

**A Study of the Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the  
Buddha (*Nian-fo*) in the Chinese Buddhist Canon**

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**Summer 2008**

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## Abstract

This study combines textual, philosophical and historical analysis of the benefits of practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*, 念佛) in the Chinese Buddhist Canon. “*Nian-fo*” is an important and popular spiritual practice method in both Mahayana and Early Buddhist (*āgamas*) texts with a range of associated benefits beyond only the aspiration of rebirth into the Western Pure Land as the Pure Land School commonly held. The benefits of *Nian-fo* practice can be grouped into as many as seventeen categories with both worldly and world-transcending benefits, but five primary types of benefits include: (1) retaining enlightened mind, (2) overcoming unwholesome states, (3) development of wholesome states, (4) eliminating afflictions, and (5) most importantly attaining liberation.

Further, the variation in translations of texts from numerous historical periods represents the development of philosophies in different periods. Sutras and treatises can be categorized into philosophies of various periods: the Early Buddha Dharma, Early Mahayana Buddha Dharma, Middle-Mahayana Buddha Dharma, Final-Mahayana Buddha Dharma, etc. The transformation of ideologies caused a range in philosophical interpretation of *Nian-fo* practice. This study attempts to analyze those causes of

transformation and resulting philosophical discrepancies.

Finally, one of the critical factors affecting interpretation of *Nian-fo* practice are the historical issues which surround the translations of texts. These include the support of emperors from each dynasty, skill level of sutra translators, the popularity of disseminating Dharma, and other social circumstances.

The examination of these textual, philosophical and historical elements shows an incredible depth to interpretation of what some view to be such simple practice. This research hopes to elucidate some of that depth and, in the process, show the range of impact that *Nian-fo* practice has had on Chinese culture.

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### ● Introduction

The primary aim of this study is to search the benefits of practicing *Nian-fo* (念佛, Mindfulness of the Buddha) in Chinese Buddhist Canon. In Early Buddhist texts, the “Three Mindfulness” (三念, Mindfulness of the Buddha(念佛), the Dharma(法), and the *Sangha*(僧)) appeared very early. The earliest account of the term *nian-fo* occurs in *Samyuktāgama* 《雜阿含經》: “You have practiced the mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *Sangha* throughout the night.”(汝已長夜修習念佛念法念僧)(T99, p. 254b ) “[You] should practice mindfulness of the attributes of the *Tathāgata* (如來), the Dharma, and the *Sangha*,”(當念如來事法事僧事)(T99, p.254c).Moreover, the Six Mindfulnesses (六念) including Mindfulness of the Buddha(佛), the Dharma(法), the *Sangha* (僧), Precepts(戒), Giving(施), and Heaven (天) are especially method of practice constantly stressed by the Buddha.<sup>1</sup> For example, in the four *Āgamas* all mentioned these methods of practice. Therefore, *nian-fo* (mindfulness of the Buddha) as a

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<sup>1</sup> There are many counts of Six Mindfulnesses appear in the four *Āgamas*. The *Ekottarikagama* 《增壹阿含經》 T125 p.550b,553b,739c,779c.The *Madhyamagama* 《中阿含經》 T26, p.646b. The *Dirghagama* 《長阿含經》 T01,p.12a,52a,54a,59c.The *Samyuktāgama* 《雜阿含經》 T.99,145b,237c,441a. The 《別譯雜阿含經》 T100,p.490a

method of practice had become popular even from the times of Early Buddha Dharma.

And more importantly, the associated benefits of this method of practice also appear together.

The term *nian-fo* (念佛) first appeared in the sutras of Mahayana Buddha Dharma in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century CE.<sup>2</sup> When the transmission and translation of sutras first started during the Late Han Period by An shi gao<sup>3</sup> and *Lokaṣema*, especially after the translation of the *Bhadrāpalasūtra* 《般舟三昧經》 by *Lokaṣema* in 179 CE. The promotion of the *Bhadrāpalasūtra* as the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha by master Hui Yuan (慧遠 334-416CE) of the East Jin dynasty had evolved into a popular trend then. However, based on the *Bhadrāpalasūtra* from which the original master Hui Yuan derived the Mindfulness of the Buddha as a practice, the aim is to be able to be in the presence of Buddha at the moment, and to be able to see Buddha face-to-face. It was during the period of the second master Shan Dao (善導 613-681) of the Tang Dynasty, who developed Reciting the Buddha's Name based on the *Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra* 《觀無量壽經》. And, the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha was directed at the sole purpose of aspiring to be reborn into the Western Pure Land.<sup>4</sup> As a method of fact, the shift of

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<sup>2</sup> T 417, p 899 b

<sup>3</sup> Gao seng zhuan《高僧傳》T2059, p.324, a9-10. An shi gao went to Luo yang in 148CE in the Eastern Han dynasty. He did the translation work for more than 20 years.

<sup>4</sup> Shan dao(善導)T1753. *Guan wu liang shou fo jing shu* 《觀無量壽佛經疏》 p.246b



emphasis was due to the changes of environment and condition of the times, which is beyond the scope of this research.

As mentioned above, in Pure Land School's texts, the practice of *Nian-fo* has been emphasized. However, the definition of *Nian-fo* is "Reciting the (*Amitabha*) Buddha's Name" and in which's benefit is mainly to be reborn in the Western Pure Land. Actually, "*Nian-fo*" is an important and common spiritual practice method. It is often mentioned in both Mahayana and Early Buddhist texts. Every spiritual practice all gives rise to some level of purpose, effect or result, so as Mindfulness of the Buddha. I summarized the purpose, effect and result as "benefit". In the study I try to find out the original meaning and the benefits of the practice of *Nian-fo* within the entire Buddha Dharma.

With the limited numbers of Sanskrit literature available, a reasonable source for the study of entire Buddhism would be from the Chinese Canon. Chinese Buddhist Canon (Taisho daizokyo) has two features.

1. It preserves the most completed sutras and treatise.

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T1761, *A mi tuo jing yi shu* 《阿彌陀經義疏》, p.361, c24-27,  
 See also T1969, *Le bang wen lei* 《樂邦文類》 p. 209c-210a  
 "why not asking people to practice visualizing, instead, teaching them to recite the Buddha's name. Shan Dao explained that is because people have many karmic obstacles, untrained mental status, restless and unsettled mind, with such conditions, practicing visualization will not do any good. Thus, the sages, out of sympathy, suggested lay people reciting Buddha's name directly as form of practice."

2. The notation of date and era of translation was the clearest one. Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese mostly between 150-800CE.

It is the version most commonly used by scholars for reference. Owing to the development of technique, the digital version of Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka (CBETA-Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association) is available now, thus through searching engine we can find out all textual sources regarding to *Nian-fo* (念佛, Mindfulness of the Buddha), and the benefits of *Nian-fo*, thus it is the technique make this research possible. Therefore, searching the term of “*Nian-fo*”(念佛) through CBETA, we can locate many related texts, and by analyzing the date of translation of the texts, the appearance of the benefits (of *Nian-fo*) by the order of dynasty then can be sorted. As mentioned above, actually, the earliest account of the term of “mindfulness of the Buddha” appear in the *Āgamas*, and also coexisting along with “mindfulness of the Dharma” and “mindfulness of the *Sangha*”. Interestingly, I found out that its primary benefit is to gain rebirth in heaven or attain nirvana. However, there is no concept of Pure Land or Western Pure Land in the *Āgamas*.

If we examine from the viewpoints expressed in the Chinese Buddhist Canon (Taisho Tripitaka), we will find that the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha was actually

recorded starting from the Four *āgamas* of Early Buddha Dharma. Later, through the periods of sectarian Buddhism, the *Prajñā* sutra period of the Early Mahayana Buddha Dharma, the Consciousness Only and *Tathāgata-garbha* period of the Middle Mahayana Buddha Dharma, till the Esoteric Buddhism period of the Final Mahayana Buddha Dharma,<sup>5</sup> the benefits of the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha can be grouped into as many as seventeen categories, and not just aspiring to be reborn into the Western Pure Land as Pure Land School commonly held.

## ● The Methodology and Scopes

In this study, I will first collect the textual sources and secondary sources. Searching through the CBETA, a lot of sources related to the benefits of Nian-fo are found in the sutras and *śāstras*

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<sup>5</sup> Yin Shun. *Integration of the primitive Buddhist scriptures* 《原始佛教聖典之集成》, (Taipei : Zheng Wen Publisher, 1985.) pp.1-3. Among the Japanese scholars, there are different opinions. They divided the Early Dharma into three periods-Fundamental Buddhism, Early Buddhism and Sectarian Buddhism. According to Yin Shun, after the split of 大眾部 Mahasanghika and 上座部 Theravada is “Sectarian Buddhism.”

Yin Shun . *The Origin and Development of Early Mahayana Buddhism* 《初期大乘佛教之起源與開展》, ( Taipei : Zheng Wen Publisher, 1988).p.22-32

Yin Shun . *History and Theory of Indian Buddhism* 《印度佛教思想史》, (Taipei : Zheng Wen Publisher, 1983). p.81,119,153,141,241,283,285.

First, I try to locate the materials that relate to the practice of “Mindfulness of the Buddha” by searching the term “*Nian-fo*” (念佛) through the Chinese Buddhist Canon (CBETA) besides those from the Pure Land School.. Second, try to find out the benefits of practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha. In Early Buddhist texts, “Mindfulness of the Buddha” (念佛) is often accompanied by Mindfulness of the Dharma and the *Sangha*, or adding “morality, liberality, celestial beings”(戒施天) becoming six mindfulnesses, or adding “on peace, mindfulness on *ānāpāna* (the in- and out-breathing), on the body, and on death,”<sup>6</sup> becoming ten mindfulnesses. In Mahayana Buddhist texts, the term “*Nian-fo*” is sometimes accompanied by “*Nian* 念+*fo gong de* 佛功德”, (mindfulness of “the Buddha’s merits”) or *Nian*+“Buddha’s good appearances” (念+佛相好.). Moreover, it also appears in various different kinds of pattern or combination, such as, “念+佛恩德” (*Nian*-Buddha’s grace), “念+佛教法” (*Nian*-Buddha’s teaching), “念+佛十號” (*Nian*-Buddha’s ten names), “念+佛十力” (*Nian*-Buddha’s ten powers), “念+佛法身” (*Nian*-Buddha’s Dharma-body).

All these kinds of pattern apply to the same combination “念+xxx”(*Nian*+xxx). In 念+xxx, the *Nian* here represents verb. The xxx is combination of adjective+noun, with one

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<sup>6</sup> Ekottaragama 《增壹阿含經》, translated by Saṅghadeva in 397CE in Eastern Jin dynasty. T125/739c, 779c,781a.

exception of one combination, which is “念佛三昧”( *Nian-fo samādhi*). In this

combination should be read as 念佛+三昧( *Nian-fo+ samādhi*)

Surprisingly, the associated benefits related to the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha can be grouped into as many as seventeen categories, and not just aspiring to be reborn into the Western Pure Land as commonly held. The benefits also include overcoming fear(除怖畏), overcoming obstructions(除障, 罪), gaining rebirth in heaven(得生天), increase virtue(增長福德) release from woeful realms(離惡趣), attaining samadhi(成三昧) and Acquiring wisdom (得智慧) and so forth.

The focus of this study will be on the *Sutra-pitaka* and *Castra-pitaka* of the Chinese Buddhist canon. It will include texts from *Āgama* section to Esoteric section (T001-T1420) (T1536-T1669),<sup>7</sup> excluding the Vinaya section. Totally, 27 volumes and 1554 texts will be investigated.

## ● Purpose

The main purpose of the study is to search the original meaning of *Nian-fo* and the results (benefits) of the practice within the entire Buddha Dharma. Thus the scope of this study

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<sup>7</sup> A Catalogue of the Taisho Tripitaka in CBETA. 2007

focuses on sutras and *śāstras* (treatises) in both Early Buddha Dharma and Mahayana Buddha Dharma, excluding the commentaries of Pure Land School. As mentioned above, the variations are due to the sutras or treatises being translated in different periods of time and belong to different system of thoughts. Therefore, in the study I will exam and analyze the data, try to find out what are the benefits related to the practice of *Nian-fo*, trace the development of the benefits of practicing *Nian-fo* and changing through timeline. Moreover, I also try to exam and analyze further the reasons of transformation of various benefits in different periods of times.

The benefits have different content or explanation across various texts. It is also discovered that the benefit varies in different eras depends on the popularity of a text in each time period. With further study and analyzing it is possible to pinpoint its cause and transformation of the thoughts, thus allows sorting out the benefits that being emphasized by each system of thoughts, and finding the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha has such vast benefits.

The variation in translations of sutras from various period of times represent the development of philosophies in different periods. All sutras and treaties can be categorized into different philosophy of various periods, for example, the Early Buddha Dharma, Early Mahayana Buddha Dharma, Middle-Mahayana Buddha Dharma,

Final-Mahayana Buddha Dharma and so forth. The benefits of mindfulness of the Buddha have been interpreted differently in different periods of time, which indicate the transformation of ideologies, thus the emphasis of the benefits of mindfulness of the Buddha were all different.

It is also found that the benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha including all teaching and benefit of Buddha Dharma, such as Buddhist Cosmology, the concept of liberation from the reincarnation within the three realms, the perception of duality (man and woman), perception of mind and body, perception of spiritual practice to liberations, and perception of spirits and Deities, etc.

This is a combination of textual, philosophical and historical study.

- **The majority Existing Researches**

Although there are many studies discussed and researched about the thought or practice of mindfulness of the Buddha, the majority existing researches of the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha focus on the study of sutras or treaties of Pure Land, the

philosophy from Pure Land masters, or the study of the Sukhāvātī (Western Pure Land).<sup>8</sup>

There are few documents that discuss its benefit from the perspective of the whole Buddha Dharma.

According to the data, i.e. sutras, sastras derived from CBETA, the content can be dealt with in five Chapters. Chapter I. Introduction. Chapter II. Attempts to restore the original meaning of the term *Nian-fo* and discuss several issues that related to the practice of *Nian-fo*. Chapter III. Investigates the benefits of practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha. Chapter IV. Analysis of the passages of the benefits of practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha. Chapter V. Conclusion

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<sup>8</sup> Hisao Inagaki. *The Three Pure Land Sutras: A Study and Translation from Chinese*. Kyoto: Nagata Bushodo. 1995.

Yingxun Cai. 蔡纓勳 *A Study of Thought of Shan-tao* 《善導思想之研究》 Ph.D. Dissertation--Taiwan Teacher's University, 1997."Fa zang wen ku". Gaoxiong: Fo guang shan wen jiao ji jin hui Publisher. 2004. Foard, James, Solomon, Michael, Payne, Richard k. eds., *The Pure Land Tradition: History and Development*. California: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1996.

Kenneth K Tanaka. *The Dawn of Chinese Pure Land Buddhist Doctrine*. New York: State University of New York press, 1990.

Mark L.Blum. *The Origins and Development of Pure Land Buddhism*. New York:Oxford University Press, 2002

Luis O Gomez. *The Land of Bliss. The Paradise of the Buddha of Measureless Light: Sanskrit and Chinese Versions of the Sukhavativyūha Sutra*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996.



## Chapter II

### Several Issues Relating to Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha

#### (*Nian-fo*)

##### ● The original meaning of *Nian-fo*

The Sanskrit word for *nian-fo* (念佛) is *buddhānusmṛti*. *Buddha* means ‘Enlightened One,’ *anusmṛti* means “recollection”.<sup>9</sup> The Pali term for *nian-fo* is *buddhānussati*, which means mindfulness upon the Buddha’s virtues,<sup>10</sup> recollection of the qualities of the Buddha.<sup>11</sup> In the Mahayana sutras, the earliest account of the term *buddhānusmṛti* (*nian-fo*) occurs in the *Bhadrāpalasūtra* 《般舟三昧經》, however, the Sanskrit version of the sutra was not well preserved.<sup>12</sup> The Sanskrit *Sukhāvatīvyūhaḥ* sutra 《阿彌陀經》 has better preservation and was translated into Chinese by *Kumārajīva* between 402-412 CE,<sup>13</sup> which is considered the early Mahayana sutra. Therefore, some *Sukhāvatīvyūhaḥ* sutra’s contents are quoted in the study. In the Sanskrit *Sukhāvatīvyūhaḥ* sutra 《阿彌陀經》, the equivalent words for *nian-fo* (念佛) are *Buddha-manasikara* and *Buddha-anusmṛti*.

<sup>9</sup> Monier-Williams, Monier, ed.. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, New Delhi: Asia Educational Services, 2001, p.31

<sup>10</sup> Aggamahapandita, A.P. Buddhaddatta Mahathera, *concise Pali-English Dictionary*, Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries Co., LTD. P.195.

<sup>11</sup> *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist technical Terms & Doctrines*.  
[http://www.budsas.org/ebud/bud-dict/dic\\_idx.htm](http://www.budsas.org/ebud/bud-dict/dic_idx.htm)

<sup>12</sup> Harrison Paul. *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddhas of the Present*. Tokyo: The International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1990.

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix: Spreadsheet I Texts Relating to the Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*) in Chinese Buddhist Canon.

*Buddha-manasikara* means attention directed towards the Buddha(作意,起心專注) and the *Buddha-anusmṛti* means denoting recollection of the qualities of the Buddha (憶念,憶持不忘). -*anusmṛti* means 'recollection'(隨念), meditation, or contemplation.<sup>14</sup> This evidence was found in the Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon. In the 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph the word buddhamanasikāra appears and in the 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph the word buddhānusmṛtiḥ appears.

The content is as follows:<sup>15</sup>

Tatra teṣāṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ taṃ śabdaṃ śrūtvā buddhamanasikāra utpadyate, dharmamanasikāra utpadyate, saṃghamanasikāra utpadyate... //6//

Tatra teṣāṃ manuṣyāṇāṃ taṃ śabdaṃ śrūtvā buddhānusmṛtiḥ kāye

saṃtiṣṭhati, dharmānusmṛtiḥ kāye saṃtiṣṭhati, saṃghānusmṛtiḥ kāye saṃtiṣṭhati | ...//7//

“*Buddhānussati: Nian-fo*” means “recollection of the virtues of the Buddha, mindfulness upon the Buddha’s virtues”. Therefore, it emphasized the mindfulness and the Buddha’s virtues. In this study, I employ “Mindfulness of the Buddha” for the Chinese term *Nian-fo* (念佛).

The term *Buddhānussati* appears frequently in Indian texts, particularly in the four

*Nikayas* of Early Buddhism, *buddhānussati* constitutes one of the six mindfulnesses. The

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> Digital Sanskrit Buddhist Canon. <http://www.uwest.edu/sanskritcanon/Sutra/roman/Sutra32.html>  
Source: Vaidya, Dr. P.L ed. *Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 17 Mah āy ā na-s ū tra-sawgrahah (part 1)*. Darbhanga :The Mithila Institute, 1961

six mindfulnesses often described in the Suttas (e.g. *AN.VI.10, 25; DN.33*) are:

1. *Buddhānussati*: mindfulness of the virtues of the Buddha.
2. *Dhammānussati*: mindfulness of the virtues of the Dhamma.
3. *Saṅghānussati*: mindfulness of the virtues of the *Saṅgha*.
4. *Silānussati*: mindfulness of one's own moral virtue.
5. *Cāgānussati*: mindfulness of one's generosity.
6. *Devatānussati*: mindfulness of the qualities that lead to rebirth as a heavenly being.

The ten mindfulnesses are often described in the Suttas (e.g. *AN.III.70*). Apart from the abovementioned six recollections, the other four recollections are:

7. *Kāyagatāsati*: mindfulness immersed in the body.
8. *Maraṇasati*: mindfulness of death.
9. *Ānāpānasati*: mindfulness of breathing.
10. *Upasamānussati*: mindfulness of the virtues of nibbana -- ultimate pleasure; unexcelled ease, free from birth, aging, illness and death.

In the four *Nikāyas*, the Buddha always taught his disciples to follow and practice the

Buddha's teaching for attaining samadhi, or further for getting rid of suffering of birth and death (i.e. attain Nirvana), and so on. Therefore, one should practice the six or ten mindfulnesses. It can be said that the mindfulness of the Buddha has been an important practice since the Buddha's time, and the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha also often mentioned in Mahayana texts.

### ● On the Benefits

The Dharma is like medicine, the purpose is to cure people's illness; likewise, the purpose of Sakyamuni Buddha's teaching is to lead sentient beings out of the suffering of samsaric birth and death. According to texts, the Buddha had pointed out countless paths to sentient beings according to their dispositions. The basic aim of his forty-nine year effort at Dharma teachings is to benefit sentient beings. Therefore, different approaches to practice have been enacted to benefit sentient beings. For example, Master Yin Shun in his published work "Fundamental Buddhism", stated, "The Dharma is centered on sentient beings, they being its core. Any attempt to view the Dharma from the standpoint of the universe or society, physically or spiritually, is destined to miss the true meaning of the Dharma."<sup>16</sup> Therefore, the gist of the primary way of practice as enunciated by the

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<sup>16</sup> Yin Shun. *Fundamental Buddhism* 《佛法概論》 (Taipei: Zheng wen publisher, 2000) pp.43-44.

Buddha is embodied in the Three practices (Pillars) – Precepts, Concentration, and Wisdom, the Eightfold Paths – Right View, Right Intention, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration. The benefits or results that would accrue from learning and practicing the many ways as taught by the Buddha can be summarized as the ability to accumulate merits from the Three Realms or to extinguish afflictions arising from the three mental poisons, greed, hatred, and ignorance. If going further into details, benefits can be of two kinds: one is increase well-being in this lifetime and the next lifetimes (増上生 exalted birth; Skt. *abhyudaya*;) <sup>17</sup> (s.hodge ), the other is the assuredness of unique concentration and finally attain liberation (Nirvana) or Buddhahood (決定勝 definitive excellence ,Skt. *niḥśreyasa*;) <sup>18</sup> (s.hodge)

The exalted birth is the fruits associated with the human and heavenly realms. If sentient beings aspire to giving, observing precepts, enduring mistreatments (forbearance), practicing meditation, all in accordance with the teachings of Buddha, they will derive benefits in the present life such as meritorious paybacks, wealth and longevity or even

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<sup>17</sup> Digital Dictionary of Buddhism

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?58.xml+id\('b589e-4e0a-751f](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?58.xml+id('b589e-4e0a-751f)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6c.xml+id\('b6c7a-5b9a-52dd'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6c.xml+id('b6c7a-5b9a-52dd'))

reborn into the higher heavenly realms in next life.<sup>19</sup> The mind that aspires toward the meritorious paybacks of the human and heavenly realms is the mind of sublimation, i.e., aspiring to a future payback better than today's. Going one step further by practicing the definitive excellence, we will be able to eradicate afflictions, ultimately and absolutely get rid of suffering and attaining cessation of suffering. *Nāgārjuna* also said, “First strive for the exalted birth (increasing well-being), then follow with the assuredness of unique concentration, hence gradually attaining the liberation (Nirvana) or Buddhahood.”<sup>20</sup> The benefits of the definitive excellence manifest in the complete elimination of afflictions due to greed, hatred, and ignorance, hence confirming the attainment of nirvana of stillness and serenity. It has been stated in *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* that “All sentient beings have two kinds of fulfillment; one originates from the exalted birth, and the second from the definitive excellence. The former aims at wholesome deeds while the latter, annihilation of craving and attainment of nirvana, the ultimate stillness.”<sup>21</sup> Further summarizing and following the explanation of the above statement from *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*, these two kinds of benefits can be

<sup>19</sup> *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*,《瑜伽師地論》「又有三種為諸樂欲 增上生者所說真實增上生道。一者布施。得大財富。二者持戒。得住善趣。三者修定。遠離苦受。得生一向無有惱害樂世界中。」T157p.349, b19-23

<sup>20</sup> *Zhong guan bao man lun song* 《中觀寶鬘論頌》Nagarjuna. Translation by Ren guang from Tibetan into Chinese. (Taipei: Fu zhi zhi sheng publisher.福智之聲出版社, 1999). p.1

<sup>21</sup> *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*《瑜伽師地論》「調諸有情有二種滿。一增上生滿。二決定勝滿。增上生滿者。謂往善趣。決定勝滿者。謂愛盡離欲寂滅涅槃。」T1579, p.370, b19-22

categorized as worldly and world-transcending benefits. Similarly, they can be classified as expedient benefits and ultimate benefits.

According to the sequence of text translation, the earliest account of benefit of *Nian-fo* appears in *Da fang bien fo bao en jing* 《大方便佛報恩經, T156》, translated between 25-220CE, and translator is unknown. It states that *Nian-fo* can overcome fear (除怖畏 T156,p.156b), and gain a male rebirth(得成男身 p.152b). The next benefit of *Nian-fo* appears in *A nan wen shih fo chi hsiung ching* 《佛說阿難問事佛吉凶經 T492》, translated by An Shih-kao(安世高) between 148-170 CE. It shows that *Nian-fo* can obliterate diseases (p.753). It further indicates that the benefit of *Nian-fo* appears in *Lokanuvartana sutra* 《佛說內藏百寶經 T807》, translated by Lokasema(支婁迦讖) between 168-186 CE, that the practitioner can see Buddha and so forth.

I will discuss the benefits in terms of the sequence of text translation.

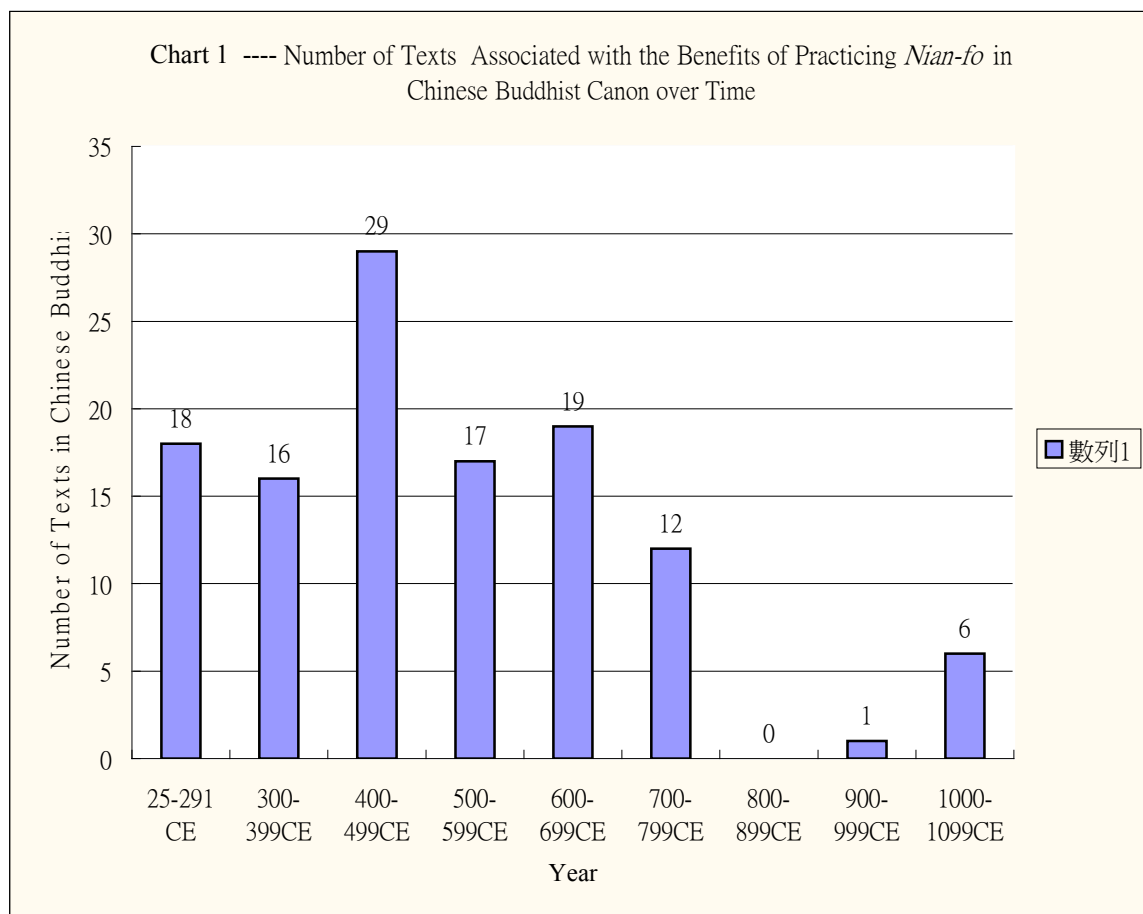
## ● Texts Relating to the Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha

### (*Nian-fo*)

First of all, the following is a chart and a demonstration of statistic of sutras, sastras that related to the benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*).

Chart 1 Number of Texts Associated with the Benefits of Practicing *Nian-fo* in Chinese

Buddhist Canon over Time



There are totally 119 Texts associated with the benefits of practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha. There are as many as 29 texts in the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries. This is followed by 19 texts in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, 18 Texts in the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century and 17 texts in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. In the fifth century the main translators of sutras and sastras were *Kumārajīva*, *Buddhabhadra*, *Dharmakṣema*, *Guṇabhadra*, *Guṇavarman*; in the sixth century, *Bodhiruci*,



*Narendrayaśas, Ji-zang, Dharmakṣema, and Jñānagupta*,<sup>22</sup> and in the seventh century, Xuan-zang and *Dharmagupta*.

As for the sutras and sastras, most of them emphasize the benefits of seeing the Buddha (65), attaining *samādhi* (25) and increasing virtues (21).<sup>23</sup>

The main reason why the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*) is so prevalent, according to Yin Shun, is because it is a way for Buddha's disciples to show their cherished memory of the Buddha, to demonstrate their yearning toward the Buddha.

But the more positive way to cherish the memory of the Buddha is to learn and practice what Buddha said. If those who practice Buddha dharma do not attain the stage of non-return, but must be reincarnated, then it is still possible that they could be reborn to the Three Evil Realms. This should be the main reason to cherish the Buddha and Dharma. Buddhas are everywhere. We can practice *nian-fo* for achieving *nian-fo samādhi*.

Through the *nian-fo samādhi* we can see the Buddha and listen to the Buddha's teaching.

Furthermore, we can ask questions. That is very great and ideal. Through *nian-fo* we can

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<sup>22</sup> Sutras and sastras translated in the fifth and sixth centuries are listed below: The texts translated by Kumārajīva between 402 and 412 CE in Yao Qin dynasty are T456, T586, T201, T382, T426, T365, T616, T614, T625, T1659, T613, T642T, 617, T1521, T223, T653, T262, T310, T657, T1646, and so on. Buddhābhaddra of Eastern Jin dynasty translated T278, T1012, and T643 between 418 and 422 CE. Dharmakṣema of Northern Liang dynasty translated T374, T1581, T397, T663, and T1488 between 414 and 421 CE. Guṇabhadra of Liu Song dynasty translated T99, T271, T462, and T353 between 435 and 443 CE. Guṇavarman of Liu Song dynasty translated T1487, T1503, and T1582 between 431 and 434 CE.

<sup>23</sup> See Chart 2: Benefits of practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha in Chapter III.

also experience the Buddha's Land, we can see the Buddhas and listen to the Buddha's teaching, which could fulfill our wishes. These are the reasons why the practice of *nian-fo* is so popular.<sup>24</sup>

### ● Different Flourishing Periods of Mahayana Texts and Thoughts

Since the Chinese translations of sutras and treatises occurred over a range of period, the resulting sutras and treatises that emerged in each dynasty or century also differed from one to another. Accordingly, the period during which the sutras and treatises of the Mahayana traditions became popular is divided into the Early, the Middle, and the Final Periods, each dominated by a different system of thought.

According to “Integration of the primitive Buddhist scriptures”

《原始佛教聖典之集成》<sup>25</sup> and “The Origin and Development of Early Mahayana Buddhism” 《初期大乘佛教之起源與開展》, the sutras (Buddha's teaching ,Buddha Dharma) can be divided into three periods: Buddha Dharma, Mahayana Buddha Dharma

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<sup>24</sup>Yin Shun. *Hua yu ji* 華雨集 二 (Taipei : Zheng wen Publisher, 1988.).pp274-276

<sup>25</sup> Yin Shun. *Integration of the primitive Buddhist scriptures* 《原始佛教聖典之集成》 pp.1-3, “Among the Japanese scholars, there are different opinions. They divided the Dharma into three periods-Fundamental Buddhism, Early Buddhism and Sectarian Buddhism.” According to Yin Shun, after the split of 大眾部 Mahasamghika and 上座部 Theravada , is “Sectarian Buddhism.”

and Esoteric Mahayana Buddha Dharma

1. 5<sup>th</sup> BCE~1CE: Buddha Dharma(佛法)--Four *agamas*--Early Buddha Dharma

2. 1~6CE: Mahayana Buddha Dharma (大乘佛法)

a. 1-3CE—Mahayana *Prajñā* sutras (大乘空相應經)--Early Mahayana Buddha

Dharma

b. 4-6CE-- Consciousness-Only sutras (虛妄唯識系經典) Middle Mahayana

Buddha Dharma

c. 4-6CE-- *Tathāgata-garbha* sutras (真常唯心系經典)

3. 7CE~11CE Esoteric Mahayana Buddha Dharma (秘密大乘佛法)--Final Mahayana

Buddha Dharma<sup>26</sup>

Esoteric Mahayana sutras (秘密大乘經典)

The Buddha's *parinibbāna* that triggered perpetual cherishing the memory of the

Buddha" took place after the Buddha's demise during the period of transition from "Early

Buddha Dharma" to "Sectarian Buddhism."<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Yin Shun. *The Origin and Development of Early Mahayana Buddhism* 《初期大乘佛教之起源與開展》, (Taipei : Zheng wen Publisher, 1988).pp.22-32

*History and Theory of Indian Buddhism* 《印度佛教思想史》, (Taipei : Zheng wen Publisher, 1983)p.81,119,153,141,241,283,285

<sup>27</sup> Akira refers the term *Sectarian* or *Nikāya Buddhism* to Hinayana Buddhism or *śrāvakayāna* (vehicle for disciples or hearers), which emerged after the split in the Saṅgha, including Theravāda School. See Hirakawa Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism: Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, trans. and ed. Paul Groner (U of Hawaii: U of Hawaii P, 1990) 7-8, and 260.

In addition, in order to have a better understanding of the historical background of the emergence and development of Mahayana Buddhism and Mahayana sutras, we have to first discuss the reasons of the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism and Mahayana sutras.

### ● The Emergence of Mahayana Buddhism

According to history, primitive Buddhist *Sangha* was divided into two groups due to the contradiction that occurred over the relaxation of number of Vinaya rules about a century after the passing away of the Buddha. The elder group was known as ‘*Theravāda*’ (Doctrine of Elders) and the later group was known as ‘*Mahāsaṅghika*’ (those of the great community). In a few centuries of time, this fundamental division of *Sangha* led to the emergence of various schools of Buddhism focusing on different philosophical points of the doctrine. Some of these schools, which focused on similar philosophical views, united while some were further separated into sub-divisions due to difference of viewpoints. Some became very popular while some could not last long. As a result of these various earlier developments, the Mahayana School of Buddhism arose some time between 150 BCE and 100 CE and it became a very popular school of Buddhism. However, its origin is neither associated with any founder nor uniquely linked to any early school<sup>28</sup>. It first

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<sup>28</sup> Peter Harvey, *An Introduction to Buddhism* ( New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher Pvt. Ltd,

arose in northern India, and the teaching later spread to other areas mainly including East Asian and central Asian countries. *The Encyclopedia of Britannica* introduces Mahayana Buddhism as follows: “Beginning about AD 150, trade between India, China, and the Roman Empire brought Indian people and ideas into China. Buddhism traveled overland from India to China as Mahayana monks rode with the traders’s caravans. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> century the Mahayana sutras, key texts on the teachings of the Buddha, were translated into Chinese and the work of translation reached its peak in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>29</sup>

A Japanese scholar Hirakawa, who indicated that there are three reasons for the emergence of Mahayana Buddhism, he states “Three sources appear to have made significant contributions to the rise of Mahayana Buddhism. The first source is *Nikāya* (Sectarian) Buddhism.... The second source is the biographical literature of the Buddha composed by people sometimes said to have belonged to the ‘vehicle that praised the Buddha’ (Ch. tsan-fo sheng).... The third source is stūpa worship. Even the origins of Mahayana Buddhism are still not completely understood.”<sup>30</sup>

However, according to Yin Shun, he did not agree with all of Hirakawa’s opinions. He pointed out that “‘The Buddha’s *Parinibbāna* that triggered perpetual cherishing the

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1990) p.88.

<sup>29</sup> *The New Encyclopadia of Britannica*. 1998. Vol.7. P.697. See also Chart I. Evidences are found from the sutras and sastras translations.

<sup>30</sup> Hirakawa Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Sakyamuni to Early Mahayana* ed. and trans. Paul Groner (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990) 260.

memory of the Buddha' is the primary force for the development of Mahayana Buddha-Dharma from [early] Buddha Dharma.”<sup>31</sup> Moreover, Yin Shun analyzed further that “Mahayana Buddha Dharma” has introduced Buddhas and pure lands of ten directions and countless Bodhisattvas. Buddhas and Bodhisattvas exist forever, thus, the mode as regards “The Buddha’s *Parinibbāna* that triggered perpetual cherishing the memory of the Buddha” has changed relatively. Nevertheless, as invocation and visualization of Buddhas were essential practices for aspirants of the Bodhisattva path who aims at attaining supreme Buddhahood, the essence as regards “cherishing the memory of the Buddha” (though the memory for Sakyamuni Buddha has faded) did not vary very much.<sup>32</sup> The rise of Mahayana was at that time a major trend in the Buddhist world (vary in levels). Mahayana was complicated nonetheless inclined towards the same ultimate goal—attainment of Buddhahood. In terms of the human dispositions, there are some believers who stand mostly on faith. There are also the Dharma practitioners who see the importance of wisdom. Still others lay emphasis on compassion and cultivate themselves in Bodhicitta. In the process and conditions of the rise of Mahayana, it is these diverse human dispositions that have conditioned the formation of a wide range of

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<sup>31</sup> Yin Shun. *The Origin and Development of Mahayana Buddhism*. (Taipei : Correct Listening Publisher, 1988) p.17 佛涅槃所引起的，「對佛的永恆懷念」，為「佛法到大乘佛法」的原動力..

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. pp.17-18.

period of Mahayana Buddhist texts.<sup>33</sup>

Master Yin Shun summarized that at the time of Sectarian Buddhism, there were some important points contribute to the rise of Mahayana Buddhism that are worth discussed.

These points are as follows:<sup>34</sup>

1. “To the view of the tainted (有漏的) Buddha-body, expounds on the untainted Buddha-body,” Theravāda (上座部) asserts that the Buddha’s body is tainted (無漏的); however, mahasanghikas (大眾部) asserts that it is untainted. The latter is close to Mahayana thought. (對佛身有漏的 佛身無漏說)
2. “To the view that all Dharma (teaching) has substance, expounds on the all dharmas (mental states) have non-substance,” *Sarvāstivādin* (說一切有部) asserts that all dharmas have substance; but, *Vetullaka* (方廣部) or *Mahāsuññatavādin* asserts that all dharmas have no substance. (對一切有的 一切無說)
3. “To the view of the impure mind-nature, expounds on the originally pure mind-nature,” *Sarvāstivādin* (說一切有部) asserts that the mind-nature is impure whereas *Mahāsaṅghika* (大眾部) asserts that the original mind-nature is pure. (對心性不淨的

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<sup>33</sup> Yin Shun. *The Origin and Development of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Taipei : Correct Listening Publisher, 1988.) p.17-18. 「大乘佛法」，傳出了現在的十方佛，十方淨土，無數的菩薩，佛與菩薩現在，所以「佛涅槃所引起的，對佛的永恆懷念」，形式上多少變了。....以根性而論，有重信的信行人，重智的法行人，更有以菩薩心為心而重悲的；性習不同，所以在大乘興起的機運中，經典從多方面傳出，部類是相當多的。

<sup>34</sup> Ibid pp.360-367.

