
MORALITY, MEDITATION AND WISDOM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE TEACHINGS OF MASTER HUINENG AND LUANGPOR TEEAN

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ABSTRACT

This paper will examine the relevant literature recording the teachings of Master Huineng and Luangpor Teean. In particular, we review and study different versions of “Platform Sutra” both in Chinese and English, and also examine the published teachings of LP Teean in English. Next, it will provide a brief introduction of the life-stories of the two masters, and then it will proceed to compare their teachings on *Sila-Samādhī-Paññā*, a Pali term which is often translated as morality (or precepts), meditation (or concentration), or wisdom. The main conclusion of this paper is that the teachings of the two masters on *Sila-Samādhī-Paññā* have many important similarities while having other distinct features.

Keywords: Master Huineng; Luangpor Teean; Platform Sutra; *Sila-Samādhī-Paññā*; dynamic meditation

Introduction

Master Huineng (also written as Hui-neng, 638-713), known as the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Chan Buddhism, is considered by many Chinese scholars as the most influential figure in Chan Buddhism. His teachings, as recorded in the *Platform Sutra*, are the foundation and core of Chan Buddhism, which promotes self-awareness and sudden enlightenment.²

Luangpor Teean (1911-1988) (henceforth, LP Teean) was the founder of Mahasati meditation or dynamic meditation school of Thai Buddhism. Similar to Master Huineng, he also reported an experience of sudden enlightenment while he was a layperson. In 1957, LP Teean started teaching dynamic meditation and later was known as the founder of Mahasati meditation or dynamic meditation in Thailand.³ LP Teean also promoted self-awareness and sudden enlightenment. Eventually, dynamic meditation was introduced to Singapore and the U.S. in the 1980s, Taiwan in the 1990s and Mainland China in the 2000s and has attracted a large number of practitioners.

It has been observed by some Buddhist scholars and meditation practitioners that there are some similarities in the teachings of Master Huineng and LP Teean.⁴ Even their lives have many interesting similarities: both were born in poor families, received no formal education, were reported to experience sudden enlightenment as lay people, became ordained late as monks in order to teach Dharma, and passed away at similar ages. Moreover, both of them seem to have the ability to give speeches on Dharma from their own direct knowledge or experiences without relying on scripture or the teachings of others. Their teachings are both quite unique when compared to their contemporaries. However, to the best of this author's knowledge, there has been no formal and detailed academic comparative study of their teachings. This study aims to examine the similarities and differences in some important aspects of their teachings. In particular we will focus on comparing their teachings on one of the core aspects in Buddhism, *Sila-Samādhi-Paññā*, a Pali term that is often translated as morality (or precepts)-meditation (or concentration)-wisdom.

The author finds that there are a lot of important similarities on the teachings of the two masters on *Sila-Samādhi-Paññā*. In particular, in terms of *Sila*, both masters emphasize that: 1) *Sila* does not simply mean to keep precepts in its external form; 2) *Sila* is concerning the mind that is straightforward, normal or free from defilements; 3) when one's mind is normal or straightforward, one's action and speech also become normal and hence one will not do evil things. Regarding *Samādhi*, both masters points out that: 1) *Samādhi* is not that type of concentration meditation in which one has to sit unmoving with eyes closed and focus on a particular object; 2) *Samādhi* does not mean to stop thoughts from arising in the mind; 3) *Samādhi* is a quality of the mind that can be present all the time, no matter what one is doing. As for *Paññā*, both masters points out that: 1) *Paññā* or wisdom is to eliminate the ignorance in the mind or the thoughts; 2) Wisdom enables one to see thoughts clearly and objectively as they really are so that defilements or greed, hatred and delusion are not able to rise. This is the way to deliverance or Nirvana.

While some of the viewpoints of the two masters may seem to be quite unique and even unorthodox, some sutras in the Pali Cannon and Chinese Agama suggest that these viewpoints are actually still within the range of the ancient teachings of the Buddha. A discussion on this aspect is presented in the last section of this paper.

Literature review

Master Huineng's teachings are mainly recorded in *Platform Sutra* by his disciples. It is noted that since the Yuan Dynasty in China⁵, the most popular version of *Platform Sutra* was the one edited by a monk called Venerable Zong-Bao in 1291 A.D..⁶ In the 20th century, some new copies of *Platform Sutra* were discovered by scholars. These copies were classified into five main versions: (i) Dun-Huang version (敦煌本), the one found in the Dun-Huang city (in Chinese敦煌, which sometimes also translated as Tun-Huang in English), which is estimated to be written in around 780 A.D.;⁷ (ii) Hui-Xin version (惠昕本), edited and compiled by Venerable Hui-Xin in around 967 A.D.,⁸ (iii) Qi-Song

version (契嵩本) · compiled by Venerable Qi-Song in around 1056;⁹ (iv) De-Yi version (德异本), compiled by De-Yi and published in 1290¹⁰ and (v) Zong-Bao version (宗宝本, compiled by Venerable. Zong-Bao and published in about 1291. This is a commonly used classification of the different versions. However, among these five versions, the last three are quite similar. Therefore, some scholars who also consider (iii) and (iv) as one single version, and some scholars who regard the last three versions as one version.¹¹

