

CHAPTER VI

Map Becomes Territory: Knowledge and Modes of Existence in Middle Period Buddhist Meditation Practice*

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1. Introduction

Many years ago, Robert Buswell observed a key distinction between two important śāstric sources on the Buddhist path. He noted how the **Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra* (ca. 150 CE) is largely *retrospective* in its outlook, surveying the path as if from the standpoint of its final goal. Conversely, the *Visuddhimagga* (ca. 430 CE) is largely *proleptic* or developmental in its outlook, presenting the path from the perspective of a practitioner traveling it, as if looking out at the path with the final goal in the distance.¹ He suggested that these different approaches lead to different ways of theorizing the entailments of the path or practically engaging it. In this article, I present an analysis of some aspects of a relatively little-known treatment of the Buddhist path of practice, found in a middle period *sūtra* attributed to the Buddha, the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* (hereafter *Saddhsu*; ca. 150–400 CE or possibly earlier).² The text’s historical position and likely connection to on-

* I would like to express my gratitude to Cristina Pecchia and Vincent Eltschinger for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of the article. It is much improved thanks to their critical feedback.

¹ Buswell 1997: 607–09.

² On the reasons for the scholarly notion of Buddhism’s “Middle Period”—the first five centuries of the Common Era when Indian Buddhism can be characterized by an established sedentary monasticism—see Schopen 1995: 360–367 and Boucher 2008: 67.

the-ground meditation practice make it a key source for understanding some of the central dynamics that broadened the scope of theorization on Buddhist practice during the early centuries of the Common Era in South Asia.³ The path of practice set out in the *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* walks an interesting line between the two approaches to the path noted by Buswell. It presents a largely developmental model of practice, but its narrative structure also provides for a retrospective stance. And it is this amalgamation of—or perhaps accommodation of—perspectives that provides the *Saddhsu* with its particular outlook on the path.⁴

I suggest here that this way of framing the Buddhist path should be understood as a key early development that contributed to new and expansive forms of conceptualizing the Buddhist path in history. The text presents a theorization on how the path of Buddhist practice allows for the cultivation of a meta-knowledge that is comprehensive and powerful, in every sense of the term.⁵ Such developments most likely set the historical stage for a wide variety of new approaches to the path, in both practice traditions and philosophical traditions.

I propose that the path outlined in the *Saddhsu* functions prescriptively and is informed by an incipient doxographical perspective. The text draws

³ There are a number of reasons why I think the *Saddhsu* provides evidence for traditions connected to on-the-ground meditation practice, some of which I have presented in Stuart 2015. Most importantly, the text is shot through with incidental evidence of the realia of meditation contexts: meditation advice for daily encounters with the material world (see below), paintings of corpses produced in order to help meditator monks develop dispassion (e.g. Ms 146a6; D ra 88b2–3; T 721, 17: 136b2–3), and particular kinds of donations for the support of meditator monks who have attained certain meditative states (e.g. Ms 187b7–188a1 ff.; D ra 176a4–b2 ff.; T 721, 17: 165b4–8 ff.). The narrative aspects of the text bring this material into play in ways that most *śāstras* would not allow for. The text also contains many techniques of meditation that have no explicit counterparts in the early tradition (see, for example, Appendix 6 in Stuart 2015 [II], particularly 326–339). This material suggests to me that the text is incorporating new and dynamic on-the-ground meditation teachings into its more traditional—though still somewhat radical—deployment of canonical practices.

⁴ See Stuart 2015a: 178–187 for a discussion of how the *Saddhsu*’s three-tiered narrative structure—in which a master *yoga* practitioner or meditation practitioner (*yogācāra*) is described observing the development of a meditator monk—creates space for both perspectives.

⁵ Stuart 2015a.

on early canonical *sūtra* accounts of fundamental Buddhist ethical and ontological categories, then pushes beyond them into more elaborate Abhidharma frameworks, theories/experiences of cognitive constructivism, and finally into cosmological visions in which a meditator envisions diverse cosmological realities and cultivates a comprehensive knowledge of action and its results (*karmaphalavipākā*). In the process, it describes a meditation practitioner engaging each of these epistemological registers in a series of meditative encounters that build on one another. I thus propose to read the text as prescribing a practical contemplative epistemology by which diverse ontological frames left over on the palimpsest of early middle period Buddhist tradition are evoked, experientially negotiated, and enacted as modes of existence. The path then becomes a tool by which traditional or conventional frames of reference can be masterfully enacted, while giving way to unconventional or unorthodox ones in an unfolding of contemplative and philosophical possibility. In many ways, this use of the path harkens back to early canonical attempts—in texts such as the *Brahmajāla-sutta* of the Dīghanikāya and its parallels—to quantify all views and show how they can be accounted for through meditative experience.⁶ The *Saddhsu*, however, inverts the approach of the *Brahmajāla-sutta*, allowing various views to be engaged and negotiated through meditative processes. In doing so, the text presages in certain ways the epistemological/doxographical śāstric traditions that emerge in force from the end of the fifth century CE onward in Buddhist South Asia.⁷

⁶ DN 1 at DN I 1–46. Interpreting this discourse, Bhikkhu Bodhi (2007 [1978]: 9) writes that “the primary focus of [the Buddha’s] concern is not so much the content of the view as the underlying malady of which the addiction to speculative tenets is a symptom.” I would suggest that we should not overdetermine a “primary focus.” It seems to me that the text does indeed emphasize the basic malady of craving, which undergirds all views. However, it also appears that the content and construction of the various views is essential to what the text is doing, accounting for how and why the mind of a spiritual practitioner creates and constructs conceptions of the self and the cosmos in time, space, and tradition. This early doxographical urge no doubt influenced later Buddhist philosophical traditions in a variety of ways.

⁷ These developments are of course tied in to parallel developments within non-Buddhist philosophical traditions. The early epistemological tradition (*pramāṇavāda*) within Buddhism is exemplified by scholars such as Dignāga (ca. 480–540) while the beginning of formal doxographical philosophy within Buddhism is marked by Bhāviveka (ca. 500–560 CE). On these dates, see Eckel 2008: 24–25.

