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D. SEYFORTH RUEGG

THE INDIAN AND THE INDIC IN TIBETAN CULTURAL HISTORY,
AND TSON KHA PA'S ACHIEVEMENT AS A SCHOLAR AND
THINKER: AN ESSAY ON THE CONCEPTS OF BUDDHISM IN
TIBET AND TIBETAN BUDDHISM *

In memory of Jan Willem de Jong, a great pioneer in Indo-Tibetan Studies

A challenging and very significant task before us is to attempt to clarify the ways in which Tibetans have absorbed and integrated into their civilization the various component parts of the originally Indian culture that they imported starting at the latest in the seventh/eighth century. In the study of such a transcultural relation, and of the enculturation of Indo-Buddhist civilization in Tibet, the identification and analysis of continuities and discontinuities – of homoeostasis (dynamic stability) and internal, systemic disequilibrium leading to restoration/renewal/innovation – will naturally play a major part. This should then assist us in overcoming the familiar opposition of stagnant stasis vs. dynamic change, a somewhat superficial and jejune dichotomy which has so frequently, and unproductively, been invoked in considering such matters.

The Tibetan absorption of Buddhism, and along with it of a major portion of Indo-Buddhist civilization, was most certainly not one of mere passive reception: even at the time when this process first came into full flower c. 800 C.E. the Tibetan mind was clearly no blank slate, no *tabula rasa*. And the Tibetan appropriation of Indo-Buddhist civilization has been, at least in large part, a creative one in which Tibetans have indeed made a very noteworthy contribution of their own.

Such considerations clearly have a vital bearing on the relationship between Tibetan and Indian studies as two disciplines which – however distinct – are of course very closely linked. Whilst so much in Tibetan civilization cannot be adequately understood without knowledge of the Indian background, certain developments in Tibet provide us with highly interesting comparative material throwing light on similar (or, alternatively, dissimilar) developments taking place in India from comparable starting

* This article was intended as a contribution to the Memorial Volume for J. W. de Jong published in Tokyo but for technical reasons could not be included in it.

points. But what might be briefly referred to under the catchword of 'Meta-India', in other words the complex of peripheral cultural extensions of India which can be said to be in especially close intellectual propinquity to India proper – and which once were major topics of historical study under the name of Greater India (or *Inde extérieure*) in connexion with Southeast Asia and Indonesia in particular – fell out of sharp focus until a very recent recrudescence of interest.¹

I

Let us first very briefly review some examples of the absorption of Indo-Tibetan tradition that are drawn from various areas of Tibetan culture.²

Even though much work still remains to be done in tracing stylistic and technical developments and influences, as well as artistic lineages, we can readily see how Tibetan artists took over styles and techniques from the surrounding areas of South, East and Central Asia, and even sometimes from Western Asia. Related iconographical models as well as iconological structures are fairly plain to see. Yet, at least from a certain period onwards, it is usually possible to say whether an art work we are looking at is actually a Tibetan production or one that was either imported into Tibet or perhaps produced by a foreign artist in Tibet.³

In Tibetan literary production, the translations of Indian (and eventually Chinese or other) texts found in the bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur speak for themselves in an eloquent way. But the Tibetan achievement in creating, within the time-span of only some decades during the eighth and early

¹ In the volume bearing the promising title *Indien und Zentralasien: Sprach- und Kulturkontakt* (Vorträge des Göttinger Symposions vom 7. bis 10. Mai 2001) edited by S. Bretfeld and J. Wilkens (Wiesbaden, 2003), we read in the Foreword: Keine Folge unserer Auswahl, sondern der Schwerpunktsetzung des Symposiums ist die Aussparung des indotibetischen Bereichs. Whether the question is just one of a focal point and emphasis alone, or one of a more far-reaching and fateful sea change in scientific concerns over the years, may remain undecided here.

² For a short outline of the place of the Indo-Buddhist sciences or knowledge-systems (*rig gnas* = *vidyāsthāna*) in Tibetan culture, see, e.g., Part 2 of D. Seyforth Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel dans la pensée bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet* (Paris, 1995).

³ Allowance has of course to be made for art work produced in Tibet by artists and craftsmen of foreign origin, such as the Newars. In the first generation a Newar might be expected to continue working mainly in his ancestral Newar style(s), whilst his descendants resident in Tibet would gradually adopt specifically Tibetan styles. – For a recent study relating to portraiture in particular, see H. Stoddard, 'Fourteen centuries of Tibetan portraiture', in: D. Dinwiddie (ed.), *Portraits of the masters* (Chicago and London, 2003), pp. 16–61.

ninth centuries, a classical literary language – the *chos skad* – suitable for translating the most difficult works from Sanskrit (etc.) into Tibetan was a most remarkable feat both intellectually and linguistically. When we look at early indigenous Tibetan writings composed in this *chos skad* it is, however, not always immediately obvious that they were not translations from Sanskrit. For example, in its language and style, the *lTa ba'i khyad par* by the renowned translator (*lo tsā ba*) sNa nam Ye šes sde (c. 800) could perhaps be a Tibetan translation of an Indian original just as well as the indigenous Tibetan text that it actually is. Other works by Ye šes sde, as well as work by sKa ba dPal brtsegs such as his *lTa ba'i rim pa*, are further examples of this situation.⁴

In this way there appears to exist a certain formal difference between the Tibetan achievement in the domain of the visual arts and in that of written texts in the *chos skad*.

In the areas of poetry and poetics, we know that learned Tibetans were inspired in their literary aesthetics by Indian *kāvya* (*sñan riag / dhags*), and that their literature has indeed been informed by concepts drawn from Indian poetics (*alaṃkāraśāstra*).⁵ As for narrative matter, a Tibetan version of the *Rāmāyaṇa* is already found among the Dunhuang manuscripts.

The influence of Indian grammar and linguistics in Tibet was a special case. The Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages of India and the Tibetan language belong to genetically unrelated linguistic families; and the relevance of Sanskrit grammar for the Tibetan language is anything but evident, even if certain areal features appear to be detectable which link Tibetan with Indian languages. Nevertheless, the development of the above-mentioned *chos skad* has been marked by the frequency of syntactic and lexical calques reflecting the language of the original Indian source-texts. This is readily understandable in view of the great cross-cultural enterprise that consisted in translating into Tibetan the important Indian sources of Buddhism, and of Indo-Buddhist civilization, now incorporated

⁴ See D. Seyforth Ruegg, 'Autour du *lTa ba'i khyad par* de Ye šes sde', *JA* 1981, pp. 207–229. Contrast for example the much less scholastic 'Cycle of birth and death' – the *skye ši 'khor ba'i chos kyi yi ge* or *skye ši'i 'khor lo 'i le'u* – studied by Y. Imaeda, *Histoire du cycle de la naissance et de la mort* (Genève-Paris, 1981); found like Ye šes sde's text among the Dunhuang manuscripts, this edifying composition of unknown authorship in the narrative genre is not scholastic in style, unlike the *lTa ba'i khyad par*, and it employs a somewhat less standard Buddhist vocabulary.

