Return to contemplate the Buddha. | Sees up to 10. |
| 3 | Gradually contemplate, making the body more at ease. | | Sees 10 to 20. |
| 4 | Make the body at ease and pure. | | Sees 20 to 50. |
| 5 | Make the thoughts become refined. | | Sees 50 to 100. |
| 6 | Make the mind become refined. | | Sees 100 to 1000. |
| 7 | | | Sees 200 to 400. |
| 8 | | | Sees 400 to 800. |
| 9 | | Sees 800 to 1000. | |
| 10 | Observe the body's impurities of pus and blood, after contemplating the characteristics of up to a thousand Buddhas clearly. | Should one see white bones, meditate on them. Should see suffering beings, meditate on friendliness. Should one not see any of these, return to contemplate on one Buddha and sincerely seek for repentance. | Sees up to boundless Buddhas. |
| 11 | Contemplate the body making it bright and pure. | Return to contemplate on the Buddha. Make big vows and arise the mind of making offerings. | Sees boundless Buddhas. Flowers appear naturally in front of the Buddhas. (The practitioner) takes these to offer. |
| 12 | | Return to contemplate on the Buddha. Seeing the previous vision, joy arises in the mind. Sincerely contemplate the Buddha wishing to make offerings. | Differently colored flowers appear naturally on trees. Someone takes these flowers and together (with the practitioner), make offerings to the Buddhas to make everywhere be filled with limitless flowers. |
| 13 | Sit next to the Buddha and contemplate the body, making it bright and pure. | Return to contemplate on the Buddha beginning from the eastern direction. | Sees boundless Buddhas in the east. |
| 14 | Repeat the previous contemplation until one's thoughts are exhausted, keeping within these boundaries in the eastern, southern, western, and northern directions. | | |
| 15 | Contemplate the joints within one's body clearly. | Contemplate beneath the Buddha's foot. | Sees that beneath the Buddha's foot there are various lights extending in four directions. All the Buddhas are in the lights within the lotus flowers. |
| 16 | - | Generate a joyful mind contemplating beneath the Buddha's foot. Contemplate the light that extends boundlessly beneath the Buddha's foot. | Sees that innumerable suffering beings are illuminated by this light and given peace. |
| 17 | Contemplate the body to make it even brighter and clearer. | Contemplate the navel within one Buddha. | Sees light emerging from the Buddha's navel extending in all four |

¹⁶² T15n619, 329a11-330a19.

| | | | |
|----|---|--|---|
| | | | directions to the far limits. Standing within the lights are many Buddhas. |
| 18 | - | Contemplate along the lights. | Sees innumerable people within the lights all experiencing happiness. |
| 19 | Contemplate the body and make it extremely clear. | Contemplate the two nipples of one of the Buddhas. | Sees that light spreads in all four directions from the Buddha's two nipples. Within this light are many Buddhas. |
| 20 | - | Contemplate along the lights. | Sees innumerable people within the lights all experiencing happiness. |
| 21 | Contemplate the body and see the body become extremely bright. | Contemplate between the eyebrows of one Buddha. Sees a large area of light from between the eyebrows, gradually broadening upwards into space. Contemplate along the lights till one's thoughts are exhausted. | Able to follow the lights up to their limits. |
| 22 | - | | |
| 23 | - | Follow the Buddha from the eastern direction, seeing various manifested Buddhas fill up the eastern direction to its farthest limits. | Sees the same vision in the southern, western, and northern directions. |
| 24 | Contemplate the body and see that it is bright and pure like a spotlight. | Contemplate the Buddha, making reverence and offerings in sequence. | Sees boundless rows of Buddhas. (The practitioner) carries various flowers and showers them in sequence in an act of making offerings to Buddhas everywhere. |
| 25 | - | Contemplate the offered flowers. See that the flowers fallen beside the Buddhas become flower canopies. | Sees various Buddhas seated on the beds within canopies. |
| 26 | - | Contemplate the flower canopies. | Sees the flower canopies gradually rise up into the sky, merging into one covering that shelters all the Buddhas. |
| 27 | Contemplate one's own body. | Upon seeing one's body as big as a spotlight, return to contemplate the Buddha, making reverence in sequence, looking up within the canopy covering. | Sees that there are flowers beneath the jeweled flower platforms within the canopy. Scoop the flowers with one's hands, and scatter the flowers in all directions as an offering to all Buddhas. |
| 28 | Make repentance and pray to the Buddhas. | Sincerely sit beside the Buddhas. | In a short moment upon being seated, sees that there naturally emerges a seven-jeweled platform with pleasing form and pleasant scent. (The practitioner) takes this and makes an offering to all the Buddhas. |
| 29 | Contemplate one's own body to make it extremely bright. | Seated beside the Buddhas, contemplate the flowers offered. | Sees that the flowers beneath the feet of the Buddhas become beryl seats. Moving in sequence, five Buddhas sit atop (the beryl seat). The straight pathways in-between are made up of jewels and are of unparalleled decorum. |
| 30 | Contemplate one's own body. | Upon seeing that there is a smaller body within one's body, and seeing the bright and pure exterior, return to contemplate the Buddha. | Sees all the Buddhas enter into one Buddha's body without constraints. |

The clear parallel with Kumārajīva's meditation texts is in terms of the beginning instructions on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, where the practitioner first observes a statue, keeping the Buddha image in mind, before gradually increasing in the numbers. As *ZCSMJ* reads:

Then [the practitioner] further calls to mind, in the same way, the divine virtues of two Buddhas, three, four, five, up to boundless Buddhas filling the [whole of] space.¹⁶³

This reliance on the Buddha's image in concentration and its increment to boundless numbers are seen in the first nine stages in Table 11. However, rather than the usual set of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* instructions which moves from contemplation of the form body to either contemplation of the life of the Buddha or the dharma-body, here we see a particular set of meditation practice that seems to infuse the ritualistic practice of making offerings into the meditation on mindfulness of body and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. While the making of offerings in meditation can also be seen in *CMYF*, it occurs but in one instance, hence it does not dominate the narrative as with the segment in *WMCF* here.¹⁶⁴

This suggests that the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* had morphed into another additional, practicable form, in which the making of offerings to multiple Buddhas had become a key aspect in meditation, which was already available in fifth-century China. This may be evidenced from the meditation cave imageries in the Tuyuq Buddhist Grottoes (*Tu yu gou shi ku* 吐峪溝石窟) from the fifth century, which research has shown, are testimony to *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice that was not only inspired from northwest India but the meditation methods in *WMCF* as well.¹⁶⁵ A look at the images from Cave 44 shows several similarities to the textual content in *WMCF*.¹⁶⁶ The interior petalled dome of Cave 44 resembles a large flower canopy, where images of numerous Buddhas, mostly seated, stream alongside its skeletal

¹⁶³ 爾時，復念二佛神德，三四五佛乃至無量盡虛空界，皆悉如是。 T15n614, 277a21-22. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 40).

¹⁶⁴ 見此事時，當起恭敬供養之心，作香華想普散諸佛。 T15n613, 264b16-18. When [the practitioner] has seen these things he must, with a mind of reverence and devotion, imagine scattering fragrant flowers atop these Buddhas. Cf. Greene(2012, 502).

¹⁶⁵ Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 244).

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, 343-347 for coloured reproductions of the cave interiors.

structure in neat rows, recalling the description at the twenty-sixth stage. All four sides of the cave are filled with multiple Buddhas seated on flower platforms in straight, orderly rows, reminiscent of the contemplation of boundless Buddhas, as well as the description of the seated Buddhas at the twenty-ninth stage. Scattered amidst the Buddhas are small six-petalled flowers, suggestive of the act of flower offerings that prevails in the text. Additionally, the presence of an altar platform within the cave suggests that this was possibly one of the earliest ritual grounds, where the practice of making offerings could be made.¹⁶⁷ Hence, the making of offerings to multiple Buddhas had been integrated into meditation practice and was actualized as early as the fifth century.

Besides the ritualistic aspect of making offerings being integrated into meditation, the repeated returns to contemplations of the practitioner's body under what is termed as a *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice are also unusual when compared with Kumārajīva's meditation texts, the latter which seem to premise more on the mental processes rather than the physical aspect of the practitioner's body in this contemplation practice. For instance, the only numerical lists in *ZCSMJ* elaborate on the thirty-two major marks and eighty minor marks of the Buddha.¹⁶⁸ In other words, the focus is placed on mentally cultivating a comprehensive contemplation of the Buddha's physical features, and there are hardly any mentions of the practitioner's role of the body in *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice. Additionally, the thirtieth contemplation of a smaller body within the practitioner's body is also interesting and is neither attested in Kumārajīva's nor the meditation texts prior to his. Might this and the return of all Buddhas' bodies into one body be symbolic references to the ideas of the Buddha-nature within and the one-Buddha doctrine in *vaipulya-sūtras*? While these unresolved questions necessitate a separate study outside the scope of this thesis at present, there are a few conclusions that can still be gathered from the comparison with this complex text.