心性本淨說)

4. “To the view of gradual realization of truth,” *Sarvāstivādin* (說一切有部) asserts that realization of truth occurs gradually while the *Vibhajjavādin* expounds on instant seeing of truth (*abhisamaya*). (對次第見諦的 一念見諦說)

5. “To the view that the five consciousnesses can not be free from defilements, expounds on the five consciousnesses that can be free from defilements,” *Vatsīputrīya* (犢子部) asserts that the five consciousnesses can’t be free from defilements, while *Mahāsaṅghika* (大眾部) and *Mahīśāsaka* (化地部) assert that the five consciousnesses can be free from defilements. (五識無離染 相對的 五識有離染說)

Apparently, the arguments mentioned above regarding the dharmas, Buddha-body, mind-nature, the two modes of realization, and whether the five consciousnesses can or cannot be free from defilements provide evidences for important turning points from Early Buddhism to Mahayana Buddhism. In addition, master Yin Shun summarized further that Early Mahayana laid emphasis on the Dharma. The tradition then was simple and easily understood. It emphasized direct realization of wisdom and de-emphasized discrimination. It sought to live up to the four kinds of purity as prescribed by the Buddha, or the moral precepts of “right speech, right action, and right livelihood” known in the early period. It underlined “the four seeds (or conditions) that lead to the noble path”



(also known as “the four kinds of supports”). It de-emphasized *Sangha* rules and regulations. Given its emphasis on wisdom, the Mahayana style of learning was close to that of the *Mahāsaṅghikas*.<sup>35</sup> It can be said, historically, that Mahayana Buddhism is more concerned with the Buddha's teachings on wisdom, compassion, and emptiness, which emphasizes teaching us how to comprehend the mind of a Buddha, the nature of Dharma and the practice of Bodhisattva Path.

### ● The emergence of Mahayana sutras

The other important issue that should be considered is the sequence of the rise of Mahayana sutras. The compilation of Mahayana sutras spans a period of several centuries. As The Encyclopedia of Religion states, “The development of the Mahayana sutras began with the incipient Proto-Mahayana stage and culminated in about the seventh or eighth century.” (Vol.2 p.457) According to most of the sources<sup>36</sup> the earliest Mahayana sutra is

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<sup>35</sup> Yin Shun. *The Origin and Development of Mahayana Buddhism*. (Taipei : Zheng wen Publisher, 1988) p.16 “初期大乘的興起，是重法的，簡易的，重於慧悟而不重分別的。上追釋尊的四清淨行，或初期的「正語、正業、正命」的戒法；重視「四聖種」（四依），不重僧伽的規制。重慧的大乘，學風與大眾系相近。”

<sup>36</sup> Ryotai Hadani. *An Introduction to Mahayana Sūtras* (Yamaguchi-ken : The Karinbunko, 1971) p.29. Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1987) p.159; *Encyclopedia of Britannica*, Vol.7, P. 697; Mircea Eliade ed, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987) Vol. 2, p.461 and so forth.

*Bhadrāpalasūtra*, which appeared in northwestern and central India.<sup>37</sup> According to Yin Shun, who put forward that the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Lotus) sutra appeared after *Prajñā* (wisdom) sutras and *Manjusri* sutra. The *Prajñā* sutras refer Buddha's wisdom to "omniscience" (*sarvajña*)<sup>38</sup> and "the wisdom of all wisdom" (*sarvajña-jñāna*).<sup>39</sup> Based on the *Prajñā* teaching and *Manjusri* teaching as the foundation, the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* sutra assumes various kinds of skilful means in its teaching. For instance, in chapter IV entitled "Willing Acceptance," the parable of the poor son outlines four different levels of expedient instruction of the Buddha.<sup>40</sup> The Four Levels of Expedient Instruction that correspond to the Dharma are as follows. The first level is about the teaching of the Hinayana. The second level concerns listening to Mahayana teaching by attending Mahayana Dharma assembly, "commenting before the bodhisattvas on the *śrāvaka* practices for taking delight in the Hanayana teaching," prediction of the maha-bodhisattvas who will be attaining Buddhahood, and so forth.<sup>41</sup> The third level concerns the *Prajñā* teaching; for instance, in the *Prajñā* sutras, *Subhūti* spoke to the

<sup>37</sup> Hajime Nakamura, *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*. (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1987) P.159 E. Lamotte asserts that.

<sup>38</sup> <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=一切智>>. See also Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 1185.

<sup>39</sup> <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=一切智智>>. See also Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, n.d, 21 October 2006 <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s4e00-5207-667a-667a.html>>.

<sup>40</sup> Yin Shun. *The Origin and Development of Mahāyāna Buddhism*. (Taipei: Zheng wen Publisher, 1988)

p.1178. translation.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid

bodhisattvas on *prajñā-pāramitā*. The fourth level is that, in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Lotus) sutra, the Buddha revealed the reality through the teaching of expedient means and that the three vehicles were fused into the One Vehicle (*eka-yāna*), also called the Buddha Vehicle (*Buddha-yāna*).

The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Lotus) sutra came after the zenith of the Middle-length *Prajñā* period. It first taught “the equal and universal teaching” and later on the “*Prajñā* teaching.” In fact, in the history of Mahayana Buddhism, it is relatively early when *Subhūti* spoke on the *Prajñā* teaching. The *Manjusri* teaching that commented slightly on the *śrāvaka* practices and advocated the Mahayana teaching took shape in later Minor *Prajñā* period and flourished in the Middle-length *Prajñā* period. The Tientai school distinguishes the Buddha’s teaching into four divisions in chronological order, namely, first, the “*Piṭaka*” (藏 *zang*) that is the Hinayana teaching; second, the “Interrelated” (通 *tong*) that is the *Prajñā* teaching; third, the “distinct” (別 *bie*) that is other “equal and universal” Mahayana teaching; and, fourth, the “Perfect” (圓 *yuan*) that is the teaching of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* sutra.<sup>42</sup> The significance of these four divisions conforms considerably with the formation and development of early Mahayana Buddhism.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>42</sup> <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=化法四教>> p.1325. See also Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s5316-6cd5.html>>.

<sup>43</sup> Yin Shun. *The Origin and Development of Mahayana Buddhism*. (Taipei: Zheng wen Publisher, 1988)

Moreover, we have to discuss the three major divisions within Mahayana tradition and their particular teachings. It will provide basic knowledge for better understanding of Mahayana thoughts and why the benefits of practicing mindfulness of Buddha result in those various kinds of benefits.

● **Three Major Divisions of Mahayana Buddhism (tradition) and the Particular Teachings of Each One**

Mahayana Buddhism (texts, thoughts, tradition) can be mainly divided into three systems (three major divisions), which are the Empty Nature Mere Name System(性空唯名系, *Madhyamaka*), the False Imagination Mere Consciousness System (虛妄唯識系, *Yogācāra*, Consciousness Only) and the Truly Eternal Mere Mind System (真常唯心系, *Tathāgatagarbha*).<sup>44</sup>

According to *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* and *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārika*, the Empty Nature Mere Name System (*Madhyamaka*) asserts that all things arise from conditions.

Dependent origination has no inherent nature and is empty. Because it is empty, it has to arise in accordance with conditions. Thus are all things established.<sup>45</sup> As the important

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p.1179 translation.

<sup>44</sup> Yin Shun *The Way to Buddhahood*. (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1998) p.303.

<sup>45</sup> *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārika* 《中論》 T30, no.1564, p. 33 a; see also Yin Shun. *The Way to Buddhahood*. (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1998) p.304.

and representative verse in the *śāstra* says:

All things that arise from causes and conditions I explain as emptiness, as conventional designation, and also as the meaning of the Middle Way.<sup>46</sup>

All things are merely conventionally designated and are empty of self-nature. The other particular teaching is the concept of “two truths”. All Buddhas, following the two truths teach sentient beings the Dharma, following the conventional truth, one can attain the ultimate truth.<sup>47</sup>

The second system is False Imagination Mere Consciousness System (Consciousness Only). According to *Yogācāra*’s doctrines, only consciousness (*Vijñāna*) is true, and all objects of this world external to the mind are false. So, it is stated in *The Thirty Verses on Consciousness-only* (Sanskrit: *Triṃśikā*), “all dharmas are consciousness-only, whole world transformation of consciousness.”<sup>48</sup>

The two well-known teachings of the *Yogācāra* system are that of The Three Natures and the Eight Consciousnesses. The Three Natures are, first, *parikalpita-svabhāva* (徧計所執性) or Imaginary Nature, the phenomena produced from one's illusory attachment and falsely considered to be real; second, Mistaken conceptualization or *Paratantra-svabhāva* (依他起性), referring to the nature of existence as arising from

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<sup>46</sup> *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārika* 《中論》 T30, no. 1564, p.33b.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid p. T30, no. 1564, p. 32, c

<sup>48</sup> *Thirty Verses on Consciousness-only*. T31, no.1586, p.60a-61b. Translated by Xuanzang 玄奘 in 648 CE

causes and conditions, that is, all existence is produced according to cause; thirdly,

*Pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*(圓成實性) or the nature of existence being perfectly

accomplished. This is the highest state of existence conforming to ultimate reality.<sup>49</sup>

The theory of eight kinds of consciousness explains all the phenomena of cyclic existence,

including how rebirth occurs and precisely how karma functions on an individual basis.

Master Yin Shun summarized the doctrine by stating thus:

Dependent origination that has inherent existence is baseless discrimination. Based on consciousness, dependent origination can be established and then cause and effect can be well founded.<sup>50</sup> Realizing that false external objects are manifested through mere consciousness, one can enter reality.<sup>51</sup>

*Madhyamaka* (中觀) and *Yogācāra* (瑜伽) were the only Mahayana schools recognized in India.

The third system is Truly Eternal Mere Mind System (*Tathāgatagarbha*, 如來藏). This

system is based on *Tathāgatagarbha*. According to the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, its

eternal immutability and its Dharma body with pure inherent nature serves as the basis

for birth and nirvana.<sup>52</sup> According to the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* 《楞伽經》, the profound

*Tathāgatagarbha* is the basis of good and evil. The sutra states:

*Tathāgatagarbha* is the source of good and evil, it can create all the sentient beings of

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<sup>49</sup> *Cheng wei shih lun* 成唯識論 T 1585.45c. See also *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* <[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id\('b4e09-6027'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id('b4e09-6027'))>.

<sup>50</sup> Yin Shun. *The Way to Buddhahood* (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1998) p 312.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p.313.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.p 320.

all the transmigrant states, like a magician who can transform himself into various characters...Inherent nature is without defilement and is ultimately pure.<sup>53</sup>

In the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*, *Tathāgatagarbha* is also called “the heart (mind) of pure inherent nature.” However, “from beginningless time it has been permeated by the false and defiled residual habits of meaningless elaboration, which are then called *ālaya* consciousness....If one can completely depart from all falseness and defilement and accomplish all pure virtue, then *Tathāgatagarbha* will be free from its bonds.”<sup>54</sup> In fact, in the *Lankāvatāra-sūtra*, the Buddha states that the empty nature of all dharmas (mental states) is called *Tathāgatagarbha*.<sup>55</sup>

In summary, “Mahayana Buddhism is multi-faceted, so is its method of propagation. And the leading school of thought in Early Mahayana Buddhism was founded on *Prajñā* (wisdom) texts that led to the widely practiced Bodhisattva Way.”<sup>56</sup>

### ● Spreadsheet/Tables/Charts

In order to analyze and understand the data and patterns of benefits of practicing mindfulness of Buddha discovered by the research, the spreadsheets, tables and charts are created.

<sup>53</sup> *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* 4, T16, p.570b.

<sup>54</sup> Yin Shun. *The Way to Buddhahood*. (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1998) pp 320-321;

See also *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*

<[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?59.xml+id\('b5982-4f86-85cf'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?59.xml+id('b5982-4f86-85cf')>)>.

<sup>55</sup> *Lankāvatāra-sūtra* 4, T.16, p.570b.

<sup>56</sup> Yin Shun. *History and Theory of Indian Buddhism* 《印度佛教思想史》, (Taipei : Zheng wen Publisher, 1983.) p.86

The first result of the CBETA searches was placed on the spreadsheet I including Taisho No., title, author, translators, dynasty and year of translation. The second result of the numerical data of benefits of practicing mindfulness of Buddha found in the translations of texts was placed on the spreadsheet II sorted by the year and Taisho number. Besides, there were three tables of the findings being created:

Table 1- Various Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time.

Table 2- Two Kinds of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time.

Table 3- Five Categories of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time

The following are charts showing the analysis of the findings:

Chart 1	Number of Texts Associated With the Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha ( <i>Nian-fo</i> ) in Chinese Canon Over Time
Chart 2	Various Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha ( <i>Nian-fo</i> ) & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Canon Over Time
Chart 3.1	Two Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in



	Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time
Chart 3. 2	Four Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time
Chart 3. 3	Three Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time
Chart 3.4	Three Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time
Chart 3.5	Three Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time
Chart 3.6	Two Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time
Chart 4	Two Kinds of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time.
Chart 5	Five categories of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time
Chart 6.1	Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon during the 1-3 Century

Chart 6.2	Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 4 <sup>th</sup> Century
Chart 6.3	Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 5 <sup>th</sup> Century
Chart 6.4	Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 6 <sup>th</sup> Century
Chart 6.5	Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 7 <sup>th</sup> Century
Chart 6.6	Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 8 <sup>th</sup> Century
Chart 6.7	Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon during the 9 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup> Century
Chart 6.8	Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 11 <sup>th</sup> Century

## Chapter III

### The Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*)

#### ● Seventeen Categories of the Benefits

“Mindfulness of the Buddha” is an important and common spiritual practice method, which is often mentioned in both Mahayana and Early Buddhist (*āgamas*) texts. Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese mostly between 150-800CE. According to Chart 1, which was mentioned in Chapter II, after investigating the selected texts, totally 119 Texts associated with the benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha. As evidenced by the data, the practices of Mindfulness of the Buddha are found in the translations of sutras and treatises written by eminent monks (excluding works advocating similar practices by monks of Pure Land School). These major works were translated and completed between the fifth and eighth centuries covering the dynastic periods of Eastern Jin, Yao Qin and Later Tang (796 CE).

According to the data, the benefits related to Mindfulness of the Buddha can be divided into seventeen categories. These benefits include 1. Not losing Bodhicitta (不失菩提心), 2. Not-giving up enlightened mind (不捨道心), 3. Subduing *māra*, ghosts (降魔, 降鬼), 4. Cure of diseases (除病), 5. Overcoming fear (除怖畏), 6. Overcoming obstructions (除

障, 罪), 7. Gaining the male form (rebirth) (得成男身), 8. Gaining rebirth in heaven (得生天), 9. Increase virtues (增長福德), 10. Release from woeful realms (離惡趣), 11. Eliminate ignorance and afflictions (滅癡惑), 12. Acquiring wisdom (得智慧), 13. Attaining *samādhi* (成三昧), 14. Seeing the Buddha (可見佛 不離佛), 15. Rebirth in Pure Land (得生淨土), 16. Attaining Nirvana (得涅槃), 17. Attaining Buddhahood (得成佛). The categories are as follows:

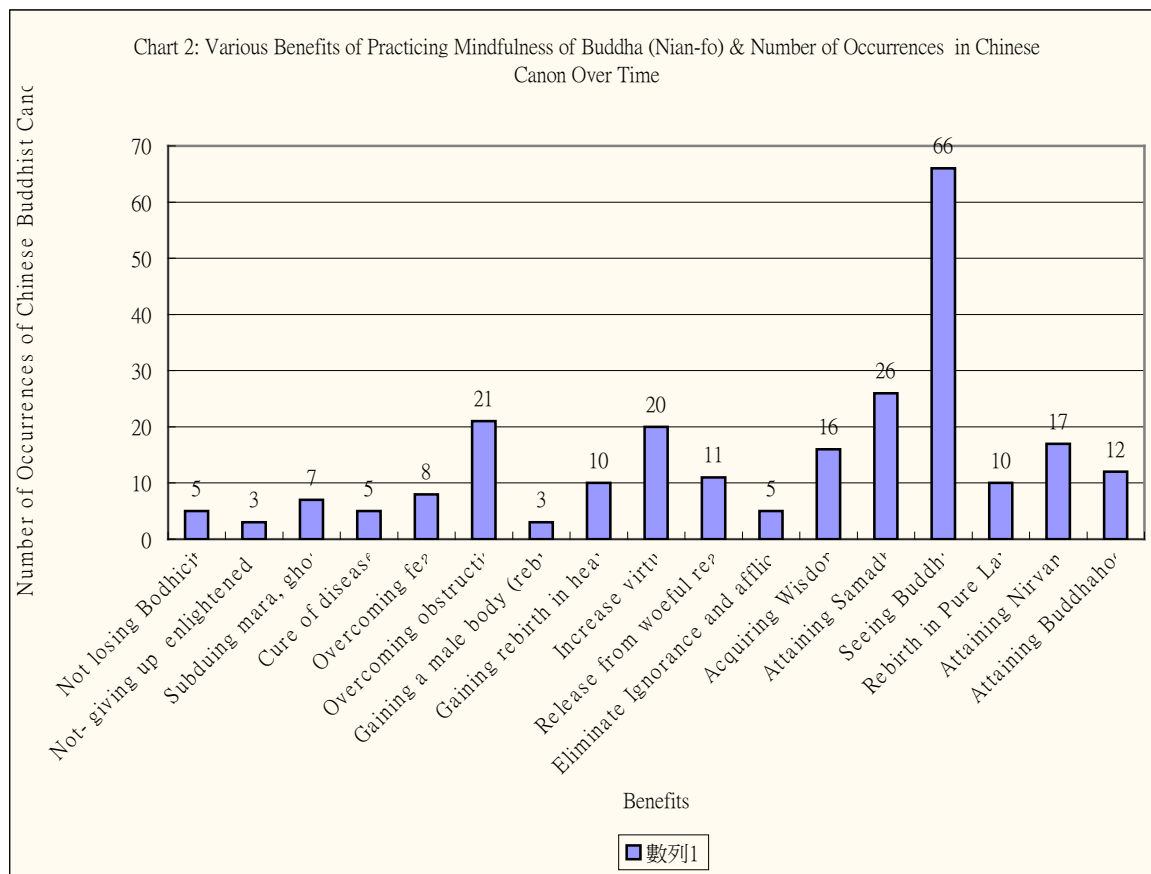
Table 1 Various Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*) & Number of Occurrences in the Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time

	BENEFITS OF	CENTURY									
	MINDFULNESS OF BUDDHA	1~3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	SUM
1	Not losing Bodhicitta  不失菩提心	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	5
2	Not-giving up enlightened mind 不捨道心	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
3	Subduing <i>māra</i> , ghosts  降魔 降鬼	2	1	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	7

4	Cure of diseases 除病	1	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	5
5	Overcoming fear 除怖畏	2	0	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	8
6	Overcoming obstructions 除障, 罪	0	0	12	1	6	2	0	0	0	21
7	Gaining the male form (rebirth) 得成男身	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
8	Gaining rebirth in heaven 得生天	0	1	4	3	0	1	0	0	0	9
9	Increase virtues 增長福德	4	0	14	1	1	0	0	0	0	20
10	Release from woeful realms 離惡趣	0	1	4	1	3	1	0	0	1	11
11	Eliminate ignorance and afflictions 滅癡惑	1	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
12	Acquiring wisdom 得智慧	2	1	8	3	0	2	0	0	0	16
13	Attaining <i>samādhi</i> 成三昧	2	1	13	3	4	2	0	0	1	26

14	Seeing the Buddha 可見佛 不離佛	6	5	34	7	4	7	0	0	3	66
15	Rebirth in (Buddha's) Pure Land 得生淨土	0	2	1	5	1	1	0	0	0	10
16	Attaining Nirvana 得涅槃	0	7	6	2	2	0	0	0	0	17
17	Attaining Buddhahood 得成佛	0	0	4	1	3	1	0	0	3	12

Chart 2: Various Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*) & Number  
of Occurrences in Chinese Canon Over Time



According to the aforesaid metadata, it is clearly evident that Mindfulness of the Buddha or Mindfulness of the Buddha's virtues yields various kinds of benefits. The major ones are being capable of seeing the Buddha and not being separated from Him, which has a normalized count of 66. Secondly, the benefit of attaining meditative concentration *samādhi* has a count of 26. The benefit of overcoming obstructions, getting rid of moral defilement (sin), ranked as third, has a count of 21. The benefit of increasing virtues, ranked as fourth, has a count of 20. The benefit of attaining *nirvāna* has a count of 17,

obtaining rebirth in Pure Land only has a count of 10.

The followings are the benefits as they first appeared. The translations for the major texts were done between 401CE-774CE. The final benefit appeared in 1072CE. That is because Northern Song dynasty reestablished the translation bureau after two centuries of no activities of translation of texts. These 17 kinds of benefits are in order as shown in Table 1.

The various benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha in the Chinese Buddhist Canon first appearance are as follows:

#### 1. Not losing Bodhicitta (不失菩提心)

In the *Puspakūṭadhāraṇī(sūtra)* 《佛說師子奮迅菩薩所問經》, translated between 317-420 CE in Eastern Jin(東晉 317-420), translator is unknown.<sup>57</sup>

One who does not dissociated from Mindfulness of the Buddha, ...one will not lose the *bodhicitta* for many lives. (...不離念佛。所往受生諸根不缺。生生 不失菩提之心。T1357, p875c)

#### 2. Not-giving up enlightened mind (不捨道心)

The earliest account of the term 道心 appears in the first fascicle of *Brahmaviśeṣacintīparipṛcchā(sūtra)*《持心梵天所問經》, translated by Dharmarakṣa 竺法護 in 286 CE in Western Jin dynasty(265-317), it states:

<sup>57</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*  
[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0340.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0340.html)



There are four things that can protect the mind which seeks enlightenment (道心).<sup>58</sup>  
 What are those demonstrated? To constantly practicing mindfulness of the Buddha's virtues; to get established in bodhicitta; to be acquainted with the wise; and to consult and extol Mahayana [teaching]. These are the four [things]. (有四事。能護道心。何等四。意常念佛一切德本。至於道心。習近善友。諮嗟大乘。是為四。)(T15, no 585,p.03b)

### 3. Subduing *māra*, ghosts (降魔, 降鬼)

In the first volume of *Jiu za pi yu jing* 《舊雜譬喻經》, translated by Kang Seng-hui in 251 CE in Wu (222-280)dynasty,<sup>59</sup> it states:

When stumbling upon a ghost [or ghosts], recollect the Buddha with right mindfulness and one's mind will remain composure and experience no fear. (逢見鬼來。正心念佛。志定不懼)(T206/510b)

### 4. Cure of diseases (除病)

In the *Fo shuo a nan wen shi fo ji xiong jing* 《佛說阿難問事佛吉凶經》<sup>60</sup>, translated by An Shi-gao (安世高) between 148 and 170 CE in Later Han dynasty,<sup>61</sup> it states:

If people contract a disease and, instead of mindfulness of the Buddha, they call on a sorcerer to practice divination and entreat the help of wicked deities, the [virtuous] deities leave them without protection. (若有疾病了不念佛。便呼巫師卜問祠祀。請乞邪神。天神離遠不得善護)(T492/753a)

### 5. Overcoming fear (除怖畏)

In the *Da fang bian fo bao en jing* 《大方便佛報恩經》, translated during 25-220 CE,

<sup>58</sup> William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*.  
 <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s9053-5fc3.html>>. See also  
 <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=道心>>.

<sup>59</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, 26 January 2007  
 <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k1005.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1005.html)>.

<sup>60</sup> 《佛說阿難問事佛經》 One Vol. T492. Fo kuang da ci dian. p3697.

<sup>61</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*.  
 <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0761.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0761.html)>.

the author is unknown, it states:

Whoever dwelling in mountains and forests is assailed by fear, if he could mindfulness of the virtues of Buddha, fear will subside. So, one taking refuge in the Triple Gems is truly protected. (又如人在山林曠野恐怖之處。若 念佛功德 恐怖即滅。是故歸依三寶救護不虛 T156/156b)

## 6. Overcoming obstructions (除障, 罪)

The *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra*《大智度論》, translated by *Kumārajīva* between 402-406

CE in Later Qin dynasty (後秦) in Xiao-yao Garden (逍遙園),<sup>62</sup> states:

*Nian-fo samādhi* can eradicate all kinds of afflictions and sins. ...By practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can eliminate serious sin and rescue all sufferings, not to mention the *Nian-fo samādhi*. (是念佛三昧能除種種煩惱種種罪。....以念佛故。能除重罪濟諸苦厄。何況念佛三昧 T1509/ p109a)

## 7. Gaining a male body (rebirth) (得成男身)

The *Drumakinnararājaparipṛcchā(sūtra)* 《佛說陀真陀羅所問如來三昧經》, translated

by *Lokaṣema* 支婁迦讖 between 168-172 CE in Later Han dynasty (後漢), states:

There are seven factors whereby a female quickly becomes a male and proceeds all the way through to the state of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. The first, to always practicing mindfulness of the Buddha and vow to attain the Dharma body(復有七事。母人疾得男子。自致阿耨多羅。何謂七事。常念佛得法身, 常念法得佛慧... T624/361b)

## 8 Gaining rebirth in heaven (得生天)

The *Miṇḍapañha* 《那先比丘經》, translator unknown, translated between 317 and 420

CE,<sup>63</sup> states:

<sup>62</sup> T1509, K549 Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, [http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0549.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0549.html)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. K1002

People in the world who did evil deeds and hid them from others, should they recollect the Buddha at the dying moment, they would reappear in the heavenly realm. ...Though one possesses deep-rooted evil states, if he recollects the Buddha for just a thought moment, he would not fall into state of depravation but would gain rebirth in heaven. (那先言船中百枚大石。因船故不得沒。...人雖有本惡一時念佛。用是不入泥犁中。便生天上。...T1670/701)

#### 9. Increase virtue (增長福德)

In the *Pu sa xing wu shi yuan shen jing* 《菩薩行五十緣身經》, translated by

*Dharmarakṣa* between 266 and 313 CE in Western Jin dynasty,<sup>64</sup> it states:

If people mindfully meditate on the Buddha's merits and virtues, he will acquire immeasurable merits, not to mention paying respect to and extolling the Buddha. (若有入至意 念佛功德 者。其福無量。況為作禮嗟歎者哉。T812/774c).

#### 10. Release from woeful realms (離惡趣)

In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* 《般泥洹經》<sup>65</sup>, translated by Po Fa-zu (白法祖) in

290-306 CE in Western Jin dynasty, it states:

Constantly recollect the Buddha with joy, constantly recollect the Dharma with joy, constantly recollect the *Sangha* with joy, constantly recollect precepts with joy, recollect these four with joy,...All will be accomplishing, one will not fall into evil realm. (...一曰念佛意喜不離。二曰念法意喜不離。三曰念眾意喜不離。四曰念戒意喜不離。念此四喜。必令具足。...不墮惡地。T6/178c)

#### 11. Eliminate Ignorance and afflictions (滅癡惑)

In the *Zhai jing* 《齋經》, translated by Zhi-qian (支謙) between 223-253 CE in Wu

<sup>64</sup> Lancaster. *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*.  
[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0355.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0355.html)

<sup>65</sup> [Soothill] " *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. There are two versions, one the Hīnayāna, the other the Mahāyāna, both of which are translated into Chinese, in several versions, and there are numerous treatises on them. Hīnayāna: 佛般泥洹經 T05, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, tr. by Po Fa-zu CE 290-306 of the Western Jin dynasty,. 大般涅槃經 tr. by Faxian,. 般泥洹經 T06, translator unknown. These are different translations of the same work. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism  
[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6d.xml+id\('b6d85-69c3-7d93'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6d.xml+id('b6d85-69c3-7d93'))

dynasty<sup>66</sup>, it states:

... Those who practice *Nian-fo*, will eliminates ignorance, malicious anger custom entirely. (佛告維耶。..當念佛。...。是念佛者。愚癡惡意怒習悉除。善心自生。 T 87/911b)

## 12. Acquiring Wisdom (得智慧)

In the *Tathāgatamahākaraṇīrdeśa(sūtra)* 《大哀經》, translated by *Dharmarakṣa* in

291CE in Western Jin dynasty (西晉) in Chang-an (長安),<sup>67</sup> it states:

Those who constantly meditate on the Buddha/which is the foundation of wisdom. (其意常念佛 是則為智本 T398/449a)

## 13. Attaining *Samādhi* (成三昧)

The *Bhadrāpalasūtra* (佛說般舟三昧經), translated by *Lokaṣema* (支婁迦讖) in 179

CE in Later Han(後漢)dynasty in Luo-yang(洛陽), states:

By practicing mindfulness of the Buddha, thus one attains emptiness (*sūnyatā*) *samādhi*. That is the true meaning for *nian-fo*. (用念佛故得空三昧。如是為念佛。 T418/905b)

## 14. Seeing the Buddha (可見佛 不離佛)

The *Lokānuvartanasūtra*(佛說內藏百寶經), translated by *Lokaṣema* (支婁迦讖) in

168-186CE in Later Han(後漢)dynasty, states:

When people practice mindfulness of the Buddha with sincerity, the Buddha will appear in front of them. (人有至誠善意念佛者。佛即為現... T807/753c)

## 15. Rebirth in (Buddha's) Pure Land (得生淨土)

In the *Guan ding qi wan er qian shen wang hu bi qiu chou jing* 《灌頂七萬二千神王護

<sup>66</sup> Lancaster.The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue  
[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0720.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0720.html)

<sup>67</sup> Ibid [http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0072.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0072.html)

比丘呪經》, translated by *Śrīmitra* (尸梨蜜多) during 317-322 CE in Eastern Jin (東晉, 317-420),<sup>68</sup> it states:

The Buddha says that if the fourfold disciples namely bhikkhus, bhikkhunis, and male and female lay followers often observe the six monthly *poṣadha*<sup>69</sup> and the three months of abstinence,<sup>70</sup> or if they ardently abide by austere practices days and nights, for those desiring rebirth in Western Land, so long as they recollect day and night, either for a day, or two, or three, or four, or five, or six, or seven, ...at death...they will take conception in the lotus flowers without having gone through the eight unfortunate conditions.<sup>71</sup> (佛言若四輩弟子比丘比丘尼清信士清信女。常修月六齋年三長齋。或晝夜精勤一心苦行。願欲往生西方阿彌陀佛國者。憶念晝夜。若一日二日三日四日五日六日七日。盡其壽命欲終之日。…不經八難生蓮華中。 T1331/533b-c)

## 16. Attaining Nirvana (得涅槃)

In the *Pi ni mu jing*《毘尼母經, *Vinaya-matrika sutra*》, translated between 350 and 431

CE,<sup>72</sup> it states:

A lad, having received the teaching of the Buddha, went and sat under a tree, diligent in practicing the mindfulness of the Buddha's teaching for seven days and seven nights. In the morning of the eighth day, all taints were overcome and he acquired the threefold wisdom (Skt. *tri-vidya*, 三明),<sup>73</sup> six supernatural Powers (Skt. *sad abhijñāh*, 六通)<sup>74</sup> and eight kinds of Deliverance (*aṣṭa-vimokṣa* 八解脫),<sup>75</sup> and attained the fruition of

<sup>68</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2008*

<[http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0174.html](http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0174.html)>

<sup>69</sup> These six fast days are the 8th, 14th, 15th, 23rd, 29th, and 30th. See Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d.*, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s516d-9f4b.html>>.

<sup>70</sup> The three months refer to the first, fifth, and ninth months when no food should be taken after noon. See Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d.*,

<<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s4e09-9577-9f4b-6708.html>>.

<sup>71</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d.*, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s516b-96e3.html>>.

<sup>72</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0939.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0939.html)>.

<sup>73</sup> Nyanatiloka. *Buddhist Dictionary*. (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, n.d.) 179.

<sup>74</sup> Nyanatiloka. *Buddhist Dictionary*. P.40 and 2-3.

<sup>75</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d.*, 10 January 2007

arahatship. (爾時 童子 聞佛世尊引諸譬喻種種說法。即悟取解。童子受法已。即從座起遶佛三匝禮佛而去。到一樹下 端身繫念 佛所說法 七日七夜。至八日朝 諸漏已盡三明六通具八解脫 證阿羅漢果) (T1463/804b)

## 17. Attaining Buddhahood (得成佛)

According to the *Buddha-dhyāna-samādhi-sāgara sūtra* 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》,

translated by Buddhahadra between 420-423CE, in Liu Song dynasty(劉宋

420-479), in Yang-zou (揚州):<sup>76</sup>

It is because practicing mindfulness of the Buddha, after eon of the constellations *kalpa* (Skt. *tārakôpame kalpe*)<sup>77</sup> you will attain Buddhahood. (...汝念佛故 過星宿劫得成為佛。 T643, p692c)

In the next step, I will discuss the occurrences of those various benefits in Chinese

Buddhist Canon over time. In addition, in order to have a better understanding of the data

and patterns of benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha discovered by the

research, several charts are created.

## ● Discussion of the Seventeen Categories of the Benefits

### ● Not losing Bodhicitta/ Not-giving up enlightened mind

First of all, the following is a chart and a demonstration of above mentioned two benefits

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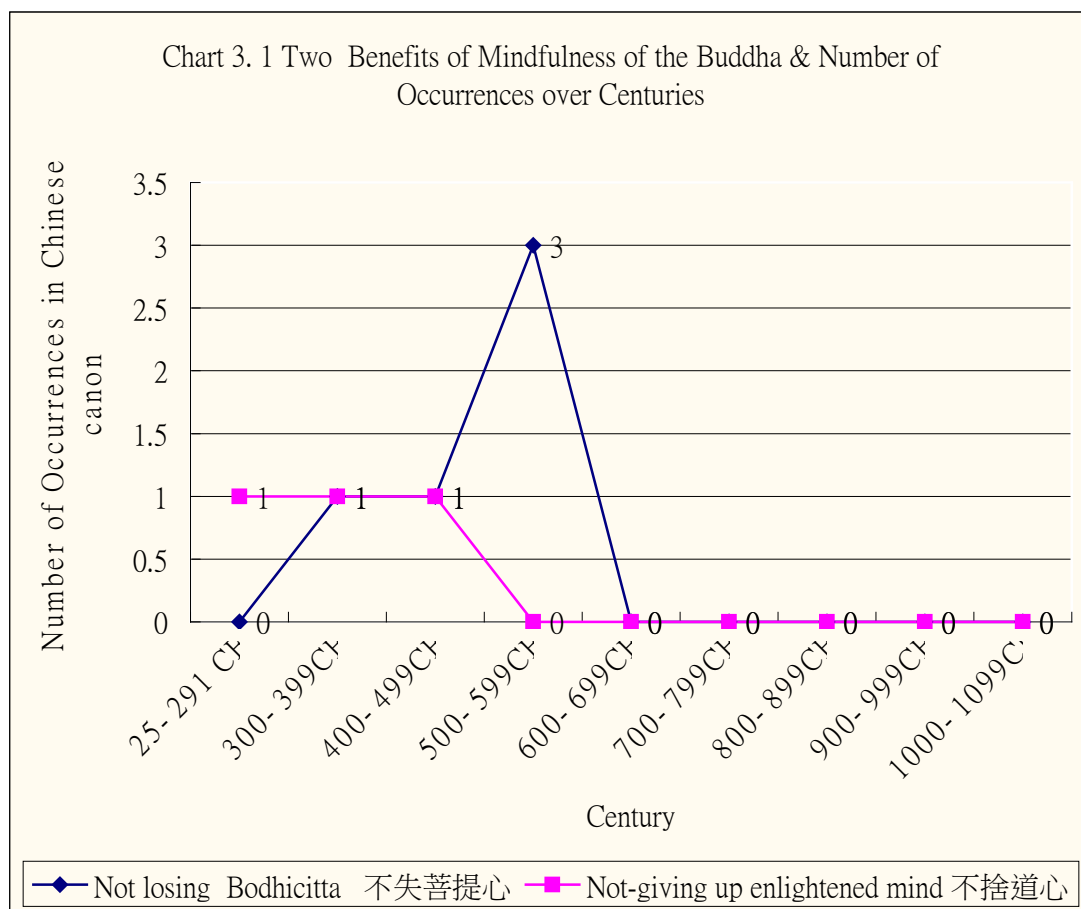
<<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s516b-89e3-812b.html>>.

See also Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, 45.

<sup>76</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, [http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0401.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0401.html)

<sup>77</sup> Ac Muller. *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?66.xml+id\('b661f-5bbf-52ab'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?66.xml+id('b661f-5bbf-52ab'))

of mindfulness of the Buddha



#### A. Not Losing Bodhicitta

After categorizing the benefits of mindfulness of the Buddha, the most important benefit—not losing the Bodhicitta, will be discussed first. It is because the Bodhicitta is where the Mahayana Buddha Dharma distinguishes from the Early Buddha Dharma, and the foundation of achieving the Buddhahood. 菩提心 *Pu ti xin* (Skt. Bodhicitta), Bodhi means awakening', or 'enlightenment. Citta means 'mind or spirit'. Therefore, the Bodhicitta means 'enlightened mind', it can be said it is the mind seeking enlightenment.

Go further, it can be said the mind seeks great Bodhi Way. There are several synonyms of Bodhicitta such as “an intention for enlightenment” *dao yi* 道意, “an intention for the unsurpassed, right, and true enlightenment” *wu shang zheng zhen dao yi* 無上正真道意, “aspiration for enlightenment” *dao xing* 道心, “the unexcelled thought (of enlightenment)” *wu shang xing* 無上心 and so on.

According to the data indicates that the benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha will lead to not lose Bodhicitta has count of 5. The earliest account of benefit of *Nian-fo* can result in not losing Bodhicitta appears in *Puṣpakūṭadhāraṇī(sūtra)* 《佛說師子奮迅菩薩所問經》, translated around 317 and 420 CE in Eastern Jin dynasty,<sup>78</sup> translator is unknown. The Buddha said that one who recites the mantra named *Puṣpakūṭadhāraṇī* will gain many kinds of benefits. “He will not be dissociated from Mindfulness of Buddha,” and then “he will not lose the *bodhicitta* for many lives.” (T1357/p.875c)

The second account appears in the first fascicle of *Viśeṣacintabrahma-paripṛcchā[sūtra]* 《思益梵天所問經》,<sup>79</sup> translated by *Kumārajīva* from *Kuchā* in 402 CE in Later Qin dynasty. The passage<sup>80</sup> revealed that the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha is

<sup>78</sup> Translator unknown. Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* 2004, 3 November 2006 <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0340.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0340.html)>.

<sup>79</sup> <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfd/text.asp?Term=思益梵天所問經>>. Lancaster’s *Korean Buddhist Canon* follows a slightly different name, 思梵天所問經 *Brahmaviśeṣacintāparipṛcchā(sūtra)*. See Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* 2004, 3 November 2006 <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0143.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0143.html)>.

<sup>80</sup> In the sutra, the Buddha told Viśeṣacintabrahma: “Bodhisattvas are endowed with a set of four Dharmas.



considered one of the four Dharmas possessed by bodhisattvas and prevents them from losing *bodhicitta*.

Two sutras were found to be translated differently from the previous sutra

, one is the *Brahmaviśeṣacintīparipṛcchā(sūtra)* 《持心梵天所問經》, translated by

*Dharmarakṣa* in 286 CE in Western Jin dynasty, it states:

There are four things that can protect the mind, which seeks enlightenment.<sup>81</sup>

The other one is *Viśeṣacintābrahma-paripṛcchā[sūtra]* 《勝思惟梵天所問經》 translated

by *Bodhiruci* between 518-536CE in Northern Wei dynasty, it says:

*Brahmā*, all Great Bodhisattvas, having accomplished the four Dharmas, will not lose their *bodhicitta*.<sup>82</sup>

The sutra was preached for *Brahmā*, indicated that those great Bodhisattvas, having

accomplished the four Dharmas, will not lose their *bodhicitta*. First is constantly

So, they will not lose their *bodhicitta* for lives. What are they? The first is to constantly recollect the Buddha. The second is to perform meritorious deeds for the sake of *bodhi* (enlightenment). The third is to be acquainted with the wise and the fourth is to extol Mahāyāna [teaching]. These are the four [Dharmas].”

「梵天。菩薩有四法。世世不失菩提之心。何等四。一者常憶念佛。二者所作功德常為菩提。三者親近善知識。四者稱揚大乘。是為四。」(T586,p035c)

<sup>81</sup> What are they? To constantly recollect the root of Buddha's virtues; to get established in *bodhicitta*; to be acquainted with the wise; and to consult and extol Mahāyāna [teaching]. These are the four [things].”

「有四事。能護道心。何等四。意常念佛一切德本。至於道心。習近善友。諮嗟大乘。是為四。」(T 585,p.03b)

William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*.

<<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s9053-5fc3.html>>. See also

<<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=道心>>.

<sup>82</sup> What four? First is constant Mindfulness of Buddha; second, performing good actions based on *bodhicitta*; third, being acquainted with the wise; and fourth, extolling Mahāyāna [teaching]. These are the four Dharmas.”