To show how this engagement with the path works, I will highlight four key passages of the *Saddhsu*, turning points in the text that indicate shifts of epistemic perspective and correlate to a range of ontological possibilities. In these shifts, we can interpret the text as negotiating realist, idealist, and enactivist frames of reference, categories to which I will return below. I have presented much of this material elsewhere, but here I want to contextualize the material differently and put a finer point on the relationships between key points in the text.⁸ While my approach is primarily descriptive, I also attempt to contextualize the material historically and provide basic interpretations of it. In this way, we can see how the *Saddhsu* connects early Buddhist practice traditions to stridently new theorizations of the path, theorizations that enact an emergent practical epistemology. This practical epistemology presages later scholastic epistemologies and the tiered ontologies of developed philosophical and śāstric traditions that emerge from the fourth and fifth centuries onward.⁹

2. The *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra*

The *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* is an understudied text. It is a massive compendium connected with the Sarvāstivāda traditions of Greater Gandhāra. While the text contains a range of material—from descriptions of basic meditative practices to Abhidharma theoretics to cosmological visions—it is also a sūtra with a frame story depicting the entire text as the teaching of the Buddha to his disciples. For reasons I won't go into now, but which are presented in a recently published monograph, I suggest that the text was composed some time between the years 150 and 400 of the Common Era.¹⁰ This means that it was circulating during a key period in the development of Buddhist tradition, when the new genre of Mahāyāna sūtras was truly coming into vogue, and śāstric and philosophical traditions were

⁸ See Stuart 2015, 2015a and Stuart 2018.

⁹ On such developments, see Dreyfus 1997: 15–21; Dreyfus and McClintock 2003: 1–33; Eckel 2008: 1–17; and Eltschinger 2014: 1–72 (particularly 71–72).

¹⁰ Stuart 2015 (I): 43–46. It remains possible that the text was composed earlier than 150 CE, but this cannot be determined with certainty at the moment. Much of the material in the text certainly goes back to much earlier layers of Buddhist textual history.

beginning to dominate the landscape of Buddhist thought, particularly in the Northwest of India.

The text is voluminous—a veritable encyclopedia of Middle Period Buddhist thought—and presents challenges to the editor since it survives only in a single manuscript. Despite these difficulties, access to the text in its original Sanskrit opens many new avenues for study. The present article is one step towards opening up the text to a wider audience of scholars. Early research by Lin Li-kouang on the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the *Saddhsu* made it clear that the text contained important material for the history of Buddhist meditative and philosophical traditions.¹¹ Unfortunately, Lin died before he could complete his study, and few scholars followed up on his work. The discovery several years ago of a partial Sanskrit manuscript of the *Saddhsu*, held at Norbulingka in Lhasa, has aroused new interest in the text.¹² I recently published an edition and study of the text's second chapter, and several other scholars are working on other sections of it.¹³ However, it will be many years until the text is available in its entirety.

Elsewhere I have shown how the core of the text has been constructed primarily on the basis of textual materials drawn from the early mainstream Buddhist canon, reframed in a comprehensive practice of *dharmasmṛtyupasthāna* with an Abhidharma inflection.¹⁴ The text is then expanded into a vast compendium of Buddhist cosmology, framed as a series of meditations in which a visionary meditator or *yoga* practitioner (*yogācāra*) observes and understands the process by which a meditator monk comes to discern a wide range of possible karmic trajectories (*karmaphalavipāka*) for beings in vari-

¹¹ Lin and Demiéville 1949.

¹² My work on the text is based on a photocopy of the manuscript kept in the collection of the China Tibetology Research Center (Box 12, No.1) in Beijing.

¹³ See Stuart 2015, in which I also edit some short sections of the sixth chapter of the text. Vesna Wallace is preparing an edition of the first chapter of the text, and Mitsuyo Demoto of its third chapter. The first three chapters only account for approximately one third of the extant Sanskrit manuscript, which itself covers only the first half of the entire text as it has come down in Tibetan and Chinese translation. So, much work remains to be done. Additionally, Mitsuyo Demoto (2009) has published a short article on the system of hells in the *Saddhsu*, in which she provides a very basic overview of the text with a focus on its third chapter.

¹⁴ Stuart 2015 (I): 35–197 and Stuart 2015a: 169–72. See also Lin and Demiéville 1949, particularly pages 99–146, where Lin provides reference to a range of material that is both directly and indirectly related to the constitution of the text.

ous realms of the Buddhist cosmos. This expanded practice gestures towards a tacit Mahāyāna soteriology while allowing for other possible soteriological goals to be accommodated.¹⁵

So, the *Saddhsu* draws on early Buddhist traditions but expands well beyond them to develop an expansive soteriology and an elaborately figured practice involving discernment of the process of karma in all realms of existence. It does so through a literary structure that brings a wide range of historically layered material—material with varied ontological and epistemological entailments—into an ordered set of epistemological engagements. A key point to emphasize is the fact that the *Saddhsu* is, at its core, a text on the stages of meditation. While it contains a wide range of narrative and scholastic material, its basic structure is built around a description of a meditator's (*yogācāra*) practice of *dharmasmṛtyupasthāna*. It outlines the various stages of practice (*yogācārabhūmi*) that a meditator engages in order to master such meditative practices. This fundamental aspect of the text indicates that the *Saddhsu*, though not strictly speaking a *śāstra*, belongs to a broad genre of proto-śāstric and śāstric *yogācārabhūmi* texts produced primarily in greater Gandhāra in the early centuries of the Common Era.¹⁶

3. Varieties of Realism

The core meditative practice depicted in the *Saddhsu* is a reworking and expansion of an early canonical Buddhist sūtra, the **Ṣaḍdhātuvibhaṅgasūtra* ("Sūtra on Distinguishing the Six Elements").¹⁷ In traditional canonical depictions of this practice, a monk is described as simply mentally dividing his experience into constituents of materiality and mind, and seeing that the entire range of psycho-physical phenomena available to human experience is impermanent, ultimately subject to decay, and therefore devoid of selfhood. In line with basic Buddhist ideas, this practice was considered to lead to a state of mind liberated from the suffering that stems from identifying with the psycho-physical process. Most scholars read these early depictions as modes of realist

¹⁵ Stuart 2015 (I): 198–224.

