

Attacked by Māra.

*Tiantai Zhiyi (538-597) and the Birth of  
Chinese Buddhist Meditative Demonology*

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# *Til Pappa*

# Abstract

This study deals with the emergence of the concept of “Māra disturbance” (*móshì* 魔事) in Buddhist meditation in sixth century China. It argues that the influential Chinese Buddhist master Zhiyi 智顓 (538-597) of the Tiāntái 天台 tradition seems to be the first to systematically discuss the idea that practitioners of meditation may be targeted by the Buddhist arch-demon Māra.

The study takes as its textual focus the “Explanation of the Sequential Dharma Gates of the Perfection of Dhyāna” (*Shì chánbōluómì cìdì fǎmén* 釋禪波羅密次第法門). This understudied treatise is one of the earliest extant systematic instructions on Buddhist meditation practice written by a Chinese monk, and as such is an important milestone in the history of Buddhist meditation in China. The study is therefore also a contribution to research on early Chinese Buddhist meditation.

The concept of “Māra disturbance,” the study shows, draws on certain Buddhist and Chinese religious traditions, but was recast by Zhiyi. In the process it came to constitute what we call an alternative paradigm for understanding meditative experience. By this we mean that Māra came to be seen as a force external to the inner, karmic paradigm, or the karmic hindrance to meditation. In practice, this meant that the practitioner was instructed to be aware of whether a given experience in meditation was caused by his karma or if it was caused by the external Māra. The consequence of wrongfully assessing the cause of one’s experience had grave consequences.

These two paradigms should be understood against Zhiyi’s assertion that “as practice progresses, Māra flourishes.” This means that the intensity of Māra’s disturbances are inversely proportional to the severity of karmic afflictions. In other words, Māra causes disturbance for the practitioners that have already made substantial progress in their cultivation. In contrast to the main thrust of the Chinese and Buddhist demonological traditions, the figure of Māra does not attack due to karmic or ethical transgression.

Finally, this study demonstrates a shift in the method of meditation advocated for dealing with Māra. Against the methods of *dhyāna* meditation which provided an escape from Māra, Zhiyi advocated a method that simultaneously destroyed Māra and caused the practitioner to gain awakening. This method is what in Zhiyi’s later instructions came to be known as *zhǐguān* 止觀, calming and contemplation.

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# 1 Attacked by Māra in India and China

In his search for the alleviation of suffering Siddhārta Gautama took up the ascetic practices of the *śramanas* of his time. But having mastered them all, he found them to be unfruitful in his quest. He left his companions and sat down in meditation under a great fig tree. The soon-to-be Buddha vowed not to get up until he had reached his goal of liberation and then entered into meditation. As his practice progressed, Māra, the god of death and desire, appeared. The subsequent battle between the Buddha-to-be and his great adversary Māra has been told and retold by later generation, reaching epic proportions. Māra is said to first have sent his beautiful daughters to instill lust in Siddhārta. When he rejected them, the daughters turned ugly and hordes of frightening demons came rushing down in an attempt to scare him. But to no avail. In a final attempt to dissuade the Buddha in the making, Māra himself stepped forth. He questioned how Siddhārta, a mere human, could go against such a mighty god as himself. How could he believe himself to be worthy of attaining the great awakening? This final attempt failed also as Siddhārta reached out his hand and touched the ground, taking the earth as the witness to his great achievement. In that moment Siddhārta defeated Māra and became the Buddha, the Awakened One.<sup>1</sup>

In Buddhism, meditation is an important component of the path leading to the soteriological goal, be it Nirvana, Bodhisattva- or Buddhahood. This is not to say that all traditions and schools of the religion give equal value to practice, yet meditative cultivation has at various times and in various locations played a central role in the life of the religious professionals, monks and nuns, as well as lay people. This practice finds both its origin and justification in the pivotal story of the biography of the religion's founder, Siddhārta Gautama, or as he is later known, Śākyamuni Buddha.

When Buddhists engage in meditation it is, broadly speaking, in emulation of this great achievement of their teacher: they meditate to attain what the Buddha attained, that is, awakening. And if one is to follow in the great teacher's footsteps as a meditator, one would also face Māra in a personal battle of one's own. On this assumption, one would expect to find in the tradition numerous narratives of monks and nuns themselves fighting off Māra in meditation to attain awakening. But this seems not to be the case.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This introduction draws on Nichols 2010, pp. 9-25

<sup>2</sup> While I am no expert on Indian Buddhism, the only prominent story of Māra disturbing meditation except that of Śākyamuni that I have been able to locate is that of his disciple Ananda.

Until we get to sixth century China. In his biography, the influential Chinese Buddhist master Zhiyi 智顓 (538-597)<sup>3</sup> is portrayed doing just that. In an epic battle on Huádǐng 華頂 peak on Mt. Tiāntái 天台 in south China Zhiyi is shown as subduing the demonic forces and at the same time, attaining awakening. All while engaged in meditation.

Koichi Shinohara, studying the biography of Zhiyi, is quick to point out that the scene is “modeled after Sakyamuni Buddha’s conquest of Māra and enlightenment,”<sup>4</sup> a statement that in and of itself is not false. Yet, it muddles more than it illuminates. The simple fact that the trope of subduing Māra or other demons in meditation seems to be close to lacking in the Chinese tradition prior to Zhiyi<sup>5</sup> should alert us to the fact that there is a larger story to be told.

It is this larger story we will attempt to tell here. It begins with the observation that the topic of Māra and the demons appears quite frequently in Zhiyi’s own writing.<sup>6</sup> This would again not be so surprising - on the basis of the awakening story of Buddha one would expect the tradition to be replete with “battle stories” and “battle techniques.” But the fact is that there does not seem to be much substantial discussion of Māra in meditation prior to Zhiyi.<sup>7</sup>

This study is an exploration of the emergence, or rather re-emergence, of Māra as an obstacle in the practice of Buddhist meditation.

We take as our primary focus Zhiyi’s early work on meditation, the “Explanation of the Sequential Dharma Gates of the Perfection of Dhyāna” (*Shì chánbōluómì cìdì fǎmén* 釋禪波羅密次第法門, here CDCM).<sup>8</sup> This is an understudied instruction on meditative practice that has often come in the shadows of his later works. These later, more doctrinally developed works were to become the center piece of the school of Chinese Buddhism that

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<sup>3</sup> All dates are CE unless otherwise noted.

<sup>4</sup> Shinohara 1992, p. 122.

<sup>5</sup> The only reference to something similar I have been able to find is in the biography in Zhiyi’s elder “dharma-brother” Huìchéng 惠成, also a student of Zhiyi’s master Huìsī 慧思. See T.50.557b02.

<sup>6</sup> Or on most cases, his lectures which were subsequently written down.

<sup>7</sup> This statement will be qualified somewhat below, but in a recent anthology of early Buddhist and Theravada instructions on meditation by Sarah Shaw 2006, for example, one finds no substantial discussion of Māra. A brief survey of Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* also does not reveal anything substantial on Māra. See Ñāṇamoli 1991.

<sup>8</sup> T.1916. The text is usually known as *Cìdì Chánmén* 次第禪門 for short, which is why we here have decided to call it CDCM.

came to be known as Tiantai (*tiāntáizōng* 天台宗). But it is in this early work that we first find his substantial discussion of Māra as a meditative obstacle.

Taking a doctrinal approach, we aim to provide some insight into both the background for and consequences of the appearance of Māra in Tiantai meditation.

While undoubtedly a malicious and evil figure, he is not a figure that punishes ethical transgressions on the part of the practitioner. Nor does he take advantage of the ethical weakness in order to create difficulties. As such it diverges from general traits of both Buddhist and Chinese demonology. Rather, he appears on the stage only when the practitioner is making substantial progress in his – or her<sup>9</sup> – practice. He responds to the practitioner’s cultivation of good. We will attempt to explain this against Indian Buddhist cosmology.

This is important when we turn to Zhiyi’s system for revealing the disturbing work of Māra in meditation. Buddhist practice is at its core concerned with the generation of good karma and the elimination of bad. However, we find in Zhiyi’s system of meditation that Māra becomes what we here will call “an alternative paradigm for interpreting meditative experience.” By this we mean that there are two different causes for disturbance and experience in: karma and Māra. Māra exists as a disturbing force external to the workings of karma. Māra is a negative force that gradually makes itself more present as the practice progresses and the negative forces of karma are reduced. The practitioner, charged with the task of assessing his progress in meditation, should therefore not only pay attention to experiences indicating a gradual progression from bad to good; he should gradually become more alert to the presence of Māra. Furthermore, if the practitioner fails in this assessment, there may be severe consequences. Māra may lead the practitioner into both illness, madness and heresy.

But with presence of greater enemies, greater measures are called for. In the methods prescribed for combatting Māra we find a tension between two methods of meditation. The tradition of dhyāna mediation provides methods for escaping the grips of Māra by taking the step into rarified meditative states. However, the practitioner can also take up another form of practice. This one takes the Buddhist concept of emptiness as its focus and involves a

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<sup>9</sup> In lieu of the invention of a gender neuter pronoun in English (akin to the Scandinavian “hen”) and due to the historical fact of the presence of patriarchal structures in Buddhism, we have for the sake of simplicity decided use the male pronoun here. This should, however, by no means be taken to indicate that women are not expected to take up the practice of Buddhism and pick their own fight with Māra.

doctrinally oriented practice. And while present already in the CDCM, this practice becomes, as we will see, further developed in the later texts of Zhiyi.

The shift in meditative technique from dhyāna to what came to be known as *zhǐguān* 止觀 is then also a shift from meditation as a method for escaping to a method of subjugation. In this sense, meditation comes to have a dual purpose: to fend off Māra and attain awakening.

Chapter two begins with a brief survey of Chinese demonology. We suggest while the Chinese preoccupation with demons has a long history, with the rise of religious Daoism in the early centuries of the common era, the demonology gained a more clearly defined ethical component, whereby the cause of and protection against demonic attacks became related to morally upright action. This resonated well with ideas of karma and the demonic pantheon that the arrival of Buddhism brought with it. The central demon in the Buddhist pantheon is Māra. We show that in the Māra figure there is a tension between a metaphorical understanding of Māra as representing karma and a cosmological Māra which exists outside, in the world. In China, karmic transgressions seem to have become the cause of demonic attacks. Focusing on demons in meditation we show that in most of the few instances we have been able to find, the attacks are all associated with karmic transgressions.

In chapter three we begin by situating the CDCM in Zhiyi's oeuvre. Then we provide an overview of the text. We focus our attention on the so-called "preparatory expedients" as this is where Māra is expected to cause trouble. We show that the main meditative method is a system known as the five dhyāna gate practices which is expected to lead the practitioner into dhyāna states by replacing bad karma with good. This practice is supported by a calming practice that also has a soteriological function of its own.

The concept of Māra disturbance in Zhiyi can also be traced back to the Perfection of Wisdom sutras. In chapter four we begin by showing how Māra in these texts serves as a general adversary to Buddhism but that there is little that indicates a direct connection to the practice of meditation. In the *Dàzhìdùlùn* commentary, we find that the concept of four Māras is introduced. We end the chapter by discussing how Zhiyi maps these four Māras onto the meditative path of the CDCM. This enables us to see that it is the figure of Prince Māra, the fourth Māra, that were to become the actual Māra in Zhiyi system. Zhiyi further states that there are three figures that all belong to the category of Prince Māra, otherwise known as the Demonic Māra. This is what we explore in the following two chapters.

In chapter five we show how Zhiyi incorporates two distinct demonological traditions into his system of the Demonic Māra. These, we will show, are taken from the Chinese and the Buddhist demonological traditions respectively. Through our discussion of the Chinese demons we see that it might give some indications about the social milieu which informed Zhiyi's demonology. The Buddhist demons, we will show, is transformed by Zhiyi in a way that supports our assertion that Māra responds to the cultivation of good, not to ethical transgressions.

It is this assertion that we explore further in chapter six. We begin by discussion what we call Māra proper and show how it operates as an external figure. Moreover, we discuss how it relates to progress in meditation. This we attempt to explain by reference to the Abhidharma system of cosmology and psychology. We suggest that Māra becomes a gate-keeper to the world of *saṃsāra*, attempting to prevent the practitioner from entering the dhyānas. But this also means that the dhyāna gate practices are the ones that actually leads the practitioner into safety.

In chapter seven we discuss the ways Māra prevents the practitioner from making progress. We suggest that Māra and karma comes to constitute two alternative paradigms for understanding experiences in meditation as well as in the practice of repentance. In the practice of meditation, Māra is the cause of deviancy and this is revealed through an intricate system of interpreting marks of experience. Māra may, as we will see, either create false dhyāna states or enter into actual dhyāna states. At the end of the chapter we briefly discuss Zhiyi description of how Māra may cause madness and give rise to heretical Dharma in the world.

Finally, in chapter eight we discuss a method for dealing with Māra that does not involve escaping into the dhyāna states. By comparing it to the meditative technique of *zhīguān* in his later text we are better equipped to understand how Zhiyi could be presented, in his biography, as one who both conquered demons and attained awakening.

## 2 Demons, Māra and Meditation

In this chapter we will argue the overarching conception of the demonic in China is closely linked to ethical transgression. This was true for the religious Daoist and seems to have resonated well with the Buddhist doctrine when it arrived from the Indian continent in the early centuries of the common era. The ethical demonology is important as it establishes the background against which Zhiyi's conception of Māra becomes clear.

### 2.1 Chinese Demonology

The question of demonology in the history of Chinese religion is such an overwhelming topic that no introductory chapter can do justice to it. Still, in order to appreciate the important contribution Zhiyi makes to conceptualization of the Buddhist demon Māra in relation to meditation, we will try to make some general observations. In the following we will make the argument that demons, loosely defined, may create difficulties for the humans for two reasons. In the earlier strata of Chinese religious history, demons represented in general potentially dangerous forces, and the external methods of prophylaxis stood center stage. With the advent of religious Daoism in the early centuries of the common era, the demonological acquired a patently ethical component. Here we see that the cause of attacks by demons are related to ethical transgression and consequently the methods of protection involve morally upright action.

We know that Chinese interest in the demonic goes far back in time. Of the Warring States and early imperial period Donald Harper writes:

The ancient Chinese conception of the spirit world did not tend towards making a categorical division of the spirits into the good and the evil or the gods and the devils. The general sentiment was, however, that the ghosts of the dead (kuei 鬼) and the sundry spirits (shen 神) who inhabited the terrestrial realm were a hazard to humankind. Identifying these spirits, determining whether they were beneficial or harmful, and whether they were to be propitiated or exorcised, were fundamental elements of demonology in early Chinese religion.<sup>10</sup>

Going back as far as our historical sources allow, we find great attention being given to identification of potentially harmful spirits. While harmful beings might exist anywhere, they pose even greater threats on the margins of human society. Mountains in particular were considered dangerous places and their many extraordinary beings were the topic of early

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<sup>10</sup> Harper 1985, pp. 459-460



visual representation. The *Shānhǎijīng* 山海經 and *Báizé jīngguài tú* 白澤精怪圖 represent early guides to the world and its strange inhabitants, many of which may cause harm.<sup>11</sup>

Knowledge of a demon's name lies at the basis of this early tradition, what Harper has termed Chinese demonography. In the *Báizé jīngguài tú*, “simply knowing a demon's name and shouting it [out loud] is the most common magical devise.”<sup>12</sup> The *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子 contains an anecdote about Seigneur Huan of Ch'i and the marsh demon Wei-i [which] also furnishes a list of demon proper names.<sup>13</sup> The *Guǎnzǐ* 管子 also makes reference to the magical effects of shouting a demon's name.<sup>14</sup>

One important guide not only to the dangers but also to the treasures of the mountains, is the *Bàopǔzǐ* 抱朴子 (here: BPZ).<sup>15</sup> This text was written by the *fāngshì* 方士 master Gě Hóng 葛洪 (ca. 280– ca. 343) around 320 AD in southern China, prior to the arrival of the Celestial Master tradition (*tiānshīdào* 天師道) in this area. The Inner Chapters of the text represent an important source for the early traditions of alchemy and methods for attaining immortality prior to the advent of religious Daoism.<sup>16</sup> The chapter called “Into [mountains], over [streams]” (*dēngshè* 登涉), is concerned with methods for safely ascending mountains for the dual purpose of harvesting herbs and escaping calamities.<sup>17</sup> According to the text, if one enters the mountains without the appropriate means of protection one is bound to get harmed. Therefore, Ge Hong provides different methods for avoiding dangers in the mountains. These methods include bringing demonographical guides, mirrors, and applying divination methods for determining the true nature of harmful spirits. We will see below that this tradition of warding off demons also informed Zhiyi.

The demonographical tradition reaches new heights with the rise of religious Daoism beginning with the Celestial Masters in the second century. The influential *Nǚqīng guǐlǜ* 女青鬼律 of probable fourth century origin, contains much greater lists of demons than had been seen until then in China.<sup>18</sup> The text paints a bleak, eschatological picture of the world where dangerous beings lurk around every corner, ready to inflict death and disease. But with

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 479. See also Robson 2009, p. 17, Wang 2005, pp. 206-219.

<sup>12</sup> Harper 1985, p. 494.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. pp. 494-495n108.

<sup>15</sup> For a succinct overview of the text, see Robinet 1997, pp. 78-113. See also Robson 2009, pp. 44-46. The complete Inner Chapters are translated by Ware 1966.

<sup>16</sup> Robinet 1997, p. 79.

<sup>17</sup> This is chapter 17 in Ware's translation, pp. 279-300.

<sup>18</sup> Mollier 2006, pp. 82-85; Strickmann 2002, pp. 80-87.

the Celestial Masters we also see the emergence of a cosmological-ethical vision of evil in the world. A cosmic order was preached where the good and correct Three Heavens (*sāntiān* 三天) are to supplant the evil and death of the Six Heavens (*liutiān* 六天). The proponents of this new order attempted to suppress the gods of the old pantheon: these gods were in reality demons and not worthy of offerings. They should be starved!<sup>19</sup>

This dualism of cosmological good and evil had a clear ethical dimension; specifically, demonic attacks causing illness came to be understood in relation to personal conduct. Christine Mollier writes:

For the faithful of the organisation of the Celestial Master, pathology and demons are indissociable from sin. Illness essentially has its aetiology in moral and religious misconduct: physical or mental, it is the most convincing sign of wrongdoing. (...) Except for minimal differences, this ideology was to remain that of the Daoists of the medieval sectarian movements. Sins, whether they are committed by the victim himself, or whether they are inherited in the family line or from personal karma, are punished in the first place by an attack on the physical or psychic integrity of the person and by a reduction of his life capital. They create a terrain favourable to demonic infiltration.<sup>20</sup>

Demonic infiltration is enabled by physical or psychic disintegration which again finds its cause in sin and ethical transgression. This relation between demonic attacks and personal morality served as fertile ground for new religious concepts, most prominently the teachings of karma, arriving from the Indian sub-continent at this time.

## 2.2 Buddhist Demonology

The translations of Indian Buddhist texts into Chinese by An Shigao 安世高 (*Ān Shìgāo*, fl. 147-168) in the middle of the second century marks the beginning of one of the largest translation enterprises in pre-modern world history. Along with religious doctrine and methods of practice also came new systems for understanding the cosmos and the beings that populate it. Benign and compassionate Buddhas and Bodhisattvas came to populate the Chinese pantheon, but so did also scores of malicious and evil beings. Of the evil beings of the Buddhist pantheon, Strickmann lists eight classes: “nāgas, rākṣasas (or yakṣas), gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kimnaras, mahoragas and bhūthas (also called pretas).”<sup>21</sup> These lists came to grow exponentially in the religious synthesis we see represented in the category

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<sup>19</sup> Mollier 2006, pp. 77-80

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-88.

<sup>21</sup> Strickmann 2002, p. 63. But the list does not stop with these eight, see *ibid.*, pp. 66-68.

of early Chinese Buddhist texts, often called apocrypha for their false claim to Indian origin. In texts like the late fourth century Mañiratna Book<sup>22</sup> we see long lists demons beings expounded by the Buddha himself so that sentient beings may stay safe.<sup>23</sup> There is however, one demon that stands out. This is Māra.<sup>24</sup> But to get a better grip of this figure we need to discuss the Indian roots of the figure.

### 2.2.1 Māra

The name Māra is derived from the root *mṛ*, to die.<sup>25</sup> He is associated with death, but also desire. Desire is in early Buddhism the root cause of the suffering and endless rebirth in *samsāra* and thus the lord of death also is the lord of desire.

Michael Nichols has pointed out that there is a certain tension in Indian Buddhist mythology with regards to the functioning of Māra. Basically, the Māra figure operates in two different ways. The first type is what we can call the metaphorical or symbolic type of Māra. Nichols has argued that this “describe[s] aspects of *samsāra*, both physically and psychologically, often as means of advancing aspects of the Buddha’s teaching and ideals of practice.”<sup>26</sup> The other Māra, the cosmological one, is “undeniably a powerful external force rather than an internal process” and he is an “external, antagonistic being bent on obstructing and subverting the Buddha’s teaching.”<sup>27</sup>

As we will return to below, these two categories of Māra are mapped onto a formula of “four Māras,” which will come to play an important part in Zhiyi’s concept on Māra. This concept appears in the scholastic traditions of both Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna in India. The exact dating of this development is yet to be determined, but it appears in the fourth century *Śrāvakaḥumi* and in the *Mahāvastu*, possibly of an earlier date.<sup>28</sup> We could also mention

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<sup>22</sup> T. 1393. *Fóshuō móní luódǎn jīng* 佛說摩尼羅剎經

<sup>23</sup> Strickmann 2002, pp. 109-113

<sup>24</sup> It should be mentioned that Māra was integrated into the pantheon of religious Daoism with Shàngqīng 上清 tradition in the fourth and fifth century where it came to play its own role, which we will not go into here as it does not seem to have been relevant for Zhiyi. See Kamitsuka 1996, Strickmann 2002, p. 63.

<sup>25</sup> Nichols 2010, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 14

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> This point has been made by Alex Wayman, see Nichols 2010, p. 14n16. The earliest division of Māra of a similar structure I have found in the Chinese corpus is a list of five in the T.732 *Fóshuō màùyì jīng* 佛說罵意經. The five are Heavenly Māra 天魔, Māra of transgressions 罪魔, Māra of action (*samskāra*?) 行魔, Māra of afflictions 惱魔, and Māra of Death 死魔. This is also pointed out by Ōno 1994, p. 520. The text is attributed to Ān Shìgāo.

that the first three Māras appear in Kumārajīva’s early fifth-century translation of the Lotus Sūtra,<sup>29</sup> but we have not been able to locate it in Dharmarakṣa’s third-century one.

This cosmological figure appears throughout Indian Buddhist narrative literature as the primary adversary of Buddha and his community. Nichols work, which takes this cosmological figure as its focus, has shown the social aspect of the Māra figure and how Indian Buddhist used him to conceptualize “their human opponents, among whom Brahmins loomed largest.”<sup>30</sup>

As we noted at the very beginning of this thesis, Māra is the main adversary of Śakyamuni Buddha in his quest for awakening under the Bodhi Tree. In the story of the Buddha’s awakening Māra is usually understood in allegorical terms, as an expression of Gautama’s psychological impediments. This would fit squarely into the metaphorical category, and, moreover, reduce stories that seemingly discuss Māra as an external being to “an allegory for an internal mental process.”<sup>31</sup> However, in his attempt to assert the importance of reading the figure of Māra as an external one for the purpose of understanding “the social world and debates of which they were undoubtedly a part,”<sup>32</sup> Nichols may underestimate the role the cosmological Māra could play in the world of doctrine and practice. Or, to put in more succinctly, the distinction Nichols makes when the metaphorical Māra is related to Buddhist practice and doctrine and the cosmological to the social world, does not apply to Zhiyi’s concept of Māra. Instead, as we will explore in this study, it is precisely in the tension between these two types that we begin to get a grip on Zhiyi’s demonology.

And with this, we may return to China.

### 2.2.2 Māra in China

The standard translation of Māra in Chinese is *mó* 魔, or in its long form, *móluó* 魔羅. The character does not exist prior to the arrival of Buddhism and was created for the purpose of

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The text is not discussed by Nattier 2008 under works attributed to Ān Shìgāo, but Greene 2014, p. 167 considers it more likely that it is a “(...) late second- or early third-century Chinese compositions, written as commentary to or exegesis of the early texts on meditation practice associated with Ān Shìgāo.” If this dating is correct, then this might very well be the earliest appearance of such a division of Māra. It should, moreover, be mentioned that this text does possibly include other interesting sections concerning meditative distraction, however it seems peripheral to our study of Zhiyi.

<sup>29</sup> T.09.39a11-12

<sup>30</sup> Nichols 2010, p. 18. See also pp. 9-17.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

translating Māra. The character is clearly put together from the phonetical component *má* 麻 (hemp) and the semantic *guǐ* 鬼 (ghost, demon), the latter indicating that the demonic association was present from the beginning.<sup>33</sup>

We cannot here provide a thorough overview of the figure of Māra in all its variation across the corpus of Chinese Buddhist texts. While such an overview would be desirable and most likely illuminate aspects of the Māra figure we have been unable to discuss here, it would simply have taken us too far away from the present topic. Instead we will limit ourselves to a survey of Māra, and a few other demons, as they relate to Buddhist practice of meditation. And as it turns out, this puts a quite effective limit to the texts we need to address.

But in order to do this, we need first to briefly discuss what we mean by Buddhist meditation in the Chinese context.

## 2.3 Māra and Demons in Chinese Buddhist Meditation

There are a number of different Sanskrit words we usually translate with the English term meditation: *dhyāna*, *samādhi*, *śamatha*, *vipaśyanā*, *smṛti*, *yoga*, *bhāvanā*, to name some central ones. The first of these, *dhyāna*, were to take center stage as *the* term for Buddhist meditation in China. Already in An Shigao's translations we find the term translated, or rather transcribed, using the Chinese character *chán* 禪.<sup>34</sup> In the Western world the term is perhaps most famous as denoting the Chan, or Zen, school emerging in the Tang dynasty and which in the popular mind has become a near-synonym for East Asian Buddhism. But by the Tang, the practice and theoretical development of *chán* already had several centuries of history.

While instructions on meditation were translated already in the second century, there does not seem to have been “lineages” of practitioners taking these texts as their foundation.<sup>35</sup> The proper beginning of the history of meditation in China is better marked by the arrival of new instructions on and new instructors in meditative cultivation around year 400. Eric Greene has shown that the earliest “*dhyāna* master” (*chán shī* 禪師) in China most likely was

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<sup>33</sup> Kamitsuka 1996, p. 31. He also notes that it earlier was written *mó* 摩 and *mó* 磨.

<sup>34</sup> Greene 2012, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-21. While all the texts attributed to An Shigao belong to the *hīnayāna* tradition of Buddhism, his successor Dharmakṣema 支婁迦讖 (*Zhī lóujiāchèn*, fl. 178-189) translated the first patently Mahāyāna Buddhist texts into Chinese.

the Gandhāri master Buddhahadra (*fótuóbátuó* 佛陀跋陀, 359-429). His influence on the subsequent meditation communities, as Jinhua Chen has argued, was substantial.<sup>36</sup>

At the same time a number of new scriptures on dhyāna practice were translated into, or written in, Chinese. These are known as “dhyāna sūtras” (*chánjīng* 禪經).<sup>37</sup> The most influential was probably the two texts attributed to Kumārajīva (*jiūmóluóshí* 鳩摩羅什 344–413): the *Zuòchán sānmèi jīng* 坐禪三昧經<sup>38</sup> and *Chánfǎ yàojiě* 禪法要解.<sup>39</sup> The influential set of five dhyāna gate practices (*wǔ chánmén* 五禪門) which we will return to below, has one of its earliest appearances in the former of the two.<sup>40</sup>

For the discussions on Māra and demonic disturbance in meditation, however, this corpus of texts yields little material. Māra does not appear frequently in the “dhyāna sūtras.” He is mentioned briefly here and there, but we have not been able to locate any substantial discussion. By substantial we mean that the term is treated as a concept in need of topical discussion. Many of the occurrences indicate that Māra is taken as a metaphor for desire and karmic impediment. In Kumārajīva’s *Chánfǎ yàojiě*, for example, we come across the line: “having departed from the five desires, having destroyed the net of Māra.”<sup>41</sup>

If we were to discuss every instance of the character *mó* 魔 in the dhyāna sutras we would also have to contextualize each of the texts, many of which are exceedingly complicated. This would have lead us to far afield, and, based on our preliminary survey, it does not seem like it would have yielded any great insight into Zhiyi’s conception of Māra.

There is however one demonic figure that appears in the one of the dhyāna sūtras that deserves our attention. While not explicitly discussed as Māra, this demon was to become one in Zhiyi’s system.

### 2.3.1 Demons of Meditation in the ZCB

In the text known as *Zhìchánbìng mìyào fǎ* 治禪病秘要法 (here: ZCB),<sup>42</sup> we find a demon disturbing monks engaged in meditation. The sūtra tells the story of a group of monks being

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<sup>36</sup> For Buddhahadra’s influence on traditions of meditation in northern and southern China, see Chen 2014a, b.