「梵天。諸菩薩摩訶薩。畢竟成就四法。不失菩提心。何等為四。一者常憶念佛故。二者所作善根不離菩提心故。三者親近善知識故。四者讚歎大乘故。是為四法。」

(T587/ p.65a)

practicing mindfulness of the Buddha or Buddha's virtue, reveal that Mindfulness of the Buddha will prevent them from losing *bodhicitta*.

In addition, the above mentioned three similar citations that came from the same contexts but with different translation also bring forth another question of text translation, it is that the term “*Dao xin*, enlightened mind”(道心) can be construed as Bodhicitta (菩提心) as well.

In the earlier translation of the text, *Dharmarakṣa* in West Jin dynasty (286 CE), used the phrase “*Dao xing*”(道心). Later, *Kumārajīva* in Yao-Qin dynasty (402 CE), used the term “*Pu ti xing*”(菩提心 *Bodhicitta*). *Bodhiruci* (during 518-536 CE) in Northern Wei(元魏 386-534), also used the same translation as the one in Yao-Qin (384-417)dynasty. In the following benefit of “not giving-up the *Dao xing*” it clearly showed that, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century, the term *Dao xing* was being used. However it was disregarded after the 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Furthermore, in the 37<sup>th</sup> scroll of *Mahaprajñāparamitāśāstra* written by *Nagārjuna*, translated later by *Kumārajīva* between 402~406 CE. He also employed the term

“retaining the mind of Bodhisattva.”<sup>83</sup> Bodhisattva's mind (菩薩心) can be construed as

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<sup>83</sup> “Again, meditating on Buddha will result in being inseparable from Buddha. Practice diligently in many life times on mindfulness of Buddha to Samadhi stage, the Mind of Bodhisattva will not vanish.”(復次深念

Bodhi mind(菩提心) as well. The former emphasize on the person, the latter on the mind.

The meanings of Bodhisattva and Bodhi were discussed above.

In another text, in the second volume of “*Sarvapūṇyasamuccayasamādhisūtra*” 《集一切

福德三昧經》 also translated by *Kumārajīva* between 402 and 412 CE in Later Qin

dynasty,<sup>84</sup> mentioned that the bodhisattvas who observed the precepts well did not lose

the bodhicitta; nor did they lose [the practice of] Mindfulness of the Buddha.<sup>85</sup>

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, three counts were found. The first account appears in the

*Viśeṣacintabrahma-paripṛcchāśāstra* 《勝思惟梵天所問經論》, written by *Vasubandhu* (

天親,世親) and translated by *Bodhiruci* in 531 CE in Later Wei dynasty in Luo-yang.<sup>86</sup>

The passage explained the reason why by being mindful on Buddha one would not lose

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佛故終不離佛。世世善修念佛三昧故。不失菩薩心故。(T1509, p333b18)

<sup>84</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, 3 November 2006

<[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0141.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0141.html)>.

<sup>85</sup> 「菩薩如是淨持戒聚不失四法。何等四。所謂不失菩提之心。不失念佛。不失聞法。既聞法已。乃至無量阿僧祇劫而不忘失。是為菩薩淨持戒聚不失四法。」 (T382, p.996a ). In the second volume of *arvapuṇyasamuccayasamādhisūtra*, translated by *Kumārajīva* between 402 and 412 CE in Later Qin dynasty,<sup>85</sup> it says: “By observing the moral precepts, bodhisattvas do not lose four Dharmas. What four? It is not losing *bodhicitta*; not losing [the practice of] Mindfulness of Buddha; not losing the [opportunity of] hearing the Dharma; and, after hearing the Dharma, one will not forget it for innumerable *kalpas*. These are the four Dharmas which do not go away from the bodhisattvas who observe the moral precepts well.”

<sup>86</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, 3 November 2006

<[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0562.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0562.html)>.

the 菩提心 *Pu ti xing* ( Bodhicitta).<sup>87</sup> Moreover, in the second volume of *Vikurvāṇarājaparipṛcchāsūtra* 《奮迅王問經》, translated by *Gautama Prajñaruci* in 542 CE in Yuan-Wei (386-534)dynasty (better known as Northern Wei dynasty),<sup>88</sup> pointed out that the bodhisattvas who practiced the mindfulness of the Buddha did not abandon the way of bodhi.”<sup>89</sup> It meant not to lose the bodhicitta. However, only the sutras that were translated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> century, three counts were found that “Not-giving up enlightened mind” (不捨道心) was related to “not losing the enlightened mind” (不失菩提心). As mentioned above, through searching from Buddhist Dictionaries, the synonym of 菩提心(enlightened mind) was also explained as 道心(enlightened mind). After comparing and discussing the translations, it was found that 菩提心 was also translated as *Dao xing* 道心.

## B. Not Giving-up Enlightened Mind

<sup>87</sup> “To those who always being mindfulness of the Buddha, their minds are always inclined to the supreme enlightenment (bodhi) of the Buddha; and, their aim is to attain the state of Buddhahood (buddhapala, buddhapala, literally ‘Buddha fruit’)<sup>87</sup> and to fulfill the immeasurable distinctive meritorious virtues. So, one does not lose the bodhicitta.”(常憶念佛者。心常憶念佛菩提心果故。...是故不失菩提之心。)(T1532, p.341b)

<sup>88</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0076.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0076.html)>.

<sup>89</sup> T 421 p.946c21 《奮迅王問經》 *Vikurvāṇarājaparipṛcchā(sūtra)*  
「奮迅王。又復菩薩住好國土富樂之處。不知念佛。而有諸天曾見佛者。教令憶念。...。若作此業則得菩提。....彼天如是教令憶念。於菩提道不越不捨。」‘...If you practice [Mindfulness of Buddha], you will attain bodhi (‘enlightenment’)... Having undertaken the practice, ... you will attain anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi (‘the unsurpassed supreme enlightenment’).’ Thus, the divine beings instructed on mindfulness of Buddha. [So, the bodhisattvas] did not abandon the way of bodhi.”

The earliest account of the term *Dao xing* 道心 appears in the first fascicle of *Brahmaviśeṣacintīparipṛcchā(sūtra)* 《持心梵天所問經》, translated by *Dharmarakṣa* in 286 CE in Western Jin dynasty, stated that “There are four things that can protect the mind which seeks enlightenment (道心).”<sup>90</sup> The *Dao xing* 道心 mentioned here means *Pu ti xing* 菩提心, it clearly demonstrated from the above-mentioned similar citation that was with different translation. It indicated that the term *Bodhicitta* (Enlightenment mind) was translated as 道心(Enlightenment mind) in earlier translation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the other account appears in the *shih zhu duan jie jing* 《十住斷結經》 translated by Zhu fo-nian between 365-385CE in Yao Qin(姚秦 384-417)dynasty. It states that there are four ways to prevent people from giving up the enlightened mind: 1) being mindfulness of Buddha’s virtue; 2) strengthening the seeking mind for bodhi (enlightenment); 3) accosting the learned and wise; and 4) ruminating in accordance with the Mahayana (the Great Vehicle) teaching. (復有四法不捨道心。云何為四。一者念佛功德之本。二者安處眾生道心堅固。三者親善知識不染邪見。四者上及大乘不修妄見。 T309, p.1044a)

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<sup>90</sup> “What are those demonstrated? To constantly recollect the root of Buddha’s virtues; to get established in bodhicitta; to be acquainted with the wise; and to consult and extol Mahāyāna [teaching]. These are the four [things].”

William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* .  
 <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s9053-5fc3.html>>. See also  
 <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=道心>>.

Even though semantic might be different, the underlying ideas were the same in the four ways advanced in the *Brahmaviśeacintīparipicchā(sūtra)* 《持心梵天所問經》, these were mindfulness of the Buddha's virtue; strengthening the seeking mind for bodhi (enlightenment); accosting the learned and wise; and ruminating in accordance with the Mahayana (the Great Vehicle) teaching. During the high rise of the Middle Period of the Mahayana Texts (4<sup>th</sup> CE - 6<sup>th</sup> CE)<sup>91</sup>, these four ways were often being cited as the means to bolster the enlightened mind, the Bodhicitta. In Volume 9 of *Kalpanamanditika* 《大莊嚴論經》 written by *Aśvaghosa* (馬鳴) and translated by *Kumārajīva* in 402 – 412 CE also pointed out that the mindfulness of Buddha can give rise to wholesome faculties, herein categorized as not abandoning the enlightened mind.

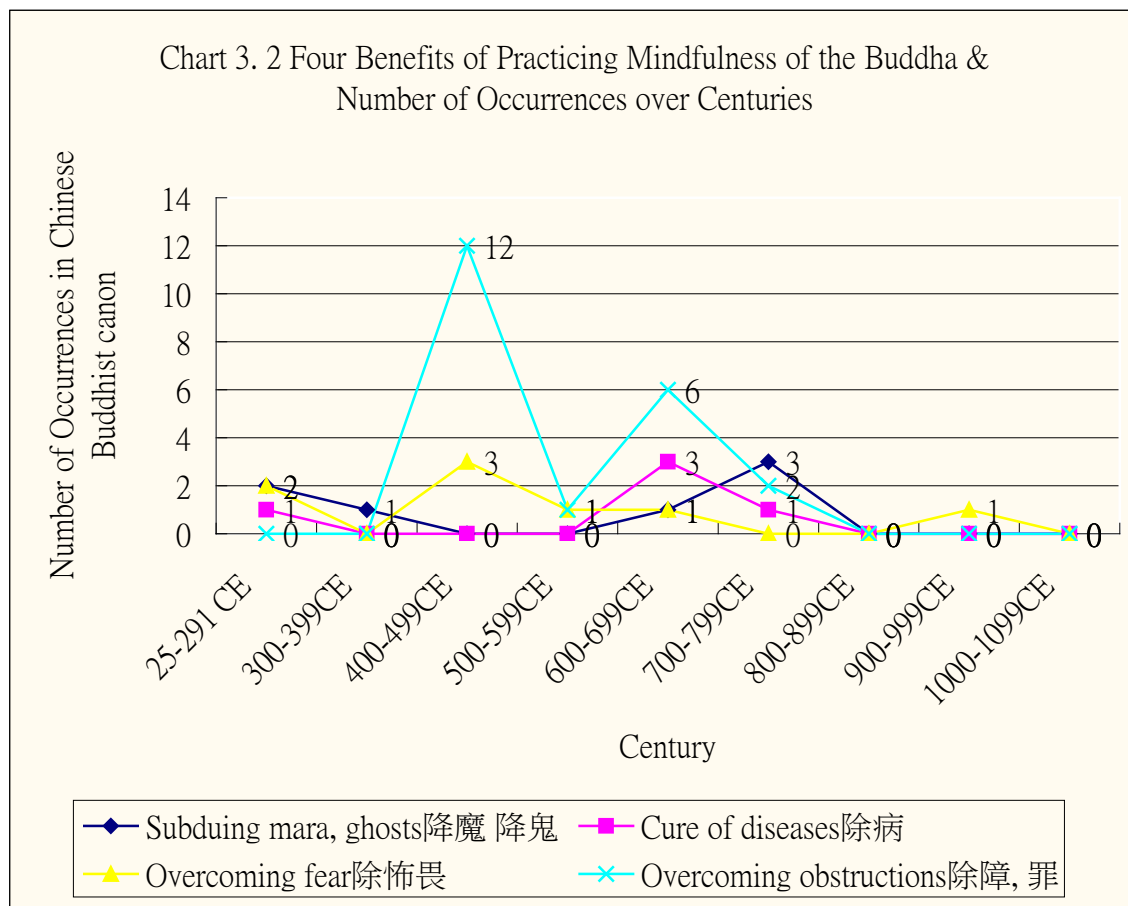
- Subduing ghosts, subduing māra/Cure of diseases/Overcoming fear / Overcoming obstructions.

### Chart 3.2 Four Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in

#### Chinese Buddhist Canon over Centuries

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<sup>91</sup> After the period of Middle Mahayana Buddhism, the features of Buddhism are as follow: 1. Emphasis of *Bodhicitta* ... .Lan Ji fu. chief editor.藍吉富 *Zhong hua fo jiao bai ke quan shu* 《中華佛教百科全書》. Zhong hua fo jiao bai ke quan shu editorial board edit,(Tainan: Zhong hua fo jiao bai ke wen xian ji jin hui 中華佛教百科文獻基金會,1994),p.2301



### A. Subduing Ghosts and Māra

As the data shows above, the earliest account of the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha can subdue ghosts appears in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and has a count of 2. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century has a count of 1. However, regarding to subdue māra the first account appears in the 7<sup>th</sup> century has a count of 1, and in the 8<sup>th</sup> century has a count of 3, most of sources appear in the Esoteric sutras.

According to the two sutras mentioned that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha is able

to subdue ghosts appears in Early Buddhist sutras.<sup>92</sup> However, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the Esoteric sutras mentioned that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha is able to subduing *māra*. There are three sutras<sup>93</sup> mentioned that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha with making the *mudrā*(結印) and reciting the mantras are able to subduing *māra*.

The

*Mahāmañivipulavimānaviśvasupratīṣṭhitaguhyaparamarahasyakalparājadhāraṇī(sūtra)*

《廣大寶樓閣善住祕密陀羅尼經》<sup>94</sup> particularly mentioned that practicing making the *mudrā*(結印), reciting the mantra(持咒), observing noble conduct(持齋戒) and reciting the name of *Avalokiteśvara* Bodhisattva (念觀音菩薩), karmic consequences of births and deaths could be eliminated (除生死之罪). They could be cured of four hundred and four kinds of diseases (除四百四病) and able to escape ghosts and divine spirits as well

<sup>92</sup> In the First Volume of *Jiu za pi yu jing* 《舊雜譬喻經》, translated by Kang Seng-hui in 251 CE in Wu dynasty,<sup>92</sup> it is advised that “When stumbling upon a ghost [or ghosts], recollect the Buddha with right mindfulness and one’s mind will remain composure and experience no fear.” (逢見鬼來。正心念佛志定不懼)(T206/510b)

The sutra is translated into Chinese in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and the other one appears in 4<sup>th</sup> century, after that no reference appeared. The other one account appears in fascicle seventeen of *Dharmapāda* 《出曜經》, composed by Dharmatrāta, translated by Zhu Fo-nian in 374 CE in Fu Qin dynasty,<sup>92</sup> it says: “Evil ghosts dare not approach nor invade people who practice wholeheartedly mindfulness of the Buddha; hence, one should practice mindfulness of Buddha day and night.” (一心念佛者。邪惡鬼眾不敢侵近。是故說晝夜當念是佛)(T212/701b)

<sup>93</sup> *Guan zi zai pu sa sui xin zhou jing* 《觀自在菩薩隨心呪經》, translated by the monk Zhi-tong (智通) in 653 CE in Tang dynasty. K317. T1103/461b  
*Mahāmañivipulavimānaviśvasupratīṣṭhitaguhyaparamarahasyakalparājadhāraṇī(sūtra)* 《廣大寶樓閣善住祕密陀羅尼經》 translated by Bodhiruci(菩提流志) in 706 CE in Tang dynasty. T1006, p.639a, 646c. In the *Anantamukhasādhakadhāraṇī(sūtra)* 《出生無邊門陀羅尼經》, translated between 720-774CE by Amoghavajra (不空). K1279. T1009/677a

<sup>94</sup> T1006/646c



(除魔鬼神等). They would be reborn in the Land of Infinite Life as well.

魔 is an abbreviated transliteration of the Sanskrit *māra* (魔羅), which means killing, destroying, the destroyer, evil one, devil or hindrances to enlightenment.<sup>95</sup> [Soothill]. In

Early Buddhism, based on Pali sources, the four kinds of *māra* are as follows:

1. *kleśa-māra* (煩惱魔), the *māra* as the embodiment of all unskilful emotions.
2. *Mrtyu-māra* (生死魔), the *māra* as death, in the sense of the ceaseless round of birth and death.
3. *skandha-māra* (五陰魔) the *māra* as metaphor for the entirety of conditioned existence.
4. *Devaputra-māra* (天子魔) the *māra* as the son of a deva (god), that is, *māra* as an objectively existent being rather than as a metaphor.

The concept of *māra* has been widely discussed in Early Buddhism (*Nikayas*) and various statements are found in the Pali canon connected with *māra*. The *māra* appears in the text both as a real deity (*Devaputra-māra*) and as personification of defilements of one's mind (*kleśa-māra*). As a deity he possesses with an enormous power to go against one's wholesome deeds and spiritual development. As defilements of mind *māra* is psychological force that obstructs one's path to liberation.

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<sup>95</sup> Digital Dictionary of Buddhism

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?9b.xml+id\('b9b54'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?9b.xml+id('b9b54'))

The Padhana Sutta(The Great Struggle 精勤經)<sup>96</sup> records that *māra* tried to tempt ascetic Gotama to abandon his striving for awakening but failed in his mission. The sutra refers to *māra* is being tenfold and they are as follows:

1. Lusts 2. Discontent. 3. Hunger & Thrust 4. Craving 5. Sloth and toper. 6. Fear. 7. Doubt.
8. Hypocrisy & Stupidity. 9. Falsely obtained Gains, Fame, Honor and Glory. 10. Praising highly of oneself and contemning of others. These ten divisions are ten evil forces of the human mind.

Various categories of *māras* appears in the Mahayana sutras and treatises, however, primary categories of *māras* are four, which appear as the same as in the Early Buddhist texts e.g. the *kleśa-māraś* (煩惱魔), *Mrtyu-māra* (生死魔), *skandha-māra* (五陰魔) and *Devaputra-māra* (天子魔).

The table of various categories of *māras* in Mahayana sources is as follows:

Year	Taisho	Sutra name	Kinds	Categories of <i>Māra</i>
	T190, p. 769c8-24	<i>Abhiniṣkramaṇasūtra</i> 佛本行集經 60 Vol. <i>Jñānagupta</i> 闍那崛多	12	Desire, unhappy, hungry and thirsty, chills and fever, attachment, sleep,

<sup>96</sup> SN 3.2 vs.425-49 . John D. Ireland. Trans. *The Discourse Collection: Selected Texts from the Sutta Nipata (WH 82)* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1983). See also *Access to insight: Reading in Theravada Buddhism*  
<<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.3.02.irel.html>>

		Sui dyansty 隋		anger, fear, doubt, compete for wealth and fame, ignorance, arrogant, slander others constantly.
402- 406 CE	T1509, p. 99b16-c8	<i>Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra</i> . <i>Vol.5</i> 大智度論卷五 <i>Kumārajīva</i> Later qin dynasty (後秦)	10	Lust, worry, hungry and thirsty, fear, doubt, wickedness ignorance, attachment of fame and wealth, arrogant and so on. Hungry and thirsty, chills and fever are external <i>māra</i> and vexations are inner <i>māra</i>
414- 426CE	T397, p. 71, b-c	大集經卷十五 ( <i>Mahāvaiṣṭhīyamaḥā</i> ) <i>sannip</i> <i>ātasūtra</i>	4 or 41	the <i>kleśa-māraś</i> (煩惱魔), <i>Mrtyu-māra</i> (生死魔), <i>skandha-māra</i> (五陰

		<i>Dharmakṣema</i> , Zhi-yan,  Bao-yun and <i>Narendrayaśas</i>		魔)and  <i>Devaputra-māra</i> (天子  魔).and fourty one <i>māras</i>
695-  699CE	T279, p  307 c8-  308, a9	<i>Avataṃsakasūtra Vol.42</i>  華嚴經卷四十二  <i>Śikṣānanda</i>  Tang dynasty (唐)	10	Four common <i>māras</i> and  karma <i>māra</i> 、 mind <i>māra</i> 、  losing good roots <i>māra</i> 、  attach <i>samādhi māra</i> ,  ignorance of Bodhi dharma  <i>māra</i> .
		Common categories <sup>97</sup>	4	<i>kleśa-māra</i> (煩惱魔),  <i>Mrtyu-māra</i> (生死魔),  <i>skandha-māra</i> (五陰  魔)and  <i>Devaputra-māra</i> (天子魔)

## B. Cure of Diseases

<sup>97</sup> T187, p.596, b26-27. T06, 220, p. 705, c4-7.T07, no. 220, p. 651, a1-3.T310,p. 33, b7-12  
T310,p 299, b5-6. T316, p. 871, b11-12. T400, p. 487, a15

One of the benefits of practicing the Mindfulness of the Buddha can cure for diseases has total count of 4. The earliest account of the benefit of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha that cured diseases appears very early in Later Han dynasty.<sup>98</sup> The other three occurrences appear in the sutras of Esoteric Buddha Dharma,<sup>99</sup> the methods of eradicating diseases mentions here are through practicing making a *mudrā* (signs made with the hands), reciting *mantras* and sincerely practices on mindfulness of the Buddha. For example, in the *Dharanisamuccaya* (sutra)《佛說陀羅尼集經》, translated by *Atigupta* (阿地瞿多) in 654 CE in Xi-jing (西京, present Xi-an) in Tang dynasty, it states:

As the sick person sincerely practices on mindfulness of the Buddha, his illness will be cured immediately. This is the healing method of *Amitābha* through the crown. (置阿彌陀佛像。...其病人至心念佛。病即除差。此是阿彌陀佛頂法) (T901/p.802b)

According to the data, early sutras are more simplified and purified which indicated practicing sincerely on mindfulness of the Buddha could cure illness. However, in the later period of Mahayana Buddha Dharma, especially in the esoteric sutras, it requires more practice such as making a mudra, reciting mantras, and reciting the name of Buddha or contemplating the image of Buddha, and by using these three methods together illness

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<sup>98</sup> Fo shuo a nan wen shi fo ji xiong jing《佛說阿難問事佛吉凶經》<sup>98</sup>, translated by An Shi-gao (安世高) between 148 and 170 CE in Later Han dynasty.<sup>98</sup> “If people contract a disease and, instead of mindfulness of Buddha, they call on a sorcerer to practice divination and entreat the help of wicked deities, the [virtuous] deities leave them without protection.” (若有疾病了不念佛。便呼巫師卜問祠祀。請乞邪神。天神離遠不得善護)(T492/753a)

<sup>99</sup> T1060/110b, T1103/461b, T901/802b

can be cured.

### C. Overcoming Fear

The benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can overcome fear has 8 occurrences.

The earliest account appears in the 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. According to the data indicates that there are two kinds of fear, one is fear of ghost, the other one is fear of aging and dying.

Moreover, the passages indicate that the method of overcoming fear gave particular emphasize on mindfulness of the Buddha's virtues.<sup>100</sup> For example, in the

*Dhyāna-niṣṭhita-samādhi-dharmaparyāya-sūtra* 《坐禪三昧經 *Zuo chan san mei jing*》, translated by *Kumārajīva* between 402 and 407 CE in Yao Qin (姚秦)dynasty in

Chang-an (長安),<sup>101</sup> it says:

Practitioners who aspire after Buddhahood should direct their attention to mindfulness of all the Buddhas's body of three periods and all directions as a way to enter *samādhi*. ...Practitioners who often practice mindfulness of the physical bodies of all Buddhas in this manner...will be able to eliminate the suffering of aging, illness and death, to eliminate the fear of aging and death. Ultimately, who will be able to attain the happiness of nirvana.

(若行者 求 佛道。入禪先當繫心專念十方三世諸佛生身。.....有三十二相八十種好。...。常念佛身相如是。...能除無量苦救老死畏。T614/281a22-b)

<sup>100</sup> *Da fang bian fo bao en jing*《大方便佛報恩經》, translated during 25-220 CE, the author is unknown. T 156/156b. *Zuo chan san mei jing*《坐禪三昧經》, translated by Kumārajīva between 402 and 407 CE in Yao Qin (姚秦)dynasty in Chang-an (長安). T614/281b. In fascicle 579 of *Pañcap āramit ā nirde*《大般若波羅蜜多經》, translated by Xuan-tsang in 659-663 CE.. T220/995c. K1 (11).

<sup>101</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k991.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k991.html)>.

The sutra states that firstly meditating on the magnificence of the Buddha's body, then after attaining the *samādhi* by mindfulness of the Buddha, and lastly meditating on all virtues of the Buddha, in which it will eradicate countless suffer, ease the fear of aging and dying. Ultimately, who will be able to attain the happiness of Nirvana.

According to the data, the source<sup>102</sup> indicates that the Buddha's virtues(佛功德) include all-encompassing wisdom(一切智解見德), understanding, seeing, and merits, as well as great loving-kindness(大慈), great compassion and freedom(大悲自在). the four kinds of perfect fearlessness(四無畏), five kinds of eyes or vision(五眼),<sup>103</sup> the perfect comprehension in ten fields of power (十力), and the eighteen virtues uncommon [to *Śrāvaka* and *Pratyeka-Buddha*] (十八不共法)....All the Buddhas are fully endowed with these boundless virtues and merits.

#### D. Overcoming obstructions

The benefit of overcoming obstructions, getting rid of moral defilement (sin), ranked as third, has a count of 21. In the fifth century, the benefit of destruction of obstructions and moral defilement has a count of 12 and that has a count of 6 in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

The data shows that the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha can eliminate one's

<sup>102</sup> *Zuo chan san mei jing* 《坐禪三昧經》 T614/281b.

<sup>103</sup> See details at Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* n.d, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s4e94-773c.html>>.

obstructions and sin, which means obstruct enlightenment (*āvṛti*). Buddhism tends to see sentient beings as being obstructed from a view of things as they really are by a wide range of phenomena, both affective and cognitive.

As texts describe that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha is also capable of overcoming moral defilement and ridding of obstructions, obstructions or hindrances are mainly of three kinds<sup>104</sup>, they are: karmic hindrances (*karmāvaraṇa*),<sup>105</sup> retributive hindrances (*vipākāvaraṇa*),<sup>106</sup> and afflicting hindrances (*kleśāvaraṇa*).<sup>107</sup> These hindrances will hinder one from hearing and practicing the teaching, and also will cast one down to woeful realms. And, the fact that Mindfulness of the Buddha is capable of obliterating those three hindrances has been clearly mentioned in many *dhyāna sūtras*.<sup>108</sup>

For instance, in the *Chan mi yao fa jing* 《禪祕要法經》 (*Dhyāna sūtra* on the secret and essential teaching), a discourse translated by *Kumārajīva* between 402 and 412 CE in

<sup>104</sup> The citations from sūtra in the *Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣā-śāstra* 《大毘婆沙論》, stated that “If sentient beings were blinded by six dharmas, even if they heard the teaching (Dharma) and Vinaya realized by the Tathāgata, they are unable to rid themselves of moral defilement. Nor are they able to give rise to pure dharma-eye (*dharmacakṣu-viśuddha*)<sup>104</sup> that discerns the truth. What six? Afflicting hindrances, karmic hindrances, retributive hindrances, unbelief, lacking in (desire) for delight [in the teaching], and heterodox views.

<大毘婆沙論>引經說：「若諸有情成就六法，雖聞如來所證所說法毘奈耶，而不堪任遠塵離垢，於諸法中，生淨法眼。何等為六？一、煩惱障，二、業障，三、異熟（報）障，四、不信，五、不樂（欲），六、惡慧」 T1545/.599 b

<sup>105</sup> 17 September 2006 <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=業障>>.

<sup>106</sup> 23 September 2006 <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=異熟障>>.

<sup>107</sup> 17 September 2006 <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=煩惱障>>.

<sup>108</sup> In *Buddha-dhyāna-samādhisāgara sūtra* 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》, translated by Buddhahadra between 420 and 423 CE in Liu Song dynasty. “On hearing the Buddha’s characteristic of a white circle of hair between the eyebrows (*ūrṇa-lakṣaṇa*). As a result, there was the elimination of the consequences of immoral actions of thousand million *nayutas* of births and deaths.” T 643/682c.



Later Qin dynasty, it states:

At that time, the Blessed One told *Dhyānandi* and instructed *Ānanda*: You should teach beings of the future who had committed many unwholesome actions to recollect the Buddha (*nian-fo*) so as to eradicate those offences. Because of mindfulness of the Buddha there is eradication of karmic hindrances, retributive hindrances, and afflicting hindrances. (「爾時世尊告禪難提及 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。」 T613/255a)

In another sutra mentions that if a person vowed with strong belief in mindfulness of the Buddha's merits and build the Buddha's statue, he would clear all karmic obstacles, and be able to break away swiftly from the cycle of life and death without hindrance.<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, the immoral karma (業障, *karmāvaraṇa*) refer to karmic hindrances, specially the five kinds of *ānantarya-karman*,<sup>110</sup> also known as the five heinous crimes, namely patricide, matricide, the murder of an Arahant, the wounding of a Buddha, and maliciously creating a schism in the *Sangha*.<sup>111</sup>

These five kinds of evil acts will lead to rebirth in the unremitting hell, therefore named unremitting karma.<sup>112</sup> Once one who has one of these three kinds of hindrances, although

<sup>109</sup> *Tathāgatapratibimbapraṭiṣṭhānuśaṃsā(sūtra)* 《佛說大乘造像功德經》, translation by Devaprajñā in 691CE in T'ang dynasty (唐) in Da Zhou Dong Monastery (大周東寺).

「若發信心念佛功德而造佛像。一切業障皆得銷除。於生死中速出無礙。」 (T694, p 794c20-22)

<sup>110</sup> *Fo guang da ci dian wang lu ban* 《佛光大辭典網路版》 n.d.

<<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=無間業>>.

<sup>111</sup> The five heinous crimes are called *ānantariyakamma* in Pāli. See *A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma*, gen. ed. Bhikkhu Bodhi (Kandy: Buddhist Pub. Society, 1993) 204.

《阿毘達磨俱舍論》T1558, p. 92c 論曰。言無間業者。謂五無間業。其五者何。一者害母。二者害父。三者害阿羅漢。四者破和合僧。五者惡心出佛身血。如是五種名為業障。

《瑜伽師地論》T1579, p318b 五無間業者。一害母。二害父。三害阿羅漢。四破僧。五於如來所惡心出血。

<sup>112</sup> *anantarya-karman*。指犯五逆罪者所作之業，導致受無間地獄苦果。蓋犯五逆罪者，臨命終之際，

one listens to Dharma, practices the Dharma, who is still no possibility to acquire right view, to get rid of defilement and attain enlightenment. However, by practicing the *nian-fo* one is able to get rid of these three karmic hindrances, retributive hindrances, and afflicting hindrances. Several other sūtras, śāstras and commentaries<sup>113</sup> have also noted the idea that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha is capable of removing moral defilement (罪, sin).

In the *Buddha-dhyāna-samādhisāgara sūtra*,<sup>114</sup> 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》 translated by *Buddhabhadra* between 420 and 423 CE in Liu Sung dynasty, it reads : “At that time, His Majesty was back at the palace. He described to his female royal artistes the sublime characteristic marks of the Buddha. On hearing the Buddha’s characteristic of a white circle of hair between the eyebrows (*ūrṇa-lakṣana*)<sup>115</sup>, the twelve hundred fifty female royal artistes were so pleased. As a result, there was the elimination of the consequences

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必定墮入地獄而無間隔，故稱無間業。又地獄稱為無間，以五逆罪業能招受無間地獄之果報，故稱無間業。 *Fo guang da ci dian* p.5122

Five kinds of evil acts leading to rebirth in the unremitting hell. *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*  
[http://buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id\('b4e94-7121-9593-696d'\)](http://buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id('b4e94-7121-9593-696d'))

<sup>113</sup> See T1093/399b

<sup>114</sup> *Fo guang da ci dian wang lu ban* 《佛光大辭典網路版》 n.d., 20 September 2006  
[<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=觀佛三昧海經>.](http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=觀佛三昧海經)

<sup>115</sup> “ūrṇa.” Monier-Williams. *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. (1899; New York: Oxford UP, 1988). See also *Fo guang da ci dian wang lu ban* 《佛光大辭典網路版》 n.d., 20 September 2006  
[<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=白毫相>.](http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=白毫相)

of immoral actions of thousand million *nayutas*<sup>116</sup> of births and deaths.” (「爾時父王還至宮中。為諸婬女說佛相好。千二百五十婬女。聞佛白毫相心生歡喜。除百萬億那由他生死之罪。」) (T643/682c25)

Regarding to eliminate sin (罪 *Zui*)<sup>117</sup>, according to the data, 罪 can be divided into two kinds of type, one is sin of births and deaths (生死之罪), the other is the five heinous crimes(五逆罪). And the five crimes leading to rebirth in the *avīci* hell(五無間地獄)<sup>118</sup> as mentioned above. It means karmic hindrances(業障)as well.

Sin, in general, means births and deaths. But why births and deaths is sin? It is because of the three mental poisons, attachment, hostility and ignorance, which lead to bad karma.

And because of bad karma, we are bond to the cyclic existence, and tortured by the three kinds of suffering (Skt. *tri-duḥkhatā*)<sup>119</sup> and the eight kinds of suffering( Skt.

*aṣṭa-duḥkhatāh*).<sup>120</sup> Thus in Buddhist texts, it is believed the cycle of births and deaths is

<sup>116</sup> *Niyuta*. Ibid <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=那由多>>.

<sup>117</sup> 罪 also can be translated as “crime, offense, fault, misconduct”

<sup>118</sup> Five kinds of evil acts leading to rebirth in the unremitting hell

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[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id\('b4e94-7121-9593-696d'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id('b4e94-7121-9593-696d'))

<sup>119</sup> They are:

苦苦 the suffering one experiences from contact with unpleasant objects;

行苦 the suffering caused by change;

壞苦 the suffering experienced due to the destruction of conditions pleasing to the subject.

<sup>120</sup> 八苦 As taught by Śākyamuni in his exposition of the Four Noble Truths 四諦. These include the four basic forms of suffering: birth 生, aging 老, sickness 病 and death 死, along with the four derivative forms of suffering: separation from that which we love 愛別離苦, association with that which we hate 怨憎會苦, inability to fulfill our desires 求不得苦 and the suffering from the instability of the five skandhas 五陰盛苦. Since there are eight forms of suffering in total, they are often referred to more simply as 八苦.

suffering (or sin).

It is mentioned, in many Buddhist texts,<sup>121</sup> practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can eradicate the sin of births and deaths, which means to be free from the cycle of birth and death. In addition, one treatise mentioned that mindfulness of the Śākyamuni Buddha by reciting the Buddh’as name and visualization of the Buddha image, can eliminate eight billion *Kalpas* of births and deaths.<sup>122</sup>

To sum up, the sin of births and deaths is the repetition of being born and dead.

Therefore, if one is able to eradicate the sin of births and deaths, one can break away from the cyclic existence and attain the stage of Nirvana. Hence the Pure Land School promotes rebirth in the Western Pure Land to cut off the earthly birth and death cycle; because, once one is reborn in the Pure Land, will never fall back to the earthly existence, and becomes a candidate of future Bodhisattva, who will finally attain the Buddhahood eventually.

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[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?56.xml+id\('b56db-82e6-516b-82e6'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?56.xml+id('b56db-82e6-516b-82e6'))

<sup>121</sup> Guan fo san mei hai jing 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》 T 643, p 675a 「修六念者名念佛心。念佛心者除十二億劫生死之罪」

T 643, p 655 a.b, 656a.c, 657a, 663c, 688a, 689b, 693b . T694/ 794c.

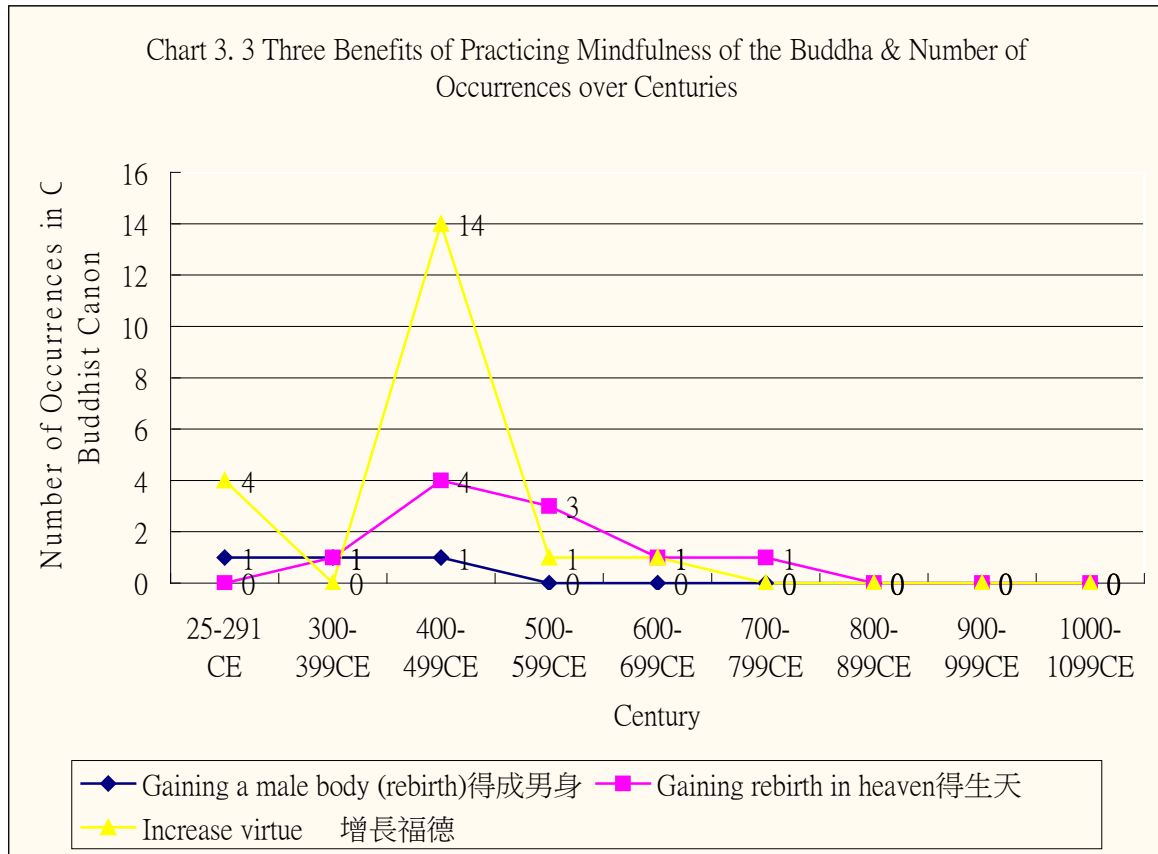
Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra 《大智度論》. T1509/ p109 a “Nian-fo Samadhi can eradicate all kinds of afflictions and sins. ...by practicing mindfulness of Buddha can eliminate serious sin and rescue all sufferings, not to mention the Nian-fo Samadhi.

<sup>122</sup> Bodhisattva-jātakamālā-śāstra 《菩薩本生鬘論》 T160, p.341, c22-25

As it is indicated in the above texts and benefits, the texts refer to meditation, translated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, stressed that mindfulness of the Buddha can eliminate obstructions and sin. In other words, in the practice of *samādhi* or *vipassana*, the method of mindfulness of the Buddha can be used for overcoming obstacles and eradicate sin. To eradicate sin, mindfulness of the Buddha and visualizing the Buddha's body are common practices. However, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, as the translated Esoteric texts flourished in China, the texts often mentioned the method of practicing "Mindfulness of the Buddha" which must practice together with making a mudra and reciting mantras. The benefits of mindfulness of the Buddha only stressed on overcoming obstacles and eradication of sin. Among the four benefits, overcoming obstructions appears the most, totally 21 counts. Because in Meditation texts of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and the texts of Esoteric Buddhism of the 7<sup>th</sup> century all emphasize practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can overcome obstructions.

- Gaining the male form (rebirth)/Gaining rebirth in heaven / Increase virtues

The following is a chart of three benefits of mindfulness of the Buddha & number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist canon over centuries.



### A. Gaining the Male Form (Rebirth)

According to the data the benefit of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha also include gaining the male rebirth has a count of 3. The earliest account appears in 2<sup>nd</sup> century in Later Han dynasty. The *Drumakinnararajapariprccha-sutra* 《佛說佉真陀羅所問如來三昧經》, translated by *Lokaksema* 支婁迦讖 between 168-172 CE in Later Han (後漢) in Luo-du (洛都).

There are seven factors whereby a female quickly becomes a male and proceeds all the

way through to the state of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*. The first, is to keep practicing mindfulness of Buddha and vowing to attain the Dharma body.... (復有七事。母人疾得男子。自致阿耨多羅。何謂七事。常念佛得法身。...T624/361b)

The second account appears in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in Western Jin dynasty, it is another different version<sup>123</sup> that is most similar to T624.