First, it might be more appropriate to refer to *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as "practices" in the plural. Comparisons with *WMCF* show that not only are there different confirmatory descriptions of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* realm, there are also different specifics and emphasis to meditation instructions, and the way to determine

¹⁶⁷ Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 247).

¹⁶⁸ T15n614, 276a26-c25.

instructions based on one's perceived “-yana” inclinations. While there are undoubtedly broad similarities, these differences show that there are different developments and adaptations to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, likely based on meditators' diverse experiences and influences from other Buddhist texts. Hence, fifth-century Buddhist meditation texts, of which Kumārajīva's corpus form a significant number, are valuable records that offer a glimpse into the myriad kinds of meditation practices — even just within *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* alone, that were brought in from Central Asia to China, which Chinese Buddhists were being exposed to. The fact that *WMCF* is a pastiche from different distinct sources, possibly including that of Kumārajīva's, highlights the close inter-relationships within this group of fifth-century manuals, which should thus be studied as a textual group more than in isolation.

Besides meditation manuals that aim at the practical steps to achieving ideal states of concentration, there is also a meditation text circulating in the fifth century that specifically provides meditation instructions to counteract the ailments produced from meditation itself. This is the next meditation text that would be examined for the perspective that it could bring to this study.

4.4 *The Secret Essentials of Curing Meditation Ailments*

(T15n620, *Zhi chan bing mi yao fa* 治禪病祕要法)

Attributed to Juqu Jingsheng, Marquis of Anyang, records indicate that he learned *ZCBYF* from Buddhasena at Khotan and translated it in Hexi in 455 CE.¹⁶⁹ It is largely deemed to be a compiled text from Central Asia.

As its title suggests, *ZCBYF* is a text that provides remedies for the various ailments arising in the course of meditation. It is framed in two narrative contexts in a style recalling the early Buddhist texts beginning with “Thus have I heard”, where Śākyamuni Buddha provides these teachings upon the request of his disciples. In the first context, Śāriputra asks for the cures for madness arising from the five causes of loud sounds, bad reputation, desire for personal gain, external winds, and internal winds,

¹⁶⁹ See the record of *ZCBYF* in T55n2145, 66a24-b2; biography of Juqu Jingsheng in T55n2145, 106b22-c19; and the postface to the *ZCBYF* in T50n2059, 337a4-23.

which would affect a practitioner’s meditation practice. In the second context, Ananda asks the Buddha for the remedies for eliminating troubles caused by various demons, which affects the entering into concentration. The contents of *ZCBYF* are in Table 12 as follows, with the remedies involving *buddhānusmṛti* highlighted:

Table 12: Contents of *ZCBYF*¹⁷⁰

| S/N | Interlocutor | Remedies for: |
|-----|--------------|--|
| 1 | Śāriputra | Curing a perturbed mind caused by evil noise |
| 2 | | Softening and curing the internal wind element |
| 3 | | Curing problems arising from <i>samādhi</i> of the fire element |
| 4 | | Curing problems arising from <i>samādhi</i> of the earth element |
| 5 | | Curing problems arising from <i>samādhi</i> of the water element |
| 6 | | Curing problems arising from <i>samādhi</i> of the wind element |
| 7 | | The coarseness of four great elements |
| 8 | | Curing blockage (from a tense mind) |
| 9 | | Lust |
| 10 | | Wounds from gain and honor |
| 11 | | Violation of precepts |
| 12 | | Delight in music |
| 13 | | Diarrhea from an excess of water element |
| 14 | | Pain in head and eyes and deafness resulting from the fire element |
| 15 | | Insanity caused by terror occasioned by seeing inauspicious things upon entering earth- <i>samādhi</i> |
| 16 | | Wind element |
| 17 | Ananda | Attacks by demons |

Besides *buddhānusmṛti* featuring as part-thereof the prescribed remedies, other cures for these disturbances to meditation range widely from a combination of visualization exercises, recollection of bodhisattvas, recollection of named Buddha’s disciples, consumption of specific food, the meditation on impurities, the meditation on the breath,

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Greene(2012, 543-613). All English translations of *ZCBYF* reference Greene(2012) unless otherwise stated.

cultivating the four immeasurables, contemplating emptiness, repentance practices, chanting of *prātimokṣa*, use of *dhāraṇīs*, and producing the aspiration for enlightenment.¹⁷¹ Amongst these methods, visualization exercises are the most elaborated. The application of these remedies usually results not only in being cured of these ailments but also in being able to see Buddhas, bodhisattvas, or Brahmā-kings, who will offer teachings or perform consecrations for the practitioner. The remedies usually also result in the attainment of fruitions of either the Śrāvakayāna or Mahāyāna path. In the former, it refers to the attainment of the four fruitions, and the latter involves the arising of aspiration to the great path or the attainment of *pratyutpanna-samādhi*.

While there are no clear mentions of the doctrinal item of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in *ZCBYF*, there are various thought (*xiang* 想) exercises to visualize the Buddhas in various scenarios. These parallel the first part of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice, to single-mindedly recall the Buddha's physical marks. In the prescribed remedy to wounds from gain and honor, *ZCBYF* states:

Imagine an image of the sixteen-foot [Buddha], his body the color of purple gold, [endowed with] the thirty-two marks, sitting on a bejeweled lion's seat within a cave made of the seven precious substances on Mount Gṛdrakūṭra, and accompanied by the four groups of followers.¹⁷²

These instructions evoke the Śrāvakayāna *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice to recall the thirty-two characteristics of the Buddha and his life. Mount Gṛdrakūṭra (Vulture Peak), being a well-known site mentioned in sūtras where Śākyamuni Buddha preached the dharmas, may be read as an aspect of contemplation of his life. However, this is where the similarities seem to end. Subsequently, the remedy goes into recalling other aspects of the dharmas — involving the contemplation of things which the practitioner clings to, and dreadful evocations of the hell realm to help the practitioner remove his obsession with gain and honor, instead of recalling the specific virtues (dharma-body) of the

¹⁷¹ *Prātimokṣa* is a Sanskrit term referring to a disciplinary code of conduct governing the behaviour of Buddhist monastics. Cf. Buswell and Lopez(2013, 666-667); *dhāraṇīs* refers to “mnemonic device” or “code,” a verbal formula believed to encapsulate the meaning of lengthier texts. Cf. *Ibid.*, 241.

¹⁷² 想一丈六像，身紫金色，三十二相，在耆闍崛山七寶窟中，坐寶師子座，與諸四眾。 T15n620, 336b10-11 . Cf. Greene(2012, 571).

Buddha. In short, while *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is not specifically mentioned in *ZCBYF*, the meditation process of recollecting the Buddha's physical features and aspect of his life, leading to the Buddha's appearance before the practitioner, bear close similarities with the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice and may be seen as its microcosm. However, despite some common features, I would posit in a narrower sense, that most are not *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practices per se, as the primary motivation of practice is not to see the Buddhas in concentration but in curing the symptoms of their illnesses. Even though these practices sometimes lead to the seeing of Buddhas (*jian fo* 見佛) — the visions that naturally arise rather than conscious imaginative exercises, these are not always resultant and are usually not their primary aim.