In all these five different versions, the main structure of the sutra remains the same and includes three parts: (i) Master Huineng's recounting of his life story, (ii) Master Huineng's teaching on the Dharma and the transmission/teaching of formless precepts; (iii) the conversation and interaction of Master Huineng and his disciples. It is noted by Hong & Sun, that the first two parts of the sutra are quite similar across the different versions of the sutra, while for different new versions/editions of the third part, quite a lot of new information was added. Some of this new information can be found in other recorded historical literature.¹² Moreover, it is usually noted by scholars that the main ideas of the teachings in the different versions are consistent and without much difference.¹³ Nevertheless, the Dun-Huang version is the oldest one and also regarded by the majority as the most authoritative one. To simplify the reading and understanding, in the later versions, for example in the Zong-Bao version, the sutra is divided into ten chapters according to the nature of teachings, where a title is added for each chapter to show the main ideas. Some parts are slightly expanded to clarify some teachings.¹⁴

Since Dun-Huang version is the most ancient and hence the most authoritative one, when we cite the teachings from the Platform Sutra, we will mostly refer to the Dun-Huang version.¹⁵ Occasionally, we may refer to Zong-Bao version for the clarification of some concepts when they are translated into English as a secondary source.¹⁶

As LP Teean lived in the 20th century, his teachings were very well recorded in various forms, including videos, audios, and books both in Thai and in English. Therefore, it is much easier to investigate the

teachings of LP Teean in its original form. There are dozens of books in Thai which record the teachings of LP Teean, but only three books in English are found by the author: (i) *A Manual of Self-Awareness*;¹⁷ (ii) *To one that feels*;¹⁸ and (iii) *Normality*.¹⁹ After reading these three books, the author feels that these books have shown the essence of LP Teean's teachings very clearly, and hence they are able to be used as the foundation of our comparative study. Moreover, this author also corresponded with scholars and disciples of LP Teean, including LP Somboon, LP Anek, LP Da and Professor Tavivat Puntarigivat. Their help has led the author to a deeper and better understanding of the teachings of LP Teean.

Life stories of the two masters

According to the records in *Platform Sutra* and other literature, Master Huineng was born in 638 A.D. and passed away in 713 A.D. His family name is Lu, and Huineng was his first name. His father was originally an official in the government, but was relocated to Xin Zhou (nowadays Xinxin County in Guangdong province) and became an ordinary person. Huineng was born in Xin Zhou. His father passed away when Huineng was only three years old. Then Huineng followed his mother and moved to Nan Hai County in Guangdong. Without much property in his family, Huineng and his mother lived a very poor life. As a result, Huineng did not receive any formal education and hence could not read and write for the remainder his life. After Huineng grew up, he made a living by selling wood that he harvested.²⁰

There are some different views on the exact year that Huineng went to seek the guidance of the Fifth Patriarch and the time he started to teach. Recent findings by Huang & Zuo show that it is more likely that at the age of 24 years old, Huineng went to Huang Mei (Huang Mei county in Hubei Province) to learn from the Fifth Patriarch, Master Hong Ren (弘忍). He stayed in Master Hong Ren's temple as a lay devotee for around 8 months, received teachings from the Master. He then left the temple and lived in seclusion for about 15 years before he came out to teach the Dharma at around 39 years old. He also received full ordination and

became a monk at that time. Master Huineng taught for about 40 years and passed away in 713 at the age of 76.

LP Teean was born in a poor peasant family in northeast Thailand in 1911 and he received no formal education since young. As a young boy, he was ordained as a novice monk for a year and six months. At the age of twenty, he was ordained as a monk for six months to practice meditation. Then, he was married and had three sons. It is also noted that “In his village, he was always a leader in Buddhist activities and was highly respected and was chosen to be the head of the village on three different occasions.”²¹ He later became a successful businessman trading along the Mekong River between Laos and Thailand.

After a dispute with his wife, LP Teean realized that his practice of meditation in the past had not led him to be away from suffering. He then made a determination to seeking the end of suffering, which finally led him to leave home to search for Dharma alone at the age of 46. He went to a temple called Wat Rangsimukdaram, in Nongkhai province to practice dynamic meditation, a technique that was originally taught by his teacher but which he had modified. He practiced diligently and attained “enlightenment” within the three-month monastic retreat in that year.²² After that, LP Teean returned to his hometown and started teaching meditation. About two years later, he was ordained as a monk. LP Teean taught Dharma and meditation for about 30 years and passed away in 1988 at the age of 77.²³

***Sila*: Morality, virtue or precepts**

Sila, is a Pali word, which is often translated as morality, virtue or (keeping) precepts. *Sila-Samādhī-Paññā*, often translated as morality (or precepts) – concentration (meditation) – wisdom (in Chinese: 戒定慧), is one of the core teachings of the Buddha. While the importance of *Sila-Samādhī-Paññā* is well recognized, the exact meaning of the term may be subject to different interpretations. This section is mainly devoted to examining the explanations of Master Huineng and LP Teean on *Sila*.

Master Huineng’s interpretation of *Sila*, can perhaps be seen

most clearly in the following conversation between Master Huineng and his disciple, Chih-ch'eng (志誠), who was originally a pupil of Master Shen Hsiu (神秀, also Shen Xiu in modern Chinese pronunciation) of the Northern school:

The Master said to Chih-ch'eng: "I hear that your teacher instructs people only by handing down precepts, meditation, and wisdom? What are the precepts, meditation, and wisdom that he teaches?"

Chih-ch'eng answered: "The priest Hsiu explains them in this way: Not to commit the various evils is the precepts; to practice all the many good things is wisdom; to purify one's own mind is meditation. These he calls precepts, meditation, and wisdom, and this is the kind of explanation that he gives. What is your own view, Master?"

The Master Hui-neng answered: "This explanation is wonderful, but my view is different."