According to the *Strīvivartavyākaraṇa (sūtra)* 《佛說轉女身經》, translated by

*Dharmamitra* in 424 CE in Liu Song dynasty,<sup>124</sup> it says:

A woman accomplished in six kinds of dharma will be freed from the state of a woman and quickly obtain rebirth as a man. What are these six dharmas? The first is to keep practicing mindfulness of Buddha and vowing to attain the Buddha body.... (復次女人成就六法。得離女身速成男子。何謂為六。一常念佛願成佛身。...T564/919a)

The benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha also include achieving the male form. From the viewpoints of the Buddha as the Enlightened One, the male form does enjoy certain advantages that facilitate the attainment on the path of enlightenment, even though males and females, and all sentient beings are regarded as equals.

This inherent disparity can be attributed to five hindrances on the path of enlightenment

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<sup>123</sup> According to *Xian shou jing* 《佛說賢首經》, translated by Sheng-jian (聖堅) between 388 and 407 CE in Western Qin dynasty, “there are seven factors whereby a female quickly becomes a male and proceeds all the way through to the state of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*.” Of the seven factors, the first is to practice constantly mindfulness of the *dharmakāya* of the Buddha.... (復有七事母人疾得男子。自致阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。何等為七。一者常念佛法身。...T570/943b)

Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* 2004, <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0469.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0469.html)>.

<sup>124</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* 2004, 10 January 2007 <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0233.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0233.html)>.

that work against the female form. For example, in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (Lotus sutra)<sup>125</sup>, *Śāriputra* (舍利弗) spoke to the daughter of the dragon king (*nāga-rāja*)(龍女) that, "there are five special hindrances for woman—the hindrances of inability to be born: (1) the king of the Brahma heaven (梵天王), (2) the king of the Indra heaven (帝釋), (3) a *Māra* king(魔王), (4) a wheel-turning king(轉輪聖王), and (5) a Buddha (佛)."<sup>126</sup>

The reasons for the five special hindrances for woman are due to the differential between (1). pure and impure, (2). less desire and much desire, (3). strong and weak, (4). kindness and jealous, (5). virtue and vexation “<sup>127</sup>

As mentioned in the

*Bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabhāsapūrvaparīdhānaviśeṣavistara(sūtra)*

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<sup>125</sup> There are three versions of the Lotus Sutra that still remain in the Chinese Tripitaka today. Its original Sanskrit text has been translated many times into Chinese, now only three are still extant besides translations in Tibetan and other languages.<sup>125</sup> The earlier one was originally translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa (*T* 263) in western Jin dynasty in 286 CE, before being superseded by a translation in seven fascicles by Kumārajīva in 406 CE. The third translation was by Jñānagupta and others to produce a more complete text entitled *T'ien-p'in miao-fa lien-hua ching* (*T* 264). The Lotus sutra (*Saddharma Puṇḍarīka-sūtra*) is the principle text of the Tien-tai School.

<sup>126</sup> 《妙法蓮華經》「又女人身猶有五障。一者不得作梵天王。二者帝釋。三者魔王。四者轉輪聖王。五者佛身。云何女身速得成佛。」(*T* 262, p.35c)

C.f. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id\('b4e94-969c'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id('b4e94-969c'))

<sup>127</sup> 女身猶有五障：一者不得作梵王，（因為清淨與垢染不同）；二者帝釋，（因為少欲多欲差別）；三者魔王，（因剛強懦弱相異）；四轉輪王，（因仁慈嫉妒各異）；五者佛身。（因萬德煩惱有別）”FGDCDp.917.



《藥師琉璃光如來本願功德經》<sup>128</sup> the medicine Buddha has vowed to release women from the suffering caused by the female form by way of the Eighth Great Vow, which states:

I vow that when I attain the Bodhi in my next life, those females who are anguished by the hundred unwholesome deeds peculiar to the female form and have vowed to give up the female form, will achieve the male form, thereby advancing on the path of enlightenment toward the ultimate Bodhi upon hearing my name.<sup>129</sup>

The imposition of these hundred unwholesome deeds(百惡之所逼惱) on the female form is driven by:<sup>130</sup>

1. Physical shortcomings such as impure discharges when giving birth.
2. Psychological afflictions such as jealousy, vanity that are normally worse than the male form.
3. Social prejudices that militate against females gaining equality in status with males within the family and community, and from the past to the present. The tendency to look down upon females still persists today.

How can we explain the emergence of the notion of changing the female into the male form in the sutras of the Mahayana Buddha Dharma? According to Yin Shun, it is

<sup>128</sup> Translation by Xuan-zang in 650 CE in Tang dynasty (唐) in Da Ci En Monastery (大慈恩寺)

<sup>129</sup> 「第八大願。願我來世得菩提時。若有女人。為女百惡之所逼惱。極生厭離願捨女身。聞我名已 一切皆得轉女成男具丈夫相。乃至證得無上菩提」(T450, p. 405, b5-8)

<sup>130</sup> Yin Shun. *Yao shi jing jiang ji* 《藥師經講記》 Taipei : Zheng wen Publisher. p.71  
<http://www.mahabodhi.org/files/yinshun/09/yinshun09-04.html>

because of the social circumstance at that time of India. The sutras of Mahayana Buddha Dharma advocate to vow to be born into the Pure Land or illustrate how females could practice in order to achieve the male form in the next life, or even in the present life (not necessary so in those Mahayana sutras emphasize wisdom). The emergence of such a notion of renunciation is driven by the chaotic times when Buddhist society characterized by discriminatory practices favored the males over the females in India<sup>131</sup>

The prejudices against females in Buddhism originated in *Mahīśāsaka*(上座系化地部), for example, eight commandments [specifically for nuns] (八敬法,Pali *aṭṭha garu-dhammā*; Skt. *aṣṭauguru-dharmāḥ*) and female form with five hindrances (女人有五障) are both emphasized by Mahīśāsaka. However, *Mahāsāṅghikas* (大眾部) of the Latter Period, *Sarvāstivāda* (一切有部) and *Madhyamaka*(大乘空系) of the Early Period, dissented. The *Nāgadatta dārakā sutra* (佛說龍施女經)<sup>132</sup> that belongs to *Sarvāstivāda* had objected to the thesis of the female form having five hindrances, and the sutra (Skt. *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*) (道行般若經)<sup>133</sup> of *Madhyamaka* of the Mahayana Buddha Dharma, had strongly opposed the treatise that changing the

<sup>131</sup> Yin Shun. *The Origin and Development of Early Mahāyāna Buddhism*《初期大乘佛教之起源與開展》, (Taipei : Correct Listening Publisher, 1988.)p.1259.

<sup>132</sup> Translation by Zhi-qian 支謙: Wu dynasty (吳) (CE222-229).

[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0270.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0270.html)

<sup>133</sup> Translation by Lokaksema: Later Han dynasty (後漢) (CE. 179) in Luo-yang (洛陽)  
[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0006.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0006.html)

female to the male form would facilitate the attainment of Buddhahood.<sup>134</sup>

## B. Gaining Rebirth in Heaven

According to the data, practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can gain rebirth in heaven

has a total count of 9. The earliest account of the benefit of “gaining rebirth in heaven”

occurs in the 4<sup>th</sup> century has count of 1,

The *Milindapañha* 《那先比丘經》, translator unknown, translated between 317 and 420

CE,<sup>135</sup> says:

Though one possesses deep-rooted evil states, if he recollects the Buddha for just a moment, he would not fall into state of depravation but would gain rebirth in heaven.  
(...人雖有本惡一時念佛。...用是不入泥犁中。便生天上。...T1670/701)

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the benefit of “gaining rebirth in heaven” has 4 occurrences. In the

(*Buddha*)*avataṃsakasūtra* 《大方廣佛華嚴經》, translated by Buddhahadra between 418

and 422 CE,<sup>136</sup> the effects of erecting pagodas are described as follows:

Seeing these (the pagodas), people practice mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the *Saṅgha*, and evoke reverence and desire to make offering in their minds. They performed charity or cultivated virtues. By means of these good virtues, they were reborn in heaven or among human beings... They constantly recollected the Buddha and made effort to repay his kindness.” (眾生見已 念佛法僧。發起恭敬供養之心。或行布施或修功德。具功德已。或生天上或生人中。...常念如來知恩報恩。T278/597b)

The another account appears in the *Dirghāgama* 《長阿含經》, translated by *Buddhayasas*

<sup>134</sup> Gu, Zheng mei. 古正美, 《佛教與女性歧視》, 《當代》第十一期, 1987年, pp. 27-35 ...

<sup>135</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*,  
<[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k1002.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1002.html)>.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0079.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0079.html)>.

and Zhu-fo-nian (佛陀耶舍共竺佛念) in 413CE Yao Qin (姚秦 384-417)dynasty.

... I once was a king in human realm... and kept myself mindful of the Buddha till I died, thus I was reborn as a prince of *Vaiṣṇava* (多聞天).<sup>137</sup> I have been following the Dharma ever since, thus attaining *srota-āpanna* (「闍尼沙言。...我本為人王。...一心念佛而取命終。故得生為毘沙門天王太子。自從是來。常照明諸法。得須陀洹。不墮惡道。於七生中常名闍尼沙」(T001/34c)

The other two accounts appear in the *Mi lei da cheng fo Jing* 《佛說彌勒大成佛經》<sup>138</sup>

and the *Samyuktāgama* 《雜阿含經》.<sup>139</sup> Three counts are found in the 6<sup>th</sup> century's

translation of texts. In the *Saddharma-smṛty-upasthāna* 《正法念處經》, translated by

*Prajñāruci* in 538-541CE in Yuan wei dynasty (better known as Northern Wei dynasty

386-534),<sup>140</sup> it says:

[If a person] practices mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma and the *Sangha*, and practices generosity towards one's parents, lay followers (*upāsaka*), or even sick people who do not observe moral precepts....At death, such person reappears in the good destiny, in the dignified Realm of Thirty-three Gods. (念佛法僧而行布施。若施父母。若優婆塞。或無禁戒病患之人。.....是人命終。生於善道三十三天威德輪地。T721/ p174b)

In the same sutra but different page states:

<sup>137</sup> Translated as 多聞天. One of the Four-Quarter Kings 四天王.

<sup>138</sup> Translation by Kumārajīva(鳩摩羅什) in 402 CE in Later qin dynasty (後秦) in Chang-an (長安). Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* 2004, K195

“ People from all walks of life, when aged, dwelling in the wood or under the tree.... Meditating on Buddha till the end of life, will be most likely to be reborn in the realm of Mahabrahmanas or in the presences of Buddhas.”(時世人民。若年衰老。自然行詣山林樹下。安樂淡泊念佛取盡。命終多生大梵天上及諸佛前。T456, p 429/ b)

“ Buddha told Mahānāman, you had practiced mindfulness of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha all nights, when time comes, your consciousness will rise up to peaceful and happy place, and will be born in the heaven realm. (佛告摩訶男。...汝已長夜修習念佛。念法。念僧。若命終時。...神識上昇。向安樂處。未來生天。T99/p. 237c2-7)

<sup>139</sup> translated by Gunabhadra(求那跋陀羅) between 435-443 CE in Liu Song dynasty (劉宋).

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. <[http://www.hm.tygp.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0076.html](http://www.hm.tygp.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0076.html)>.

Practicing mindfulness of the Buddha's merits as a way to cultivate one's mind. People who perform wholesome deeds take rebirth in one of the heavenly realms. They are revered and supported by all good people. (念佛功德。以修其心。...善業之人。生彼天已。一切善人。敬重供養。 T721/176c).

If people practice mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma and the *Saṅgha* and practice generosity, they can gain rebirth in Thirty-three heavens. According to the Mahayana sutras, there are Thirty-three heavens. However, in Early Buddhist texts, only Thirty-one heaven were mentioned<sup>141</sup>

The other one account appears in the *Mahākaruṇāpūṇḍarīkasūtra*《大悲經》, translated by *Narendrayaśas* in Northern Qi dynasty (北齊 550-557) in Xiang-Zou (相州).<sup>142</sup> Only one count was found in the 7th century's translation of text. In

the *(Abhidharma)mahāvibhāṣa(śāstra)*《阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論》,<sup>143</sup> translated by

Xuan-zang in 659 CE in Tang dynasty (唐), states :

The pain-stricken Sakyan women earnestly recollected the Buddha and entreated for

<sup>141</sup> According to Buddhist cosmology, there are 31 Heavens mentioned in Pāli sutras. Three realms of existence are mentioned both in Pāli sutras and in Abhidharmas including The sensuous realm (*kāma loka*). (1-11), The fine-material realm (*rūpa loka*) (12-27), The immaterial world (*ārūpa loka*). (28-31). In the Pali canon and commentaries the single world system is discussed.

<sup>142</sup> T380/956a. K0110

<sup>143</sup> Traditionally held to have been composed in Kashmir around the second century CE; the actual date is uncertain. A key philosophical treatise of the Kāśmīra Sarvāstivāda sect, which presents and argues against the theories of various other sects — though not held to be the earliest extant text of that school. The Xuanzang *\*Mahāvibhāṣā* is one of three texts of roughly the same name extant, all preserved in the Chinese canon. The others are the *\*Vibhāṣāśāstra*《毘婆沙論》(T1547) translated by *\*Saṃghabhūti/Saṃghabhadra* 僧伽跋澄 et al. in 383; and the *\*Abhidharmavibhāṣāśāstra*《阿毘曇毘婆沙論》(T 1546), translated by *Buddhavarman* 浮陀跋摩, Daotai 道泰 in 437-439 CE of the Northern Liang dynasty (397-439). These works are obviously of a particular sort of historical interest as two of the three earliest Chinese translations from the early Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma corpus.

Digital Dictionary of Buddhism  
[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?96.xml+id\('b963f-6bd8-9054-78e8-5927-6bd8-5a46-6c99-8ad6'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?96.xml+id('b963f-6bd8-9054-78e8-5927-6bd8-5a46-6c99-8ad6'))

his sympathy.... After the Buddha preached the Dharma to them, they all realized the noble truth; and at death, all were reborn in the dignified Thirty-three Heaven. (釋女爾時苦痛所逼。各專 念佛 請垂哀愍。...因為說法皆見聖諦。命終生 妙三十三天。T1545/ p430c)

The teaching of the *śāstra* belongs to Sectarian Buddhism, although it was translated much later in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. One account is found in the eighth century. It is in the *Pu kong juan suo tuo luo ni jing* 《不空羂索陀羅尼經》, translated by Li Wu-chan in 700 CE in Tang dynasty.<sup>144</sup> It states:

When one forsook the human body and acquired a body of a heavenly being...still, his mind was never negligent in the mindfulness of the Buddha. (捨於人身則得天身。...念佛之心終不忘失。菩薩之行亦不休廢。得宿命智永離惡趣。...常得見佛及諸菩薩。T1096/413c)

In Early Buddha Dharma, rebirth in heaven is often mentioned in the practice. For instance, the last one of the six mindfulnesses is *Devatānussiti*, which means recollection of the qualities that lead to rebirth as a heavenly being. The Esoteric sutras mentioned that the being who rebirth in the heaven was still never negligent in the mindfulness of the Buddha.

### C. Increase Virtues

福德 means “Blessed virtues, all good deeds; the blessing arising from good deeds.”

[Soothill]. It also means meritorious virtues. All kinds of good actions and the merit

<sup>144</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*.  
<[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0291.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0291.html)>.

derived from them. Meritorious virtue(福德) and wisdom(智慧) are the two necessary provisions for the path to enlightenment or for Bodhisattva to attain the Buddhahood. The six *pāramitās* are the fundamental practices of Bodhisattva; the first five of *pāramitās* are for merit and virtue,<sup>145</sup> whereas the sixth is for wisdom.

The Buddha is the most honored among men and *devas* (lit. among two-footed beings 兩足尊, Skt. *dvipadôttama*). The two feet are compared to the virtues and wisdom.

Moreover, there are two kinds of adornment, adornment of wisdom (智慧莊嚴) and adornment of virtuous activities (福德莊嚴). The first is merit through the acquisition of understanding (*jñāna*), which leads to *prajñā* (wisdom), the sixth and crowning practice of the six transcendent practices (*pāramitās*, 六波羅蜜). The second is merit through the accumulation of worthy actions (*punya*). The latter type of merit is attained through the first five of the transcendent practices.<sup>146</sup>

Besides, the first five of *pāramitās* that can accumulate meritorious virtue, according to texts, practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can also increase the virtue.

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<sup>145</sup> The first five of the *pāramitās* are: 1.布施(*dāna*), charity, or giving, including the bestowing of the truth on others; 2. morality 持戒(*śīla*), maintaining moral rectitude; 3. forbearance 忍辱(*kṣānti*), patience under insult; 4. effort 精進(*vīrya*), zeal; 5. meditation 禪定(*dhyāna*), meditation or contemplation

<sup>146</sup> Digital Dictionary of Buddhism

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id\('b4e8c-56b4'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id('b4e8c-56b4'))

涅槃經: 具足二種莊嚴。一者智慧。二者福德。 T374/523a. An accomplishment of two adornments, wisdom and meritorious virtue.

Most of the accounts appear in the sutras and satras, which were translated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, totally has 14 occurrences. This followed by the 1-3<sup>rd</sup> century, has 4 occurrences. The earliest account of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can increase merit and virtue appears in the *Pu sa xing wu shi yuan shen jing* 《菩薩行五十緣身經》, translated by *Dharmarakṣa* between 266 and 313 CE in Western Jin dynasty,<sup>147</sup> it says:

If people mindfully meditate on the Buddha's merits and virtues, he will acquire immeasurable merits, not to mention paying respect to and extolling the Buddha. (若有人至意念佛功德者。其福無量。況為作禮嗟歎者哉。T812/774c).

Moreover, in the *Guan xi fo xing xiang jing* 《佛說灌洗佛形像經》, translated by Fa chu (法炬) between 290-306 CE in Western Jin (西晉 265-316) dynasty, it states:

All conscientious men and women, contemplating whole heartily on the Buddha's immeasurable merit after Buddha's *parinirvana*, bathing the Buddha's statue as if the Buddha still alive, can obtain incalculable merit. (諸善男子善女人。於佛滅後當至心念佛無量功德之力。浴佛形像如佛在時。得福無量不可稱數。T695/ 796c)

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, one of the famous treatises is *Mah ā prajñ ā p ā ramit ā śā stra*(大智度論) (100 *chuan*), written by *Nāgārjuna* and translated by *Kumārajīva* in 402-406 CE in Later Qin dynasty (後秦 384-417) in Xiao-yao Garden (逍遙園). 7 occurrences mentioned the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha can increase merit and virtue. The messages are as follows:

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<sup>147</sup> Lancaster. *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* 2004.  
[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0355.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0355.html)



- 1.) *Nian-fo samādhi* (*Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*) has great virtue and merit capable of liberating beings. (念佛三昧有大福德能度眾生) T1509/109a
- 2.) Among others, *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is considered one of the loftiest states of mind whereby a donor can gain virtues and merits.”(或時從心大得福德。或從福田大得功德。或從妙物大得功德 。第一從心如四等心念佛三昧 )(T1509/146c)
- 3.) So long as one focuses on meditating the Buddha, one will gain immeasurable virtues and merits, not to mention [other qualities such as] diligence, generosity, morality, offering and attending to others’ need, and paying homage to those worthy of respect. (若人但心念佛。尚得無量無盡福德。何況精進布施持戒供養承事禮拜者。T1509/281b)
- 4.) One who practices mindfulness of the Buddha sows the best kind of seed in the Buddha-field, a field that is foremost among other fields of merit in the world. (若 但念佛。..問曰。經言種種福田。今何以獨言殖於福田。答曰。雖有種種福田 佛為第一福田。T1509/ 282b)
- 5.) When great bodhisattvas want to recollect and cherish the virtues and merits of all past Buddhas of countless world cycles, they recollect the Buddha, for He is the foremost in virtues and merits... (若菩薩摩訶薩。憶念過去十方無量無邊阿僧祇世界中諸滅度佛者。是菩薩欲起隨喜福德。佛是福德主。是故念佛。T1509/488b)
- 6.) The Buddha told Subhuti that if laymen and laywomen recollect the Buddha

respectfully, the results derived from this wholesome cause and condition will end his suffering and will bring him immeasurable merits. (佛告須菩提。...若有善男子善女人。但以敬心念佛。是善根因緣乃至畢苦其福不盡。 T1509/645c)

7.) If, seeing the Buddha statue, he recollects the Buddha with kindness, he will put an end to suffering and will reap immeasurable merits.... ( T1509/648a 復次此中佛說。...有人見石泥像等慈心念佛。是人乃至畢苦其福不盡。)

According to above discussion, it revealed that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha or mindfulness of the Buddha *samādhi* could increase meritorious virtues. Moreover, eliminating suffering and achieving ultimate liberation is one of the main purposes of building up meritorious virtues. Furthermore, meritorious virtues can also overcome obstacles. According to the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra* 《瑜伽師地論》, with provisions of meritorious virtue, one can live with bountiful supplies and wealth, encounter and be taught by the knowledgeable, free from obstacles and practice spiritually with diligent.<sup>148</sup>

In the Early Mahayana sutras particularly emphasize increase virtue and wisdom, due to virtue 福德 and wisdom (智慧) are two necessary provisions for the path to enlightenment or for Bodhisattva to attain the Buddhahood.

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<sup>148</sup> T1579, p 446b. “福德資糧者。謂由此故 於今獲得隨順資具 豐饒財寶。遇真福田為善知識。離諸障礙能勤修行。”

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the benefit of mindfulness of the Buddha can increase virtue has 1 account, which appears in the *Mahākaruṇāpūṇḍarīkasūtra* 《大悲經》, translated by *Narendrayaśas* in 558CE in Bei Qi dynasty (北齊 550-577).<sup>149</sup> In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, one account appears in the *Nilakantha(ka) sutra* 《千眼千臂觀世音菩薩陀羅尼神呪經》, translated by Zhi-tong (智通) between 627-649 CE in Tang dynasty(唐) in Luo-yang.<sup>150</sup>

In the Esoteric sutra also states that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can increase virtues.

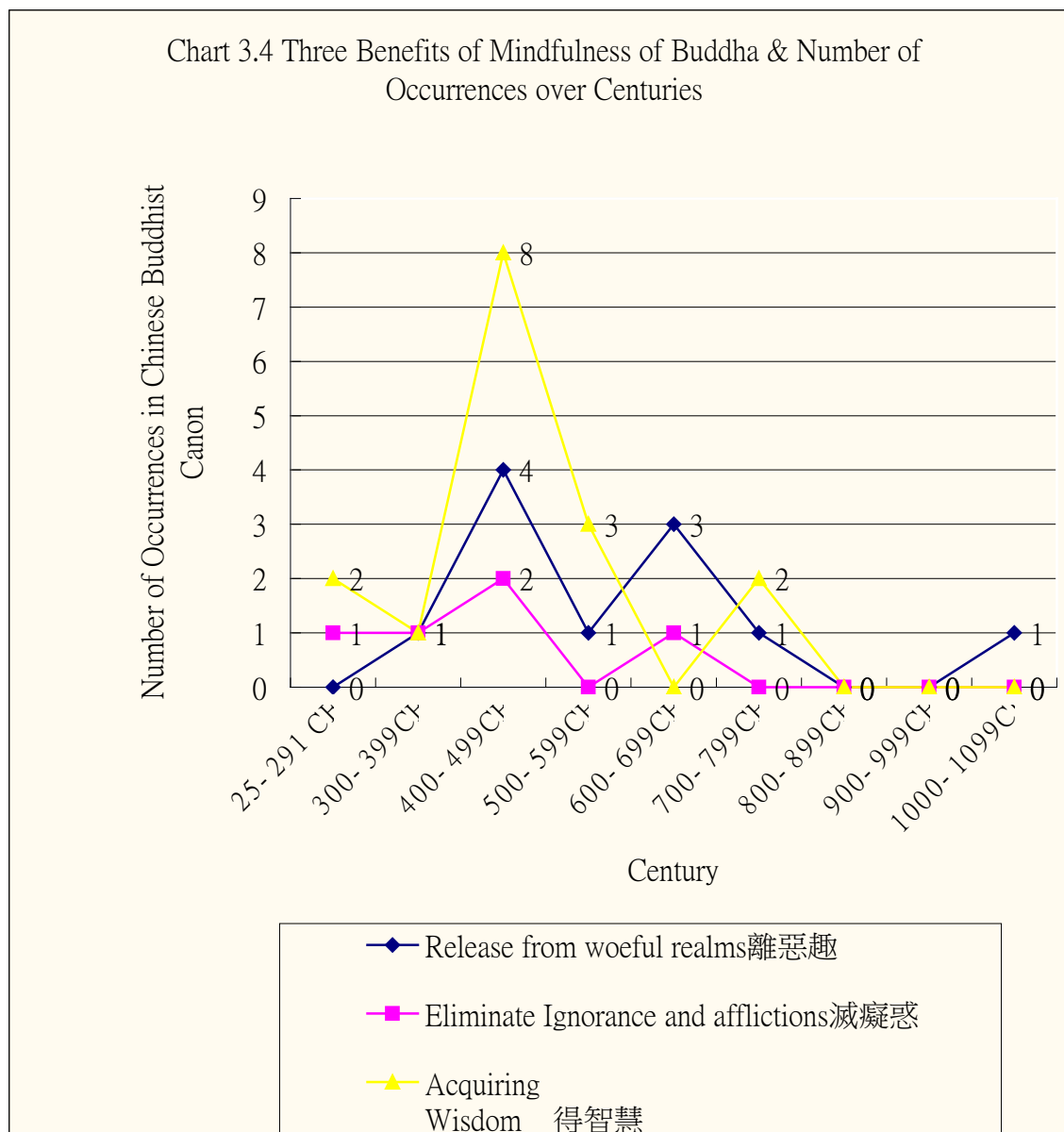
- Release from woeful realms/ Eliminate ignorance and afflictions /Acquiring wisdom

Chart 3. 4 Three Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences over Centuries.

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<sup>149</sup> “Buddha told Anada, if a person practiced mindfulness of Buddha,... the fruitful effect of meritorious virtue is countless; and if a person contemplated whole heartily on Buddha’s virtue, he will also derive endless blessed reward.”(佛告阿難。若有眾生。以念佛故。...如是福德所得果報不可窮盡。...若有眾生以至誠心念佛功德。...其福報亦不能盡。 T380/956b)

<sup>150</sup> (A practitioner)... when he sits, walks, or stands still, he should practice mindfulness of Buddha constantly as if the Buddha is right in front of him. ... all faults and sins will be eliminated. Such a practitioner will be rewarded with blessing of a thousand Wheel-Turning Kings. ... (若坐若行若住。常念佛如對目前者。是人於無量百千俱胝生。所有積集諸惡罪業皆得消滅。是人當得具足千轉輪王之福。 T1057/91b)



#### A. Release from Woeful Realms

evil destinies (woeful realms)(惡趣)also written as 惡道. According to the Buddhist cosmology, the woeful realms have three, including hell (地獄)(Skt. *narakagati* ), hungry ghost (餓鬼)(Skt. *pretagati* )and animal (畜生) (Skt. *tiryagyonigati*). These three woeful realms are the result of predominantly evil karma, namely greed(貪), hatred(瞋) and

ignorance(癡) are the three poisons (Skt. *rāga-dveṣa-moha*)<sup>151</sup>

According to the data, the practice related to mindfulness of the Buddha can “stay away from woeful realms” has a total count of 11. The earliest account of the benefit of release from woeful realms appears in 4<sup>th</sup> century in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* 《般泥洹經》<sup>152</sup>, translated by Po Fazu in CE 290-306 in Western Jin dynasty.

Constantly recollect the Buddha with joy, constantly recollect the Dharma with joy, constantly recollect the *Saṅgha* with joy, constantly recollect precepts with joy, recollect these four with joy.... All will be accomplishing, and will not fall into evil realm.... (「一曰念佛意喜不離。二曰念法意喜不離。三曰念眾意喜不離。四曰念戒意喜不離。必令具足。...不墮惡地。 T6/p.178c)

Other accounts appear in the 5<sup>th</sup> century's texts.<sup>153</sup> According to Early Buddhist texts, in order to stay away from the evil realms, one must achieve four objects of unshakable purity(四不壞淨信).<sup>154</sup> which will result in the attainment of the first realization(初果 *srota-āpanna* 須陀洹). After attaining the stage of *srota-āpanna*, which means the person who has abandoned the first three of the fetters<sup>155</sup> that bind the mind to the cycle of

<sup>151</sup> C.f. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?60.xml+id\('b60e1-8da3'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?60.xml+id('b60e1-8da3'))

<sup>152</sup> [Soothill] " *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*. There are two versions, one the Hīnayāna, the other the Mahāyāna, both of which are translated into Chinese, in several versions, and there are numerous treatises on them. Hīnayāna: 佛般泥洹經 T05, *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, tr. by Po Fazu CE 290-306 of the Western Jin dynasty,. 大般涅槃經 tr. by Faxian. 般泥洹經 T06, translator unknown. These are different translations of the same work. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6d.xml+id\('b6d85-69c3-7d93'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6d.xml+id('b6d85-69c3-7d93'))

<sup>153</sup> T643/687b, 687c, T278/597b.

<sup>154</sup> 《雜阿含經》 *Madhyāma-āgama* T99/214b, 215b (843 經)

<sup>155</sup> self-identification views (*sakkaya-ditthi*) 身見, uncertainty (*vicikiccha*) 疑, grasping at precepts and practices (*silabbata-paramasa*) 戒禁取見. Access to Insight: Readings in Theravada Buddhism <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/glossary.html#samyojana>

rebirth and has thus entered the sage's "stream" flowing inexorably to nirvana, it ensures that one will be reborn only seven more times at the most, and it is only into human beings or higher realms.<sup>156</sup>

Having attained the first realization and being reborn seven times between human and heavenly realm, a practitioner can then break away from the endless suffering, which means free from the cyclic existence, and rise above the three realms (*Trailokya*).

Based on this theory, practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can stay away from the evil realms, which also means that it allows one to attain the first realization (*srota-āpanna*) minimally, even up to attain *arahatship*. This benefit is same as achieving nirvana, because attaining nirvana means attaining *arahatship*.

The texts of the Early Mahayana period, translated into Chinese in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, recorded that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha's supreme characteristic marks (perfect appearance) and virtues or mindfulness of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha or practicing offering or accumulate merits or virtues, help one to be free from falling to the evil realms.<sup>157</sup> The texts of the Middle Mahayana period, translated into Chinese in the 6<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Access to insight. Reading in Theravada Buddhism  
<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/glossary.html#sotapanna>

<sup>157</sup> In *Guan fo san mei hai jing* (, translated by Buddhahadra between 420-423CE in Liu song dynasty. The Buddha told Ānanda, "If beings hear about the Buddha-body as being endowed with virtues and supreme characteristic marks as mentioned above , they will not fall into woeful realms for millions of kalpas." (佛告阿難。念佛功德者...若有眾生一聞佛身如上功德相好光明。億億千劫不墮惡道。T643/687b) T643/K401 Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* 2004

-7<sup>th</sup> century focused on the contemplation of Buddha in mind, which would enable one to be reborn in the Pure Land. Once reborn in the Pure Land, one would not fall back to the evil realms.<sup>158</sup> The texts of the Final Mahayana period, translated into Chinese after the 7<sup>th</sup> century, indicated that practice mindfulness of the Buddha's super wisdom, one will not fall into woeful.<sup>159</sup>

The other issue is in regard to the Chinese term, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, *Buddhabhadra* (佛陀跋陀羅) used 惡趣 Evil Destinies in the 《大方廣佛華嚴經》, but in the 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》, the term Evil Path 惡道 was used, which was also seen in the 6<sup>th</sup> century in *Paramārtha*'s(真諦) translation work. However, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, *Śikṣānanda*(實叉難陀) and Fa Zang(法藏) switched back to Evil Destinies 惡趣.<sup>160</sup>

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In *Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭhāra-sūtra* 《大方廣佛華嚴經》, translated by Buddhabhadra (佛陀跋陀羅) between 418-423CE in Liu Song dynasty (劉宋 420-479). “眾生見(塔)已念佛法僧。...或行布施或修功德...除滅惡趣直向正道。” T278/597b. K 79

<sup>158</sup> According to *Mahāyānaśraddhotpādaśāstra*《大乘起信論》, attributed to Aśvaghōṣa(馬鳴) and translated by Paramārtha(真諦) in 553CE in Liang (梁 502-557) dynasty,<sup>158</sup> it says that first-time Dharma learners “Simply by practicing mindfulness of the Buddha with unwavering attention, they will be reborn in the Buddha land in any direction according to wish, get to meet the Buddha and will never again fall into woeful abodes.” (謂以專意念佛因緣。隨願得生他方佛土。常見於佛永離惡道 T1666/ 583a). However, the sutra is considered as an apocrophy.

According to another translation of *Mahāyānaśraddhotpādaśāstra* by Śikṣānanda(實叉難陀) in 695-700CE in Tang dynasty, it using 惡趣 “one who practice mindfulness of the Buddha and bodhisattva with one-pointed attention, will never again fall into woeful realms.” (一心專念佛及菩薩。..永離惡趣。 )T1667/591b. K623

<sup>159</sup> In Fascicle One of *Saṃghāṭīśūtradharmaparyāya* 《佛說大集會正法經》, translated by Dānapāla(施護) in 1001CE in Northern Song dynasty, it says: “To practice mindfulness of the Buddha's super wisdom, one will never fall into woeful realms.” (念佛最上智 永不墮惡趣 T424/978c)

<sup>160</sup> 一心專念佛及菩薩。..永離惡趣。 T1667/591b

十化諸天子一念念佛。近離惡趣。遠滅癡惑。 (T1733/141c)

To sum up, the Early texts mentioned that practicing or achieving the four objects of unshakable purity(四不壞淨) one can enter the noble stream( *sotāpanna*). That means one will not fall into woeful realms. However, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the texts of the Early Mahayana period simply mentioned that, “If beings hear about the Buddha-body as being endowed with virtues and supreme characteristic marks, they will not fall into woeful realms” (T643/687b).

The texts of the Middle Mahayana period lay stress on promotion of the super benefits of Rebirth in the Pure Land. After be reborn to the Pure Land one will not fall into woeful realms.

#### B. Eliminate Ignorance and Afflictions

癡 *Moha*, it means delusion, ignorance. Also written as愚癡 . In the

*Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*(俱舍論) it is listed as one of the evil producing elements; in the doctrine of the *Yogācāra* school, it is listed as one of the primary afflictions 六根本煩惱.

Also, one of the three 'roots of non-virtue' 三不善根 and one of the 'ten secondary

dullnesses' 十隨眠, a synonym for ignorance 無明.<sup>161</sup> For example, in Twelve Link of

Dependent Origination, regarded as the origin of all afflictions. 惑 (Skt.

<sup>161</sup> Digital Dictionary of Buddhism.

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?60.xml+id\('b60d1'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?60.xml+id('b60d1'))

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?76.xml+id\('b7661'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?76.xml+id('b7661'))



*saṃsāra-mahārṇava*), it means mental disturbance, the root of delusion, Defilement, affliction (煩惱), delusion, confusion, agitation.<sup>162</sup>

The benefit of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can eliminate ignorance and afflictions have 6 occurrences. The earliest account appears in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century in the *Chai ching*(齋經), translated by Zhi-qian(支謙)between 223-253CE in Wu dynasty(220-265)<sup>163</sup>, it says:

... those who practice *Nian-fo*, will eliminates ignorance, malicious anger custom entirely. (佛告維耶。...是念佛者。愚癡惡意怒習悉除。善心自生。T87/911b)

In the *Suṣṭhitamati(devaputra)pariprcchā(sūtra)*(佛說 如幻三昧經),translated by *Dharmarakṣa* (竺法護) between 265-313 CE in Western Chin dynasty (西晉 265-316), says:

When desires arise, one practices mindfulness of the Buddha. Then the desires will be eliminated, hatred and ignorance are the same will be eliminated and attain liberation. 「貪欲意生。執此欲意一心念佛。欲即消滅。愚癡亦然而得解脫。」 (T342/ 152a)

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the benefit of eliminating ignorance has count of 3, which appear in T616/277a, T643/646a, T99/143b.

In the 7<sup>th</sup> century, one account appears in the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra*(瑜伽師地論), translated by Xuan- zang 玄奘 between 646 and 648 CE in Tang dynasty.<sup>164</sup> It states:

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?76.xml+id\('b7661'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?76.xml+id('b7661'))

<sup>163</sup> Lancaster. *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*. 2004 [http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0720.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0720.html)

<sup>164</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, 18 December 2006 <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0570.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0570.html)>.

There are three kinds of luminosity, ...Dharma-luminosity which derives from the mindfulness of Buddha and so on. Dharma-luminosity would eliminate three kinds of darkness, including ignorance and doubts. (法光明者。...隨念佛等。..法明能治三種黑暗。...此中 無明及疑俱名黑暗。T1579/330a)

The above-discussed passages revealed that the cessation of ignorance and delusion means to attain wisdom, therefore, ignorance and delusion are contradictory to wisdom. Affliction arises from them, too. Thus, being able to clear affliction means to eliminate ignorance and delusion hence to obtain wisdom. Therefore, it can also be said that affliction is opposing wisdom. The cessation of ignorance and delusion equals to attain Nirvana. Consequently, ignorance and delusion are affliction, and wisdom is liberation.

### C. Acquiring Wisdom

From the earliest stages of Buddhist tradition, wisdom (*prajñā*) played a central role in Buddhist practice. Wisdom involved an ability to see through appearances of things and understand them correctly. In other words, it is to see things as they really are.

The gist of the primary way of practice as enunciated by the Buddha is embodied in the Three practices (Pillars) – Precepts, Concentration, and Wisdom. All spiritual practices in Buddhism are for the sake of achieving Morality, Concentration or *Samādhi*, and Wisdom. Morality and *Samādhi* are in the path of blessed virtue, where Wisdom is obviously the path of wisdom. The benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha including both increase virtues and acquire wisdom.

According to the data, the practice of Nian-fo can acquiring wisdom has 16 occurrences.

The earliest account appears in the *Tathāgatamahākaraṇīrdeśa(sūtra)* 《大哀經》,

translated by *Dharmarakṣa* in 291CE in Western Jin dynasty (西晉 265-317) in Chang-an

(長安).<sup>165</sup> It says:

Those who constantly meditate on Buddha/take it as the essence for wisdom.” (其意常念佛 是則為智本 T398/449a)

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century one account is found. The *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* 《佛說大方等頂王

經》, translated by *Dharmarakṣa*(竺法護)in 308 CE in Western Jin dynasty,<sup>166</sup> says:

One practices Mindfulness of the Buddha, who is the supreme one. Then the virtue [one acquires] surpasses Mount *Sumeru* and the wisdom exceeds the three periods [past, present, future]. (念佛至聖 德踰須彌慧超三世 。 T477/595b)

Six records are found in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. That is because in the fifth century the main

translators of sutras and śāstras were *Kumārajīva*, *Buddhabhadra*, *Dharmakṣema*,

*Guṇabhadra*, *Guṇavarman*. Therefore, Early Mahayana texts prevailed in the fifth

century. The *Prajñā* sutras and śāstras period of the Early Mahayana Buddha Dharma lay

more stress on the teachings of *Prajñā*, therefore it results in more benefits in acquiring

wisdom. For example, the *Guan fo san mei hai Jing* 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》, translated

by *Buddhabhadra* (佛陀跋陀羅) in 420-423CE in Liu Song (劉宋) or Eastern Jin (東晉),

<sup>165</sup> Ibid [http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0072.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0072.html)

<sup>166</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, 20 December 2006  
<[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0122.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0122.html)>.

states that <sup>167</sup>“The Buddha instructs *Ānanda*, ...If people could pay homage to the Buddha and meditate on him, contemplate his form or his image, certainly such persons are no different from *Mañjuśrī*.” (佛勅阿難。..眾生。若能禮拜者。若能念佛者。若能觀佛者。當知此人與文殊師利等無有異. T643/ 688b)

*Mañjuśrī* in Mahayana Sutras represents wisdom.