<sup>37</sup> See Greene 2012, pp. 32-41 for a discussion the concept of dhyāna sutras.

<sup>38</sup> T.614. For English translation, see Yamabe and Sueki 2009.

<sup>39</sup> T.616.

<sup>40</sup> Greene 2012, p. 44.

<sup>41</sup> T.15.287a19 五欲已遠離。魔網已壞裂

<sup>42</sup> T.630

attacked by *guīmèi*-demons while practicing meditation under the instruction of Mahākāśyapa. The sūtra describes the frightening demons like this:

One demon they saw had an [enormous] face like a Central Asian lute. It had four eyes and two mouths, and its entire face glowed. It tickled the monks beneath their armpits and all over their bodies, murmuring “buti buti.” Like a spinning wheel of fire, or flashing lightning, [this demon] appeared and disappeared, preventing the practitioners’ minds from becoming concentrated.<sup>43</sup>

The sūtra then goes on to describe the methods for expelling it.

The method for curing this is as follows. The practitioner must be instructed to close his eyes and silently curse the Bu-ti demon: “I know you! You are a tou-lao-ji-zhi demon who consumes the smells of the fires of Jambudvīpa. You cause false views and delight in causing the destruction of the precepts. But I hold to the precepts and am not afraid of you.” If [the practitioner] is a monk or nun he or she should recite the opening passage of the prātimokṣa. If [the practitioner] is a layperson, he should recite the three refuges, the five precepts, or the eight precepts. The demon will then crawl away.<sup>44</sup>

The origin of the demon is explained in the sūtra as going back to the time of the past Buddha Kanakamuni (*jiānàhánmóuni fó* 迦那含牟尼佛). He was about to become a stream-enterer (*śrotāpanna*), but because of his “evil livelihood” (*xiémìng* 邪命) he was expelled from the Sangha. Filled with hatred he vowed to come back to harass Buddhist practitioners. The nature of his evil livelihood is not entirely clear, but considering it was the cause for expulsion it must have been one of the grave transgressions.

The *bùti* demon is only discussed in the second and final sūtra of the ZCB. This sūtra is known as “The method for curing beginning meditators who are attacked by *guīmèi* 鬼魅 demons and disturbed in various ways such that they are unable to attain concentration. (As asked by the venerable Ānanda.)”<sup>45</sup> Greene suggests that the ZCB might originally have

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<sup>43</sup> 見一鬼神,面如琵琶,四眼兩口,舉面放光。以手擊攢兩腋下及餘身分。口中唱言:埠惕埠惕。如旋火輪,似掣電光,或起或滅,令於行者心不安所。Original text and translation from Greene 2012, p. 607. Greene’s Chinese text is a critical version, and thus I cite this rather than the regular Taishō one.

<sup>44</sup> 治之法者,教此行人,埠惕來時,一心閉眼,陰而罵之,而作是言:我今識汝,知汝是此閻浮提中食火嗅香偷臘吉支,汝為邪見,喜破戒種。我今持戒,終不畏汝。若出家人,應誦戒序。若在家人,應誦三歸、五戒、八戒。鬼便却行匍匐而去。Original text and translation from *ibid.*, p. 608.

<sup>45</sup> For a translation of the whole sūtra, including this long title, see *ibid.*, pp. 607-613.

formed a single collection with the *Chán mìyào fǎ jīng* (禪祕要法經),<sup>46</sup> and that both of them can be traced back to Jūqú Jīngshēng 沮渠京聲.<sup>47</sup> Both these texts, he believes, are apocryphal in nature.

This sūtra on the *bùtì* demon is very short, and only around one tenth of the complete text. It may have circulated independently. In 515 Sēngyòu 僧祐 (445-518) notes in the *Chūsānzàngjìjí* 出三藏記集 the existence of a text called ”Sūtra for Treating the Distress [caused by] *Guǐmèi*[-demons]” in one fascicle and that it stems from the text which Greene believes to be the combined CMY and ZCB.<sup>48</sup> Nobuyoshi Yamabe has pointed out the motif of demons disturbing meditation on the murals in a cave in Toyok in Turfan and has speculated about the possibility of the text to have originated there.<sup>49</sup>

The demon is said to torment those having broken the precepts and is also the cause for nocturnal emission (*shījīng* 失精).<sup>50</sup> This might indicate that the transgression is of sexual character. This is further supported by the explanation of the demon’s name, *bùtì* 埠惕, which is also what it “murmurs.”<sup>51</sup> Strickmann and Greene have both suggested that *bùtì* may be a transcription of the feminine version, *bhūtī*, of the Sanskrit *bhūta* meaning ghost or other spirit of the dead.<sup>52</sup>

If the practitioner is attacked by the demon, the text suggests the following method of treatment:

One must then repent [as follows]: “Buti has come! Because of evil [committed] in the past, I have met this baleful demon who destroys the precepts. I will now spur on my mind, restrain my sense organs, and not be heedless.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> T.614

<sup>47</sup> Greene 2012, in particular pp. 86-138.

<sup>48</sup> T.55.30c8: 治禪鬼魅不安經一卷 (抄禪要祕密治病經所出) This is pointed out by Greene 2012, p. 89n49.

<sup>49</sup> Yamabe 1999, p. 435-441. See also Yamabe 2004. I would like to thank Professor Yamabe for sending me a PDF of the 2004 article after our discussion of the topic in Dunhuang, June 2016.

<sup>50</sup> What the relation between *bùtì* disturbing in meditation and *bùtì* appearing at night seems somewhat unclear.

<sup>51</sup> We do not have the Middle Chinese pronunciation for 埠, but its phonetic part 阜 is given by Kroll 2015 as *bjuwX*. 惕 is given as *thek*.

<sup>52</sup> Strickman 2002, p. 121. Greene 2012, p. 607 also makes this suggestion, though he does not seem to be aware of Strickmann’s earlier one.

<sup>53</sup> 當起懺悔:埠惕來也,我是過去惡因緣故,遇此破戒賊害惡鬼,我今鞭心,束縛諸情,不使放逸。 Original text and translation from Greene 2012, p. 608.



What is important about this statement is that it indicates that the *bùtì* demon attacks a practitioner that has transgressed in the past. Just like with the ethical demonology of religious Daoism discussed above, transgressions of the Buddhist practitioner make him susceptible to demonic attack.

We already mentioned that this demon is to become integrated into Zhiyi's system. However, as we will discuss when we return to Zhiyi's conception of the demon below, *bùtì* becomes sanitized of any ethical or karmic connotation.

But for now, we will continue our overview of Māra and demons in meditation.

### 2.3.2 Māra in the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith

One of the very few proper appearances of Māra in relation to meditation in Chinese Buddhist history prior to Zhiyi is in the Treatise on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith (*Dàshèng qǐxìn lùn* 大乘起信論,<sup>54</sup> here: AMF). The text is traditionally considered to have been composed in Sanskrit by Aśvaghoṣa (Mǎmíng 馬鳴) and translated by Paramārtha (Zhēndì 真諦) around year 550.<sup>55</sup> Most scholars today doubt Aśvaghoṣa's involvement in its composition and questions Paramārtha's involvement in the translation. Though the issue does not seem to be finally settled, the text was probably composed in Chinese by someone associated with the southern branch of the Dilùn 地論 School.<sup>56</sup>

Most of the text deals with doctrinal issues and is particularly known for attempting to combine *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine with the Yogācāra concept of *ālāyavijñāna*, but this does not interest us here. Towards the end, the text gives a short introduction to meditative practice of calming and contemplation (*zhǐguān*). The two practices are discussed separately.

In the section discussing calming, the issue of Māra appears:

If there is a man who lacks the capacity for goodness, he will be confused by the evil Tempter (ie. Māra), by heretics and by demons. Sometimes these beings will appear in dreadful forms while he is sitting in meditation, and at other times they will manifest themselves in the shapes of handsome men and women.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> T.1666

<sup>55</sup> Hakeda 2006, p. 1. Another, but less influential, translation was made by Śiksananda (T.1667) around year 700.

<sup>56</sup> The issue has been highly debated, much of which is in Japanese. For an early English discussion, see Liebenthal 1958. A later summary appears in Lai 1990, pp. 186-189. See also Grosnick 1989, which advocates Paramārtha's involvement.

<sup>57</sup> T.32.582b04-06 或有眾生無善根力，則為諸魔外道鬼神之所惑亂，若於坐中現形恐怖，或現端正男女等相 Translation, Hakeda 2006, p. 92. Parenthesis my addition.

The author of the text then goes on to describe a number of different phenomena created by Māra, heretics and demons. The phenomena may take the form of heavenly beings, Bodhisattvas and Buddhas (litt. Tathāgata), preaching all sorts of doctrinal concepts (including the six perfections, equanimity and emptiness).<sup>58</sup> Or they may make the practitioner know the future or the previous lives, read other people’s minds,<sup>59</sup> speak with eloquence, and crave worldly fame and fortune. The list goes on to include variation in mood, drowsiness, illness and laziness. The practitioner might abandon his practice and take up worldly activities, but also enter into false *samādhi* states for up to seven days. Finally, the disturbances might lead to both craving for and rejection of food.

The methods for avoiding such confusions is to meditate on the principle of the mind-only (*dāng niàn wéixīn* 當念唯心) and moreover:

For these reasons, he who practices [“cessation”] should be discreet and observant, lest his mind fall into the net of evil [doctrine]. He should be diligent in abiding in “correct thought,” neither grasping nor attaching himself to [anything]; if he does so, he will be able to keep himself far away from the hindrance of these evil influences.<sup>60</sup>

At first glance, this passage seems similar to Zhiyi’s conception. All the phenomena listed above are, according to the text, confusions (*huòluàn* 惑亂) created by Māra, heretics and demons (*zhūmó wàidào gǔishán* 諸魔外道鬼神). On closer scrutiny we see that there is an important difference. The passage is introduced by saying that the reason for the practitioner being disturbed is that he or she “lacks capacity for goodness” (*wú shàn ’gēn lì* 無善根力), in other words, lacks good karmic roots. The demonic disturbance is therefore directly linked with the negative karmic constitution of the practitioner.

This becomes even more clear when we look at a passage right above the one just discussed. When discussing the practice of zeal (*jìn mén* 進門), the text says:

Even if a man practices faith, because he is greatly hindered by the evil karma derived from the grave sins of previous lives, he may be troubled by the evil Tempter

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<sup>58</sup> We must assume that the doctrine preached is not the correct one.

<sup>59</sup> Knowing one’s previous lives and reading other people’s minds are two of the five supernatural powers (*shéntōng* 神通, skt. Abhijñā).

<sup>60</sup> T.32.582b21-23 以是義故，行者常應智慧觀察，勿令此心墮於邪網。當勤正念不取不著，則能遠離是諸業障。 Translation from Hakeda 2006, p. 93. Brackets in original.

(Māra) and his demons, or entangled in all sorts of worldly affairs, or afflicted by the suffering of disease<sup>61</sup>.

Here demonic disturbances, along with entanglement in worldly affairs and medical afflictions, is directly related to bad karma. Bad karma is the cause of demonic disturbance!

This reading also finds support in the earliest commentary on the AMF to address the question of practice,<sup>62</sup> one attributed to Jìngyǐng Hùiyuǎn 淨影慧遠 (523–592).<sup>63</sup> The commentator does not mention Māras or demons explicitly, but comments upon the demonic passage under the heading “meditative difficulties” (*dìngnán* 定難). The commentary divides the passage into three sub-headings: 1) disturbances [caused by] physical karma (*shēnyè luàn* 身業亂); 2) disturbances [caused by] oral karma (*kǒuyè luàn* 口業亂); and 3) disturbances [caused by] mental karma (*yìyè luàn* 意業亂). Māra, heretics and demons as well as the dreadful and handsome figures all belong to the first. In the second category belong the figures that are able to speak, the content of their speech, the supernatural powers attained. The third category contains the attainment of devious Samadhi absorptions. In Huiyuan’s reading of the demonic passage in the AMF, Māra is but a result of the practitioner’s physical karma. Having physically transgressed, he is punished by Māra.

With the influential commentary by the Korean monk Wonhyo 元曉 (617–686) we see an interesting shift in the commentarial tradition on the AMF with regards to Māra. But this we will return to towards the end of this study.

For now, let us turn to the text attributed to Zhiyi’s master, Huisi. While there is no indication that Zhiyi’s were directly influenced by the AMF,<sup>64</sup> the influence from Huisi is well attested for. In Huisi’s text we will see that there are certain interesting, but scattered discussions of Māra.

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<sup>61</sup> T.32.582a06-09 若人雖修行信心，以從先世來多有重罪惡業障故，為魔邪諸鬼之所惱亂，或為世間事務種種牽纏，或為病苦所惱。 Translation from Hakeda 2006, p. 90. Parenthesis in original.

<sup>62</sup> The earliest commentary might be Tányán’s 曇延 (516–588) X.755 *Dàshèng qǐxìn lùn yìshū* 大乘起信論義疏, but only the first fascicle is extant and this does not cover the issue of practice and thus also not Māra. The authorship of this commentary is contested, but it is generally considered early. See Jin 2008, p. 186n366.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 188n370: “Although *Jingyingshu* is traditionally attributed to Huiyuan, there are doubts about his authorship. (...) the commentary [can be seen] as an imitation instead of an authentic work of Huiyuan.”

<sup>64</sup> The only reference to the AMF in Zhiyi’s works in the Taishō version of *Xiǎo zhǐguān*, but it does not appear in the Sekiguchi version, which is generally considered less corrupt according to Daniel Stevenson (personal communication, October 2016).

### 2.3.3 Māra in Works of Huisi

The final texts relevant for our discussion of demons and Māra in meditation is in the works attributed to Zhiyi's master, Huisi 慧思 (515-577). There are four extant works that can with certainty be attributed to Huisi. These are *Suízìyì sānmèi* 隨自意三昧 (SZY), *Zhūfǎ wúzhèng sānmèi fǎmén* 諸法無諍三昧法門 (WZFM), *Fǎhuájīng ānlè xíngyì* 法華經安樂行義 (ALXY), *Nányuè sīdàchánshī lìshì yuànwén* 南嶽思大禪師立誓願文 (YW).<sup>65</sup>

Māra appears in all the four works. However, just like in the dhyāna sūtras, the brief discussions are scattered. At no point does he single out the topic of Māra or Māra disturbance (*móshì*) for thematic attention. Here we will simply try to cover some of the main topics related to Māra in the texts. Given the complexity of these texts this is the only feasible approach. At the same time, we encourage further investigation of the figure of Māra in Huisi's works.

In the SZY, Huisi is asked why some people hear sounds when meditating, while others do not. Huisi provides several explanations for why this may be the case. Two of the explanations for why people don't hear sounds involves Māra. The first is like this:

There is another type of people [in whose] dhyāna-meditation [they] do not hear any sound. [Since] the dhyāna of these people is weak and [their] transgressions are heavy, [they] enter the “dead mind absorption.” This is not good dhyāna. This is an absorption that obstructs the path. These people are stupid. They claim to have obtained the quiescent extinction of nirvana. This is called the absorption of complete extinction.<sup>66</sup> This is not the path of nirvana. Suppose [one] abides in this dhyāna (i.e. absorption) for kalpas, [one will] not extinguish the methods of the path. [This is] called “transgressions that obstruct the path”. [It] is also called “Māra-demons abducting one's consciousness.” The powers of Māra hold it (ie. the consciousness) [and tricks it into] a make-belief dhyāna-meditation.<sup>67</sup>

Here Māra is able to attack the practitioner due to his (karmic) transgressions. Māra moreover tricks into false meditative states and abducts his consciousness into the dead-end state of complete extinction.

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<sup>65</sup> For the most comprehensive study of Huisi's texts in English, see Stevenson and Kanno 2006.

<sup>66</sup> Skt. *nirodha samāpatti*.

<sup>67</sup> X.55.502c07-c11 更有一種人禪定。不聞一切聲者。此人薄禪罪重入死心定。此非好禪。此是障道定。其人頑癡。自謂我今得寂滅涅槃。亦復名為滅盡定。此非涅槃道。設使經劫住是禪中。不盡道法。名障道罪。亦名魔鬼奪其識去。魔力持之狀似禪定。

In another explanation that involves Māra, Huisi relates that Māra blocks the mind of the practitioner. Here this is due to the practitioner “abiding in the subtle mind”:

One type of people is those not yet having attained dhyāna-meditation. Prior to [entering] the first dhyāna, [they] attain the “subtly abiding mind.” This is called “abiding sensation.” [one] is not aware of it, just like person that is sunken into dreams but does not dream. This is Māra-demons blocking one’s mind. The state is similar to dhyāna-meditation, but one does not know. [One] does not know it at the time of entry, only upon exiting is [one] aware of it, asking “where did [I] go?”<sup>68</sup>

These two ways of operating, blocking the mind and tricking the practitioner into false states of dhyāna, are something that we will see in Zhiyi’s instructions later as well. In Zhiyi, however, it is not connected with bad karma.<sup>69</sup>

Just below, Huisi relates an anecdote about Śariputra which explains the power of meditation in fending off harmful Piśācāḥ demons, and by extension, Māra himself.

Moreover, when Śariputra was practicing meditation in the mountains he met a Piśācāḥ demon and hordes of other demons travelling in the mountains. Because Śariputra was sitting on the road, blocking it, the Piśācāḥ demon became very angry. With all his power, he hit the head of Śariputra with a Vajra scepter so the great trichilocosm shook. Unknowingly, Śariputra came out of meditation and realized that something was strange with his scalp. He stood up and asked the Buddha: “World Honored One, something is strange with my scalp.” The Buddha answered: “With utmost power a Piśācāḥ demon hit your head with a Vajra scepter, shaking the great trichilocosm. [The demon] met you when in meditation. If [you] had not been in meditation, [he would have] shattered you to dust.

[An interlocutor] asks: Which dhyāna did Śariputra enter, the power [of which] is able to do this? [Huisi] answered: The meditative power of all dhyāna are able to do this. If [one] enters the Vajra-wall<sup>70</sup> absorption. Heavenly Māra, heretics and Piśācāḥ demon are not able to enter. If they wish to enter, Heavenly Māra, heretics, demons and spirits would themselves shattered and disappear. How could be they be able to [merely] hit?

[An interlocutor] asks: [In] all dhyānas [one] does not sense mind and thought. How could it be that Śariputra entered the great meditation, but as Piśācāḥ hit [his] scalp [he had] a slight strange [sensation]. [Huisi] answered: to let people after [him] know

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<sup>68</sup> X.55.502c04-c07 一種人者。未得禪定。初禪前得細住心。名曰住觸。不自覺知猶如眠熟不夢之人。此是魔鬼[門@卞(閉)]其心識。狀似禪定都不自知。入時不覺至出乃知心識。問何處去。

<sup>69</sup> This second is perhaps not connected with bad karma at all, in which case it actually may serve as an early precursor to Zhiyi.

<sup>70</sup> 壁定, note the similarity with Bodhidharma’s famous wall contemplation 壁觀

the power of meditation, therefore [he] asked this question; to leave word for later generations and instruct [all] sentient beings.<sup>71</sup>

In the WZFM, Huisi also explains that Māra response to the bad karma of the practitioner.

There is the type of people that have committed the five heinous [crimes]. When this person practices the way, [he will] meet the bad friend. Māra-demons [will] enter his mind and [he will] constantly say “I have understood the profound meaning of emptiness of the Mahāyāna.”<sup>72</sup>

In this passage we not only see Māra operating in response to the bad karma of the practitioner, but also that Māra causes the practitioner to believe he has gained realizations and awakening. The topic of Māra being the cause of heterodox teachings in the world is also one we will see in Zhiyi’s writings.

With regards to the subduing of Māra, the WZFM states that the practice of meditation leads to the attainment of supernatural powers (*abijñā, shéntōng* 神通).<sup>73</sup> And with those, the practitioner is able to subdue Māra.

[Through] the practice of dhyāna-vipaśyana [one] attains supernatural power [and thus] is able to subdue heavenly Māra, destroy heretics, liberate sentient beings and cut off afflictions.<sup>74</sup>

There is, finally, one more occurrence of Māra that deserves attention. Towards the end of the ALXY Huisi maps the fourfold Māra on four contemplation practices. Māra of afflictions, he writes, are broken (*pò* 破) through the method of impurity contemplation (*bùjìng guān* 不

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<sup>71</sup> X.55.502c21-503a12 復如舍利弗山中禪定。值毗舍闍鬼將領諸鬼山中遊行。時舍利弗斷其路坐。礙不得過。毗舍闍鬼即大瞋恚。以金剛杵盡力極打舍利弗頭。振動三千大千世界。時舍利弗不覺不知。從定出時覺頭皮多少異常。起來問佛。世尊我今頭皮多少異常。佛言。毗舍闍鬼以金剛杵極力打汝頭。振動三千大千國土。值汝入定。若不入定碎如微塵。

問曰。是舍利弗入何禪定力能如此。答曰。一切禪定力皆能如此。若入金剛壁定三昧。天魔外道毗舍闍鬼所不能近。若欲近時。天魔外道鬼神即自碎滅。況復能打。

問曰。一切禪定無受念心。云何舍利弗入大禪定。毗舍闍打頭皮少異。答曰。令後人知禪定力。故作此問。留名後世引導眾生。是名菩薩自在禪定。菩薩復有自在禪定。若入禪定若出禪。定行住坐臥身心無定無亂。常能示現一切佛事。上人能覺下人不如。是名菩薩自在禪定。

<sup>72</sup> T.46.638b26-27 復有一人。重於五逆。是人學道。值惡知識。魔鬼入心。常說是言。我解大乘甚深空義。

<sup>73</sup> Note the contrast with the AMF above, which stated that Māra caused the practitioner to attain these powers.

<sup>74</sup> T.46.628b25-26 專修禪觀。得神通能降天魔。破外道。能度眾生斷煩惱。

淨觀). Māra of the *skandhas*, *āyatanas* and *dhātus* is broken through an intricate contemplation of the functioning of these three interrelated concepts of Buddhist psychology. Māra of death is related to the contemplation of the mind as impermanent whereas Prince Māra is related to the contemplation of all dharmas (constituents of experience) as empty. This finally leads to the attainment of the immovable *samādhi* (*búdòng sānmèi* 不動三昧).<sup>75</sup>

The intricacies of this system prevents us from appreciating its relevance for Zhiyi's concept of Māra beyond the simple observation that the fourfold Māra here for the first time (as far as we have been able to ascertain) is clearly related to meditative practice.

The topic of demonic disturbance within and without meditation prior to Zhiyi is certainly a multifarious one. In the above we may not have done full justice to the topic and more research has to be done in order to provide a complete overview. Yet, we believe we have revealed some important characteristics of the topic. The most important seems to be the connection that is made between Māra and demons on the one hand, and ethical action on the other. If we dare to make a general observation concerning the adaptation of Indian demonic forces into the Chinese environment is that it seems to pick up on the ethical paradigm of religious Daoism. In other words, the general trend in Māra and demonic disturbance prior to Zhiyi understood it as a response to ethical transgression; to bad karma. As we now turn to Zhiyi's CDCM, we will begin to lay out the land on which this changes.

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<sup>75</sup> For a translation of passage, see Stevenson and Kanno 2006, p. 273-274.

## 3 Zhiyi and the *Sequential Dhyāna Gates* (CDCM)

Having provided a historical and doctrinal background for the study of demonology, we may now turn our attention to the text that serves as the basis for our study, the CDCM. We will begin by situating the text in Zhiyi's overall corpus. Then we will discuss in some detail the structure of the meditative path as it is presented in the text. This will enable us to better appreciate role Māra plays in relation to meditation.

### 3.1 Zhiyi on Doctrine and Practice

Zhiyi place in the history of Chinese Buddhist is well attested for, and need not be repeated here.<sup>76</sup> Zhiyi's oeuvre is often divided into two parts: exposition of doctrine and instruction in practice. While there certainly is ground for problematizing the clear-cut nature of this distinction – his instructions on practice certainly contains much doctrinal discussion - it nevertheless serves as a starting point for approaching his textual corpus. And the corpus is extensive. There are 35 extant works attributed to Zhiyi and another 21 lost.<sup>77</sup> About half of the extant ones are commentaries on Buddhist sūtras and thus doctrinal in nature, whereas the other half concerns practice.<sup>78</sup> The doctrinal works will not be studied here.<sup>79</sup>

A brief mention should however be made of a special topic, that of the concept of evil in later Tiantai though. During the Sóng 宋 dynasty there developed a doctrinal strife between two fractions of the Tiantai community with regards to the question of whether Buddha-nature contains evil or if it is wholly good. Indeed, Ziporyn's landmark study of the topic begins with a quote from the monk Zhīlǐ 知禮, stating: "Other than the devil (i.e. Māra) there is no Buddha, other than the Buddha there is no devil."<sup>80</sup> In the present study we have

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<sup>76</sup> Hurvitz 1962 is the foundational study of his life and teachings.

<sup>77</sup> Hurvitz 1962, pp. 332-334.

<sup>78</sup> See also Donner and Stevenson 1993, pp. 3-8 for a succinct background on the topic.

<sup>79</sup> Some important works of the topic of Zhiyi's doctrine includes: Hurvitz' study of the life and ideas of Zhiyi; Swanson's 1989 groundbreaking work on the Tiantai doctrine of the three truths and a partial translation of Zhiyi's *Fāhuā xuányì* 法華玄義; Ng 1993 which advocates the role of Buddha Nature in Zhiyi; Ziporyn 2000 which discusses Zhiyi for as the basis for his study of the Sóng dynasty Tiantai monk Zhīlǐ 知禮. Ziporyn 2016 provides a more accessible introduction to the developed Tiantai doctrine.

<sup>80</sup> 魔外無佛，佛外無魔. Ziporyn 2000, p. 1.



decided not to try to relate the topic of Māra disturbance – on the level of practice – to the question of evil in either Zhiyi himself or in later developments of Tiantai doctrine. We do not foreclose that such a broader study might yield interesting insights into both to practice and doctrine, but we have been unable to develop this further here.<sup>81</sup>

### 3.1.1 Zhiyi's Instructions on Practice and the Concept of Māra

As we turn to the texts that concerns practice, we may make the distinction between practice- and cult-specific texts, and the comprehensive ones, which are sometimes called, “path- or *mārga* texts.”<sup>82</sup>

It is primarily in the path-texts that we find discussions of Māra disturbing the practice.<sup>83</sup> There are three texts that treats the concept of “Māra disturbance” (*móshi*) as a topic for theoretical discussion. They are, in chronological order:

T.1916 *Shì chánbōluómì cìdì fǎmén* 釋禪波羅密次第法門 (CDCM)

T.1915 *Xiūxí zhǐguān zuòchán fǎyào* 修習止觀坐禪法要 (also known as *Xiǎo Zhǐguān* 小止觀 XZG)<sup>84</sup>

T.1911 *Móhē zhǐguān* 摩訶止觀 (MHZG)

The initial observation one makes when comparing the discussion of Māra disturbance in the three texts is that they are remarkably high degree of continuity across the three. Where they diverge is not primarily with regards to the content of the chapter, but how they structurally feature in the text at large. The visions of the path of cultivation presented in the three.

Our purpose here is to understand the emergence of the concept of Māra in meditation and due to its historical precedence, our arguments will mainly concern the CDCM. This is the first appearance of the concept in his writings and thus understanding it here should establish the basis for which later developments may become clearer. We will however

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<sup>81</sup> We may also mention an article by Donner 1987 that deals with Zhiyi's meditation on Evil, which we came across shortly before finishing this study. We were therefore unable to relate our findings to his argument.

<sup>82</sup> Buswell and Gimello 1992.

<sup>83</sup> We may note that there are brief mentions of Māra in relation to practice in the X.907 *Chánmén zhāng* 禪門章 and T.1919 *Tiāntái zhìzhě dàshī chánmén kǒujue* 天台智者大師禪門口訣. These do not however seem to bear direct relevance for the arguments made in this study. We may add that it is somewhat surprising that there is no treatment of our topic in the otherwise comprehensive T.1925 *Fǎjiè cìdì chūmén* 法界次第初門

<sup>84</sup> The version of this text in the Taishō appears to be corrupt at some important places, most notably in the chapter on “Correct Practice” *zhèngxiū* 正修. Therefore I will at certain points in this study use the alternative version of the text, known as *Lüè míng kāiméng chūxué zuòchán zhǐguān yàomén* 略明開蒙初學坐禪止觀要門. We will call it “Sekiguchi XZG” as it is edited by Sekiguchi 1954, pp. 321-364.

briefly discuss the XZG towards the end of the study. The MHZG, while immensely interesting, is also immensely complicated. Moreover, it is much further developed doctrinally in a way that inhibits the kinds of arguments we will make here.<sup>85</sup>

There is very limited scholarship available in English on the topic of Tiantai practice. Here we will just briefly address the most important works. Zhiyi's most famous work on meditation, MHZG, has been the focus of several studies. Donner and Stevenson's 1993 study of the text, its historical reception and translation of the introductory chapter, introduced the text to the scholarly community.<sup>86</sup> Stevenson has conducted a study on the concept of the "four kinds of *samādhi*" (*sìzhǒng sānmèi* 四種三昧) in the text and its relevance for the study of Buddhist ritual practice and cultivation.<sup>87</sup> The XZG has been translated a number of times, but has received little scholarly attention in itself.<sup>88</sup>

The CDCM has received one single full-length study, but this focused on the latter half of the text, which, as we will see below, is not that relevant for the present study.<sup>89</sup> To our knowledge, the only work to address aspects of the first half of the text is a short, but very useful chapter in Eric Greene's recent work on meditation in fifth and sixth century China.<sup>90</sup>

Due to the lack of scholarship on the CDCM, much of the effort that has gone in to this study has been to make sense of its intricate structure and underexplored concepts, including draft-translating large sections of the text. This will also have to serve as a justification for the extended study of the overall structure of the introductory part of the CDCM, the topic to which we will now turn.