Chih-ch'eng asked. "How does it differ?"

Hui-neng answered: "There is slow seeing and swift seeing."

Chih-ch'eng asked the Master to give his explanation of the precepts, wisdom, and meditation. The Master said: "Listen to my explanation and you will know my view. **The mind-ground, not in error, is the precept of self-nature; the mind-ground, undisturbed, is the meditation of self-nature; the mind-ground, not ignorant, is the wisdom of self-nature.**" (in Chinese: 心地无非自性戒 · 心地无乱自性定 · 心地无痴自性慧).²⁴

Master Hui-neng said: "Your precepts, meditation, and wisdom are to encourage people of shallow capacities, mine are for men of superior attainments. [Because] the

awakening of self-nature [is the pivot of my teaching], I don't even set up precepts, meditation, and wisdom." Chih-ch'eng said: "Please explain what you mean by 'not set up.'"

The Master said: "Self-nature is without error, disturbance, and ignorance. Every thought puts forth the radiance of *prajñā* wisdom, and when one **is always separated from the form of things**, what is there that can be set up? Self-awakening to self-nature, and sudden practice with sudden awakening-there is nothing gradual in them, so that nothing at all is set up.'

Chih-ch'eng bowed deeply and did not leave Mount Ts'ao-ch'i. He became a disciple and never departed from the Master's side.²⁵

In this conversation, Master Huineng pointed out clearly that instead of the usual view regarding the precepts (*Sila*) as "not to commit the various evils", his view on precepts is the mind which is without error or evil.

In the Zong-Bao version of the Platform sutra, the definition of *Sila*-Morality is mentioned clearly, in Chapter VI, Repentance and Reform:

The assembly knelt and the Master said, "The first is the morality-refuge, which is simply your own mind when free from error, evil, jealousy, greed, hatred and hostility."²⁶

In another place of the sutra, a very famous verse goes as follows:

The mind made straight (Normal), why toil following rules (keeping precepts)? The practice sure, of what use is *Dhyāna* meditation?²⁷

Apparently, Master Huineng knows the difference between the traditional interpretation of precepts and his own interpretation of precepts.

Therefore, he and his disciples very often use another term, **formless precepts** or the **Precepts of Formlessness**, to differentiate his own interpretation from those of others. This term appears both in the name of the Sutra in the Dun-Huang version and also in the first sentence of the sutra. For example, the full name of the platform sutra is as follows:

Southern School Sudden Doctrine, Supreme Mahayana Great Perfection of wisdom: The Platform Sutra preached by the Sixth Patriarch Hui-neng at the Ta-fan Temple in Shao-chou, one roll, recorded by the spreader of the Dharma, the disciple Fa-Hai, who at the same time received the **Precepts of Formlessness**.²⁸

And the first sentence of the Sutra is:

The Master Hui-neng ascended the high seat at the lecture hall of the Ta-fan Temple and expounded the Dharma of the Great Perfection of Wisdom, and transmitted the **precepts of formlessness**.²⁹

Now let us look at LP Teean's explanation of *Sila*. In the book *Normality*, LP Teean gives a very clear explanation of Virtue, which is another translation of *Sila*:

Virtue doesn't mean the 5, 8, 10 or 227 precepts because that is the morality of society. Virtue here, has only just one single precept that one must really seriously care for: to look after the mind, it is morality of the mind. Whoever looks after virtue doesn't harm oneself or others and has normality of mind, because when the mind is in its normal state, we don't kill, steal, want anything from anybody or commit adultery. When the mind is in its normal state, actions of body and speech also become normal. This kind of person is called one who has virtue, one who has merit.³⁰

In another book, *To One That Feels*, LP Teean says that:

Sila (“keeping moral precepts”) is normality. *Sila* is the result of a normal mind.³¹

It can be seen that LP Teean’s explanation of *Sila* is very similar to Master Huineng’s one. They both pointed out that:

- 1) *Sila* does not simply mean to keep precepts in its external form or not to commit the various evils externally;
- 2) *Sila* is concerning the mind which is straightforward, normal or free from defilements;
- 3) when one’s mind is normal or straightforward, one’s actions and speech also become normal and hence one will not do evil things.

Here, both masters emphasize the importance of a normal or straightforward mind which will lead to good conduct and good actions. When Master Huineng said to Chih Ch’eng: “Your precepts, meditation, and wisdom are to encourage people of shallow capacities, mine are for men of superior attainments.” This should not be regarded as a perfunctory or casual claim. This is, from my point of view, an important guideline that is being used by Master Huineng and his disciples. We can see this point from several other places in the Platform Sutra. For example, in paragraph 16,³² Master Huineng said that “Good friends, in the Dharma there is no sudden or gradual, but among people some are keen and others dull. The deluded recommend the gradual method, the enlightened practice the sudden teaching.” In the end of the Platform sutra, it is also instructed that “If a person’s talents are inadequate and his capacities do not suffice, he must [not] seek this Dharma.³³ This Platform Sutra must not be haphazardly assigned to a person who betrays the precepts and has no virtue.”³⁴

One may feel that such an interpretation of *Sila* is quite unorthodox. However, this author noticed that a similar interpretation of *Sila* does exist

in some sutras in the Pali Canon, for example, in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta: The Great Forty*, which is the 117th sutra in the Majjhima Nikaya.³⁵ A more detailed discussion on this will be provided later in this paper. Based on this common foundation, we proceed to examine their interpretations on *Samādhi* and *Paññā*.