Nevertheless, the close association of these *buddhānusmṛti* practices and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* are recognized, and through this text, it affirms and even extends value to the practices of *buddhānusmṛti* and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. This constitutes the other insight from examining *ZCBYF* vis-à-vis Kumārajīva's meditation texts; significantly, the remedy for violation of precepts contain the most instances of repeatedly visualizing the Buddhas, thus echoing the dominant idea of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* being able to attenuate negative karma in Kumārajīva's meditation texts. The method prescribed in *ZCBYF* is as follows. After the precept-breaker confesses and repents his actions before his preceptors, the text reads:

The preceptors must then instruct this monk to bring to mind Śākyamuni Buddha, and then to bring to mind in order the remainder of the seven Buddhas. Having brought the seven Buddhas to mind, he must bring to mind the thirty-five Buddhas, and then must further bring to mind the various bodhisattvas, arouse aspiration for the great vehicle, and contemplate the emptiness of dharmas...[Having done this] the various Buddhas [he has invoked will appear] in his dreams.¹⁷³

Again we see the close similarities with *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice. The recollection of the seven Buddhas and thirty-five Buddhas, while not much highlighted

¹⁷³ 智者應當教此比丘念釋迦牟尼佛，乃至次第念於七佛。念七佛已，念三十五佛，然後復當念諸菩薩，念大乘心，觀於空法。深自慚愧，想一一佛 ... 諸佛如來，於其夢中，放白毫光，救地獄苦。T15n620, 337a17-24. Cf. Greene(2012, 577).

in Kumārajīva’s meditation texts, is not different from recollecting the Buddhas in the three periods and ten directions in Mahāyāna *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.¹⁷⁴ The practitioner is then further instructed on two more separate accounts, after rounds of repentances, menial work, and visualization practices, to (i) enter the stūpa to contemplate the Buddha’s *ūrṇā* for seven days,¹⁷⁵ and (ii) contemplate the Buddha until the Buddha is seen emitting golden light and touches the practitioner’s head.¹⁷⁶ There is eventually a confirmatory vision of purification of negative karma, where the Buddha pours a pitcher of water over a monk’s head. While the various Buddhas appear here not necessarily in concentration but in dreams, similar causal practices with *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* should be recognized.¹⁷⁷ Hence, through a different perspective of curing an impure mind from the breaking of precepts, *ZCBYF* affirms the negative karma attenuating benefits of this practice. As summed in the ending verses to this remedy, “Wholeheartedly contemplating the marks of the Buddha, he eliminates suffering and despair.”¹⁷⁸ Again, in a later verse summing up the remedy for the wind element, “If you take medicine, practice concentration, recite this *dhāraṇī*, and single-mindedly bring to mind all Buddhas, then the defilements will never again arise.”¹⁷⁹ Corroborated in *ZCSMJ*:

The fifth method is a practice [designed] to cure people equally [troubled with multiple problems]. [This method is also intended for] people who have committed grave transgressions and who seek for [help from] the Buddha. [The master] should teach such people the single-minded concentration on calling the Buddha to mind.¹⁸⁰

Again, in *SWLYF*, “The practitioner of *buddhānusmṛti* causes the heavy negative karma from boundless kalpas to become light and [the practitioner] attains meditative concentration...the various unwholesome dharmas do not come and disturb the

¹⁷⁴ Cf. 賴鵬舉(2007, 253).

¹⁷⁵ 入於塔中，一心合掌，諦觀如來眉間白毫大人相光，一日至七日。 T15n620, 337a29-b1.

¹⁷⁶ 說此語已，復教掃塔、塗地、作諸苦役，更教觀佛，見佛放金色光以手摩頭。 T15n620, 337b12-13.

¹⁷⁷ Interestingly, the seeing of Buddhas in concentration has also been likened to dreams in *BZSM* and *GSMJ*. See T15n643, 663a10. See also *JDY* T45n1856, 134b04-135a11 for Kumārajīva’s explanation to the analogy in *BZSM*.

¹⁷⁸ 一心觀佛相，除苦無憂苦。 T15n620, 337c7. Cf. Greene(2012, 580).

¹⁷⁹ 服藥行禪定、誦此陀羅尼、一心念諸佛，結使永不起。 T15n620, 340c15-16. Cf. Greene(2012, 604).

¹⁸⁰ 第五法門治等分行，及重罪人求索佛，如是人等當教一心念佛三昧。 T15n614, 276a7-8.

Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 33).

practitioner of *buddhānusmṛti*.”¹⁸¹ Also noteworthy are that the appearances of the Buddhas in *ZCBYF* are usually associated with the providence of solutions to the ailments and dharma teachings, which include the four foundations of mindfulness, the four immeasurables, and the three marks of existence. This is similar to the accounts in Kumārajīva’s texts, which state that “having succeeded in seeing the Buddhas, one listens to the words of their preaching. Otherwise, one raises questions by oneself, for whom the Buddha preaches and solves various doubts;” or that “the Buddhas in the ten directions provide teachings to the accomplished practitioner in concentration, dispelling doubts for the attainment of the non-arising of dharmas.”¹⁸² Hence, the benefits extolled are consistent across the texts, acting as a protective cure that attenuates negative karma and relieves defilements, enabling concentration to arise, as well as cure doubts with the Buddha’s teachings.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that those ailments caused by meditation methods in *ZCBYF* are from the meditations on breathing, impurities, and the four elements. From this viewpoint, the method of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* then appears to be a relatively more innocuous, and thus perhaps palatable, form of meditation practice within the Five Doors, which can also help with solving other meditation ailments that arise.

4.5 Comparison with *Samādhi* Texts in the Fifth Century

Different from the “meditation sūtras” which are practical compasses for accomplishing an essential part of the basis of the cultivation path, commonly known and simplified as the three practices of morality, meditation, and wisdom, “*samādhi-sūtras*” focus on the meditative realm of inner mind observation in the elaboration of Mahāyāna principles.¹⁸³ Therefore, while meditation texts focus more on the practical administration of steps to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, how is

¹⁸¹ 念佛者，令無量劫重罪微薄得至禪定。...念佛之人。諸餘惡法不來擾亂。 T15n617, 299a5-8. (The translation is mine.)

¹⁸² 既得見佛又聞說法言。或自請問，佛為說法解諸疑網。 T15n614, 277a5. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 38); 即於定中十方諸佛皆為說法，疑網雲消得無生忍。 T15n617, 299c14-15. (The translation is mine.)

¹⁸³ “*Samādhi sūtras*” refer to texts no. 621-648 in the Volume 15 of the Taishō. Cf. 水野弘元(1984, 182-184), elaborating the differences between the classifications of “meditation sūtras” and “*samādhi sūtras*.”

buddhānusmṛti-samādhi referred to in these “*samādhi-sūtras*,” and how do these reinforce or differ from the exposition in Kumārajīva’s meditation texts? Across the list of twenty-eight “*samādhi-sūtras*” in the *Taishō*, there are altogether four sūtras which mention the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* that were circulated in the fifth century:

1. *The Sūtra of the Questions of The King of the Mahādruma Kimnaras* (T15n625, *Da shu jin na Luo wang suo wen jing* 大樹緊那羅王所問經; henceforth *DSSW*), in two fascicles, with translation attributed to Kumārajīva;
2. *The Śūraṅgama Samādhi Sūtra* (T15n642, *Fo shuo shou lenyan sanmei jing* 佛說楞嚴三昧經; henceforth *SLYJ*), in two fascicles, with translation attributed to Kumārajīva;
3. *King of Samādhi Sūtra*, or the *Samādhirājasūtra* (T15n639, *Yue deng sanmei jing* 月燈三昧經; henceforth *YDSM*), in ten fascicles, with translation attributed to Narendrayaśas (*Na lian ti li ye she* 那連提黎耶舍);
4. *The Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha* (*Fo shuo guan fo sanmei hai jing* 觀佛三昧海經; T15n643, henceforth *GSMJ*), in ten fascicles, with translation attributed to Buddhahadra.

While the first three “*samādhi-sūtras*” listed above do mention *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, they do not provide extensive elaboration of it, compared with *GSMJ* which is directly correlated to this particular practice. Nevertheless, they provide a relational perspective to facilitate an understanding of how *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may be viewed amidst different *samādhis* within this textual group.