## 3.2 Structure of the CDCM

In this chapter we will discuss the structure of the meditative path as it is laid out in the CDCM. This will enable us to understand how Māra causes disturbances.

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<sup>85</sup> We think in particular about the "perfect and sudden approach" to calming and contemplation (*yuándùn zhǐguān* 圓頓止觀). See Donner and Stevenson 1993, pp. 9-17.

<sup>86</sup> Donner and Stevenson 1993. We await Swanson's forthcoming complete translation.

<sup>87</sup> Stevenson 1986, 1987

<sup>88</sup> The translations are Goddard 1970 [1938], Luk 1964, Saso 2000, and Dharmamitra 2008, of which the last is the most reliable. A new translation, based on the Sekiguchi version is expected as part of Swanson forthcoming. The XZG has been discussed by Bielefeld 1986, 1990.

<sup>89</sup> Wang 2001. Sjøstedt 2015 has, moreover, shown how the Ming dynasty Confucian Yuan Huang drew on the CDCM in his advocating meditation for the cultivation of Confucian virtues.

<sup>90</sup> Greene 2012, pp. 203-218.

The CDCM was lectured in the Wǎguān Temple 瓦官寺 in the capital of Jīnlíng 金陵 during his seven year stay between 568 and 575. According to the colophon, the CDCM was lectured by Zhiyi, written down by Fǎshèn 法慎 and edited by Guàndǐng 灌頂.<sup>91</sup>

We begin by discussing how Zhiyi, or his editors, structured the text. The text is divided into three main parts. They are:

- 1) External preparatory expedients (*wài fāngbiàn* 外方便)
- 2) Internal preparatory expedients (*nèi fāngbiàn* 內方便)
- 3) Practices and verifications of the perfection of dhyāna (*chánbōluómì xiūzhèng* 禪波羅蜜修證).

The part on “external preparatory expedients” contains a set of twenty-five practices and adjustments meant to be conducted outside of, and prior to, entering into meditative concentration (*dìng* 定). This is followed by the preparatory expedients of the internal kind. By “internal”, Zhiyi means that they take place within meditative concentration. This is where we find Māra operating and thus it is this section of the text that we will study in depth here.

In the final part of the text, making up roughly half of the text itself, Zhiyi discusses a variety of practices and verifications of different meditation states. They are organized in a tetralemmatic structure: mundane *dhyāna* (*shìjiān chán* 世間禪), both mundane and supramundane *dhyāna* (*yìshìjiān yìchūshìjiān chán* 亦世間亦出世間禪), supramundane *dhyāna* (*chūshìjiān chán* 出世間禪), and neither mundane nor supramundane *dhyāna* (*feīshìjiān feīchūshìjiān chán* 非世間非出世間禪).<sup>92</sup> As this third part of the CDCM bears relatively little relevance for the study of demonic disturbance in meditation, we will only briefly touch upon it in the following.<sup>93</sup>

The correspondence between the three main parts and the chapters of the text is given in figure one.

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<sup>91</sup> T.46.475c08-10 隋天台智者大師說。弟子法慎記。弟子灌頂再治

<sup>92</sup> Parts of the supramundane and the whole last section on dhyāna fell victim to a much discussed lacuna because Zhiyi supposedly ran out of time when lecturing. The same happened when Zhiyi lectured the MHZG. Donner and Stevenson 1993, p. 21.

<sup>93</sup> The dhyāna-part of the CDCM has been studied by Huei-Hsin Wang 2001 and 2003

Main parts	Chapters
External preparatory expedients 外方便	Fulfilling five conditions 具五緣
	Chastening five desires 訶五欲
	Renouncing five coverings 棄五蓋
	Five adjustments 調五法
	Five practices 行五法
Internal preparatory expedients 內方便	Calming meditation 止門
	Verifying good and bad roots 驗善惡根性
	Dhyāna gates for settling the mind 安心禪門
	Treating illness 治病方法
	Māra disturbance 魔事
Practice and Realization 修證	Mundane dhyāna 世間禪
	Both mundane and supramundane dhyāna 亦世間亦出世間禪
	Supramundane dhyāna 出世間禪
	Neither mundane nor supramundane dhyāna 非世間非出世間禪

Figure 1 CDCM Main Parts and Chapters

We will first discuss, briefly, the external preparatory expedients and then turn to the internal ones.

### 3.3 External Preparatory Expedients

While it is the internal expedients that interests us the most, let us first quickly review the external ones. This is relevant for the understanding of meditative practice and Māra in it. In the first stage of the practice Zhiyi presents a list of practices and adjustments that needs to be made in order for the practitioner to be able to enter meditation. They are collectively known as external preparatory expedients. The term external does not imply a physical-mental distinction, but simply means that these are activities that take place outside meditative concentration (*dīng*). They are organized into five groups of five, making up a total of twenty-five. For the sake of simplicity, I present them in the following figure.

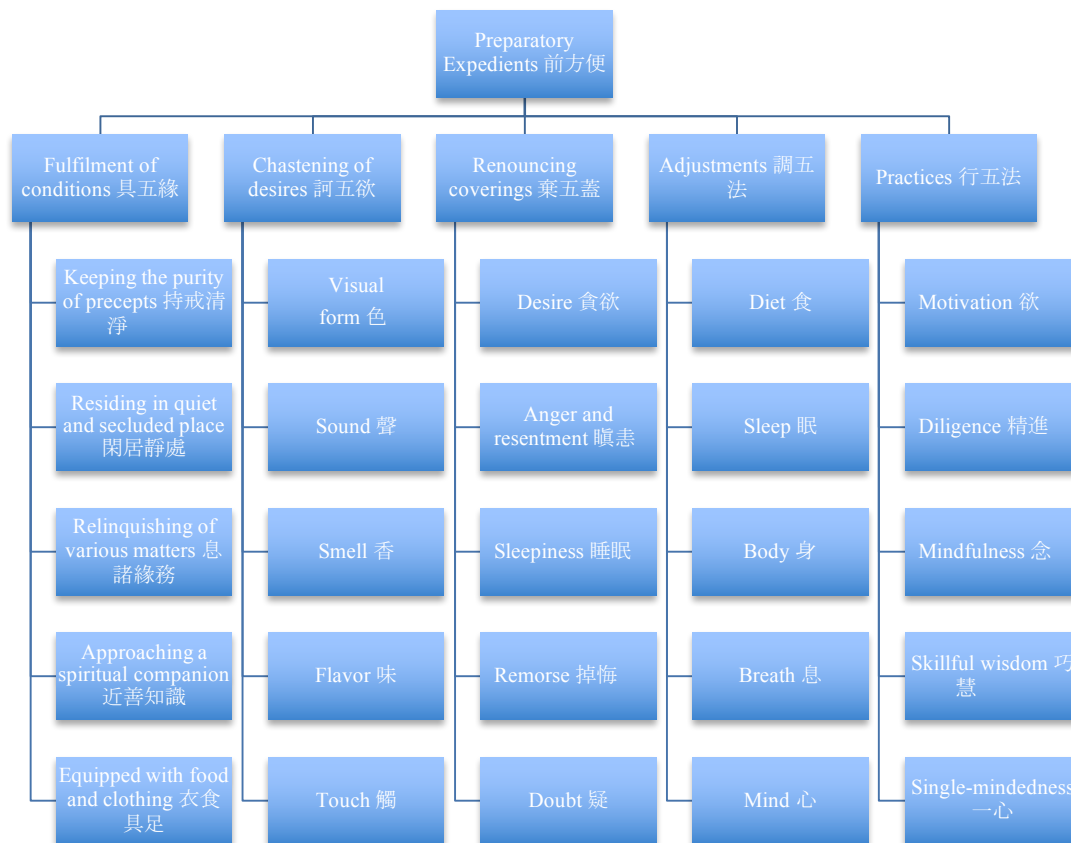


Figure 2 Twenty-five External Preparatory Expedients

The chastening of desires, renouncing of coverings and practices are taken from the DZDL. The fulfilment of conditions is taken from the “dhyāna sūtras” and the final, adjustments, is collected from various meditation masters.<sup>94</sup>

The five groups are different in nature and we will not discuss them in detail here. Some of them describe patently physical, mundane issues like obtaining a quiet and secluded dwelling place and appropriate food and clothing. The very first, the “Keeping the purity of the precepts” involves a ritual component related to ordination and to repentance for transgressions. We will discuss this practice later as Māra is considered to be able to interfere in it. Others deal with the determination and intention with which the practitioner should approach the practice. Yet others describe the need for dealing with emotional coverings that interfere with the meditative practice. The “renouncing of coverings” is the one most closely related to meditative obstacles. Coverings (*gài* 蓋) denote emotional obscurations that prevents the practitioner from entering into meditation. The five coverings include desire (*tānyù* 貪欲), anger and resentment (*chēnhuì* 瞋恚), sleepiness (*shuìmián* 睡眠), remorse (*diàohuǐ* 掉悔), and doubt (*yí* 疑). Zhiyi does not offer any specific practice for dealing with

<sup>94</sup> Andō 2013, p. 246. See also Donner and Stevenson 1993, pp. 19-20.

the coverings, only observes that they pose an obstacle and that they should be renounced (*qi* 棄).

These five coverings should be understood in relation to the three poisons (*sāndú* 三毒) or afflictions (*fánnǎo* 煩惱).<sup>95</sup> The first two coverings are synonymous with the first two poisons: desire and anger. Sleepiness and doubt are together equated with the poison of delusion (*chīdú* 癡毒). The final covering, that of remorse, arises from all the three poisons. This latter covering also makes up the fourth category of what Zhiyi calls the “fourfold affliction” (*sifēn fánnǎo* 四分煩惱). It is called as the “equal-part affliction” (*děngfēn fánnǎo* 等分煩惱).<sup>96</sup>

To sum up, the first stage of practice is a collection of physical and mental preparations that lays the foundation for the meditation practice.

### 3.4 Internal Preparatory Expedients

Having completed the external preparatory expedients, the practitioner then takes up the practices of internal preparatory expedients. As noted above, the term “internal,” refers to the fact that they take place within meditative concentration (*dìng*). Moreover, the practices are also distinguished from the dhyāna states of the following part, which are deep meditative states. The present practices are introductory practices.

We mentioned above that the chapter on the internal preparatory expedients in the CDCM contained five chapters. In terms of concrete meditative practices, however, we may single out two sets. These are 1) calming meditation (*zhǐ* 止), and 2) the “five dhyāna gates” (*wǔ chánmén* 五禪門). While Zhiyi does discuss how they relate to each other, they are, as we will see below, distinct practices. We will first treat them separately and then show how calming informs the decision about which dhyāna gate practice should be taken up.

#### 3.4.1 Calming Meditation

At the very beginning of taking up meditative practice, the practitioner is instructed to take up the “calming” practice. Known as *sāmata* in Sanskrit, this is a well-established practice in Indian Buddhism. In Zhiyi’s later works calming meditation is paired with insight meditation

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<sup>95</sup> T46.489b2-14

<sup>96</sup> This fourfold scheme of affliction that Zhiyi uses is different from the standard threefold one. The origin seems somewhat obscure, but it does appear briefly in the DZDL in connection with the concept of 84.000 afflictions, consisting of four groups of 21.000. See for instance T25.478b15-20.

(*vipaśyanā*, *guān* 觀) rather than the five dhyāna gates, a combined practice that is also familiar from the Southern Buddhist tradition.<sup>97</sup>

In the CDCM the calming practice is described independently. It is described as having three levels. They are known as

calming by way of tying [the mind] to an object (*xìyuán zhǐ* 繫緣止),  
calming by way of suppressing the mind (*zhìxīn zhǐ* 制心止), and  
calming by penetrating the ultimate truth (*tǐzhēn zhǐ* 體真止).

At the first level the practice is to concentrate on one of five “places” (*chù* 處), namely, the top of the head, the hairline, the nostrils, the abdomen, and the so-called earth wheel (presumably under the foot). The second level asks the rhetorical question how one can think that there is a mind at all and how the mind posits an object of concentration external to itself. Finally, the third level is defined as the application of correct wisdom to penetrate (*tǐ* 體) into the emptiness of all dharmas. This is followed by an extensive philosophical discussion on the relation between the mind and karma. If the practitioner completely succeeds with this practice it will lead directly to Nirvana.

This set of three calming practices has in itself a clear soteriological purpose, one which becomes most prominent at the third level. The soteriological function of the calming practice becomes more important in Zhiyi’s later works on meditation. And as we will explore in the final chapter of this study, the method for meditatively destroying Māra has certain commonalities with calming meditation.

In the CDCM, the main function of this practice is different. Calming practice functions rather as a preparatory practice to the practice of the so-called five dhyāna gates. It is expected that through the practice of calming meditation, the practitioner will have certain visions or experiences on the basis of which the practitioner may know which of the five dhyāna gates the practitioner should attempt to enter.

Before we discuss the relation between calming and the dhyāna gates, let us first discuss the five dhyāna gates.

### 3.4.2 The Five Dhyāna Gates

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<sup>97</sup> Shaw 2006, pp. 18-20

The third of the five chapters of the internal preparatory expedients is known as “The Dhyāna Gates for Settling the Mind” (*ānxīn chánmén* 安心禪門). The relatively brief chapter is, we will argue, central to understand the overall meditative path of the CDCM.

The five dhyāna gates are not actually discussed in this chapter. Here Zhiyi only discusses five approaches to take when deciding which of the five practices one should apply. Let us still first list the five gates as they are discussed elsewhere in the text. The five are:

Breath meditation (*ānuóbōnuó* 阿那波那),  
Contemplation of impurity (*bùjìngguān* 不淨觀),  
Compassion contemplation (*cíxīnguān* 慈心觀),  
Contemplation of dependent origination (*yīnyuánguān* 因緣觀), and  
Buddha-recollection (*niànfó* 念佛).

We need not discuss them in depth here, only note that these five practices are well established in the Chinese Buddhist community, mainly owing to an instruction translated by Kumārajīva.<sup>98</sup>

The five dhyāna gates should be taken up according to either of these five principles:

Following [one’s] disposition (*suí biànyí* 隨便宜);  
Following [the need for] treatment (*suí duìzhì* 隨對治);  
Following [one’s] interest (*suí lèyù* 隨樂欲);  
Sequentially establishing (*cìdì lì* 次第立);  
Following the absolute truth (*suì dìyīyì* 隨第一義).

The first practice refers to applying a method on the basis of having practiced the given method in a previous life and thus having a karmic disposition towards it. The second refers to the practice of taking up either of the methods for the sake of ridding oneself of the negative karmic retribution caused by transgressions in previous lives. The third describes the situation where the practitioner can take up whichever method he or she has an inclination towards due to there being no karmic obstacles to the path. In the absence of karmic obstacles, the practitioner may also follow the fourth approach which is a program of sequentially taking up the different methods that gradually leads deeper into the practice. The final approach is a program whereby the practitioner follows “the principle of the absolute truth.”<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Greene 2012, p. 44.

<sup>99</sup> What exactly following the principle of absolute truth entails is not explained, but it is also not important for our present purpose.



The last three principles are not discussed any further and it seems quite clear to us that it is the first two principles are the foundational ones. They guide the practitioner to take up on the appropriate dhyāna gate practice on the basis of the individual's karmic constitution. He may have a karmic affinity with either of the methods or he may have the need for a specific practice due to former transgressions. But this also raises a central question: how does one know one's actions in previous lives? How does one know if one has cultivated meditation or committed transgressions? Or put conversely, which one and for what purpose should the five practices be taken up and why? This is where the method of calming meditation enters the picture.

### 3.4.3 Knowing One's Karmic Constitution

The main purpose of the practice of calming meditation in the CDCM is to provide the practitioner with information about his karma. Zhiyi says that if the practitioner is able to skillfully cultivate the calming meditation,<sup>100</sup> scattered thinking will be put to rest and the mind will become clear and still. In this still mind the so-called roots of good (*shàn'gēn* 善根) and bad (*ègēn* 惡根) from previous lives will spontaneously appear (*fā* 發).<sup>101</sup> These good and bad roots make up the two categories of karmic constitution of a person.

It is not the roots themselves that come forth, but rather marks (skt. *nimitta*, *xiàng* 相) indicative of the karmic roots. The marks appearing in meditation indicating to the practitioner the progress in meditation is found in different Buddhist traditions of meditation. It is prominent in the *Chán Scripture of Dharmatrāta*,<sup>102</sup> but a related tradition can also be found in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* of the Southern Buddhist tradition.<sup>103</sup>

Zhiyi provides an extensive catalogue of such marks. This catalogue functions as a handbook for the interpretation of the marks. The marks, if properly interpreted, will indicate to the individual what kind of karmic roots he possesses. I will discuss this system at some length because it serves as the basis for understanding the demonic interference later on. I

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<sup>100</sup> Zhiyi does not specify which of the three levels of calming will bring about these experiences

<sup>101</sup> T.46.494a07-09 行人既能善修止門。息諸亂想。則其心澄靜。以心靜故。宿世善根。自然開發。若無善者。則發諸惡法。 This discussion of karmic constitution relies on Greene 2012, pp. 205-218.

<sup>102</sup> The original title of the text may have been *Yogācāra Bhūmi* and it contains the teachings of the famous Gandhāran meditation master Buddhasena. See *ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53-63.

will, however, not discuss the descriptions of the marks of the experiences themselves as that will take us too far afield.

The marks are, as already mentioned, indicative of the presence of roots of either good or bad karma. Let us first take a closer look at the good roots. Zhiyi begins by making a distinction between those marks indicative of good deeds conducted *outside* of meditative concentration (*waishàn'gēn* 外善根) and those done *within* (*neishàn'gēn* 內善根). The external good roots are results of five types of good deeds from previous lives<sup>104</sup>. This type of good roots is less important for Zhiyi. The presence of internal good roots, on the other hand, is particularly important to determine.

The presence of internal good roots means that the practitioner has cultivated and made some progress with one or more of the five dhyāna gate practices in previous lives. The marks indicating the presence of such roots are closely associated with the content of the five practices themselves. The difference between the two is that the marks indicating the presence of roots is expected to come up spontaneously, not through deliberately taking up the method. Eric Greene writes the following about the process:

Zhiyi describes the manifestation of these good roots as, in essence, the spontaneous occurrence of experiences that when actually cultivating trance are topics or objects of conscious development. Thus the meditator might "suddenly" (忽然) experience a vision of the thirty-six impure elements of the body, of the nine kinds of corpses, or of his own body dissolving into a glowing skeleton. The very objects towards which the meditator consciously directs his mind when actually cultivating trance [ie. dhyāna] here manifest suddenly and unexpectedly, as "verification" (驗) of the presence of the roots in question.<sup>105</sup>

On the basis of such verificatory experiences, the practitioner knows which meditation practice he has practiced in the past and thus has a karmic affinity with. This is called, in Zhiyi's technical jargon "cultivation that is activation" (*xíngxiū* 行修)<sup>106</sup>. Once the experience is properly interpreted by the practitioner, he knows which method he is likely to make

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<sup>104</sup> The five are: charity; keeping of precepts; obedience to parents and elders; revering and making offerings to the Buddhist community; and reading, reciting, hearing and studying Buddhist scriptures. The manifestation of external good comes in two forms; as visions (*xiāngmào* 相貌) and as good mental states/qualities (*shànxīn* 善心).

<sup>105</sup> Greene 2012, p. 209

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pp. 210-211. This stands in contrast to "cultivation that is obtaining" (*déxiū* 得修) which is the attainment of specific states due to the cultivation of the associated practice, in other words, regular meditative cultivation.

further progress with it taken up. Here we see that the first goal of calming meditation is to “re-connect” with the meditative states of previous lives.

But the practitioner might also experience marks that indicate the bad roots. Such marks reveal that he has committed transgressions in previous lives. They are identified as five bad states (*èfǎ* 惡法, or *bùshànfǎ* 不善法). The five are:

distracted thinking (*juéguān* 覺觀),  
desire (*tānyù* 貪欲),  
anger and resentment (*chēnhuì* 瞋恚),  
delusion (*yúchī* 愚癡), and  
evil karmic obstacles to practice (*èyè zhàngdào* 惡業障道).

These five<sup>107</sup> states correspond to the five dhyāna gates. The difference with the good roots above is that the five practices here are prescribed as “treatment practices” (*duìzhìfǎ* 對治法). They are to be taken up to treat the corresponding bad karmic root.

Zhiyi also equates the five bad states with the fourfold afflictions.<sup>108</sup> As such the bad states might seem similar to the five coverings (*wǔgài*) discussed as part of the external preparatory expedients above. What is important to notice here though is that these are experiences of marks indicating the presence of certain karmic *roots*, not the fruition of them. Importantly, these experiences arise due to the *successful* calming of the mind.<sup>109</sup> The karmic roots exist on a deeper level and the marks that arises from, for example, anger are not the same as the experience of anger. It is in a sense a second-order experience of anger, revealing rather one’s proclivity for anger and consequently the need for the application of specific treatment practice.<sup>110</sup> For the sake of clarity, we have provided a figure of the complete system below.

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<sup>107</sup> Again Zhiyi describes three bad states under each of these five, making up a total of fifteen bad states.

<sup>108</sup> The second, third and fourth state align with the three poisons. Distracted thinking and karmic obstacles together make up the equal-part affliction.

<sup>109</sup> This is pointed out by Greene 2012, p. 212.

<sup>110</sup> Greene discusses how Zhiyi classifies the five bad mental states according to “three ‘obstructions’ (*āvaraṇa*): the obstruction of the defilements (*kleśāvaraṇa*; *fánnaōzhàng* 煩惱障), the obstruction of retribution (*vipākāvaraṇa*, *baòzhàng* 報障), and the obstruction of [evil] karma (*karmāvaraṇa*, *yèzhàng* 業障) (...) align[ing] the ‘obstruction of the defilements’ with the manifestation of the evil roots of lust, hatred and confusion (the second, third, and fourth categories respectively), the ‘obstruction of retribution’ with the root of distracted thinking (the first category), and the ‘obstruction of karmic obstructions’ with the final category, the evil roots of ‘evil karma’ (*è’yè* 惡業).” (2012, p. 213).



Figure 3 Karmic Constitution as Experienced in Calming Meditation

To return to the “Dhyāna gates for settling the mind,” we may now better appreciate how the first two principles of “following [one’s] disposition” and “following [the need for] treatment” functions. They rely on the practice of calming meditation for the generation of marks. Through these marks, if interpreted correctly, the practitioner will know what is hidden in the depth of his mind and consequently he can take up the appropriate practice.

### 3.4.4 Attainments and its Impediments

The five dhyāna gates lead into different meditative states and they generate different attainments. The practices and the corresponding attainments and stages of sagehood are listed in the table below. The details of the different attainments are not directly relevant for our further discussion of Māra in meditation.<sup>111</sup> Here we will just briefly note that the different dhyāna gates leads to different attainments in the proper dhyāna states.

Dhyāna gate	Attainment	State or stage of Sagehood
Breath meditation	This dhyāna-samādhi penetrates into the fundamental [dhyāna], [the sixteen] extraordinary and superior [methods] and the [contemplation leading to] supernatural powers and insight. 此通至根本及特勝通明等諸禪三昧。	Mundane, common-folk dhyāna 世間凡夫禪
Contemplation of impurity	This dhyāna-samādhi penetrates the nine considerations [of a decaying corpse], the [eight] liberations (vimokṣa) and the transcendental [samādhi] 此通九想背捨超越等諸禪三昧。	Supramundane dhyāna, the practice of Śravakas 出世間禪。諸聲聞人所行

<sup>111</sup> See Wang 2001 for the only discussion of this part of the CDCM in English.

Compassion contemplation	This dhyāna-samādhi penetrates the four infinite [minds] 此通四無量等。諸禪三昧。	[The practice of] common people and sages 凡聖二人。
Contemplation of dependent origination	This dhyāna-samādhi penetrates into the wisdom practice of twelve [links of] dependent origination and the four truth 此通至十二因緣四諦等慧行諸禪三昧。	The practice of the Pratyeka Buddha 辟支佛人之所行。
Buddha-recollection	This dhyāna-samādhi penetrates into the nine dhyānas and the hundred-and-eight samādhis 此通至九種禪。及百八三昧。	The practice of Bodhisattvas 諸菩薩之所行。

Figure 4 Attainments Through the Five Dhyāna Gates<sup>112</sup>

It is prior to the practitioner taking the step into these rarified states that he may be attacked by Māra. It is in this in his quest for sagehood that he may be tricked into deviancy. This is what we will turn to and discuss at length in the following chapters.

But first let us just briefly note another category of obstacles to practice. This is the issue of illness in meditation. As we shall see in the next chapter, this will make up a part of the Zhiyi's system of the fourfold Māra in meditation. When the practitioner engages in meditation he may experience various types of illnesses. As Pierce Salguero has shown in his study of the corresponding chapter in the XZG, Zhiyi draws on both Indian and Chinese medical systems which he “characterizes (...) as compatible but separate bodies of knowledge.”<sup>113</sup> He also proposes various methods for treatment based on the etiology of the illness.<sup>114</sup>

<sup>112</sup> T.46.494a28-b04

<sup>113</sup> Salguero 2014, p. 104. For his translation of the chapter, see Salguero 2012

<sup>114</sup> We may also mention that one of the three causes of illness Zhiyi provides is indeed demonic disturbance. This does, however, not seem relevant for our argument here. See T.46505c25.

## 4 Māra's Deeds

In the last chapter we discussed the structure of the meditative path according to the CDCM and briefly alluded to the fact that Māra cause disturbance in relation to the practices of the “internal preparatory expedients.” In this chapter we take a first step in our investigation of the disturbances that Māra causes.

We will begin by discussing the concept of Māra disturbances, what we in this context will call “Māra's deeds,” in the early Mahāyāna corpus known as the Perfection of Wisdom. The sūtras of this corpus together with an influential commentary on one of them, are undoubtedly what Zhiyi drew on when he composed his own chapter on Māra. However, as we shall see below, these disturbances are for the most part not discussed in relation to the practice of meditation. According to these texts Māra is not an adversary of the meditating practitioner in particular.

This changes with Zhiyi. In the CDCM we will see that Māra is redefined as one or several meditative obstacles. Drawing on key attributes of the figure as it appears in the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras and its commentary, Zhiyi, we will argue, makes some important doctrinal changes whereby Māra goes from being a general adversary of Buddhist to becoming a meditation-specific cause of disturbance.

### 4.1 Māra in Perfection of Wisdom and its Commentary

The Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) sūtras are generally considered some of the oldest scriptures of the Mahayana canon and foundational to the doctrinal developments of the tradition. Among the many sūtras belonging to this corpus, the Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 lines (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*) is accepted as the earliest stratum from which other sūtras, both longer and shorter, developed.<sup>115</sup>

The earliest Chinese translation of the 8,000 lines sūtra was made by Lokakṣema in year 179-180 and is known as *Dàoxíng xōrě jīng* 道行般若經.<sup>116</sup> The somewhat later version of the text is the Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 lines (*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*). This was also, like the first one, translated into Chinese several times, but most importantly by Kumārajīva between year 403 and 404. This is known as the Great

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<sup>115</sup> Conze 1978, p. 1. It is translated on the basis of a Sanskrit manuscript by Conze 1973.

<sup>116</sup> T.224. See also Lancaster 1975, pp. 30-31.

Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra (*Móhē bōrě bōluómì jīng* 摩訶般若波羅蜜經, here: PP).<sup>117</sup> This one is particularly important because it served as the basis for the one hundred fascicle long encyclopedic commentary known as the *Dàzhìdùlùn* 大智度論 (\**Māhaprajñāparamitopadeśa*, here: DZDL). The commentary is traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna, but this has been questioned by modern scholars<sup>118</sup>. It is more likely that it was compiled by the translator, Kumārajīva. For Zhiyi, however, the DZDL was most likely considered to be the creation of Nāgārjuna.

An extensive survey of Māra in the DZDL and the Perfection of Wisdom literature lies outside the scope of the present work. Here we shall limit ourselves to making some comments about the how Māra is considered to cause disturbance.