⁵ See L. van der Kuijp, 'Tibetan belles-lettres: the influence of Daṇḍin and Kṣemendra', in: J. Cabezon (ed.), *Tibetan literature* (Ithaca, 1996), pp. 393–410. See also M. Kapstein, 'The Indian literary identity in Tibet', in: S. Pollock (ed.), *Literary cultures in history: Reconstructions from South Asia* (Berkeley, 2003), pp. 747–802.

in the bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur. If, then, Indian languages cannot be said to have formed a linguistic substratum properly speaking for Tibetan, the existence of the influences just noted does allow us to speak of the former having possessed an as it were archistratal function in the history of the Tibetan language.⁶ Recent work on the influence of Sanskrit grammar on Tibetan linguistic description has, moreover, sought to show how certain ideas of the Sanskrit grammarians may have had an impact on indigenous Tibetan grammar.⁷

In a different direction, mention may be made of the highly interesting case of the socio-religious and religio-political impact of Buddhism in Tibet and Inner Asia. This is evidenced for example in the close relationship existing between the spiritual and temporal orders which has been so prominent in the polities of this area, and which in a sense prolongs the old relation between the monk as donee and his lay donor (*dānapati* = *sbyin bdag*). In Tibetan, the association of Dharma and temporal rule – the *chos srid zun 'brel* – is designated as the two-fold system (*lugs gñis*, *tshul gñis*) or two-fold law (*khriims gñis*) linking a donor (*yon bdag* = *sbyin bdag*) with his spiritual preceptor, counsellor and ritual officiant (*mchod gnas*, *yon gnas*). Reference is made to this close association by the copulative compounds *mchod yon/yon mchod*, i.e. *mchod gnas* = *yon gnas* 'preceptor donee' and *yon bdag* (~ *sbyin bdag*) '(princely) donor'. Dyarchy of a ruler – the temporal power as donor – and his counsellor-preceptor and ritual officiant – the religious authority as donee – had more or less distant precursors in India, where it was at least foreshadowed in theory if not strictly equalled. In Tibet the complex – even oscillating and somewhat kaleidoscopic – socio-religious and religio-political link existing between a spiritual preceptor/officiant – a personage regarded as worthy of honour and of a ritual offering/fee (*yon* = *dakṣiṇā*), which explains his appellation of *yon gnas* = *mchod gnas* (Skt. *dakṣiṇīya*) – and his princely donor (*yon bdag/sbyin bdag* = *dānapati*) has been an important and very significant feature in polities conceived of in terms

⁶ See D. Seyforth Ruegg, 'Notes sur la transmission et la réception des traités de grammaire et de lexicographie sanskrits dans les traditions indo-tibétaines', in: N. Balbir et al. (ed.), *Langue, style et structure dans le monde indien* (Centenaire Louis Renou, Paris, 1996), pp. 213–232; id., 'Sanskrit-Tibetan and Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries and some problems in Indo-Tibetan philosophical lexicography', in: B. Oguibénine (ed.), *Lexicography in the Indian and Buddhist cultural field* (Munich, 1998), pp. 115–142 (with p. 123 for the use of 'archistratal').

⁷ See P. Verhagen, *A history of Sanskrit grammatical literature in Tibet*, ii (Leiden, 2001), Chapter 2, together with the present writer's review in *JRAS* 13 (2003), pp. 123–127.

of Buddhist principles.⁸ (Compare the Pali terms *dakkhiṇeyya-puggala* and *-khetta*.) In certain favourable circumstances in Tibet and elsewhere in Inner Asia, this relationship then developed into a sort of concordat linking the spiritual and temporal orders, as in the case of the personal preceptor-donor relationship established first between the Tibetan hierarch Sa skya Paṇḍi ta (1182–1251) and the Mongol Prince Köden, and then between the former's nephew 'Phags pa (1235–1280) and the Mongol Emperor Qubilai Qaγan (rg. 1260–1294). In India, on the contrary, the relation between a monk-preceptor/counsellor and a ruler appears not to have been institutionalized, and lexically expressed, to the degree to which it came to be in Tibet, either with the *mchod gnas* in his personal relation to a princely donor or with the high religious officers termed *ti śri* and *gu śri* (< Chinese *guoshi* and *dishi*) in their official relation to a ruler in the imperial bureaucracy. Even in Tibet, the personal relation between preceptor and donor, well attested though it is, seems not to have become the object of a systematic theoretized exposition in a treatise. Eventually Tibet was to develop a hierocratic – or more exactly a 'Bodhisattva-cratic' – form of government in which the hierarch regarded as a Bodhisattva could combine spiritual authority with temporal power. Much if not all of this development appears to be ultimately derivable from Indo-Buddhist inspiration, but in Tibetan hands it took on a special form not exemplified in India.⁹

As an example of the Tibetan propensity to absorb imported intellectual property, Tibetan medicine also deserves mention because it has combined South Asian (Indian) and East Asian (Chinese) elements with West Asian elements. This being a special department in Tibetan studies that has been making noteworthy progress in recent years, it will not be gone into here.

II

It is of course very clearly in the case of Buddhism that the transcultural linkage between Tibet and South Asia has been especially strong, creative

⁸ For this reason the common rendering 'priest-patron relationship' is inadequate and potentially even misleading. From the point of view of political power relations (as distinct from the socio-religious and religio-political points of view), the label protector/benefactor-protégé relation would seem preferable.

⁹ See D. Seyforth Ruegg, *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel dans la pensée bouddhique de l'Inde et du Tibet*, Part 1; id., 'The preceptor-donor (*mchod yon*) relation in thirteenth century Tibetan society and polity, its Inner Asian precursors and Indian models', in: H. Krasser et al. (ed.), *Tibetan studies* (Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies), ii (Vienna, 1997), pp. 857–872.

and productive. This appears to be true in various degrees for all Tibetan religious orders or schools (*chos lugs*). Even the history of Bon shows that this religious tradition has not been without links to South Asia (as well as to western Asia, the western sub-Himalayan area, and Central Asia).¹⁰

The Indo-Tibetan traditions of Buddhism thus bear ample and most eloquent testimony to the many and various links between India and Tibet which have had an impact on most departments of activity – including art, architecture, etc. – and thought – from monastic discipline (*vinaya*, 'dul ba) through to logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa*, *tshad ma*), philosophy, and Tantra. They accordingly go far beyond the individual case to be discussed in the following lines.

III

The life's work of Tsoñ kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419) as thinker and writer has been variously described as that of a reformer, an innovator (to the extent perhaps of even having been something of a maverick), and a conservative traditionalist. When reading his writings it is possible to see how such various, and at first sight contrary, descriptions can have been attached to him. Their appropriateness and justification still require careful scrutiny and evaluation. This will of course be the task for a full-scale intellectual biography – in Tibetan terms principally a *nan gi nam thar* – of this master. Here only a few aspects of the matter can be addressed.

A major thinker in the lines of philosophy and ritual – one who embraced analytical and 'exoteric' Prajñāpāramitā and Madhyamaka thought along with the 'esoteric' Vajrayāna – Tsoñ kha pa has on occasion himself alluded to his intellectual and spiritual struggles, and to how he came to feel dissatisfied with certain views and interpretations current among his Tibetan predecessors and contemporaries. An eloquent and at the same time moving account of this intellectual and spiritual struggle is found in the *rTen 'brel bstod pa* – his well-known Hymn to *pratītyasamutpāda* – where he speaks of his efforts to penetrate the connexion between origination in dependence (*rten 'byun*) and Emptiness

¹⁰ This complex matter remains the subject of investigation and discussion. On Buddhist ('boudhisant') features in Bon, see our *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel* . . . , pp. 143–144. For the problem of links with western Asia (Iran, etc.), see G. Tucci, 'Iran et Tibet', *Acta Iranica* 1 (1974), pp. 299–306, with the critical observations by P. Kvaerne, 'Dualism in Tibetan cosmogonic myths and the question of Iranian influence', in C. Beckwith (ed.), *Silver on lapis* (Bloomington, 1987), pp. 163–174. For a recent discussion of several of these topics (with an extensive bibliography), see D. Martin, *Unearthing Bon treasures* (Leiden, 2001).

(*ston pa ñid*), between the surface level (*kun rdzob* = *saṃvṛti*) and the deep level of ultimate reality (*paramārtha*).¹¹ Yet he is also known as a disciple of Red mda' ba/pa gZon nu blo gros (1349–1412), the renowned Sa skya master in whose Madhyamaka lineage he has been listed, as well as of a number of other Tibetan masters.¹² This picture of Tsoñ kha pa as a traditionalist placed in an Indo-Tibetan spiritual lineage is not in fact belied by his own writings. His biographies and hagiographies have represented him as indebted to other Tibetan masters also. Among his contemporaries there was Bla ma dBu ma pa dPa' bo rdo rje, who is stated to have acted as intermediary (*lo tsā ba* 'interpreter') for Tsoñ kha pa in visionary encounters with the Bodhisattva Mañjuṣa, for instance at a time when he felt overwhelmed by the difficulties he was experiencing in reaching an understanding of the Buddha's teaching and of Nāgārjuna's thought, the Madhyamaka (dBu ma).¹³ This theme of a visionary encounter with, and of inspiration received from, a great Bodhisattva is reminiscent of the role attributed to the Bodhisattva Maitreya(nātha) in the traditional *Vita* of Asaṅga at a time when this Indian master too was meeting with difficulties in understanding and interpretation.¹⁴ The *topos* of visionary encounter and teaching may perhaps be understood as implicitly alluding, in India as well as in Tibet, to a felt need for both conservative traditionalism and restorative or renovative interpretation.

