


The Wholesome Streams (*dGe ba'i chu rgyun*). Tshe dbang nor bu's Treatment of the Chinese Monk's Simultaneist Approach to Awakening

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 stereotypical Tibetan understanding of Chinese Buddhism—particularly that of the Chinese Chan tradition—over the course of the late spread of the teaching in Tibet (*phyi dar*) has taken as its parameter the narrative of the debate believed to have occurred during the reign of Khri Srong lde brtsan (r.755–799). The debate narrative, which is laden with the rhetoric of the controversy over the two opposed doctrinal strands of the Subitism and Gradualism²—specifically, those of the simultaneist (*cig car ba*) and gradualist (*rim gyis pa*) approaches³—is traceable to the

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² Paul Demiéville (1987a) first applied the pair of terms 'Subitism' and 'Gradualism' to describe the sudden-gradual contrast. His point of departure is the famous story of the verse exchange between Huineng 慧能 (638–713) and Shenxiu 神秀 (606?–706) in competition for the patriarchal title. Unconcerned with the polemical history as well as a detailed investigation of the doctrinal issues as manifested by the verses, Demiéville attempts to formulate a typology of the sudden-gradual contrast. However, R. A. Stein (1987) investigates the precise semantic range of the term "sudden" in both Chinese and Tibetan contexts, and implied that Demiéville has missed the lexical variety of this term.

³ In the Tibetan context, the [*g*]cig c[*h*]ar ba and *rim gyis pa*, a pair of terms denoting Subitism and Gradualism respectively, are parallels to *dunmen* 顿门 and *jianmen* 渐门 in Chinese. The Chinese phrases have been rendered in turn phonetically as [*s*]ton men / *min* and [*br*]tse[*n*] men / *min* in Tibetan. As for the definition of both, *cig car ba* is characterised by its immediacy and innate spontaneity of realising the pure nature of the mind, while *rim gyis pa* involves a progressive course of cultivation on the factors conducive to the awakening. For further information regarding this contrasting pair of terminology, see Stein (1987). Two major works dealing with the debate as historical event are Tucci (1958) and Demiéville (1987b). Tucci has made an extensive historical investigation of the debate as an introduction to the presentation of Kamalaśīla's first *Bhāvanākrama*, while Demiéville has treated the same subject from the Chinese perspective.

sBa bzhed, a text first compiled around the 12th century and allegedly the earliest extant Tibetan source on this subject. According to the normative discourse commonly held by Tibetan scholars, the Chinese Chan monk, customarily called Hwa shang Mahāyāna (Chin. *heshang moheyan* 和尚摩诃衍), was finally defeated by his opponent Kamalaśīla who had come from the Indian scholastic tradition, and his simultaneist approach, charged with being excessively quietistic and with excluding ethical and intellectual cultivations, was consequently prohibited by royal decree. The *sBa bzhed* documentation of Hwa shang's defense and Kamalaśīla's ensuing refutation in the debate, however, might have primarily copied from, or at least based itself on the same textual origin with, Kamalaśīla's third *Bhāvanākrama*, where the author devises a conversation with an anonymous opponent who proposed non-thinking (Skt. *na kiñcit cintayanti*; Tib. *ci yang mi sems*) and non-action (Skt. *na kiñcit karma kurvanti*; Tib. *ci yang mi byed*) as the effective path to liberation.⁴ As the discourse of this sudden-gradual controversy went on, a simplistic and even distorted image of Hwa shang Mahāyāna as an advocate of sudden awakening denying any preceding cultivations began to assume an emblematic function. Representative of an erroneous kind of teaching, the figure Hwa shang was often put to the polemical use against certain traditions—mainly those of the bKa' brgyud pa and rNying ma pa—whose philosophical and meditative systems were vehemently rebutted by being labelled with terms such as “the tradition of Hwa shang” (*hwa shang gi lugs*).