#### 4.1.1 Māra in Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras

In his study of the Perfection of Wisdom literature through the rhetorical figure of chiasmus Matthew Orsborn (Shi Huifēng 釋慧峰) has contributed greatly to the understanding of Māra.<sup>119</sup> Chiasmus is a “(...) methodology [that] analyses a text into two parallel halves, identifying complementary ‘prologue’ (A) and ‘conclusion’ (A’) and highlighting a critical central point (...).”<sup>120</sup> This has enabled him to illuminate potential rhetorical connections between a number of seemingly disparate topics in the sūtras, but also the critical central point of a given topic. In the case of Māra, Orsborn has suggested that he appears as the “bad friend,” (*pāpimitra*, *èzhīshì* 惡知識), and as the opposing force of the “good friend,” (*kalyāṇamitra*, *shànzhīshì* 善知識) on the Bodhisattva path.<sup>121</sup>

It is however “Māra’s deeds” that interest us the most here as this is the concept that Zhiyi picks up. In the 8,000 line sūtra, there are two chapters on the topic.<sup>122</sup> Both of the chapters are known in Sanskrit as *māra karma*, a genitive “*tatpuruṣa*” compound, meaning “the work or deeds of Māra.”<sup>123</sup> In Kumārajīva’s translation of the text the first of the two is translated as “Chapter on Māra’s deeds,” *móshìpǐn* 魔事品<sup>124</sup>, whereas the second is known as “Awareness of Māra by irreversible [Bodhisattvas],” *āpíbázhì juémóipǐn* 阿毘跋致覺魔

<sup>117</sup> T.223. Conze 1975, p. 35.

<sup>118</sup> Williams 2009, p. 6

<sup>119</sup> Orsborn 2012.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. iii.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 195-200, 309-312.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 315. These are chapters 11 and 21 of the text.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 315.

<sup>124</sup> Chapter 11.

品.<sup>125</sup> The corresponding two chapters of the PP are “Chapter on Māra’s deeds”<sup>126</sup> and “Chapter on Māra grievance” *móchóupǐn* 魔愁品<sup>127</sup> respectively. The last of the two chapters in both of the texts deals with questions on Māra disturbance, or rather his grief, after aspiring Bodhisattva has attained Bodhisattvahood, after he has become an irreversible Bodhisattva.<sup>128</sup> This issue of post-attainment Māra does not seem to bear relevance for Zhiyi’s concept of Māra in meditation. We will instead discuss the first chapter, the one discussing Māra’s deeds.

In this chapter, Buddha gives a long list of activities that are considered deeds of Māra. Conze, in his translation of the PP drawing mainly on Sanskrit materials, translates each item on the list along the lines of “this also should be known as Mara's deed to the Bodhisattvas.”<sup>129</sup> The list of disturbances begins with mundane acts like yawning, laughing, and having stray thoughts come up. It moves on to wrong motivations for practice, rejection of the sūtra, desertion of the goals of practice. Applying the method of chiasmic analysis, Orsborn points out that the worst Māra deed is “(...) that of abandoning the essential teaching of the *bodhisattva* vehicle, *Prajñāpāramitā*, and taking up the texts and practices of the two vehicles.”<sup>130</sup>

Before we turn to the DZDL, one observation needs to be made. The Māra deeds are distracting the bodhisattva-in-the-making while engaged in the acts of copying, retaining, reading, reciting or contemplating the sūtra.<sup>131</sup> In the PP chapter none of the deeds, or disturbances, listed are specific to, or even mentioned in relation to, meditation (*dhyāna*). This does not foreclose the possibility that such Māra activity also may pose a disturbance in meditation, indeed, the PP does state that Māra can disturb cultivation, *xiūxíng* 修行.<sup>132</sup> What is important is that no specific connection between Māra and meditation is expressed.

#### 4.1.2 Māra in *Dàzhìdùlùn* (DZDL)

<sup>125</sup> Chapter 21. Translation of the title from *ibid.*, p. 320.

<sup>126</sup> Chapter 46.

<sup>127</sup> Chapter 62.

<sup>128</sup> *ibid.*, p. 319-322.

<sup>129</sup> Conze 1975, p. 332-337. Kumārajīva’s original phrase 當知亦是菩薩魔事 we would prefer to translate as “[One] should know that this also is a Māra deed of the Bodhisattva.” The Chinese reader of the text, we believe, would not necessarily have understood the phrase as indicating that this is something that Māra does to the aspiring Bodhisattva, but rather that his own deeds are Māra deeds.

<sup>130</sup> Orsborne 2012, p. 319.

<sup>131</sup> This has also been pointed out by Yamabe 1999, p. 438-439.

<sup>132</sup> T.08.320a20



The DZDL is a highly influential commentary-cum-encyclopedia based on the PP. Its influence on Zhiyi's work is well established.<sup>133</sup> It is also relatively clear that Zhiyi based his discussion of Māra on it.

The arguably most prominent feature of the DZDL commentary on the PP's chapter on Māra's deeds is the introduction of the fourfold system of Māra. We have already briefly discussed them, but we will properly introduce them here. According to the DZDL they are:

Māra of Afflictions (*kleśamāra*, *fánnǎo mó* 煩惱魔)

Māra of the Five Aggregates (*skandhamāra*, *wǔzhòng mó* 五眾魔; alt. Skandha Māra *yīnmó* 陰魔<sup>134</sup>)

Death Māra (*mṛtyumāra*, *sǐmó* 死魔)

Prince Māra Constantly Enjoying Pleasures Provided by Others (*paranirmita vaśavartin devaputra māra*, *tāhuà zìzài tiānzǐ mó* 他化自在天子魔; here: Prince Māra *tiānzǐ mó* 天子魔)

In the DZDL, *Kleśamāra* not surprisingly refers to the afflictions of a sentient being, numbering 108 or 84,000. *Skandhamāra* refers to the five aggregates making up what is mistakenly considered to be the self. The Māra of death is related to process of impermanence that leads to death.

Prince Māra is explained as master of the world of the senses, deeply attached to all worldly pleasures and jealous of all spiritual practice.<sup>135</sup> In the next part of this chapter we shall see that it is precisely this fourth category of Māra that forms Zhiyi's conception of Māra as a separate meditative obstacle.

In discussing the Māra deeds of the PP above, we expressed some uncertainty about whether these deeds indeed were carried out by an external being or if the Buddha was instructing the bodhisattva to consider certain of his own deeds in reality of the Māra-type. This potential confusion seems to be cleared up in the DZDL. Here the commentator makes a distinction between internal and external Māra works. Māra is first compared to a "hateful thief" (*yuànzéi* 怨賊). Then a distinction is made between sentient and insentient thieves. Among the insentient thieves are illness, hunger and thirst, cold and warm, etc. Among the sentient beings a further distinction is made between internal and external, the internal

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<sup>133</sup> Donner and Stevenson 1993, p. 9n25 The DZDL is T.1509

<sup>134</sup> This is the rendering Zhiyi uses and appears in T.25.99b12

<sup>135</sup> T.25.534a04-06

being "created by one's own mind, troubling [so as one] does not obtain the taste of the dharma, giving rise to wrong views, doubt and regret, non-belief etc."<sup>136</sup> The external are:

Māra and his people, evil ghosts, un-believers, those breaking good roots, those who have attained something in meditation,<sup>137</sup> those distinguishing the dharma of reality and meditation, those attaching to the pleasures of the world, hateful thieves, government officials, lions, wolves, evil beasts, poisonous insects etc.<sup>138</sup>

This list of external sentient thieves is the closest we get to a cosmology of figures disturbing religious practice in the DZDL. While not explicitly quoted in the CDCM, this passage may somehow have served as the basis for Zhiyi's demonology.

This is further supported by the way the DZDL makes a connection between the fourfold Māra and the external and internal Māra. The commentator writes:

Internally there is the Māra of afflictions, externally the *devaputra* Māra. When copying the perfection of wisdom [sūtra] all-the-way until cultivating [it],<sup>139</sup> these two causes and conditions will destroy the Perfection of Wisdom.<sup>140</sup>

This distinction between the internal and external Māra and how they pose two different obstacles to religious practice is something that we will see is being picked up by Zhiyi.

As for a meditative connection, there is not much to find in the DZDL as was the case with the PP. The only exception seems to be in connection to the fourth Māra. The commentator writes in another chapter, but in a content-wise closely related discussion of Māra:

[B]y being always one-pointed (*ekacitta*), by not adhering to any (heavenly) sphere and by entering into the immoveable concentrations (*acalāsamādhi*), they have destroyed the paranirmitavaśavartin *devaputramāra*<sup>141</sup>.

<sup>136</sup> T.25.533c18-20 內者，自從心生，憂愁不得法味，生邪見、疑悔、不信等；

<sup>137</sup> This is somewhat unclear, but we may suggest that it refers to people who have had some attainment, but takes it to be more than what it really is.

<sup>138</sup> T.25.533c15-18 魔及魔民、惡鬼，邪疑不信者，斷善根者，定有所得者，實定分別諸法者，深著世間樂者，怨賊，官事，師子、虎狼，惡獸、毒蟲等。

<sup>139</sup> This is a common elliptical expression in the Perfection of Wisdom literature meaning all the practices from the superficial writing/copying of the sūtra up until the actual practice of it. In-between practices tend to include retaining (*shòuchí* 受持), reading (*dú* 讀), reciting (*sòng* 誦), preaching (*shuō* 說) etc.

<sup>140</sup> T.25.536c04-05 內有煩惱魔、外有天子魔，是二事因緣故，書般若波羅蜜乃至修行時，壞般若波羅蜜

<sup>141</sup> T.25.99b15-16 常一心故，一切處心不著故，入不動三昧故，破他化自在天子魔。 Translation, including the italics, in Lamotte 2001, p. 277.

The destruction of the cosmological Māra is directly connected with entry into a samādhi. The only other instances in which this samādhi is mentioned in the PP and DZDL is in a list of 108 samādhis, where the commentator glosses it like this:

There are people that say about the immoveable concentration: The fourth dhyāna is immovable. In the realm of desire, the five desires cause movement. In the first dhyāna, coarse and fine mental functioning<sup>142</sup> causes movement. In the second dhyāna, joy causes movement, in the third dhyāna pleasure causes movement, in the fourth dhyāna [one] depart from respiration. Because there is no movement [it is called] immovable<sup>143</sup>.

It is interesting that we find in the DZDL a meditative state that destroys the cosmological Māra. But according to this gloss, Māra is only destroyed when the practitioner enters into the forth dhyāna. This does not accord with the way Zhiyi understands Māra, as we will see below, where already the entry into the first dhyāna marks the escape from Māra's reach.

With this one exception Māra seems not to be discussed in relation to meditation in the PP and DZDL. A final observation will make this clear. Wang Huei-hsin has showed that the structure of the CDCM correlates with the chapter of the DZDL discussing the perfection of dhyāna (*dhyāna pāramitā, chánbōluómi*)<sup>144</sup>. This chapter is, moreover, a commentary on a single sentence in the introductory chapter of the PP (*xùpǐn* 序品).<sup>145</sup> Yet, when consulting the chapter in the DZDL, we find only two short references to Māra. At the beginning of the chapter a short version of the interaction between Māra's three daughters and the Buddha (to be) under the Bodhi tree is recapped. Upon hearing the *word* of the Buddha the daughters answer: "this person is free from desires, [we] cannot move [him]."<sup>146</sup> The second reference simply states that desire is the web and army of Māra. These two brief appearances of Māra do not, however, warrant the centrality of Māra in the CDCM, to which we will now turn our attention.

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<sup>142</sup> *Juéguān* 覺觀, skt. *vitarca* and *vicāra*

<sup>143</sup> T.25.400a15-18 不動三昧者，有人言：第四禪是不動；欲界中五欲故動，初禪中覺觀故動，二禪中喜多故動，三禪中樂多故動，四禪離出入息，無諸動相故不動

<sup>144</sup> This is chapter 28 of the DZDL. For a comparative parsing of the CDCM and the DZDL, see Wang 2001, pp. 78-81.

<sup>145</sup> The sentence is: 不亂不味故，應具足禪波羅蜜。The first 34 fascicles of the DZDL is a commentary on this first *xùpǐn* chapter of the PP.

<sup>146</sup> T.25.181a10-11 此人離欲，不可動也

## 4.2 Māra and Disturbance in Meditation

We have seen so far is that in the PP and DZDL, Māra's deeds are described as obstacles to Buddhist practice broadly defined, but seem not to feature prominently in relation to meditation. This changes in the CDCM.

The final chapter of the internal preparatory expedients is simply called *móshì* 魔事. While the term *móshì* is the same as what we called “Māra's deeds” in the PP and DZDL, I will distinguish Zhiyi's use of the term by translating it as “Māra disturbance.”

Zhiyi employs the same system of the fourfold Māra as the one we saw in the DZDL, and it is safe to assume that this is where he received it from, not the least because he cites liberally from the commentary. Zhiyi begins by discussing the characteristics of the four Māra (*mófǎ bùtóng* 魔法不同).<sup>147</sup> Here he lays out the doctrinal foundations for the different Māras. These are mostly in line with the DZDL, but we will nevertheless review them here as they form the basis for our subsequent discussion of how they relate to meditation.

Of the Māra of afflictions, Zhiyi writes: “[This] is the three poisons, the ninety-eight declivities, grasping, worldliness, yokes, ties, covers, fetters, vexations, and knots; everything that destroys the cultivation of the path.”<sup>148</sup>

What in DZDL is known as Skandha Māra is by Zhiyi called Māra of Skandha-dhātu-āyatana (*yīnjièrù mó* 陰界入魔). This Māra is:

Five skandhas, twelve ayatanas and eighteen dhatus. All [conceptions of] nama-rupa binding sentient beings. Because the skandhas cover the practitioner's pure good roots and [hinders] increase in merit and wisdom, it is called Māra.<sup>149</sup>

The death Māra is “all karmic retribution of samsara [that] revolves without break.”<sup>150</sup> He continues:

If the practitioner resolves to practice the way, but suddenly gets sick and dies, or because of other injuries cannot practice, this is a waste of the present practice of the sagely way. In a later life, [due to] the causes and conditions changing for the worse, one may lose one's resolve. All this is called Mara's work. When the practitioner is

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<sup>147</sup> T.46.506c07-507a04.

<sup>148</sup> T.46.506c09-10 即是三毒九十八使取有流扼縛蓋纏惱結等。皆能破壞修道之事

<sup>149</sup> T.46.506c20-22 為五陰十二入十八界。一切名色繫縛眾生。陰覆行者清淨善根。功德智慧不得增長。故名為魔。

<sup>150</sup> T.46.506c25-26 一切生死業報。輪轉不息。

practicing [if he is] constantly thinking about death not life and attached to his body and not practicing, this is also [being] drawn in by the Māra of death.<sup>151</sup>

Finally he turns to the Prince Māra. He begins by stating that he is known as *bōxún* 波旬, a transcription of the Sanskrit *pāpīyān*, “the Evil One,” and a common epithet of Māra.

This Māra is the malevolent enemy of the Buddha-Dharma. Constantly frightening the practitioner and causing him to depart from his mental state (界), making ghosts-and-spirits surround [him]. Creating all kinds of distractions and destroying the good roots of the practitioner, this is the *Paranirmita vaśavartin* Māra.<sup>152</sup>

In the next part of the chapter, Zhiyi turns to how the four Māras should be recognized during the practice of meditation. This is explained by the characteristic marks or marks coming forth from the four Māras (*sì mó fāxiàng* 四魔發相). This is where Zhiyi takes a step away from the DZDL. Let us first take a look at the first three types of Māra, which Zhiyi describes the follow way:

The [characteristic marks of] Māra of Afflictions are the afflictions of the three poisons and the equal-part [one] of the non-good roots discussed earlier.

The characteristic marks of Māra of Skandha-āyatana-dhātu<sup>153</sup> are all kinds of [physical] forms, mind and mental states coming forth from non-good and good roots discussed earlier.

The characteristic marks of Māra of Death are the types of illness discussed earlier. Why is that? [It is because] illness is the cause of death.<sup>154</sup>

Here Zhiyi makes the association between Māra of Afflictions and the fourfold afflictions. Although he doesn't make the connection explicit, it seems very likely that what he refers to as “the earlier discussion” is that of the five coverings (*wūgài*). As we discussed under the “external preparatory expedients” above, Zhiyi makes the connection between these five coverings and the fourfold afflictions. If this is indeed the case, then the Māra of afflictions is, in Zhiyi's view, what prevents the practitioner from entering meditative concentration.

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<sup>151</sup> T.46.506c26-507a01 復次若行人欲發心修道。便得病命終。或為他害不得修道。即為廢。今修習聖道。比至後世。因緣轉異。忘失本心。皆名魔事復次行者。當修道時。慮死不活。便愛著其身。而不修道。亦是死魔所攝。

<sup>152</sup> T.46.507a02-04 此魔是佛法怨讐。常恐行人出離其界故。令諸鬼神眷屬。作種種惱亂。破壞行者善根。是為他化自在天子魔。

<sup>153</sup> Zhiyi reverses the order of *āyatana* and *dhātu* compared with the previous discussion. The order used here is the normal one.

<sup>154</sup> T.46.507a05-08 若煩惱魔。如前不善根性中三毒等分煩惱中廣說。若陰入界魔發相。如前不善及善根性中發種種色心境界說。若死魔發相。如前病患法中廣說。所以者何。病為死因。

Zhiyi goes on to equate Māra of Skandha-āyatana-dhātu with the various experiences of both good and bad karmic roots. This seems to be referring to the various marks indicating the presence of good and bad roots as experienced in the initial calming meditation. The Māra of Death is equated with the meditative obstacle of illness for the simple reason that illness is the cause of death.

In this very effective way, Zhiyi makes the connection between the three first Māras and the three stages of meditative practice: afflictions preventing the establishment of initial meditation, the experiences gained in this meditation, and illnesses preventing the practitioner from making further progress. However, it should also be emphasized that in neither of the three places in the text Zhiyi here refers to, does he actually talk about these phenomena as linked with or caused by Māra. Zhiyi equates the three types of Māra with these three phenomena as a way to explain these Māras. The Māras seem to be symbolically associated with the phenomena: they are alternative ways to describe the three meditative phenomena. This is further supported by the observation from the XZG where, in the corresponding chapter, it is stated that “[these] three are all common matters of the world and are born from people’s minds.”<sup>155</sup>

The first three Māras stand in contrast to the final one which, as we have alluded to above, is what Zhiyi actually talks about when he talks about Māra disturbance. We will discuss this type of Māra in more detail over the following two chapters, so we will limit ourselves to some preliminary observations here.

In the list of four Māras in the DZDL and which we saw Zhiyi using above, the fourth Māra is known as Prince Māra (*devaputra māra, tiānzǐ mó*). In the second list, where the characteristic marks of the Māras are given, Zhiyi instead uses the term “demonic Māra,” *guǐshén mó*, 鬼神魔. It seems like such an attributive use of *guǐshén* in front of *mó* does not appear in the Buddhist canon prior to Zhiyi.<sup>156</sup> This new term is important because it points to the fact that Zhiyi includes certain types of demons and spirits of Chinese and Buddhist origin as part of the category of Māra-works.

The Demonic Māra is a category that contains three types of demonic figures. They are *jīngmèi* (精媚), *bùtì* demon (埠惕鬼), and what we here will call Māra proper (*móluó* 魔羅). These three figures are all cosmological beings in the world that come to disturb the

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<sup>155</sup> T.46.470b08 三種皆是世間之常事及隨人自心所生。

<sup>156</sup> The few earlier occurrences of the phrase in the Taisho all appear in longer lists of cosmological beings. The CBETA range tool is invaluable for such types of searches: <http://140.112.26.229/cbetalexicon/range.py>

practitioner in his practice. The first two types, which we will discuss in detail in the next chapter, are demonic figures which Zhiyi introduces into the category of demonic Māra. They have concrete visual appearance and specific ways of disturbing the practitioner. While Zhiyi never makes it explicit, it seems like the two are considered to make up the retinue of Māra.

Māra proper's methods for disturbing the practitioner are, on the other hand, more far-reaching. As we will discuss in more detail later, he is both able to carry a much wider array of disturbing work, but also has a specific malicious agenda.

<b>Four types of Māra</b>	Māra of Afflictions 煩惱魔	Māra of Skandha- āyatana-dhātu 陰入界魔	Māra of Death 死魔	Prince Māra 天子魔, Demonic Māra 鬼神魔		
<b>Marks 發相</b>	The “fourfold” afflictions [caused by] non-good roots 不善根性中三毒等分煩惱	All kinds of forms, mind and mental states coming forth from non-good and good roots 不善及善根性中發種種色心境界	Illness 病患法	<i>Jīngmèi</i> 精媚	<i>Bùtì</i> demon 埠惕鬼	Māra proper 魔羅
<b>Meditative phenomena</b>	Five coverings of the external preparatory expedients 外方便五蓋	Good or bad roots 善惡根性	Illness 病患	Māra disturbance 魔事		

Figure 5 Four Māras, Their Marks and Corresponding Meditative Phenomena.

## 5 Incorporating Demonological Traditions

In the last chapter we saw how Zhiyi reinterpreted the concept of “Māra’s deeds” from the Perfection of Wisdom sutras and the DZDL commentary where it appeared as a general adversary to the bodhisattva-in-the-making to becoming an obstacle specifically to the practitioner of meditation. We showed moreover that it was the fourth category of Māra, the “Prince Māra,” that was the basis for what Zhiyi termed “demonic Māra.” This category of demonic Māra contained three types of beings. It is the first two of these that we will discuss in this chapter. The two types of demonic Māra are *jīngmèi* and *bùtì* demon.

As we briefly alluded to above, the *jīngmèi* and the *bùtì* demon draw on older demonological traditions in China. They are of early Chinese and Buddhist provenance respectively. It may be easy, therefore, to brush the presence of these two demons in the CDCM off as an attempt on Zhiyi’s side to co-opt contemporary demonological traditions into the larger framework of his own system of meditation. This may very well be the case, but we believe that it nevertheless only is half of the story.

Their presence also bears witness to a need in his community, if not for himself, for explaining the larger cosmological place of certain of demonic creatures. They may in a sense serve as imprints of a larger demonological culture that informed Zhiyi’s own conception of the demonological. More important, however, is the question of which demons he included and how he included them.

We will argue that the inclusion of precisely *jīngmèi* both reveals something about the religious impulses that informed the establishment of the concept of Māra disturbance, and help provide a background for understanding how the demonic operates with regards to karma. As for the *bùtì* demon, we will discuss how Zhiyi changed the figure in the process of integrating it into his system, in particular in relation to karma.

The study of *jīngmèi* and *bùtì* may therefore provide certain clues regarding the processes that led to the establishment of Māra and demonic disturbance in meditation and the doctrinal shift that included

Before we turn to the *jīngmèis* we must make a short methodological note. The argument we are making concerning Zhiyi’s concept of Māra is so far only related to the CDCM and consequently only based on the textual material from the CDCM. In the below discussion of the two demons, however, we need to draw on material from Zhiyi’s two other main instructions on meditation, XZG and MHZG. We do this for the reason that certain key



features of the demons and the way they operate are discussed more fully in the latter two texts and drawing on them enables us to gain a better overview of the figures. At the same time, the overall structure of the Māra chapters of these two later texts exhibit such a high degree of continuity with the CDCM so as to warrant this methodological leap. The way the conceptualization of Māra in these two text diverge from that of the CDCM is, as we have pointed out already, with regards to its place on the meditative path and in relation to the method of cultivation, both of which we will return to in the final chapter.

## 5.1 Jīngmèi: the “Chinese” Demon

We will begin by discussing the first type of demonic Māra. It is named slightly different by Zhiyi’s in the three instructions. This is shown in the table above. The CDCM only employs the term *jīngmèi* 精媚. The MHZG uses this term interchangeably with *shímèi* 時媚, “time-*mèi*”. In the Taishō version of the XZG the *mèi* (1) 媚 character is substituted with *mèi* (2) 魅 and in the Sekiguchi version with *mèi* (3) 魑.

In the *Dàodé jīng* 道德經, *jīng* 精 is “the life germ contained in the Dao<sup>157</sup>,” while in other early texts it exists in human beings as “a form of energy that mainly derives from food and nourishes the body, especially the five viscera.”<sup>158</sup> After the fall of the Han dynasty, we begin to see a development wherein *jīng* came to denote a type of demon.<sup>159</sup> In the Baopuzi the idea is, according to Kleeman, that:

as living beings age, they accumulate spirit (*jīng*). Exceptionally long-lived beings, be they animals like the turtle or crane, or plants like the pine tree, could accumulate enough *jīng* to attain the power of transformation.<sup>160</sup>

*Jīng* became a category of spirits that inhabit the world. They can be malefic in nature. The BPZ states: “as for the aged of the myriad beings, the spirit of each one of them can temporarily assume human form to dazzle the human eyes, and often they test people.”<sup>161</sup>

The original meaning of the *mèi* (1) is the verbal “to like”<sup>162</sup> and the derived adjective meaning “likable, beautiful,” possibly related to *měi* 美, beautiful.<sup>163</sup> Later, it gained the

<sup>157</sup> Despeux 2008, p. 562

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>159</sup> In the HDC the earliest source for *jīng* as *yāoguài* 妖怪 is the *Suōshénjì* 搜神記 compiled around 350 AD. Luo 1986.

<sup>160</sup> Kleeman 1994, p. 231.

<sup>161</sup> BPZ 又萬物之老者，其精悉能假託人形，以眩惑人目而常試人 Translation *ibid.*

meaning "attractive, seductive", often together with "bewitching," *yāo* 妖. Adjectival usage of the character is widespread, also in Buddhist texts. In one of the earliest Buddha biographies, the *Fóshuō Tàizǐ Ruìyìng Běnnqǐ Jīng* 佛說太子瑞應本起經<sup>164</sup> the term is used in this way to describe the mesmerizing appearances of Māras daughters.<sup>165</sup> Nominal usage of the term is, on the other hand, very infrequent and we have not been possible to locate any definitive examples of this prior to Zhiyi.

It seems more likely that *mèi* (1) should be understood in relation to the characters used in the XZG, *mèi* (2) and *mèi* (3). In middle Chinese all the three *mèi*-characters were pronounced identically<sup>166</sup> and this makes it possible that they could have been used interchangeably. The second century *Shuōwén Jiězì* 說文解字 dictionary glosses *mèi* (3) as "beings of old spirits" and gives *mèi* (2) as a synonym.<sup>167</sup> If we return to the BPZ, we see that the connection between *jīng* and *mèi* (2) is made already there.<sup>168</sup>

This all provides evidence that the *jīngmèi* as it is written in both the CDCM and MHZG on the one side and XZG on the other should be treated as cognates. While the former *mèi* (1) is associated with the mesmerizing and bewitching appearances of Māra's daughters, the latter two has a meaning closer to the Chinese demonic tradition. This connection becomes even more clear when we turn to discuss how the spirits operates.

*Jīngmèi* is a category of shapeshifting spirits, or rather, sprites. In the CDCM they are described as taking many different shapes.

*Jīngmèi* change [according to] the twelve time periods, taking all sorts of forms. Taking the form of a young boy, young girl or an old man. Its dreadful bodily shapes are different, [in order to] disturb the practitioner.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Hanyu Da Cidian: 愛 ; 喜愛. Luo 1986.

<sup>163</sup> The Middle Chinese pronunciation of which is given by Kroll 2015 as mijX

<sup>164</sup> T.185, likely translated by Zhi Qian 支謙 in the Wu 吳 dynasty. For dating, see Nattier 2008 p. 135.

<sup>165</sup> T.03.477a28-29 三女皆被羅縠之衣，服天名香瓔珞珠寶，極為妖冶巧媚之辭，欲亂其意。

<sup>166</sup> Middle Chinese pronunciation given by Kroll 2015 is mijH for all three.

<sup>167</sup> 老精物 <http://www.zdic.net/z/swjz/>

<sup>168</sup> Kleeman 1994, p. 231.

<sup>169</sup> T.46.1916a10-12 精媚者。十二時獸變化。作種種形色。或作少男少女老宿之形。及可畏身相等非一。以惱行人。

According to the MHZG they may also take shapes as birds and beasts, pleasure ladies and teachers. To know what these figures really are, the practitioner needs to observe at what time of the day they arrive to disturb him:

[One] should skillfully distinguish them according to the time period they arrive. If they arrive in the *mǎo* time period, they are foxes, hares, raccoons and the like.<sup>170</sup>

Zhiyi makes a distinction between the shapes these sprites take, described in the previous quote, and their real nature. This knowledge is only available to the practitioner through a type of divination. The practitioner observes what time of the day the being approaches. If it mostly (*duō* 多) comes during the *mǎo* time one should know that they are foxes, hares or raccoons.