In *DSSW*, *Ratna-kūta* bodhisattva asks Śākyamuni Buddha regarding the various practices of a bodhisattva. Responding to the question of how can a bodhisattva never be away from the seeing of Buddhas, four teachings are given, as stated: “What are the four? Proceed to see the Buddhas, and persuade others to do so; proceed to listen to the dharmas, and persuade others to do so; give rise to *bodhicitta*, and persuade others to do

so; always never give up the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.¹⁸⁴ From this, not only is *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* clearly one of the key requisites for perceiving the Buddhas, but it is also considered as a bodhisattva's practice. Hence, while the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may be shared by both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna as seen in Kumārajīva's meditation texts, it is especially foregrounded as a necessary practice on the bodhisattva path. Elsewhere in this sūtra is also its repeated mentions of its close relationship with the seeing of Buddhas and the bodhisattva practice.¹⁸⁵

Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi is also mentioned in *SLYJ*, as comprising part of the content of the *sūraṅgama samādhi*, that latter of which is described as only attainable by bodhisattvas of the tenth abode. In the hundred descriptions for the *sūraṅgama samādhi*, number ninety-four reads: "It (*sūraṅgama samādhi*) is to manifest pleasure in the various amusements without internally dispensing with the *samādhi* of the remembrance of the Buddha (*nianfo sanmei*)."¹⁸⁶ Further, it states that all meditative concentrations of bodhisattvas and all *samādhis* are included in the *sūraṅgama samādhi*.¹⁸⁷ While the mention is brief, it might be useful to consider the sole highlight of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* amidst all possible alternative *samādhis* in this list, as regard for its significance in bodhisattva meditation. Elsewhere in the text, the only other singling out of *samādhi* other than the *sūraṅgama* is the *pratyutpanna-samādhi*, which is mentioned as the attainment of the bodhisattvas at the eighth stage.¹⁸⁸ It might be fair

¹⁸⁴ *Bodhicitta* refers to the intention to achieve unsurpassable and perfect enlightenment. The Chinese text reads as follows excerpted in two parts: 云何菩薩不離見佛？T15n625, 368c24. 菩薩成就四法，不離見佛。何等四？自往見佛亦勸眾生、自往聽法亦勸眾生、自發菩提心亦勸眾生發菩提心、常不捨離念佛三昧。 Ibid., 370a3-6. (The translation is mine.)

¹⁸⁵ 念佛寶心，不離見佛故。念法寶心，不離聞法故。念僧寶心，不退菩薩僧故。 T15n625, 373a18-19 The precious mind that recollects the Buddhas is thus not separated from the seeing of Buddhas. The precious mind that recollects the dharma is thus not separated from hearing the dharma. The precious mind that recollects the *saṅgha* is thus not separated from the Bodhisattva *saṅgha*; 菩薩法器有三十二...念佛是得見諸佛器。 Ibid., 385b28-385c12. There are thirty-two ways to become an accomplished receptacle of the Buddha-*dharma*... recollecting the Buddhas is the receptacle to see the various Buddhas. (The translations are mine.)

¹⁸⁶ 於眾伎樂現自娛樂，而內不捨念佛三昧(九十四)。 T15n642, 631c21-22. Cf. McRae(1998, 129). All English translations of *SLYJ* reference McRae(1998) unless otherwise stated.

¹⁸⁷ 如是菩薩所有禪定，皆在首楞嚴三昧。T15n642, 632a1-2. Thus are the bodhisattvas' meditations all contained within the *sūraṅgama samādhi*. Cf. McRae(1998, 129); 如是所有三昧門、禪定門、辯才門、解脫門、陀羅尼門、神通門、明解脫門，是諸法門悉皆攝在首楞嚴三昧，隨有菩薩行首楞嚴三昧，一切三昧皆悉隨從。 T15n642, 632a1-7. All the meditations, emancipations, *samādhis*, autonomous supranormal powers, and unhindered wisdoms are all contained within the *sūraṅgama samādhi*. Hence when a bodhisattva practices the *sūraṅgama samādhi*, he practices all the *samādhis*. Cf. McRae(1998, 129).

¹⁸⁸ 入第八菩薩地已，得諸佛現前三昧；得諸佛現前三昧已，常不離見諸佛。 T15n642, 634a5. When

to surmise that not only is *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* well-regarded in the bodhisattva practice, but it is also furthermore unique for its accessibility to both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna, despite its realization to different degrees. Nowhere in the traditional Śrāvakayāna meditation texts do we see a similar method of practice which enables practitioners to acquire a *samādhi* where multiple Buddhas can be seen. Hence, Kumārajīva's transmission of this well-regarded bodhisattva meditation is significant for availing it in practical terms to practitioners of both vehicles through his composite manuals.

In another text, the *YDSM* contains a more concrete example of visual *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. It states that if one were to give rise to the thought of recollecting the physical characteristics of the Buddha and his virtues and cultivate accordingly, the practitioner would single-mindedly be headed towards non-retrogression, and be undoubtful about the Buddha's wisdom. If one constantly practices this, one would always be able to see various Buddhas day and night. Further, the practitioner is exhorted to never give up this practice even at the point of one's death nor let extreme suffering replace *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the mind.¹⁸⁹ Although the text does not go into details about the method of practice as would be in a meditation text, it is another example of how the basic gist of practice and its merits are reiterated, the importance of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice even being hinged at the stake of one's life.

In fascicle seven, the verse reads: "After the Buddha has gone into nirvāṇa, think deeply about the characteristics of the Buddha's body. Even though one sees the Buddha's body, it is due to the Buddha's supranormal powers."¹⁹⁰ Here it seems that the remembrance of the Buddha as meditation practice is particularly emphasized after the Buddha's passing, a point not mentioned in Kumārajīva's meditation texts, but interestingly relates to the formation of the religious practices surrounding the figure of the Buddha in northwest India in the first century.

he or she has entered the eighth bodhisattva stage, he or she will attain the *samādhi* of presence before the Buddhas. When he or she has attained the *samādhi* of presence before the Buddhas, he or she will never be without a vision of the Buddhas. Cf. McRae(1998, 139).

¹⁸⁹ 若有能生如是心: 念佛相好及智慧。彼人能修如是念, 一心趣向無退轉, 若行、若坐、若經行, 於諸佛智無疑惑。 T15n639, 553b14-16; 常修如是念佛相, 日夜恒見諸如來。若遇垂死最重疾, 痛惱逼迫極無聊, 念佛三昧常不捨, 不令苦切奪此心。 Ibid., 553b21-23.

¹⁹⁰ 於佛滅度後, 思念佛身相, 即便觀佛身, 以佛神力故。 Ibid., 591c17-18. (The translation is mine.)

Further, in the same verse, it states to see (the Buddha's) appearance as like the sun's and moon's reflected appearances upon the rivers and streams, as with all characteristics of phenomena. If one knows about the nature of all phenomena are as if the seeing of illusions, one would ultimately not see the real Buddha by his physical body.¹⁹¹ It is noteworthy that the visual images are eventually removed and one is expected to see the Buddha in terms of his dharma-body, by penetrating the truth of emptiness, echoing Kumārajīva's meditation texts.

In short, the above analysis of the first three texts shows that *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is regarded as one of the essential practices on the bodhisattva's path in fifth-century "samādhi-sūtras," and it is a relatively more accessible *samādhi* noted for the seeing of Buddhas based on the Buddha's supranormal powers, even if one might not have attained to the eighth stage of bodhisattva practice. Understanding this relative standing and uniqueness of this practice amongst the various *samādhis* allows for a better appreciation of Kumārajīva's introductions of the more detailed and practical steps in practice that are not seen in these "samādhi-sūtras," and for making this practice accessible to both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practitioners. On the other hand, *GSMJ* has a different textual nature and provides thorough details on the visualizing aspect of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, known as *guanfo* (觀佛). It is this text that we turn to next.

4.6 The Sūtra on the Ocean-like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddha (T15n643, *Fo shuo guan fo sanmei hai jing* 佛說觀佛三昧海經)

Fundamentally a text on visualizing the bodily marks of the Buddha, the *GSHJ* is deemed to be a cross-cultural product compiled in Central Asia, which does not seem to follow any textual traditions very carefully, surmised based on its loose references to prior sources.¹⁹² Accordingly, Yamabe notes that *GSHJ* references various parts from

¹⁹¹ 譬如彼日、月，影現於百川，皆觀其像貌，諸法相如是。若知諸法性，猶若諸影像，終不以色身，得觀於真佛。 T15n639, 591c21-24.

¹⁹² Cf. Yamabe(1999), where he argues through comparisons with Indian, Chinese and hybrid theories on the formation of this text, that the various cross-cultural contents within the text makes it more likely

other Chinese Buddhist texts in the fifth century, and asserts with certainty that its author(s) were familiar with the texts translated by Kumārajīva.¹⁹³ Particularly, the close relationships between the *CMYFJ* and the *GSHJ* are noted, and either one was referring to the other, or both had come from the same geographical and textual backgrounds.