This article will leave aside the issues revolving around the historicity of the debate itself, and turn to the significance of the image of Hwa shang Mahāyāna in the Tibetan Buddhist landscape through the case analysis of Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu's

⁴ The *sBa bzhed* does bear the mention of the three *Bhāvanākramas*, which is said to have been composed by Kamalaśīla at the request of the Tibetan king after the debate. See *sBa bzhed*: 76.18–77.2. Kamalaśīla as the author of the third *Bhāvanākrama* renders his opponent's position as an abandonment of the Mahāyāna system: specifically, the non-thinking would finally lead to the abandonment of the supramundane (Skt. *lokottara*; Tib. 'jig rten las 'das pa) *prajñā*, and the non-action, primarily the rejection of any benevolent conduct (Skt. *kuśalacaryā*; Tib. *dge pa spyod pa*), is equal to a complete abandonment of *upāyas*. For the Sanskrit original of pertinent passages in the third *Bhāvanākrama*, see Tucci 1971: 13–4. For its Tibetan translation, see the *sGom rim gsum*: 143. Is Kamalaśīla referring in his work intentionally to a specific contemporary—probably Hwa shang—he encountered in the real life, or merely to an imaginary opponent who was later identified by the *sBa* writer with Hwa shang Mahāyāna in the *sBa bzhed*? It is, however, barely easy to pin this down due to the paucity of earlier literature and the nature of our documentation.

(1689–1755)⁵ treatment of the Chinese monk's simultaneist approach. Unlike many of his predecessors and fellows who distanced their own teachings from Hwa shang's and even sided against him in response to attacks, Tshe dbang nor bu in his *Wholesome Streams* (*dGe ba'i chu rgyun*)⁶—a historical treatment of the origination and transmission of Hwa shang's simultaneist approach in China and Tibet—adopted quite a different strategy of defense. Rather than rejecting any resemblance to or association with the Tibetan system of the rDzogs chen or Mahāmudrā, he attempted to prove Hwa shang's teaching as a valid path to awakening, thus cutting the ground from under his opponents' rebuttals.

To ground Tshe dbang nor bu's thesis in a broader historical setting of how the historical figure Moheyan made his way in the Tibetan milieu with his image changed to cater to the specific Tibetan agendas, I will first briefly introduce (i) the Chinese venue of the sudden-gradual controversy which possibly influenced the Tibetan perception of the Chinese Chan teaching, (ii) the Dunhuang witnesses to Moheyan's presence, from which the later mainstream discourse had diverged,⁷ and (iii) the Indian precedent and Tibetan development of the *amanasikāra* (Tib. *yid la mi byed pa*; Chin. *buzuoyi* 不作意) doctrine toward which people's perception of Hwa shang's teaching had gravitated.

⁵ Born in 1698 in Eastern Tibet, Tshe dbang nor bu was soon recognised as the reincarnation of gNubs Nam mkha'i snying po's spiritual line, and then ordained in the Kaḥ thog monastery. Sources of his doctrinal inspiration came from both the rNying ma pa and Karma bKa' brgyud pa circles. He kept a tolerant attitude toward doctrines from different schools and later became a non-sectarian (*ris med*) activist. He also gave more weight to meditative practice than scholarly debate. See Richardson 1967: 7–8. All points mentioned above could be well reflected in his self-designation as unbiased and non-sectarian vagabond yogin (*phyogs med ris med rnal 'byor rgyal khams pa*), found in the epilogue of the text (*dGe ba'i chu rgyun*: B: 389.11–12; D: fol. 16a6–b1).

⁶ The full title of the text is *rGya nag hwa shang gi byung tshul grub mtha'i phyogs snga bcas sa bon tsam smos pa yid kyi dri ma dag byed dGe ba'i chu rgyun* (The Virtuous Stream which Purifies the Mental Stains: A Mere Brief Account of the Origin of Chinese Hwa-Shang's [Doctrine] together with Objections to the System). According to the epilogue (B: 389.11–15; D: 16b), the text was finished in 1744 with the assistance of two scribes at lJon pa lung of the Kong po area.

⁷ In order to differentiate between the legendary figure in the Tibetan *imaginaire* and the historical one who did leave his teaching in the Tibetan Buddhist landscape, especially in the Dunhuang Tibetan corpus, I will use the term *hwa shang* to designate the former, and *moheyan* the latter.

1. *The Sudden-Gradual Controversy on Chinese Ground Prior to the Tibetan Event of Debate*

The Chinese conflict, which took place in Tang China in the 730s, constitutes Shenhui's 神会 (684–758) attack on Shenxiu's theory of the gradual awakening, and marks the historiographical division of the Chinese Chan tradition into the South and North branches.