¹⁶ On the *yogācārabhūmi* as a textual genre, see Demiéville 1954, Yamabe 1999, and Deleanu 2006.

¹⁷ D 4094, *mngon pa*, ju 34b6–43a3 and Q 5595, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos*, tu 38a1–46b5; T 26, 1:690a19–692b21; MN 140 at MN III 237–247.

philosophical discourse that take for granted the basic existence of mind and materiality in elemental form.

The meditative process depicted in the first four stages of meditative practice in the *Saddhsu* is more or less a simple rehashing of the canonical *Ṣaḍdhātuvibhaṅgasūtra*. Both texts describe a practitioner looking one by one at the five different elements that make up his material body, and then meditatively isolating consciousness:

<i>Khams drug rab tu rnam par 'byed pa'i chos kyi rnam grangs</i> ¹⁸	<i>Dhātuvibhaṅgasutta</i> ¹⁹	分別六界經 <i>Fenbieliujie Jing</i> ²⁰
The remaining consciousness, being pure and definitely cognized, is discernable.	“Then there remains only consciousness, purified and clear.	There is only consciousness remaining.
What does it cognize?	“And what does one cognize with that consciousness?	What does it cognize?
It knows pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness, and equanimity.	“He cognizes ‘pleasure,’ ‘pain,’ and ‘neither-pain-nor-pleasure.’”	It cognizes pleasure, pain, happiness, sadness, and equanimity.

Table 1: The **Ṣaḍdhātuvibhaṅgasūtra* on isolating consciousness

¹⁸ D 4094, *mngon pa*, ju 38b6–7 and Q 5595, *mngon pa'i bstan bcos*, tu 42a6–7 (see Stuart 2015 [II]: 260–61): *rnam par shes pa khyad par can dag cing nges pa rnam par shes shing yongs su shes so || ci zhig rnam par shes zhe na | bde ba rab tu shes so || sdug bsngal rab tu shes so || yid bde ba rab tu shes so || yid mi bde ba rab tu shes so || btang snyoms rab tu shes so ||* I remain uncertain about the rendering of the first sentence here. Its lack of parallelism with the other versions of the text makes me suspect that the text was mistranslated or that the translation was made from a corrupt Sanskrit version.

¹⁹ MN 140 at MN III 242 (see Stuart 2015 [II]: 260–61): *athāparam viññāṇam yeva avasissati parisuddham pariyoḍātam. tena ca viññāṇena kiṃ vijānāti? “sukhan” ti pi vijānāti, “dukkhan” ti pi vijānāti, “adukkhamasukhan” ti pi vijānāti*. This *sutta* also has the alternative title of *Chadhātuvibhaṅgasutta* in some editions.

²⁰ T 26, 1:691b4–5 (see Stuart 2015 [II]: 260–61): 唯有餘識。此何等識？樂識，苦識，喜識，憂識，捨識。

However, when the *Saddhsu* comes to treat the last of the six elements, the consciousness element (*viññānadhātu*), it evidences a significant doctrinal development:

[The *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* (Chapter Two, Stage Two) on isolating consciousness]

Now what is the mind-element (*manodhātu*)? The mind-element is connected with the twelve sense-spheres (*āyatana*). One experiences the [visual] object that is experienced by eye-consciousness by way of mind-consciousness (*manovijñāna*). In this way ear[-consciousness], nose[-consciousness], tongue[-consciousness], body[-consciousness], and mind-consciousness (*manovijñāna*) have their origin in the mind-consciousness element (*manovijñānadhātu*), and are rooted in the mind (*manas*)...

... He cognizes the arising of pleasure, he cognizes the arising of pain, he knows the arising of joy and sadness, and cognizes equanimity.²¹

In this passage, we find an attempt—employing Abhidharmic categories—to outline a causal framework for the process of cognition. Consciousness is no longer a simple element of human experience, standing separate from sense experience and only capable of cognizing feelings/sensations. It is a complex of relational cognitions, dynamically intertwined with and engaged in filtering the data of sense experience. We remain in a realist frame of reference, but the relational categories of an Abhidharma phenomenology now govern the text's theory of mind. This is our first key epistemic shift, and such a shift can be seen within and across early canonical Sūtra traditions.²²

This development indicates the way that Abhidharma accounts of the process of sense experience exert increasing influence on more elemental conceptions of consciousness, such as those found in the *Śaddhātuvibhaṅgasūtra*.

²¹ *Saddhsu* II, §2.9–3.2 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 336–44): *tatra kataro mano(dhā)tuḥ? mano(dhā)tur dvādaśabhīr ā(yatanair saṃyuktāḥ). cakṣurvijñānānubhūtaṃ arthaṃ manovijñānenānubhavati. evaṃ śrotraghrāṇajihvākāyamanovijñānāni manovijñānadhātuprabhavāni manomūlāni ... sa sukham utpadyamānaṃ vijānāti. duḥkham utpadyamānaṃ vijānāti. saumanasyaṃ jānāti. daurmanasyaṃ jānāti. upekṣaṃ vijānāti.* On this passage, see also Stuart 2015: 119–121, 288–293 and Stuart 2018: 199–201, particularly n. 21.

²² On this issue, and how it leads to the need for something like the *ālayavijñāna*, see Waldron 2003.

Yet the elemental component does not disappear. Rather, it cedes some ground to more content-oriented conceptions of consciousness while maintaining the possibility of a more basic consciousness—which is pre-reflective yet intentional—in line with the phenomenology of the early practice tradition.