The interlocutor in this text is King Śuddhodana, who asks the Buddha how many people in the future see the radiant physical body of the Buddha after the latter’s nirvāṇa. In a style starkly different from the relatively more concise form of instructional manuals presented in meditation texts, the Buddha in *GSHJ* elaborates with meticulous descriptions of the Buddha’s physical traits, leading to dense pictorial descriptions of visionary worlds and narrative stories. These are instructed as to the content for “correct visualization,” whereupon doing otherwise is the wrong visualization, serving as the concluding remarks following each elaboration of a trait.¹⁹⁴ It is vital to note that the terms for *guanfo* 觀佛 — used in this text to specifically refer to the notion of visualization (*guanxiang* 觀想), and recollection of Buddha (*nianfo* 念佛) are used interchangeably, and may be regarded as synonymous in this text.¹⁹⁵

The contents across the twelve chapters in ten fascicles are summarized as follows:

Table 13: Contents of *GSMJ*

| S/N | Content | Emphasis |
|-----|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Six parables | Merits of practice |
| 2 | Enumeration of the objects of visualization | Method of fixing one’s mind |

to be a “hybrid apocryphal” text from Central Asia, where several authors were possibly involved.

¹⁹³ These include Dharmakṣema’s (*Tan wu chen* 曇無讖) *Jin guangming jing* 金光明經, T16n663, translated between 412 and 421 CE; Kumārajīva’s *Miaofa lianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經, T9n262, translated in 405 CE; Kumārajīva’s *Shizhu piposha lun* 十住毗婆沙論, T26n1521, translated in 405 CE; and Kumārajīva’s *Da zhidu lun* 大智度論, T25n1509, translated between 402-5 CE. Cf. Yamabe(2019, 402).

¹⁹⁴ 如是觀者名為正觀，若異觀者名為邪觀。If one visualizes this way, it is correct visualization, otherwise it is wrong visualization. This phrase is seen in various parts of the text, beginning with T15n643, 653b27. Cf. Yamabe(1999, 26).

¹⁹⁵ This observation coincides with Yamabe’s. Also to offer a simple piece of textual evidence, one may perhaps consider that towards the conclusion of *GSMJ*, the names for this text were offered as the “*Ocean-like Samādhi of the Visualization of the Buddhas*” (觀佛三昧海), or “*buddhānusmṛti-samādhi method*” (念佛三昧門), suggesting their synonymous use. T15n643, 696b20-29.

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 3 | Visualization of the Buddha's bodily marks | Contemplation on statue or image of Buddha |
| 4 | Visualization of the heart of the Buddha | |
| 5 | Visualization of the four types of boundless mind | |
| 6 | Visualization of the four types of deportment | Contemplation on the life of the Buddha |
| 7 | Visualization of [the Buddha's] hidden male organ | |
| 8 | Acts in past lives | Contemplation on Buddha's virtues; his dharma-body |
| 9 | Visualization of statues | Contemplation of Buddhas in three periods and ten directions |
| 10 | Recollection of the past seven Buddhas | |
| 11 | Recollection of Buddhas in the ten directions | |
| 12 | Secret practice of the visualization of the Buddha | Merits of practice |

Aside from chapters two to eleven forming the main subject matter for contemplation, the first chapter presents analogies of the merits from practicing visualization of the Buddha through six similes, and the concluding chapter suggests ideal attitudes of practicing *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, as well as exhorts the importance of guarding one's practice against self-conceit, in which one assumes spiritual superiority over others.

In what follows, I shall compare the content of *GSHJ* with Kumārajīva's meditation texts, showing their general similarities and differences in terms of the structure of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* contemplation, and ritual practicalities involving meditation practice.

Regarding the structure, it is observed that despite the elaborate descriptions, the division of the content across the text generally follows the framework for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* contemplation. Chapters three to five form the bulk of the text in terms of length, covering the various visualization of physical marks beginning with the top of the head, with more content devoted to the visualization of the *ūrṇā* and naval of Buddha. It is worthy to note that *GSMJ* mentions the method of forward and reverse contemplation, from the top of the head to the feet and back again, which is absent in Kumārajīva's texts. Nevertheless, these visualizations largely correspond to the thirty-two marks enumerated in Kumārajīva's texts. Some aspects of the Buddha's life

are also interwoven within the visualization of the marks — for example, there are descriptions for visualization of the *ūrṇā* when first renouncing the home life, when undergoing austerities, and when subduing Maras.¹⁹⁶ To a larger extent than in Kumārajīva’s texts, this reveals the close relationship between the formation of the physical features and his deeds. In chapter six, the narration of the Buddha teaching at *Śrāvastī* (*She wei cheng* 舍衛城), going to *Trayastrimśa* (*Dao li tian* 忉利天) heaven to teach, the subduing of *Samjñeya-mahā-yakṣas* (*San zhi gui da jiang* 散脂鬼大將) at *Ālavī* (*Kuang ye* 曠野), subduing of the dragons at *Nagarahāra* (*Na gan he luo* 那乾訶羅), leaving the Buddha’s shadow (*fo ying* 佛影) on the walls of a cave, subduing of five hundred men at *Kuśinagara* (*Ju shi na jie luo* 据尸那揭羅), and the reclining posture of *nirvāṇa*, are considered aspects of the Buddha’s life, even though this differs from the typical eight junctures usually presented. In chapter eight, the dharma-body involves the Buddha’s epithets, and the virtues comprising of the five-part dharma-body of the Buddha: morality, meditation, wisdom, liberation, and knowledge and vision of liberation, as well as the ten powers, four fearlessnesses, eighteen distinguished characteristics, and great compassion.¹⁹⁷ Chapters nine to eleven extend the contemplation to the past seven Buddhas, suggestive of the three periods, and ten directions. In a presentation more detailed than in Kumārajīva’s texts, the representative Buddha from each direction is named and their realms individually described. Hence, while the content might not agree in every detail, the basic framework for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice in these fifth-century texts remains the same.

Next, the contents of these texts also provide an idea of the religious practices that are associated with the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in early medieval Buddhism, namely the practices of going to stūpas to contemplate the Buddha statue or image, repentance rites, the making of offerings of incense, flowers, Buddha statues and images, canopies, music, and hymns of praise. In *GSMJ*, there are various indications of instructions of going to a stūpa to observe the statue or image of the Buddha. The following sentence provides one clear example of this associated practice:

¹⁹⁶ T15n643, 650a9-653b28.

¹⁹⁷ T15n643, 687b16-687c10.

The practitioner who wishes to visualize the (Buddha's) image, first enters the Buddhist stūpa and cleans the floor with fragrant mud and earth. To the extent of his ability, burn incense and scatter flowers in offering to the image of the Buddha. Having then confessed his evil deeds, he must bow before the Buddha and repent. Humble the mind in this manner for between one and seven days.¹⁹⁸

Therefore, the stūpa has become an architectural center for the advancement of meditation practice with its associative rituals. Similarly, we see in *ZCSMJ* the instructions for going forth to a sanctuary where the Buddha statue is for meditation, where the teacher should “lead him to a statue of the Buddha or teach him to go there by himself and make him clearly observe the major and minor bodily marks of the statue.”¹⁹⁹ Likewise in *SWLYF*, this is implied by the need to “return to a quiet place” after capturing the Buddha's image.²⁰⁰

On a related note, in *GSMJ*, the merits of these associated ritual practices are directly associated with, and even integral to the attainment of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.²⁰¹ Various passages, which bear a similarity to *CMYF*, speak especially of the necessity for repentance rites, especially if one does not see Buddhas, or does not see successfully see the expected confirmatory visions following the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice, as evident in, “If one does not see the (Buddha's body), one should enter the stūpa to contemplate on all the seated (Buddha) statues. Seeing these seated statues, one repents on transgressions and negative karma.”²⁰² Furthermore, we get a striking visual image of the practitioner in the stūpa, seen in: “If

¹⁹⁸ 欲觀像者，先入佛塔以好香泥及諸瓦土塗地令淨，隨其力能燒香散華供養佛像，說已過惡禮佛懺悔，如是伏心經一七日。 T15n643, 690c3. Translation references Greene(2012, 294-5) with slight modifications, using “Buddhist stūpa” instead of “sanctuary” for 佛塔; “to the extent of his ability” instead of “to the extent that he is able” for 隨其力能; “humble the mind” instead of “humbling his mind” for 伏心, making it sound more instructional.

¹⁹⁹ 將至佛像所，或教令自往諦觀佛像相好。 T15n614, 276a10. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 33).

²⁰⁰ 云何憶念？人之自信無過於眼，當觀好像便如真佛。先從肉髻、眉間白毫下至於足，從足復至肉髻，如是相相諦取，還於靜處閉目思惟，繫心在像不令他念。 T15n617, 299a8. (The translation is mine.)

²⁰¹ 若有眾生於佛滅後造立形像，幡、花、眾香持用供養，是人來世必得念佛清淨三昧。 T15n643, 678b17. If a sentient being creates an image of the Buddha after the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, and uses streamers, flowers, and various incense to make offerings, this person will definitely attain the pure *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in the next life. (The translation is mine.)