Three occurrences are found in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* 《大智度論》. <sup>168</sup> One account appears in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜經》 T223/219a, translated by *Kumārajīva* between 402-406CE. One account appears in the *pu sa nei jie jing* 《菩薩內戒經》 T1487/1051a, translated by *Gunavarman* in 431CE in Liu Song dynasty (劉宋). One account is found in the *Samyuktāgamasūtra* (雜阿含經) T99/333c, translated by *Guṇabhadra* between 435-443CE in Liu Song dynasty (劉宋) in Yang-tu (楊都). Two occurrences are found in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, which appeared in the *Mahāratnakūṭa* 《大寶積經》 T310/436b,458c, translated by *Bodhiruci* in 568CE. One account appears in the Fascicle One of *Samādhirāja(candrapradīpa)sūtra* 《月燈三昧經》, translated by *Narendrayaśas* (那連提耶舍) in 557 CE in Gao Qi dynasty, <sup>169</sup> several of

<sup>167</sup> Ibid [http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0401.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0401.html)

<sup>168</sup> T1509/219b,488c, 661a. T1509/661a “Contemplate the dissolution of recollection of Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, morality, liberality, heavenly beings, fading, and *ānāpāna*. This is the practice of *prajñāpāramitā*.” (修念佛念法念僧念戒念捨念天念滅念安般壞。是修般若波羅蜜)

<sup>169</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, 20 December 2006 <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0181.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0181.html)>.

the stanzas on Mindfulness of the Buddha read as follows:

Through practicing mindfulness of the Buddha's supreme characteristics and virtues /  
one can subdue the senses / the mind freed of bewilderment realizes the dharma /  
gaining wisdom as vast as the ocean." (念佛相好及德行 能使諸根不亂動 心無迷  
惑與法合 得聞得智如大海) (T639/553a)

The sutra describes mindfulness of the Buddha's supreme characteristics and virtues.

Two records are found in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. One is found in the

*Nantamukhasādhakadhāraṇīsūtra* 《出生無邊門陀羅尼經》, translated by *Amoghavajra*

(不空) between 720-774 CE:<sup>170</sup>

Those who attain *Nian-fo samādhi*, which is a state that all dharmas are beyond words,  
all dharmas are equal. ... Will accumulate all good roots and wisdom. (...入一切法無  
言說。念佛三昧 一切法平等。...一切善根智慧積集 T1009/677a)

The other is found in the *Shou hu guo jie zhu to luo ni jing* 《守護國界主陀羅尼經》,

translated by *Prajña* (般若) and *Muniśrī* (牟尼室利) in 790CE in Tang dynasty (618-907).

It states:

Bodhisattvas possess adornment of six kinds of *Samādhi*: mindfulness of the Buddha,  
the Dharma, the *Sangha*.... (菩薩有六種三昧瓔珞莊嚴。謂念佛念法念僧。念戒念捨  
念天 T997/557c。)

The (*Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*)-*uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī(sūtra)* 《佛說佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經》,

translated by I-jing 義淨 in 710CE in Tang dynasty,<sup>171</sup> states:

Practicing mindfulness of the Buddha constantly with making *mudra*, one will attain  
unobstructed wisdom *samādhi* and adorned *samādhi* of *Bodhicitta*. (心常念佛作慕陀  
羅尼印。.....證得無障礙智三昧及菩提心莊嚴三昧 T971/363c-364a)

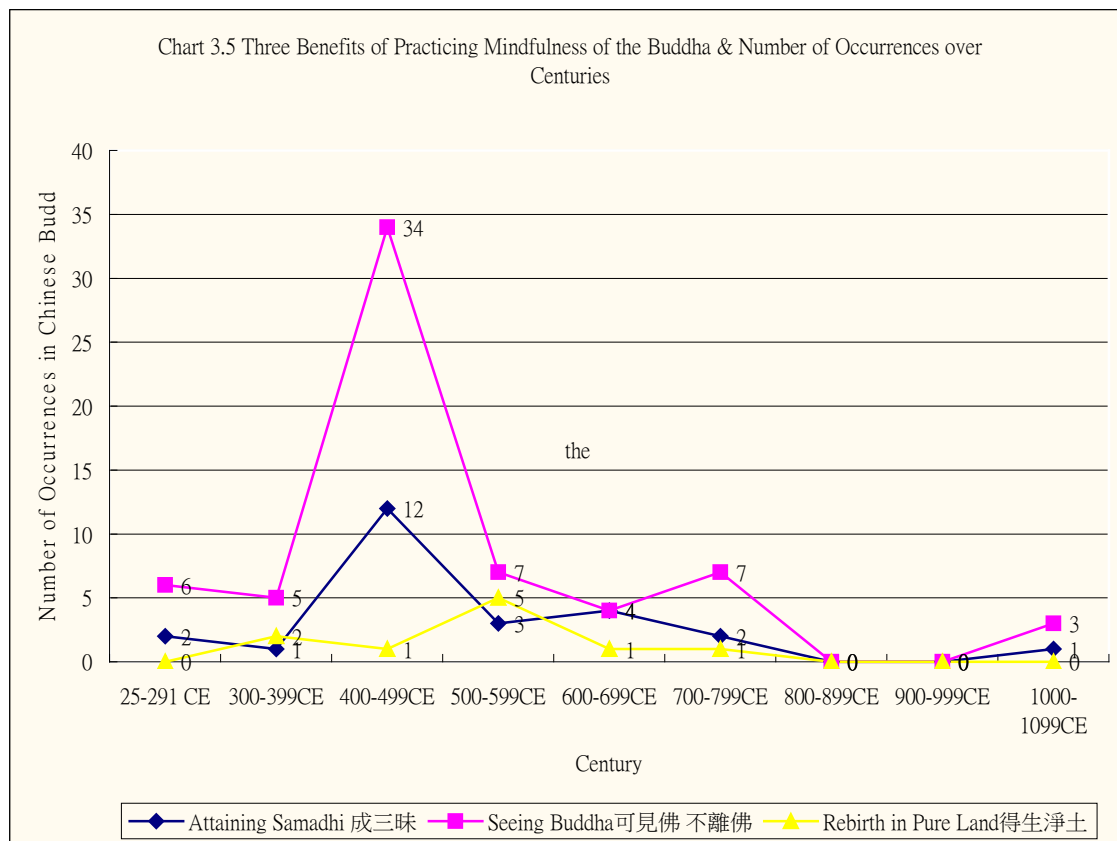
<sup>170</sup> T1009 (Nos. 1011,1018). Ibid. K1279, cf. K331. K324

<sup>171</sup> T971 《Nos 967,佛說佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經》 K.323

From these passages we can see that several kinds of *samādhi* appears in the Esoteric sutras, include *Nian-fo samādhi*, unobstructed wisdom *samādhi* and adorned *samādhi* of Bodhicitta. Through the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha with making *mudra*, one can attain unobstructed wisdom *samādhi* and adorned *samādhi* of *Bodhicitta*.

- Attaining *Samādhi* / Seeing the Buddha / Rebirth in Pure Land

Chart 3. 5 Three Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences over Centuries.



### A. Attaining *Samādhi*

The benefit of attaining *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* (*Nian-fo san mei*), ranked as second, has 26 occurrences. In the fifth century, attaining *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* has 13 occurrences and in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, attaining *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* has 4 occurrences.

The earliest account of the benefit of attaining *samādhi* appears in the

*Bhadrāpalasūtra* 《佛說般舟三昧經》, translated by *Lokaṣema* (支婁迦讖) in 179 CE in

Later Han(後漢)dynasty in Luo-yang(洛陽). It states:

By practicing mindfulness of the Buddha, thus one attains emptiness (*sūnyatā*) *samādhi*.

That is the true meaning for *nian-fo*. (...。用念佛故得空三昧。如是為念佛。T418/ 905b)

According to the data, practicing mindfulness of the Buddha will lead to the attainment of *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* means “The *samādhi* in which the individual whole-heartedly thinks of the appearance of the Buddha, or of the *dharmakāya*, or reciting the Buddha's name. The one who enters into this *samādhi*, or merely reciting the name of *Amitābha*, however evil his life may have been, will acquire the merits of *Amitābha* and be received into Pure Land.”<sup>172</sup>

According to the data,<sup>173</sup> more passages of practicing the visualization of the Buddha image (觀像 念佛) appears in the fifth century. One will be able to attain *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* (*Nian-fo san mei*) with this practice. Moreover, this will enable one be with all Buddhas. Through the power of *samādhi*, one is able to removed evil; and, through the elimination of evil, one can see the Buddhas here and now.

The *Zuo chan san mei jing* 《坐禪三昧經》, translated by *Kumārajīva* between 402 and 407 CE in Yao Qin (384-417)dynasty in Chang-an (長安),<sup>174</sup> says:

Practitioners who aspire after Buddhahood should direct their attention to recollecting the bodies of all Buddhas of three periods and all directions as a way to enter *samādhi*. (但念諸佛 生身處在虛空。佛身如是。...有三十二相八十種好。...常念佛身相如是。行者便得十方三世諸佛悉在心目前一切悉見三昧。T614/281a)

<sup>172</sup> Digital Dictionary of Buddhism [cmuller ; source(s): Soothill]  
[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?5f.xml+id\('b5ff5-4f5b-4e09-6627'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?5f.xml+id('b5ff5-4f5b-4e09-6627'))

<sup>173</sup> T643/ 691c

<sup>174</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* 2004, 1 February 2007  
[<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k0991.html>](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0991.html)



The *(Buddha)avatamsakasūtra* 《大方廣佛華嚴經》<sup>175</sup> says:

People who practice mindfulness of all the Buddhas of three periods will attain *Nian-fo samādhi*. (發菩薩心普照一切。正念三世一切諸佛。念佛三昧悉得具足...。

T278/524c)

If people practice mindfulness of the *Tathāgata*, they would attain *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*, their minds remain mindful and not scattered. (若有念如來者。得念佛三昧。正念不亂。T278/629c)

In the *Buddha-dhyāna-samādhisāgara-sūtra* 《觀佛三昧海經》,<sup>176</sup> translated by

*Buddhabhadra* between 420 and 423 CE in Liu Song dynasty,<sup>177</sup> the *Brahmā* entreated

the Buddha to preach the method of visualization of Buddha image “so that human beings

following his teaching would always be with all the Buddhas and attain

*buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. Through the power of *samādhi*, human beings are removed

from evil. Through the elimination of evil, human being can see the Buddhas here and

now.”(婆羅門勸請世尊....具足演說 觀像 相 法。..得念佛三昧。三昧力故令諸眾生遠

離罪惡。以罪滅故現見諸佛。T643/ 691c)

The *Bodhisattvabuddhānusmṛtisamādhi* 《大方等大集經菩薩念佛三昧分》 translated

by *Dharmagupta* between 607-614 CE in Sui dynasty (隋 589-617) mentioned that

practice mindfulness of the Buddha’s virtues of ten names of past, now and future will

attain *buddhānusmṛti-samādhi*. (念過去現在未來佛十號功德 成就念佛三昧 T415 /858

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. K0079

<sup>176</sup> <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=觀佛三昧海經>>.

<sup>177</sup> K401

b)

The *Buddha-dhyāna-samādhisāgara-sūtra* 《觀佛三昧海經》 advocates the method of visualization of Buddha image and mindfulness of the supreme marks of the Buddhas.

Through the visualization, one can attain *Nian-fo samādhi*.

The Master Yin Shun considered the Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Buddhānusmṛti*)—one of the six Mindfulnesses—an expedient based more on faith whereas

*Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is the practice that will lead to the higher state of realization.<sup>178</sup>

This point is well made. The phrase *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* appears only in sutras and

*śāstras* related to the series of *Prajñā* sutras or Pure Land teaching (including

commentaries). *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* prevailed in the fifth century due to the

translations of meditation sutras and the series of *Prajñā* sutras by *Kumārajīva*; the

practice was often mentioned in his translations. That is an era that gave particular

emphasis on the development of wisdom and faith, and the discernment of emptiness.

According to the *Wu liang shou ru lai guan xing gong yang yi gui*:<sup>179</sup>

People may practice the three mystic doors,<sup>180</sup> attain *buddhānusmṛti samādhi*, gain

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<sup>178</sup> Yin Shun. *Hua yu ji* 華雨集 二 (Taipei : Correct Listening Publisher, 1988.) p.241

<sup>179</sup> Translated by *Amoghavajra*(不空) between 746 and 774 CE in Tang dynasty. Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, 20 January 2007 <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k1312.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1312.html)> and <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k1273.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1273.html)>.

<sup>180</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d.*, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s4e09-5bc6.html>>.

rebirth in the Pure Land, and enter the higher stages of bodhisattvas.<sup>181</sup>(修三密門 證念佛三昧得生淨土入菩薩正位。)

The practice of three mystic doors: making *mudra*, reciting mantra and mindfulness of the Buddha are often mentioned in the Esoteric sutras.

## B. Seeing the Buddha

According to the data, there are several manifestations of seeing the Buddha by practicing mindfulness of the Buddha.

1. Seeing the Buddha in one's mind 見自心佛.
2. Seeing the Buddha subsequent to achieving *samādhi*. 入三昧定見佛.

For example: May all sentient beings be adornment with dignified heart, seeing the Buddhas in *samādhi* through mindfulness of the Buddha. (令一切眾生。以心莊嚴而自莊嚴。念佛三昧普見諸佛。T278/507a)

“Having eaten the meals, the assembly enter the state of *nian-fo samādhi* naturally, and seeing the Buddhas in boundless form in all directions.” (時諸大眾食是食已。自然得入念佛三昧。見十方佛身量無邊。T643/680b22)

“After hearing the Buddha's teaching, twenty thousands Upasaka in *Śrāvastī*(舍衛城), initiated *Bodhicitta* and attained the *samādhi* through mindfulness of the Buddha, often in *samādhi*, thus seeing the Buddha teaching dharma. (佛說此時。舍衛城中二萬優婆塞。

<sup>181</sup> Ibid <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s521d-5730.html>>.

發菩提心得念佛定。常於定中見佛說法。T643/677a21)

### 3. Seeing the Buddha in the present life. 在現世就可見佛

For example: One follows the practice of mindfulness of the precious Buddha so as not to be dissociated from seeing the Buddha (念佛 寶心。不離見佛故。T625/ 373 a)

### 4. Seeing the Buddhas after rebirthing in other realm. 命終後他世得見佛 值遇諸佛.

This is the emphasis of rebirth in Pure Land.

For example: Mindfulness of the Buddha leads to *samādhi* that inevitably allows one to see the Buddha, and to be reborn in the realm of Buddha Land. 「念佛三昧必見佛 命終之後生佛前。」 T278/437 b

### 5. Encountering the Buddha when rebirthing into other life. 捨身他世。值遇佛

For example: “After Buddha’s Nirvana, one practice mindfulness of the Buddha diligently.... When one is reborn, will encounter 8 billion Buddhas.

(佛滅度後。念佛心利。...捨身他世。值遇八十億佛。...T643/659a)

Regarding seeing the Buddha in one’s mind or seeing the Buddha subsequent to achieving *samadhi*, the *Avatamsaka* (Flower Adornment) Sutra mentioned the mind-based<sup>182</sup> mindfulness of the Buddha<sup>183</sup> The Sutra stated that mind-based

<sup>182</sup> Yin Shun. The History of Chinese Chan School 《中國禪宗史》,(Taipei : Correct Listening Publisher, 1971). pp.58-59.

<sup>183</sup> There are three major full-length translations of the sūtra:  
The first full translation was completed by Buddhahadra 佛駄跋陀 around 420 (*Avatamsaka-sūtra*; 60

mindfulness would lead to seeing the Buddha in one's mind or seeing the Buddha

subsequent to achieving *samādhi*. The evidences are mentioned above.

The term of “seeing the Buddha” also has different meaning across various Buddhism eras. According to the Four *Āgamas*, during the Buddha's time, seeing the Buddha meant seeing Śākyamuni Buddha. But in Mahayana Texts, it emphasized seeing the Buddhas of Ten Directions or *Amitabha* Buddha.

### C. Rebirth in Pure Land

According to the data, practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can gain rebirth in the Pure Land has 10 occurrences. The earliest account appears in the *Kuan ting jing* (佛說灌頂經), translated by *Srimitra* (尸梨蜜多) during 317-322 CE in Eastern Jin (東晉 317-420), it says:

The Buddha says that if the fourfold disciples ...often observe the six monthly *poṣadha*<sup>184</sup> and the three months of abstinence,<sup>185</sup> or if they ardently abide by austere practices days and nights, for those desiring rebirth in Western Pure Land, so long as they recollect day and night, either for a day, or two, or three, or four, or five, or six, or

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fascicles, T 278.9.395a-788b), also known also as the 晉經 *Jin sūtra* and 舊經 the old *sūtra*. The second translation (80 fascicles *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*; T 279.10.1b-444c) was completed by Śikṣānanda 實叉難陀 around 699. Known also as the Tang *sūtra* 唐經, the new *sūtra* 新經, and the eighty-fascicle *Avataṃsaka* 八十華嚴. The third was completed by Prajñā 般若 around 800 (40 fascicles, *Gaṇḍavyūha*; T 293.10.661a-848b) around 798.

Digital Dictionary of Buddhism.

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?83.xml+id\('b83ef-56b4-7d93'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?83.xml+id('b83ef-56b4-7d93'))

<sup>184</sup> These six fast days are the 8th, 14th, 15th, 23rd, 29th, and 30th. See Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d.*, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s516d-9f4b.html>>.

<sup>185</sup> The three months refer to the first, fifth, and ninth months when no food should be taken after noon. See Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d.*, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s4e09-9577-9f4b-6708.html>>.

seven, ...at death... they will take conception in the lotus flowers without having gone through the eight unfortunate conditions.<sup>186</sup> (佛言若四輩弟子...常修月六齋年三長齋。或晝夜精勤一心苦行。願欲往生西方阿彌陀佛國者。憶念晝夜。若一日二日三日四日五日六日七日。盡其壽命欲終之日。...不經八難生蓮華中。T1331, p533 b-c)

The text mentioned that practicing both abstinence in our life and mindfulness of the Buddha for up to 7 days, it allows one to be reborn to the Pure Land. However, the other sutra mentioned that practicing mindfulness of the Dharma-body one can be reborn to any Buddhas' Pure Lands at his/her wish, but not limited to Western Pure Land. For instance, the *Jin gang san mei ben xing qing jing bu huai bu mie jing* 《佛說 金剛三昧本性清淨不壞不滅經》, translator unknown, translated between 350 and 431 CE in the Three Qin dynasties,<sup>187</sup> states:

At the dying moment, if these people practice mindfulness of the Buddha's Dharma-body earnestly, ... they may be reborn in any of the Buddhas' Pure Lands according to wish." (...此諸人等臨命終時。若能至心 念佛法身。...隨意往生諸佛淨國。T644/699a). However, the sutra is considered as an apocrypha.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> century, several texts indicated that simply by mindfulness of the Buddha with unwavering attention, one will be reborn in the Buddha land in any direction according to wish.<sup>188</sup> The Esoteric sutras mentioned that by practicing three mystic doors, one could

<sup>186</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d*, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s516b-96e3.html>>.

<sup>187</sup> K501

<sup>188</sup> T408/675b The second volume of *Ākāśagarbhasūtra* 《虛空孕菩薩經》, translated by Jñānagupta(闍那崛多) in 587CE in Sui dynasty, it is told that "At that time, because of mindfulness of the Buddha and hearing his voice, joy filled the minds of those beings. At death, they are reborn in the Pure Land, abandoning the world of five *kaṣāya* periods of turbidity." (爾時彼諸眾生。以念佛故。以聞佛音故。心生歡欣。命終已後。捨五濁世即生淨土。)

attain *buddhānusmṛti samādhi* and gain rebirth in the Pure Land.

According to the *Amitayus Tathāgata-dhyāna cārya pūjā kalpa* 《無量壽如來觀行供養儀

軌 *Wu liang shou ru lai guan xing gong yang yi gui*》：

By practicing the three mystic doors,<sup>189</sup> one will attain *buddhānusmṛti samādhi*, and enter the higher stages of bodhisattvas. Therefore, mindfully develop oneself according to the teaching one is certain to attain rebirth in the highest grade<sup>190</sup> of birth in the world of utmost joy (*Sukhāvatī*)<sup>191</sup> and to realize the first bodhisattva stage.<sup>192</sup> (修三密門 證念佛三昧 得生淨土入菩薩正位。...決定生於極樂世界上品上生。獲得初地。 T930/67b)

### ● Attaining Nirvana / Attaining Buddhahood

Chart 3. 6 Two Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences over Centuries.

T1666/583a. Āśvaghoṣa's *Mahāyānaśraddhotpādaśāstra* 《大乘起信論》, translated by Paramārtha in 553 CE in Liang dynasty. It is also considered as an apocrypha.

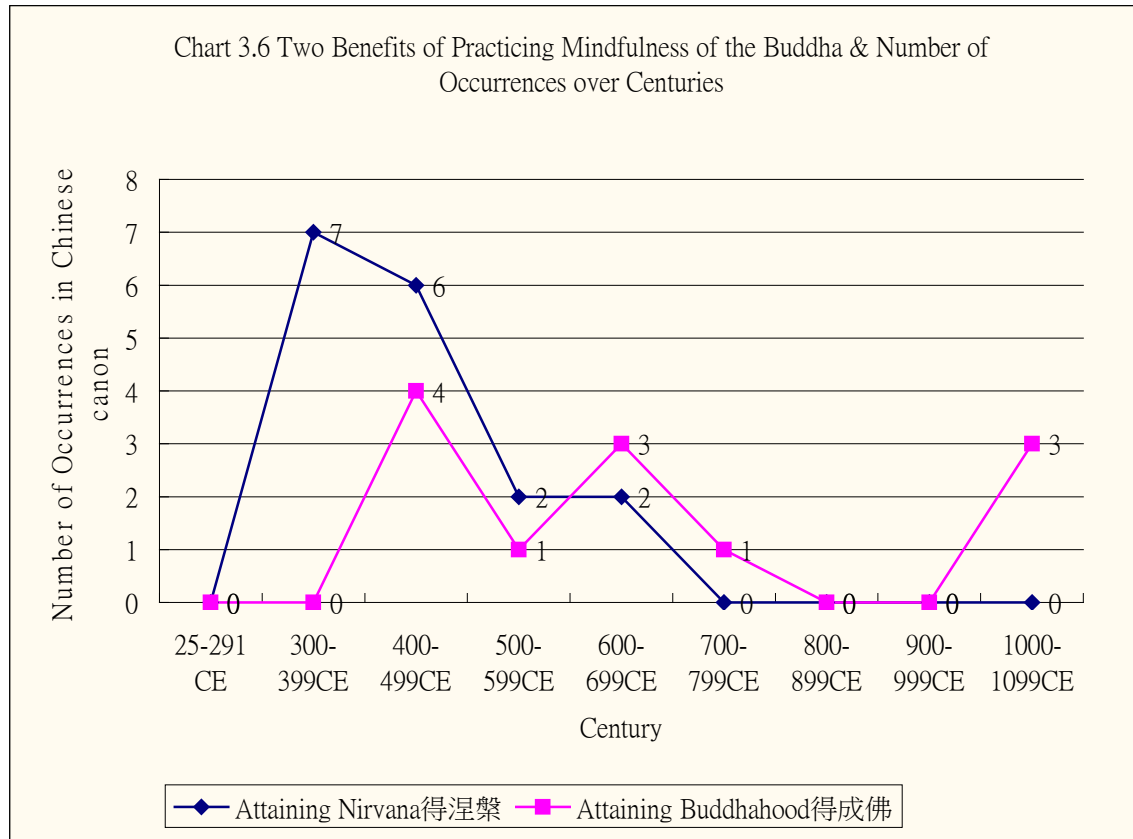
T1667/591b. Different one translation of T1666

<sup>189</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms n.d.*, <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s4e09-5bc6.html>>.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s4e0a-54c1-4e0a-751f.html>>.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid. <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s6975-6a02.html>>.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid. <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s521d-5730.html>>.



### A. Attaining Nirvana

There are 17 occurrences found for the benefit of attaining Nirvana through practicing mindfulness of the Buddha. *Nirvāṇa* (Skt.) (涅槃, Pali. *Nibbana*) means liberation; literally, the "unbinding" of the mind from the mental effluents (*āśava*, 漏), defilements (*kilesa*, 染污) and the cycle of rebirth. As this term also denotes the extinguishing of a fire, it carries the connotations of stilling, cooling, and peace.<sup>193</sup>

According to the data, there are six records of the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha which results in attaining nirvāṇa, in both the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century. Only two records are

<sup>193</sup> Access to Insight: Readings in Theravada Buddhism <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/glossary.html#n>



found in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century, no record was found after the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

Most of accounts appear in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially in the *Ekottarikāgama* 《增一阿含經》, where it appears 4 times, reveals that attaining nirvana is a primary goal in Early Buddha Dharma and the attainment mentioned in the Mahayana sutras as well but not in the Esoteric sutras (teachings).

According to the Chinese translation, the earliest account of the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha results in attaining nirvana appears in the *Vinaya mātrikā sutra* 《毘尼母經》 (T1463/804b) in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, translated between 350 and 431 CE.<sup>194</sup> It says:

A lad, having received the teaching of the Buddha, “went and sat under a tree, diligent in practicing the mindfulness of the Buddha’s teaching for seven days and seven nights. In the morning of the eighth day, all taints were overcome and he acquired the threefold wisdom (Skt. *tri-vidya*, 三明),<sup>195</sup> six supernatural powers (Skt. *sad abhijñāh*, 六通)<sup>196</sup> and eight kinds of Deliverance (*aṣṭa-vimokṣa* 八解脫),<sup>197</sup> and attained the fruition of arahatship.” (爾時 童子 聞佛世尊引諸譬喻種種說法。即悟取解。童子受法已。即從座起遶佛三匝禮佛而去。到一樹下 端身繫念 佛所說法 七日七夜。至八日朝 諸漏已盡三明六通具八解脫 證阿羅漢果。 T1463/804b)

There are 7 counts found in the 4<sup>th</sup> century’s texts.

According to Fascicle 42 of the *Ekottarikāgama* 《增一阿含經》, translated by

*Samghadeva* (僧伽提婆) in 397 CE in Eastern Jin dynasty(東晉),

<sup>194</sup> K939

<sup>195</sup> Nyanatiloka. *Buddhist Dictionary*. (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, n.d.) 179.

<sup>196</sup> Nyanatiloka. *Buddhist Dictionary*. p. 40 and 2-3.

<sup>197</sup> Soothill and Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* n.d, 10 January 2007 <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s516b-89e3-812b.html>>.

See also Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, 45.

Mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma, the bhikkhu-Sangha, precepts, liberality, heavenly beings, peace, [and] mindfulness on breathing, body, and death<sup>198</sup> are reckoned as the Ten mindfulnesses. If a bhikkhu achieves equality and liberation, he will put an end to all suffering. (所謂十念。念佛・念法・念比丘僧・念戒・念施・念天・念休息・念安般・念身・念死。是謂十念。若比丘平等解脫。乃至盡於苦際。 T125/779c)

In the same sutra, alternatively known as the Ten Dharmas, it states:

If a person develops these dharmas, he will attain nirvana. (云何修行十法。得至涅槃。所謂十念。念佛・念法・念比丘僧・念天・念戒・念施・念休息・念安般・念身・念死。是謂修行十法。得至涅槃 T125/781a)

In Fascicle 27 of the *Ekottarāgama*, the stanzas read:

The practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha is to reach the state in which there is no craving and desire / He (the Buddha) liberated *Nanda* from lustful desire / by showing him the heaven and the hell / [And, Nanda] had the mind controlled and severed the bonds of the five destinations. (念佛無貪欲 度彼欲難陀 觀天現地獄 制意離五趣 T125/701a)

According to the Early Buddhist texts, the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha along with the other nine mindfulness will directly lead to attain liberation and put an end to all suffering, i.e. attain nirvana.

There are 6 counts found in the texts of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

According to the *Chan fa yao jie* 《禪法要解》, translated by *Kumārajīva*(鳩摩羅

什)between 402 and 405 CE in Later Qin dynasty,<sup>199</sup>

When a person practicing mindfulness the bodies of the Buddhas in the ten directions

<sup>198</sup> In Pāli, the Ten Recollections are termed *buddhānussati*, *dharmānussati*, *saṅghānussati*, *sīlānussati*, *cāgānussati*, *devatānussati*, *upasamānussati*, *ānāpānā-sati*, *kāyagatā-sati*, *marāṇa-sati*. See Nyanatiloka, *Buddhist Dictionary*, rev. and ed. by Nyanaponika (Taiwan: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 1970) 17-8.

<sup>199</sup> Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue 2004*, <[http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive\\_catalogue/files/k1004.html](http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1004.html)>.

as complete with supreme, golden marks and ten powers with measureless Dharma body of merits and virtue etc., Owing to that mindfulness, his mind is filled with delight. Further, the Buddha-Dharma is foremost among the ninety-six classes of heretical teaching; it can exterminate all sorts of suffering and lead to lasting happiness. (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。復次佛法於九十六種道中。最為第一。能滅諸苦能趣常樂。心生歡喜。T 616/289c)

Moreover, the sutra mentioned that the nature of nirvana is referred to as the ultimate, unchanging, lasting truth (涅槃無量常相。是究竟不壞法). The eightfold path is the means leading to nirvana; (涅槃方便八直聖道) .(T616/289c). The above passage indicated the practice of mindfulness of Buddha's supreme body(念佛色身相好) and the Buddha's virtues of Dharma-body(法身功德)(T616/289c). The text mentioned the Buddhas in the ten directions(十方諸佛) as well.

From the 5<sup>th</sup> century on, Early Mahayana texts began to be translated into Chinese by *Kumārajīva*, the concept of the Buddhas in the ten directions appears in the teaching. The Buddha's body complete with supreme, golden marks and the Buddha's Dharma-body with ten powers and measureless merits and virtue, etc. *Theravāda* asserts that the Buddha's body is tainted; however, Mahasanghika asserts that it is untainted. The latter is close to Mahayana thought.

In the other sutra, *Si wei lve yao fa* 《思惟畧要法》 also translated by *Kumārajīva* (鳩摩羅什) in 402-412CE in Yao Qin (姚秦 384-417) dynasty, it states:

The Buddha's kindness exceeds that of the parents.... One should be mindfulness of the Buddha at all time... If obtained such contemplation one would certainly uproot all fetters of the afflictions(煩惱) and even the attainment of the truth of the Dharma is non-arising. (*anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*).<sup>200</sup> (佛恩深重過於父母。若使一切眾生悉為父母。佛為一分二分之中 常當念佛。...若此定成 除斷結縛。乃至可得無生法忍。<sup>201</sup> T617/299b)

The passage mentions that when one attains *Nian-fo samādhi*, in which stage is able to uproot all fetters(縛) of afflictions(煩惱) or defilements (染污) and even to attain the truth of the Dharma that is non-arising. Attaining arahatship<sup>202</sup> means uproot all fetters(縛) of afflictions(煩惱).

The other important issue is that the term 無生法忍(*Wu sheng fa ren*, Skt.

*anutpattika-dharma-kṣānti*) appears in the sutra. 'The acceptance of the non-arising of mental states'(無生法忍) is a unique concept in Mahayana teaching. Most of the accounts appear in the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra*(大智度論

T1509/p.97a,263c,362a,618c...etc.). In Early Buddhist teaching, the non-retrogression stage is the attainment of first achievement, the stage of *srota-āpanna*, in which illusion being discarded and the stream of enlightenment entered. The person who has abandoned

<sup>200</sup> According to *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* 大智度論 T1509/263c 無生法忍，即聲聞於入見道位時見四諦之理；菩薩則於入初地時諦認諸法無生無滅之理，以住不退轉地。Fo Kuang da ci dian p5079

<sup>201</sup> 結 (Skt. *samyojana*) Fetters. The shackles(縛) of the afflictions; defilement, which binds and fetters sentient beings to the cycle of rebirth.

<sup>202</sup> The arahatship means the person has abandoned the five upper fetters that bind the mind to the cycle of rebirth, the five upper fetters are passion for form(色貪) (*rupa-raga*), passion for formless phenomena (*arupa-raga*) (無色貪), conceit (*mana*) (慢), restlessness (*uddhacca*) (掉舉), and unawareness (*avijja*)(無明).<sup>202</sup>

the three fetters- self-identification views (*sakkaya-ditthi* 身見), uncertainty (*vicikiccha*, 疑), grasping at precepts and practices (*silabbata-paramasa*, 戒禁取) is considered a sage and will not fall into Three Evil Realms(三惡趣). Ultimate liberation means attain arahatship. In Mahayana teaching, the Bodhisattva who has attained the first stage (*bhūmis*) and above are considered sages.

‘The acceptance of the non-arising of mental states’(無生法忍)<sup>203</sup> is a state of actualization attained by high level bodhisattvas, usually described as a mental function occurring within the seventh *bhūmi* or above.<sup>204</sup> The attainment of arahatship is equal to that of eighth stage of Bodhisattvas.

According to the *Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭhīya-sūtra* 《大方廣佛華嚴經》,<sup>205</sup> beings who practice mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma and the *Sangha*, with these merits, they proceeded to the right path and went beyond Three Realms. This passage revealed that the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha results in attaining nirvāṇa (went beyond Three Realms) as well.

## B. Attaining Buddhahood

<sup>203</sup> Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra 《大智度論》 T1509/659c.

See also Yin Shun *The Origin and Development of Early Mahāyāna Buddhism* 《初期大乘佛教之起源與開展》, p.1073 ~ 1084.

<sup>204</sup> Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra 《大智度論》 T1509/586a....八人地者，...於菩薩則是無生法忍入菩薩位。

<sup>205</sup> T278/597b

There are 12 counts found for the benefits of attaining Buddhahood through practicing mindfulness of the Buddha. The earliest account of mindfulness of the Buddha can attain Buddhahood appears in the *Guan fo san mei hai jing* 《佛說觀佛三昧海經》,<sup>206</sup> it says:

It is because of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha, after eon of the constellations kalpa (Skt. *tārakôpame kalpe*)<sup>207</sup> you will attain Buddhahood. (.....汝念佛故 過星宿劫得成為佛。T643/ 692c)

In other page also states that if people heard the Buddha's name... in the future they would attain Buddhahood.<sup>208</sup> In Fascicle One of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*《添品妙法蓮華經》, translated by *Jñānagupta* and *Dharmagupta* between 601 and 602 CE in Sui dynasty,<sup>209</sup> the stanzas read:

I prophesy that such a person / would attain enlightenment in future life / because of his profound practice in mindfulness of Buddha [and] / pure morality. (「我記如是人 來世成佛道 以深心念佛 修持淨戒故」T264, p.141a)

The *Dhāranīsamuccaya(sūtra)*《陀羅尼集經》, translated by *Atigupta* in 654CE in Tang dynasty (唐) in Hui-ri Monastery (慧日寺), says:

Those who recite mantras and sutras and mindfulness of the Buddha with a rosary [made of precious stones] will fulfill the ten perfections and attain the fruition of *anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* (supreme, perfect enlightenment) in this very life. (若以此等寶物數珠。掐之誦呪 誦經念佛 諸行者等。當得十種波羅蜜功德滿足。現身即得阿耨多羅三藐三菩提果。T901/802c)

Assuming this *mudrā* along with daily recitation of a mantra, mindfulness of the Buddha as well as repentance, one quickly attains the fourth *dhyāna*, accomplishes

<sup>206</sup> K401

<sup>207</sup> Ac Muller. *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?66.xml+id\('b661f-5bbf-52ab'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?66.xml+id('b661f-5bbf-52ab'))

<sup>208</sup> 「若有眾生聞我名者禮拜我者。...於未來世當得作佛」(T643, p. 693b6-9)

<sup>209</sup> K118

*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi* (supreme, perfect enlightenment) soon and fulfils all wishes. (若以此印。日日誦 呪念佛 懺悔。得四禪定。速成阿耨多羅三藐三菩提。隨願成辦 T901/818)

The esoteric sutra,

*Mahāmanivipulavimānaviśvasupratisthitaguhyaparamarahasyakalparājadhārānī(sūtra)*

《廣大寶樓閣善住祕密陀羅尼經》, translated by Bodhiruci in 706 CE in Tang dynasty

(唐) in Xi Chong Fu Monastery (西崇福寺), states:

Concentrate on making the *mudrā* , practicing the mindfulness of the Buddha and reciting the mantra sincerely...will certainly help one attain *sambodhi* the next life (perfect enlightenment). (結印 專誠念佛 誦 呪 . …來生決定成等正覺 T1006/647a) .

According to the passages mentioned above, the texts of the Early Mahayana Period state that the practice of being mindful of the Buddha will result in achieving Buddhahood in the future. However, the texts of the Final Mahayana Period state that practicing mindfulness of the Buddha with making mudra and reciting mantra will result in achieving Buddhahood soon in this very life or next life.

In fact, attaining Buddhahood in this very life is one of the features of Final Mahayana (Esoteric) Buddha Dharma (teaching). The teaching emphasizes these three practices: making mudra, reciting mantra and mindfulness of the Buddha which one can attain Buddhahood in this very life. This is much different from the teaching of Early or Middle Mahayana Buddha Dharma.

## Chapter IV

### Analysis of the Passages of the Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*)

#### ● Two Kinds of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*)

As discussed in the Chapter Three, the benefits related to practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha can be grouped into seventeen categories. According to the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*, benefits can be of two kinds: one is increase well-being in this lifetime and the next lifetimes (増上生 exalted birth; Skt. *abhyudaya*);<sup>210</sup> the other is the assuredness of unique concentration and finally attain liberation (Nirvana) or Buddhahood (決定勝 definitive excellence, Skt. *niḥśreyasa*);<sup>211</sup> These two kinds of benefits can be categorized as: worldly and world-transcending benefits or expedient benefits and ultimate benefits.

According to Buddhist cosmology, the worldly or world-transcending benefit is defined by whether the benefit can enable us to transcend the Three Realms. If a benefit is seen as

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<sup>210</sup> Digital Dictionary of Buddhism

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?58.xml+id\('b589e-4e0a-751f](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?58.xml+id('b589e-4e0a-751f)

<sup>211</sup> Ibid

[http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6c.xml+id\('b6c7a-5b9a-52dd'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?6c.xml+id('b6c7a-5b9a-52dd'))



the blessing and happiness within the Three Realm, it is considered a worldly one. The worldly benefit can also be classified as an expedient or exalted birth (progressive) benefit. If a benefit allows an individual to exceed the existence of Three Realms, it is considered a world-transcending benefit, and carries the alternate monikers of “definitive excellence” or “ultimate benefits”. This relates to Buddhist Cosmology and its perception of spiritual practice leading to liberations.