4. Sense Experience and Phenomenal Consciousness: Emergent Idealism

In looking at the next relevant meditative and epistemic shift in the development of the *Saddhsu*'s practice program, we might look at a representative passage from the fifth stage of practice. After discerning the mind-element, a meditator goes on in the third and fourth stages of practice to analyze feelings (*vedanā*), first in ways that accord with the basic framework of the *Śaddhātuvibhaṅgasūtra* and then in a variety of new and creative ways. This process involves observing feelings at ever subtler levels, first in connection with the equanimity constitutive of the immaterial attainments,²³ then in connection with all of the possible objects of sense experience,²⁴ and finally in connection with their ethical and karmic valence.²⁵ It is in discerning the ethical valence of feelings that a meditator begins to see how such observation entails a process of purification, which is metaphorically figured as the process of producing refined sugar from sugarcane.²⁶ This process of purification leads to the possibility of a meditator observing even subtler aspects of mental life, and in the fifth stage he turns his attention to the aggregates of perception (*sañjñā*)²⁷ and mental constructions (*saṃskāra*).²⁸ It is in this context that a meditator develops the ability to discern various additional *dharma*s and their relationships. In coming to discern *dharma*s in this way, the meditation practitioner of the *Saddhsu* attains certain realizations about the mentally constructed nature of experienced phenomena. This development emerges most saliently in a series of meditations in which a monk—the

²³ *Saddhsu* II, §3.1–4.1.6 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 342–55).

²⁴ *Saddhsu* II, §4.1.7–§4.1.11 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 356–60).

²⁵ *Saddhsu* II, §4.2.1–4.2.28 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 360–97).

²⁶ *Saddhsu* II, §4.2.29–4.2.33 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 396–403).

²⁷ *Saddhsu* II, §5.1–§5.1.24 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 402–37).

²⁸ *Saddhsu* II, §5.1.20–§5.2.12.25 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 424–66).

primary agent of the meditative narrative of the text—discerns the material sense-spheres (*āyatana*).²⁹ This mode of discernment occurs in the fifth stage of practice of the *Saddhsu* and is described in the following manner:

[The *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* (Chapter Two, Stage five [2]) on the ‘material’ sense-spheres as mere cogitation (*saṅkalpamātra*)]

That monk, knower of the reality of the sphere of the nose and scent, investigates precisely according to reality: “Is there [anything of] substance here, [anything] permanent, stable, or eternal? [This] sense-sphere, which is subject to change, has the characteristic of being impermanent, suffering, empty and not-self.” Having understood the sphere of the nose and scent [in this way,] he thinks: “All of this is not mine, and I do not belong to it,” and he discriminately examines [it] in this way: “The sphere of the nose and scent is, in every way, mere cogitation, which oppresses all dim-witted foolish worldlings.”³⁰

In this meditative analysis of the olfactory sense door and its objects, a mediator discerns that what are traditionally referred to as the nose and scent are, in fact, experienced only as constructions of the mind (*saṅkalpamātraka*). This realization indicates a fundamental shift of the practitioner’s relationship to the world of experience. That is, one realizes that sense experience is accessed only in a process mediated by mental entanglements. What is more, within the larger framework of practice of the *Saddhsu*, this relationship cannot be divorced from the earlier analysis of how all sense experience is mediated by the mind-element or *manodhātu*. This shift represents an emergent epistemological idealist frame of reference, one that possibly opens the door for the emergence of a true ontological idealism.³¹

²⁹ *Saddhsu* II, §5.2.1–7. (Stuart 2015 [I]: 438–452).

³⁰ *Saddhsu* II §5.2.5.2 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 448–449): *sa bhikṣur ghrāṇagandhāyatana-tattvajñas tattvata evānveṣayati: “kim atra sāraṃ nityaṃ dhruvaṃ śāśvataṃ? vipariṇāmadharmikasyāyatanasyānityaduḥkhaśūnyānātmakam.” ghrāṇagandhāyatanaṃ jñātvā, “sarvaṃ naitan mama. nāsyāham,” iti matvā, “kevalaṃ saṅkalpamātrakaṃ evedaṃ ghrāṇagandhāyatanaṃ yena bādhyanti sarvabālapṛthagjanāḥ mandabuddhayaḥ,” prakāro ’yaṃ pratyavekṣyate.*

³¹ Some of the passages parallel to the one quoted above contain statements such as the following (*Saddhsu* II §5.2.3.5 [Stuart 2015 (I): 444]): “This entire world is encompassed by cogitation [connected with] rapture and anger ...” (*kevalaṃ ayaṃ lokaḥ*

We find in the text comparable descriptions of a practitioner discerning all of the material sense-spheres (*āyatana*)—the eye, the ear, the tongue, the body and their respective sense-objects. The text then describes how a meditator turns his attention to the sphere of *dharmā(s)* (*dharmāyatana*).³² The traditional Sarvāstivāda understanding of the sphere of *dharmā(s)* is that it comprises all mental factors excluding consciousness, the three unconditioned *dharmas*, and unmanifest materiality (*avijñaptirūpa*).³³ Here in the *Saddhsu*, however, we find a treatment of the *dharmāyatana* with several somewhat puzzling differences. Most importantly, the text seems to suggest that the entire world of materiality can come to be subsumed within the

prītikrodhasaṅkalpagṛhītaḥ...). One way to interpret this is that the text does not intend to make an argument about the ontological status of sense-objects themselves, but simply about how an ignorant person experiences them. Entailed in this interpretation is the notion that were one to observe sense-objects absent of such cogitations, with equanimity, one would be able to observe those actual sense-objects. I think the above description (*Saddhsu* II, §2.9 [Stuart 2015 (I): 336–37]) of mind as a mediating factor in all sense experience precludes this interpretation. Further, observing sense-objects with equanimity does not seem to necessarily entail the absence of *saṅkalpa*, and could theoretically entail a process of ignorance/delusion (*moha*). However, the text remains silent on this issue.

³² Our text makes no reference here to the sphere of the mind (*manāyatana*). It seems likely that this is a deliberate omission, as discernment of mind (*citta*) becomes the central topic later on in the text, in the seventh stage of practice.

³³ See the definition of the sphere of *dharmā(-s)* in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* (T XXVII 65a29–b2): 「法處有七種。謂前四蘊及三無為。於色蘊中取無表色。三無為者。謂虛空擇滅。非擇滅。」 – “The sphere of *dharmā* has seven aspects, the previously stated four aggregates [excluding the consciousness aggregate] along with the three unconditioned [*dharmas*]. With respect to the materiality aggregate, we refer to unmanifest materiality. The three unconditioned [*dharmas*] are space, cessation through discriminatory observation, and cessation without discriminatory observation.”