²⁰² 若不能見(佛身)，當入塔觀一切坐像，見坐像已懺悔障罪。 (T15n643, 681c3). (The translation is mine.)

one does not see (the Buddhas), one should enter the stūpa to visualize. While entering the stūpa to visualize, also imagine bright light, sincerely joining palms together in a kneeling posture in careful contemplation.”²⁰³ While to a briefer extent, the necessity of rituals is also seen mentioned in Kumārajīva’s other texts. In *ZCSMJ*, the practitioner is asked, before beginning meditation, to repent should one have broken precepts, such that one can become pure before commencing with meditation practice.²⁰⁴ Under the instructions for the contemplation of Buddhas in the ten directions in *SWLYF*, the practitioner is advised to repent for a day and night throughout the six periods of the day should he not see the various Buddhas due to past negative karma.²⁰⁵ Hence, from *GSHJ* and Kumārajīva’s texts, we see ritual practices of worship and purification being a complementary practice to *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, as well as meditation practices in general.

This particular emphasis on repentance rituals in *GSMJ* and *CFYJ* is especially noted by Greene, who posit that seated meditation came to be constitutively incorporated into a broader cultic program in which “repentance” was the guiding form and that the destruction of negative karma was the overarching goal throughout the fifth to seventh centuries.²⁰⁶ While repentance does appear to garner increasing importance in meditation practice from the fifth century, I seek to provide an additional viewpoint, that repentance is but one of the many forms of ritual practices that gained momentum. Other ritual practices such as the making of offerings and *dhāraṇī* recitations, which also became incorporated with meditation practice, are likewise burgeoning as we have seen in other fifth-century meditation texts.²⁰⁷ Therefore, to say that repentance became but one of the different guiding forms for meditation, is perhaps a perspective that might

²⁰³ 若坐不見當入塔觀，入塔觀時，亦當作此諸光明想，至心合掌踞跪諦觀。(T15n643, 656b01). (The translation is mine.)

²⁰⁴ 若破餘戒，是時應教如法懺悔。 T15n614, 271a5. If the practitioner has broken other precepts, the master should teach him to repent properly. Cf. Yamabe and Sueki(2009, 7).

²⁰⁵ 若宿罪因緣不見諸佛者，當一日一夜六時懺悔隨喜勸請，漸自得見。 T15n617, 299c15. If one does not see the various Buddhas due to past negative karma, one should repent for a day and a night throughout the six periods, making invitational requests accordingly, to gradually and naturally be able to see them. (The translation is mine.)

²⁰⁶ Cf. Greene(2021a).

²⁰⁷ See for instance the making of offerings in T15n619, 329a11-330a20, and *dhāraṇī* recitations in T15n620, 340b18-340c20; 341c18-341c29.

accord fairer regard for this other panoply of ritual practices that were integrated into meditation as well.²⁰⁸

Additionally, a unique feature in *GSMJ* is its mention of the Buddha's "shadow" — or "emanation," which is closer to its suggested intent of light, in chapter six on "visualization of the four types of deportment."²⁰⁹ This is an interesting example that embodies a further developed notion of the dharma-body contemplation in *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice, traceable to Central Asia in the late fourth century. Accordingly, *GSMJ* narrates the story of how the Buddha left his emanation on the walls of a cave, upon the request of the subdued dragons to leave the Buddha's presence as a visual reminder for them to reign in their unwholesome behavior. Promising to leave his emanation for a thousand and five hundred years, the Buddha then entered into a cave, performed miraculous transformations with his body, before etching himself onto the cave rocks in a seated posture, akin to a mirrored reflection. The text further describes how the Buddha emanation is seen from afar but not from near and is depicted as full of golden light. This emanation in the seated posture is to be used as a basis for contemplation of the Buddha's deportment of sitting, and subsequently walking, standing, and lying down, which coheres to the chapter's title on the four types of deportment.²¹⁰ This constitutes the contemplation of not only the life of the Buddha but his dharma-body as well. According to *SZL*, the second constituent of the forty dharmas exclusive to the Buddhas states the Buddha's ability to manifest countless transformations, encompassing these four types of deportment. Thus, the Buddha's emanation is seen as a manifestation of his dharma-body.

Interestingly, the Buddha's emanation is not a mere record in *GSMJ*, but apparently traceable to an actual cave in the mountains around Nagarahāra (modern Jalalabad, Afghanistan). The emanation in this pilgrimage site has been said to appear to devotees on certain occasions and was visited and testified in written records by the Chinese Buddhist pilgrims such as Faxian 法顯 (337–422 CE) in 401 CE who saw a clear emanation, and Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664 CE) in the early seventh century who

²⁰⁸ This constitutes some preliminary thoughts and a fuller argument would necessitate a separate study.

²⁰⁹ The choice of the word "emanation" over "shadow" references Greene(2012, 224).

²¹⁰ T15n643, 679b7-682b25.

saw a fading emanation, thus correlating with *GSMJ*'s record of the emanation staying only for a thousand and five hundred years. Huiyuan, who learned of the Buddha's emanation from Buddhābhadra who is purportedly *GSMJ*'s translator, was also known to have constructed a replica of this cave, the "Buddha's Shadow Platform" in 412 CE at Lushan 廬山, and henceforth contributed to the subsequent growth of meditation cave practices in China.²¹¹ In short, *GSMJ* records the notion of the Buddha's dharma-body as a Buddha's emanation that embodies the content of his forty distinguished characteristics. Not only does its actual on-site presence reflect this developed idea of the dharma-body in fourth century Central Asia, but the relevant text from *GSMJ* also provides understanding to the contents of its history and form. Hence, these fifth-century meditation texts are significant as collective records of the historical practices surrounding meditation and *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. In other words, besides doctrinal or meditation instructions, the texts significantly serve as cultural records pointing to practices that complement and became very much a part of meditation practice itself.

4.7 Summary of Findings

In this chapter, the preceding *BZSM*, three other fifth-century meditation texts (*DMCJ*, *WMCF*, and *ZCBYF*) and fifth-century *samādhi* sūtras, including the *GSMJ*, are brought into comparison with Kumārajīva's meditation texts to ascertain his texts' standing within this textual circle, as well as glean insights into the understanding of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in fifth-century China.

While the textual analyses may appear sporadic due to the desire to let the different uniqueness of each text surface, I shall now draw a unifying thread and present the afore principal findings through the four key areas of (i) presence of meditation instructions on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*; (ii) presence of the Five Doors method with *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*; (iii) *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* structure of proceeding from contemplation of the physical body to the life of the Buddha, and dharma-body; and (iv) general distinction between Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation practices. These are

²¹¹ Cf. Chen(2016, 57-58) and 賴鵬舉(2007, 45).

summarized in Table 14 as follows. The symbol “●” indicates mention in the text with a greater emphasis with repetitive discussions, whereas the symbol “△” indicates briefer or less explicit mentions.



Table 14: Overview of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* findings across texts

| S/N | Content | Precursor | Kumārajīva's Fifth-Century Meditation Texts | | | | | Other Fifth-Century Meditation Texts | | | Fifth-Century <i>Samādhi</i> Texts | | | |
|-----|---|-------------|---|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--|--------------|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|--|
| | | <i>BZSM</i> | <i>ZCSMJ</i> | <i>CFYJ</i> | <i>CMYF</i> | <i>SWLYF</i> | <i>DMCJ</i> | <i>WMCF</i> | <i>ZCBYF</i> | <i>DSSW</i> | <i>SLYJ</i> | <i>YDSM</i> | <i>GSMJ</i> | |
| i | Meditation instructions on <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> | △ | ● | △ | ● | ● | | ● | | | | ● | ● | |
| ii | Five Doors containing <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> | | ● | | ● | △ | | △ | | | | | | |
| iii | Structural framework of: physical body → life of Buddha → dharma-body | △ | ● | | ● | ● | | ²¹² ● | △ | | | △ | ● | |
| iv | Distinction of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practices | | ● | △ | | | △ | | | | | | | |

²¹² This however, appears in the segment which overlaps with *SWLYF* and might not have been part of the original construct.