***Samādhi*: meditation or concentration**

In Chinese, *samādhi* is translated as “定” (*ting* or *ding*)³⁶, which, when referring to the mind or emotions, means calmness, peace or stability.³⁷ In contemporary English translation, *samādhi* is often translated as concentration. However, concentration usually has the meaning of focused, concentrated attention. This is actually quite different from the meaning of “定” (*ting* or *ding*) because one can be quite mentally calm or emotionally stable without concentrating or focusing on a single object. In Yampolsky, this “定” (*ting* or *ding*) in the platform sutra is mostly translated as “meditation”. Although this may not be a perfect translation, it avoids the confusion of simply equating “定” with concentration.

Sometimes, in Chinese Buddhist scripts, “*samādhi*” is transliterated from Sanskrit into Chinese as “三昧” (*san-mei*). In the Platform Sutra, Master Huineng also used this term and give a detailed explanation to the so-called “the *samādhi* of oneness”.

The *samādhi* of oneness (“一行三昧”) is straightforward mind at all times, walking, staying, sitting, and lying. The *Ching-ming ching*³⁸ says: ‘Straightforward mind is the place of practice; straightforward mind is the Pure Land.’ ... Only practicing straightforward mind, and in all things having no attachments whatsoever, is called the *samādhi* of oneness. The deluded man clings to the characteristics of things, adheres to the *samādhi* of oneness, [thinks] that straightforward mind is sitting without moving and casting aside delusions without letting things arise in the mind. This he considers to be the *samādhi* of oneness. This kind of practice is the same as in sentiency and the cause of

an obstruction to the Tao.³⁹ Tao must be something that circulates freely; why should he impede it? If the mind does not abide in things the Tao circulates freely; if the mind abides in things, it becomes entangled. If sitting in meditation without moving is good, why did Vimalakirti scold Sāriputra for sitting in meditation in the forest? ⁴⁰

Quite often in Chinese, “*ting or ding*” (定) is used together with “Ch’an” to form the words “*Ch’an-ting* (禅定)”, where Ch’an is a transliteration from the Sanskrit word, *dhyāna*, which also has an equivalence in Pali, *Jhāna*.⁴¹ “*Ch’an ting*” usually conveys a similar meaning just as “*ting*” (定) itself. On paragraph 19, Master Huineng gave a detailed explanation on *Ch’an ting*, or Ch’an meditation:

And what do we call Ch’an meditation (*ch’an-ting*)?⁴² Outwardly to exclude form is ‘ch’an’; inwardly to be unconfused is meditation (*ting*). Even though there is form on the outside, when internally the nature is not confused, then, from the outset, you are of yourself pure and of yourself in meditation. The very contact with circumstances itself causes confusion. Separation from form on the outside is ‘ch’an’; being untouched on the inside is meditation (*ting*). Being ‘ch’an’ externally and meditation (*ting*) internally, it is known as ch’an meditation (*ch’an-ting*).⁴³

From these explanations, it can be concluded that *samādhi* (or meditation) from Master Huineng’s point of view refers to a straightforward mind that is inwardly unconfused and stable. This straightforward mind can be attained at all times whether we are walking, standing, sitting or lying down. It does not involve maintaining a motionless body.

For LP Teean’s explanation on *samādhi*, he says in the book, *To One That Feels*:

We don’t have to sit with eyes closed to get calmness,

but we can have calmness in this very society. Whenever conceiving thought arises, *samādhi* will see it immediately. *Samādhi* doesn't mean to sit with eyes closed. ***Samādhi* means setting up the mind to see our own mind, to see our own work.**⁴⁴

Humans cannot stay still, so we find some work for the body to do and then use the *sati* to be with the movement. You can call it *sati* or you can call it *samādhi*. The feeling is called *sati*, ***samādhi* is setting up the mind.**⁴⁵

Also, in the 5th paragraph of Chapter 7, *To One That Feels*, LP Teean says:

So the method of practice is to have more and more awareness, knowing the postures of the body, and those minor movements like blinking, looking to the left and right, inhaling and exhaling. All these movements can be seen with the eyes. But we cannot see thought with the eyes. We can only know it and see it with *samādhi-sati-paññā*. **The *samādhi* I am talking about is not sitting with eyes closed. *Samādhi* means setting up the mind to be aware of ourself. When we have awareness of ourself continuously, that is called *samādhi*, or it can be called *sati*.**⁴⁶

As I mentioned previously, the word *Ch'an* is a transliteration from the Sanskrit word *dhyāna*, which also has an equivalence in Pali, *Jhana* (or *Jhāna*). Since in Thailand, Theravada Buddhism follows the Pali Canon, LP Teean will sometimes also use the word, *Jhana*, in his talks as an expression of *Ch'an* or *ting* or *Samādhi*:

*Nyana*⁴⁷ translates as realizing, really seeing, truly understanding. But most people think that one needs to enter *Jhana* first, before one can have *Nyana*, the kind of *Jhana* where one sits with eyes closed and

unmoving, being able to fly and disappear and so on. But the Buddha doesn't teach that because it doesn't lead to realization and the overcoming of suffering.... Entering *Jhana* means to have awareness that knows and sees physical sensations in the various postures and knows and sees the feelings and thoughts in the mind, for example love, like, anger, hate, jealousy, worry, irritation, drowsiness and sadness. So we can enter *Jhana* any moment, no matter what we're doing. When we are aware in this way, delusion will not arise in the mind. And this mind without delusion will have the wisdom to view all things according to reality. This is called *Nyana*.⁴⁸

Jhana is a Pali word which is commonly understood as a high-level state of concentration. Usually, there are four levels of *Jhana*: First *Jhana*, Second *Jhana*, Third *Jhana* and Fourth *Jhana*. Usually, in Theravada Buddhism, all these *Jhana* practices require practitioners to sit still with eyes closed and concentrated on one object. Most Buddhists in the Theravada tradition of Thailand regard these four levels of *Jhana* concentration as *samādhi*. However, LP Teean gave his own view on this term which is quite different from the conventional interpretation.