The intriguing story of the verse competition between Shenxiu and Huineng⁸ has been long taken as the archetypical episode featuring the sudden-gradual conflict. However, this episode might be compromised by pieces of evidence in both figures' biographies.⁹ Be that as it may, the *Platform Sūtra* (*Liuzu tanjing* 六祖坛经) which first recorded this story still holds its significance in telling us how Shenhui, or the Southern side he represented, perceived his antagonistic relationship with the Northern side across the isle. The distinction between the two poems attributed respectively to Shenxiu and Huineng corresponds to the doctrinal contrast between *linian* 离念 and *wunian* 无念 advocated by the Northern and Southern sides respectively. The notion of *linian*, literally separation of thoughts, requires the removal of the dust of discursive thoughts from the mirror of the mind, whereas *wunian* suggests that there is no necessity to do so. For Shenhui, who laid a claim to Huineng's legacy, the occurrence of suddenness or simultaneity derives from the identification of awakening and delusion, which entails no such extra efforts.

Despite the rhetoric of the sudden-gradual opposition fully engaging the persons involved, the Chinese context reveals distinct doctrinal and political concerns without necessarily being connected with the Tibetan one which emerged decades later. However, tenuous historical links do exist. One such link is that Shenhui's critique of his northern rivals is found incorporated into the

⁸ See Yampolsky 1967: 129–32; and McRae 1994: 126–28.

⁹ As McRae points out, since both Shenxiu's and Huineng's chronological lines of activity never overlapped, as revealed by their own biographies, the competition for the succession to the patriarchal title in the form of verse exchange must simply have never happened (McRae 1994: 129). Second, McRae considers the two verses as constituting "one single unit expressing a rarified understanding of the 'perfect teaching' of constant bodhisattvic practice," which is that, "one should labor unceasingly to save all other sentient beings from suffering even as one remained constantly in meditation, but without ever conceptualising sentient beings, salvic action, or meditation." (McRae 1987: 228) Furthermore, Shenxiu's 'perfect' teaching, which laid a focus on the constant practice as implied by the verse, was not really a gradualist method as advocated by Shenhui's side, whereas the sudden teaching probably espoused by Huineng was not exclusive to the Southern school (McRae 1994: 129).

ordination platform ceremony of bestowing the *bodhisattva* vow, which had been spread to Sichuan, and further to the Tibetan-occupied area in Northwest China.¹⁰ This, more or less, contributed to the Tibetan awareness of the radical antipractice rhetoric from Chinese Chan teachings. Another more substantial link could be found in the lineage affiliation and doctrinal inspiration of the figure Moheyan (i.e. Hwa shang Mahāyāna): he was, on the one hand, connected to Shenxiu's Northern lineage in the Dunhuang Chinese source,¹¹ while on the other credited with the explicit Southern colour of apophatic rhetoric, which points to a possible connection with Shenhui. As van Schaik points out, Moheyan's teaching aims to reconcile meditation practice with Shenhui's antipractice rhetoric.¹²

2. Moheyan's Teaching in the Witness of the Dunhuang Chan Corpus

Hwa shang is the last, but most important, Chinese monk to appear in the *sBa bzhed*, where several instances are recorded of the Tibetan encounter—particularly that of Khri Srong lde brtsan's court—with Chinese Buddhists prior to Hwa shang's arrival.¹³ As the narrative unfolds, Hwa shang was at first quite popular in the court, but soon tensions emerged regarding the method of cultivation on how to gain access to awakening. The Chinese master ended up losing to Kamalaśīla in the debate. However, according to the *Dunwu dacheng zhenglijue* 顿悟大乘正理决—a Dunhuang Chan text purporting to be the minutes of the debate written in Chinese favor compiled in the early 9th century, the debate did not necessarily take place alive on a stage as the *sBa bzhed* would like us to believe, but most likely by letter. Sam van Schaik connects the *Zhenglijue* form of question-and-answer exchange to the way Chan “was presented to a sympathetic audience [...] the questions in Wangxi's text generally set the stage for Moheyan's answers, just as in the Tibetan version of the debate, Moheyan's brief argument sets the stage for a lengthy refutation.”¹⁴ Thus, the setting of debate in both texts, from either the Tibetan or Chinese perspective, is more conventional in evoking the agenda of the author or compiler than indicative of a scene in real practice.