The visual overview from Table 14 clearly shows that among the meditation texts that were available in China in the fifth century, specific meditation instructions on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* are predominantly found in Kumārajīva’s corpus of texts. While the precursory second-century *BZSM* contains some semblance of instructions in the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, these have not yet been fully developed into a coherent system specific for practical meditative contemplation. *WMCF* and *GSMJ*, which were translated after Kumārajīva’s texts, have content mainly premising on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* meditation but does not contain the full breadth of instructions for the traditional Five Doors contemplation in the likes of *ZCSMJ*. Comparison between the meditation texts and *samādhi* texts (with the exception of *GSMJ*) also highlighted the general differences in nature of these texts; the latter contains either brief exposition on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in *YDSM*, or no instructional tendencies, with generally more descriptive narration on meditative states. Hence the specific value of meditation texts as practical manuals is foregrounded. The *DMCJ*, a contrasting example as a largely traditional Sarvāstivāda manual, does not contain meditation instructions on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* nor its inclusion in the Five Doors, yet is interesting for a similar meditative experience of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* at the stage of summit, as well as the fact that there were later additions to its text, suggesting the need for adaptations to attune to new meditative experiences as well as to meet the proclivities and needs of practitioners. The structural framework for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* are also more clearly set out in Kumārajīva’s texts, of which *ZCSMJ* and *CFYJ* also contain distinction of Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation practices.

As a whole, these texts from the fifth century provide indications of the value accorded to *buddhānusmṛti*, as well as rich instructional variations to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Some, like *WMCF* and *CMYF*, place more emphasis on the associated confirmatory visions while others, like *ZCSMJ* and *SWLYF*, relatively focus more on the associated doctrinal understanding. Some, like *WMCF* and *ZCBYF*, provide innovative perspectives and practice specifics, such as the inclusion of making offerings, complementary practice of body contemplation, *dhāraṇīs*, and other visualization practices within *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Aside from these differences in content and emphasis, instructional variations also vary in terms of the tone of instructions used in these texts, from the more results-oriented, prescriptive instructions responding to the reported visions encountered in *WMCF*, to the more process-oriented approach in

Kumārajīva's *ZCSMJ* and *CFYJ*, which contain questions and answers that extend beyond instructional steps to the deepening of doctrinal understanding behind the meditation practice. These result in different understandings of the specific confirmatory attainment of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhī*. Thus, it can be known that the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhī* is not monolithic, and new developments from third and fourth-century Central Asia, which might be deemed as the esotericization of meditation, were embodied in these different textual witnesses that were transmitted to the Chinese audience. The knowledge of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhī* practices available to Chinese Buddhists in the fifth century is much enriched with the appearance of this body of meditation texts. The key distinctiveness that each text brings to the understanding of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhī* is summarized in Table 15 on the following page:



Table 15: Overview of key distinctiveness of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* across texts

| Text | Key distinctiveness of <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i> practice |
|--------------|---|
| <i>ZCSMJ</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinction between Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practice. • Distinction of three levels and three types of practitioners. • Foremost practice for bodhisattva meditation. • Inclusion of vows-making for Mahāyāna <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i>. |
| <i>CFYJ</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used in the cultivation of <i>jhānas</i>. • Combined with the meditation on immeasurable joy. |
| <i>CMYF</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on complementation with repentance rituals. • Largely a preliminary method for removing negative karma and allaying fears. • Rich in confirmatory visions including the anointing by Buddha. |
| <i>SWLYF</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contemplation of Amitābha Buddha from meditation on white bones. • A distinct elaborated section on <i>prajñā</i> contemplation. • <i>Saddharma-Puṇḍarīka-samādhi</i> meditation. |
| <i>BZSM</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The earliest mention of contemplation of Buddhas in ten directions. • Highlights Amitābha Buddha as an object of contemplation. • Elaborates on practices conducive to the attainment of <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i>, such as continually walking and not sitting down for three months. |
| <i>WMCF</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich in confirmatory visions and visualizations. • Bodily locus of forehead, heart, and naval used in contemplation. • Mindfulness of body and visualization practice of making offerings infused into <i>buddhānusmṛti-samādhi</i>. |
| <i>ZCBYF</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positioned as a method to cure wounds from gain and honor, violation of precepts, and attacks from demons. • Inclusion of <i>dhāraṇīs</i>. |
| <i>GSMJ</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forward and reverse contemplation. • Rich visualization of marks interwoven with the life of the Buddha. • Buddha's emanation as a notion of dharma-body. |

Despite these differences, all these meditation and *samādhi* texts share in common the importance of cultivating single-mindedness, and the need for complementary supportive practices. More significantly, these texts all emphasize the enduring importance placed on the figure of the Buddha in meditation practices; while expounded to different degrees, all speak unanimously of *buddhānusmṛti* and its lauded benefits of the practice, especially its attenuation of negative karma. For the realization of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in particular, the benefit of seeing Buddhas is usually associated with the expounding of teachings and thus the removal of doubts. While it is a practice shared by both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practitioners, it is especially valued and foregrounded in Mahāyāna bodhisattva practice that is closely associated with the fruition of Buddhahood. In the concluding segment of this thesis, I will sum up the significance of Kumārajīva’s transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from these findings.



CHAPTER FIVE- CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have first addressed the contextual development of the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from the traces of *buddhānusmṛti* in the early Buddhist texts to the burgeoning and development of its practice in northwest India and Central Asia from the first to fifth centuries. I have shown that the trajectory of development of the concept and practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in Buddhism stems from the various forms of *anusmṛtis* from early Buddhism, of which the teaching of *buddhānusmṛti* was widely practiced in northwest India in the first century. Various *Dārṣṭāntikas* in this area extolled the virtues and merits of the Buddha in literature, inspiring practices surrounding the figure of the Buddha. In line with this, the area's meditation practitioners and treatise masters developed a system of meditation method for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* from the early Buddhist sūtras, with Śākyamuni Buddha as the object of meditation, complemented by the creation of visual representations of the Buddha as aids to meditation. This systematized practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, developed from *buddhānusmṛti* with the inclusion of *samādhi* aspect of visualization and visions as well as the formalization of the notion of the dharma-body, was at its initial stage of development shared by both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna meditation. Later, the Mahāyānization of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* then hinged upon the full development of contemplation of the dharma-body when it was transmitted from northwest India to Central Asia, and later through Hexi into China, the transmission of which Kumārajīva played a crucial role in the late fourth and early fifth century.

To understand Kumārajīva's role, legitimacy, and doctrinal standing in this transmission, there is then the attempt to trace his background of being active in northwest India and Central Asia in the fourth century. This shows that Kumārajīva's exposure to both Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna teachings, as well as the meditation practices in both northwest India and Central Asia, led to his ability to clarify the structures as well as differences in the Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in his texts. Working with his contemporaries in a vibrant intellectual climate, it was thus in part due to the efforts of Kumārajīva, who not only compiled a number of meditation texts but also provided meditation teachings during the translation process, that meditation was able to manifest as an actual discipline

among Chinese Buddhists, of which there was a prior lack due to insufficient clarity and structure.

Subsequently, to understand the nature of Kumārajīva's transmission, the various presentations of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in each of his four meditation texts — *ZCSMJ*, *CFYJ*, *CMYFJ*, and *SWLYF* are analyzed. The analysis of these four texts shows that the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, while appearing in all of Kumārajīva's meditation texts as one of the various meditation methods, have but varying angles of approach and weightage of importance in each of their contexts, due to the different overall focus that each text purports. Despite these variations, we can see from these texts that the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice largely follows a well-structured, sequential practice of the contemplation of the physical bodily characteristics of the Buddha through an image or statue, before reproducing the image with the mental eye. This is followed by contemplating on the life of the Buddha, and then the dharma-body. Contemplations for Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna practitioners differ, primarily in terms of the meditation on the singular Gautama Buddha-figure for the Śrāvakayāna, to that of limitless Buddhas in the ten directions for the Mahāyāna; a shift in the attitude towards meditation, from that of individual liberation for the Śrāvakayāna to the aspiration to benefit and liberate other sentient beings for the Mahāyāna; and the further developed notion of the dharma-body from the contemplation on the Buddha's virtues through his ten epithets, ten powers, four fearlessnesses, and eighteen distinguished characteristics for the Śrāvakayāna, to the contemplation of forty dharmas exclusive to Buddhas, as well as the *prajñā* reality of dharmas as neither arising nor ceasing for the Mahāyāna. Further, it is also observed from the analysis, that the inclinations and tendencies of practitioners, as well as motivations for the practice, need to be considered for the approach towards *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice, as these factors would determine its positioning either as a preliminary practice or the main practice, the sequencing of practice, or how *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* may be blended with other meditation methods. Nevertheless, despite these varied presentations, the practices in Kumārajīva's texts eventually and distinctively round off with the *prajñā* contemplation of emptiness. In addition, the accomplished practice leading to the attenuation of afflictions and transgressions, as well as the attainment of concentration in which Buddhas appear, are recognized across his texts. These meditation practices reflected in Kumārajīva's texts also corroborate

historically with various meditation cave paintings and sculptures in northeast India and Central Asia.