It can be concluded by comparing the above teachings, that both Master Huineng and LP Teean agree that:

- 1) *Samādhi* is not a form of concentration meditation where one has to sit motionless with eyes closed and focusing on a particular object;
- 2) *Samādhi* does not mean to stop thoughts from arising in the mind;
- 3) *Samādhi* is a quality of the mind that can be present at all times, no matter what one is doing. Master Huineng said that *samādhi* is a straightforward mind that is inwardly unconfused. LP Teean pointed out that *samādhi* means conditioning the mind to see our own mind, to see our own work, to see our own thoughts.

In conclusion, the teachings of the two masters on *samādhi* are highly similar.

Paññā (Prajñā): Wisdom

Paññā, in Sanskrit *Prajñā*, is transliterated into Chinese as “Bo-re (般若)”. Master Huineng, used this term (in its Sanskrit form) frequently in his teachings:

What is *prajñā*? *Prajñā* is wisdom (*chih-hui*). When at all times successive thoughts contain no ignorance, and you always practice wisdom, this is known as the practice of *prajñā*. If but one instant of thought contains ignorance, then *prajñā* is cut off; but if one instant of thought contains wisdom, then *prajñā* is produced.⁴⁹

If you are not able to obtain self-awakening, you must give rise to *prajñā* and illuminate with it, and then in one instant false thoughts will be destroyed. Once you have awakened to the fact that you yourself are your own true good teacher, in one awakening you will know the Buddha. If, standing upon your own nature and mind, you illuminate with wisdom and make inside and outside clear, you will know your own original mind. If you know your original mind, this then is deliverance. Once you have attained deliverance this then is the *prajñā samādhi*. If you have awakened to the *prajñā samādhi*, this then is no-thought.

What is no-thought? The Dharma of no-thought means: even though you see all things, you do not attach to them, but, always keeping your own nature pure, cause the six thieves⁵⁰ to exit through the six gates⁵¹. Even though you are in the midst of the six dusts⁵², you do not stand apart from them, yet are not stained by them, and are free to come and go. This is the *prajñā samādhi*, and being free and having achieved release is known as the practice of no-thought. If you do not think of the myriad things, but always

cause your thoughts to be cut off, you will be bound in the Dharma. This is known as a biased view. If you awaken to the Dharma of no-thought, you will penetrate into all things thoroughly, and will see the realm of the Buddha. If you awaken to the sudden doctrine of no-thought, you will have reached the status of the Buddha.⁵³

In the full title of the Platform Sutra, it starts with “Southern School Sudden Doctrine, Supreme Mahāyāna Great Perfection of wisdom: The Platform Sutra”.⁵⁴ Here the term “Great Perfection of Wisdom” (“摩訶般若波羅蜜”) is a transliteration from the Sanskrit term, *Mahā-prajñā-pāramita*, where *Mahā* means Great, *prajñā* means wisdom, *pāramita* means perfection or “reaching the other shore”. The first sentence of the Platform sutra is also related to this term: “The Master Hui-neng ascended the high seat at the lecture hall of the Ta-fan Temple and expounded the Dharma of the Great Perfection of Wisdom (摩訶般若波羅蜜), and transmitted the precepts of formlessness.” It is thus no doubt that this “Great Perfection of Wisdom” lies on the core of the teachings of Master Huineng.

In another part of the sutra, Master Huineng pointed out that no-thought (无念) is the main doctrine of his teaching.⁵⁵ In the cited paragraph above, Master Huineng further explained that “If you have awakened to the *prajñā samādhi*, this then is no-thought” which connects his teaching on *prajñā* with his teaching of no-thought. However, the term “no-thought” here should not be understood as “not thinking” or “no thoughts”. This terms actually means not clinging to any thoughts. We need to look at Master Huineng’s further explanation very carefully in order to understand this point correctly:

Good friends, in this teaching of mine, from ancient times up to the present, all have set up no-thought as the main doctrine, non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis. Non-form is to be separated from form even when associated with form. No-thought is not to think even when involved in thought. Non-abiding is the original nature

of man. Successive thoughts do not stop; prior thoughts, present thoughts, and future thoughts follow one after the other without cessation. If one instant of thought is cut off, the Dharma body separates from the physical body, and in the midst of successive thoughts there will be no place for attachment to anything. If one instant of thought clings, then successive thoughts cling; this is known as being fettered. If in all things successive thoughts do not cling, then you are unfettered. Therefore, non-abiding is made the basis.⁵⁶

Here, Master Huineng points out that “successive thoughts do not stop” unless one is dead. Therefore, it is wrong and useless to attempt the cessation of thinking. Instead, thoughts are natural and a part of Dharma. Instead he emphasizes the practice of no-attachment or non-abiding with regard to our thoughts. Master Huineng further explained that:

To be unstained in all environments is called no-thought. If on the basis of your own thoughts you separate from environment, then, in regard to things, thoughts are not produced. If you stop thinking of the myriad things, and cast aside all thoughts, as soon as one instant of thought is cut off, you will be reborn in another realm.⁵⁷

LP Teean’s teaching on wisdom is somewhat similar:

... The heart of the teaching I am talking about is to have *sati* (awareness), to have *paññā* (knowing), to see thought. Whenever thought arises see it, know it understand it. Know it in whatever manner it comes, and know how to prevent it from deluding us.⁵⁸

In the book, *A Manual of Self-awareness*, LP Teean explained:

Man is born to think. He thinks this and that endlessly. Thoughts flow all the time like a stream. Thought is the quickest thing. It is quicker than lighting or anything.