IV

What then are we to make of these attested facts and widely spread traditions and allusions in so far as they relate to Tsoñ kha pa? Does being a traditionalist continuator, a 'conservative', in fact preclude being a radical thinker, perhaps even an innovator? The word 'innovator' may be problematic here, and it might be more accurate to speak of a 'renewer' and 'restorer', and of a 'rethinker'. And to be a 'reformer' might imply

¹¹ Cf. D. Seyforth Ruegg, 'La pensée tibétaine', in: A. Jacob (ed.), *L'univers philosophique* (Encyclopédie philosophique universelle, t. 1, Paris, 1989), col. 1589–1591. This renowned work by Tsoñ kha pa has been published and translated several times in recent years.

¹² See our *Three studies in the history of Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka philosophy* (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka thought, Part 1, Vienna, 2000), pp. 60–64, 88 f.

¹³ See *Three studies* . . . , pp. 89–90.

¹⁴ See P. Demiéville, 'La *Yogācārabhūmi* de Saṅgharakṣa', *BEFEO* 44 (1954), pp. 376–387; and D. Seyforth Ruegg, *Théorie du tathāgatagarbha et du gotra* (Paris, 1969), p. 42 ff.

a return to, and restoration of, old but overlaid or eclipsed tradition.¹⁵ In other words, are these characterizations and categories, now so often taken to be mutually exclusive, truly so?

Furthermore, in a somewhat different perspective, are the things referred to as 'Tibetan Buddhism' and 'Buddhism in Tibet' to be regarded as entirely different, perhaps even opposed, entities?

It is useful to explore these questions in respect to Tsoñ kha pa's place in the history of the Indo-Tibetan Madhyamaka (dBu ma). And the answers to be given to such questions are of fundamental significance for the understanding of Tibetan civilization, and hence for Tibetan and Indo-Tibetan studies also. For whilst the Tibetans indubitably, and avowedly, introduced – 'imported' or 'borrowed' – Buddhism from India, they so thoroughly internalized and integrated it in a carefully pursued and systematic process comparable to that of *enculturation* (as distinct from acculturation) that Buddhism – the (*sañs rgyas kyi*) *chos* – was no longer a strange foreign import in Tibet. In this case the category of the foreign – 'the other' in xenology – becomes blurred and is of doubtful pertinence.

Put otherwise, Tibetan culture embraces (at least) two co-ordinate and closely related, but withal distinct, component strands. The first consists of elements originating *historically* in India and found documented in sources that are still extant either in their original Indian language or in canonical Tibetan translations of Indian works. These components can of course be properly described as *Indian*. By contrast, another component strand in Tibetan culture consists of what may be called *Indic* (meta-Indian) elements. It has evidently been developed in a process of elaboration by Tibetans thinking in a style and along lines that are *typologically* Indian without being *historically* Indian in so far as this second strand is not attested in our available sources of Indian origin.¹⁶ In this matter the Indian works included in the Tibetan bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur served both as sources of inspiration and as models, templates or moulds. In developing their Indic elaborations, Tibetan thinkers were then able as it were to think along with their Indian sources.¹⁷

¹⁵ The Śākyamuni also has sometimes been described, problematically, as a reformer, but exactly what he is supposed to have reformed has not usually been made clear. That he set out to be a social reformer seems doubtful. That he was in some sense of the word a spiritual reformer, and that he in some way reformed ways of thinking, is a defensible view that requires further clarification.

¹⁶ Compare the observations made in our *Ordre spirituel et ordre temporel* . . . , p. 141 f.

¹⁷ For the idea of 'thinking along' in another context, that of modern scholarly 'emic' analyses of classical Indian and Tibetan thought, see our 'Some reflections on the place of philosophy in the study of Buddhism', *JIAS* 18 (1995), pp. 155–156.

This co-existence of a component strand that is historically of Indian origin with a second strand of typologically Indic elements developed by Tibetans appears to characterize Tsoñ kha pa's work, just as it does the work of many of his Tibetan predecessors, contemporaries and successors. In this way, as a searching and sometimes radical philosophical (re)thinker, Tsoñ kha pa may justly be described as being both a *conservative traditionalist* and a *creative restorer/renovator/innovator*. But he would surely have disavowed 'originality' in its frequent modern sense of the reverse of traditionalism (see below on *rañ bzo*).

Following on these observations, let us examine some cases which serve to illustrate Tsoñ kha pa's philosophical position and his intellectual contribution in relation to the Indian Madhyamaka sources. And let us recall from the outset that Tsoñ kha pa saw it as his task to penetrate, and to interpret as faithfully as possible, the final import, the 'intent' (*dgoñs pa*), of the thinking of Nāgārjuna – the source of the Madhyamaka school of philosophy – as well as that of Buddhapālita and, above all, Candrakīrti – the two main Indian exponents of what came to be termed the 'Prāsaṅgika' (Thal 'gyur ba) branch of the Madhyamaka which, in Tibet, has been very widely held to be the most accurate and faithful interpretation of Madhyamaka thought.¹⁸ Tsoñ kha pa considered that in fulfilling this great task he was at the same time contributing to the clarification of the final import of the teaching of the Jina, or Buddha, himself.

For Tsoñ kha pa, such were indeed the stake and real issue. And he would therefore seek to eschew anything that might constitute arbitrary personal invention (*rañ bzo*) having the effect of distorting the true meaning of the basic sources. By Tibetan as well as by modern scholars, Tsoñ kha pa has sometimes been suspected – even openly accused – of having unjustifiably, and hence unfaithfully, innovated and invented to the extent of making unrecognizable the authentic Indian Madhyamaka. No doubt, historically unfounded interpretations may occasionally be found in his writings, but hardly to the extent and in the frequency alleged by Tsoñ kha pa's opponents, provided of course that the cases impugned

¹⁸ See Tsoñ kha pa's *Lam rim chen mo* (Zi ling ed.), pp. 573–574.

By some authorities it has been held that it was Candrakīrti rather than his predecessor Buddhapālita who was to count as the foundational institutor (*srol 'byed*) of the Prāsaṅgika school of the Madhyamaka. See lCañ skya Rol pa'i rdo rje, *Grub mtha'*, ña, p. 288. And on Bhavya's not having considered himself to belong to a branch of the Madhyamaka quite different from Buddhapālita's (and on the claim that both are classifiable as 'Svātantrikas'), see op. cit., pp. 287–288. (See now also W. Ames, 'Bhāvaviveka's own view of his differences with Buddhapālita', in: G. Dreyfus and S. McClintock, *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction* [Boston, 2003], pp. 41–66.)

are examined philologically *and* through philosophical and hermeneutical analysis. They then frequently turn out to be well-founded systemic 'readings' of the sources that are authentically grounded in careful philosophical thinking and analysis. But there may, of course, exist more than a single philosophically founded 'reading' of the sources, a notorious example being the problem of the *pratijñā* 'thesis' in Madhyamaka thought (on which see below). Indeed, it is on such points that Tibetan orders and schools (*chos lugs*, *bśad tshul*) could differ among themselves.

V

With the purpose of clarifying this situation, let us consider the following points illustrating what has been said above concerning Tsoñ kha pa's relation to the Madhyamaka tradition in India.

(1) Take the well-known, and often discussed, division of the Mādhyamikas, Indian as well as Tibetan, into the two branches of Rañ rgyud pas – the 'Svātantrikas' or Autonomists – and Thal 'gyur bas – the so-called 'Prāsaṅgikas' or Apagogists. Tsoñ kha pa recognizes that, as it stands, this doxographical nomenclature is unattested in the Indian sources, and that it appeared in Tibet only towards the end of the eleventh century, at the time of the Tibetan Mādhyamika master Pa tshab Ñi ma grags (b. 1055). He nevertheless considers that this nomenclature, and the doctrinal division it expresses, are in conformity with Candrakīrti's own explanations.¹⁹

¹⁹ See *Lam rim chen mo*, p. 573; and our *Three studies* . . . , pp. 95–96. Cf. K. Yotsuya, *The critique of Svatantra reasoning by Candrakīrti and Tsong-kha-pa* (Stuttgart, 1999).