Despite the historicity of the event of debate itself, Moheyan,

¹⁰ Van Schaik 2015: 11.

¹¹ The *Dunwu dacheng zhengli jue* 顿悟大乘正理决 ascribes to Moheyan a list of five or six masters, three out of which, Xiangmo 降魔, Xiaofu 小福 and Dafu 大福 respectively, are certainly followers of Shenxiu (Rao 1979: 357).

¹² Van Schaik 2015: 12.

¹³ See Broughton 1983: 5–10; and van Schaik 2015: 13–4.

¹⁴ Van Schaik 2015: 16.

together with quite a few other teachers identified with the Chan master, did have their teachings and sayings left in the Dunhuang Tibetan corpus. However, the majority of the texts which bear the subject were not necessarily intended to simply record these masters' thoughts, but were used as source material for a larger ritual scheme. The texts functioned to instil the Chan ethos of non-conceptuality in participants of the ceremony represented by the compendium of which those Chan masters' sayings were part.¹⁵ Those Chan teachings, grouped together regardless of factious attribution, are generally characteristic of "presentations of what is apparently a negation as a positive aspect of Buddhist practice and realization."¹⁶

The teachings found in the works attributed to Moheyan¹⁷ shows a tendency to reconcile the practice of 'observing the mind' (Chin. *kanxin* 看心; Tib. *sems la bltas*)—which has been taught by Shenxiu as well—with the antipractice rhetoric of sudden awakening firmly held by Shenhui. According to Moheyan's thesis, the conceptual mind as the fundamental cause of *samsāra* should be brought to cessation through the meditative technique of observing the mind, the instruction of which contains repeated negations of mental engagement. However, instead of calling for an absolute suppression—which he himself actually deemed as inferior and incorrect—Moheyan attempted to achieve a certain form of meditative experience free from conceptuality, which he defined as the simultaneist approach (*cig car 'jug pa*).¹⁸ Furthermore, his works show a positive attitude toward the perfections cultivation. Though it is only by subsuming all the six or ten perfections under one single method of *dhyāna* that one is guided through the simultaneist path,

¹⁵ Sam van Schaik regards the collection of Chan master's teachings found in PT 116 as "performative utterances" characterised by "repetition and redundancy" (*ibid.*: 43–4).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*: 45–6.

¹⁷ Gómez has extracted five works ascribed to Moheyan out of the Dunhuang Tibetan corpus: 1) parallel to the *Dunwu dacheng zhenglijue* 顿悟大乘正理决; 2) the *bSam gtan cig car 'jug pa'i sgo*; 3) the *bSam gtan gyi snying po*; 4) the *Myi rtog pa'i gzhung*; 5) the *bSam gtan myi rtog pa'i nang du pha rol tu phyin pa drug dang bcu 'dus pa bshad pa'i mdo*. (Gómez 1983: 86–7). Sam van Schaik has revised this list by pointing out that the inclusion of the third one was due to the confusion caused by the scribal error (van Schaik 2015: 139). For the English translation of those works, see Gómez 1983: 107–32; and van Schaik 2015: 121–9, 141–6. However, an alternative list of works attributed to Hwa shang occurs in the later indigenous Tibetan literature, the earliest available of which might be Sa skya Paṅḍita's work. For instance, the *Thub pa dgongs gsal* (48b5–6) groups five *śāstras*, namely the *bSam gtan nyal ba'i khor lo*, the *bSam gtan gyi lon*, the *Yang lon*, the *lTa ba'i rgyab sha* and the *mDo sde bryad cu khungs*, under the category of *dkar po chig thub*.

¹⁸ ITJ 468: 1a–2b. For its English translation, see Gómez 1983: 107–9; and van Schaik 2015: 141–2.

his schema does leave some room for the gradualist perfections cultivation.¹⁹ At this point, we can see a difference to the later Tibetan impression of Hwa shang Mahāyāna.