Suffering arises because we do not see thought. Thought itself is not suffering. When thought arises, we do not see, know and understand it simultaneously, so greed, anger, or delusion arises and brings us suffering.

If fact, there is no greed, anger or delusion. They occur because we do not see “the source of the mind”.

So let us cultivate self-awareness. When thought arises, we see, know and understand it. It is *Sati-Samādhī-Paññā* (Awareness-Attention-Insight). We call it “self-awareness”. Whenever we are aware, thought cannot concoct. If we do not see it, it will concoct endlessly.

This method is the shortest way to Sudden Enlightenment.⁵⁹

It can be seen from here that LP Teean’s teaching on seeing the thoughts is very similar to Master Huineng’s teaching of no-thought. Instead of stopping thoughts from arising, LP Teean teaches seeing thoughts clearly and objectively with awareness and wisdom so that greed, anger and delusion will not have a chance to rise. LP Teean further explained that:

When thought arises, we are aware of it immediately again and again. Our mind will change at this point. The Path starts from here. It is the beginning of Nirvana.

Formerly, the mind was in the dark and did not know the Path. When it can overtake thoughts, then the mind will be illuminated. This light is not the external light that can be viewed by the naked eye. The mind itself is free and illuminated. It is called “wisdom eye”, the arising of *Paññā Nana* of Vipassana (Insight).⁶⁰ ()

Awareness and concentration are together. As for wisdom, it means knowing and seeing clearly.⁶¹

From the above teachings of the two masters, we can see that they hold very similar views regarding wisdom. In particular, they pointed out that:

- 1) *Paññā* or wisdom is to eliminate the ignorance in the mind or the thoughts;
- 2) Wisdom enables one to see thoughts clearly and objectively as they really are so that defilements or greed, hatred and delusion are not able to rise. This is the way to deliverance or Nirvana.

Master Huineng also explained the relationship between meditation and wisdom carefully. His view on this matter is also quite different from the usual views in Theravada Buddhism. The Master said that:

Good friends, my teaching of the Dharma takes meditation (*ting*)⁶² and wisdom (*hui*) as its basis. Never under any circumstances say mistakenly that meditation and wisdom are different; they are a unity, not two things. Meditation itself is the substance of wisdom; wisdom itself is the function of meditation. At the very moment when there is wisdom, then meditation exists in wisdom; at the very moment when there is meditation, then wisdom exists in meditation. Good friends this means that meditation and wisdom are alike. Students, be careful not to say that meditation gives rise to wisdom, or that wisdom gives rise to meditation, or that meditation and wisdom are different from each other.⁶³

He also uses the metaphor of a lamp:

“Good friends, how then are meditation and wisdom alike? They are like the lamp and the light it gives forth. If there is a lamp there is light; if there is no lamp there is no light. The lamp is the substance of light; the light is the

function of the lamp. Thus, although they have two names, in substance they are not two. Meditation and wisdom are also like this.”⁶⁴

On the relationship between concentration and wisdom, LP Teean sometimes gave a similar account, as we can see from his description on the relationship between *Nyana* and *Jhana* which has already been cited near the end of the last section.⁶⁵

Master Huineng strongly advocated that meditation and wisdom “are a unity, not two things” and “Meditation itself is the substance of wisdom; wisdom itself is the function of meditation.” LP Teean says that “...Entering *Jhana* means to have awareness that knows and sees physical sensations in the various postures and knows and sees the feelings and thoughts in the mind.... So we can enter *Jhana* any moment, no matter what we’re doing. When we are aware in this way, delusion will not arise in the mind. And this mind without delusion will have the wisdom to view all things according to reality. This is called *Nyana*.” From this teaching of LP Teean, it seems that LP Teean also view meditation and wisdom in a way that is very similar to Master Huineng’s claim of one unity.

Discussion and conclusion

This paper investigates and compares the teachings of Master Huineng and LP Teean on *Sila-Samādhi-Paññā* as recorded in the literature. It is found that there are many important similarities in their teachings. However, due to the limits of this author’s ability, it is not possible to investigate all aspects of their teachings or to distinguish the differences of their teachings in a detailed way.

While the thoughts and teachings of Master Huineng and LP Teean may be seen as quite unique and unorthodox, this author found this may not be the case. Actually, supporting evidence for the teachings of the two masters can be found in some sutras of the Pali Cannon and also the Chinese Agama. For example, in the *Maha-cattarisaka Sutra: The Great Forty*, the 117th Sutra in the Majjhima Nikaya, talks about two

types of Noble Eightfold Path. In the sutra, it is mentioned that for the first five factors of the Noble Eightfold path, each has two types: One is with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions [of becoming]; and another is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path. For example,

And what is right action? Right action, I tell you, is of two sorts: There is right action with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions [of becoming]; there is right action that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path.

And what is the right action with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions? Abstaining from killing, from taking what is not given, and from illicit sex. This is the right action with effluents, siding with merit, resulting in acquisitions.