Earlier, Tsoñ kha pa is said to have learnt from a visionary instruction given by the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī in reply to his enquiry put through Bla ma dBu ma pa (see above, p. 7) that he had not adequately understood the distinction between Rañ rgyud pa and Thal 'gyur ba and that his philosophical theory (*lta ba*) was then neither. That is, he still had to reflect long and deeply before he could properly fathom Nāgārjuna's and Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka thought; and this would involve, *inter alia*, his coming correctly to appreciate the true function of an accepted position or assertion (*khas len pa* = *abhyupagama*) – in other words a philosophical thesis (*dam bca* = *pratijñā*) – in Madhyamaka thought (see below).

Whatever the exegetical and philosophic problems attaching to the nomenclature 'Svātantrika' and 'Prāsaṅgika' in Tibet as well as now in contemporary studies of the Madhyamaka, and however late the origin of this nomenclature, the fact remains that it possesses a certain usefulness for taxonomic and doxographical purposes, and even a certain heuristic value. (The matter of the nomenclature 'Svātantrika' and 'Prāsaṅgika' has just recently been the subject of discussions and opinions, with somewhat mixed results, in G. Dreyfus and S. McClintock (ed.), *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction*, published in 2003 shortly after this article was written.)

The lexeme **svātantrika* – a possible Sanskrit equivalent of Tib. *rañ rgyud pa* – would not be morphologically anomalous in Sanskrit;²⁰ but in its specific connexion with Bhavya's (Bhā[va]viveka's or Bhāvin's) branch of the Madhyamaka, the term *rañ rgyud pa* seems to go no further back than Jayānanda, the Kashmirian master who was active in Tibet in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. Still, extracted as it is from the expressions *svatantrānumāna*^o (and *svatantram anumānam*) and *svatantraprayoga(vākya)*²¹ – which denote respectively an 'independent inference' and an 'independent formal argument' (the Mādhyamika's so-called 'syllogism') with which Bhavya and his Svātantrika school operated – the term 'Svātantrika' would possess both philosophical justification and doxographic appropriateness as a name for this school. As for the correlative appellation Thal 'gyur ba – equivalent to Skt. *prāsaṅgika* and used in Tibet to designate the second main Indian school of the pure Madhyamaka –, in extant Indian sources it does not appear to be attested at all in the meaning of Candrakīrti's branch of the Madhyamaka; and it must be judged to be a terminological innovation current in Tibet (though possibly originating in Jayānanda's native Kashmir). But since it is regularly derived from the technical term *prasaṅga* (Tib. *thal 'gyur*) – denoting here the apagogic procedure adopted in Buddhapālita's and Candrakīrti's school of the Madhyamaka that points up in an opponent's theory and argument consequences or eventualities (*prasaṅga*) undesired by the opponent himself –, it too possesses its philosophical justification and doxographic appropriateness.

Concerning the question as to whether the use of this nomenclature constitutes nothing but fanciful and hence arbitrary personal invention (that is, a *rañ bzo*) on the part of Tibetan interpreters, Tsoñ kha pa has accordingly concluded that, even though unattested in the Indian sources as the names of the two branches of the pure Indian Madhyamaka, it is in fact not a *rañ bzo* because it accurately corresponds to Candrakīrti's own philosophical procedure and explanations.²²

According to Tsoñ kha pa, this terminology relates to the two ways in which the theory (*lta ba* = *darśana*) ascertaining the deep level of ultimate reality (*don dam pa* = *paramārtha*) – Emptiness (*śūnyatā*) – is generated in the conscious stream (*rgyud* = *saṃtāna*, *saṃtati*) of a

²⁰ Compare also the attested word *svātantrya*.

²¹ Cf. *svatantrasādhana(vādin)* in the so-called **Lakṣaṇatikā*. Cf. Y. Yonezawa, *IBK* 47 (1999), pp. 1024–1022 (and the same author's Introduction to the Facsimile Edition of Sanskrit palm-leaf manuscripts in Tibetan *dbu med* script, The Institute for Comprehensive Studies of Buddhism, Taishō University, Tōkyō, 2001).

²² See *Lam rim chen mo*, p. 573.

Mādhyamika philosopher-practiser,²³ a process which is itself located on the level of philosophical analysis and meditative praxis that belong to the realm of pragmatic transactional usage (*tha sñad* = *vyavahāra*), that is, to the surface level (*saṃvṛti*). The distinction between the two terms stands then in correlation with the difference in whether, when reaching his understanding of ultimate reality, a Mādhyamika – following the method of the ‘Svātantrika’ Bhavya – proceeds through the use of independent (*svatantra*) inferences and formal reasoning, or whether – following the ‘Prāsaṅgika’ Candrakīrti – a Mādhyamika resorts instead to the use of the negative (or, more precisely, apagogic) procedure termed *prasaṅga* to achieve this end.

In sum, according to Tsoṅ kha pa, the terminology and nomenclature in question, as well as much of the relevant commentarial detail, are indeed later than the foundational Indian sources. Nevertheless, for him, the philosophical procedures pointed up by the Tibetan appellations ‘Raṅ ggyud pa’ and ‘Thal ’gyur ba’ are grounded in the respective philosophical methods of Bhavya and Candrakīrti, the institutors (*srol ’byed*) of the two main branches of the pure Indian Madhyamaka.

(2) Another significant case where Tibetan interpreters and commentators have entered philosophical territory that had not been clearly charted by their Indian predecessors was in seeking to clarify the vexed question as to whether, in the frame of Madhyamaka thought, the true Mādhyamika – and in particular the Mādhyamika of the ‘Prāsaṅgika’ school – is actually entitled to hold a propositional thesis (*dam bca’* = *pratijñā*), a philosophical doctrine (*lugs* = *mata*), and a doctrinal position (*phyogs* = *pakṣa*) of his own. The Tibetan exegetes were faced with the need to explicate Nāgārjuna’s famous – and *prima facie* subversively radical – statement that he himself has no thesis whatever (*pratijñā*; *Vigrahavyāvartanī* 29). And they had to reconcile this statement by Nāgārjuna – as well as a not unrelated one by Ārya-Deva (*Catuhṣataka* xvi.25) – with the actual philosophical and commentarial practice of these two masters and their successor Candrakīrti, all of whom have indeed propounded philosophical propositions and statements.²⁴

This issue has been a subject on which Tibetan scholars have written hundreds of pages that raise fundamental questions in philosophical language, method and thinking. It was also a matter on which Tibetan scholars differed among themselves. The position of Tsoṅ kha pa’s school was that, although the Mādhyamika indeed has no thesis postulating the

existence of any entity ((*ñhos po* = *bhāva*) whatsoever produced in terms of the ‘tetralemma’ (*mu bzhi* = *catuskoṭi*) of ontological positions – namely origination from self (as in the Sāṃkhya’s *satkāryavāda*), from another entity (as in the Nyāya’s *ārambhavāda*), from a combination of both these positions, or from neither (i.e. causelessly), as stated in *Madhyamakakārikā* i.1 – which is to say that all things are Empty of self-existence (*svabhāvasūnya*) and originate only in dependence (*pratītyasamutpanna*), as a philosopher the Mādhyamika (inclusive even of the ‘Prāsaṅgika’) does nevertheless have a philosophical position expressible in the form of a proposition or statement. This view of the matter Tsoṅ kha pa’s school considers to be in conformity with Candrakīrti’s actual philosophical procedure, for instance when the latter ascribed statements and doctrines to Nāgārjuna himself (and also to the Buddha).²⁵

(3) Still another area in which Tibetan exegetes innovated – albeit in this case in the wake of some later Indian Mādhyamikas – was in effecting a drawing together or convergence between the Madhyamaka (dBu ma) and the logic and epistemology (Tshad ma) of Dignāga and above all Dharmakīrti.²⁶ This convergence they expressed lexically by means of the copulative compound *dbu tshad* ‘Madhyamaka and Pramāṇa’.²⁷

That the balance between continuity and change has been an issue not only in Madhyamaka but also in the history of Tibetan logic and epistemology has been demonstrated in recent studies.²⁸

(4) A further noteworthy Tibetan development concerns the analysis of negation. The two forms of negation recognized for Sanskrit by Mīmāṃsaka ritualists and by the grammarians were defined respectively as verbally bound sentence-negation (*prasajyapratishedha*) and nominally bound term-negation (*paryudāsa*). The difference between these two kinds of negation has thus been defined in terms of syntax. And a trace of this syntactic view of the matter is found within Madhyamaka thought in the

²⁵ See *Three studies* . . . , Section II.