Going back to a reform during the Western Hàn 漢 and with antecedents even further back, the Chinese divided the day into 12 time periods, each lasting two hours.<sup>171</sup> These two-hour periods are named according to the 12 earthly stems (*dìzhī* 地支). The *mǎo* time is one of these twelve and corresponds to the time between 5 and 7 am. The other time periods and their corresponding animals are not listed in the CDCM, but both XZG and MHZG do. Through these two texts a rather extensive system emerges serving as a guide for divining, based on the time of day, the inner essences (*jīng*) of figures approaching the practitioner. For each of the time periods somewhere between one and three animals are listed in the XZG, and three animals in the MHZG. In the latter text Zhiyi seems to be saying that the order in which the three animals appear is connected with which month of the season it appears.<sup>172</sup> The full system is provided in a table at the end of chapter 5.1.

In the traditional Chinese system, each of the zodiac animals (*shēngxiào* 生肖) corresponds to one of the twelve time periods. In all of the cases of the XZG and MHZG one of the animals listed for each time period corresponds to the traditional zodiac of the earthly stem.<sup>173</sup> This provides basis for the assertion that Zhiyi's system draws on early Chinese cosmology. He himself, as we shall see below, instead claims a Buddhist canonical authority.

### 5.1.1 Textual Origin

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<sup>170</sup>各當其時而來。善須別識。若多卯時來者。必是狐兔貉等。

<sup>171</sup> Wilkinson 2000, p. 210-212.

<sup>172</sup>九物依孟仲季傳作前後。According to the Kroll 2015, *mèng, zhòng, jì* means the first, second and third month of the season respectively.

<sup>173</sup> The only slight variation being in the case of the dog, where the zodiac is *quán* 犬, but the XZG and MHZG both gives the synonym *gǒu* 狗.

The MHZG cites the *Mahāsaṃnipāta Sūtra* (*Dàjíjīng* 大集經) as the textual source for the system. Zhiyi explains that there are twelve animals that practice the Dharma on Treasure mountain and that they are the lord(s) of the Jingmeis. Consulting the section of the sūtra Zhiyi seems to be referring to, the connection appears to be relatively weak.<sup>174</sup> The sūtra describes a landscape where Jambudvīpa is surrounded by four mountains made from precious materials and twenty *yojanas* high. Each mountain has three caves, making up a total of twelve caves.<sup>175</sup> In each of the caves one of the twelve animals of the Chinese zodiac<sup>176</sup> lives. The animals in the caves all practice compassion of the *śravaka* kind. Two girls, a *rakṣa* (*luóchā* 羅刹) and a spirit (*shén* 神) together with a retinue of five hundred, make offerings to the three animals of each of the mountains. For one day and one night, one animal roams Jambudvīpa and spreads the *śravaka* teachings to all sentient beings of the same body as the animal in question.<sup>177</sup> At that time the other eleven animals cultivate in their cave, each leaving only in their allotted time. On the thirteenth day a new cycle begins.

Zhiyi says that if the *jīngmèis* appear tentatively (*quán* 權) in response (to conditions?) they will not necessarily disturb, but if they appear in reality (*shí* 實) then they may,<sup>178</sup> using the Nagarjunian terms for relative (tentative) and absolute (reality) truth. But the scene from the *Dàjíjīng* where “daily” animals *teach the dharma* to sentient beings of Jambudvīpa is far removed from a MHZG scenario where hourly animals *disturb* the practitioner in his or her practice. Teaching the dharma and disturbing practitioners are simply opposites!

Another set of canonical sources may shed some light on the topic of animals disturbing meditation, though Zhiyi never explicitly makes the connection to them. This is the story of the Buddha fighting off Māra under the Bodhi tree. In a number of early biographies of the Buddha, Māra, or his daughters, turn into a host of animals as part of their strategy to dissuade the Buddha-to-be from actually reaching awakening. Many of these animals are the same as the zodiacs and the other animals of Zhiyi’s instructions. While we will not discuss the details of each list, we may note that animals such as tigers (虎), dragons

<sup>174</sup> This observation has already been made by Swanson forthcoming, p. 1317 and Shi 2014, p. 164.

<sup>175</sup> T.13.167b25-168a12

<sup>176</sup> With only slight variations in writing, most notably the tiger (虎) being a lion (師子). The fact that these animals are near-identical with the zodiac may indeed indicate that the story is apocryphal.

<sup>177</sup> For instance “all [with] the body of a mouse” 一切鼠身眾生. I take this to mean people born in the year of the mouse, though the passage is unclear.

<sup>178</sup> T.46.115a28-29 權應者未必為惱。實者能亂行人。

or *nāgas* (龍), bulls (牛), horses (馬), pigs (豕), monkeys (猴), all appear frequently.<sup>179</sup> All these animals appear in Zhiyi's system. In the biographies these animals only show up in a short list and none of the larger cosmological connections made by Zhiyi is present.

The most likely source for Zhiyi's shapeshifting spirits, we will argue, is the fourth century Daoist manual Baopuzi mentioned in the second chapter.<sup>180</sup> The chapter called "Into [mountains], over [streams]" informs the reader about the many dangers of the mountains. One may attract illness, become scared, see light and shadows, hear strange sounds, and going mad (*míhuòkuángzǒu* 迷惑狂走). Among the many spirits and demons of the mountains are the old *mèi* (*lǎomèi* 老魅) sprites we discussed above. One of the methods for recognizing these sprites is based on a time-based cosmology closely related to Zhiyi's.<sup>181</sup>

Ge Hong writes that if one walks in the mountains on a *yín* 寅 day and meets someone presenting himself as the Official of Yú (*yúli* 虞吏), then he is, in reality, a tiger. He may also present himself as Lord of the Road (*dānglùjūn* 當路君) or Commander in Chief (*lìngzhǎng* 令長) and then he is a wolf or an old fox respectively. The list goes on to include all the twelve days as represented by the earthly stems. For each of the days the mountaineer can expect to meet between one and three figures of various titles. And behind each of the titles, Ge Hong tells us, is a different animal. In the figure 6 at the end of this chapter, all the titles and corresponding animals are given.

If we compare Ge Hong's system with Zhiyi's we see that there is much overlap in the correspondence between animals and time periods. In the case of the *chén* 辰 time, for example, we see that the BPZ mentions the three animals, dragon, fish and crab. The MHZG lists a scaly dragon or shark (*jiāo* 蛟) instead of the crab while the other two are identical.

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<sup>179</sup> T.184 *Xiūxíng běnqǐ jīng* 修行本起經 : T.03.471a08-09 皆使變成師子熊羆兕虎象龍牛馬犬豕猴猿之形。

T.185 *Fóshuō tài zǐ rùiyìng běnqǐ jīng* 佛說太子瑞應本起經 : T.03.477b13-14 皆使變為師子熊羆虎兕象龍牛馬犬豕猴猿之形。

T.186 *Pǔyào jīng* 普曜經 : T.03.521a27-28 各各變為師子熊羆虎兕象龍牛馬犬豕猴猿之形。

T.189 *Guòqù xiànzài yīnguǒ jīng* 過去現在因果經 : T.03.640b27-28 或猪魚驢馬師子龍頭熊羆虎兕及諸獸頭

T.192 *Fó suǒxíng zàn* 佛所行讚 : T.04.25c12-13 猪魚驢馬頭駝牛兕虎形師子龍象首及餘禽獸類。

<sup>180</sup> This connection has been pointed out by Ōno 1994, p. 541-543 and Shi 2014, 164.

<sup>181</sup> The text does not explicitly call these figures sprites (*mèi*) or demons (*guǐ*), but the discussion appears in the proximity of both figures.

Importantly, the correspondence between the MHZG and the BPZ is greater than that between the MHZG and the zodiac. However, the systems of the respective texts are also different. The time periods of the BPZ are days while in MHZG it is hours. The MHZG also does not make any mention of the titles of the figures approaching.

The similarities between the BPZ and the MHZG are not close enough to ascertain a direct influence from the former on the latter. However, the similarities are sufficient enough, we believe, to warrant the assertion that the category in *jīngmèi* as a demonic Māra draws on an indigenous Chinese tradition of demonology. What is more likely is that Zhiyi integrates a local tradition present in his religious environment and that this tradition, again, is somehow related to the one preserved in the BPZ. The assertion that Zhiyi draws on indigenous traditions becomes even more clear when we turn to the question of how to deal with the *jīngmèis*.

### 5.1.2 Methods of Treatment

How should the mountaineer, in the case of the BPZ, and the meditator, in the case of the Zhiyi's instructions, protect himself? And why should he attempt to know which animal is causing the disturbance? In the case of the BPZ the text advises: "only know its animal name and it will not be able to cause harm."<sup>182</sup>

Zhiyi's method is similar, but involves an oral component. In all his three instructions the first step is to skillfully analyze the figure that approaches. In the Sekiguchi XZG, the word divining, *zhān* 占, is even used, taking the analytical process even further. But obtaining the knowledge is not enough. In the CDCM the and Taishō XZG the practitioner is advised to speak (*shuō* 說) its name. In the Sekiguchi XZG the name should be shouted (*hū* 呼) and in the MHZG it should be called out (*huàn* 喚). In the XZG the sprite should also be scolded (*hēzé* 呵責).

A further method, only mentioned in the MHZG, for warding off *jīngmèis* should also be discussed here. Zhiyi notes that (Daoist) recluses, *yīnshì* 隱士, and (Buddhist) ascetics, *tóutuó rén* 頭陀人 (skt. *dhūta*, austerities), often put up mirrors behind their seat. The *jīngmèis* are not able to change their shapes and take on their usual guises in the reflection of a mirror. Thus when they see a mirror they will immediately flee.<sup>183</sup> The apotropaic function of a

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<sup>182</sup> BPZ 但知其物名，則不能為害也

<sup>183</sup> T.46.116a21-23 隱士頭陀人多畜方鏡挂之座後。媚不能變鏡中色像。覽鏡識之可以自遣

mirror in relation to sprites also appears in the BPZ.<sup>184</sup> Ge Hong instructs the mountaineers to attach mirrors on their backs when scaling the mountains. He continues with a story where two mountaineers are approached by a strange man:

Long ago, Chang Kai-t'a and Ou Kao-ch'eng were both giving earnest thought to the divine process in a cave on Mount Yün-t'ai in Shu [Szechuan], when a man approached them wearing a single garment of coarse yellow silk and a kerchief of Kudzu. "Rest yourselves, processors" he said, "for you are suffering from your life as hermits." When the two of them looked into their mirrors, they saw that it was a tiger. Immediately they greeted it with: "You are an old tiger belonging to this mountain. How dare you pretend to be a human being!" Before they had finished speaking, the man changed into a tiger and left.<sup>185</sup>

Zhiyi calls the making use of mirrors an external (*wai* 外) method as distinguished from the internal (*nei* 內) method of divining based on the time of appearance. Both however functions the same way in that they reveal the true nature of the demon.

It is easy to draw clear distinctions between practices and doctrines of the "Buddhists" on the one hand and "Daoists" on the other. But such categories are not always clear cut. As Robson has shown, Huisi's vow to enter Mt. Nányuè 南嶽 (what we abbreviated as YW above) contains a number of patently "Daoist" term, including one of the earliest occurrences of "inner alchemy" (*nèidān* 內丹).<sup>186</sup> Robson suggests that the reason "Huisi set his sights on Nanyue [was] in part for its role as a center for Daoist practices and as a source for pharmacopeia necessary for his religious pursuits."<sup>187</sup> Indeed, Huisi seems to have pursued techniques of longevity hoping to meet the future Buddha Maitreya and thus be present at the beginning of a new age of "true Dharma."

The presence of Daoist knowledge in the community of Zhiyi's master provides further ground for the connection we have made between Zhiyi's *jīngmèi* and Chinese demonological traditions. Just as Huisi went to Nanyue in hoping "to use longevity techniques and the opportunity for undisturbed mental concentration in order to realize Buddhist ends,"

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<sup>184</sup> Still in chapter 17, "Into [mountains], over [streams]."

<sup>185</sup> BPZ 昔張蓋蹋及偶高成二人，並精思於蜀云臺山石室中，忽有一人著黃練單衣葛巾，往到其前曰，勞乎道士，乃辛苦幽隱！於是二人顧視鏡中，乃是鹿也。因問之曰：汝是山中老鹿，何敢詐為人形。言未絕，而來人即成鹿而走去。 Translation from Ware 1966, p. 281.

<sup>186</sup> Robson 2009, p. 218-220.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 219.

as Robson writes, it seems like Zhiyi instructs his disciples on Chinese demonological techniques *in order to gain* the opportunity for undisturbed mental concentration.

As we discussed in chapter two, knowing the name of the demon and speaking it out is one of the oldest methods for warding off demons in China.<sup>188</sup> Zhiyi does not subscribe to the eschatological vision of the latter, in particular not to the ethical dimension of demonic attacks. Yoshiko Kamitsuka has pointed out that the demons of the BPZ “are regarded as carrying out tests as a means of obstructing those who are in training (...) [and as such] resembles the obstruction of Māra.”<sup>189</sup> It might therefore not be that surprising that Zhiyi includes such a demon. Indeed, the very fact that the *jīngmèi* comes from a tradition earlier than the appearance of the ethical demonology, might not be coincidental. In light of our main argument concerning Māra responding to good rather than bad karma, it was perhaps the case that *jīngmèi* was more readily available for cooptation into Zhiyi demonology than were other “contenders.”

### 5.1.3 Table of Jīngmèi

The table provides different lists of animals from different versions of the texts. For the XZG I have consulted the Taisho and Sekiguchi versions of the text. Because the list of the time-sprites seems to be particularly volatile, I have also consulted two texts by the Tang dynasty Chan-Huáyán exegete Zōngmì 宗密, the *Yuánjuéjīng dào chǎng xiūzhèng yì* 圓覺經道場修證儀<sup>190</sup> and *Yuánjuéjīng dàshū shìyì chāo* 圓覺經大疏釋義鈔,<sup>191</sup> both of which provide early textual alternatives of the XZG.

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<sup>188</sup> An interesting parallel exists here to the early Christian tradition of combating demons. The influential Christian theologian and ascetic Evagrius of Pontus (345-399) established the practice of “talking back” to the demons of gluttony, fornication, love of money, sadness, anger, listlessness, vainglory, and pride. This tradition later developed into the seven deadly sins vividly portrayed in Dante’s *Inferno*. For a translation and study, see Brakke 2009.

<sup>189</sup> Kamitsuka 1996, pp. 36

<sup>190</sup> X.245. For a study of this text and how it relates to Zhiyi, see Gregory 1993.

<sup>191</sup> X.1475.



Earthly stem	MHZG <sup>192</sup>	XZG <sup>193</sup>	BPZ <sup>194</sup>	Zodiac <sup>195</sup>	Modern time <sup>196</sup>
寅 yín	狸豹虎 Badger, panther, tiger	T 虎 S 虎豹 YZ 虎兕	稱虞吏者，虎也。 Calling [himself] Inspector [Official of Yú] = tiger 稱當路君者，狼也。 Lord of the Road = wolf 稱令長者，老狸也。 Commander in Chief = old fox	虎 Tiger	03.00- 05.00
卯 mǎo	狐兔貉 fox, rabbit, raccoon	TZ 兔鹿 S 菟羸鹿 Y 菟羸鹿	稱丈人者，兔也。 Elder = hare [rabbit] 稱東王父者，麋也。 East-King father [King Father of the East] = elk 稱西王母者，鹿也。 West-King mother [Queen Mother of the West] = deer	兔 rabbit	05.00- 07.00
辰 chén	龍蛟魚 dragon, scaly dragon or shark, fish	TS 龍鼈 Y 龍龜 Z 鼉龍	稱雨師者，龍也。 Rainmaker = dragon 稱河伯者，魚也。 Lord of the River = fish 稱無腸公子者，蟹也。 Lord Intestineless = crab	龍 dragon	07.00- 09.00
巳 sì	蟬鯉蛇 cicada, carp, snake	TSY 蛇蟒 Z 蟒蛇	稱寡人者，社中蛇也。 Poor Me [I, the sovereign] = earth-altar snake 稱時君者，龜也。 Lord of Seasons = tortoise	蛇 snake	09.00- 11.00
午 wǔ	鹿馬羸 deer, horse, roebuck deer	TSY 馬驢 駝 Z 馬驢	稱三公者，馬也。 <i>San-kung</i> [three highest officials] = horse 稱仙人者，老樹也。 Genie [immortal] = aged tree	馬 horse	11.00- 13.00
未 wèi	羊雁鷹 sheep, wild goose, hawk or eagle	TSYZ 羊	稱主人者，羊也。 Master = ram [sheep] 稱吏者，獐也。 Official = fallow deer	羊 sheep	13.00- 15.00

<sup>192</sup> English translations follows Swanson forthcoming, p. 1318.

<sup>193</sup> I have consulted the following four texts: T: T.1915 XZG, S: Sekiguchi XZG, Y: Zongmi's *Yuánjuéjīng dào chǎng xiūzhèng yì* 圓覺經道場修證儀 Z: Zongmi's *Yuánjuéjīng dàshū shìyì chāo* 圓覺經大疏釋義鈔

<sup>194</sup> Time periods in days, not hours. Translations from Ware 1966, p. 288, with my additions in brackets.

<sup>195</sup> According to the *Taichū* 太初 calendar reform of 104 BC. Wilkinson 2000, p. 210-212

<sup>196</sup> Wilkinson 2000, p. 211-212

申 shēn	狢猿猴 gibbon, ape, monkey	TZ 猿猴 SY 猴獍	稱人君者，猴也。 Lord = monkey 稱九卿者，猿也。 <i>Chiu-ch'ing</i> [nine ministers] = ape	猴 monkey	15.00- 17.00
酉 yǒu	烏雞雉 black crow, crow, pheasant	TSZ 鷄烏 Y 鷄雞烏	稱將軍者，老雞也。 General = aged fowl [crow, chicken] 稱捕賊者，雉也。 Bandit catcher = pheasant	雞 chicken	17.00- 19.00
戌 xū	狗狼豺 dog, wolf, jackal	TSYZ 狗 狼	稱人姓字者，犬也。 “giving himself a man’s name” = dog 稱成陽公者，狐也。 Ch’eng-yang kung [master of completed <i>yáng</i> ] = fox	犬 dog	19.00- 21.00
亥 hài	豕豢猪 pig, hog, wild boar	T 猪 S 猪豕 Y 猪豕 Z 猪豨	稱神君者，猪也。 Lord of the gods = [wild] boar 稱婦人者，金玉也。 Lady = gold or jade	猪 pig	21.00- 23.00
子 zǐ	猫鼠伏翼 cat, mouse, bat	TSYZ 鼠	稱社君者，鼠也。 Lord of the Earth-altar = rat [mouse] 稱神人者，伏翼也。 God [spirit] = bat	鼠 Mouse	23.00- 01.00
丑 chǒu	牛蟹鼈 bull, crab, tortoise	TYZ 牛 S 牛犢	稱書生者，牛也。 Student [scholar] = ox [bull]	牛 Bull	01.00- 03.00

Figure 6 Table of Jīngmèis

## 5.2 Bùtì: the “Buddhist” Demon

It is safe to assume that, despite Zhiyi’s attempt at connecting it with a Buddhist sūtra, the first category of demonic Māra, that of the *jīngmèi*, would have sounded indigenous or even Daoist to the listener and reader. The name *bùtì* would not. Linguistically, *jīngmèi* is an indigenously Chinese word. But this is not the case for the second demon. This would sound foreign to the Chinese. The name is, or at least claims to be, a transcription from Sanskrit.

We have already discussed the *bùtì* demon above, where we saw that it appeared in the ZCB. Zhiyi says the following in the CDCM about this demon:

*Bùtì* demons also come in many shapes, disturbing practitioners. Sometimes like insects, surrounding people's heads and faces, frighteningly drilling and piercing.

Sometimes tickling<sup>197</sup> beneath the person's armpits. Sometimes suddenly embracing people. Sometimes speaking with terrible noise and taking beastly shapes. Its forms are many<sup>198</sup>.

The shapes taken by the *jīngmèi* was mainly agreeable to the eye, but the *bùtì* demons are decidedly not. Frightening and intrusive the *bùtì* would certainly cause disturbance for the poor meditators they attack. But there is a way to drive it away. The CDCM continues:

[When it] comes to disturb the practitioner, [he] should be aware [of it]. [He should] wholeheartedly close [his] eyes and quietly scold it, saying: “I now know you! You are a *tōulájīzhī* demon who consumes the smells of the fires of Jambudvīpa. You cause false views and delight in causing the destruction of the precepts. But I hold to the precepts and am not afraid of you.” If [the practitioner] is a monastic, he should recite the opening passage of the *prātimokṣa*. If [the practitioner] is a layperson, he should recite the three refuges, the five precepts, the ten grave and forty-eight light precepts of the bodhisattva. The demon will then crawl away.<sup>199</sup>

Not unlike the method for driving off the *jīngmèis*, the central method here also involves addressing the demon by name.<sup>200</sup> It is neutralized through exposure.

### 5.2.1 *Bùtì* Beyond the ZCB

It is beyond doubt that the textual origin of the *bùtì* demon is the ZCB.<sup>201</sup> This is not only because the ZCB is the only extant text in the Taishō which features a demon of this name, but Zhiyi himself also says that this demon is further discussed in the *dhyāna sūtras*<sup>202</sup>. The methods for dealing with the *bùtì* demon is virtually identical.

But on closer analysis we are able to reveal certain important textual discontinuities between the ZCB and Zhiyi’s instructions. The most significant difference is related to the reason for why *bùtì* disturbs. As we saw in chapter two, in the ZCB it is stated that the *bùtì*

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<sup>197</sup> Greene 2012, p. 607 points out that *jīlūè* 擊攪 is a technical term in the *vinaya* meaning “to tickle”. In the CDCM and the XZG it is written *jīlūè* 擊攪, but this is probably a synonym.

<sup>198</sup> T.46.507a15-18 二埠惕鬼者。亦作種種。惱亂行人。或如蟲。緣人頭面。鑽刺摺摺。或擊攪人兩掖下。或乍抱持於人。或復言說音聲喧鬧。及作諸獸之形。異相非一。

<sup>199</sup> T.46.507a18-23 來惱行人者。應即覺知。一心閉眼。陰而罵之作是言。我今識汝。汝是此閻浮提中食火嗅香偷臘吉支。邪見喜破戒種。我今持戒終不畏汝。若出家人。應誦戒序。若在家人。應誦三歸五戒菩薩十重四十八輕戒等。鬼便却行匍匐而去 My translation, but drawing on the translation of the ZCB by Greene 2012, p. 608.

<sup>200</sup> The connection of this method to the Chinese demonological tradition has been pointed out by Yamabe 1999, p. 439-440.

<sup>201</sup> This point has been made by many scholars, including Ōno 1994, pp. 539-540; Greene 2010, p. 607; Swanson forthcoming, pp. 1316-1317.

<sup>202</sup> T.46.507a23-24 如是作種種留難相貌。及除却之法。並如禪經中廣說。

torments those who have broken the precept. This is all but removed by Zhiyi. We see remnants of it in the methods of protection where parts of the monastic and lay regulations are to be recited. But they seem to become magic formulas rather than a method of repentance because of the Zhiyi never provide any karmic reason for being attacked. This lacuna in Zhiyi's discussion of *bùtì* is significant because it provides support to our argument concerning Māra not responding to bad karma.

The description of its appearance is also quite different. Looking at the similarities we see that the only feature from the ZCB which is consistent across all of Zhiyi's instructions is the fact that the *bùtì* demon tickles the practitioner. The MHZG also mentions its characteristic facial features including the face shaped like a Central Asian lute (*pípa* 琵琶), having four eyes and two mouths. The descriptions from the ZCB of the *bùtì* demon as spinning like a wheel of fire, flashing and murmuring “*bùtì bùtì*” are not mentioned. Instead, a number of other characteristic are given: surrounding people's heads and faces, frighteningly drilling and piercing, embracing people, speaking with terrible noise and taking beastly shapes. The story of the hateful monk is briefly mentioned only in the MHZG, but also here with certain differences. Most important is the fact that Zhiyi says that this hateful monk is the forefather (*yuánzǔ* 源祖) of the demons that now torment the practitioners<sup>203</sup>. A table is attached at the end of this sub-chapter indicating the continuities and discontinuities of the four versions of the *bùtì* lore.

The differences between the ZCB and Zhiyi are further accentuated when seen in relief to how the Sòng 宋 Huáyán 華嚴 exegete Zǐxuán 子璿 (936-1038) discusses the *bùtì* demon. This appears in his commentary on the AMF, the commentarial tradition of which, as we will see below, is known have to included much of Zhiyi's demonology. It is quite clear that he has consulted the actual ZCB as we know it.<sup>204</sup> In his commentary we see for the first time outside the ZCB itself a *bùtì* (or *duītì* 堆惕 as is the name he uses) demon having been expelled by the Sangha for his transgressions during the time of the Kanakamuni Buddha, murmuring his own name, spinning wheels of fire and flashing lightning. Zǐxuán, moreover, explicitly states that he draws on the “Dhyāna Illness Sūtra” (*chánbìng jīng* 禪病經), not just

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<sup>203</sup> It is also interesting that while in the ZCB the story takes place in the *time* of Buddha Kanakamuni (迦那含牟尼佛時) the corresponding story in the MHZG takes place during *mòfǎ*, the “latter days of the law,” a doctrinally important term in East Asian Buddhism (拘那含佛末法). Note also the different transcription of the Buddha's name.

<sup>204</sup> T.1848 起信論疏筆削記, T.44.401a22-b05

a text with the more generic name “dhyāna sūtra,” as does Zhiyi. Zǐxuán therefore seems to be the first to actually have conferred with the ZCB.

With regards to the name of the demon there are also interesting differences. The CDCM writes *bùtì* 埠惕 just as in the ZCB. But in the other two text the name is written differently. In the Taishō XZG it is written *duītī* 堆剔, whereas the Sekiguchi XZG writes *duītì* 堆惕. The MHZG also writes *duītì* but with different characters: 堆髓.<sup>205</sup>

On the basis of the above discussion, it does not seem likely that Zhiyi had access to a text similar to the text transmitted down under the name ZCB. Why would he have failed to provide certain key characteristics of the demon of the text, while adding a number of others not present? This might indicate that he had access to a different text which gave a different picture of the demon, perhaps even it was the separate sūtra mentioned by Sēngyòu. However, while Zhiyi’s description is fairly consistent across the CDCM and XZG, the discussion in the MHZG is different yet again. This latter difference might be explained by the well-attested editorial contribution by Zhiyi’s disciple, Guàndǐng 灌頂.

It might very well be the case that the origin of Zhiyi’s *bùtì* demon lies in a tradition only partially related to the ZCB and that at this point in time was more fluid. Granted, the methods for driving off the demon is stable, but this might be explained by importance attached to the correct naming of demons in the Chinese tradition. Determining its presence, on the other hand, could perhaps be understood as a constantly evolving process whereby new marks of identification could be, and indeed should be, added, regardless of what an original text indicates.

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<sup>205</sup> CBETA writes this character: [怡-台+追].

## 5.2.2 Textual Comparison: Bùtì in ZCB, CDCM, XZG, and MHZG

The below table juxtaposes the discussions of the *bùtì* demon in Zhiyi's three instructions with selected passages from the ZCB. Different topics that are continuous are marked with different colors: **Yellow**: appearance 1; **Green**: appearance 2; **Turquoise**: method 1; **Pink**: method 2; **Red**: background story; **Grey**: appearance 3.

ZCB <sup>206</sup>	CDCM <sup>207</sup>	XZG <sup>208</sup>	MHZG <sup>209</sup>
<p>鬼魅所著，見一鬼神，面如琵琶，四眼、兩口，舉面放光，以手擊撲兩腋下及餘身分，口中唱言：「埠惕埠惕。」如旋火輪、似掣電光，或起、或滅，令於行者心不安所。若見此者，當急治之。治之法者，教此行人，埠惕來時，一心閉眼，陰而罵之，而作是言：「我今識汝，知汝是此閻浮提中食火、嗅香、偷臘吉支。汝為邪見，喜破戒種。我今持戒，終不畏汝。」</p> <p>若出家人，應誦戒序；若在家人，應誦三歸、五戒、八戒，鬼便却行，匍匐而去。</p> <p>...</p> <p>「若有四眾患此鬼者，汝當為說治鬼之法。此埠惕鬼有六十三名，乃是過去迦那含牟尼佛時，有一比丘垂向須陀洹，因邪命故為僧所擯，願盡命終自誓為鬼，乃至今日惱亂四眾。壽命一劫，劫盡命終落阿鼻獄。汝等今日宜識名字，一心繫念，莫為所亂。」</p>	<p>亦作種種。惱亂行人。或如蟲。緣人頭面。鑽刺熠熠。或擊攙人兩掖下。或乍抱持於人。或復言說音聲喧鬧。及作諸獸之形。異相非一。來惱行人者。應即覺知。一心閉眼。陰而罵之作是言。我今識汝。汝是此閻浮提中食火嗅香偷臘吉支。邪見喜破戒種。我今持戒終不畏汝。若出家人。應誦戒序。若在家人。應誦三歸五戒菩薩十重四十八輕戒等。鬼便却行匍匐而去。如是作種種留難相貌。及除却之法。並如禪經中廣說。</p>	<p>亦作種種惱觸行人或如蟲蝸緣人頭面，鑽刺熠熠；或擊攙人兩掖下；或乍抱持於人；或言說音聲喧鬧；及作諸獸之形異相非一，來惱行人。應即覺知，一心閉目，陰而罵之，作是言：「我今識汝，汝是閻浮提中食火臭香偷臘吉支、邪見、喜破戒種；我今持戒，終不畏汝！」若出家人，應誦戒本；若在家人，應誦三歸五戒等。鬼便却行，匍匐而去。如是若作種種留難惱人相貌，及餘斷除之法，並如禪經中廣說。</p>	<p>若人坐時或緣頭面或緣人身體。墮而復上翻覆不已雖無苦痛而屑屑難耐。或鑽人耳眼鼻或抱持擊攙。似如有物捉不可得。驅已復來。嗽[口*祭]作聲聞人耳。此鬼面似琵琶四目兩口(云云)。</p> <p>...</p> <p>須知拘那含佛末法比丘好惱亂眾僧。僧擯驅之即生惡誓。常惱坐禪人。此是源祖之鬼。報或已謝而同業生者。亦能惱亂。今呵其宗祖聞即羞去。呵云。我識汝名字。汝是[怡-台+追]惕惡夜叉。拘那含佛時。破戒偷臘吉支貪食嗅香。我今持戒不畏於汝。如是呵已即應去。若其不去當密誦戒序及戒。戒神還守破戒鬼去。</p>

Figure 7 Textual Continuity and Discontinuity of the Bùtì Demon

<sup>206</sup> T.15.341a29-b09; T.15.341b25-c01

<sup>207</sup> T.46.507a15-24

<sup>208</sup> T.46.470b23-c02 Sekiguchi version is very similar.