This conforms with AKBh 11.2–5: *ete punas trayāḥ | vedanāsaṃjñāsaṃskāraskandhā{h} āyatanadhātuvyavasthāyāṃ dharmāyatanadhātuvākhyāḥ sahāvijñaptiyasaṃskṛtāḥ ||15|| ity etāni sapta dravyāṇi dharmāyatanaṃ dharmadhātus cety ākhyāyante* | – “And these three—the aggregates of feeling/sensation, perception, and constructions in their roles as spheres and elements—along with unmanifest materiality and the [three] unconditioned [*dharmas*] are termed the sphere of *dharmā(s)* or the element of *dharmā(s)*. ||15|| In this way, these seven things are termed the ‘sphere of *dharmā(s)*’ and the ‘element of *dharmā(s)*.’”

dharmāyatana. This idea comes out implicitly in the *Saddhsu*'s definition of the three unconditioned *dharmas*.³⁴

³⁴ *Saddhsu* II §5.2.8.1–5.2.10 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 452–457): *punar api sa yogācāra ādhyātmike dharme dharmānupaśyī viharati: katham sa bhikṣur daśa rūpīṇy āyatanāni avalokya, dharmāyatanatattvadarśī dharmāyatanam avalokayati? sa paśyati śrutamayena jñānena divyena vā cakṣuṣā:*

“*dharmāyatanasaṅgrhītāstrayo dharmāḥ: pratisaṅkhyāyanirodho 'pratisaṅkhyāyanirodha ākāśaṃ ca. tatra dharmo yat kiñcid avidyamānam, tad dharmasaṅgrhītaṃ kṛtvā, ākāśāyatanam bhavati. pratisaṅkhyānirodho nirvāṇam. pratisaṅkhyā nāma prajñām anekavidhām sākṣīkṛtvā, viharati. pratisaṅkhyānaṃ kṛtvā, kleśān vidhamati kṣapayati nāśayati, paryāvṛṇīkurute sarvān āsraṇān. apratisaṅkhyānirodhaḥ: apratisaṅkhyā nāma yad ajñānaṃ yan na jānāti na samprativedayati na jānīte na sambudhyate na pratarkayate. paramparavijñānaśatasahasraṇy utpannāni naśyanti, cakṣuḥśrotraghrāṇājihvākāyamanovijñānāni. teṣāṃ dhvastānāṃ na punarutpādaḥ, eṣa apratisaṅkhyāyanirodhaḥ. tṛtīyaṃ ākāśam. ete trayo dharmā ajātā nityā. adhvanāpy ete na jātā na janiṣyante na jāyante.*”

punar api sa bhikṣuḥ katham dharmāyatanam dvividham vibhajati, rūpaṃ cārūpaṃ ca?

“*tatra rūpijagad daśa rūpīṇy āyatanāni. tatra katham anidarśanāpratighena cakṣurvijñānena sapratighaṃ sanidarśanaṃ rūpaṃ upalabhyate? evaṃ śrotravijñānenānidarśanāpratighena katham śabda grhyate? evaṃ ghrāṇavijñānenānidarśanāpratighena katham gandho grhyate? evaṃ jihvāvijñānenānidarśanāpratighena katham raso grhyate? evaṃ kāyavijñānenānidarśanāpratighena katham spraśṭavyo grhyate? evaṃ etāni bāhyāni pañcāyatanāni adhyātmikāni pañcāyatanāni. katham anidarśanāpratighānāṃ sanidarśanasapratighānāṃ cāyatanānāṃ upalabdhir bhavati?*”

sa paśyati bhikṣuḥ: “yāvad vividham ālambanaṃ bhavati, tāvad vividham eva vijñānam utpadyate, mudrāpratimudrakavat. tatra visadṛśā mudrāyasy akaṭhinam mudrakam. mṛdu sātaptakaṭhinam. kaṭhinākaṭhinayoḥ pratimudrā utpadyate. evam evānidarśanāpratighaṃ vijñānaṃ sanidarśanāpratighaṃ ālambanaṃ grhṇīte. tṛtīyaṃ pratimudrakam utpadyate. visadṛśānāṃ sarveṣāṃ visadṛśam upalabhyate. evaṃ visadṛśe visadṛśam utpadyate. prathamā koṭiḥ.

“*dvitīyā koṭiḥ: sadṛśaiḥ sadṛśam utpadyate. tadyathā: śuklais tantrabhiḥ śuklaṃ vastraṃ paṭasañjñakam.*

“*tṛtīyā koṭiḥ: vidhurād vidhuram utpadyate. tadyathāraṇibhyo vahniḥ, kāṣṭhāgnyor virodho dṛṣṭaḥ.*

“*caturthī koṭiḥ: acchād ghaṇaṃ jāyate. yathā kṣīrād acchād ghaṇaṃ dadhi, tadevam asadṛśair api bhāvaiḥ cakṣurvijñānādibhir hetupratyayaviśeṣaiḥ cakṣurvijñānādaya utpadyante.*”

[The *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* (Chapter Two, Stage five) on the *dharmāyatana*, mentality and materiality, seals and impressions]

And further, the *yoga* practitioner dwells observing *dharma*s among internal *dharmā*[s]: How does that monk, having scrutinized the ten material sense-spheres, being a seer of the reality of the sphere of *dharmā*(s), scrutinize the sphere of *dharmā*(s)? He sees according to knowledge of scripture, or with the divine eye:

“Three *dharma*s are subsumed (°*saṃgrhīta*) by the sphere of *dharmā*(s): [1.] cessation through observation (*pratisaṅkhyāyanirodha*), [2.] cessation through absence of observation (*apratisaṅkhyāyanirodha*), and [3.] space. In this respect, that *dharmā* which does not exist at all, being [nonetheless] taken as a *dharmā*, becomes the sphere of space. Cessation through observation is *nirvāṇa*. Observation means that one dwells realizing discernment of various sorts. Having observed [with discernment] (*pratisaṅkhyānaṃ kṛtvā*), one dispels, obliterates, and destroys the mental defilements, and eradicates (*pariyāvṛṇīkurute*) all the fluxes. Cessation through absence of observation: absence of observation is unknowing (*ajñāna*), that by which one does not know (*jānāti*), does not experience (*sampravedayati*), does not cognize (*jānīte*), does not understand (*sambudhyate*), and does not reflect upon (*pratarkayate*). Successive hundreds of thousands of cognitions that have arisen—consciousness of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—disappear. Once they have perished, there is no further arising. This is cessation through absence of observation. The third [*dharmā*] is space. These three *dharma*s are unborn and permanent. They are not born, will not be born, and are not being born.”