Next, having established the early development trajectory of the *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice, as well as its transmission from the perspective of Kumārajīva's meditation text corpus, these texts are further juxtaposed and compared with relevant *samādhi* texts together with other fifth-century meditation texts, to understand how Kumārajīva's transmission stand within this textual group. Through comparisons with the second century's *BZSM*, other fifth-century meditation texts — *DMCJ*, *WMCF*, and *ZCBYF*, and fifth-century *samādhi* sūtras which mention this practice, including the *GSMJ*, it becomes evident that these texts from the fifth-century as a whole provide indications of the value accorded to *buddhānusmṛti*, as well as rich instructional variations to the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. While the general framework for *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* contemplation remains largely similar, the comparative analysis surfaces interesting differences in content, emphasis, and instructional particularities, resulting in different understandings to the specific confirmatory attainment of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. This illuminates that *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* was far from being a monolithic practice, and should perhaps be regarded as comprising of practices that were very much alive and morphing in tandem with actual, varied meditation experiences. These developments in meditation from third and fourth-century Central Asia were embodied in these different textual witnesses that were transmitted to the Chinese audience. Hence, the comparative analysis also reveals that at the very least, knowledge of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practices available to Chinese Buddhists in the fifth century is much enriched with the appearance of these meditation texts.

From the summation of these findings, I would like to return to the question at the beginning of this thesis regarding the significance of Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* and posit four conclusions in terms of his contributions to the history of Chinese Buddhist meditation. First, Kumārajīva's transmission formalized the doctrine of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* as a form of meditation practice, being amongst the first to widely use the doctrinal item of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, moreover in a substantial number of meditation texts. This formalization is also seen from his

precursory and complete introduction of the revised Five Doors which includes the item of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* within the meditation methods.

Second, his meditation teachings had clarity of structure that responds to practical needs. As recorded by Sengrui, this helped heighten knowledge of standard methodologies and guidelines to the learning of meditation. In particular, for the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, the improved clarity and systematization of practice can be seen from the juxtaposition of instructions in the second-century *BZSM* and Kumārajīva's meditation texts in the fifth century. Additionally, the clarification of differences in cultivation goals and methods between Śrāvakayāna and Mahāyāna *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* not only responded to the needs of different practitioners but also illuminated the relationship between the two, where Śrāvakayāna cultivation is a necessary foundation for Mahāyāna practice. Kumārajīva's systematic meditation transmission is therefore a significant contribution to such a perceived lack of structured meditation practice prior to the fifth century.

Third, Kumārajīva's texts infused the doctrine of *prajñā* into the practice of meditation. His transmission premises the use of *prajñā* to contemplate the reality of all phenomena in the Śrāvakayāna meditation system that he has inherited, and thus was able to integrate the meditation of both vehicles. This *prajñā* insight of the non-arising and non-ceasing of all dharmas, which is constituent of the Mahāyāna contemplation of the dharma-body, is also known as the recollection of the Buddha in his actual *dharmakāya* form, and some scholars have suggested its influence on the later meditation methods propounded by Dao Xin 道信 (580–651 CE) and Hongren 弘忍 (601–675 CE).²¹³ While not in the current purview of this thesis, the influences of Kumārajīva's texts on later meditation methods may be one of the potential areas for extended study.

And fourth, Kumārajīva's meditation texts are considered an important part of a textual group that bears witness to the rich complexity of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*

²¹³ Cf. 白冰(2017), where the author traced Dao Xin's "one-practice absorption" (*yi xing sanmei* 一行三昧)'s influence to the *BZSM* and Kumārajīva's transmission of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Also cf. 方立天(2002, 767); besides the influence on Hongren's meditation method, the author also posits that Kumārajīva's transmission of the Five Doors would play a role in influencing the later expounding of *samatha* (*zhi* 止; cessation) and *vipaśyanā* (*guan* 觀; observation) by the Tiantai school.

practices in the third to fourth century Central Asia and fifth-century China. Besides the increase in meditation caves bearing evidence of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practices that correspond to the meditation instructions described in these fifth-century manuals, the reception of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in China has also left clear traces in Huiyuan's written exchanges with Kumārajīva, where Huiyuan sought clarification on a dozen topics, amongst them that of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*.²¹⁴ These collectively advanced and promoted the practice of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, which was to gain much momentum and further development in the later history of Chinese Buddhist meditation.²¹⁵

Therefore, although Kumārajīva was famed more as an exegete, his involvement in meditation was essentially rather significant, being the first systematic transmitter of Indian and Central Asian meditative traditions to Chang'an, in view of the number of meditation texts he had transmitted, and the impact that his infusion of *prajñā* doctrine into the practice of meditation had on the development of later meditation traditions in China. This study of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* hopefully provides a different perspective to the view that "Kumārajīva's meditation system was marred by its lack of a strict lineage," showing instead that Kumārajīva's meditation system is not only well-grounded in the teachings of early Buddhist texts but that its composite characteristic is, in fact, an extremely valuable and a truer reflection of the actual, complex, and multifaceted meditative practices from northwest India and Central Asia in the third and fourth centuries.²¹⁶

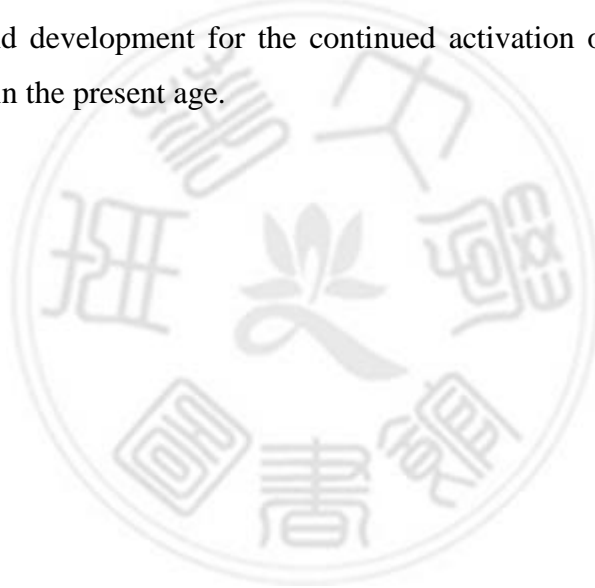
Last but not least, from this research of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in Kumārajīva's meditation texts, I would like to conclude with the larger essential idea that the formation of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practice happened from past practitioners' earnest

²¹⁴ See T45n1856, 134b4-135a11 for the section on "the question and answer on *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*" 「次問念佛三昧并答」.

²¹⁵ This can be seen from the trend in records of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practices and attainments across the biographical records of eminent monks, from Seng You's 僧祐 *Chu san zang jiji* (T55n2145, 出三藏記集; 445–518 CE), Hui Jiao's 慧皎 *Gao seng zhuan* (T50n2059, 高僧傳; 519 CE); Dao Xuan's 道宣 *Xu gao seng zhuan* (T50n2060, 續高僧傳; 645 CE); to Zan Ning's 贊寧 *Song gao seng zhuan* (T50n2061, 宋高僧傳; 988 CE) where there was an evident significant increase of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* practices and attainments towards the later records.

²¹⁶ Cf. Chen(2014, 103; 118). Chen references Huiguan's 慧觀 (350–413 CE) criticism in his preface to a meditation manual translated by Buddhahadra, seemingly targeting at the way Kumārajīva transmitted meditations without a coherent lineage of a meditation system from which its credibility was derived.

attempts at putting their theoretical understandings of Buddhist sūtras into a methodological practice. With the pre-requisite understanding of the basic essence and structure of traditional meditation practice, they were able to skilfully innovate practical methods of meditation that are steeped in the teachings of the Buddha, which were also able to better meet the needs and inclinations of their contemporaries, and supersede previous limitations. From a broader perspective, the development of these multifaceted meditation methods reflects a natural, continuum process of change that reflects pragmatic activation of doctrinal theory for adaptation to different needs. Kumārajīva's varied transmissions of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* in his texts of composite meditative approaches is a valuable reflection of this. Transposing the findings from this research to the contemporary, it may be well worth acknowledging the non-fixed, fluid, and recurrent cycles between doctrinal theory and practice. This validates the opening up of new possibilities and development for the continued activation of doctrinal theory in meditation practice in the present age.



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