<sup>209</sup> T.46.115a22-26; T.46.116a13-20

## 6 Māra Proper

The two categories of demonic Māra we have discussed so far represent specific demonological traditions. The *jīngmèi* can be traced back to early Chinese demonological traditions whereas the *bùtì* demon has its origin in the world of Buddhist apocrypha. They both are demonic figures with a clearly defined visual appearance and methods for disturbing the practitioner. The case of Māra proper different.

In this chapter we will explore the category of Māra proper. We will begin by showing that Māra proper operates by creating external, physical disturbances. Moreover, we will argue that Māra proper is a figure that appears in response to the progress that the practitioner makes in meditation. In other words, he disturbs because the practitioner improves his karmic constitution.

We will then attempt to explain this way of operating by reference to Indian Buddhist cosmology. Here we aim to show that Māra becomes a sort of gatekeeper of *samsāra*, and why dhyāna gate-practices may lead to an escape.

### 6.1 Māra Proper in the CDCM

Let us first turn to discuss Zhiyi explanation of the way Māra proper (subsequently just called Māra) operates. First and foremost, Māra is said to "create *xiàng*" (*zuòxiàng* 作相). *Xiàng*, which usually refers to the Sanskrit *nimitta*, we have translated here as mark. However, what Zhiyi seems to describe is the creation of objects of the five senses. We will therefore translate it as objects.

Māra creates objects for the purpose of disturbing the practitioner. The types of objects he creates relate to the five sense organs. They are:

visual form (*sè* 色),  
sound (*shēng* 聲),  
scent (*xiāng* 香),  
taste (*wèi* 味), and  
touch (*chǔ* 觸).<sup>210</sup>

These five types objects may each appear in emotional valence of the following three types:

Unattractive (or frightening) (*wéiqíng* 違情),

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<sup>210</sup> T.46.507a29-b01

Attractive (*shùnqíng* 順情), and  
Neutral (*fēiwéi fēishùn* 非違非順).<sup>211</sup>

The five objects of the senses, each existing in three emotional versions, make up in total fifteen states or objective fields (*jìng* 境). These fifteen states together represent the range of possible disturbances created by Māra.

In the CDCM Zhiyi only gives examples of visual form. He says:

One, forms that goes along with the senses. [Māra] creates the attractive states with the shapes of father, mother, brothers, Buddha statues, good-looking men and women, making people's minds attach.

Two, forms that goes against [the senses]. [Māra] creates the shapes of tigers, wolves, lions, *rakṣas* and all sorts of dreadful shapes, coming to frighten the practitioner.

Three, forms that are neither attractive nor frightening. [Māra] simply creates neutral forms. [They] neither make people give rise to attraction nor fright.<sup>212</sup>

Zhiyi does not give a corresponding description of attractive, unattractive or frightful, and neutral states of the other four sensual objects, but leaves it to the reader to fill in for himself.

In the basic Buddhist view of perception and the world, there are six senses and six sense objects, not just the five addressed above. The sixth sense is the mind (*manas*, *yì* 意) and the corresponding object is mental objects, “thoughts” (*dharma*, *fǎchén* 法塵). Therefore, an interlocutor asks:

Why do [you] not discuss the three [emotional] kinds of Māra disturbance that [come into being with] the meeting of the mental object with the mind?

[Zhiyi] answers: generally speaking, all Māra disturbances enter through the five senses, therefore [we] only discuss the five desires. Speaking in a detailed fashion, *mana* also has the three disturbing phenomenon. We can know them to be categorized thus.<sup>213</sup>

While in theory one might talk of Māra also creating mental objects to disturb the practitioner, Zhiyi answers, Māra does not really create such objects. The objects that Māra creates are predominantly, if not exclusively, of the physical kind. Māra disturbances are not mental!

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<sup>211</sup> T.46.507a25-28

<sup>212</sup> T.46.507b02-b06 一順情色。或作父母兄弟諸佛形像端正男女可愛之境令人心著。二色中違者。或作虎狼師子羅刹之形種種可畏像。來怖行者。三色中非違非順者。但作平品之形色。亦不令人生愛。亦不令人生怖。

<sup>213</sup> T.46.507b11-14 問曰。何故不約法塵對意根中論三種魔事。答曰。從多為論。一切魔事。多從五情中入故。但說五情。細而論檢。意根中亦不無三種惱亂之事。類而可知。



The statement that Māra operates on the physical, not the mental, plane, might seem simple enough. However, as we shall see below, it actually has important implications for our understanding of both how and why Māra disturbs the meditator.

### 6.1.1 Māra as External

We have already seen that the objects Māra creates are of the three emotional types: attractive, unattractive/frightening and neutral. These three emotional types, not surprisingly, corresponds to the three “poisons” or emotional afflictions: greed, hatred/fright and delusion. But there is an important distinction between the former and latter types. Whereas the latter are internal, mental events, the former are external phenomena created by Māra for the purpose of giving rise to such mental events. In other words, Māra’s creations *attempt to cause* afflictions; they are not afflictions themselves.

This becomes clearer when we compare it to one of the categories of “external preparatory expedients”, that of the “chastening the five desires” (*hē wǔ yù* 訶五欲). This practice also deals with the five objects of sensation. Zhiyi describes a scenario where the practitioner sees something beautiful, hears an attractive sound (and so on), and because of this distraction ends up committing an offence.<sup>214</sup> Consequently, the external objects of the senses should be cut off so as to prevent the practitioner from becoming distracted.

While these distractions certainly contain an external component, the beautiful object or attractive sound, the cause of the distraction, does not primarily lie in these objects. Rather, we find the cause in the internal emotional response. The practitioner is distracted because of *his own* desire.

With the workings of Māra proper, the picture is different. First of all, it should be expected that the five desires are cut off long time ago. The practitioner should be far removed, physically as well as mentally, from the gross sensual objects discussed in the external preparatory expedients. Secondly, these afflictive responses should, following Zhiyi’s own classification of the four Māras in accordance with different meditative phenomena, classify as Māra of Afflictions.

The Māra’s objects are created for the purpose of causing afflictions, but they are only the external instigator of the internal afflictive response. Moreover, as we will argue below, the intensity of Māra’s disturbances are, it seems, inversely proportional to the intensity of the afflictive ones.

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<sup>214</sup> The distractions are discussed exclusively in attractive terms and not as unattractive and neutral.

## 6.2 Māra and Progress in Meditation

In the introduction to the chapter on Māra disturbance Zhiyi makes a short remark which is of central importance for understanding how Māra operates. He says: “as practice progresses, Māra flourishes.”<sup>215</sup> Similar statements appears at other places in relation to Māra as well.<sup>216</sup> In unpacking this statement, we will first discuss the meaning of “progress in practice.”

We begin with the reminder that we are situated in the “internal preparatory expedients.” As we saw above, the central practice at this stage is the five dhyāna gates. One of the most important reasons for cultivating these methods is for treating bad karma or, conversely, increase the amount of good. Practice can therefore here be defined as the cultivation of good, wholesome mental states (*shànxīn* 善心). In other words, the practitioner increases the amount of good to the detriment of the bad. What Zhiyi seems to be saying is that Māra responds to the practice of good by intensifying his efforts. Māra flourishes!

This point may be further illustrated by an analogy from the MHZG.<sup>217</sup> There Zhiyi explains that the experience of afflictions has three components. First, there are the latent habitual tendencies for afflictions.<sup>218</sup> Then there is the karmic retribution of former bad deeds<sup>219</sup>. Finally, there is the disturbances caused by Māra.<sup>220</sup> The latent tendencies are likened to the flickering of the flame, karmic retribution to the wind from a fan. Māra’s disturbances are like the tossing of oil on to the fire.<sup>221</sup> In this analogy, there are three separate causes for the experience of afflictions. The habitual tendencies and karmic retribution describes the two aspects of the karmic process that constantly keeps fire burning, keeps the wheel of samsara turning. Māra is considered as a third factor, a figure that symbolically tosses oil on the fire that is already burning.

As the practice progresses, the first two components, the habitual tendencies and karmic retribution, are weakened. The fire is gradually put out. But instead of following in

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<sup>215</sup> T.46.506c05 道高則魔盛

<sup>216</sup> CDCM: 惡魔恐其道高。為作惱亂

XZG: T.46.470b05-06 若能安心正道，是故道高方知魔盛。

X.907 *Chánménzhāng* 禪門章 X.55.655c18 使身安道隆。道隆故。道高而魔盛。

<sup>217</sup> Please note that while we here quote from the MHZG, the argument we are making still is limited to the CDCM.

<sup>218</sup> Literally “perfuming caused by seeds (*bīja*)” 習因種子。

<sup>219</sup> Literally “beating of the karma” 業力擊作。

<sup>220</sup> Literally “Māra’s flapping [of his wings]” 魔所扇動。

<sup>221</sup> T.46.102c26-27 若就火為譬者。抖擻如習風扇如業膏投如魔。

suit and putting down his “bucket of oil,” Māra increases the amount he tosses. He creates more and more objects of sensation, attempting to further distract the practitioner. The intensity of Māra’s disturbance, it seems, is inversely proportional to the intensity of the disturbance caused by the karmic process.

### 6.3 Cosmology and Meditation

In order to fully appreciate why the intensity of Māra’s disturbances are inversely proportional to the intensity of the afflictions and thus removed from the Chinese ethical demonology, we first need to take a rather extensive excursion into early Buddhist cosmology. Then, by understanding Zhiyi’s meditative path through this lens, we will be better equipped to understand both how and why Māra is considered to cause disturbance the way he does. In the following we will draw on an influential article by Rupert Gethin who has discussed the relationship between cosmology and meditation in the Nikāyas, Āgamas and Abhidharma (pali: Abhidhamma) of pre-Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>222</sup>

Gethin begins by describing three basic principles of the cosmology of the Nikāyas and Āgamas.<sup>223</sup> We will quote Gethin at some length:

First, there are a number of different realms of existence that constitute a hierarchy; there are lower realms - the realms of animals (*tiracchānayoṇi*) and of hungry ghosts (*pettivisaya*) and various hells (*niraya*); there is the realm of men (*manussa*) and, above, the various heaven realms of the *devas* and *brahmās*.

Second, beings are continually reborn in these various realms in accordance with their actions - the ten unskillful (*akusala*) courses of action (*kammaṭṭhāna*) lead to rebirth in one of the lower realms, and the ten skillful (*kusala*) courses of action lead to rebirth as a human being or in the lower heavens, while meditation attainments (*jhāna*) lead to rebirth in the higher heavens as a *brahmā*.

The third principle is that (...) [t]he various levels of existence arrange themselves in "world-systems" (*loka-dhātu*); there are innumerable world-systems which all expand and contract across vast expanses of time.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Gethin 1997. I would like to express my gratitude to Peter Romaskiewicz for showing me the importance of the *abhidharma* for the study of meditation.

<sup>223</sup> Nikāyas refer to the collection of *sūttas* of what is later known as the Theravada or Southern Buddhism which has been preserved in the Pāli language. *Āgamas* is the corresponding collection of the Northern tradition which used the Sanskrit language. The *āgamas* were the ones that were translated into Chinese.

<sup>224</sup> Gethin 1997, pp. 186-187

The first principle describes the cosmological hierarchy of beings in the world, or in other words, the destinies of rebirth available to sentient beings. The second principle describes the reason why sentient beings are reborn in the different destinies: intentional acts of body, speech and mind; in other words, karma. Gethin continues:

(...) acts of body and speech are performed in response to and conditioned by the quality of the underlying intention or will (*cetanā*); they are unskillful or skillful because they are motivated by unskillful or skillful intentions. Acts of body and speech are, as it were, the epiphenomena of particular kinds of mentality; they are driven by specific psychological states.<sup>225</sup>

These two first principles, of cosmological hierarchy and reasons for being born according to it, make up two related, but alternative systems of the cosmos. The first is the world and second the mind. Moreover, it indicates according to Gethin, a “general principle of an equivalence or parallel in Buddhist thought between psychology on the one hand and cosmology on the other.”<sup>226</sup>

The parallel between cosmological beings and their corresponding mental states makes it easy to interpret the cosmology as symbolic emanation of the psychology. The example Gethin provides is of particular interest to us as it involves Māra.

(...) in the *Māra-* and *Bhikkhunī-samyuttas* Mara is represented as appearing on the scene and tempting *bhikkhus*, *bhikkhunīs*, and the Buddha, with the world of the five senses. Here then Mara appears to act as the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) which are precisely the mental states that one must overcome in order to attain *jhāna*, and it is precisely *jhāna* that - at least according to a later understanding - takes one temporarily beyond the world of the five senses and out of Mara's reach.<sup>227</sup>

Gethin believes that such a psychological interpretation is inherent in the Nikāya material. The cosmological and the psychological represent what we might call two different registers for expressing the same position in the system. Thus, “particular psychological states are described in terms of an encounter with beings with cosmological significance - or vice versa.”

<sup>228</sup> What Gethin does is not to completely reduce the cosmology to a metaphor for

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., pp. 188-189

<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 189

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p. 190. On page 192 he makes a further connection between these two registers and two *upaniṣadic* categories of *adhidaivatam* (with reference to the gods) and *adhyātmam* (with reference to the self) and that “conceive of Māra as a cosmic entity on the one hand and as psychological forces on the other is essentially to shift from (...)” the one perspective to the other.

psychological processes, yet this argument still relates the Māra figure to the unskillful states of bad karma

The importance of Gethin’s third principle becomes clear when we introduce the fully developed Abhidharma system. Here we see that both the cosmological and the psychological register consist of three world-systems:

[Mental states] belong to one of the three sense spheres (*kāmāvacara*), the form sphere (*rūpāvacara*), or the formless sphere (*arūpāvacara*); beings exist in the sense world (*kāma-dhātu, kāma-loka*), the form world (*rūpa-dhātu, rūpa-loka*), or the formless world (*arūpa-dhātu, arūpa-loka*).<sup>229</sup>

We present a truncated version of the system in the figure below, reproducing only the terms relevant for the present argument.<sup>230</sup>

Cosmology		Psychology	
World	Realm	Mental state	
Formless world	...	...	Formless-sphere
Form world	...	4 <sup>th</sup> dhyāna	Form-sphere
		3 <sup>rd</sup> dhyāna	
		2 <sup>nd</sup> dhyāna	
		1 <sup>st</sup> dhyāna	
Sense world	Six heavens of gods: 6 <sup>th</sup> : Māra <sup>231</sup> ...	Skillful (good) states of mind	Sense-sphere
	Human Beings		
	Jealous gods Animals Hungry ghosts Hell beings	Unskillful (bad) states of mind	

Figure 8 Cosmology and Psychology in the Abhidharma

### 6.3.1 The Cosmology of Zhiyi’s Māra

Let us now return to the meditative system of Zhiyi. Being a system of meditation, one would expect it to belong to the side of psychology; it is the mind that is cultivated. And to a certain extent, this is correct. But then one would also expect the obstacles to the practice of meditation to belong to the side of psychology. But based on the above discussion, we see that Māra operates in the cosmological register. How then can it be a meditative obstacle? In

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>230</sup> The full system is given in *ibid.*, p. 194.

<sup>231</sup> This heaven is given by Gethin as “Masters of the creations of others”, which is the name of the Heaven to which Prince Māra belongs.

order to answer this, we will begin by showing how Zhiyi's system maps onto the psychological register.

In chapter three we saw how the meditative path, broadly speaking, consists of two parts: the internal preparatory practices and the dhyānas. When we map these two parts of the path onto the psychological system of the Abhidharma we see that the practices of the internal preparatory practices take place in the sense sphere. The dhyānas, not surprisingly, takes place in the form-sphere.<sup>232</sup>

As we discussed in chapter three, the internal preparatory practices center around the five dhyāna-gate practices. We saw that the practices may be taken up for a number of different reasons. But the basic purpose is to eradicate bad karma. Put conversely, the practices generate skillful or good states of mind. This must be understood as a zero-sum-game where the eradication of bad equals the generation of good. They bring the practitioner upwards in the sense-sphere of the psychological register.

On the basis of good mental states cultivated in the sense sphere, the practitioner ascends into the first dhyāna of the form-sphere. Zhiyi does not seem to make explicit exactly when this occurs, but we may surmise that it is when the good states of mind have completely eradicated the bad ones.<sup>233</sup> In other words, through cultivating the five dhyāna gates, the practitioner gains entry into the dhyānas.

What then to make of Māra? According to Gethin, the practitioner's fight against Māra is to express in cosmological term, what in psychological terms is expressed as eradicating one's bad karma. They are equivalent.

In Zhiyi's system, as discussed above, Māra as synonymous with bad karma is represented by the first three of the fourfold Māra. To speak of the practitioner's struggle with either of them would be to speak of Māra metaphorically. The fourth Māra is, on the other hand, an external force. He is a cosmological being that is not metaphorically equivalent with a psychological state.

We discussed this non-metaphorical, cosmological Māra already in chapter two when we discussed the fourfold Māra. Moreover, we saw that it appeared to a certain degree in the

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<sup>232</sup> As we briefly mentioned above the dhyānas in the CDCM are divided in four types of mundane and supramundane. For sake of the present argument, we conflate them.

<sup>233</sup> Skillful (skt. *kusala*) and unskillful (skt. *akusala*) are typically rendered *shànxīn* 善心 and *èxīn* 惡心 respectively. This, moreover, is what we here have translated as good and bad mental states, drawing on the Chinese rather than the Sanskrit semantical content.

DZDL in chapter four. However, it seems like this is the first time that cosmological Māra appears in direct relation to the practice of meditation.

Māra is a being in the cosmological register, yet he responds to the psychological advancement of the practitioner. We noted above how Zhiyi explained that as practice progresses, Māra flourishes. As the psychological obstacles from karma are reduced, the cosmological disturbances from Māra are increased. Māra functions in a sense as a gatekeeper. The introduction to the “Māra disturbance” chapter of the MHZG reinforces our impression of Māra as a gatekeeper, while at the same time adding some narrative flesh to the bone:

When a practitioner cultivates the Four Samādhis, leaving behind evil and wishing to give birth to good, then Māra fears that this person will turn away and escape from his realm, and furthermore save others, so that he [Māra], thinks, “I will lose the people who belong to me and my palace will become empty.” Again, he anxiously thinks, “If this [person] attains great supranormal powers and the power of great wisdom, he will engage in a great battle against me, will overcome and restrain me, and be a great vexation for me.” [Māra] thereupon rushes to keep him from attaining [enlightenment] and to destroy his good roots. Therefore these are called “demonic matters” [of Māra]. When the practitioner is still weak with regard to the path, [the demonic powers of] Pāpīyas are not yet put in motion, but [as you advance along the path and attempt to leave behind the realm of desires,] all of the demons and spirits associated with the six heavenly realms [of desire] will try to protect this realm and will certainly put these [demonic forces] into motion.<sup>234</sup>

Here it becomes very clear that Māra disturbs the practitioner as he makes progress and is about to leave the sense-world (realm of desires in Swanson’s translation).

This leaves two distinct but related questions: What is the disturbing work of Māra? And how should the practitioner protect himself from it? The first question is the topic of the next chapter. The answer to the second question is initially a relatively simple one. As we saw in one of the quotation from Gethin above, by entering into the states of dhyāna, one is safe from Māra’s grip. The dhyānas represent in a way, a safe haven from the disturbing work of Māra. And the dhyāna gate practices becomes methods for escaping. But in the world of Mahāyāna Buddhism, escapism is not the ultimate goal. As we will discuss further

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<sup>234</sup> T.46.114c22-29 行人修四三昧。惡將謝善欲生。魔恐迴出其境。又當化度於他。失我民屬空我宮殿。又慮其得大神力大智慧力。復當與我興大戰諍。調伏控制觸惱於我。遽其未成壞彼善根。故有魔事也。行者道弱未動波旬。一切鬼神屬六天管。當界防戍正應動此耳。 Translation from Swanson forthcoming, p. 1387. Again, we are not making an argument pertaining to the MHZG, but insert this quote here simply to illustrate the point we are making about the CDCM.

in chapter eight, Zhiyi proposes another method. This is aimed at dealing with Māra on a more fundamental level.

But first, let us turn to the question of how Māra disturbs, the methods for figuring out that Māra is in the picture, and not the least, what may happen if the practitioner is wrong in his interpretation.



## 7 The Experience of Māra

In the last chapter we saw that Māra responds to the progress in practice that the practitioner makes. In this chapter we will discuss what this response entails. We have already touched this issue with regards to the *jīngmèi* and *bùtì* demons. Now we will look closer at how Māra proper plays his tricks and creates disturbances. We will argue that Māra makes up an alternative paradigm for the interpretation of meditative experience. But before we go any further in explaining this, we need to make a quick note on the study of meditative and religious experience.

Central to the study of Buddhist meditation, most prominently in its modern incarnations, has been the question of experience.<sup>235</sup> This is not the place to recapitulate all the arguments pertaining to the 20<sup>th</sup> century modernization of meditation and the rhetorical apparatus employed in its propagation. Rather we draw on Eric Greene's study, which we have been citing from throughout this thesis. His starting point for the study of meditative experience is "the recognition that what we have before us are *texts*, not experiences."<sup>236</sup> He continues:

The primary subject of my investigation is thus not meditative experiences per se, but the understanding of meditative experience that fifth-century Chinese chan texts presuppose. (...) I will take as the object of my study the strategies the texts themselves use for interpreting or explaining the significance of the experiences they assume people will have.<sup>237</sup>

This so-called "performative approach" to the study meditative experience is also what we take here. We study the explicit strategies that the texts provide the practitioner with for understanding his own experiences. In this way we avoid the thorny issues of what we as scholars can say about the internal experiences of the practitioner, phenomenologically speaking. This might be difficult to do with contemporary meditation, but it is close to impossible with meditators separated from us with nearly 1500 years.

The study of experience becomes the study of what a given text or tradition *assumes people to have*. We study the interpretive range. The interpretive range in the instructions on

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<sup>235</sup> I refer to the famous article by Robert Sharf 1995 discussing Buddhist modernism and the rhetoric of meditation. See also Sharf 1999 and 2005.

<sup>236</sup> Greene 2012, p. 7.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

meditation studied by Greene is between good and bad karma.<sup>238</sup> The practitioner engages in meditation in order to generate visions. These visions are then interpreted as indicating the presence of either good or bad karmic roots. This function is also what calming practice has in the CDCM. Indeed, Greene uses precisely the example calming practice in the CDCM as support for his argument.<sup>239</sup>

What we would like to suggest here is that Greene's reading of the CDCM is incomplete.<sup>240</sup> There is no doubt that experiences may be interpreted along the axis of good and bad karma, but the experience might also be caused by Māra. In this way Zhiyi expands the interpretive range by adding Māra as a source for disturbance. The CDCM ends up with providing two alternative paradigms for the interpretation of meditate experience: either it is caused by the practitioner's karma, be it good or bad, or it is caused by Māra.

The emergence of this alternative Māra-paradigm is enabled by Zhiyi's decoupling of Māra from bad karma. Māra appears on the stage when the practice is progressing. At the same time the practitioner is looking for marks that his practice is progressing, i.e. marks of good mental states. If the practice of the practitioner is weak, any and all he experiences is afflictions and bad karma. As the practitioner progresses there is a higher likelihood of marks of good mental states, but also a higher likelihood of Māra creating false and deceptive ones. The process of determining success, therefore, is fraught with the deceptions of Māra, not with the bewilderment of bad mental states.

First we will discuss the work of Māra in relation to the practice of repentance practice. We saw above that Māra proper "creates objects or marks" (*zuòxiàng*).<sup>241</sup> But while he is able to create all sorts of marks, there are some specific ones which Zhiyi discusses in particular. Here we will see that Māra creates false marks, so as to trick the practitioner into believing he is making progress.

Then we will turn to the question of how Māra disturbs the practitioner in the practice of meditation. Here we will see that the practitioner is advised to be on the look-out for deviancy in experience. It is not the case that Māra creates the marks, but rather that there are

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<sup>238</sup> Greene's introductory chapter lays out this interpretive range.

<sup>239</sup> Greene 2012, pp. 203-218

<sup>240</sup> Greene briefly mentions Māra in the CDCM (p. 216) he does not develop this any further.

<sup>241</sup> *Xiàng* 相 is a very difficult concept to translate. Sometimes Zhiyi uses it about external signs indicative of good or bad karma. Other times it is used to about "characteristic marks" of a phenomenon. Above we already translated it as objects, but this does not seem to fit in the current discussion.

marks that indicate that Māra is luring the practitioner into deviancy. We will further discuss two different methods for determining this.

Finally, we will discuss what happens if the practitioner is attacked Māra and is unable to notice it. This, we will see, may lead the practitioner into madness and cause him to become an heretic.

## 7.1 Māra and the Practice of Repentance

In the CDCM the practice of repentance (*chànhuǐ* 懺悔) is discussed at length under the very first external preparatory expedient, that of keeping the precepts pure and clean (*chíjiè qīngjìng* 持戒清淨).<sup>242</sup> Here Zhiyi discusses both taking and upholding the precepts as well as repenting for past transgressions. He distinguishes between precepts of the Hinayāna (*xiǎoshèng* 小乘) and Mahāyāna (*dàshèng* 大乘) traditions. The Hinayāna precepts are characterized by outward formality, whereas in the Mahāyāna, the precepts come from the mind and is ultimately an inner issue. The same distinction is made in the discussion of practices for repenting past transgressions.

If the practitioner never has committed acts of evil, Zhiyi informs the reader, then there is no need for repentance. Yet, if he or she is unable to determine whether or not one has upheld the precepts or have encountered evil circumstances, then the precepts<sup>243</sup> are not pure and *samādhi* will not arise. Through repentance the impurity of the precepts is removed just like stains on a piece of cloth.

Zhiyi lays out three methods of repentance: “procedural repentance” (*zuòfǎ chànhuǐ* 作法懺悔), “repentance through the contemplation of marks” (*guānxiàng chànhuǐ* 觀相懺悔), and the “repentance through the contemplation of the unrisen [nature of transgressions]” (*guānwú chànhuǐ* 觀無生懺悔). The first is repentance that is supported by the monastic precepts (*jièlǜ* 戒律) and is the method of the Hinayāna tradition. The practices that belong here are those of the collective repentance practices of the *Vinaya*.<sup>244</sup> The latter two are supported by meditation and wisdom respectively and are both methods of the Mahāyāna. The final practice draws mainly on the *Guān pǔxián jīng*<sup>245</sup> and involves contemplation on

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<sup>242</sup> T.46.485b29ff

<sup>243</sup> Here Zhiyi uses the transcription of the Sanskrit, *śīla*, *shīluó* 尸羅, not the regular *jiē* 戒.

<sup>244</sup> Zhiyi uses the technical term *jiēmó* 羯磨, a transliteration of the Sanskrit *karman*, here meaning ritual procedure

<sup>245</sup> T.277 *Fóshuō guānpǔxián pǔsà xíngfǎ jīng* 佛說觀普賢菩薩行法經

how all transgressions and the mind that gives rise to them all are ultimately empty of self-nature.

It is in the second method of repentance that Māra may cause disturbance. The procedures of the practice is explicitly stated and Zhiyi says that the practice is found in various sūtras.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, it is supported by meditative concentration.<sup>247</sup> Zhiyi also quotes a passage from the *Fànwǎng jīng* 梵網經,<sup>248</sup> which has a section discussing marks indicating success in repentance.