And what is the right action that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path? The abstaining, desisting, abstinence, avoidance of the three forms of bodily misconduct in one developing the noble path whose mind is noble, whose mind is without effluents, who is fully possessed of the noble path. This is the right action that is noble, without effluents, transcendent, a factor of the path.⁶⁶

While these teaching may not look exactly the same as the teachings of the two Masters, it is evident that between the two types of the paths, the first focuses more on actions while the second focuses on the mind. It seems that this dichotomic classification of the path is quite in line with the essence of the interpretation of the *Sila*, *Samādhi* and *Paññā* by Master Huineng in his conversation with Chih-ch'eng as listed in Section 4.

More interestingly, there is a counterpart of the MN117 in the Chinese Agama: *Agama No. 785*, which says that all the eight factors of the Noble Eightfold Path have two types. This interpretation is similar to but somewhat different from that of MN117, for example:

What is right action? Right action has two types: There is right action that is worldly, secular, with effluents, with attachment and resulting in a good rebirth; there is right action that is noble, transcendent, without effluents, without attachment, rightly ending suffering, and turning to the end of suffering. What is the right action that is worldly, secular, with effluents, with attachment and resulting in a good rebirth? It is abstaining from killing, from taking what is not given, & from illicit sex. This is the right action that is worldly, secular, with effluents, with attachment and resulting in a good rebirth. What is the right action that is noble, transcendent, without effluents, without attachment, rightly ending suffering, and turning to the end of suffering? It is the noble disciples' suffering, thinking (pondering) of suffering, cause of suffering, thinking (pondering) of cause of suffering, ending of suffering, thinking (pondering) of ending of suffering, path, thinking (pondering) of path. Eliminating of wrong livelihood and greed, abstaining from the three kinds of bodily evil actions, as well as other kinds of evil bodily actions. Without effluents, the mind is not glad with attachment, firmly guarded, holding not committing [evil actions], timeless, boundless. This is right action that is noble, transcendent, without effluents, without attachment, rightly ending suffering, and turning to the end of suffering.⁶⁷

In line with the sutra above, this author would like to suggest that the corresponding teachings of Master Huineng and LP Teean refer to the second type of the path that is “noble, transcendent, without effluents, without attachment, rightly ending suffering, and turning to the end of suffering”. Actually, as seen from the analysis in Section 4, Master

Huineng did not reject the conventional view of *Sila-Samādhi-Paññā* completely, instead he emphasized that “Your precepts, meditation, and wisdom are to encourage people of shallow capacities, mine are for men of superior attainments.” Therefore, this author sees from here a unity among the teachings of the two masters, the Pali Canon and the Chinese Agama.

Future research may be undertaken to compare some other aspects of the teachings of the two masters, for example, their meditation techniques, and a more formal comparative study on their teachings and the teachings in the Pali Cannon and/or Chinese Agama. Interested readers are welcome to contact this author for possible collaborations.

ENDNOTES

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² For more information about Master Huineng, please refer to the work of Hong & Sun, and Du & Wei.

³ Jittasubho, L. T. *A Manual of Self-Awareness*. Bangkok: Luangpor Teean Jittasubho (Pann Itapew) Foundation, 1984.

⁴ Puntarigviwat, Tavivat. “Luangpor Teean: The Dynamic Practices of a Thai Meditation Master”. *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 7(1), (1992), 69-89.

⁵ 元朝, 1271-1368.

⁶ Hong, X. & Sun, Y., 1998. 惠能评传 (*A critical biography of Huineng*). 南京: 南京大学出版社 Nanjing University Press, 1998, 175.

⁷ Hong & Sun, *A critical biography of Huineng*, 165.

⁸ Hong & Sun, *A critical biography of Huineng*, 172.

⁹ Hong & Sun, *A critical biography of Huineng*, 173.

¹⁰ Hong & Sun, *A critical biography of Huineng*, 175.

¹¹ Hong & Sun, *A critical biography of Huineng*, 164-165.

¹² Hong & Sun, *A critical biography of Huineng*, 159.

¹³ See, Du & Wei, pp. 178-179 and Hong & Sun, 164.

¹⁴ Both the Dun-Huang version and the Zong-Bao version are translated into English by several different publishers. In this research, we mainly refer to the translations of Dun-Huang Version by Columbia University Press (Yampolsky, 1967) and the Zong-Bao version by Buddhist Text Translation Society (Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2001). The electronic versions of both translations are available online.

¹⁵ Yampolsky, P. B. *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch: the text of the Tun-Huang manuscript with translation, introduction, and notes*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1967.

¹⁶ Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2001.

¹⁷ Jittasubho, L. T. *A Manual of Self-Awareness*. Bangkok: Luangpor Teean Jittasubho (Pann Itapew) Foundation, 1984.

¹⁸ Puntarigviwat, Tavivat & Bhikkhu Nirodho. *To one that feels: The Teaching of Luangpor Teean*. 2nd Edition ed. s.l.: Luangpor Teean Foundation, 1993.

¹⁹ Cittasubho, Loo-ang por Tee-an. *Normality*. Translated by Venerable Tone Jinacamso. Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008.

²⁰ Yang, C. 新版敦煌新本六祖坛经 *The Platform Sutra of the Six Patriarch: A New Version of Dun-huang New Copy*. Beijing (北京) : Religious Culture Press (宗教文化出版社), 2001.

²¹ Jittasubho, L. T. *A Manual of Self-Awareness*. Bangkok: Luangpor Teean Jittasubho (Pann Itapew) Foundation, 1984.