Worldly benefits include subduing *māra*, ghosts(降魔,降鬼), cure of diseases(除病), overcoming fear(除怖畏),overcoming obstructions(除障, 罪), gaining a male form(rebirth) (得成男身), gaining rebirth in heaven(得生天), increase virtues(增長福德)and release from woeful realms(離惡趣).These benefits can be classified as benefits of exalted birth (增上生) or expedient benefits (方便)

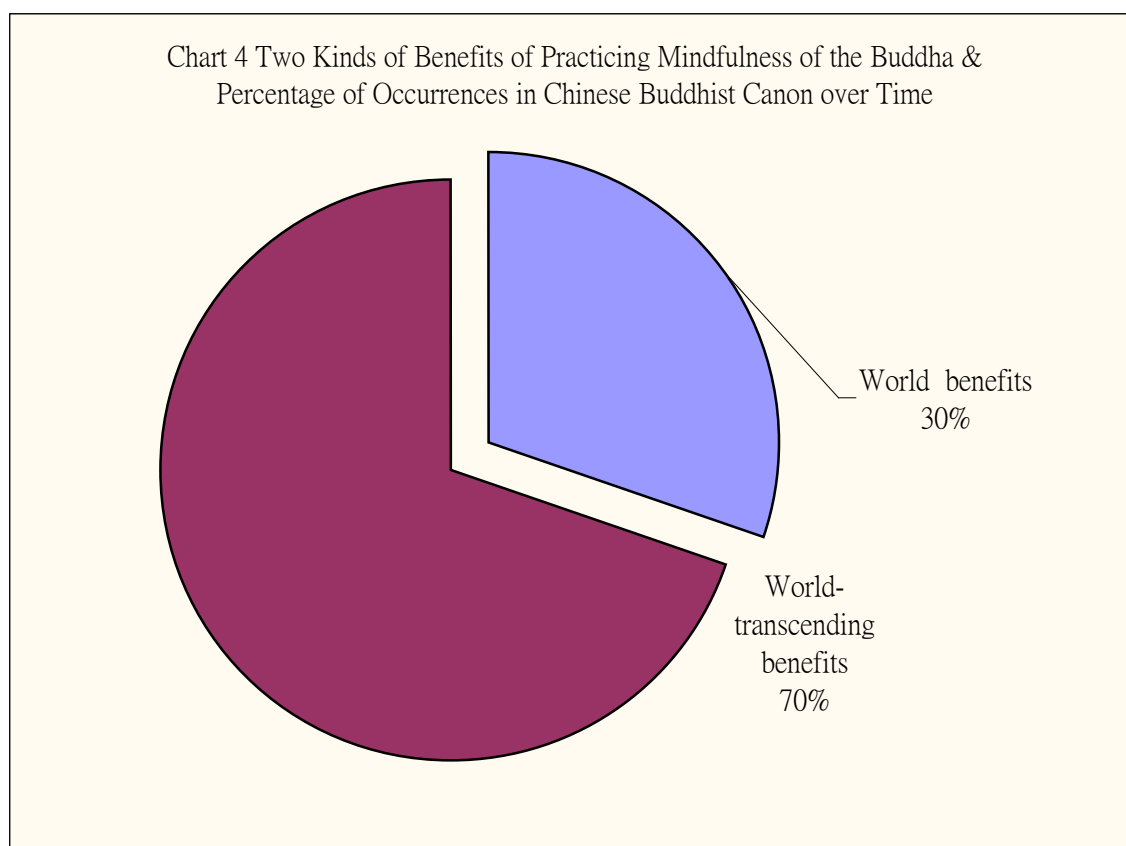
World-transcending benefits include not-losing Bodhicitta(不失菩提心), not-giving up enlightened mind(不捨道心), eliminate ignorance and afflictions(滅癡惑), acquiring wisdom (得智慧), attaining *samadhi*(成三昧), seeing the Buddha(可見佛 不離佛), rebirth in Pure Land (得生淨土), attaining nirvana(得涅槃)and attaining Buddhahood (得成佛). These benefits can be classified as benefits of definitive excellence(決定勝) or ultimate benefits. The categories are as follows:

Table 2 Two Kinds of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time

Benefits	World / exalted birth / expedient	World-transcending / definitive excellence / ultimate
	Subduing <i>māra</i> , ghosts 7	Not losing Bodhicitta 5
	Cure of diseases 5	Not-giving up
	Overcoming fear 8	enlightened mind 3
	Overcoming 21	Release from woeful 11
	obstructions	realms
	Gaining a male body 3	Eliminate Ignorance and 5
	(form, rebirth)	afflictions
	Gaining rebirth in 10	Acquiring Wisdom 16
	heaven	Attaining <i>Samadhi</i> 26
	Increase virtues 20	Seeing the Buddha 66
		Rebirth in Pure Land 10
		Attaining Nirvana 17
		Attaining Buddhahood 12

Total counts	74	171
Percentage	30% (74/245)	70% (171/245)

Chart 4 Two Kinds of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time



According to the metadata, it indicates that the benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha include both expedient benefits and ultimate benefits. In other words, practicing

mindfulness of the Buddha not only can acquire the blessing and happiness of the world, but also can attain liberation, which eliminate the sufferings of the round of birth and death. From the chart we can see that the world-transcending benefits more than twice as numerous as the worldly benefits. Not only are the world-transcending benefits greater in implication; they are far greater in number, which serves to place more emphasis on them. In other words, although the practice can bring us worldly benefits such as increasing virtues and being reborn in the heavenly realm...etc., the main purpose of the practice still emphasized on obtaining world-transcending benefits rather than worldly benefits. The results further revealed that the teachings or practices of the Buddha are done primarily for the sake of the cessation of suffering from the cycle of samsamic birth and death.

● **Five Categories of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*)**

The benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can be further categorized into five groups : (1)retaining enlightened mind, (2) overcoming unwholesome states, (3) development of wholesome states, (4) eliminating afflictions and (5) attaining liberation.

The table is as follows:

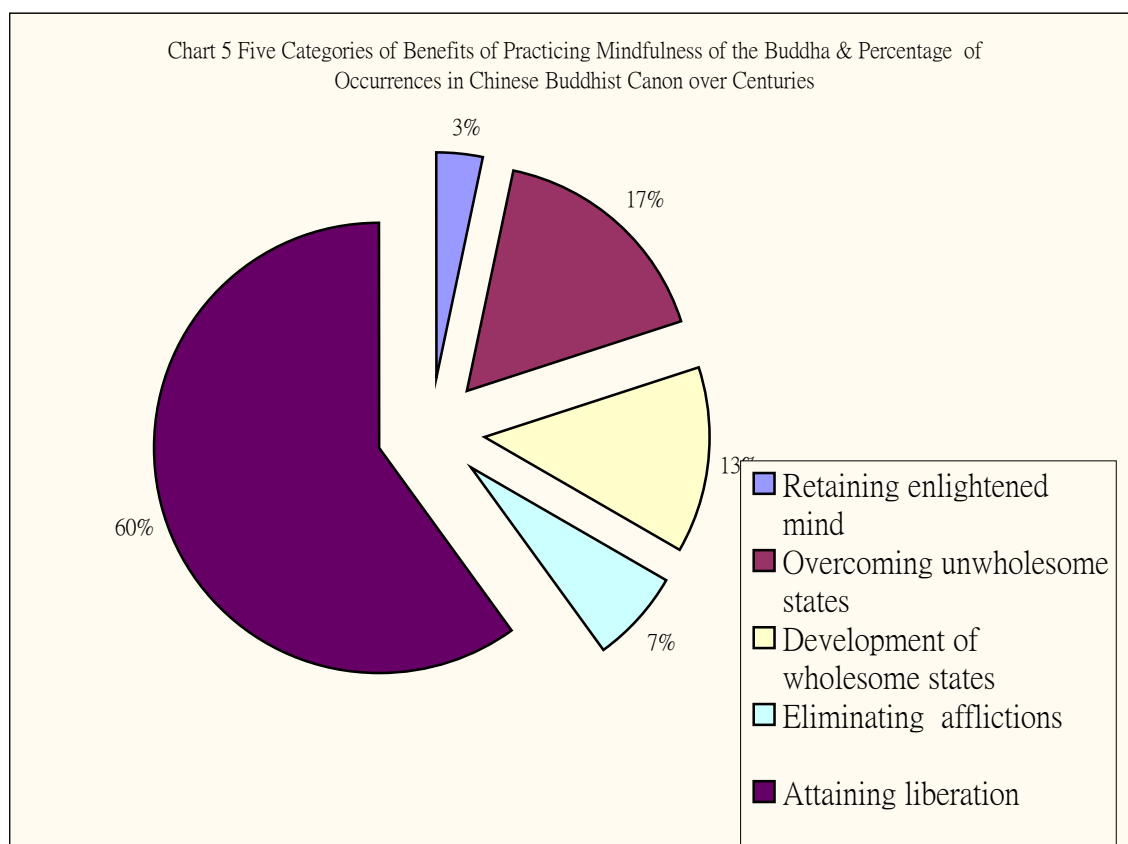
Table 3 Five categories of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number

## of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Centuries

Benefits	Contents	Total counts	Percentage %
Retaining enlightened mind	Not losing Bodhicitta 5	8	3% (8/245)
	Not-giving up enlightened mind 3		
Overcoming unwholesome states	Subduing <i>māra</i> , ghosts 7	41	17% (41/245)
	Cure of diseases 5		
	Overcoming fear 8		
	Overcoming obstructions 21		
Development of wholesome states	Gaining a male body ( rebirth) 3	33	13% (33/245)
	Gaining rebirth in heaven 10		
	Increase virtues 20		
Eliminating afflictions	Release from woeful realms 11	16	7% (16/245)
	Eliminate ignorance and afflictions 5		
Attaining liberation	Acquiring Wisdom 16	147	60% (143/245)
	Attaining <i>Samadhi</i> 26		
	Seeing the Buddha 66		

	Rebirth in Pure Land	10		
	Attaining Nirvana	17		
	Attaining Buddhahood	12		

Chart 5 Five Categories of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha &  
Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Centuries



As a result, attaining liberation is the primary benefit of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha.

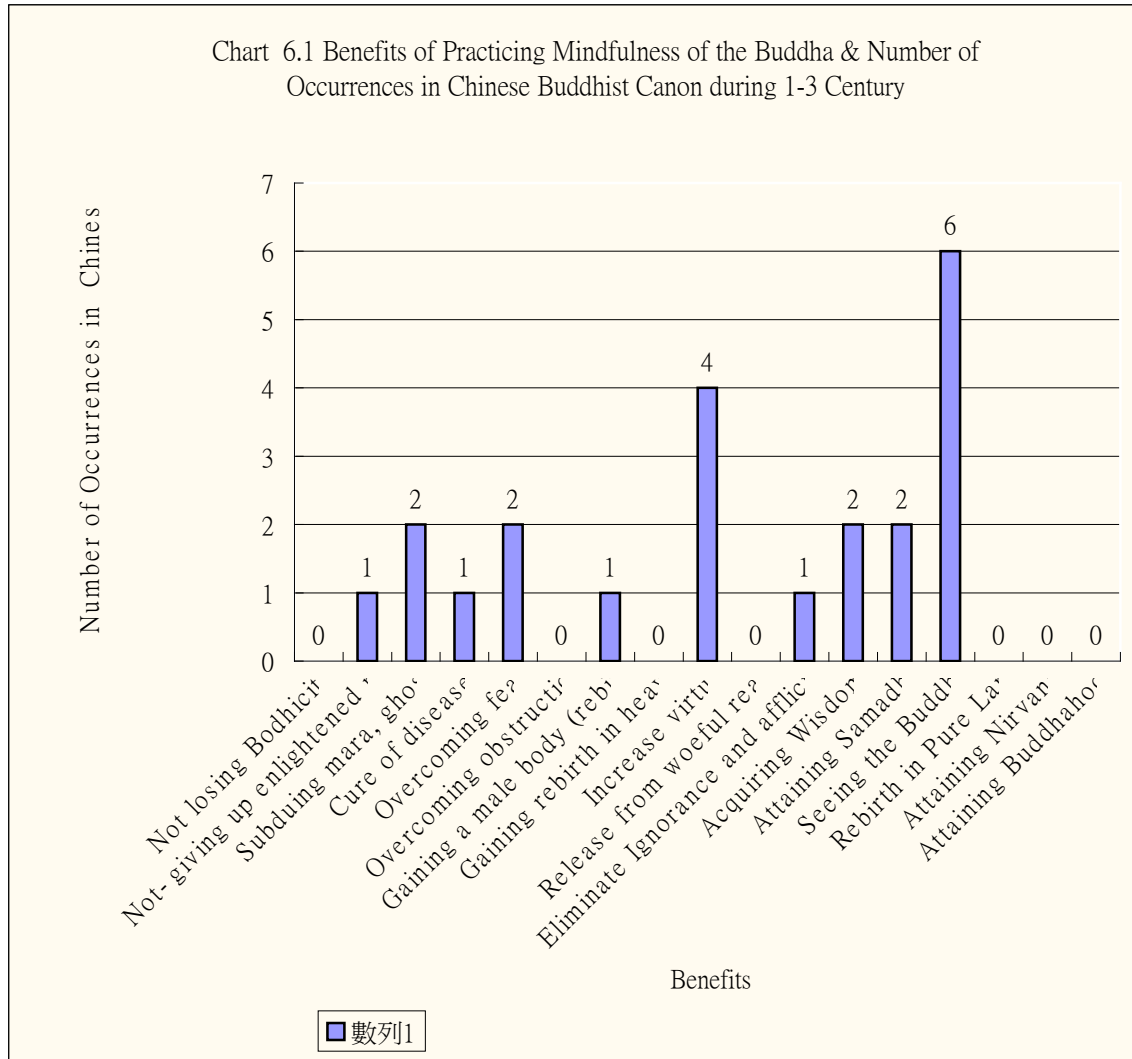
- **Analysis of the Passages by the Number of Occurrences of Various Benefits**

**Found in Translations of Texts over Eleven Centuries**

The following is to further analyze the reasons and background in term of the sequential order of translations of texts and by the number of occurrences of various benefits found over eleven centuries.

1. 1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> Centuries

The following is a chart representing the various benefits of practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & the number of occurrences in the Chinese Buddhist Canon during the first three centuries CE.



From the Chart we can see during the first through third centuries, the major benefit of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha was seeing the Buddha, has 6 occurrences.<sup>212</sup>

During 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, the main translators of sutras and sastras were *Lokaṣema* (支婁迦讖 168-188 CE) in Later Han (後漢), Zhi-qian (支謙 220CE~) and Kang Seng-hui (康

<sup>212</sup> See Appendix Spreadsheet II.



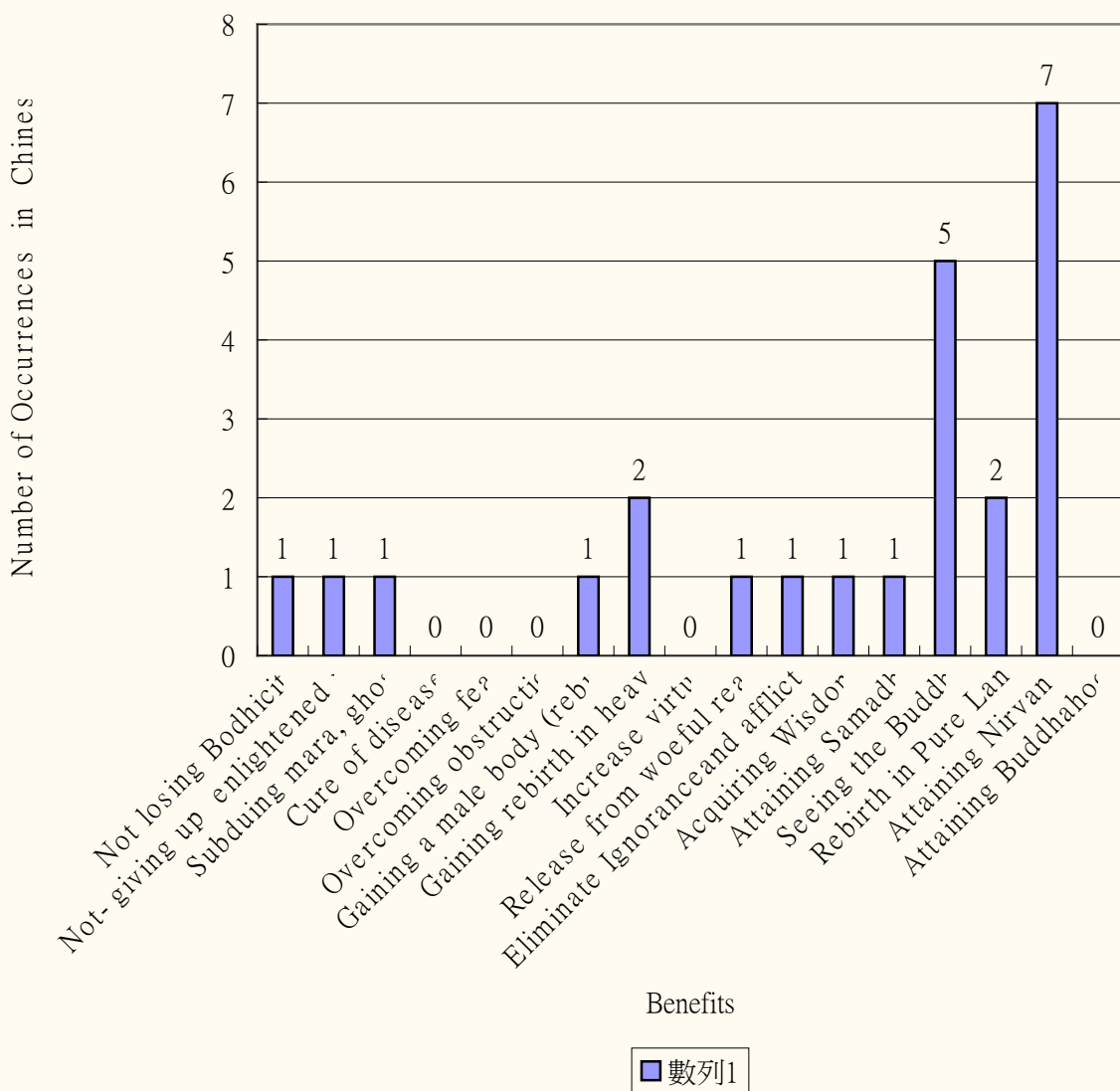
僧會) in Wu (吳) dynasty, *Dharmarakṣa* (竺法護 266CE ) in Western Jin dynasty (西晉).

Generally, the period of *Nāgārjuna* (around 250CE, 3<sup>rd</sup> century) can be called Early Mahayana. Thus, texts translated prior to *Dharmarakṣa* can be categorized as Early Mahayana Sutras. All texts translated by *Kumārajīva*, including those referenced in *Nāgārjuna's Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sāstra* 《大智度論》, are also recognized as Early Mahayana Sutras. During this period, those translated Chinese texts related to the Benefits of Mindfulness of the Buddha all belonged to Early Mahayana Sutras. As a result, Early Mahayana sutras stressed more on seeing the Buddha. Next, increasing virtues has 4 occurrences. Subduing *māra* and ghosts, overcoming fear, attaining *samādhi* and acquiring wisdom each have 2 counts. The benefits of not losing Bodhicaitta, release from woeful realms, and being reborn in Pure Land have not yet appeared during this period. In the earliest sutras, the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha has no relation with rebirth in the Pure Land.

## 2. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century

Chart 6.2 Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences  
in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century

Chart 6.2 Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 4th Century



In the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the most frequently seen benefit was attaining Nirvana, which has 7 occurrences and seeing the Buddha has 5 occurrences.

The reason for that was because the *Ekottarāgama* (增壹阿含經) which translated into

Chinese by *Sanghadeva* (僧伽提婆) in 397 CE, belongs to the Early Buddha Dharma. It emphasized the benefits of attaining Nirvana, and the attainment of Nirvana was recognized as the highest goal. Although the Four *Āgamas* were all translated into Chinese as late as the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century, the teachings are considered as Early Buddha Dharma. Thus, in 4<sup>th</sup> century most benefits were emphasized in the attainment of Nirvana.

Gaining rebirth in heaven and rebirth in Pure Land each has only 2 occurrences. Gaining rebirth in heaven was also emphasized in these earliest texts. The appearance of Rebirth in Pure Land started in T644, p.699a. *Jin gang san mei ben xing qing jing bu huai bu mie jing* (佛說金剛三昧本性清淨不壞不滅經); it mentioned rebirth in any of the Buddhas' Pure Lands, however, was not limited to Western Pure Land. Nevertheless, such a sutra was suspected as an apocrypha.

Not losing Bodhicitta (不失菩提心), not giving up enlightened mind(不捨道心), subduing *māra* and ghosts(降魔 降鬼), gaining a male body (rebirth) (得成男身), increasing merits and virtue (增長福德), and releasing from evil realms (離惡趣) all occurred only once. All of these benefits were mentioned in Early Buddha Dharma and Early Mahayana Buddha Dharma. In other words, Early Buddha Dharma and Early Mahayana Buddha Dharma are both concerned with worldly and material benefits.

Moreover, reduction of both physical and spiritual suffering is closer to human beings' present life. The benefits of curing of diseases(除病), overcoming fear(除怖畏), overcoming obstructions(除障, 罪), eliminating ignorance and afflictions(滅癡惑) and attaining Buddhahood (得成佛) have not yet appeared in the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Moreover, in the earliest Buddhist texts, practicing mindfulness of the Buddha meant contemplating of Buddha's meritorious virtues and also stressed the importance of mindfulness of the Dharma and the *Sangha*, even to six contemplations, ten contemplations. Because the practice includes, not only meditation on Buddha, but also on his teachings and community, the texts suggested that we are then able to increase practice of the virtues, gain wisdom, eliminate afflictions, and then achieve liberation. Seeing the Buddha was still a primary important goal in practicing the mindfulness of the Buddha at the Buddha's time, but seeing the Buddha meant seeing *Śākyamuni* Buddha.

By exploring the Buddha's teaching in Early Buddha Dharma from the four *Āgamas*, apparently, it shows that the primary purpose of the Buddha's teaching is to lead sentient beings to the end of the suffering of birth and death, which means attaining Nirvana (cessation of suffering). It can be said that Early Buddha Dharma emphasizes impermanence and renunciation and lays most stress on the law of cause and effect, and the non-egoism of personality.

Why is it that the Buddha's teaching in the Early Period mainly emphasizes the attainment of Nirvāṇa? First, we have to understand the background of religious belief and practices at the Buddha's time. Historically, there were four major schools—Brahmanism, Materialism, Ajivikism, and Jainism—emerging in India before or contemporaneous with the Buddha from the eighth to sixth century BCE. In short, there were various traditional beliefs prevalent in India before the rise of Gotama Buddha. These beliefs were concerned about human knowledge and reality. However, Kalupahana concluded: "The four major philosophical traditions before the rise of Buddhism—Brahmanism, Materialism, Ajivikism, and Jainism—seem to have been generally reluctant to admit any element of uncertainty or skepticism regarding human knowledge." And, "the only philosopher who seriously addressed the problem of skepticism was Sabjaya. Unfortunately, Sabjaya could provide no solution to it and therefore refrained from making any positive statement."<sup>213</sup> However, these views really did not conform to the ultimate reality from the Buddha's point of view. Among these various religious teachers and philosophers, Gotama the Buddha stood on a unique place because of his unique and enlightened teaching. In the *Sangarava Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha himself classified his contemporaries by their ways of

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<sup>213</sup> D.J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy* (Hawaii: University of Press, 1992). See 'Indian Philosophy and the search for Ultimate objectivity' p. 20.

knowing into three groups: the traditionalists who blindly accepted the authority of Vedic tradition (*anussavika*), the rationalists and metaphysicians (*takki, Vimamsi*) who found their knowledge by way of speculation, and the experientialists who gained the higher knowledge personally.<sup>214</sup> The fundamental teaching of the Buddha is comprised of the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the theory of Dependent Origination (*paticca-samupāda*), the Middle Path, the theory of Karma, the Thirty-Seven Path-Dharmas, Nirvana, and so forth. The Buddha's main attempt was to bring about a reformation in religious practice and a return to the basic principles. Therefore, he categorized all existed theories of his time into the two extreme theories of eternalism (*Sasvatavāda*) and annihilationism (*Uccedavāda*). Eternalists held that there is an everlasting soul in human beings and annihilationists denied the existence of such a soul and held that human beings are annihilated at death. The Buddha avoided both these extreme views and explained the existence of humans in the cycle of rebirth through the doctrine of dependent origination (*paticca-samuppāda*). Furthermore, in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*—discourse of the universal righteousness,<sup>215</sup> the Buddha cautioned the first five monks to avoid the two extremes (*anta*) of indulgence in sensual

<sup>214</sup> Bhikkhu Dhammajoti, Asanga Tilakaratne and Kapila Abhayawansa, ed., *Recent Researches in Buddhist Studies- Essays in Honour of Professor Y. Karunadasa* (Colombo: Karunaretna & Sons Ltd, 1997). p.18. See M.11-121.

<sup>215</sup> Narada. *The Buddha and His Teachings*. (Malaysia: Buddhist Missionary Society, 1988). pp.74-75.

pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*) and the constant addiction to self-mortification (*attakilamathānuyoga*). “Abandoning both these extremes the Tathagata has comprehended the Middle Path (*Majjhimā paṭipadā*) which promotes sight (*cakkhu*) and knowledge (*ñāṇa*), and which tends to peace (*upasamāya*), higher wisdom (*abhiññāya*), enlightenment (*sambodhāya*), and Nibbāna.”<sup>216</sup>

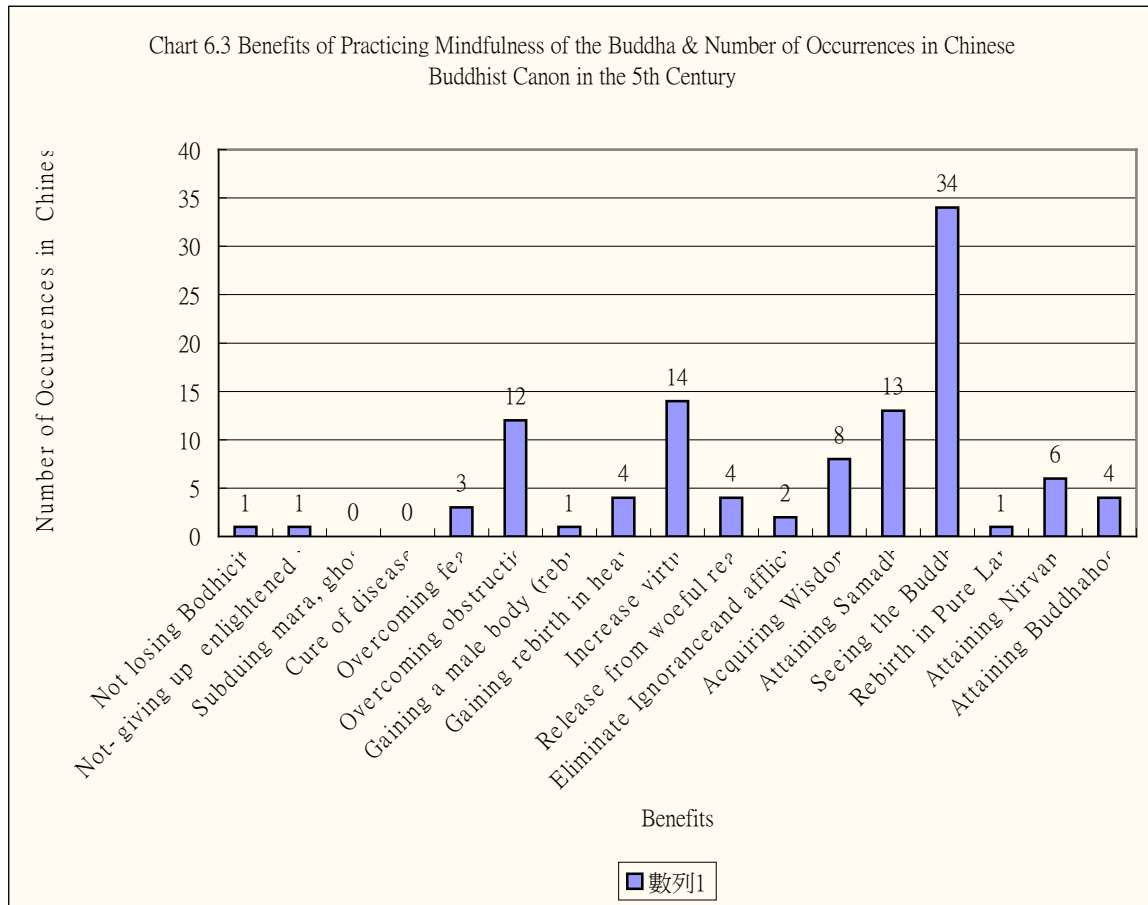
As various religious theories and practices flourished in India by the Buddha’s time, the Buddha did not discover any new theory but just pointed out the correct way, which are the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Twelve-fold Dependent Origination, and the theory of Karma. These teachings will lead whoever follows them to the end of the suffering of birth and death. Thus, śrāvakas (hearers) are the main audience and their primary goal is attaining Nirvāna (liberation). That is to say, Arahant hood is the highest spiritual state during the Buddha’s time.

### 3. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century

Chart 6.3 Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century

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<sup>216</sup> Narada. The Buddha and His Teaching. Colombo: 1988 P.89



In the fifth century, particular emphasis was given to benefits of seeing the Buddha, which has 34 occurrences. It ranks first in the list of benefits. Enhancement of merits and virtues has 14 occurrences, attainment of meditative concentration (*samādhi*) has 13 occurrences, destruction of obstructions and moral defilement has 11 occurrences, and acquisition of wisdom has 8. Moreover, most Early Mahayana Sutras belongs to Early Mahayana Buddha Dharma despite being translated into Chinese as late as in the 5<sup>th</sup> century by *Kumārajīva*,. Therefore, in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the benefits emphasize seeing the Buddha, attaining *samadhi*, increasing virtues, overcoming obstructions and acquiring



wisdom. That is because in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, *Buddha-dhyāna-samādhisāgara-sūtra* 《觀佛三昧海經》, *Pancavimsatisahasrikaprajnaparamitasutra* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜經》 and several Meditation texts<sup>217</sup> were translated into Chinese and stressed that the achievement of *samādhi* is to see the Buddha. When discussing meditation practice or entering *samādhi*, naturally a text will also discuss how to overcome the obstructions in order to attain *samādhi* state. Besides, A blessed virtue is the foundation of gaining wisdom. Cultivating the blessed virtue is very important because it emphasizes the gaining of wisdom. Why does it emphasize the gaining of wisdom? It is because many early Mahayana texts belong to *Prajña* teaching. Therefore, wisdom is one of the crucial ideologies.

In the fifth century the main translators of sutras and sastras were *Kumārajīva*(鳩摩羅什 344-413CE), *Buddhabhadra*(佛陀跋陀羅, *Dharmakṣema* (曇無讖 385-433CE), *Guṇabhadra*(求那跋陀羅 394-468CE), *Guṇavarman*(求那跋摩 367-431CE).<sup>218</sup>

Translators such as *Kālayaśas* (疆良耶舍 383-442), *Dharmamitra*(曇摩蜜多 356-442CE), and Ju-qu Jing-sheng(沮渠京聲~464CE) were renowned meditation teachers (*yogin*)

<sup>217</sup> T613, T614, T617

<sup>218</sup> Sutras and *śāstras* translated in the fifth and sixth centuries are listed below: The texts translated by Kumārajīva between 402 and 412 CE in Yao Qin dynasty are T456, T586, T201, T382, T426, T365, T616, T614, T625, T1659, T613, T642T, 617, T1521, T223, T653, T262, T310, T657, T1646, and so on. Buddhabhadra of Eastern Jin dynasty translated T278, T1012, and T643 between 418 and 422 CE. Dharmakṣema of Northern Liang dynasty translated T374, T1581, T397, T663, and T1488 between 414 and 421 CE. Guṇabhadra of Liu Song dynasty translated T99, T271, T462, and T353 between 435 and 443 CE. Guṇavarman of Liu Song dynasty translated T1487, T1503, and T1582 between 431 and 434 CE.

from *Kaśmīra*(罽賓)<sup>219</sup> and Central Asia. Since the times and places of these translators were close to those of *Kumārajīva* and *Buddhabhadra*, we can imagine that the meditation practice of mindfulness of the Buddha and bodhisattvas quite flourished in *Kaśmīra* and Central Asia in the fifth century.<sup>220</sup>

Furthermore, the texts translated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century similarly highlight the importance of seeing the Buddhas. That is because cherishing the memory of the Buddha and the desire to receive teaching directly from the Buddha, are two of the main features of Early Mahayana Buddha-Dharma.<sup>221</sup> Moreover, due to highlighting the importance of seeing the Buddhas, the practice of *Nian-fo samādhi* or attaining *samādhi* is emphasized as well. Most of the sutras and *śāstras* that mentioned the practice of *buddhānusmṛti* appeared in the fifth and sixth centuries and reached its peak in the eighth century.

*Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* (*Nian-fo samādhi*) prevailed in the fifth century due to the translations of meditation sutras and the series of *Prajñā sūtras* by *Kumārajīva*; the practice was often mentioned in his translations.<sup>222</sup> That is an era that gave particular emphasis to the development of wisdom and faith and the discernment of emptiness.

<sup>219</sup> <<http://sql.fgs.org.tw/webfbd/text.asp?Term=罽賓國>>.

<sup>220</sup> Yin Shun. *Hua yu ji* 華雨集 二 (Taipei : Correct Listening Publisher, 1988.) p.283.

<sup>221</sup> Yin Shun. In the preface to his <*The Origin and Development of Early Mahayana Buddhism*>, mentioned that “The issues of ‘Mindfulness of Buddha’ and ‘Seeing the Buddha’ as a result of ‘cherishing the memory of Buddha’ constitute the major concerns of early Mahayana sutras. P.4

<sup>222</sup> See Spreadsheet II.

Moreover, the majority of the sutras that were translated in the 5<sup>th</sup> century belong to the *Prajñā* series, and those led by the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* centered on Reality as the method of mindfulness of the Buddha. Therefore, it can be concluded that while the benefits of mindfulness of the Buddha in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century laid particular stress on seeing the Buddha, in actual fact they emphasized realizing the reality of Dharma. Especially noteworthy is the fact that while *Kumārajīva*'s translation of the sutra appeared as late as the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, the original treatises by *Nāgārjuna*, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-śāstra* 《大智度論》 and *Daśa-bhūmika-vibhāṣā-śāstra* 《十住毘婆沙論》, belonged to the treatises of the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. These treatises had drawn widely from the sutras of the Mahayana tradition of the Early Period, and even predate a portion of the translated sutras by *Dharmarakṣa*.<sup>223</sup>

The practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Buddhānusmṛti*)—one of the six Mindfulnesses—was considered as an expedient based more on faith whereas *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is the practice that will lead to the higher state of realization.<sup>224</sup>

This point is well made. The phrase *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* appears only in sūtras and śāstras related to the series of *Prajñā* teaching. *Buddhānusmṛti-samādhi* is not the kind of

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<sup>223</sup> Yin Shun. *The Origin and Development of Early Mahayana Buddhism* 《初期大乘佛教之起源與開展》, (Taipei : Zheng wen (正聞) Publisher, 1988.), p.24

<sup>224</sup> Yin Shun. *Hua yu ji* 《華雨集》二 (Taipei : Zheng wen (正聞) Publisher, 1988) p.241

*samādhi* acquired from the development of concentration but is resulted from the knowledge that realizes emptiness. According to Yin Shun's study, in *Ekottara-āgama* handed down by the later sub-sects of *Mahāsaṅghika*, the compound word *buddhānusmṛti* denotes as a whole the Buddha's form-body and virtues(佛身與功德); the "diamond body" (金剛身)(*vajra-saṃhatana-kāya*)<sup>225</sup>, perfect comprehension in ten fields of knowledge(十力) (*daśa-balāni*)<sup>226</sup> and the four kinds of perfect self-confidence(四無所畏) (*catvāri vaiśāradyāni*)<sup>227</sup>; the perfection of characteristic marks(佛相端嚴) and accomplishments of the body of morality(戒), concentration(定), wisdom(慧), deliverance(解脫), and knowledge of deliverance (解脫知見)<sup>228</sup>—virtues of Dharma-body. This type of *buddhānusmṛti* is more primitive than mindfulness of the Buddha's form as taught in "Mahayana Buddha-Dharma."<sup>229</sup>

In the fifth century, Early Mahayana sutras describe two kinds of merits of Buddha. One is virtues associated with the Form Body (色身功德) and the other is virtues of Dharma body<sup>230</sup> (法身功德). This concept revealed that Mahayana texts appraised Buddha's

<sup>225</sup> *Fo guang da ci dian wang lu ban*.p.3542

<sup>226</sup> "Bala," *Pali-English Dictionary* (1921-25; Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Pubs, 2003). *Fo guang da ci dian wang lu ban*.p.361

<sup>227</sup> "Vesārajja," *Pali-English Dictionary*. *Fo guang da ci dian wang lu ban*. p.1773.

<sup>228</sup> "Sampadā," *Pali-English Dictionary*.

<sup>229</sup> Yin Shun. *Hua yu ji* 《華雨集》二 (Taipei : Zheng wen (正聞) Publisher, 1988).p.251. It is true, the evidence was found in the chart 3.5 and spreadsheet II

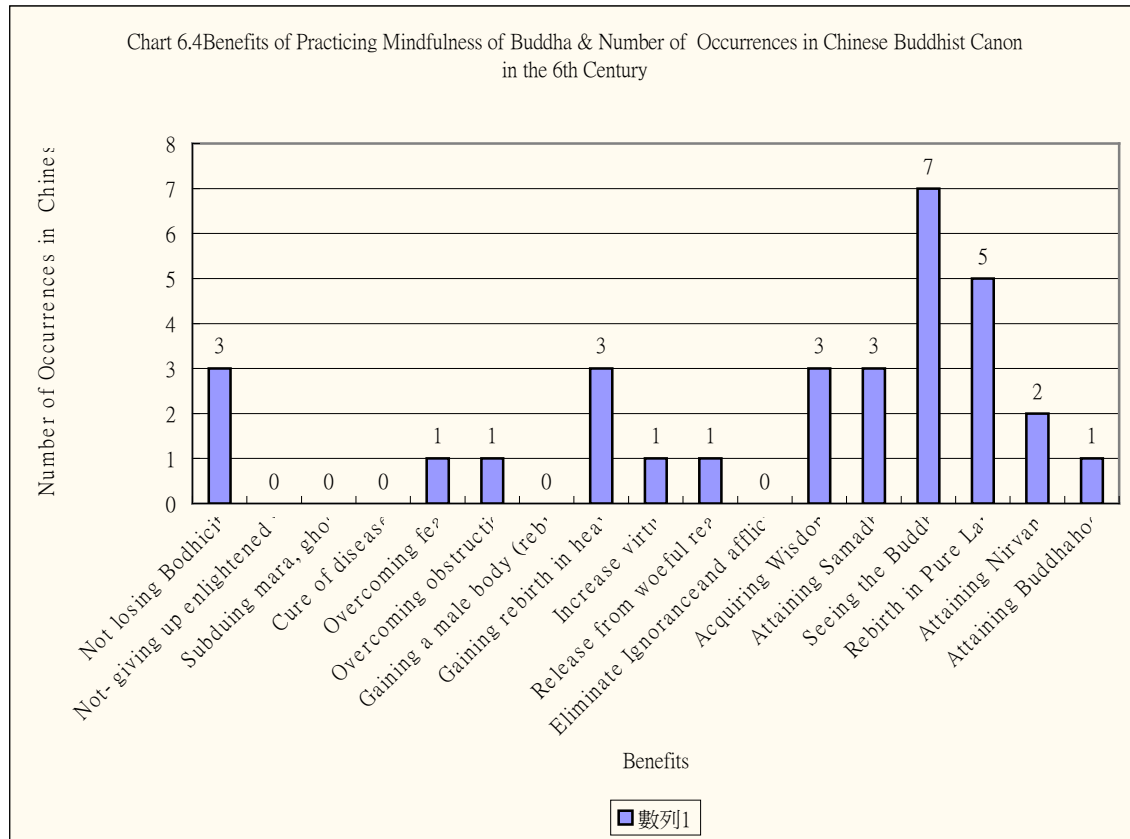
<sup>230</sup> T614 and T643

perfect body form, Buddha's body possesses thirty-two distinguishing marks and eighty minor marks (Skt. *aśīty-anuvyañjanāni*). This is different from the Early Buddhist teaching. The origin of this concept, as being discussed in Chapter II, is because Mahasanghikas (大眾部) asserted that the Buddha's body is untainted(無漏的), hence the formulation of the eminence of Buddha's body. Buddha's ten powers and ten names are all due to the Buddha's merits. However, Early Buddhist texts only mentioned the merits of the Buddha.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century, the purpose of the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha is to see the Buddha in ten directions and listen to the Buddha's teaching. After the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the idea of *nian-fo* has come to mean the invocation of the Buddha's name, particularly *Amitabha's* name. The purpose of the practice is to focus on the rebirth in *Amitabha's* Pure Land. This shows the huge shift from the original concept and practice.

#### 4. In the 6<sup>th</sup> century

Chart 6.4 Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 6th Century



According to the data, more emphasis was given to benefits of seeing the Buddha but it has a lesser count of 7 compared to the fifth century. Rebirth in Pure Land ranks second with 5 occurrences. Not losing Bodhicitta, Gaining rebirth in heaven, Acquiring wisdom and Attaining *samadhi* each has 3 appearances.

Apparently, in the fifth and sixth century's translation of texts, the benefit laid more stress on seeing the Buddha. Therefore, the benefit of seeing the Buddha is more popular. The factors leading to the popularization of seeing the Buddha were that at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century CE, *Kumārajīva's* translated text of *Si wei lve yao fa* (思惟略要法, T617),

*Buddhabhadra's* translated text of *Guanfo sanmei hai jing* (觀佛三昧海經, T643), and *Dharmamitra's* translated text of *Pañcadvāra-dhyāna-sūtra-mahārtha-dharma* (五門禪經要用法, T619), etc., all mentioned being mindful of the Buddha and seeing the Buddha. As a result of the appeal of the Buddha's image, the practice of contemplating the Buddha which results in seeing the Buddha had become a popular part of general practice of the *Yogācāra* School in the world of Buddhism then, irrespective of whether the practitioners belonged to the tradition of *Cravakas* (hearers) or Mahayana.<sup>231</sup>

In the sixth century the main translators of sutras and treatises were *Bodhiruci* (菩提流支 ~537CE) in Sui Dynasty (隋朝), *Narendrayaśas* (那連提耶舍 490-589CE), Ji-zang (吉藏 549-623CE), *Paramartha* (真諦 499-569CE) and *Jñānagupta* (奢那崛多 523-600CE).