Contrary to what one would expect, the practice that Zhiyi presents is not a contemplation or visualization practice, but rather a practice of recognizing marks as they appear to the practitioner in different aspects of life. Zhiyi lists four categories of marks:

One, marks seen in dreams.

Two, voices heard in the air when walking in meditation, or seeing strange marks and various numinous and auspicious [marks].

Three, seeing marks of good and evil, and of the destruction and upholding of precepts when seated [in meditation].

Four, taking as marks the internal attainment of the various [meditative] methods and the arousal of the mind of the way.<sup>249</sup>

A detailed discussion of Zhiyi's marks of successful repentance lies outside the present project and we will limit ourselves to note that such marks may be of different kinds and come at different times. What is important for our present topic is that Māra is also able to create such marks. The text says:

Question: Māra is also able to make marks like this. How does [one] distinguish?

Answer: In truth it is like this. Erroneous and correct are difficult to distinguish [and I] cannot give a definite answer. When a mark appears, an experienced teacher will [be needed to] recognize [it]. It must be determined face to face and cannot be written down and recorded in text. Therefore, when the practitioner first starts to practice repentance, he should approach a [teacher of] good knowledge (skt. *kalyāṇamitra*), [that is] a person that can separate correct [marks] from erroneous. Moreover, when it comes to seeing a mark, if it suddenly appears, it is even more difficult to distinguish

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<sup>246</sup> T.46.485c19 行人依諸經中懺悔方法

<sup>247</sup> T.46.485c02-03 二觀相懺悔。此扶定法。以明懺悔

<sup>248</sup> T.46.485c21-23 佛來摩頂。見光華種種瑞相已。罪即得滅。若不見相。雖懺無益  
This passage is taken from: T.24.1008.c17-18

<sup>249</sup> T.46.485c29-486a05 一夢中見相。二於行道時聞空中聲。或見異相及諸靈瑞。三坐中觀見善惡破戒持戒等相。四以內證種種法門道心開發等為相。

correct [marks] from erroneous [ones]. If [one] consults texts and deliberately seek into it, [one] will probably get tangled up with Māra.<sup>250</sup>

Zhiyi admits that it is difficult to distinguish erroneous from correct marks. What a mark really means has to be determined by an experienced teacher. The practitioner cannot rely only on scriptures in determining the meaning of marks. If he tries to determine it on the basis of texts, then, presumably, chances are high that he will misunderstand and thus get tangled up with the workings of Māra.<sup>251</sup> We are also told that if the marks suddenly show up, it is even more difficult to distinguish the erroneous from the correct.

Furthermore, correct marks are supposed to appear spontaneously. Zhiyi is quick to point out that these marks are not to be taken up as objects of contemplation (*xīncún xiàngshì* 心存相事). If the practitioner does so, he will give rise to attachment to the marks and this will lead to the practitioner attracting Māra.<sup>252</sup>

In this brief discussion by Zhiyi, we learn that marks, presumably indicating success in repentance practice, also can be the creation of Māra, and thus not indicating the karmic constitution of the practitioner at all. They are erroneous. Therefore, in encountering a mark, the practitioner is faced with the question: is this mark one which indicates karmic constitution or one created by Māra? There are two alternative paradigms of interpretation. Charged with the task of solving this question, moreover, relying on texts is discouraged. It is only in relying on a teacher that the issue can be resolved.

When we now turn to the chapter on identifying meditative marks attained in meditation, we shall see that it becomes both more difficult, but also that the practitioner is presented with more tools in distinguishing the erroneous from the correct.

## 7.2 Māra and Determining Karma

When discussing the meditative path of CDCM, we saw that the initial meditative practice had two components: calming meditation (*zhì*) and the five dhyāna gates (*wǔchánmén*). The idea that Zhiyi expresses is that through calming meditation the practitioner will have certain

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<sup>250</sup>T.46.486a04-09 問曰。魔羅亦能作此等相。云何可別。答曰。實爾。邪正難別。不可定取。若相現時。良師乃識。事須面決。非可文載。是故行者初懺悔時。必須近善知識別邪正之人。復次夫見相者。忽然而覩。尚邪正難知。若逐文作心求之。多著魔也。

<sup>251</sup>This passage has been briefly discussed by Greene 2012, pp. 196-197, where he makes the point that texts on mediation are used “not as manuals for practice, but as arbiters of true visions.” However, Greene does not address the issue of Māra in particular.

<sup>252</sup>T.46.486a12-13 非謂行道之時心存相事而生取著。若如此用心。必定多來魔事。

marks come forth. We have already discussed how such marks provides the practitioner with information on his karmic constitution, informing the taking up of specific dhyāna practices. Now we will see that the experience of the practitioner might not be one caused by karma, but rather belonging to the Māra paradigm.

Zhiyi's discussion of Māra's disturbance and how it diverges from the karmic one is discussed under the heading "verifying and knowing empty [from] real" (*yánzhī xūshí* 驗知虛實). Real means that it is an actual expression of the karmic constitution. Empty means that it is not, in other words, it is created by Māra. Before we turn to the specific methods Zhiyi provides, let us first turn to his theoretical discussion.

Zhiyi begins with the following:

[Among] the roots of good dhyāna that arise when in meditative concentration there are genuine and false. [One] should not mistakenly give rise to retaining and rejection.<sup>253</sup>

We have previously seen that meditative experience is divided into the categories of roots of good and bad. Now Zhiyi introduces the categories of genuine (真) and false (偽). An experience indicative of different types of roots is genuine, but may also be of a different category that does not provide such information. Such experiences are labeled false.

The practitioner should be skilled separating the genuine from the false. Zhiyi continues:

When various *dhyāna-samādhis* arise and the mind does not distinguish [between genuine and false, one of the two will happen]. If [one] sees a Māra-absorption (魔定) [but mistakenly] calls it the arising of a good root and the mind gives rise to attachment, [then] because of this error (邪僻) [one] becomes ill and mad. If it is a root of good [but one mistakenly] calls it Māra-absorption, [then] the mind will doubt, reject and disassociate [from it] and loose the good and beneficial [results].<sup>254</sup>

Zhiyi here associates the category of false experience with Māra. The meditative absorption that produces false meditative experience is called Māra-absorption (*móding* 魔定). I will return to this term below. Zhiyi also lays out two scenarios for the practitioner not skilled in separating the genuine from the false. In the first the practitioner mistakes the Māra-

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<sup>253</sup>T.46.496c13-14 若於定中。發諸禪善根。是中有真有偽。不可謬生取捨。

<sup>254</sup>T.46.496c15-18 若發諸禪三昧時。心不別識。或見魔定。謂是善根發。心生取著。因此邪僻。得病發狂。若是善根。謂是魔定。心疑捨離。即退失善利。

absorption for a result of roots of good coming forth. Due to this error the practitioner becomes ill and mad (*débing fākuáng* 得病發狂).

In the second scenario the practitioner does experience a root of good, but mistakenly calls it a false Māra-absorption. The results of this is perhaps not as severe as the former, but involves an attitude of doubt, rejection and disassociation, whereupon the potentially good and beneficial results are lost. We may put it in a table like this:

Phenomenon	Genuine 真 (i.e. karma)		False 偽 (i.e. Māra)	
	Taken as genuine	Taken as false	Taken as genuine	Taken as false
Result	(Enter meditation)	Loose good and beneficial [results] 退失善利	Becomes ill and mad 得病發狂	(Apply methods)

Figure 9 Genuine and False Meditative State

The above table clearly shows how Zhiyi draws the line between the two interpretive paradigms. Let us now turn to the methods Zhiyi presents for determining if the meditative experience indeed is karmically caused or if it caused by Māra. The first method is called “assessing marks” (*zéxiàng* 則相)<sup>255</sup> and involves interpretation of experiences in meditation. The second is called “applying techniques” (*yǐfǎ* 以法) and is a set of three concrete methods the practitioner can apply to test the experience.

### 7.2.1 Assessing Marks

The assessment of marks is a rather complicated procedure. In order to get a clearer picture of it, we need to first discuss briefly how Zhiyi sees the process of entry into the first dhyāna.

According to Zhiyi, the practitioner’s entry into the first dhyāna<sup>256</sup> is marked by the experience of a set of sensation, *chù* 觸.<sup>257</sup> The completion (*chéngjiù* 成就) of these sensations is the mark (*xiàng*) of the attainment of first dhyāna.<sup>258</sup> There are all together two

<sup>255</sup> We read *zé* 則 to *cè* 測 as the former does not makes senses given the content of the practice.

<sup>256</sup> In the discussion of the “assessment of marks,” Zhiyi uses the term “fundamental dhyāna” *gēnběn chán* 根本禪, whereas in chapter discussing the entry into the first dhyāna, he uses the term “first dhyāna” *chūchán* 初禪. I take them here to be synonymous.

<sup>257</sup> The concept of sensations accompanying entry into the first dhyāna appears both in the *Visuddhimagga*, where it is known as *pīti*, and in various *Abhidharma* texts in Chinese translation. For a discussion, see Wang 2001, pp. 163-167.

<sup>258</sup> T.46.510a18 證十六觸成就。即是初禪發相 For the technically inclined reader, this takes place when the practitioner is in “access meditation” 未到地定. Zhiyi distinguishes this

sets of eight such sensations. They are given in figure 10. The two sets of eight are similar, but the relationship between the two is somewhat unclear.<sup>259</sup>

The sensations arise (*fā* 發) when the practitioner is about to enter the first dhyāna. Moreover, each one of the sensations are accompanied (*juànshǔ* 眷屬) by a set of ten so-called “virtuous good characteristics” (*gōngdé shànfǎ* 功德善法).<sup>261</sup> All of these good characteristics has to be present for the sensation to be complete. And they have to be good!

Movement 動	Scatteredness 掉
Itching 痒	Pleasure 猗
Coolness 涼	Coldness 冷
Warmth 暖	Heat 熱
Lightness 輕	Floating 浮
Heaviness 重	Sinking 沈
Roughness 澁	Hardness 堅
Smoothness 滑	Softness 軟

Figure 10 Sixteen Sensations<sup>260</sup>

In the chapter on “assessment of marks,” Zhiyi explains how the practitioner is to know whether the characteristics accompanying the sensations are good, which he here calls “correct” (*zhèng* 正), or “erroneous” (*xié* 邪). If they turn out to be erroneous, it means that they are caused by Māra.

The practitioner may know that the sensations he is experiencing are accompanied by such erroneous characteristics by assessing “erroneous marks” (*xiéxiàng* 邪相). It is through analyzing these marks that the practitioner knows whether his dhyāna has been compromised by Māra or not.<sup>262</sup> Zhiyi provides an extensive catalogue of the erroneous marks indicating erroneous characteristics. Each erroneous characteristic exists in two types: excessive (*guò* 過) and insufficient (*bùjǐ* 不及). Because there are marks corresponding to each on the characteristics, there are all together 20 marks of erroneous characteristics of a sensation. It should further be pointed out that Zhiyi only provides the marks for the first sensation, the moving sensation (*dòngchù* 動觸). The marks of the remaining seven or fifteen sensations, which would be either 140 or 300, Zhiyi leaves to the reader to figure out.

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from “sense-sphere meditation” 欲界定 below, and “first dhyāna” 初禪 above. See: T.46.510a13-511a08. Another characteristic of the attainment of the first dhyāna is through the five “dhyāna factors” 禪支. For a discussion, see Wang 2001, pp. 168-183.

<sup>259</sup> Zhiyi writes about the second list that there are subtle differences between the two list: T46.510b6-8 此八觸與前相雖同。而細分別不無小異。更別出名目足前合為十六觸。

<sup>260</sup> Translations from Wang 2001, p. 150

<sup>261</sup> Wang suggests that this term should be understood in relation to the Sanskrit term *guṇa*, quality. Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>262</sup> In the chapter on the first dhyāna, Zhiyi states that that sensation also can be caused by imbalance in the four elements (*sìdà* 四大) and the five (afflictive) coverings. See T.46.510b27-c11. When assessing the marks, the only interpretive alternatives are correct and erroneous, i.e. caused by Māra.



In lieu of a thorough analysis of all the marks, we have provided the entire catalogue in table 11 below. The reader is invited to appreciate the psychological and physiological complexity of the system and imagine the intricacies in determining what is correct and not.

What is important to note, is that Zhiyi instructs the practitioner to be on the look-out for deviant mental and physical experiences at the very moment when he believes he is entering into the first dhyāna. Any such deviance means that Māra is playing a role in the process. We will discuss what this role might be below, but first we will take a look at the other method for determining Māra’s presence.

Erroneous characteristic 邪法 <sup>263</sup>				Correct (good) characteristic 正法 <sup>264</sup>
Excessive 過	Mark 相 of excessiveness	Insufficient 不及	Mark 相 of insufficiency	
<b>Increase of bodily sensation</b> 觸體增	Body move, hand rises and foot also follows, but other people see his body as still like asleep. 身動手起脚亦隨。然外人見其兀兀如睡 As if possessed by demons and one’s body and hands move confusedly. 如著鬼身手紛動 Strange visions when sitting. 坐時見諸異境	<b>Decrease of bodily sensation</b> 觸體減	Upward or downward [movement], not having reached to sides of the body, then it will gradually disappear. 若上若下。未及遍身。即便漸漸滅壞 Because of this all visions will be lost. 因此都失境界 When sitting, [sensation] will disappear 坐時蕭索 Unable to uphold [one’s] body. 無法持身	<b>Correct characteristic mark of sensation</b> 觸相如法
<b>Concentration</b> 定	Awareness that body and mind is bound by concentration and not unrestrained. 識心及身。為定所縛。不得自在。 And moreover, because of this enters erroneous [meditative] absorption, lasting up to seven days without exiting. 或復因此便入邪定。乃至七日不出。	<b>Disturbance</b> 亂	Mind is stirred up and caught in [karmic] conditions. 心意撩亂。攀緣不住。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of concentration</b> 定相如法
<b>Emptiness</b> 空	Completely unable to see [one’s] body 都不見身	<b>Existence</b> 有	Experiences [one’s] body as firm like wood and stone. 覺身堅[革*印]。猶如木石。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of emptiness</b> 空相如法
<b>Brightness</b> 明	One sees all kinds of light outside 見外種種光色。 Sun, moon and stellar constellations, blue-green, yellow, red and white. 乃至日月星辰青黃赤白種種光明。	<b>Darkness</b> 闇	Body and mind are dark, as if [one] has entered a dark room. 身心闇暝。如入暗室。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of clarity</b> 明相如法

<sup>263</sup> T.46.496c26-497a23

<sup>264</sup> T.46.498a02-a06. Note that the list of “virtuous good characteristics” (*gōngdé shànfǎ*) given in the chapter on the first dhyāna deviates somewhat with the list in the “assessment of marks.” For comparison, see: T.46.510a26-28

<b>Grief 憂</b>	One's mind is agitated, worn out and unhappy. 其心熱惱。憔悴不悅。	<b>Joy 喜</b>	The mind is exceedingly happy, and in fearlessness unable to settle down. 心大慶悅。勇動不能自安。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of joy 喜相如法</b>
<b>Suffering 苦</b>	Body and mind hurts all over. 身心處處痛惱。	<b>Bliss 樂</b>	[One] is extremely happy and is tormented by greed. 甚大快樂。貪著纏綿。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of bliss 樂相如法</b>
<b>Goodness 善</b>	One recalls good deeds conducted outside meditative absorption. This distracted thinking destroys samādhi. 念外散善。覺觀破壞三昧。	<b>Evil 惡</b>	Without shame or contrition and gives rise to a mind of evil. 即無慚無愧等諸惡心生。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of kindness 善相如法</b>
<b>Delusion 愚</b>	Mind and consciousness is deluded by ignorance, confusion and inversed [thinking]. 心識愚惑。迷惛顛倒。	<b>Wisdom 智</b>	The mind of views and subtle declivities arise, erroneous thinking destroys samādhi. 利使知見心生。邪覺破壞三昧。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of wisdom 智相如法</b>
<b>Bondage 縛</b>	The five coverings and various afflictions, conceal the mind and consciousness. 五蓋及諸煩惱覆蔽心識。	<b>Liberation 脫</b>	This is called the verification of emptiness and no-marks of meditation, the attainment of the way and of the fruit. With liberation and the breaking of fetters comes loathing and arrogance. 謂證空無相定得道得果。斷結解脫。生憎上慢。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of liberation 解脫相如法</b>
<b>Hardness of mind 心強</b>	The mind is unyielding. When entering and exiting [meditation, one] is unable to be unrestrained. Just like it is difficult to restore a broken pot, [following] the good path is not smooth. 其心剛強。出入不得自在。猶如瓦石難可迴變。不順善道。	<b>Softness of mind 心軟</b>	The mental intention is soft and weak, and easily destroyed. It is like soft clay not being suitable for making pots. 心志軟弱。易可敗壞。猶若軟泥不堪為器。	<b>Correct characteristic mark of mind 心調相如法</b>

Figure 11 Marks of Erroneous Characteristics of the Moving Sensation When Entering First Dhyāna <sup>265</sup>

<sup>265</sup> Translations partly based on Wang 2001, pp. 158-160.

## 7.2.2 Application of Techniques

If the practitioner is unable to determine the presence of Māra through the assessment of marks, Zhiyi advises the practitioner to take up another method. This second method for determining whether one’s meditative experience is correct or not is what Zhiyi calls the “application of techniques.” Zhiyi writes:

The marks of one’s erroneous dhyāna are subtle and difficult to distinguish, and are similar to the marks of correct dhyāna. [If one is] not able to distinguish [them] by assessing marks, [then one] should apply three methods to verify and know: one, investigate and rub [it] with a meditative mind; two, using the practice [one already practices] to treat [it]; three, refute with wisdom.<sup>266</sup>

He continues by drawing on an analogy from the Nirvana Sūtra:

It is like the Nirvana Sūtra says: if you want to know [if something is] real gold, there are three [methods] to test it: burn, pound, rub. For practitioners it is also difficult to distinguish. If [one] wants to distinguish, [one] should [use] the three [methods] to test it. This is: (1) to act with it; if [one] does not know [through] acting with [it], [then one] should (2) dwell with it; if [one] does not know [through] dwelling with [it], [then one] should (3) use wisdom to investigate [it]. Now we will borrow this meaning and use [it] to illuminate the erroneous and correct marks of dhyāna-absorption.<sup>267</sup>

The discussion of the three techniques follow a clear pattern. We have presented it in the table below. First, Zhiyi explains that method is to be applied on the basis of what kind of the phenomenon appears. Then comes a description of the technique itself. After the phenomenon has been treated with the technique, two possible outcomes are discussed. Either it turns out that the phenomenon was indeed a karmic one or it was one of Māra’s creations. Again, we see that Zhiyi’s system operates with the two paradigms we proposed.

<b>Name of technique</b>	Investigate and rub with a meditative mind 定心 研磨	Using the practice one already practices to treat 以本法修治	Using wisdom to investigate 以智慧觀察
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<sup>266</sup> T.46.498b01-03 自有邪禪。其相微細難別。與正禪相似。非則相之所能別。應以三法驗知。一定心研磨。二用本法修治。三智慧破析。

<sup>267</sup> T.46.498b03-07 如涅槃經說。欲知真金。應三種試之。謂燒打磨。行人亦是難可別識。若欲別之。亦須三種試之。所謂當與共事。共事不知。當與久處。久處不知。以智慧觀察。今借此意。以明禪定邪正之相。

<b>Type of phenomena</b>	Moving sensation [of dhyāna] arise 如發一動觸。	Dhyāna of impurity-contemplation arises 如發不淨觀禪	Dharmas arise 發法 <sup>268</sup>
<b>Description of technique</b>	[One] should deeply enter into an absorption-mind. In the state that arise, do not grasp or reject, only abide in the equanimous mind 應當深入定心。於所發境中。不取不捨。但平心定住。	[One should] return to practicing impurity-contemplation 還修不淨觀。	Contemplate the dharmas that arises, and inferentially analyze [its] origins. Not seeing the place from which it arises, and coming to know empty quiescence, the mind does not abide and attach 觀所發法。推檢根源。不見生處。深知空寂。心不住著。
<b>Result if karma</b>	If it is a root of good, then the root of good will grow stronger with the deepening of meditative power 若是善根。定力踰深。善根踰發。	If the visions increase in clarity as the practice progresses, then this is not falsity 隨所修時。境界增明。此則非偽。	The correct appear by itself 正當自顯。
<b>Result if Māra/erroneous</b>	If it is a creation of Māra, then it will self-destruct before long 若魔所為不久自壞。	If, by using the method [one already practices, it] gradually disappears, [then one] knows it to be an erroneous mark 若以本修治。漸漸壞滅。當知即是邪相。	The error will disappear by itself 邪當自滅。
<b>Nirvana Sūtra metaphor</b>	Rubbing 磨	Pounding 打	Burning 燒

Figure 12 Application of Techniques<sup>269</sup>

### 7.3 Mistaking Māra for Karma and Karma for Māra

The danger connected with wrongfully distinguishing the two paradigms are grave. Now we will discuss what happens if the practitioner mistakes Māra for karma and karma for Māra? First we will show that Zhiyi makes a distinction between two types of “Māra meditations”

<sup>268</sup> What Zhiyi means by *fā* 法 is not clear, however it cannot be “characteristics” as characteristics not seem to be able to arise (*fā* 發).

<sup>269</sup> T46.498a29-b19

up against karmic disturbance. Then we will discuss some of the possible outcomes if the practitioner is wrong in his understanding.

### 7.3.1 Māra Meditation

A dhyāna state can according to Zhiyi either have the “mark of Māra” (*móxiàng* 魔相) or not (*fēi móxiàng* 非魔相). The first category is further divided into two types: 1) “dhyāna not being Māra, [but] Māra enters into dhyāna” (*chánfēishì mó mórùchánzhōng* 禪非是魔魔入禪中) and 2) “the dhyāna is completely created by Māra” (*yīxiàng mó zuò chándìng* 一向魔作禪定) It is not entirely clear how these types map onto the above discussion, in particular the assessment of marks.

In describing the first type of Māra-dhyāna, Zhiyi writes:

One, illuminating "dhyāna not being Māra, [but] Māra enters into dhyāna". If the practitioners in a correct mind gives rise to various [states of] dhyāna, evil Māras become afraid of his high [achievements] of the way. [Māra] creates disturbances and enters his dhyāna. If the mind craves and attaches or gives rise to fear and distress, then Māra will get the better of him. If [one] is able to apply [one's] mind and dispel it, like [explained] above, then Māra-errors will disappear. Just like when the clouds depart the sun shines forth, the settled mind is bright and pure<sup>270</sup>.

Here the dhyāna-state is in itself genuine. Yet in response to the progress of the practitioner, Māra creates disturbances (*nǎoluàn* 惱亂) and enters the dhyāna-state. If the mind of the practitioner becomes attached to or fearful of Māra, then Māra will take hold (*déqíbiàn* 得其便).

Zhiyi explains the second way the dhyāna-state is associated with Māra like this:

Two, the dhyāna is completely created by Māra and deceive the practitioner. If [one] is aware that [the dhyāna] is not true, [one] should use methods to treat it. After the Māra retreats there will not even be a hairsbreadth of dhyāna<sup>271</sup>.

Here it is the meditative state itself that is created by Māra. Rather than being a disturbance like the former one, this scenario is all together a deception (*kuánghuò* 誑惑). The

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<sup>270</sup> T.46.498b21-25 一明禪非是魔。魔入禪中。如行者於正心中。發諸禪定。惡魔恐其道高。為作惱亂。入其禪中。若心貪著。或生憂懼。即魔得其便。若能如上用心却之。魔邪既滅。如雲除日顯。定心明淨。

<sup>271</sup> T.46.498b25-27 二明一向魔作禪定。誑惑行者。若覺知非真。用法治之。魔退之後。則無復毫釐禪法。

practitioner should also apply methods in treating it, but once Māra retreats, there will be no dhyāna left.

These two Māra-dhyānas stand in contrast to the category of meditative experience that may appear similar to ones created by Māra, but is in reality obstacles caused by karmic transgressions. Zhiyi explains:

Next, illuminating marks [disturbances] not [associated with] Māra. [Karmic] transgressions obstructing dhyāna may resemble something made by Māra, but in reality they are not [created by] Māra. [They are] difficult to distinguish. If [one] uses the previous methods to dispel it, it will never depart. If [one] diligently strives to cultivate repentance, the transgressions will disappear and the dhyāna-absorptions will be natural and clear. Moreover, if [one] is in [meditative], absorption and [due to one] not being skilled in the use of expedient [practices],<sup>272</sup> mental states (境界) will not be in accord with the dharma. If [one] applies the expedient [practices] well, what [one] realizes is bright and pure. Then [one] knows that [it] is not the creation of Māra.<sup>273</sup>

We may put it in a table like this.

	<b>Mark of Māra 魔相</b>		<b>Mark of non-Māra 非魔相</b>
<b>Mistake</b>	Mistakes Māra-dhyāna as good dhyāna states		Mistake karmic transgressions as Māra
<b>Phenomenon</b>	Māra enters dhyāna 魔入禪	Māra creates dhyāna 魔作禪	Karmic transgressions 罪障於禪
<b>Outcome</b>	Disturbances 惱亂	Deception 誑惑	Mental states will not be in accord with the dharma. 致令境界不如法
<b>Method of treatment</b>	Apply one's mind and dispel it 用心却之	Use methods to treat it 用法治之	If [one] diligently strives to cultivate repentance, the transgressions will disappear and the dhyāna-absorptions will be natural and clear 若能勤修懺悔。罪既除滅。則禪定自然分明

Figure 13 Māra and Non-Māra Experience

To sum up, we see that Māra may operate in two ways in relation to dhyāna: he may enter into dhyāna to create disturbance and he may create entirely false dhyāna to create deception. These two scenarios are in contradistinction to the one where the practitioner is actually

<sup>272</sup> Since the first of the 25 external preparatory expedients is repentance, it might very well be that this is what meant by “expedient [practices]”, *fāngbiàn* 方便.

<sup>273</sup> T.46.498b28-c3 次明非魔相者。罪障於禪。似如魔作理實非魔。難可別識。若用前所說却之。終不得去。若能勤修懺悔。罪既除滅。則禪定自然分明。復次或入定時。方便不巧。致令境界不如法。若更善作方便。則所證明淨故。知非魔之所作也。

aware that there is a disturbance, but is mistaken in his diagnosis. He believes the experience to be caused by Māra, but it is in reality related to former bad deeds. It is karmic.

### 7.3.2 Madness and Heresy

What happens if you mistake Māra's dhyānas for real ones? Throughout Zhiyi's discussions of Māra in meditation we find references to what may go wrong if he "gets it his way" (*déqibian* 得其便). For example, in the MHZG it is said that the practitioner may "go mad, fall into trance, mistakenly teach divination and fail to avoid [the dangers of] water and fire."<sup>274</sup>

The most comprehensive discussion appears after the discussions of "assessment of marks." Here we see that if the practitioner is unable to recognize the disturbing work of Māra he may either go mad or become a heretic. The topic of what happens if Māra gets it his way is worthy of its own study and we can only provide a translation and a few initial remarks here.

Zhiyi begins by giving a colorful description of what may happen if the practitioner is unable to distinguish correctly. The reader cannot help but imagining how this passage is based on the deviancies of certain individuals of the monastic community at Zhiyi's time.

If [one] does not distinguish erroneous and false [from correct and true], the mind will give rise to greed and clinging. Because [of this, one] may lose [one's] mind and become unruly, sing and cry, laugh and wail, sometimes pacing in manic fright, sometimes attracting illness, sometimes even leading to [one's] death, sometimes wishing to throw oneself of a cliff or walk into fire, afflict and harm oneself. Such impeding afflictions are manifold.<sup>275</sup>

Going mad was certainly a danger the individual could face. But the second scenario was probably worse as it put the greater monastic community in jeopardy.

Zhiyi goes on at considerable length describing how Māra may cause the practitioner to become a heretic. When we discussed Māra in the writings of Huisi, we saw that if Māra enters the mind of the practitioner he may start to preach his great realization, which in fact is a false one. This topic is apparently one that concerns Zhiyi as well. Indeed, the topic of Māra causing the meditator to falsely believe he has reached awakening deserves a study in itself.

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<sup>274</sup> T.46.115a16-17 令人猖狂恍惚妄說吉凶不避水火 Translation from Swanson forthcoming, p. 1319.

<sup>275</sup> T.46.497a26-29 若不別邪偽。心生愛著者。因或失心狂逸。或歌或哭。或笑或啼。或時驚狂漫走。或時得病。或時致死。或時自欲投巖赴火。自絞自害。如是障惱非一。

Here we are only able to provide a translation and some brief commentaries, to the encouragement of future study.