²⁶ Candrakīrti has criticized Dignāga, but he does not appear to know Dharmakīrti. See Candrakīrti’s *Prasannapadā*, and our *Two prolegomena to Madhyamaka philosophy: Candrakīrti’s Prasannapadā Madhyamakavṛttiḥ on Madhyamakakārikā* i.1, and Tsoṅ kha pa Blo bzang grags pa / rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen’s *dKa ’gnad/gnas brgyad kyi zin bris* (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Madhyamaka thought, Part 2, Vienna, 2002), p. 5 (and *passim*). – Concerning Jitāri/Jetāri and his congeners as precursors in India of this movement of convergence, see *Three studies* . . . , p. 30 with n. 56, and p. 273 n. 65.

²⁷ See *Three studies* . . . , Section III, p. 272 ff., where Tsoṅ kha pa’s use of *tshad ma* has been discussed. The justification for Tsoṅ kha pa’s procedure in this respect has been the object of discussion among scholars.

²⁸ See T. Tillemans, *Scripture, logic, language: Essays on Dharmakīrti and his Tibetan successors* (Boston, 1999), especially chap. 7; G. Dreyfus, *Recognizing reality: Dharmakīrti’s philosophy and its Tibetan interpretations* (Albany, 1997).

²³ See *Lam rim chen mo*, p. 573: . . . *don dam pa ston pa ñid nes pa’i lta ba rgyud la skyed tshul gyi sgo nas min ’dogs pa* . . .

²⁴ See Candrakīrti, *Prasannapadā* (ed. La Vallée Poussin), p. 16.

examples given in the *Tarkajvālā* (on Bhavya's *Madhyamakahrdayakārikā* iii.26; D, f. 59b), and in the exegetes who quote this influential source.

Bhavya himself held that the kind of negation found in Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakakārikā* i.1 is *prasajyapraṭiṣedha* (*med [par] dgag [pa]*; see *Prajñāpradīpa*, ed. Walleser, p. 10.8). And this was Candrakīrti's understanding also (*Prasannapadā*, ed. La Vallée Poussin, p. 13). Now, according to Buddhist philosophical analysis since the time of the *Tarkajvālā* ascribed to Bhavya, the difference between *paryudāsa* (*ma yin [par] dgag [pa]*), i.e. relative or internal negation) and *prasajyapraṭiṣedha* (i.e. absolute or external negation) lies in the fact that the first is presuppositional and implicative – that is, it presupposes the existence of an entity (*bhāva* = *dños po*) the relation of which to a given predicate is then negated, and it thus implies the affirmation (*vidhi*, *vidhāna*) for this entity of a real nature which is different from the one being negated – and that the second type of negation is on the contrary non-presuppositional and non-implicative – that is, it does not presuppose the reified existence of the entity for which negation is stated, and being then pure negation (*pratiṣedha[mātra]*) it therefore does not imply the affirmation of any real nature different from the one negated.²⁹ In other words, the distinction drawn between these two forms of negation is no longer defined in terms of syntax, and it rests instead on ontic, logical, and semantic analysis. According to both Bhavya and Candrakīrti, in the crucial first stanza of the *Madhyamakakārikā*s just referred to, Nāgārjuna's statement that all entities (*dños po* = *bhāva*) do not originate from self does not presuppose the reified existence of an entity; nor, above all, does the negation of origination from self (the first of the four *mu* = *koṭi* 'positions' enumerated in *Madhyamakakārikā* i.1) imply the affirmation of the contrary of this negation, namely that reified *bhāvas* originate from other *bhāvas* (the second position). In this stanza of Nāgārjuna's work, an interpretation according to the *paryudāsa* type of negation is in fact untenable within the frame of his Madhyamaka philosophy; and, irrespective of syntax, the Mādhyamika accordingly understands the negation used in this stanza as being of the *prasajya* type.

²⁹ See *Tarkajvālā* (D), f. 59b: *ma yin par dgag pa ni dños po'i no bo ñid dgag pas de dañ 'dra ba de las gžan pa'i dños po'i no bo ñid smra bar byed pa ste/ dper na 'di bram ze ma yin no žes dgag pas bram ze de 'dra ba de las gžan pa bram ze ma yin pa dka' thub dañ thos pa la sogs pas dman pa'i dman rigs yin par bsgrubs pa lta bu'o/ med par dgag pa ni dños po'i no bo ñid tsaṃ žig 'gog par zad kyi de dañ 'dra ba de ma yin pa gžan gyi dños po sgrub par mi byed pa ste/ dper na bram zes chañ btuñ par mi bya'o žes bya ba de tsaṃ žig 'gog par zad kyi de las gžan pa'i btuñ ba btuñ no že'am mi btuñ no žes mi brjod pa lta bu'o//*

Now, Tsoñ kha pa has observed that, even though in the Tibetan language implicative negation (*ma yin dgag*) may correlate with negation expressed by means of the negated copula (i.e. *ma yin/min*) whereas non-implicative negation (*med dgag*) may stand in correlation with negation expressed by the negated substantive verb (i.e. *med*), this is not necessarily and automatically so. In other words, there here exists no regular and necessary isomorphism between linguistic usage and ontic, logical and semantic analysis. Tsoñ kha pa has thus perceived that such analysis may in fact be independent of the linguistic form lent to a syntagma in a natural language.³⁰

Much of what has been said in the preceding is, no doubt, not exegesis in the narrowest sense but explicative elaboration – sometimes indeed innovation – offering interpretations which have not actually been explicitly set out in a thematized and theorized form in the works of Nāgārjuna, Ārya-Deva, Buddhapālita, and Candrakīrti. But such rethinking and restorative/renovative explication might be regarded as a form of *systemic hermeneutics*, and also as *internal philosophical reconstruction*, of Nāgārjunian and Candrakīrtian thought, as distinct from literal commentary on it. Every effort has been made by Tsoñ kha pa solidly to ground his internal reconstruction and hermeneutics in philosophical penetration and analysis, which were in their turn rooted in the classical texts of the Indian masters of the Madhyamaka tradition. In any case, what is often called 'originality' – i.e. *rañ bzo* or *rañ dga' ba* – was eschewed by him.

VI

In their treatments of Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā* – and in particular of the first stanza of Nāgārjuna's *Madhyamakakārikas*, the part known in Tibet scholastics as the (*Tshig gsal*) *ston thun* – the philosophical horizons of Tibetan commentators have expanded and shifted from those that were current among Indian authors. Tibetan scholars such as Tsoñ kha pa were for instance concerned less than Candrakīrti was with a detailed critique of the views of the Indian schools of Sāṃkhya, Nyāya,

³⁰ See Tsoñ kha pa, *Drañ ñes legs bšad sñiñ po*, f. 108b (= Zi ling ed., p. 518): *ma yin žes pa dañ med ces pa'i tshig gis bkag pa ni de gñis kyi khyad par min te/ bdag las ma yin žes bkag pa med dgag tu legs ldan dañ zla ba grags pa gñis kas bšad pa'i phyir dañ/ tshe dpag med ces pa ma yin dgag tu bya dgos pa'i phyir ro*. Cf. our 'Sanskrit-Tibetan and Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries and some problems in Indo-Tibetan philosophical lexicography' (as in n. 5 above), p. 126, n. 24; and *Two prolegomena* . . . , p. 19, n. 6 (esp. pp. 20–21).

Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā; and they tended to generalize philosophical issues which had earlier been identified by Candrakīrti with a view to criticizing or rejecting the doctrines of these schools, or eventually of Bhavya. In other words, although the Tibetan interpreters were certainly not unfamiliar with the Brāhmanical schools – as is amply demonstrated by the Tibetan doxographical (*grub mtha'*) literature going back to Bhavya's *Madhyamakahr̥daya*, the *Tarkajvālā* commentary on it, and Avalokitavrata's comment on Bhavya's *Prajñāpradīpa* –, they universalized doctrinal positions held historically by these earlier schools into so to say transhistorical philosophical positions and views that continue to possess an abiding significance within much later Buddhist thought.³¹

With regard to his commentarial method, although Tsoñ kha pa may on occasion supply word-for-word explanations of the text of Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*, *Prasannapadā*, etc. – providing what in Tibet is known as a *tshig 'grel* 'word-commentary' –, his effort was mainly concentrated on philosophical analysis and hermeneutics – on *don 'grel* 'meaning commentary' –, that is, on a philosophical reading and internal reconstruction of Nāgārjunian and Candrakīrtian thought. (The predominance of 'meaning commentary' of course already characterized most of Candrakīrti's own exegetical practice.)

Tsoñ kha pa on occasion made use of citations of Indian sources in what – at least to strictly literalist exegesis – might seem an unexpected and philologically unnatural way. In the ninth chapter of the *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra*, for example, we read: 'Without having reached a (conceptually) constructed entity, its absence [i.e. negation] is not apprehended; therefore, the [positive] entity being indeed false, its absence [i.e. negation] is [itself] clearly false' (ix.140: *kalpitam bhāvam aspr̥ṣtvā tadabhāvo na gr̥hyate/ tasmād bhāvo mṛṣā yo hi tasyābhāvaḥ sphuṭam mṛṣā//*). In Śāntideva's text this statement pertains to the solidarity of binarily opposed (conceptual) things, so that the negative *abhāva* 'non-

³¹ Compare e.g. D. Seyforth Ruegg, *Two prolegomena* . . . , pp. 56–57 (note).

An interesting case is provided by Tsoñ kha pa's discussion, in his *Drañ nes legs bśad sn̄in po*, of *Prasannapadā* i.1, pp. 66–68, on *lakṣaṇa* and *lakṣya* and on Candrakīrti's famous discussion of the use in ordinary language of the expressions 'Rāhu's head' (*rāhoḥ śiraḥ*) and 'body of the torso/pestle' (*śilāputrakasya śarīram*). In Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā* the discussion arose in connexion with Dignāga's postulation of the two *pramāṇas* of *pratyakṣa* (: *svalakṣaṇa*) and *anumāna* (: *sāmānyalakṣaṇa*). In the *Drañ nes legs bśad sn̄in po*, pp. 445–452, however, Candrakīrti's discussion has been linked by Tsoñ kha pa with his rubric of the identification (*no 'dzin pa*) of the negandum (*dgag bya*), followed by negation of the self-characteristic (*rañ gi mtshan n̄id*) and of the thing established by it (*rañ gi mtshan n̄id kyis grub pa*), factors attributed to Bhavya. On this theme which was of such fundamental importance for Tsoñ kha pa, see below.

entity' has no ontologically superior status to *bhāva* 'entity'.³² Tsoñ kha pa understands verse ix.140ab as referring specifically to his theory of the need to identify (*no 'dzin pa*) the concept or image of what is to be negated – the negandum (*dgag bya'i spyi = dgag bya'i rnam pa*), i.e. substantial self-existence or self-nature (*no bo n̄id, rañ bžin*) – in order to achieve understanding of the Emptiness of self-existence, i.e. non-substantiality (*no bo n̄id med pa = niḥsvabhāvatā, bdag med pa = nairātmya*).³³

Tsoñ kha pa's exegetical procedure was in part due to the already mentioned fact that he regarded the textual corpus of scripture and Śāstra as a hermeneutically coherent set of texts located in a philosophically timeless and enduring intellectual present.³⁴ That is, his interpretations

³² For *bhāva* and *abhāva*, cf. ix.35, where the commentator Prajñākaramati speaks of a relation of affirmation (*vidhi*) and negation (*pratiśedha*). In his comment on ix.140 Prajñākaramati refers to the negative *abhāva* of an entity (such as a pot) as the *sambandhin* relatively to the entity to which a positive nature is imputed in conceptual construction.

³³ Although there exists no full commentary by Tsoñ kha pa on the *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra* – the *Śes rab le'u'i zin bris* (in vol. pha of the bKa' 'bum) being an outline manual on the ninth chapter written down by Tsoñ kha pa's disciple rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen (the author of the extensive commentary entitled *rGyal sras 'jug nogs*) which only alludes to its verse ix.140, while the comment on the ninth chapter subtitled *Blo gsal ba* (in vol. ma) written down by another disciple is even shorter – 'hyper-interpretation' can be found in Tsoñ kha pa's treatment of ix.140ab (in the numbering of the Skt. text) in the *Lam rim chen mo*, where this half-verse is explained as relating to the conceptual negandum (p. 579: . . . *bdag med pa dan rañ bžin med pa žes pa'i don nes pa la'añ med rgyu'i bdag dan rañ bžin de legs par nos zin dgos te/ dgag par bya ba'i spyi legs par ma šar na de bkag pa'añ phyin ci ma log par mi nes pa'i phyr te* . . .). For the *dgag bya'i spyi* related to this verse, see also Tsoñ kha pa, *dGoṅs pa rab gsal*, f. 71a (= p. 129: *brtags pa'i dños po ste dgag bya'i spyi legs par ma šar na/ dgag bya de med pa legs par 'dzin mi nus par gsuñs pas/ med rgyu'i bden grub dan/ gañ gis stoñ pa'i dgag bya'i mam pa blo yul du ji lta ba bžin ma šar na/ bden med dan stoñ pa'i no bo legs par nes pa mi srid do//*) (Verse ix.139 of this text also contains a philological *crux*, the Tibetan translation reading [*b]sgom pa* [i.e. *bhāvanām*] against the *bhāvanām* of the Sanskrit text.) Cf. H. Tauscher, *Die zwei Wirklichkeiten in Tsoñ kha pa's Madhyamaka-Werken* (Vienna, 1995), pp. 75–81 (with P. Williams, *Altruism and reality* [London, 1998], p. 82 ff., and T. Jinpa, *Self, reality and reason in Tibetan philosophy* [London, 2002], p. 52, which do not refer to Tauscher's detailed discussion of the matter).

A further example of Tsoñ kha pa's 'hyper-interpretation' of a classical Indian source is in his exegesis of chapter 25 of Bhavya's *Prajñāpradīpa*, on the basis of which he ascribes to Bhavya the doctrine of a *rañ gi mtshan n̄id* (*svalakṣaṇa*) and of something that is *rañ gi mtshan n̄id kyis grub pa* (*svalakṣaṇa-siddha*; see below).

³⁴ This transhistorical coherence is traditionally understood in terms of certain established hermeneutical principles, the fundamental one in Sūtra hermeneutics being the division of the Buddha's word (*sañs rgyas kyi bka'* = *buddhavacana*) into that having a definitive sense (*nes don = n̄itārtha*) and that having a sense that is provisional since it requires to be further elicited (*drañ don = neyārtha*) in another meaning. (This hermeneutical division is independent of, and not reducible to, the additional division between the

– however unexpected and anachronistic they may perhaps be from the standpoint of literalist commentary – can be well-founded and meaningful from a systemic – and transhistorical – point of view.

Sometimes, moreover, Tsoñ kha pa has narrowed down the meaning of a word, making, e.g., *rañ bžin/ño bo ñid* (Skt. *svabhāva*) regularly and systematically denote ‘self-nature/self-existence’, and bracketing out other, less technical, usages of this word even though attested in Nāgārjuna’s text (e.g. *Madhyamakakārikās* xv.1–2) and, occasionally, in his own literal comments.³⁵ In practice, this procedure of attaching a single fixed meaning to a technical term in philosophy need not in itself be either misleading or illegitimate: quite the contrary in fact.