The sutras translated during the late fifth and sixth centuries are classified as belonging to Middle Mahayana Buddha Dharma. These include the sutras and treatises of *Yogācāra* (Consciousness-Only) School and the *Tath ā gata-garbha* (store) school of thought such as the mind-based<sup>232</sup> mindfulness of Buddha in the *Avataṃsaka* (Flower Adornment) sutra.<sup>233</sup> The sutra stated that mind-based mindfulness could lead to seeing the Buddha in

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<sup>231</sup> Yin Shun. *History and Theory of Indian Buddhism* 《印度佛教思想史》. (Taipei: Zheng wen (正聞) Publisher, 1983). pp.404-405

<sup>232</sup> Yin Shun. *The History of Chinese Chan School* 《中國禪宗史》. (Taipei: Zheng wen Publisher, 1971). pp.58-59.

<sup>233</sup> There are three major full-length translations of the sūtra:  
The first full translation was completed by Buddhabhadra 佛馱跋陀 around 420 (*Avataṃsaka-sūtra*; 60

one's mind or seeing the Buddha subsequent to achieving *samādhi*. From the sixth century onward, the emergence of the sutras in Mahayana Buddhism had reduced due to both the prevalence of the trend for discourse and the maturation of the new age ushered in by the Esoteric Mahayana Buddha Dharma.<sup>234</sup> In addition, in the fifth and sixth century, the texts emphasized the practice of Mindfulness of the Buddha's Virtues, however, from the seventh century onward, the concept of *nian-fo* practice along with reciting mantras (持咒) and making *mudrās* (結印) appears in the texts.

##### 5. In the 7<sup>th</sup> century

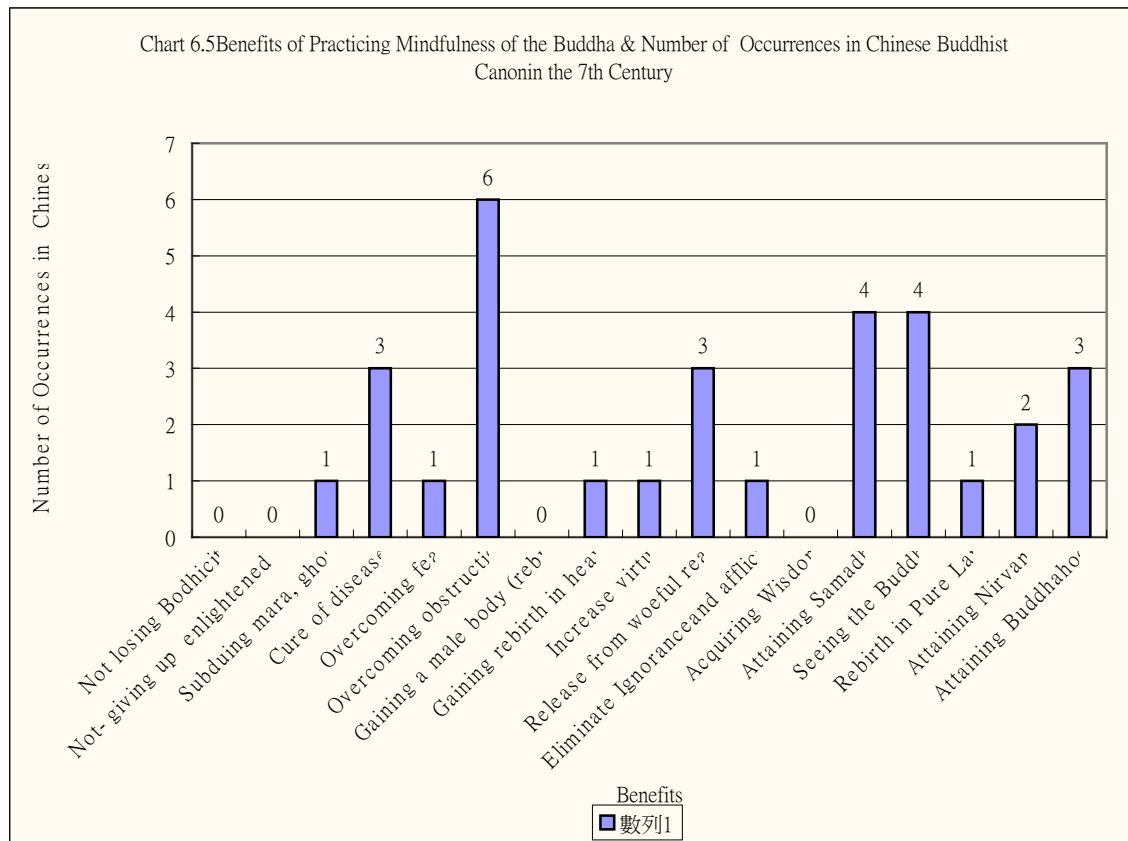
Chart 6.5 Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 7th Century

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fascicles, T 278.9.395a-788b), also known also as the 晉經 Jin *sūtra* and 舊經 the old *sūtra*. The second translation (80 fascicles *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*; T 279.10.1b-444c) was completed by Śikṣānanda 實叉難陀 around 699. Known also as the Tang *sūtra* 唐經, the new *sūtra* 新經, and the eighty-fascicle Avataṃsaka 八十華嚴. The third was completed by Prajñā 般若 around 800 (40 fascicles, *Gaṇḍavyūha*; T 293.10.661a-848b) around 798. Digital Dictionary of Buddhism. [http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?83.xml+id\('b83ef-56b4-7d93'\)](http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?83.xml+id('b83ef-56b4-7d93'))

<sup>234</sup> Yin Shun. *History and Theory of Indian Buddhism* 《印度佛教思想史》.(Taipei : Zheng wen (正聞) Publisher, 1983),p153-154





From the chart we can see that in the seventh century, particular attention was given to ridding of obstructions and moral defilement, which has 6 occurrences; capable of seeing the Buddha has 4 occurrences and attaining *samadhi* has 4 occurrences. Attaining Buddhahood and release from woeful realms have 3 occurrences each. Apparently, enhancement of merits and virtues was no longer the issue in the sixth and seventh centuries. This indicates a gradual shift of emphasis from positive advantage of increasing blessing to passive types of benefit such as ridding of obstructions and moral defilement. That is because most of the esoteric sutras were translated into Chinese in the

7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>235</sup> which gave particular emphasis to overcoming obstructions.

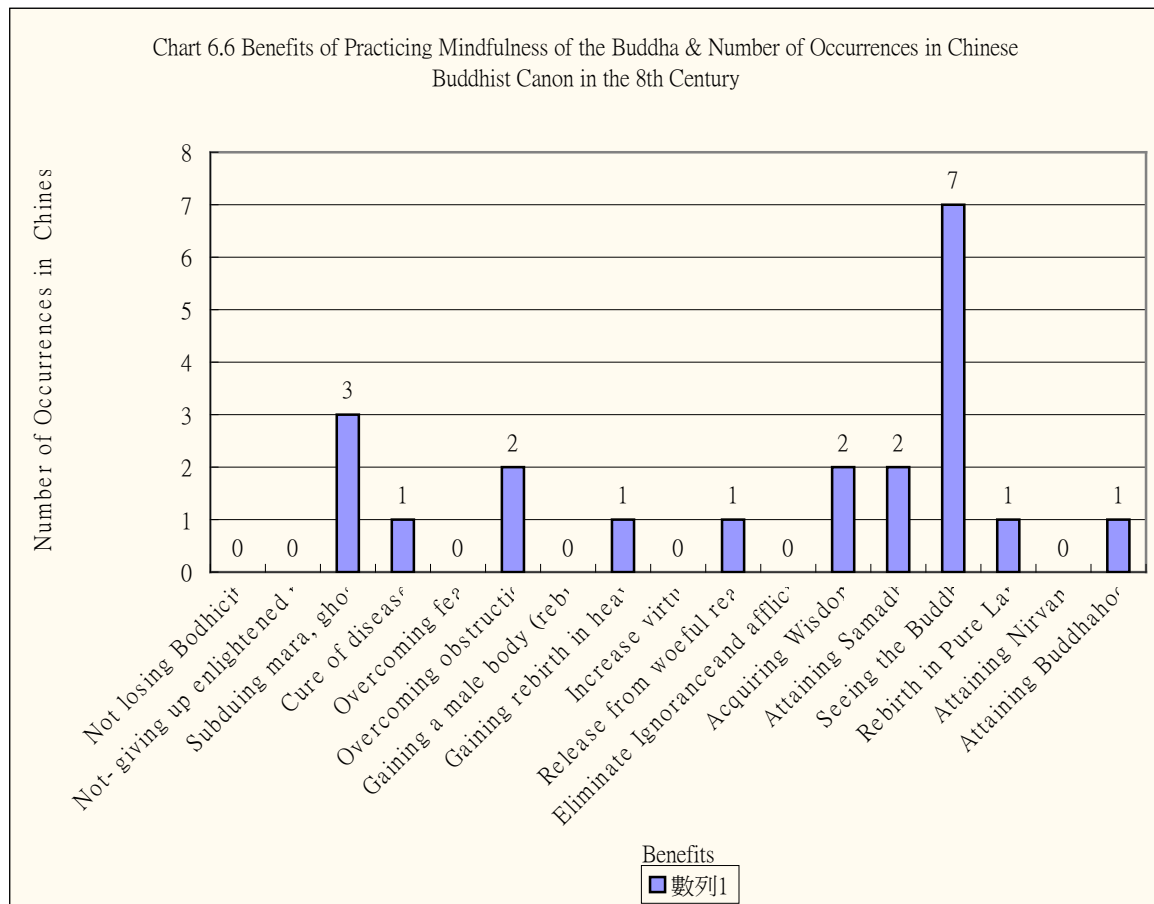
Through making a *mudra*, reciting mantras, and contemplating the image of the Buddha, which form the practice of the three mysteries, all sentient beings can overcome obstructions, attain rebirth in Pure Land, see the Buddha, and even attain Buddhahood in this life. Moreover, one of the features of Esoteric teachings is an emphasis on overcoming obstructions, which is one of important worldly benefits.

#### 6. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century

Chart 6.6 Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 8th Century

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<sup>235</sup> See Appendix. Spreadsheet I. Texts Relating to the Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of Buddha (Nian-fo) in Chinese Buddhist Canon over time



According to the data, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the most frequently seen benefits are being capable of seeing the Buddha, which has 7 occurrences. Secondly, the benefit of subduing *Māra* and ghosts has 3 occurrences. The benefits of overcoming obstructions, getting rid of moral defilement (sin), acquiring wisdom and attaining *samadhi* have 2 occurrences each.

Seeing the Buddha is still a primary goal in esoteric teachings. As discussed in the previous Chapter, the term of “seeing the Buddha” also has different meaning across

various Buddhism eras. According to the Four *Agamas*, during the Buddha's time, seeing the Buddha meant seeing Śākyamuni Buddha. But in Early Mahayana Texts, it emphasized seeing the Buddhas of ten directions or *Amitabha* Buddha.

Historically, Esoteric Buddha Dharma flourished after the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. The period coincided with the later period of Indian Mahayana Buddha Dharma and witnessed the emergence of numerous texts of Esoteric Buddha Dharma, principally

*Mahavairocana-sutra* 《大日經》 and *Vajrasekhara-sutra* 《金剛頂經》. Esoteric Buddha

Dharma adopted the thinking of the *Madhyamaka* School and *Yogācāra* Schools,

especially the influence of *Tathāgata-garbha* doctrine enshrined in the broad

connotations followed in the *Yogācāra* School. As a result, Esoteric Buddha Dharma

advocates that all sentient beings are Buddhas to begin with, a concept known as

*Adibuddha*(本初佛).<sup>236</sup> Through making a *mudra*, reciting mantras, and contemplating

the image of Buddha, which form the practice of the three mysteries, all sentient beings

can become Adibuddha. Therefore, by the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century, Esoteric Buddha Dharma

had assumed a leading role in Indian Buddhism. At the same time, the propagation of

Esoteric Buddha Dharma into Tibet also started.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Yin Shun. *History and Theory of Indian Buddhism* 《印度佛教思想史》.(Taipei : Zheng wen (正聞) Publisher, 1983).pp400, 409-410

<sup>237</sup> Kenneth Chen. *Buddhism in China: A historical Survey*. (NJ: Princeton University Press ,1973), p.330  
See also *Fo guang da ci dian* 2<sup>nd</sup>. p.4477.

According to the Spreadsheet I, it indicated clearly that after the eighth century, Esoteric Buddha Dharma strongly flourished for a time in China. The evidence was found from the translation of texts. Numerous Esoteric sutras<sup>238</sup> were translated into Chinese in the seventh and eighth centuries.

Most of these sutras<sup>239</sup> mentioned practicing mindfulness of the Buddha along with reciting mantras and making a *mudra* could overcome obstructions and sin. Esoteric Buddha Dharma culminates in acquiring this-worldly benefit. This feature should not be denied.<sup>240</sup>

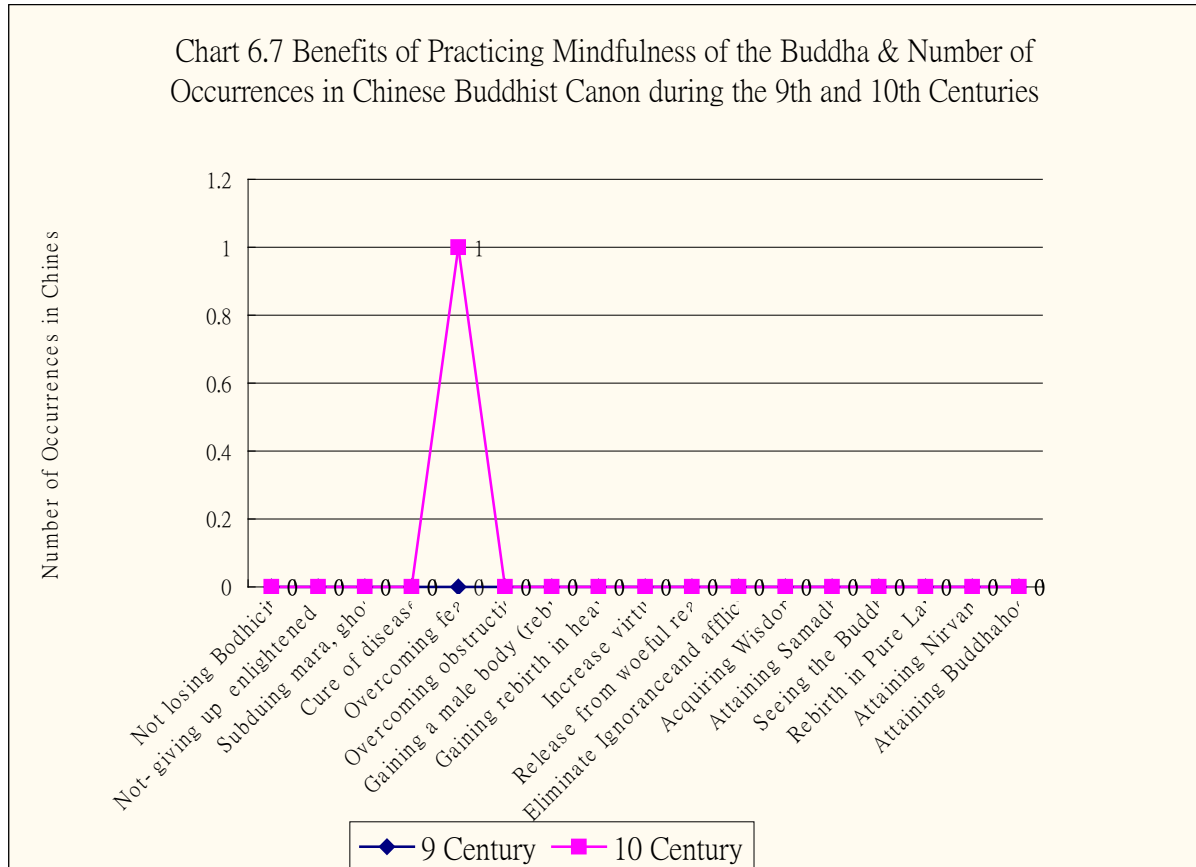
## 7. In the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century

Chart 6.7 Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Century

<sup>238</sup> T1057/627-649 CE, T1097/693 CE, T952/693-706 CE, T1006/706 CE, T920x/ 706-713 CE, T1092/707 CE, T1009/ 720- 774 CE, T953/746-774 CE, T682/720-774 CE...etc. See Spreadsheet I.

<sup>239</sup> T1093/399b Amoghapaśāhṛdaya (不空羂索呪經)587CE. T1057/91b Nilakantha(ka) sutra(千眼千臂觀世音菩薩陀羅尼神呪經)627-649CE. T901/893a Dharanisamuccaya(sutra) (佛說陀羅尼集經)654CE...etc.

<sup>240</sup> Hajime Makamura. Indian Buddhism: A survey with Bibliographical Notes.p343



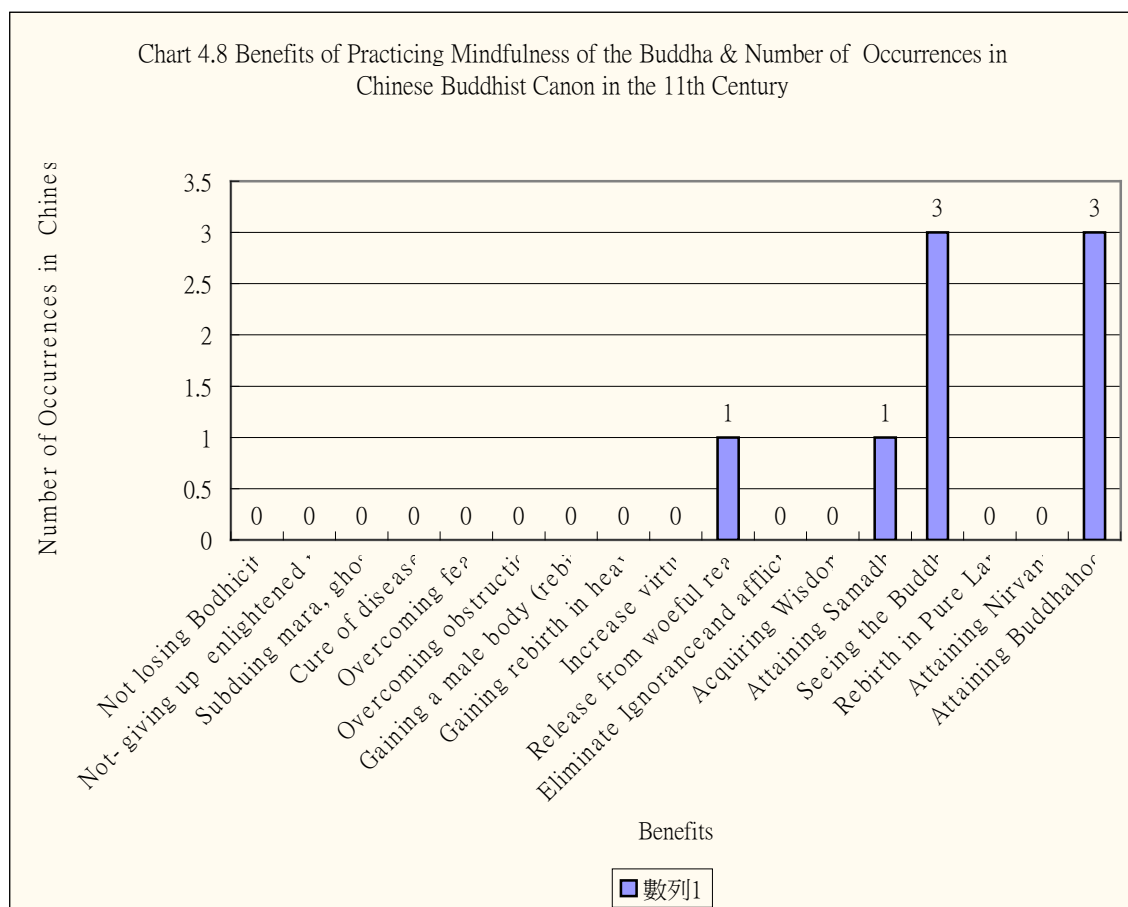
According to the data, there was no sutra or *śāstra* translated during the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The suppression of Buddhism in 845 CE by Tang Wu Zong (唐武宗) destroyed the spreading of Buddha dharma. In the late 10<sup>th</sup> century the Northern Song dynasty reestablished the translation bureau<sup>241</sup> after two centuries of no Buddhist text translations. Therefore, the account of benefits on practicing mindfulness of the Buddha appeared again in 994CE and we have one account of the benefit of overcoming fear.<sup>242</sup>

<sup>241</sup> Lancaster, Lewis. *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A descriptive Catalogue*, 2004. K1090.

<sup>242</sup> T1170/695c

## 8. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century

Chart 4.8 Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon in the 11th Century



In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, only a total of eight counts were found related to the benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha and mainly appeared in the esoteric sutras. Seeing the Buddha and attaining Buddhahood have 3 occurrences each. Attaining *samadhi* and release from the evil realms each have only one account. As described in the previously

chapter Esoteric Buddha Dharma (teaching) pays more attention to how to attain

Buddhahood in this very life.

Since the Chinese translations of sutras and treatises occurred over a range of period, the resulting sutras and treatises that emerged in each dynasty or century also differed from one to another. Moreover, the variation in translations of sutras and treatises from various periods of times represent the development of philosophies in different periods. All sutras and treaties can be categorized into different philosophies of various periods: the Early Buddha Dharma, Early Mahayana Buddha Dharma, Middle-Mahayana Buddha Dharma, Final-Mahayana Buddha Dharma, etc. The benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha have been interpreted differently in different periods of time, which indicate the transformation of ideologies, thus the emphasis of the benefits of mindfulness of Buddha were different as well.



## Chapter V

### Conclusion

#### ● Translation of Texts

The first Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese in 148 CE by a Parthian (安息國) monk named An shi Kao (安世高) in Luoyang (洛陽). Followed by *Lokakṣema* (支婁迦讖 168-188 CE), *Dharmarakṣa* (竺法護 266CE~) and several eminent translators such as *Kumārajīva* (鳩摩羅什 344-413CE), *Buddhabhadra*(佛陀跋陀羅, *Dharmakṣema* (曇無讖 385-433CE), *Guṇabhadra*(求那跋陀羅 394-468CE), *Guṇavarman*(求那跋摩 367-431CE), *Bodhiruci* (菩提流支~537CE), *Narendrayaśas* (那連提耶舍 490-589CE), *Ji-zang* (吉藏 549-623CE), *Paramartha*(真諦 499-569CE)and *Jñānagupta* (奢那崛多 523-600CE) , *Xuan-zang* (玄奘 602-664CE), *Dharmagupta* (達磨笈多~619)and *Amoghavajra* (不空 705-774CE). Through the dedicated work of generations of translators, Indian Buddhist Texts were then be translated into Chinese continuously and successfully until the eighth century. Some critical historical factors affecting the translations of texts were support of emperors of each dynasty, the skill level of Sutra translating monks, along with social circumstance and the popularity of Dharma dissemination. For example, in the Tang Dynasty, due to the Emperor, Tang Tai Zong's

(唐太宗, 599-649CE) support, Xuan-zang's (玄奘) great translation ability, plus the spreading efforts of many eminent monks, Buddhism held a lofty status during the Tang dynasty. Then the Northern Song (960-1126CE) dynasty reestablished the translation bureau after two centuries of suspension of translation of texts. The translation of texts was a crucial factor for Buddhism spreading in China. The first printing of the Chinese canon was commissioned by the court from 972 CE to 983 CE in the city of Cheng-du, the wood carving center for China. The entire canon was carved onto 130,000 wooden print blocks and it contained materials from over 5,000 rolls of manuscripts.<sup>243</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese Buddhist Tripitaka (Taisho daizokyo) was published between 1924-1934 by Japanese scholars. It is the version most commonly used by scholars for reference. Furthermore, the Digital version of the Chinese Buddhist Canon has been produced through the effort of some recent scholars.

## ● Difficulties

In the study, there are two difficulties that must be solved at the beginning.

The first difficulty is how to construct the basic database that determines the sequence of

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<sup>243</sup> Lancaster, Lewis R. "Buddhist Books and Texts: Canon and Canonization." *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Ed. Lindsay Jones. Vol. 2. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. 1255. Gale Virtual Reference Library. Gale. University of the West. <<http://go.galegroup.com/ps/start.do?p=GVRL&u=uwest>>.

translations of texts. Fortunately, by means of The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue (Lancaster), a Digital version, which assists the construction of the basic database. The spreadsheet 1 of texts translation includes the texts translators, translation years and dynasties.

The second difficulty is how to translate Chinese into English. How to find out the English equivalent word for Chinese Buddhist terminology is the other challenge in this study. According to the CBETA and several Digital Buddhist Dictionaries such as Digital Sanskrit Dictionary (Monier-Williams), Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (Muller, Charles, ed.), A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms (Soothill and Hodous) and “Fo kuang Buddhist Dictionary (Digital version, Fo Guang Publishing and Press) make the study possible and the translation easier.

### ● **Significance and Findings**

The study has shown the significant points in the following:

- (1) That *nian-fo* was a common expression from the earliest period of Buddhist textual material.
- (2) The practice of *nian-fo* involves both basic and advanced levels. The ultimate goal should be mindfulness of the Dharma-body as well as the ultimate reality.

(3) That *nian-fo* can be seen to undergo a shift of emphasis, which is equivalent to the changes that can be traced in the development of Buddhist doctrine.

- a. In the Early period of Buddhist thought, the practice of *nian-fo* included six mindfulnesses or ten mindfulnesses and it meant contemplating Buddha's meritorious virtues.
- b. In the Early period, it was a practice focused on "seeing" the Buddha, that is remembering Sakyamuni.
- c. It was extended to the concentration on the virtues of the tradition, focusing on the good as a method of achieving a state of morality.
- d. At the end point of the practice of the Early period, it was an aid in achieving Nirvana.

In the Mahayana:

- a. The practice of *nian-fo* emphasized *nian* of:
  - (1). the Buddha's merits
  - (2). the Buddha's grace
  - (3).the Buddha's teaching
  - (4).the Buddha's Dharma-body
- b. The focus on "seeing" the Buddha became more cosmic in the sense that

the practitioner was able to see the Buddhas in distant world systems in all the Ten Directions. A major shift in Buddhist thought from the historical Buddha and the cosmology of the Early period resulted in the belief of a system of universes...multiverses.

- c. The focus on virtues was now not just the virtues as practiced by ordinary people, but the virtues seen as those of the Buddhas. These virtues were expanded into the power of the Buddhas. One did not just focus on “giving” but on the “Buddhas/Bodhisattva’s giving”
- d. In place of achieving Nirvana, the practice led to birth in the Pure Land with the subsequent idea of the Bodhisattva practice of continuing to exist.

All of this is important to know about the practice. From the study we see that the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha is not just a Pure Land endeavor in terms of schools of thought in Buddhism; it is more universal. Moreover, mindfulness of the Buddha is also a practice undertaken by Bodhisattvas because Bodhisattvas still need to follow the example of the Buddha. According to the

*Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtra* 《大方廣佛華嚴經》, several passages mention that all bodhisattvas from the first to the ten stages practice mindfulness of the Buddha.

For example:

Bodhisattvas that reach the stage of *pramuditā*<sup>244</sup> often make great and constant offerings. The bodhisattva performs meritorious deeds such as charity (*dāna*), affectionate speech (*priyavacana*), conduct profitable to others (*arthakṛtya*) and co-operation with and adaptation of oneself to others.<sup>245</sup> He is never heedless about the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma, other bodhisattvas of the same vocation and same path, all the *pāramitās*, and so on. (T 278, p 547 b)

At the second bodhisattva stage, called ‘freedom from all immoral defilement’ (*Vimalā*)<sup>246</sup>.... When a bodhisattva performs meritorious deeds such as charity, affectionate speech, conduct profitable to others, and co-operation with and adaptation of oneself to others, he is never heedless about the practice of mindfulness of Buddha, the Dharma, and the complete, perfect knowledge. (T 278, p 550a)

Several other sutras mentioning the bodhisattva stages similarly highlight the practice of Six Mindfulnesses.<sup>247</sup> This implies the significance of giving rise to the thought of mindfulness of the Buddha in the process of practice even for the bodhisattva.

According to the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* (大智度論):<sup>248</sup>

<sup>244</sup> *Pramuditā* means “joy at having overcome the former difficulties and now entering on the path to Buddhahood.” See William Edward Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* n.d., <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s5341-5730.html>>.

<sup>245</sup> These four are collectively called *catuḥ-saṃgraha-vastu* (四攝法), “the four all-embracing bodhisattva virtues.” Ibid. <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s56db-651d-6cd5.html>>.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid. <<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/data/s5341-5730.html>>.

<sup>247</sup> *Buddhāvataṃsaka-mahāvaiṣṭhīya-sūtra* 《大方廣佛華嚴經》 T 278/ 554 b, 556b, 556c, 569c, 574c, etc. *Mahāyānopadeśasūtra* 《寶女所問經》 T399/463a. “The practice of the bodhisattva path always does not violate the Six Mindfulnesses.”

*Bodhisattvabhūmisūtra* 《菩薩地持經》 T1581/991c “Bodhisattva-mahāsattvas practice mindfulness of the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha, the liberality, the morality, and the celestial beings.”

It is underscored in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra* 《摩訶般若波羅蜜經》 that “Subhuti, the great bodhisattvas who are developing *mahāpāramitā* should practice mindfulness of the Buddha.” 「須菩提。菩薩摩訶薩行般若波羅蜜時應念佛。」 (T 223, p.385, c)

At the height of *prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, bodhisattvas developing the bodhisattva path undertook the mindfulness of Buddha and often gave rise to the thought of mindfulness of Buddha; for the Buddha is the foremost teacher to be remembered and emulate.

*Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* 《大般涅槃經》 T374 /515a “Why does it say bodhisattvas are accomplished in six dharmas? And, what do the six foundations of mindfulness denote? The first is practicing mindfulness of the Buddha...”

<sup>248</sup> Translated by Kumārajīva between 402 and 406 CE in Hsiao-yao Garden (逍遙園) in Later Qin

Buddhas are Dharma king, Bodhisattvas are Dharma generals, who respect and esteem only the Buddha, the World Honored One. Thus, Bodhisattvas should constantly practice *nian-fo*. Moreover, by constantly practice *nian-fo* they gain all kinds of merits and advantages. By understanding great kindness, they thus constantly practice *nian-fo*.<sup>249</sup>

From the above-mentioned information it is obvious that the practice of *nian-fo* is not simply a means to train the mind and develop concentration and insight. It is also a practice required of the practitioners of the bodhisattva path. For, only when one is able to constantly remember the fully enlightened Buddha, to keep in mind the Buddha's teaching, his merit and to think of repaying his kindness, and to abide by his guidance, will that one walk the bodhisattva path with resolve undistracted from worldly pleasures. Thus, they constantly recollect the Buddha's virtues and the Dharma-body; and, they even meet the Buddha and listen to his teaching. This mindfulness is considered vital to those in the bodhisattva path who "perform what is hard to perform and endure what is unbearable."

Further, the foregoing pages also include studies on the sequence of Mindfulness of the Buddha that advance from mindfulness of the Buddha's form-body, the Buddha's sublime characteristic marks, virtues, Dharma-body all the way to mindfulness of reality.

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dynasty.

<sup>249</sup>T1509/ p109a26-b1. 佛為法王 菩薩為法將。所尊所重唯佛世尊。是故應常念佛。復次常念佛得種種功德利。譬如大臣特蒙恩寵常念其主。菩薩亦如是。知種種功德無量智慧皆從佛得。知恩重故 常念佛。

Sequentially, one starts off recollecting the form and sublime marks of the Buddha and then progresses to recollecting reality. In other words, adhering to the objects of mindfulness is merely an expedient for beginners while recollecting reality is the ultimate way leading to liberation. The information discussed above reveals the profundity of Mindfulness of the Buddha. It is a practice that involves both basic and advanced levels and it allows practitioners to proceed along the path of practice in an orderly and sequential manner. It is also a means of training the mind by way of *samādhi* concentration and insight meditation. Again, it is the practice vital to practitioners of the bodhisattva path.

In the study of the benefits of practicing *nian-fo* (mindfulness of the Buddha) in Chinese Buddhist canon, several issues come to the forefront:

1. The CBETA (Chinese Buddhist Electronic Tripitaka) provides new the possibilities for the study of the Buddhist canon and we can expect new discoveries based on this resource.
2. The texts of Early Mahayana Period describe two kinds of virtues (merits) of Buddha. One is virtues associated with the Form Body (色身功德) and the other is virtues of Dharma body<sup>250</sup> (法身功德). Through the study we find that the benefits related to the

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<sup>250</sup> T614 and T643



practice of *nian-fo* can be grouped into seventeen categories. It is not limited to the aspiration to be reborn into the Western Pure Land as commonly held.

3. All of the benefits including worldly and world-transcending benefits can be classified as expedient benefits and ultimate benefits. See Table 2 and Chart 4. This indicates that the practice of *nian-fo* can not only obtain fortune and happiness in the mundane world, such as health in both physically and mentally, abundant in wealth, but also can attain transcendental joy, gain wisdom, overcome affliction, and be liberated with utmost happiness. The world-transcending benefits are taught in many more passages than those devoted to worldly benefits
4. All of the Benefits can be further categorized into five groups. As a result, attaining liberation is the primary benefit of practicing mindfulness of Buddha. See Table 3 and Chart 5.
5. In Early Buddhist texts, the benefits of *nian-fo* lay stress on attaining Nirvana, a reflection of the way in which the teaching of Early period emphasized liberation. According to the *Āgamas*, during the Buddha's time the religious practices in India were full of the atmosphere of salvation. Therefore, it is due to the historical background of the Buddha's time and human dispositions.
6. The benefits of the enhancement of merits and virtues were no longer the issue in the

text translated and compiled in the sixth and seventh centuries in China. This implies an important shift from focusing on the development of wholesome states to overcoming unwholesome states. See Chart 2.

#### 7. The appearance of visualizing the Buddha's sublime and untainted body in Early

Mahayana texts departed from the conception of Buddha taught in the Early Buddhist texts. This is one of the main differences between the Mahayana and Early Buddhist teaching. In the texts of Middle Mahayana Period, the idealism of mind-only and consciousness-only emerged, hence the practicing of mindfulness of the Buddha changed and put the focus on visualizing the Buddha in one's mind. The texts of Final Mahayana Period, with the inclusion of the description of the practices of the Three Mystic Doors(三密門) put its emphasis on removing karmic obstructions, healing and attaining Buddhahood within one lifetime. In this way the orientation of Buddhist practice to present-life benefit became apparent.

#### 8. It is also found that the benefits of practicing mindfulness of the Buddha include all teachings of Buddha Dharma was tied to Buddhist Cosmology. At the same time, the concepts of liberation were varied, in some cases conceived as reincarnation within the three realms. This was expressed in the teachings regarding; the perception of duality

(man and woman), perception of mind and body, perception of spiritual practice to liberations, and perception of spirits and Deities, etc. When we discuss the benefits of the practice of *nian-fo*, it relates to the basic teachings of the Buddha, such as karma, *samsara*, *samadhi* (meditation), Nirvana...and so forth as discussed in Chapter III.

Originally, the different Dharma practices contained in sutras and treatises all have their own sets of corresponding functions and benefits. However, as a result of different periods and the sequence of translated sutras and treatises that emerged over a period of time, different systems of thoughts were promoted. If the order of the emergence of these sutras and treatises and the associated backgrounds germane to each period of time can be examined comprehensively, this facilitates our the understanding of these changing thoughts and permits us to restore their original meaning.

#### ● Further study

The methodology used in the research might be utilized as an example for researching other themes within the entire Buddha dharma. This dissertation also leave some rooms for further research, such as why practicing mindfulness of the Buddha can acquire so many benefits as well as how to practice mindfulness of the Buddha. Moreover, the practice of mindfulness of the Buddha was appropriated as a major part of the Pure Land.

Therefore, how the Pure Land tradition makes use of the idea and a main practice for individuals could be discussed further.

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T.220-704b : T = Taisho ,220 = volume number, 704 = page number  
  
b = middle section (a = top; c = bottom).
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- **Appendix**

- **Data**

- Spreadsheet I Texts Relating to the Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*) in the Chinese Buddhist Canon.
    - Spreadsheet II Various Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*) in the Chinese Buddhist Canon.