How does that monk then discriminate between the two-fold *dharmā*-sphere, the material and the immaterial?

“In this respect, the ten material spheres are the world of materiality. And how is it that a visible form, which is tangible and visible, can be appropriated (*upalabhyate*) by eye-consciousness, which is invisible and intangible? Similarly, how can a sound be grasped by an invisible and intangible ear-consciousness? Similarly, how can a scent be grasped by an invisible and intangible nose-consciousness? Similarly, how can a taste be grasped by an intangible and invisible

tongue-consciousness? Similarly, how can a touch be grasped by an invisible and intangible body-consciousness? These are the five external sense-spheres and the five internal sense-spheres. How is there the engagement (*upalabdhi*) of sense spheres, which are [both] visible and tangible and invisible and intangible?”

That monk sees: “To the extent that there are various objects, various consciousnesses arise, like a seal and its impression. In this respect, there is a distinct iron seal and soft material to be imprinted. The soft [material] becomes hard when heated. From [the contact of] hard and soft, an impression appears. Similarly, an invisible and intangible consciousness grasps a visible and tangible object (*ālambana*), and a third [element], an impression, appears. A thing is appropriated by all things dissimilar [to it]. In this way, a dissimilar thing appears within a dissimilar thing. [This is] the first angle (*koṭi*).

“The second angle: Something appears (*utpadyate*) due to things that are similar [to it]. For example: A white cloth, known as a *paṭa*, [comes about] through the use of white threads.

“The third angle: A distinct thing appears because of [another] distinct thing. For example: Fire appears from two fire-sticks, [even though] wood and fire are known to be distinct.

“The fourth angle: Something opaque is produced from something pellucid. Just as opaque curd [is produced] from pellucid milk, so also sense-consciousnesses (*cakṣurvijñānādi*) appear from [already] existent but dissimilar sense-consciousnesses, due to specific causes and conditions.”

For the present purposes, I want to highlight one key element of this passage. It emerges in the second part of the definition (§5.2.9–10), when a query is raised about the twofold nature of the sphere of *dharma(s)*: how does one distinguish between the immaterial and material aspects of the sphere of *dharma(s)*? The answer is an unusual one: The ten material sense-spheres (*āyatanas*) comprise the material aspect of the sphere of *dharma(s)*.³⁵ This

³⁵ The traditional position is clearly elucidated in the *Śrāvakahūmi*: *rūpam ucyate daśa rūpīṇy āyatanāni yac ca dharmāyatanaparyāpannam rūpam sa ca rūpaskandhaḥ* (Śrbh J: 236) – “The aggregate of materiality is what we call materiality: the ten material sense-spheres and that materiality which is subsumed within the sphere of *dharma(s)*.”

position is radical, though not unknown to early doctrinal debates.³⁶ In light of the preceding meditative realizations, however, this position carries deeper implications. That is, we have already seen our monk experientially deconstruct the material existence of the sense doors and sense-objects that construct phenomenal experience. By subsuming all of the putative sense doors and sense-objects within the sphere of *dharmas*—in what appears to be a more ontologically oriented meditative query—the text here opens the door to a true ontological idealism, though this idea is not carried to its final conclusion in the way that eventually happens in later Vijñānavāda philosophical treatises.³⁷ In connection with the subsequent larger question of the

The position presented in the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* allows us to see how most orthodox Vaibhāṣikas probably conceived of this form of materiality: *tad yad evātra rūpam anidarśanam apratighaṃ cokaṃ tad evāstu dharmāyatanaparyāpannam* | (AKBh 198.18–19) – “Whatever materiality here is described as invisible and intangible, that should be subsumed within the sphere of *dharmā(s)*.” Furthermore, *na cāvijñaptiṃ virahayyāsti rūpam anidarśanam apratighaṃ nāpy (an)āsravam* | (AKBh 196.13–14) – “Except for unmanifest materiality, no materiality is invisible and intangible, nor is it free of fluxes.”

³⁶ The position that appears to be advocated in the *Saddhsu* is presented in the *Mahāvibhāṣā* as the view of “other masters” and subsequently refuted: 「有餘師說：法界總攝一切法盡。」 (T 1545, 27: 370c19-20) – “There are some masters who say: ‘The **dharmadhātu* entirely subsumes all *dharmas*.’”; 「或說：法處攝一切法。」 (T 1545, 27: 985b6-8) – “Some say: ‘The **dharmāyatana* subsumes all *dharmas*.’” On these passages see Dhammajoti 2007: 37–43. Dhammajoti associates this view with the “Sautrāntika” master Śrīlāta.

³⁷ Another way to interpret what is happening in this part of the text is to read the reference to the material sense-spheres as a reaffirmation of the existence of materiality. Dhammajoti outlines the intractability of this interpretive problem in doctrinal terms when he writes the following (Dhammajoti 2007: 39): “While on the one hand, influenced by the intention in the *sūtra*, the Sarvāstivādins speak of the ‘mental objects’ as including all possible types of *dharmas*, at the same time they would not state that *dharmadhātu* subsumes the ‘totality’ of real existents—even though some Sarvāstivāda masters apparently maintain precisely that. One reason for this is that the Vaibhāṣikas must maintain their ontology which includes *dharmas* other than those seven mental objects specified by the tradition as being *dharmadhātu*, as real existents.” Dhammajoti’s doxographical reification of the Vaibhāṣika school is somewhat problematic, but he nonetheless illuminates why it is difficult to sort out where the *Saddhsu* stands on this key question. One thing seems quite clear: the authors/compilers/redactors of the *Saddhsu* were not orthodox Vaibhāṣikas. I think it is possible that we can read their position as in line with what Dhammajoti calls the “Sautrāntika” position.

fifth stage of practice, the question of how immaterial states come about based on material objects (§5.2.10), this opening nonetheless reveals a deep preoccupation with the possibility that the traditional categories of mind and matter—sense doors, sense-objects, and the cognitions that facilitate their interaction—are somehow ontologically suspect. Here, then, is another significant shift in the text, an apparent reorientation in outlook. We might talk about this as a move from a more straightforward epistemological idealism towards an actual ontological idealism—or at least that interpretive possibility emerges.