²² Puntarigviwat, Tavivat & Bhikkhu Nirodho. *To one that feels: The Teaching of Luangpor Teean*. 2nd Edition ed. s.l.: Luangpor Teean Foundation, 1993

²³ Cittasubho, Loo-ang por Tee-an. *Normality*. Translated by Venerable Tone Jinacamso. Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008.

²⁴ Wang, R. 坛经释义 (*Annotation of Platform Sutra*). 北京 (Beijing): 中华书局 (Zhong Hua Publishing House, 2013.

²⁵ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 164.

²⁶ Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2001. *The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra: with the commentary of Venerable Master Hsuan Hua*. Third Edition ed. San Francisco: Sino-American Buddhist Association, 222

²⁷ Buddhist Text Translation Society, 2001. *The Sixth Patriarch's Dharma Jewel Platform Sutra: with the commentary of Venerable Master Hsuan Hua*. Third Edition ed. San Francisco: Sino-American Buddhist Association, 198 (In Chinese: “心平何劳持戒·行直何用修禅。”)

²⁸ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 125.

²⁹ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 125

³⁰ Cittasubho, Loo-ang por Tee-an. *Normality*. Translated by Venerable Tone Jinacamso. Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008.

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³¹ Puntarigviwat, Tavivat & Bhikkhu Nirodho. *To one that feels: The Teaching of Luangpor Teean*. 2nd Edition ed. s.l.:Luangpor Teean Foundation, 1993, 3)

³² Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 137.

³³ The copy of Dun-Huang version that Yampolsky was referring to has some errors (as this always is the case in this type of ancient handmade copies). Yampolsky added a footnote here saying that “The text appears to have dropped a negative here”. In the newly discovered copy of Dun-Huang in 1980s, published by (Yang, 2001), it is confirmed that there is a negative here.

³⁴ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 183.

³⁵ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (translator), 2008.

³⁶ In Yampolsky, the pronunciation of “定” is written as “ting”. This is however an old style of the Chinese pronunciation. Nowadays, in mainland China, this pronunciation is “ding”.

³⁷ See, for example, the 11th version of New Chinese dictionary (新华字典)

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³⁸ Ching-ming ching: 《淨名經》, a Mahayana Sutra translated by Kumarajiva.

³⁹ Tao, in Chinese: “道” (the path).

⁴⁰ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, p. 136)

⁴¹ See, for example, footnote 78 in (Yampolsky, 1967, p. 140))

⁴² In Chinese: “禅定”。

⁴³ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 140.

⁴⁴ Puntarigviwat, Tavivat & Bhikkhu Nirodho. *To one that feels*, 22-23.

⁴⁵ Puntarigviwat, Tavivat & Bhikkhu Nirodho. *To one that feels*, 34.

⁴⁶ Puntarigviwat, Tavivat & Bhikkhu Nirodho. *To one that feels*, 70.

⁴⁷ Another Pali word that is the synonym of *Paññā*, wisdom.

⁴⁸ Cittasubho, Loo-ang por Tee-an. *Normality*. Translated by Venerable Tone Jinacamso. Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008, 2.

⁴⁹ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 146.

⁵⁰ The six fields of the senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and discerning.

⁵¹ The six sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind.

⁵² The six qualities produced by the objects and organs of sense: sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and idea.

⁵³ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 152-153.

⁵⁴ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 125.

⁵⁵ “Good friends, in this teaching of mine, from ancient times up to the present, all have set up no-thought as the main doctrine, non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis.” (Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 137-138.

⁵⁶ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 137-138.

⁵⁷ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 138.

⁵⁸ Puntarigviwat, Tavivat & Bhikkhu Nirodho. *To one that feels*, 47.

⁵⁹ Jittasubho, L. T. *A Manual of Self-Awareness*. Bangkok: Luangpor Teean Jittasubho (Pann Itapew) Foundation, 1984, 13-14.

⁶⁰ Jittasubho, *A Manual of Self-Awareness*, 33-34

⁶¹ Cittasubho, Loo-ang por Tee-an. *Normality*. Translated by Venerable Tone Jinacamso. Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008, 17.

⁶² In the bracket, “ting” is the Chinese pronunciation of “定” (*Samādhi*). However, “ting” is more an ancient pronunciation. Nowadays, in mainland China, its actual pronunciation is “ding”.

⁶³ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 136.

⁶⁴ Yampolsky, *The platform sutra of the sixth patriarch*, 137.

⁶⁵ Cittasubho, Loo-ang por Tee-an. *Normality*. Translated by Venerable Tone Jinacamso. Bangkok: Loo-ang Por Tee-an Cittasupho (Pun Indapiw) Foundation, 2008, 2.

⁶⁶ Thanissaro Bhikkhu (translator), 2008. *Maha-cattarisaka Sutta: The Great Forty*, 2008.

⁶⁷ From <http://agama.buddhason.org/SA/SA0785.htm>. Original text in Chinese: “.....何等為正業？正業有二種：有正業世俗、有漏、有取、向於善趣；有正業是聖、出世間、無漏、不取、正盡苦、轉向苦邊。何等為正業，世俗、有漏、有取、轉向善趣？謂：離殺、盜、婬，是名正業，世俗、有漏、有取、轉向善趣。何等為正業是聖、出世間、無漏、不取、正盡苦、轉向苦邊？謂：聖弟子苦、苦思惟，集.....滅.....道、道思惟，除邪命{念}[貪]，身三惡行，諸餘身惡行數，無漏心不樂著，固守執持不犯，不度時節，不越限防，是名正業，是聖、出世間、無漏、不取、正盡苦、轉向苦邊。”

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