- **Charts**

Charts Associates with the Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha

Chart 2.1	Various Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha ( <i>Nian-fo</i> ) & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time
Chart 4.1	Various World Benefits & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time
Chart 4.2	Various World benefits & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time
Chart 4.3	Various World- transcending Benefits & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time

Chart 4.4	Various World- transcending Benefits & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time
Chart 5.1	Five Categories of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time

## Spreadsheet I for Texts Relating to The Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of Buddha in Chinese Buddhist Canon

Year	Taisho	Title of Text
25-220 CE	T156	Da fang bian fo bao en jing 大方便佛報恩經
148-170 CE	T492	A nan wen shi fo ji xiong jing 佛說阿難問事佛吉凶經
168-186 CE	T807	Lokanuvartana sutra 佛說內藏百寶經
179 CE	T418*	Bhadrपालasutra 佛說般舟三昧經 3 卷
223-253 CE	T087	Zhai jing 齋經
223-253 CE	T1011*	Anantamukhasadhakadharani (sutra) 佛說無量門微密持經
251 CE	T206	Jiu za pi yu jing 舊雜譬喻經
265- 313 CE	T342	Susthitamati (devaputra) pariprccha sutra 佛說如幻三昧經
265-313 CE	T381	Sarvapunyasamuccayasamadhisutra 等集眾德三昧經
265-313 CE	T811*	Buddhaksepana 佛說決定總持經
266-313 CE	T310 1	Svapnanirdesasutra 大寶積經 卷 16 淨居天子會
266-313 CE	T812	Pu sa xing wu shi yuan shen jing 菩薩行五十緣身經
284 CE	T606	Yogacarabhumi 修行道地經
286 CE	T222	Pancavimsatisahasrikaprajnaparamitasutra 光讚經
286 CE	T585*	Brahmavisesacintipariprccha-sutra 持心梵天所問經
289 CE	T338 *	Vimaladattapariprccha 佛說離垢施女經
290-306 CE	T695*	Guan xi fo xing xiang jing 佛說灌洗佛形像經
291 CE	T398	Tathagatamahakarunanirdesa sutra 大哀經
308 CE	T477*	Vimalakirtinirdesasutra 佛說大方等頂王經
317-322 CE	T1331	Guan ding qi wan er qian shen wang hu bi qiu chou jing 灌頂七萬二千神王護比丘呪經
317-420 CE	T006	Mahaparinirvanasutra 般泥洹經
317-420 CE	T1357	Puspakutadharani sutra 佛說師子奮迅菩薩所問經
317-420 CE	T1670	Milindapanha 那先比丘經
350-431 CE	T644	Jin gang san mei ben xing qing jing bu huai bu mie jing 佛說金剛三昧本性清淨不壞不滅經
350-431 CE	T1463	Pi ni mu jing 毘尼母經
374 CE	T212	Dharmapada (Dharmatrata)出曜經
384 CE	T1549	Zun po xu mi lun 尊婆須蜜論
384-417 CE	T1485	Pu sa ying luo ben ye jing 菩薩瓔珞本業經
388-407 CE	T570	Xian shou jing 佛說賢首經
397-439 CE	T579	Upasikabrahmacaryadharmaparyaya sutra 優婆夷淨行法門經
397-439 CE	T410 *	Dasacakraksitigarbha 大方廣十輪經
397 CE	T125	Ekottaragama sutra 增壹阿含經
399-416 CE	T309	Shi zhu duan jie jing 十住斷結經
399-416 CE	T384	Pu sa chu tai ching 菩薩處胎經
402 CE	T456	Mi lei da cheng fo jing 佛說彌勒大成佛經
402 CE	T586*	Brahmavisesacintipariprccha-sutra 思益梵天所問經

Taisho	Author, Translator	Dynasty	Place
T156	Unknown	Later Han 後漢	
T492	An Shih-kao 安世高	Later Han 後漢	
T807	Lokaksema 支婁迦讖	Later Han 後漢	
T418*	Lokaksema 支婁迦讖	Later Han 後漢	
T087	Zhi-qian 支謙	Wu 吳	Luo-yang
T1011*	Zhi-qian 支謙	Wu 吳	
T206	Kang Seng-hui 康僧會	Wu 吳	
T342	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	
T381	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	
T811*	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	Luo-yang
T310 1	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	
T812	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	
T606	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	
T222	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	
T585*	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	Chang-an
T338 *	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	
T695*	Fa chu 法炬	Western Jin 西晉	Yeh-tu 鄴都
T398	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	
T477*	Dharmaraksa 竺法護	Western Jin 西晉	Chang -an
T1331	Srimitra 尸梨蜜多	Eastern Jin 東晉	
T006	Unknown	Listed in Eastern Jin 東晉錄	
T1357	Unknown	Eastern Jin 東晉	
T1670	Unknown	Listed in the Tung-chin lun 東晉錄	
T644	Unknown	Three chin 三秦錄	
T1463	Unknown	Listed in the 秦錄	
T212	Zhu fo-nian 竺佛念	Wu 吳	
T1549	Sanghabhuti 僧伽跋澄	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T1485	Zhu fo-nian 竺佛念	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T570	Sheng-jian 聖堅	Western Jin 西晉	
T579	Unknown	Northern Liang 北涼錄	
T410 *	Unknown	listed in Pei-liang Lu	
T125	Sanghadeva 僧伽提婆	Eastern Jin 東晉	
T309	Zhu fo-nian 竺佛念	Yao Qin 姚秦	Lu-shan
T384	Zhu fo-nian 竺佛念	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T456	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T586*	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	Chang-an

Year	Taisho	Title of Text
402-405 CE	T616	Chan fa yao jie 禪法要解
402-406 CE	T1509	Mahaprajnaparamitasastra 大智度論
402-407 CE	T614	Zuo chan san mei jing 坐禪三昧經
402-409 CE	T625*	Drumakinnararajapariprccha -sutra 大樹緊那羅王所問經
402-412 CE	T201	Kalpanamanditika 大莊嚴論經
402-412 CE	T382	Sarvapunyasamuccayasamadhisutra 集一切福德三昧經
402-412 CE	T366	Fo shuo a mi tuo jing 佛說阿彌陀經
402-412 CE	T613	Chan mi yao fa jing 禪祕要法經
402-412 CE	T617	Su wei luo yao fa 思惟畧要法
402-412 CE	T1521	Shi zhu pi po sha lun 十住毘婆沙論
404 CE	T223	Pancavimsatisahasrikaprajnaparamitasutra 摩訶般若波羅蜜經
405 CE	T745	Za xang jing 佛說雜藏經
406 CE	T657	Kusalamulasamparigraha sutra 佛說華手經
413 CE	T001	Dirghagama sutra 長阿含經
414-421 CE	T374	Mahaparinirvanasutra 大般涅槃經 13
414-426 CE	T397	(Mahavaipulyamaha)sannipatasutra 大方等大集經 卷 4
418-422 CE	T278 32	Avatamsakasutra 大方廣佛華嚴經
420 CE	T371 *	Mayopamasamadhisutra 觀世音菩薩授記經
420-423 CE	T643	Guan fo san mei hai jing 佛說觀佛三昧海經
424 CE	T564	Strivartavyakarana Sutra 佛說轉女身經
427 CE	T397	(Mahavaipulyamaha)sannipatasutra 大方等大集經 卷 14
431 CE	T1487	Pu sa nei jie jing 佛說菩薩內戒經
431 CE	T1503	You po sai wu jie wei yi jing 優婆塞五戒威儀經
435-443 CE	T099	Samyuktagamasutra 雜阿含經
435-443 CE	T462	Ratnakaranda(ka)(vyuha) sutra 大方廣寶篋經
437-439 CE	T1546	(Abhidharma)vibhasa (sastra) 阿毘曇毘婆沙論
472 CE	T434	Kusumasancayasutra 佛說稱揚諸佛功德經
502-557 CE	T370	Aparimitayurjnanahrdadharani 阿彌陀鼓音聲王陀羅尼經
508-535 CE	T831*	Buddhaksepana 謗佛經
518-536 CE	T587*	Brahmavisesacintipariprccha-sutra 勝思惟梵天所問經
531 CE	T1532	Visesacintabrahmapariprccha-sastra 勝思惟梵天所問經論
538-541 CE	T721	(Saddharma)Smrtiyupasthana-sutra 正法念處經
539 CE	T310 2	Dasadharmaka sutra 大寶積經 卷 28 大乘十法會
541 CE	T339 *	Vimaladattapariprccha 得無垢女經
542 CE	T421	Vikurvanarajapariprccha sutra 奮迅王問經
553 CE	T1666*	Mahayanasraddhotpadasastra 大乘起信論
557 CE	T639	Samadhiraja(candrapradipa)-sutra 月燈三昧經
558 CE	T380	Da bei jing 大悲經
568 CE	T310 4	Pitaputrasamagamana sutra 大寶積經 卷 64 菩薩見實會
585-604 CE	T310 6	Rastrapalapariccha sutra 大寶積經 卷 80 護國菩薩會
587 CE	T408	Akasagarbhasutra 虛空孕菩薩經

Taisho	Author, Translator	Dynasty	Place
T616	Nagarjuna Kumarajiva 龍樹 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	Chang-an 長安
T1509	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	Xiao-yao Garden 逍遙園
T614	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T625*	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	Xiang-zhou 相州
T201	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T382	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T366	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	Ci-en M 慈恩
T613	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T617	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T1521	Nagarjuna Kumarajiva 龍樹菩薩造 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T223	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Later Chin	
T745	Fa-xian 法顯	Eastern Jin 東晉	
T657	Kumarajiva 鳩摩羅什	Yao Qin 姚秦	
T001	Buddhayasas and Zhu-fo-nian 佛陀耶舍共竺佛念	Wu 吳	
T374	Dharmaksema 曇無讖	Northern Liang 北涼	Gu-zang 姑藏
T397	Dharmaksema 曇無讖	Northern Liang 北涼	
T278 32	Buddhabhadra 佛跋陀羅	Eastern Jin 東晉	Yang-zhuo
T371 *	Tan Wu-Jie 曇無竭	Liu Song 劉宋	Yang-zhou 楊州
T643	Buddhabhadra 佛跋陀羅	Liu Song 劉宋 or 東晉	Yang -zhou
T564	Dharmamitra 曇摩蜜多	Liu Song 劉宋	Chi-yuan Monastery
T397	Zhi-yan and Bao-yun 智嚴共寶雲	Liu Song 劉宋	Yang-du 楊都
T1487	Gunavarman 求那跋摩	Liu Song 劉宋	Qi-yuan M 祇洹寺
T1503	Gunavarman 求那跋摩	Liu Song 劉宋	Qi-yuan M 祇洹寺
T099	Gunabhadra 求那跋陀羅	Liu Song 劉宋	
T462	Gunabhadra 求那跋陀羅	Liu Song 劉宋	Yang-du
T1546	Buddhavarman and Tao-tai 浮陀跋摩 共 道泰	Northern Liang 北涼	
T434	Kimkara 吉迦夜	Northern Wei 北魏	Bei-tai 北臺
T370	Unknown	Liang 梁	
T831*	Bodhiruci 菩提流支	Wu 吳	Luo-yang 洛陽
T587*	Bodhiruci 菩提流支	Eastern Wei 元魏	Luo-yang 洛陽
T1532	Vasubandhu Bodhiruci 天親菩薩造 菩提流支	Later wei 後魏	Luo-yang 洛陽
T721	Prajnaruci 般若流支	Yuan wei 元魏	
T310 2	Buddhasanta 佛陀扇多	Northern Wei 北魏	Ye-du 鄴都
T339 *	Gautama Prajnaruci 瞿曇般若流支	元魏	
T421	Prajnaruci 般若流支	Yuan wei 元魏	
T1666*	Paramartha 真諦	Liang 梁	Heng-zhou 衡州
T639	Narendrayasas 那連提耶舍	Kao Qi 高齊	
T380	Narendrayasas 那連提耶舍	Kao Qi 高齊	
T310 4	Narendrayasas 那連提耶舍	Northern Qi 北齊	Tian-ping M
T310 6	Jnanagupta 闍那崛多	Wu 吳	
T408	Jnanagupta 闍那崛多	Sui 隋	Da-xing-shan M 大興善寺



Year	Taisho	Title of Text
587 CE	T1093	Amoghapasahrdya 不空羂索呪經
591 CE	T480	Candrottaradarikapariprccha-sutra 佛說月上女經
594-595 CE	T416	Bhadrapalasutra 大方等大集經賢護分
601-602 CE	T264	Saddharmapundarikasutra 添品妙法蓮華經
607-614 CE	T415*	Bodhisattvabuddhanusmrtisamadhi 大方等大集經菩薩念佛三昧分
618-917 CE	T207	Za pi yu jing 雜譬喻經
627-649 CE	T1057*	Nilakantha(ka) sutra 千眼千臂觀世音菩薩陀羅尼神呪經
646-648 CE	T1579	Yogacarabhumisastra 瑜伽師地論
650 CE	T765	Itivrttakasutra 本事經
650-661 CE	T1060*	Nilakantha(ka) sutra 千手千眼觀世音菩薩廣大圓滿無礙大悲心陀羅尼經
651-652 CE	T411*	Dasacakraksitigarbha 大乘大集地藏十輪經
652-710 CE	T412	Di zang pu sa ben yuan jing 地藏菩薩本願經
653 CE	T1103	Guan zi zai pu sa sui xin chou jing 觀自在菩薩隨心呪經(亦名多唎心經)
654 CE	T901	Dharanisamuccay(sutra)佛說陀羅尼集經
659 CE	T1537	(Abhidharma)dharmaśāstra(padasastra) 阿毘達磨法蘊足論
659CE	T1545	(Abhidharma)mahāvibhāṣa(śāstra) 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論
659-663 CE	T220	Mahaprajnaparamita-sutra 大般若波羅蜜多經
683 CE	T967*	Usnisavijayadharani 佛頂尊勝陀羅尼經
691 CE	T694	Tathagatapratibimbapratisthanusamsa sutra 佛說大乘造像功德經
693 CE	T660	Ratnameghasutra 佛說寶雨經
693 CE	T1097	Bu kong juan so to lo ni zi zai wang chou jing 不空羂索陀羅尼自在王呪經
695-700 CE	T1667*	Mahayanasraddhotpadasastra 大乘起信論
700 CE	T1096	Bu kong juan so tuo lo ni jing 不空羂索陀羅尼經
705 CE	T945	Surangamasutra 大佛頂如來密因修證了義諸菩薩萬行首楞嚴經
706 CE	T1006	Mahamanivipulavimanavisvasupratisthitaguhayaparamara 廣大寶樓閣善住祕密陀羅尼經
706-713 CE	T310	Maharatnakuta 大寶積經 卷 98
709 CE	T1058*	Nilakantha(ka) sutra 千手千眼觀世音菩薩姥陀羅尼身經
709 CE	T1095x	Bu kong juan so chou xing jing 不空羂索呪心經
720-774 CE	T319*	Manjusribuddhaksetragunavyuha sutra 大聖文殊師利菩薩佛剎功德莊嚴經
720- 774 CE	T1009*	Anantamukhasadhakadharani (sutra) 出生無邊門陀羅尼經
746-774 CE	T930	Wu liang shou ru lai guan xing gong yang yi gui 無量壽如來觀行供養儀軌
746-774 CE	T962 x	Bao xi di cheng fo tuo lo ni jing 寶悉地成佛陀羅尼經
746-774 CE	T1101	Da fang guang man shu shi li jing 佛說大方廣曼殊室利經
790 CE	T997	Shou hu guo jie zhu tuo lo ni jing 守護國界主陀羅尼經
994 CE	T1170	Chin kang hsiang pu sa ta ming cheng chiu I kwei ching 佛說金剛香菩薩大明成就儀軌經
1001 CE	T424	Sanghatisutradharmaparyaya 佛說大集會正法經
1004-1023 CE	T316	Bodhisattvapitaka 佛說大乘菩薩藏正法經
1009 CE	T372*	Mayopamasamadhisutra 佛說如幻三摩地無量印法門經
1010 CE	T1099	Amoghapasahrdyadharani (sutra)佛說聖觀自在菩薩不空王祕密心陀羅尼經
1012-1015 CE	T882	Sarvatathagatatattvasamgraha(sutra)佛說一切如來真實攝大乘現證三昧大教王經
1058-1072 CE	T1671	Fu gai zheng xing suo ji jing 福蓋正行所集經

Taisho	Author, Translator	Dynasty	Place
T1093	Jnanagupta 闍那崛多	Sui 隋	
T480	Jnanagupta 闍那崛多	Sui 隋	
T416	Jnanagupta 闍那崛多	Sui 隋	
T264	Jnanagupta 闍那崛多 and Dharmagupta 達磨笈多	Sui 隋	
T415*	Dharmagupta 達磨笈多	Sui 隋	
T207	Dao-lve 道略	Tang 唐	
T1057*	Zhi-tong 智通	Tang 唐	Luo-yang
T1579	Maitreya 彌勒菩薩, Xuan-zang 玄奘	Tang 唐	Hong-fu M 洪福寺
T765	Xuan-zang 玄奘	Tang 唐	
T1060*	Bhagavaddharma 伽梵達摩	Tang 唐	
T411*	Xuan-zang 玄奘	Tang 唐	
T412	Siksananda 實叉難陀	Tang 唐	
T1103	Chih Tong 智通	Tang 唐	Zong-chi M 總持寺
T901	Atigupta 阿地瞿多	Tang 唐	Xi-jing 西京
T1537	Xuan-zang 玄奘	Tang 唐	Da-ci-en M 大慈恩寺
T1545	Xuan-zang 玄奘	Tang 唐	Da-ci-en M 大慈恩寺
T220	Xuan-zang 玄奘	Tang 唐	
T967*	Buddhapali 佛陀波利	Wu 吳	
T694	Devaprajna 提雲般若	Tang 唐	Da-zhou-dong M 大周東寺
T660	Dharmaruci 達摩流支	Tang 唐	Fa-shou-chi M
T1097	Ratnacinta 寶思惟	Tang 唐	Dong-du 東都
T1667*	Siksananda 實叉難陀	Tang 唐	Xi-jing 西京
T1096	Li Wu-chan 李無諂	Tang 唐	Fo-shou-ji M 佛授記寺
T945	Paramiti 般刺蜜諦	Tang 唐	Guang-zhou 廣州
T1006	Bodhiruci 菩提流支	Tang 唐	
T310	Bodhiruci 菩提流支	Tang 唐	Xi chong-fu M 西崇福寺
T1058*	Bodhiruci 菩提流支	Tang 唐	Xi chong-fu M 西崇福寺
T1095x	Bodhiruci 菩提流支	Tang 唐	
T319*	Amoghavajra 不空	Tang 唐	
T1009*	Amoghavajra 不空	Tang 唐	Luo-yang
T930	Amoghavajra 不空	Tang 唐	
T962 x	Amoghavajra 不空	Tang 唐	
T1101	Amoghavajra 不空	Tang 唐	
T997	Prajna, Munisri 般若共牟尼室利	Tang 唐	
T1170	Danapala 施護	Northern Song 北宋	
T424	Danapala 施護	Northern Song 北宋	
T316	Dharmapala 法護	Northern Song 北宋	
T372*	Danapala 施護	Northern Song 北宋	
T1099	Danapala 施護	Northern Song 北宋	
T882	Danapala 施護	Northern Song 北宋	
T1671	Ri-chen and Dharmaraksa 日稱,法護	Northern Song 北宋	

## Spreadsheet II for Various Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of Buddha in Chinese Buddhist canon

		Not losing Bodhicitta	Not-giving up enlightened mind	Subduing mara, ghosts	Cure of diseases	Overcoming fear	Overcoming obstructions	Gaining a male form	Gaining rebirth in heaven
Year	Taisho	不失菩提心	不捨道心	降魔 降鬼	除病	除怖畏	除障, 罪	得成男身	得生天
25-220 CE	T156					156b		152b	
148-170 CE	T492				753a				
168-186 CE	T807								
179 CE	T418								
223-253 CE	T087								
223-253 CE	T1011			682a			682a		
251 CE	T206			510b		510b			
265- 313 CE	T342								
265-313 CE	T381								
265-313 CE	T811								
266-313 CE	T310 1								158a
266-313 CE	T812								
284 CE	T606								
286 CE	T222								
286 CE	T585		03b						
289 CE	T338								
290-306 CE	T695								
291 CE	T398								
308 CE	T477								
317-322 CE	T1331								
317-420 CE	T006								
317-420 CE	T1357	875c							
317-420 CE	T1670								701c
350-431 CE	T644								
350-431 CE	T1463								
374 CE	T212			701b					
384 CE	T1549								780c
384-417 CE	T1485								
388-407 CE	T570							943b	
397 CE	T125								701a
397-439 CE	T410								
399-416 CE	T309		1044a						



		Not losing Bodhicitta	Not- giving up enlightene d mind	Subduing mara, ghosts	Cure of diseases	Overcom ing fear	Overcom ing obstructi ons	Gaining a male form	Gaining rebirth in heaven
Year	Taisho	不失菩提心	不捨道心	降魔 降鬼	除病	除怖畏	除障, 罪	得成男身	得生天
402 CE	T456								429b 梵 天
402 CE	T586	35c							
402-405 CE	T616					281a			
402-406CE	T1509	333b				218c	109a		
402-407 CE	T614						277b		
402-409 CE	T625								
402-412 CE	T201		308b produce good root						
402-412 CE	T382	996a							
402-412 CE	T366								
402-412 CE	T613						255a,256 c 三障		
402-412 CE	T617						299a 除 罪		
402-412 CE	T1521					112c			
404 CE	T223								
405 CE	T745								
406 CE	T657								
413 CE	T001								34c
414-421 CE	T374								
414-426 CE	T397	38a	27b						
418-422 CE	T278								597b
420 CE	T371								
420-423 CE	T643						675a,除 罪 678b,682 c,689a,6 91c,693b		
423 or 424 CE	T1421								
424 CE	T564							919a	
427 CE	T397								

	Increase virtues	Release from woeful realms	Eliminate ignorance and afflictions	Acquiring Wisdom	Attaining Samadhi	Seeing Buddha	Rebirth in Pure Land	Attaining Nirvana	Attaining Buddhahood
Taisho	增長福德	離惡趣	滅癡惑	得智慧	成三昧	可見佛 不離佛	得生淨土	得涅槃	得成佛
T456						429b			
T586	T586*								
T616			277a					289c	
T1509	108c,146c,281b,282b,488b.c,645c,648a			219b,488c,661a	284b,387c,673a,	275c,284b,333b,338c,414c,477c,530b,673a see eastern Buddhas,735b,753c			
T614				277b	277b	277b			277b
T625						373a			
T201									
T382	1057b								
T366		347a					347a		
T613									
T617					299b			299b	
T1521					83c				
T223	242b			219a					
T745	558c								
T657	181b								
T001									
T374	479b					470a,540c		414b,548c	
T397					96a				
T278	550a	597b			524c,629c	437b,507a,597a,597b513c	437b	597b	
T371					357a	357a			
T643		687b,689b	646a	688b	689b,得首楞嚴三昧 691c,695b	657c,659a,675a,677a,680b,689a.b,691c,692c,693c,694b.c			692c,693b,694c
T1421						166c,167a Sakyamuni			
T564									
T397					96a,186b				

		Not losing Bodhicitta	Not-giving up enlightened mind	Subduing mara, ghosts	Cure of disease s	Overco ming fear	Overcomi ng obstructio ns	Gaining a male form	Gaining rebirth in heaven
Year	Taisho	不失菩提心	不捨道心	降魔 降鬼	除病	除怖畏	除障, 罪	得成男身	得生天
431 CE	T1487								
431 CE	T1503								
435-443 CE	T099								237c
435-443 CE	T462								
437-439 CE	T1546								
472 CE	T434						104a 除罪		
502-557 CE	T370								
508-535 CE	T831								
518-536 CE	T587	65a							
531 CE	T1532	341b							
538-541 CE	T721								174b,176c
539 CE	T310 2								
541 CE	T339								
542 CE	T421	946c							
553 CE	T1666								
557 CE	T639								
558CE	T380					957b			956a
568 CE	T310 4								
585-604 CE	T310 6								
587 CE	T408								
587 CE	T1093						399b 除罪		
591 CE	T480								
594-595 CE	T416								
601-602 CE	T264								
607-614 CE	T415								
627-649 CE	T1057	觀音 持咒					91b 除罪		
646-648 CE	T1579								
650 CE	T765								
650-661 CE	T1060				110b				
651-652 CE	T411						719b 除惡		
652-710 CE	T412						784a 除罪		
653 CE	T1103			461b					
654 CE	T901				802b		893a		
659 CE	T1537								
659 CE	T1545								430c



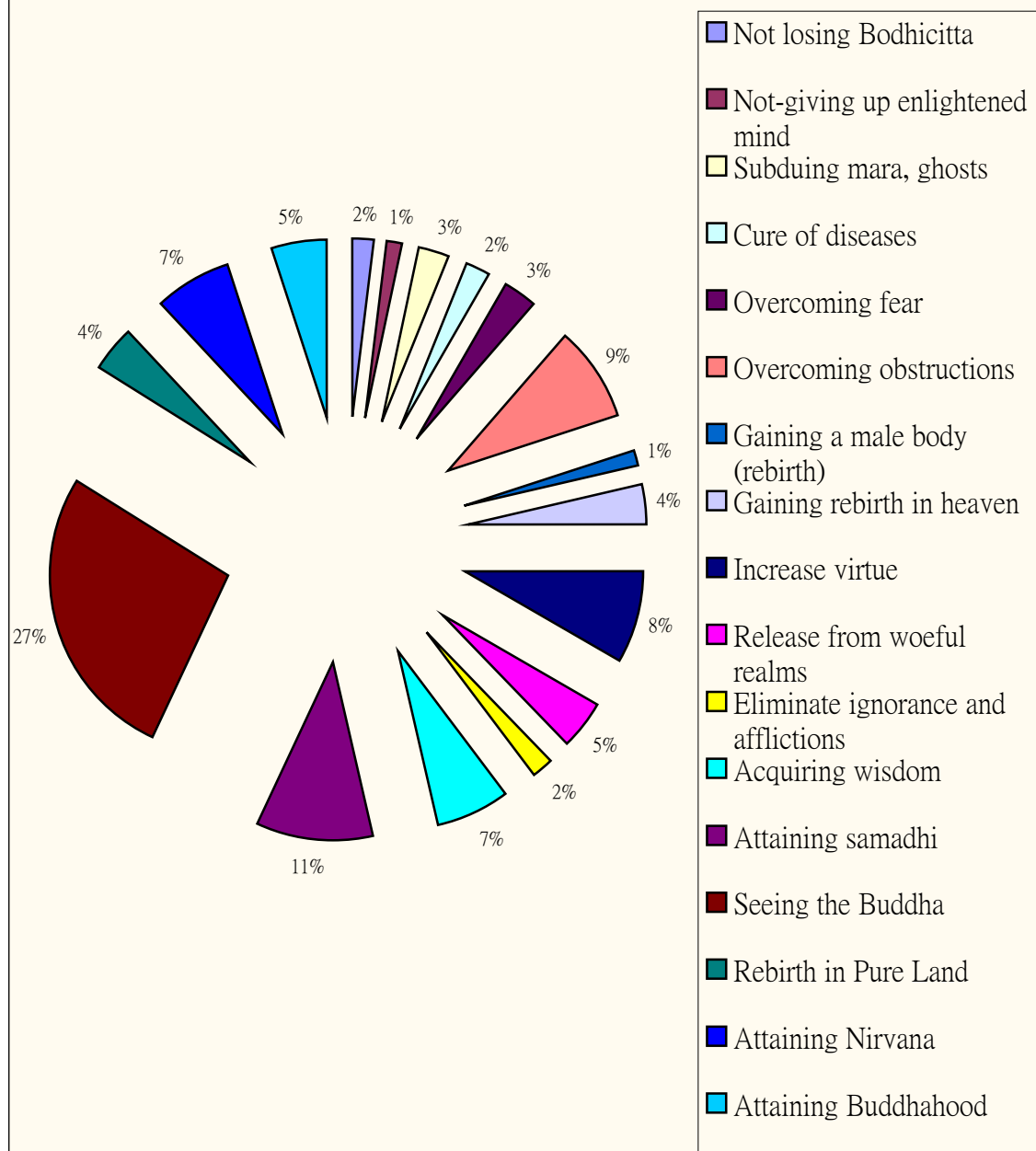


		Not losing Bodhicitta	Not- giving up enlightene d mind	Subduing mara, ghosts	Cure of diseases	Overco ming fear	Overcom ing obstructi ons	Gaining a male form	Gaining rebirth in heaven
Year	Taisho	不失菩提心	不捨道心	降魔 降鬼	除病	除怖畏	除障, 罪	得成男身	得生天
659-663 CE	T220					995c			
683 CE	T967								
693 CE	T660								
693 CE	T1097								
695-700 CE	T1667								
700 CE	T1096						410a		413c
705 CE	T945								
706 CE	T1006			646c			647a		
706-713 CE	T310			548b					
709 CE	T1058				104a				
709 CE	T1095x						406b 除 罪		
720-774 CE	T319								
720- 774 CE	T1009			677a					
746-774 CE	T930								
746-774 CE	T962 x								
746-774 CE	T1101								
790 CE	T997								
994 CE	T1170					695c			
1001 CE	T424								
1004-1023 CE	T316								
1009 CE	T372								
1010 CE	T1099								
1012-1015 CE	T882								
1058-1072 CE	T1671								

	Increase virtues	Release from woeful realms	Eliminate ignorance and afflictions	Acquiring Wisdom	Attaining Samadhi	Seeing Buddha	Rebirth in Pure Land	Attaining Nirvana	Attaining Buddhahood
Taisho	增長福德	離惡趣	滅癡惑	得智慧	成三昧	可見佛 不離佛	得生淨土	得涅槃	得成佛
T220						632b			
T967						351c			
T660					206a				
T1097						426a			
T1667		591b				591b	591b	591b	
T1096					413c	413c			
T945						128a			
T1006	646c	647a				647a			647a
T310									
T1058									
T1095x						406b			
T319						104c			
T1009				677a					
T930					67b		67b		
T962 x						336c			
T1101			450b			450b			
T997				557c					
T1170									
T424		978c							
T316									
T372						363a Amitabha			
T1099						433c			
T882									379c 428b,433c
T1671					353b	353b			

## Appendix Charts

Chart 2.1 Various Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha (*Nian-fo*) & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time



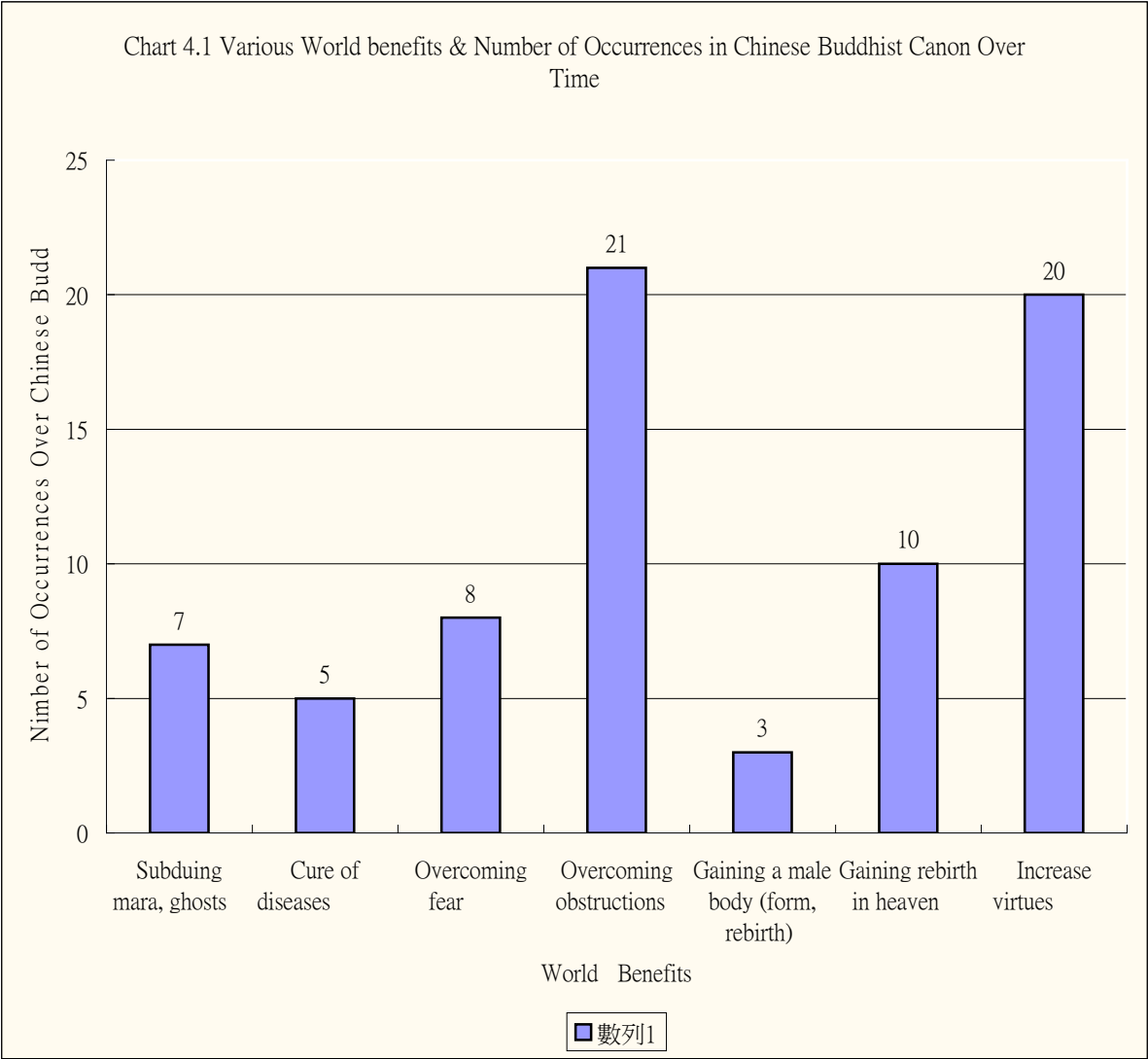


Chart 4. 2 Various Worldly benefits & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time

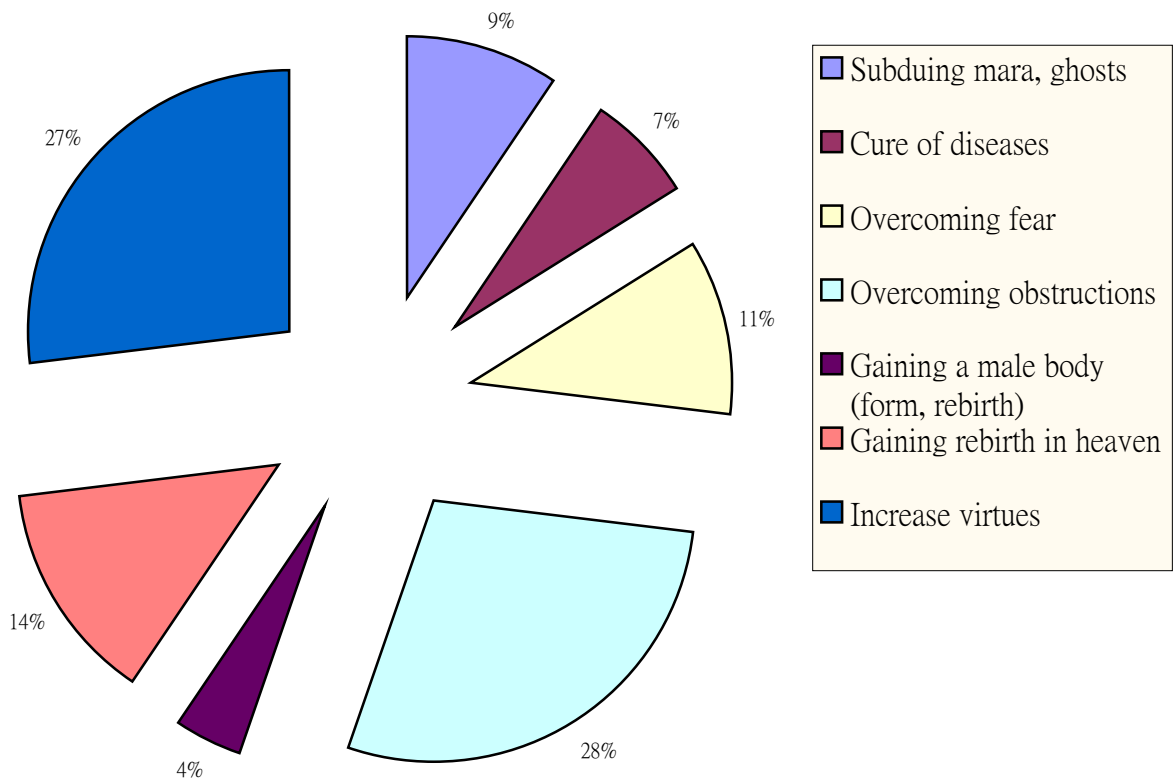


Chart 4.4 Various World- transcending Benefits & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time

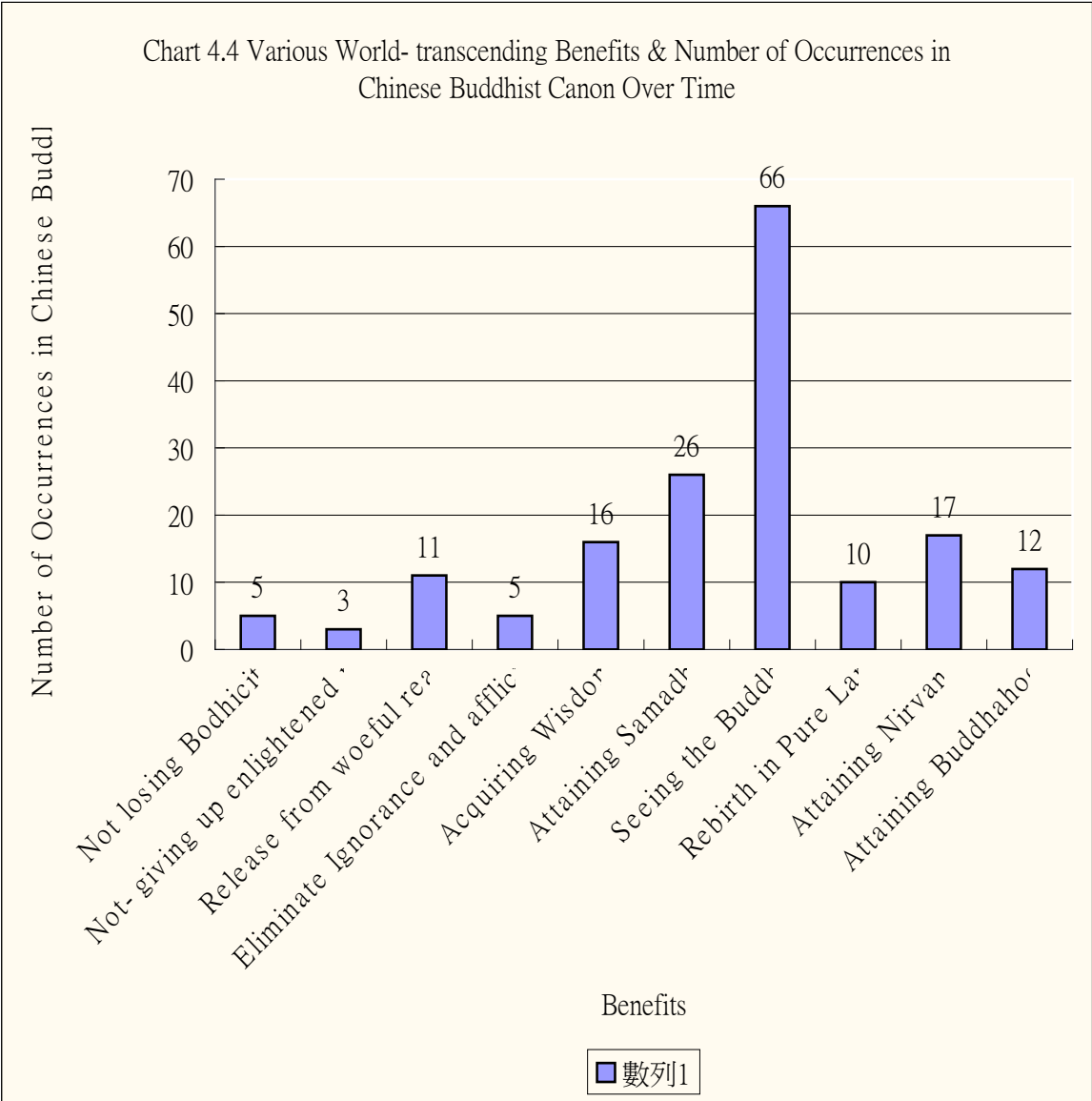
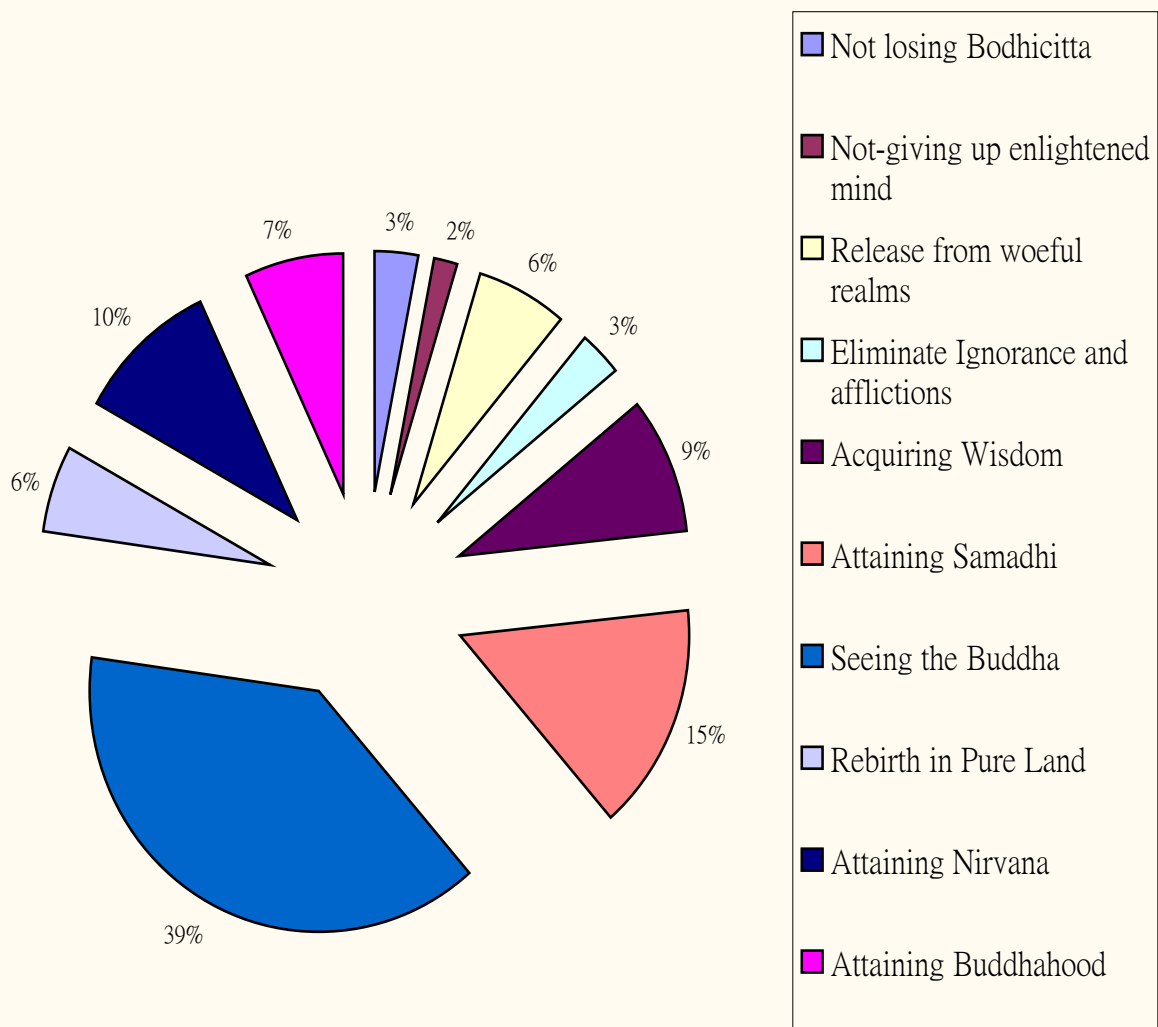


Chart 4. 4 Various World-transcendent Benefits & Percentage of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon Over Time



**Chart 5.1** Five categories of Benefits of Practicing Mindfulness of the Buddha & Number of Occurrences in Chinese Buddhist Canon over Time