5. Enactive Frames

It is important to emphasize that the meditation practitioner of the *Saddhsu* does not carry through with an explicit elaboration of the philosophical entailments suggested above. Rather, perhaps because of its emphasis on practice, the text appears to hold off on taking a strong ontological position. It seems instead to suggest that a set of tiered epistemological engagements allows for a set of tiered, provisional ontologies that are conditioned by the way in which a practitioner knows the world through meditation. This approach appears to allow for a contemplative middle path between the philosophical modes of realism (exemplified in premodern South Asia by some Abhidharma traditions and Vaiśeṣika thought), idealism (exemplified in premodern South Asia by certain strands of Yogācāra-vijñānavāda and Vedānta thought), and relativism (exemplified in premodern South Asia by certain strands of Madhyamaka and [differently] Jaina thought). I do not contend here that the *Saddhsu* is explicitly engaging these categories as they have come to be understood in various (and later) classical South Asian or European philosophical traditions. Rather, I would suggest that the approach of the text accommodates such perspectives in their broad contours, and that it points to the idea that many of the key positions and points of contention of the classical Indian philosophical schools—some of which find family resemblances with basic divisions in European thought systems—are constrained by a set of basic assumptions and categories that are already largely taken for granted in the practical gestures of a text like the *Saddhsu*.

I would call particular attention to the initial possibility of the *catuṣkoṭi* (§5.2.11.1–4) presented in the above passage. The simile of a seal and its impression (*mudrāpratimudrā*) suggests an emergentist model of phenomenal

consciousness.³⁸ At the same time, there remains in the background a more basic notion of consciousness—à la *manodhātu* presented initially above—as a fundamental and pre-reflective element of reality. The simile of the seal and its impression reflects an attempt to address the difficulty of the problem of phenomenal consciousness and its connection to elemental consciousness while at the same time not providing a hard and fast answer to the problem. This model allows for phenomenal consciousness to be enacted, embodied, experienced, and engaged, while also suggesting that in and of itself it does not constitute a concretely existent phenomenon.

This open epistemic frame of reference—which allows for divergent perspectives on the ontology of consciousness—gets fully developed in a final key point of the text, a series of metaphor-based meditative cognitions that can be found in the *Saddhsu*'s description of the seventh stage (*bhūmi*) of meditative practice. At this point in the text, a practitioner comes to observe the mind or *citta* in its role as the generative force of *saṃsāra*:³⁹

[The *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra* (Chapter Two, Stage Seven) on the painter mind]

7.12.7 Further, that monk is [thus] established in the practice of *yoga*: “This very painting of the flow [of existence] has three realms, five destinations in five pigments, and states of existence on three levels (*tribhūmyavastha*): [1.] the level of the sphere of sensuality, [2. the level of] the sphere of subtle materiality, and [3. the level of] the

³⁸ On the complexities of the idea of emergence and theories of emergentism in early South Asia and in more recent developments, see Ganeri 2011.

³⁹ *Saddhsu* II §7.12.7–7.13 (Stuart 2015 [I]: 490–93): *punar api sa bhikṣur yogam āsthitaḥ*: “*tad eva traidhātukaṃ pañcagatikapañcaraṅgaṃ saṃsāracitrapaṭaṃ tribhūmyavasthaṃ—kāmadhātubhūmikaṃ rūpadhātukaṃ ārūpyadhātukaṃ. tatra sa cittacitrakarmakaraḥ kāmasevanayā kāmadhātūlambanāni nanavidhāni rūpāni ālikhate. viṃśatividhāni rūpadhātūlambanāśrītāni kāmavisaṃyuktāni caturdhyānakūrcena tadāśrītāni śoḍaśabhūmyavasthitāni rūpadhātāv abhiliḥkhatī. rūpadhātūlambanavisaṃyuktāni samāpatticatūṣkādīsamāmbanāny ārūpyadhātāv abhiliḥkhatī cittacitrakarmakaraḥ. āyato hy ayaṃ traidhātukapaṭaḥ.*

punar api sa bhikṣuḥ cittacitrakaram paśyati sattvān ālikhamānam anyena prakāreṇa: “*tatra citrakarasadrśaṃ cittacitrakaram. raṅgabhājanasadrśaṃ śarīram. dr̥ḍhakasadrśāni rāga dveṣaṃohāni. sopānasadrśaṃ ālambanam. kūrcasadrśānīndriyāṇi. raṅgasadrśā bāhyaviśayāḥ śabdasparśasasarūpagandhāḥ. bhittisadrśaḥ saṃsāraḥ. ālokasadrśaṃ jñānam. hastasadrśo vīryārambhāḥ. citrarūpasadrśāni rūpāni anekaveśarūpavastravṛddhijātāny anekakarmaphalavipākakṛtāni.*”

sphere of immateriality. On that [painting], the actions of the mind, like a painter, by engaging in sensuality, paint various images [based on] objects [of consciousness] of the sphere of sensuality. With the brush of the four meditations in the sphere of subtle materiality, [it] paints twenty types of [images], which are based on objects [of consciousness] of the subtle material sphere, and which are separate from sensuality. [These images appear in] sixteen states of existence that have these [meditations] as a support (*tadāśrita*). The action of the mind, like a painter, [also] paints [images] in the sphere of immateriality. They are separated from the objects of the sphere of subtle materiality, and have as a basis the four [immaterial] attainments. [In this way,] this painting of the three realms is extensive.”