3. *Amanasikāra: the Indian Precedent and Tibetan Development*

If the *sBa bzhed*'s divergence from the Dunhuang archives in terms of the picture of Chinese Chan teachings has much to do with the clannish rivalries traced back to the imperial era,²⁰ then what motivated Tibetans of later generations, up till Tshe dbang nor bu's time, to bring up this debate story from time to time? It involves a more complex discourse of the Buddhist transmission from India triumphing over that from China, and the new translation schools overwhelming the ancient one. Therefore, a subtle shift of emphasis occurred in later versions of the story: it was Chinese Buddhism as a whole—thought of as embodiment of the simultaneist approach—that became subject to criticism. To get a proper sense of this new thread of thought, so as to better contextualise Tshe dbang nor bu's thesis, we will look at how the *amanasikāra* doctrine became entangled with the discourse of the Chinese monk in the Tibetan Buddhist landscape.

The early canonical use of the term *amanasikāra*—literally 'to become mentally disengaged'²¹—pointed to a rejection of mental engagement with signs (*nimittas*) while keeping the proper working of mental engagement (*manasikāra*).²² Mahāyāna thinkers inherited this line of thought, and developed it along two strands: the traditional Madhyamaka analysis which leads to the realisation of emptiness and the Mahamudrā path where the nature of mind is experienced as luminosity. While Kamalaśīla considered *amanasikāra* as a result of the analytical *vipaśyanā* practice, Saraha equated his *mahamudrā* practice with *amanasikāra*, advancing a non-analytical

¹⁹ PT 116: 171–3. For its English translation, see Gómez 1983: 121–3; and van Schaik 2015: 50–1.

²⁰ According to Ruegg, clannish rivalries among Tibetans might play a more contributing role than any possible conflicts of both political and religious benefits between Chinese and Indians (Ruegg 1989: 126–7). Both the *sBa bzhed* and *Zhenglijue* confirm that Moheyan, or the Tibetan Chan group, was supported by the 'Dro clan which had played a big role as the guardian of Tibet's northeast frontier. Thus, the story of Moheyan's party being defeated by the sBa family-supported party led by Kamalaśīla as was told in the *sBa bzhed*—a text celebrating the role of the sBa clan in introducing Buddhism to Tibet—could be seen as an attempt to lend the sBa clan a claim to the imperial Buddhist agenda.

²¹ Here I adopt Klaus-Dieter Mathes's way of translating this term. See, for instance, Mathes 2010.

²² *Ibid.*: 4–5.

path aiming at a direct access to the luminous nature of mind, even without necessarily going through tantric initiations.²³ However, both agree that it is only the *manasikāra* invested with *nimitta* that the *amanasikāra* aims to negate or transcend. It was only since Maitrīpa that the motif of non-analytical realisation started to be combined with Pāramitāyāna teachings, and made a certain kind of Madhyamaka-based Mahāmudrā which finally ended up in Tibet with the label ‘sūtric Mahāmudrā’ (*mdo lugs phyag rgya chen po*).²⁴

The Tibetan bKa’ brgyud pa tradition had reinforced Maitrīpa’s role, probably as a response to the doubts raised regarding the authenticity of the transmission of sGam po pa’s (1079–1153) non-tantric Mahāmudrā path. sGam po pa proposed a ‘pointing-out instruction’ (*ngo sprod*) method which constitutes a simultaneist approach to the *mahāmudrā* whereby one is introduced through the teacher’s instruction (*gdams ngag*) directly to the nature of mind, as distinguished from the gradualist path of both the sūtric and tantric methods.²⁵ At some points, he even equated this Mahāmudrā path with the rDzogs chen.²⁶ The transcending nature of sGam po pa’s Mahāmudrā presentation had succumbed itself to criticisms from communities either scholarly minded or tantric based. Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), one of the best-known critics in this regard, linked the self-sufficient white [remedy] (*dkar po chig thub*)—a metaphor of sGam po pa’s *ngo sprod* method²⁷—with Hwa shang’s teaching which he identified with the ‘Chinese-style rDzogs chen’ (*rgya nag lugs kyi rdzogs chen*).²⁸ Instead of extending his reproach to the Mahāmudrā per se, Sa paṇ confined the object of his attack only to what he called ‘neo-Mahāmudrā’ (*da lta’i phyag rgya chen po*), a path taught outside of the Mantrayāna by bKa’ brgyud pas, as contrasted with the tantric-based transmission from Nāropa.²⁹

However, Sa paṇ had not necessarily levelled his criticism against Maitrīpa’s *amanasikāra*,³⁰ neither was sGam po pa so much emphatic about Maitrīpa as the source of his Mahāmudrā transmission as

²³ *Ibid.*: 7–8.