A contrasting feature in Tsoñ kha pa’s exegetical method has been to extend the range of usage of the technical term *rañ gi mtshan ñid* (Skt. *svalakṣaṇa*) to designate the ‘self-characteristic’ – i.e. the ontological-foundational ground which is the object of a non-erroneous (*ma’khrul ba* = *abhrānta*) cognition in Bhavya’s philosophy. This procedure was in conformity with his understanding of Bhavya’s philosophical analysis of the surface level or *saṃvṛti*.³⁶ He has thus ascribed to this Indian thinker the doctrine of some thing established through self-characteristic (*rañ gi mtshan ñid kyis grub pa*: **svalakṣaṇa-siddha*), even though Bhavya does not in fact seem ever to have himself used this particular terminology. This is, then, a noteworthy example of Tsoñ kha

‘literal’ [*iyathāruta* = *sgra ji bžin pa*] and the ‘non-literal’ [*sgra ji bžin ma yin pa*].) The *neyārtha* or provisional sense is, moreover, not set up arbitrarily, for this category is subject to the three hermeneutical criteria of (1) the really intended (*dgoñs gži*, e.g. *ño bo ñid med pa* = *ñiḥsvabhāvatā*) – i.e. what the Buddha had in view (*dgoñs nas* = *saṃdhāya*) even when uttering an intentional (*dgoñs pa can* = *ābhiprāyika*, allusive) statement –, (2) the motive (*dgos pa* = *prayojana*) for formulating such an intentional and hence provisional utterance, and (3) incompatibility with the intended sense (*dños la gnod byed*; cf. Skt. *mukhyārthabādhā*). See D. Seyforth Ruegg, ‘Purport, implicature and presupposition: Sanskrit *abhiprāya* and Tibetan *dgoñs pa/dgoñs gži* as hermeneutical concepts’, *JIP* 13 (1985), pp. 309–325; and id., ‘An Indian source for the Tibetan hermeneutical term *dgoñs gži* “intentional ground”’, *JIP* 16 (1988), pp. 1–4. Tsoñ kha pa’s major treatise on the subject was his *Drañ ñes legs bšad sñiñ po*; see also the relevant section of the *dKa’ gñad/gnas brgyad kyi zin bris*, together with *Two prolegomena* . . . , pp. 257–270 (and pp. 78–82).

³⁵ As just seen above, this self-nature/self-existence is regarded as the negandum for principled analytical reasoning (*rigs pa’i dgag bya*).

³⁶ Compare Tsoñ kha pa description of Bhavya as a proponent, on the *saṃvṛti*-level, of a (reified) entity (*dños por smra ba*: *bhāva/vastu-vādin*), one who is, however, at the same time a Mādhyamika in respect to his understanding of ultimate reality (*paramārtha*). On this, and on the matter of Tsoñ kha pa’s acceptance of a *tha sñad pa’i tshad ma* (*vyāvahārika-pramāṇa*), see *Three studies* . . . , pp. 93–94, 237, 250, 276; and *Two prolegomena*, pp. 6–7, 214, 236.

pa’s philosophical reconstruction of Bhavya’s ‘Svātantrika’ thought.³⁷ In Tsoñ kha pa’s view, it was the postulation of the self-characteristic, and of a thing established through it, that underlay Bhavya’s recourse to autonomous (*rañ rgyud* = *svatantra*) inference. A remarkable feature of Tsoñ kha pa’s Madhyamaka interpretation was accordingly to consider Bhavya to be in certain respects a proponent of substantialism (*dños po[r] smra ba*), but at the same time to acknowledge this master to be a respected Mādhyamika in the final analysis.³⁸

Tsoñ kha pa sought to remain faithful to what he understood to be the genuine import and structure, the philosophical dynamic, of the thinking of Candrakīrti even though he was prepared when analysing and expounding it to adopt a historically later (and hence strictly speaking anachronistic) terminology that had not actually been employed by that Indian master. This is because he found it to be *in conformity with* Candrakīrti’s (or Bhavya’s) philosophical procedure and thinking. An example is his adoption of the terms *Rañ rgyud pa* and *Thal ’gyur ba* to denote respectively Bhavya’s and Candrakīrti’s branches of the Madhyamaka.

In sum, on the historical level, noteworthy shifts are observable between the expressed intellectual worlds of Candrakīrti, and of Bhavya, on the one side, and Tsoñ kha pa’s own philosophical horizons on the other side. But such a historical shift does not inevitably and automatically bring with it a distortion in the overall understanding of the philosophical mainspring and import, the internal dynamics, of the Indian source’s philosophical thought. Such updating indeed constitutes a kind of continuing philosophical *aggiornamento*, where Candrakīrti’s discussions relating to a Brahmanical school of philosophy, or again to a particular Buddhist school such as that of the Ābhidhārmikas, are linked to themes and issues which, a

³⁷ See *Three studies* . . . , pp. 236–238. In this study it was noted that, when considering the philosophical expression *rañ gi mtshan ñid* = *svalakṣaṇa*, it is necessary to distinguish between three usages, those of the Ābhidhārmikas (for whom it means ‘specific characteristic, property’), the Buddhist logicians (‘particular characteristic’), and the Svātantrikas as understood by Tsoñ kha pa (‘self-characteristic’); see there the Index s.v. *svalakṣaṇa*. (For a study just published, see M. Eckel, ‘The satisfaction of no analysis: On Tsoñ kha pa’s own approach to Svātantrika Madhyamaka’, in: G. Dreyfus and S. McClintock, *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction*, pp. 173–203.)

³⁸ Cf. Tsoñ kha pa’s *Lam rim chen mo*, f. 425a (= p. 705), discussed in *Three studies* . . . , pp. 239, 267, 280–281; and f. 343a (= p. 573). On the Svātantrika’s *rañ gi mtshan ñid* = **svalakṣaṇa* in general, see *Two prolegomena*, p. 168 ff. (For two just published discussions, see T. Tillemans, ‘Metaphysics for Madhyamikas’, in: G. Dreyfus and S. McClintock (ed.), *The Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction*, pp. 91–124; and C. Yoshimizu, ‘Tsong kha pa’s reevaluation of Candrakīrti’s criticism of autonomous inference’, *ibid.*, pp. 257–288.)

millennium later, continued to occupy a prominent place within the frame of Buddhist philosophical discussion, if only as universalized – and hence *ahistorical* or rather *transhistorical* – subjects of discussion and criticism.

If Tsoñ kha pa's writings may be said to represent a 'reading' of much of the Buddhist Dharma as known in Tibet, this is because they not only provide an interpretation – a *lectio* – of a canon of fundamental scriptural (bKa' 'gyur) and commentarial (bsTan 'gyur) texts, as in the case of his hermeneutical treatise on the coherence of the Buddha's Word (*sañs rgyas kyi bka'* = *buddhavacana*) and on distinguishing in it between provisional meaning (*drañ ba'i don* = *neyārtha*) and definitive meaning (*ñes pa'i don* = *nītārtha*) – the *Drañ nes legs bśad sñiñ po* (of 1408) – but also because they constitute a reasoned enquiry – a *quaestio* – relating to a philosophical corpus, as in the case of his two major Madhyamaka commentaries – the *rTsa še ũk chen* (the *rNam bśad rigs pa'i rgya mtsho*, 1408/9) on Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* and the *dGoñs pa rab gsal* (c. 1418) on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* (*bhāṣya*). His great synthetic expositions of the Buddhist Path, the *Lam rim chen mo* (1402) and the *Lam rim chuñ ba* (1415) (not to speak of his *sNags rim*), represent the outcome of this twofold investigation concerned with hermeneutics and internal philosophical reconstruction.

VII

In the history of Tibetan civilization, then, Tsoñ kha pa can be said to have embraced in his philosophical thinking the twin spheres of the *Indian* – that is, what is *historically* identifiable as having been taken over from Indian sources – and the *Indic* – that is, the meta-Indian that is *typologically* (if not *historically*) Indian, continuing as he did to think in line with Indian models and templates found in the canonical sources of the bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur. Yet faithfulness to what was either historically Indian or typologically Indic did not make Tsoñ kha pa any the less Tibetan. And his insights were thus able to have a deep and fruitful impact on Tibetan thought. At the same time, his creative contribution has deeply marked the history of Buddhism, this being one of several reasons for which it is appropriate to speak of an Indo-Tibetan tradition within Buddhism, notwithstanding the fact that this tradition was very clearly not a frozen or ossified one.³⁹

³⁹ To avoid misunderstanding concerning this non-essentialist use of the expression 'Indo-Tibetan', what was written in *Three studies* ... may be recalled here (p. vi): '... this descriptive term is not meant to convey the idea of a single monolithic – and monothetic – entity. Rather, over a large area of South and Central Asia and a period of more than a

What has been said above may suffice to indicate that the problematics of continuity relative to change – and indeed of the very concepts of Buddhism in Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism – are more complex than might perhaps appear at first sight. The differentiations made above are more than just verbal distinctions without real difference. For, without developing clear concepts and the corresponding terminology, it is not possible to speak meaningfully about these matters. And a 'rectification of names' can be essential for further progress. As for the expressions 'Tibetan Buddhism' and 'Buddhism in Tibet', even if there exists a certain overlap between the two, each is no doubt appropriate in the relevant context, having its application in a particular defined situation. And both expressions can be usefully employed when investigating the contribution of a thinker such as Tsoñ kha pa.