7.13 Further, that monk, using another method, sees the painter-mind as it paints beings: “Here, the painter-mind is similar to a painter. The body is similar to pigment vessels. Desire, aversion and delusion are similar to a base coat (*dr̥dhakasadr̥śa*). An object [of consciousness] is similar to a ladder [on which a painter stands]. The sense-faculties are like paint brushes. The external sense-objects—sounds, touches, tastes, visible forms and scents—are similar to pigments. The flow [of existence] is similar to a wall [on which a painter paints]. Knowledge is similar to light [that illuminates a painting]. The application of effort is similar to [a painter’s] hands. The bodies [of beings], like the images in a painting, are born in a multitude of appearances, shapes, attires and fortunes, and are created as the ripening of the fruit of various actions.”

This elaborate metaphor is developed from a canonical simile found in the *Samyuktāgama*.⁴⁰ In the canonical text, the mind of an ignorant worldling is compared to a master painter who paints images in conformity with his mind.⁴¹ In the extended metaphor of the *Saddhsu*, however, the early concep-

⁴⁰ SĀ 267 (with a Pāli parallel in SN 22.100 at SN III 152).

⁴¹ See Stuart (forthcoming) for a discussion of the painter-mind passages of the *Saddhsu* in connection with the development of the relationship between visual and contemplative practice cultures. For a treatment of painter similes with an eye to Buddhist texts from Central Asia, see Martini 2008 and 2011. Cristina Scherrer-Schaub (2009) has also brilliantly analyzed the painter metaphor in the *Saddhsu* in a discussion of painting and writing practices in Central Asia. She does not, however, contextualize the metaphor within the larger meditative and philosophical program

tion is transfigured to portray the mind of a meditator at an advanced stage of discernment. Here the text develops the meta-cognitive outlook presented in the *catuskoṭi* similes of the fifth stage of practice. The outlook of the painter-mind metaphor is more expansive, however, and provides conceptual space for all of the ways of knowing—which are also ways of being—presented in the previous stages of practice. This comprehensive metaphor opens up a space for an *enactive* mode of meditative existence. By this, I mean a theory-cum-practice of mind in which the world of human experience is produced through a process of enactment.⁴² That is, instead of conceptualizing cognition as a process whereby cognizing agents passively gain access to the world that is experienced, theories of enactivism suggest that cognition is embodied, a way of acting in a world of experience that thereby plays a role in producing that very world of experience. The *Saddhsu*'s painter-mind metaphors gesture towards such a theory of enactive cognition, and the text's previous shifts in modes of engaging the mind and cognition appear to lead up to such gestures.

A meditation practitioner first discerns basic mental and material phenomena. He then comes to see how the entire world, a world of mental content that makes up his reality, emerges from those basic structures. In that process, he ultimately deconstructs the very existence of such structures. Finally, however, he returns to the fundamental aspects of mind and materiality, but engages them in a soteriological play that acknowledges and allows for the entire range of mental life to manifest in a spectrum of mundane and supramundane experiences.⁴³

6. Conclusion

These key developmental shifts outlined in the *Saddhsu*'s path of meditative practice suggest two avenues of interpretation. On the one hand, we can read the text as very much in line with traditional canonical schemes of

of the text. See also Hamar 2014 for a discussion of the metaphor in the East Asian Buddhist tradition.

⁴² On enactivism, see Varela et al. 1992: 9, Thompson 2010: 1–88, Hutto and Myin 2013, and MacKenzie 2013.

⁴³ The soteriology of the *Saddhsu* is a complex topic, and it remains unclear how the practices represented in the text relate to the supramundane path. On the soteriology of the *Saddhsu*, see Stuart 2015 (I): 198–224.

the path. A practitioner carries out an analysis of mind and materiality, sees their interrelationship, and comes to understand all facets of psycho-physical life. But the *Saddhsu* complicates this simple model in that its basic path scheme contains a range of historically layered materials, which are themselves framed as the objects of a process of meditative discernment, the objects of a comprehensive practice of *dharmasmṛtyupasthāna*.⁴⁴ In this way, the text explicitly engages what European philosophical traditions refer to as realist, idealist, and enactivist frames of reference.⁴⁵ While these categories of Western philosophical thought are not a perfect fit for the meditative gestures of the text—or for Indian philosophical contexts in general—by looking at the text through such lenses, we can begin to make sense of many of the developments in Indian Buddhist philosophy that emerge in the centuries after the *Saddhsu* was composed. But the text is more than just a historically important signpost. Rather, it is an approach to the path that must be taken seriously in its own right. The path of the *Saddhsu* provides a set of traditional categories and procedures through which to know the world, and these categories and procedures in turn prescribe a set of modes of existence in the world, as the world, or in relation to a world of experience. If taken seriously as a model for contemplative development, the *Saddhsu* provides a take on the Buddhist path that suggests that the maps we use—and are provided with by our traditions—construct and become the territory of our practice.

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⁴⁴ See Stuart 2015a: 178–187.

⁴⁵ The idea that enactivism is simply a “Western” category is, however, somewhat misleading, since the category owes its origins, at least in part, to the Buddhist philosophical tradition’s influence on Francisco Varela’s systems theory.

	ing published in Delhi by Karmapae chodhey gyalwae sun-grab partun khang, 1976–79).
DN	<i>Dīghanikāya</i>
<i>Mahāvibhāṣā</i>	T 1545: * <i>Abhidharmamahāvibhāṣāśāstra</i> (<i>Apidamo da piposha lun</i> 阿毘達磨大毘婆沙論).
MN	<i>Majjhimanikāya</i>
Ms	A photocopy of the single known Sanskrit manuscript of the <i>Saddharmasmṛty-upasthānasūtra</i> kept in the collection of the China Tibetology Research Center (Box 12, No.1), the original of which is held at Norbulingka in Lhasa
Q	The Tibetan Tripitaka: Peking Edition, kept in the Library of the Otani University, Kyoto, ed. D. T. Suzuki. Tokyo: Tibetan Tripitaka Research Institute, 1955–1958.
<i>Saddhsu</i>	<i>Saddharmasmṛtyupasthānasūtra</i>
SĀ	<i>Samyuktāgama</i> (Taishō no. 99)
SN	<i>Samyuttanikāya</i>
ŚrbhJ ^c	<i>Śrāvakabhūmi</i> , The First Chapter, Revised Sanskrit Text and Japanese Translation, ed. The Śrāvakabhūmi Study Group. Tokyo: The Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taisho University, 1998.
T	Taishō

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