It will be remembered that when we discussed the “assessment of marks” above, we translated *xiéfǎ* 邪法 as “erroneous characteristics.” But *xié* may also be translated into English as heterodox and *fǎ* as either “method” or “teachings”. Thus the erroneous becomes the heterodox and the characteristics becomes method or teachings. It is this polysemy Zhiyi takes advantage of in the following when he writes:

Moreover, one of the twenty erroneous (*xié*) [characteristics may] arise along [with the sensations of dhyāna]. If [it] resonates with one of the ninety-six [heterodox] teachings (*fǎ*) of the demons-and-spirits and [one] is not aware of it, then [one's] thoughts will be on that path, [and one's] practice on that method (*fǎ*). Immersed in their [heterodox] teachings (*fǎ*), demons and spirits enters along with [one's] thoughts. Because of this [one] gains realization of the teachings (*fǎ*) of the ghosts-and-spirits and is empowered by them. This may give rise to various deep heterodox (*xié*) absorptions, [attaining heterodox] wisdom and eloquence, knowing worldly fortune and misfortune (for the purpose of divination), [attaining] spiritual powers and [visions of] the strange, put on unusual demonstrations, move the people and widely spread heterodoxy.<sup>276</sup>

If the practitioner has an experience of the erroneous in meditation, this may cause him to resonate (*xiāngyìng* 相應) with the heterodox teachings and methods of practice. This may further lead him to attain various heterodox powers. And, Zhiyi continues, he may cause much harm in the world:

[One] may create great evil and destroy the good roots of [other] people. Even if one does good, one's actions are false and [cause] confusion. Worldly people without wisdom simply sees an extraordinary person and calls him a worthy sage. [They] sincerely submit [themselves] in faith and their minds turn topsy-turvy. They only practice the methods (*fǎ*) of demons, and constantly teaching demon teachings (*fǎ*) to [other] people. Therefore, those believing and practicing it destroys the orthodox precepts and orthodox views, destroys [correct] deportment and pure livelihood. Sometimes they eat feces and [walk] naked without shame. They don't respect the three worthies (ie. Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), their parents, teachers and elders. They destroy scriptures, statues, pagodas and temples. They commit the heinous sins and cut of the roots of goodness. They exhibit the marks of equanimity and praise themselves saying they practice equanimity. When it comes to what is not the way, they are without impediment [but they] destroy other's cultivation of good, thus [we] say it is not the correct path. They may teach that there is no cause and no result or

<sup>276</sup> T.46.497a29-b05 復次二十種邪中。隨有發一邪法。若與九十六種道鬼神法一鬼神法相應。而不覺識者。即念彼道行彼法。於所得法中。鬼神隨念便入。因是證鬼神法門。鬼加其勢力。或發諸深邪定。及智慧辯才。知世吉凶。神通奇異。現希有事。感動眾生。廣行邪化。



heterodox [doctrines of] cause and result. Such heterodox teachings confuse and destroy the orthodox teachings (*fā*). The minds of those who hear and accept it becomes tainted with the heterodox dharma whereupon they attain heterodox dhyāna, samādhi, wisdom, and cuts of merit. Outside various gates of practice (*fā*) their eloquence is without limit, their air of authority convert sentient beings. Therefore, they gain fame and followers, are provided with the benefits of offerings, reverence and praise. This is what the Sūtra of the Ninety-Six Heretics<sup>277</sup> says: [when] a person preaches the teachings (*fā*) and ghosts-and-spirits provides them with power, then all listeners believe and accept all the [distorted] views. They give rise to affectionate reverence. Because of this, their minds become deeply attached and is unable to change. Heterodox action and topsy-turvy-ness are manifold. If someone is like this, one should know that person to be far removed from the sacred teachings (*fā*) [of Buddhism]. [When] their body is destroyed and their life has reached its end they will fall into the three evil paths [of rebirth].<sup>278</sup>

This passage leaves the reader with little doubt with regards to how dangerous the practice of meditation is. If the practitioner is unskilled in distinguishing Māra from the workings of his own karma, grave harm will be cause to himself and to others. All the more, then, is the reason to cultivate the correct practices. In the next chapter we will further discuss what this entails. And we will see that correct practice not only saves the practitioner from Māra, but also leads him into awakening.

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<sup>277</sup> There is no text bearing this name in the Taishō.

<sup>278</sup> T.46.497b05-b22 或大作惡破人善根。或雖作善。而所行偽雜。世人無智。但見異人。謂是賢聖。深信信伏。然其內心顛倒。專行鬼法。常以鬼法教人。故信行之者。則破正戒破正見。破威儀破淨命。或時噉食糞穢。裸形無恥。不敬三尊父母師長。或毀壞經書形像塔寺。作諸逆罪。斷滅善根。現平等相。或自讚說所行平等。故於非道。無障無礙。毀他修善。云非正道。或說無因無果。或說邪因邪果。如是邪說紛然。壞亂正法。其有聞受之者。邪法染心。既內證邪禪三昧智斷功德種種法門外。則辯才無盡。威風化物。故得名聞眷屬。供養禮敬稱歎等利。是以九十六種道經云。人為說法。鬼神加力。則一切聞者。無不信受。一切見者。咸生愛敬。以有如斯等事故。深心執著不可迴轉。邪行顛倒種種非一。若如是者。當知是人遠離聖法。身壞命終。墮三惡道中。

## 8 Cosmology and Meditation Revisited

We ended chapter six on the note that the cultivation of dhyāna as a means to escape Māra is only half the story. In this chapter, we will attempt to finish the story. We will begin by discussing the other method for dealing with Māra, something that can be seen as a precursor to later developments in Zhiyi's system of meditation. This we will then compare with the methods for dealing with Māra in the XZG and MHZG, Zhiyi's later works on meditation, where we will see that the method for destroying Māra is also the method for gaining realization and attaining the soteriological goal of Buddhism.

It is this connection that then becomes the key to understanding the story of Zhiyi on Huading Peak. Here, we will see, it is precisely the act of dealing with Māra that causes him to attain insight.

### 8.1 From Escapism to Destruction of Māra

Dhyāna states, we have argued, are safe havens, outside the reach of Māra. Cultivating the practices of the five dhyāna gate then becomes means to escape the grips of Māra. In chapter two we translated an anecdote from Huisi where Śāriputra were left unharmed after an attack by the angry Piśācāḥ demon. Huisi stated that the meditative powers of all the dhyānas were able to keep the practitioner safe from attacks by both demons and Māra.

It might therefore come as a surprise that Zhiyi in the chapter on Māra disturbance in the CDCM does not advocate entry into dhyāna states as the way to deal with these disturbances. Instead we find a three-tiered practice which involves an early version of what was to become the hallmark of meditation practice in the later developments of Zhiyi. Let us first provide a translation of the practice for what he calls “methods for destroying Māra” (*pò mó fǎ* 破魔法):

One, understanding that all that is seen, heard and perceived are without substance. Do not perceive, do not attach [to it]. Without anguish, without discrimination, the other does not appear.

Two, only contemplate the mind that sees, hears and perceives. Do not see the place of arising. What is it that is disturbed? When contemplating like this, do not perceive and do not discriminate and it will extinguish by itself.

Three, if in making this contemplation they don't disappear, [one] must make [one's] thought upright (correct mindfulness), don't give rise to fear, and don't cling to [one's] physical life. An upright mind that does not move knows that the suchness of the world of Māra is the suchness of the world of Buddha. The Māra-world-suchness and the Buddha-world-suchness are one suchness, not two. Nothing is abandoned in the

Māra-world and nothing is obtained in the Buddha-world. The Buddha-dharma appears and Māra disperses by itself. Not seeing the coming and going anymore, there will also be no distress or delight. Then, how can there be afflictions [caused by] Māra?<sup>279</sup>

The meditative technique for conquering Māra consists of three successive levels. First the practitioner is asked to understand that everything that is sensed, all objects of the senses, are without substance. In other words, they are empty of self-nature. Then the focus is turned inwards and to the illusion that there is a mind that can perceive the outer world. The subtext here is clearly that mind also should be understood as empty of self-nature. Finally, Māra should be approached with correct mindfulness (*zhèngniàn* 正念) and without giving rise to fear or attachment to one's physical life. Zhiyi then goes on to make the assertion that the world (*jiè* 界) of Māra is identical (*jìshì* 即是) to world of Buddha and that the two are of the same suchness (*tathā, rú* 如).

One may be tempted to relate these three levels to the three levels of calming discussed in chapter three. But on closer inspection, already in the first of the three Māra-destroying methods we find what looks like the third of the calming practices. The first of the Māra-destroying methods instructs that the practitioner should see all objects of sensation as without substance, in other words, as empty of self-nature. This seems to be quite similar to the third of the calming practices when Zhiyi states that the practitioner is to “penetrate into the emptiness of all dharmas.”<sup>280</sup>

In order to situate the next two Māra-destroying levels, we need to turn to Zhiyi's later instruction on meditation, the XZG. Here we will see that CDCM's three levels of Māra-destruction are to be explained under the dual practice of calming and contemplation.

## 8.2 Destroying Māra in the XZG

We have already alluded to the fact that the chapter on Māra disturbance in the XZG (and MHZG for that matter) are surprisingly similar to that of the CDCM. In our discussion of *jīngmèi* and *bùtì* above, this enabled us draw on the Zhiyi's later works to get a fuller picture.

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<sup>279</sup> T.46.507b18-27 一者了知所見聞覺知皆無所有。不受不著。亦不憂感。亦不分別。彼即不現。二者但反觀能見聞覺知之心。不見生處。何所惱亂。如是觀時。不受不分別。便自謝滅。三者若作此觀。不即去者。但當正念。勿生懼想。不著軀命。正心不動知魔界如即是佛界如。魔界如佛界如一如無二如。於魔界無所捨。於佛界無所取。即佛法現前。魔自退散。既不見去來。亦不憂喜。爾時豈為魔所惱。

<sup>280</sup> T.46.492a11 體諸法空

Where the chapter in the two later texts diverge from the CDCM is in relation to how Māra is to be treated in meditation. In the CDCM we have seen that there is a clear difference between the central method advanced in the text, that of the five dhyāna gates, and the method for destroying Māra. As we will see here, in the XZG the method for destroying Māra is the same as the main method of practice, namely “calming and contemplation.”

Let us first turn to the method in the XZG. Here Zhiyi writes that practitioner either may apply the method of calming or of contemplation (*guān* 觀). Of calming he writes:

One, cultivate calming to expel them. Whenever one sees an external demonic state, known that they are all empty and deceptive and not [cause for] worry of fright. Do not grasp or reject, or wrongfully [make] discriminations. Put the mind to rest in quietude and the other [i.e. Māra] will naturally [go into] extinction.<sup>281</sup>

This method is very similar to the first level in the CDCM: the phenomena of experience are to be seen as empty. When the mind is put to rest, Māra will naturally go into extinction (*miè* 滅).

However, if the practice of calming does not create the desired effect, then the practitioner should take up the practice of contemplation.

Two, cultivate contemplation to expel them. If one sees Māra-states like those discussed above and they are not expelled through the application of calming, then one should turn [one’s attention] and contemplate the mind that sees. Then one will see that there is no place [where it abides]. How can there then be any affliction [caused by Māra]?<sup>282</sup>

Again we see that the method advocated is very similar to that of the CDCM. Also in the XZG is the practitioner advised to turn his attention inwards and to the mind that experiences. He is expected to realize that there is no mind that can be disturbed. Then, presumably he realizes the illusory and relational nature of the Māra.

If he contemplates like this but Māra does not disappear right away, Zhiyi writes that he must apply correct mindfulness (*zhèngniàn* 正念), not give rise to fear and so on; in a passage that is virtually identical to the last of the three levels in the CDCM. The practitioner should realize how the world of Buddha and the world of Māra is of the same suchness. They are the same.

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<sup>281</sup> T.46.470c28-471a02 一者修止却之。凡見一切外諸 惡魔境。悉知虛誑不憂不怖。亦不取不捨。妄計分別息心寂然彼自當滅。

<sup>282</sup> T.46.471a02-04 二者修觀却之。若見如上所說種種魔境。用止不去即當反觀。能見之心不見處所。彼何所惱

On the basis of this comparison we can make the observation that the Māra-destroying methods of the CDCM is very similar to that of the XZG, the major difference being that in the latter, the three methods are mapped onto the two practices of calming and contemplation.

What changes in the later text is that in the practices of calming and contemplation is not just a method for destroying Māra, it makes up the central practice. This is mainly explicated in the sixth chapter of the text known as “Proper Practice” (*zhèngxiū* 正修).<sup>283</sup> This is not the place to discuss all the practical and doctrinal aspects of the shift from CDCM to the XZG.<sup>284</sup> What we may note, however, is that the XZG, structurally, is a continuation of the external and internal preparatory expedients of the CDCM. In other words, the part of the CDCM that discusses dhyāna (which makes up about half of the text), does not have a parallel in the XZG. Moreover, the practices of the five dhyāna gates, which in the CDCM lead into the safe havens of the dhyāna states and thus outside the grip of Māra, are relegated to a minor position in the new text.<sup>285</sup> Is it relatively clear from the XZG that the practitioner is not to try to escape Māra through the ascension into the dhyānas, but that Māra is to be dealt with using the methods of calming and contemplation; the same two methods he should use to attain awakening. Not just are they identical, the disturbance of Māra actually serves as an opportunity to practice calming and contemplation; in other words, to gain awakening.<sup>286</sup>

### 8.3 Zhiyi’s Biography – Revisited

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<sup>283</sup> Calming and contemplation can be practiced in two settings: in the seated posture (*yú zuò zhōng xiū* 於坐中修) and in all circumstances (*lìyuán duìjìng xiū* 歷緣對境修). See T.46.0466c28.

<sup>284</sup> For some aspects of this transition, see Rhodes 2013.

<sup>285</sup> The dhyāna gates may still be taken up if the practitioner has particular afflictive problems, or feels particularly inclined towards one of them. But this is clearly secondary to the main practice of calming and contemplation.

<sup>286</sup> This principle also applies to the MHZG. To give complete overview of the method of meditation in this text lies outside our abilities. However, we may briefly note that Zhiyi here discussed ten so-called “spheres or objects of contemplation” (*shí guānjìng* 十觀境) that may appear in meditation. Number five of these ten is “Māra disturbance” (*móshi*). Regardless of which of these ten that appears in meditation, when either of them do, the practitioner is to take up one of the practices from a list of ten, known as the “ten modes of discernment” (*shíshèng guānfǎ* 十乘觀法). He begins from the most rarified one, known as “contemplating [the sphere as] the inconceivable as object,” (*guān bùkěsīyì* 觀不可思議). If this does not work, he moves down the list until he finds a method that works. For a discussion of the topic, see Donner and Stevenson 1993, pp. 20-21.

The story of Zhiyi on Huading peak is a pivotal one in his life. By the time he left society and retreated into the Tiantai mountains, he had already gained fame in the capital of the Chén 陳 dynasty. Indeed, he had actually already given the lectures that were to become the text of CDCM that we have studied here. But he is said to have expressed dissatisfaction with his life as an eminent monk in the capital.<sup>287</sup> In the year 575 he left the capital and went to Mt. Tiantai. There he built a temple on the northern peak where he resided. To the north of the temple there was a peak known as Huading. This is where Zhiyi went to practice austerities (*tóutuó* 頭陀). In the *Biézhuàn* 別傳 biography, his disciple Guanding then relates the story:

Suddenly, during the second half of the night, a strong gust of wind ripped the trees out of the ground; thunder shook the mountain. A thousand groups of mountain demons (*chīmèi* 魑魅), each with one hundred forms, emerged: some had the head of a dragon or a snake; others were shooting sparkles out their mouths. These creatures were amorphous in shape like a dark cloud, and the sound of their voice was like a thunderbolt. They changed appearance suddenly, and it was impossible to identify or count them. It was like the scene of the Buddha defeating Māra which has been depicted in pictures. Though the creatures who threatened Zhiyi were a smaller they were even more frightening. But Zhiyi was able to calm his mind, and attained the state of untroubled emptiness and silence. The vision that was pressing on him spontaneously disappeared. Then the creatures took the form of Zhiyi's parents and of the monks who were his teachers. Some came close to him and others embraced him; they cried and shed tears. But Zhiyi concentrated his thoughts on the True Reality and realized the Original Non-being. The appearance of distress and suffering again disappeared after a while. Neither the visions of aggression nor of suffering could affect Zhiyi.<sup>288</sup>

It is, we believe, futile to attempt to map this story squarely onto the doctrinal discussion that has taken up most of this study. However, we do believe that it may provide some insight into the question of how meditation practice was portrayed by the community surrounding Zhiyi on Mt. Tiantai. After all, as John Kieschnick has argued, we may read Buddhist biographies “as an expression of the idea of the monk, that is, what people thought monks were and what they thought monks should be.”<sup>289</sup> In our case we may read the biography as an expression of the idea of what the community thought Buddhist meditation should be, as exemplified in the life of their teacher. We have no way of telling what actually happened at Huading, if

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<sup>287</sup> Shinohara 1992, p. 120.

<sup>288</sup> T.50.193b02-b10 忽於後夜大風拔木。雷震動山魑魅千群一形百狀。或頭戴龍虺。或口出星。火形如黑雲聲如霹靂。倏忽轉變不可稱計。圖畫所寫降魔變等。蓋少小耳可畏之相復過於是。而能安心湛然空寂。逼迫之境自然散失。又作父母師僧之形。乍枕乍抱悲咽流涕。但深念實相體達本無。憂苦之相尋復消滅強軟二緣所不能動。

Translation from Shinohara 1992, p. 121, but with some changes.

<sup>289</sup> Kieschnick 1997, pp. 3-4

anything at all. Here we must keep in mind John McRae's first rule of Zen studies: "It's not true, and therefore it's more important."<sup>290</sup>

We begin by noting that the demon that attacks Zhiyi is not Māra himself, but a group of mountain demons, *chīmèi* 魑魅. Their appearance is gruesome and, one gets the feeling, overwhelming. We are told that it was "equivalent to" (*děng* 等) the paintings of Buddha defeating Māra. They were not as large, but actually even more frightening. But, "Zhiyi was able to calm his mind, and attained the state of untroubled emptiness and silence" (*ānxīn zhànrán kōngjì* 安心湛然空寂) whereupon the frightening visions spontaneously disappeared.

In this passage we see that the demons that attacked Zhiyi were mountain demons and that the scene was equivalent to that of the Buddha defeating Māra. The name of the demons, *chīmèi*, might be of some interest. In one of the earliest reference to Buddhist practice on Mt. Tiantai, the poem "Wandering on Mount Tiantai: A Rhapsody" (*Yóu tiāntaishān fù* 游天臺山賦) by Sūn Chuò (320–377) we find the following line; here in Burton Watson's poetic translation.

Now casting its shadow into the many-fathomed depths, now hiding its summit among a thousand ranges – to reach it one must first travel the paths of goblins and trolls (*chīmèi*), and finally enter the realm where no human being lives.<sup>291</sup>

One can easily speculate, though it is hard to find a base in historical records, that there is some distant resonance between the *chīmèi* demons in Sun Chou's rhapsody and the figure that attacked Zhiyi. We can easily imagine Zhiyi travelling, both physically and spiritually, on the far-away mountain paths and enter the realm where no human being lives or has gained access to.

Having emptied and silenced his mind, the frightening visions disappeared. Then visions of people he held dear appeared, crying and shedding tears.<sup>292</sup> But Zhiyi kept his thoughts on "the True Reality and realized the Original Non-being" (*shíxiàng tǐdá běnwú* 實

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<sup>290</sup> McRae 2003, p. xix.

<sup>291</sup> 其路幽迥，或倒景於重冥，或匿峰於千嶺，始經魑魅之途，卒踐無人之境。Watson 2000, p. 483

<sup>292</sup> It is somewhat surprising that the second category does not include beautiful women as in the story of the Buddha, but it was probably not suitable for the disciples to insinuate that their master had sexual fantasies in his meditation.

相體達本無). Thereupon the morning star<sup>293</sup> arouse and a supernatural monk (*shénsēng* 神僧) appeared, saying:

You have controlled and overcome enemies, and can be said to be courageous. No one can pass their trials better than you did.<sup>294</sup>

Thereupon the monk told him he that this teaching is “called the One Truth of Reality, it is studied with wisdom and thought with compassion.”<sup>295</sup>

More study is needed to unravel the content of this fascinating story and its relation to the concept of Māra and disturbance in meditation. For our purpose, we are content with pointing out the connection that is made between demonic trials, and the attainment of awakening.

### 8.3.1 Subduing Māra, Pacifying Leeches

To round off, I would like to add a short contemporary anecdote. I have had the great pleasure of visiting Mt. Tiantai twice. On my second trip I visited the Huading Temple (*huádǐng jiǎngsì* 華頂講寺) on top of the mountain. Some of my fellow travelers and I started talking with one of the monks. We got into the topic of dangerous animals and if there were any such in the Tiantai range. There were not many, the monk could confirm, but in recent decades the leeches in the area had started to suck blood again. Somewhat confused, we asked him to elaborate. It turns out that, according to him, for a long time the leeches of the area did actually not suck blood. But in the 1960s the communist government had built a military watch tower on the near-by peak and in the process demolished what was known as the “Māra-subduing Pagoda” (*xiángmótǎ* 降魔塔). This pagoda was erected in commemoration of Zhiyi and his subjugation of Māra on this location.

According to the monk, when Zhiyi practiced meditation on Huading peak he had pacified the leeches of the area, making them stop sucking blood. But when the pagoda was destroyed by the military, the leeches were freed from the spell and again began to suck blood. The story of Zhiyi pacifying the leeches is confirmed by a book of collected stories from Mt. Tiantai that I happened to come across in a Beijing bookstore a year later.<sup>296</sup> I have not been able to find reason why Māra would come to be personified as blood-sucking

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<sup>293</sup> Note the clear reference to the famous symbol in Buddha biography.

<sup>294</sup> T.50.193b10-11 制敵勝怨乃可為勇。能過斯難無如汝者。 Translation from Shinohara 1992, p. 121

<sup>295</sup> T.50.193b1014-15 名一實諦。學之以般若。宣之以大悲。

<sup>296</sup> Zhu 2012, pp. 22-25



leeches, but the story testifies to the public imaginary concerning Zhiyi's meditative attainments and the change it caused in the world.

# 9 Towards a Chinese Buddhist Meditative Demonology

This study began with the observation that while the Buddha's subjugation of Māra and attainment of Buddhahood is a pivotal moment in Buddhist history, few of Buddha's followers seems to have following in their master's footsteps and fought off Māra in the same way.

Zhiyi seems in his text to make explicit the implicit tension in the figure of Māra. This tension is between the metaphorical and the cosmological. On the one hand, Māra is a metaphor for the karmic impediments that causes the practitioner to constantly remain in *samsāra*, the world of birth and death. On the other, Māra is a figure located in the world, bent on constantly causing trouble. It is easy, especially with our modern sensibilities, to think of Māra as an outwards projection of internal, karmic, afflictions. And we probably have large parts of the Buddhist tradition on our side in thinking this.

What we have attempted to do in this study is to suggest that Zhiyi somehow goes against the stream. He asserts the existence of a cosmological Māra that targets the meditator, responding to the cultivation of good, that is, to his progress in meditation and on the way. The practitioner, therefore has to skillfully assess whether a given instance of experience in meditation indeed is indicative of his karmic constitution or if it is caused by Māra, lest he may fall into great danger and cause harm to the world. This is what we called the two paradigms for interpreting meditative experience.

A Chinese Buddhist Meditative Demonology is then the idea that there are forces "out there" which cause certain disturbances and difficulties for the individual practitioner in the practice. And these difficulties are not explained by the karmic baggage the practitioner brings with him onto the meditation mat. Rather, there are demonic forces that gradually increase the power of their attack as the practitioner makes progress.

But Zhiyi, as became clearer in light of the later XZG, also advocates using the disturbance of Māra as an opportunity for proper cultivation. And then the method for handling Māra is actually identical with the method for attaining Buddhahood.

## 9.1 Epilogue

But while Zhiyi fought off *Chīmèi*-cum-Māra on the Huading Peak, there are indications that Māra continued to torment Chinese meditators in their practice. We will here just provide a

few observations concerning the Chinese Buddhist Meditative Demonology as encouragement for future study.

### 9.1.1 AMF Commentarial Tradition

In chapter two we noted how the AMF portrayed Māra as attacking practitioners lacking good roots. With the Korean monk Wonhyo 元曉 (617–686), the understanding of the demonic changes. Wonhyo draws heavily on Zhiyi’s CDCM to the point where large sections are quoted verbatim. He also seems to have consulted the XZG. The first part of the demonic passage of the, equivalent to the first citation from the AMF in this chapter and a short sentence on treatment, served for Wonhyo as the basis for the truncated explanation (*lüè míng* 略明). Here he discussed the *Bùtì* demons, *Jīngmèi* spirits and parts of Māra proper, and the methods for dealing with them. This material is drawn from the chapter on Māra disturbance the CDCM. The remainder of the demonic passage serves as the basis for the expanded explication (*guǎngshì* 廣釋) drawing mainly upon the content of the CDCM chapter discussing Māra in relation to the assessment of good and bad roots.

The final of the three classical commentaries on the AMF, Fazang’s 法藏 (643–712) *Dàshèng qǐxìnlùn yìjì* 大乘起信論義記<sup>297</sup> follows Wonhyo and paraphrase Zhiyi when commenting on the demonic passage. Another important text in relation to the AMF is the *Shì móhēyán lùn* 釋摩訶衍論<sup>298</sup>. The whole of fascicle 9, out of a total of 10, is devoted to the demonic paradigm. This is worthy of its own study, but an initial survey shows only slight influence from Zhiyi through Wonhyo. The final in the list of 10 demons (*guí* 鬼) is *Duītì* 堆惕 and the final in the list of 15 spirits (*shén* 神) is *jīngmèi* 精媚. The association of *jīngmèi* with spirits (*shén*) appears in Wonhyo’s commentary, but not in Zhiyi’s works, and this might indicate that the *Shì móhēyán lùn* is influenced by Wonhyo. Most of this fascicle is devoted to various demon-quelling spells. From what I have been able to see, the text follows Zhiyi and Wonhyo rather than the original AMF in defining the demonic.

### 9.1.2 Instructions on Meditation in Chan and Daoism

Zhiyi’s demonology seems to have had lasting impact on instructions on meditation. This is probably due to the wide-ranging impact of the XZG on the practice of meditation. In the

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<sup>297</sup> T.1846

<sup>298</sup> T.1668. While attributed to Nagarjuna and translated by \*Vṛddhimata (筏提摩多), it was most likely composed in Korea towards the end the seventh century or the beginning of the eight. See Digital Dictionary of Buddhism “釋摩訶衍論.” <http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?q=釋摩訶衍論> (accessed 20.5.2017)

Sóng dynasty Chán instruction *Zuòchányì* 坐禪儀, contained in the *Chányuàn qīngguī* 禪苑清規, we find mention of the dangers of Māra.<sup>299</sup> Not only that, but it states explicitly, and by now familiar, that “as the practice progresses, Māra flourishes.”<sup>300</sup> The earliest of the texts the practitioner is asked to consult is *Tiāntái zhǐguān* 天台止觀, which most likely refers to the XZG.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century modernizer of meditation practice, Jiāng Wēiqiáo 將為橋, also drew on the XZG in his instructions and thus we find another discussion of Māra in meditation.<sup>301</sup>

We also see Māra showing up in Daoist meditation instructions after Zhiyi, see for instance the *Dìngguānjīng* 定觀經:

Because the mind grasps forms, various forms are produced in response. All the wicked devils (*xiémó* 邪魔) compete at coming to confuse and distract you.<sup>302</sup>

### 9.1.3 Surangama Sutra

If what we have suggested here, that Zhiyi is the one to (re-)establish the connection between Māra and meditation, then this might shed new light on the highly influential Tang apocryphal sūtra, *Sūrangama Sūtra* (T.945 *Dàfó dǐng shǒulèngyán jīng* 大佛頂首楞嚴經). The final chapter of this text is an instruction given by Buddha to his disciple Ananda on how to stay safe from the attacks of *Skandha-Māra* (*yīnmó* 陰魔).

### 9.1.4 Walking on Fire, Entering Māra

Finally, we may mention the concept of “Walking on Fire, Entering Māra” (*zǒuhuó rùmó* 走火入魔). This is a concept that is used to conceptualize deviancy and mental illness caused by various form of physical and mental methods of cultivation. As Nancy Chen has shown, during the heydays of Qigong-practice on the Chinese mainland in the 1980s and 1990s, this came to be a standard phrase for explaining why some people had strange experiences in practice and altered behavior.<sup>303</sup> As far as we have been able to ascertain, the concept has its origin in the the Qíng 清 dynasty medical manual *Zhāngshì yītōng* 張氏醫通, though it seems to be conceptually related to Zhiyi’s system.

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<sup>299</sup> X.63.545a16-18. This has been pointed out by Bielefeld 1986 and 1990.

<sup>300</sup> X.63.545a16 道高魔盛

<sup>301</sup> Jiang 2009, pp. 79-80.

<sup>302</sup> 爲心取相 諸相應生 一切邪魔 競來撓亂. Original text and translation by Eskildsen 2015, p. 235.

<sup>303</sup> Chen 2008, pp. 107-138.



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