In the last analysis, the matters discussed in this paper are no doubt just as much issues in anthropology (in the comprehensive sense), and in the history of mental representations, as they are narrower ones of Buddhist philosophy and the transcultural history of intellectual traditions of Indo-Buddhist provenance.⁴⁰

To sum up, in Tibet we find a complex interplay between continuity accompanied by conservative (and sometimes simply epigonal) transmission on the one side and on the other side creative rethinking/restoration/renewal/innovation accompanied by updating and new insights. In Tibetan cultural history, one or the other of these poles may stand out as predominant in an individual case. (The latter trend appears to be especially pronounced in the earlier part of the so-called Later Diffusion, the *phyidar*, of Buddhism in Tibet, which was followed in Tsoñ kha pa's tradition by a re-emphasizing of classical Indian sources.) And between the two

millennium, it refers to cultural and intellectual developments marked, polythetically, by continuities – and by what may be described as "family resemblances" – as well as by discontinuities'. Whether the relationship of some Tibetan scholarship to Indian sources justifies speaking of certain Tibetan scholars as having been Indologists *avant la lettre* (see our *The literature of the Madhyamaka school of philosophy in India* [A History of Indian literature VII/1, Wiesbaden, 1981], p. viii) may have been called into question; but this description actually corresponds to known facts in the history of Tibetan civilization and scholarship.

⁴⁰ Whether the forms of restoration/renewal/innovation considered in the present paper might be relatable to Hobsbawmian 'invention of tradition' is a quite different matter requiring further clarification. An instance of the constitution/invention of tradition seems to be found in the Tibetan historiography relating to the Great Debate of bSam yas and to the Hva sañ Mahāyāna (Ho-shang Mo-ho-yen) who figures in this historiography more as an emblematic than as a strictly historical figure; see our *Buddha-nature, Mind and the problem of Gradualism in a comparative perspective* (London, 1989), pp. 5, 58 etc.

poles there are intermediate positions, as well as instances of synchronic and diachronic tension between them. Outside circumstances – social, political, and cultural – have no doubt played a part in channelling developments, these external factors being nowadays often called upon to provide the preferred mode of explanation. A cultural tradition is in fact hardly ever wholly shielded from such outside influence. But the internal dynamics of a living and vital tradition inclusive of the requirements of internal philosophical reconstruction are surely not to be neglected when we seek to account for renewal and innovation. Moreover, if there has existed a tension between these processes, it is no doubt also the case that change is not inevitably incompatible, and entirely incapable of co-existing, with a search for fidelity and continuity. Tsoñ kha pa's intellectual and spiritual achievements seem to exemplify these considerations.⁴¹

Concerning finally the question as to precisely what Tsoñ kha pa may have himself been hoping to achieve in his life's work of teaching and writing with regard to the above-mentioned trends and polarities, insights and glimpses are provided by his compositions, as well as by hints to

⁴¹ Indological scholarship has sometimes raised the question as to whether the writings of Tibetan commentators and interpreters of Indian authors have any truly useful contribution to make to our present understanding of these sources. And among some Indologists there has existed an inclination to play down, even to deny, this possibility. (When reading Indological reactions to publications on the Indo-Tibetan Madhyamaka (see, e.g., K. Werner's review article of H. Tauscher, *Die zwei Wirklichkeiten in Tsoñ kha pa's Madhyamaka-Werken*, in *Buddhist Studies Review* 15 [1998], pp. 213–222) or on Pramāṇasāstra (see, e.g., the review of T. Tillemans, *Scripture, logic and language: Essays on Dharmakīrti and his Tibetan successors* by J.-M. Verpoorten, *Bulletin d'Études indiennes* 20 [2002], pp. 322–326), it is noticeable how considerable the obstacles to scholarly communication and understanding can prove to be.) Part of the difficulty lies no doubt in the complexity and technicality of the Tibetan materials. Yet one cannot help gaining the impression that there exists a difference of opinion as to just what the endeavour of the exegete, interpreter and philosopher-practitioner might consist in when embarking – as Tibetans clearly did – on the intellectual internalization and integration of Indian Buddhist traditions, and in particular on the arduous enterprise of penetration, interpretation, (re)thinking and internal philosophical reconstruction. Such difference of opinion may perhaps have to do, at least in part, with the pre-understanding, or pre-judgement, as to what philosophy as an intellectual exercise or practice, and also as a theoretical activity, has in fact been even within the history of western philosophy (compare, e.g., P. Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique* [Paris, 1995] on the one hand, and on the other L. Wittgenstein) – not to speak of what the scholastic enterprise in philosophy has represented. In several discussions of Indo-Tibetan traditions it has then been, first and foremost, commentarial discontinuity that has been perceived and emphasized, to the exclusion of continuity and the internal dynamics of an intellectual tradition linking India and Tibet. The possibility that the complex and very intense process of absorption, internalization and (re)thinking could be traditional and yet creative, faithful in its aim and yet renovative and even innovative in its outcome, appears not to have received full attention.

be found in his *Vita* – that is, in his 'internal' or intellectual biography (*nan gi rnam thar*), but also in his 'external' biography (*phyi'i rnam thar*), where outer, 'public' events in his life are narrated,⁴² and no doubt even in his 'secret' or intimate biography (*gsaṅ ba'i rnam thar*), where his spiritual visions are recounted.⁴³ To explore all this further will be a task for comprehensive study in the future.⁴⁴

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⁴² It is to be recalled that Tsoñ kha pa refused to visit India as well as China, thus centring his external activity in Tibet while focussing his intellectual activity on the Indian (as represented by sources contained in the bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur) and on the Indic (or meta-Indian as defined above), although not of course rejecting Tibetan tradition out of hand but only if he felt it to be ungrounded in, and incompatible with, the Indian and the Indic.

⁴³ Compare the visionary instruction from the Bodhisattva Mañjuṣa (referred to above in n. 19) according to which Tsoñ kha pa's earlier understanding of the Madhyamaka had been inadequate.

⁴⁴ Tsoñ kha pa's relation to the Indo-Buddhist traditions was briefly considered already many decades ago by E. Obermiller, 'Tsong-kha-pa le paṇḍit', *MCB* 3 (1934/1935), pp. 316–338. On his life see also R. Kaschewsky, *Das Leben des lamaistischen Heiligen Tsongkhapa Blo-bzañ-grags-pa* (1357–1459) (Wiesbaden, 1971).

In the history of Buddhist thought, a parallel (but not identical) problem – the doctrine of the *tathāgatarbha* – which also raises highly interesting questions in systemic and trans-historical hermeneutics, and in philosophical rethinking and updating (*aggiornamento*), due to factors present within Indian Buddhism has been discussed in our 'The Buddhist notion of an "immanent absolute" (*tathāgatarbha*) as a problem in hermeneutics', in: T. Skorupski (ed.), *The Buddhist heritage* (Tring, 1989), pp. 229–245, and in the first section of *Buddha-nature, Mind and the problem of Gradualism in a comparative perspective*. There the factors determining philosophical elaboration and development were not initially ones pertaining to intercultural transmission, enculturation, and the Indic relatively to the Indian, but ones that were endogenous to India itself. Only later did the question of the Indic in Tibet arise, on which see *La théorie du tathāgatarbha et du gotra* (cited above) and *Le traité du tathāgatarbha de Bu ston Rin chen grub* (Paris, 1973).