²⁴ For issues regarding the Indian origin of the “sūtric Mahāmudrā,” mainly surrounding Maitrīpa’s contribution to a synthetical hermeneutical framework of the *amanasikāra* idea, see Mathes 2010.

²⁵ Jackson 1994: 23–8.

²⁶ *Ibid.*: 29–30.

²⁷ See Ruegg 1989: 102–4; and Jackson 1994: 1–12.

²⁸ Such a linkage is well established throughout Sa paṇ’s narrative of the debate event. See, for instance, the *sKyes bu dam pa* (3a6–3b1): *rgya nag mkhan po na re l ... sems ngo ’phrod na dkar po chig thub yin*.

²⁹ *sDom gsum rab dbye*: 26a5–b2. Cf. Ruegg 1989: 101–2.

³⁰ Even in his criticism of Hwa shang, Sa paṇ had not used the term *yid la mi byed pa* (*amanasikāra*), but *rnam par mi rtoḡ pa* (non-conceptuality), to characterise the Chinese monk’s teaching (Jackson 1994: 73, n. 179).

about Nāropa. It was only in the subsequent centuries that Maitrīpa, together with his *amanasikāra* doctrine, was given higher regard within the tradition, partly as a strategy to defend the lineage legitimacy. The justifications made by later bKa' brgyud pa, nonetheless, showed a sūtric orientation in that the presentation of what was a third path had been fit into the sūtric category, with its equivalents being the 'pāramitā Mahāmudrā' (*phar phyin phyag chen*), the 'Mahāmudrā of the quintessential meaning' (*phyag chen snying po'i don*), or 'Maitrīpa's Mahāmudrā' (*mai tri'i phyag chen*).³¹ Thus, in the bKa' brgyud pa defense and elaboration, Sa paṅ has been portrayed as if he took Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* doctrine considered to feature sGam po pa's Mahāmudrā path as having come from Hwa shang's *cig car ba* teaching.

Therefore, sGam po pa had not so much inherited from Maitrīpa in his doctrinal innovations as his successors would have people to believe. Then, is there any way to trace some more direct inspirations? Based on the currently extant sources, Sa paṅ's vision of a connection with the Chinese Chan, despite its potential polemical nature, does seem to have some historical validity. The *dkar po chig thub* as the metaphor of a soteriologically self-sufficient method finds itself a parallel in the *Zhenglijue* where Moheyan uses a medicine metaphor for his non-conceptual method.³² Moreover, sGam po pa's elaboration of his simultaneist approach even shares quotations from Chinese Chan scriptures with the Tibetan Chan texts.³³ It is also worthy to note that the Chinese Chan continued to exert its influence upon the Tibetan circle even till the 11th century.³⁴ However, the possibility that sGam po pa had ever drawn his doctrinal inspiration from the Chan has yet to be confirmed by a closer reading of relevant materials.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 82–3.

³² Rao 1979: 349, cf. Ruegg 1987: 100–1; and Jackson 1994: 4.

³³ Jackson 1994: 22–4.

³⁴ Van Schaik 2015: 16–7. gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes (fl. 10th century) devised in his *bSam gtan mig sgron* (30b6–31b3) a doctrinal hierarchy which incorporates the simultaneist approach among the other three. This reflects an attempt to counter the then Tibetan tendency to mix Moheyan's teaching with Atiyoga. Cf. Dalton & van Schaik 2003. Moreover, A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas who flourished in the 11th century is said to be the point where the Indian and Chinese sevenfold lineages of reincarnated teachers (*bdun brgyud*) converged. See, for instance, *Deb ther sngon po*: 211.11–14.

4. A Case of Polemical Defense by an 18th-Century rNying ma pa Master in his Treatment of Hwa shang Mahāyāna

Tshe dbang nor bu's agenda in his *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* can be better examined against the background of the non-tantric Mahāmudrā discourse—which had been narrowly identified with Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra*—being intertwined with the *cig car ba* one. We also need to put his stance in the religio-political environment in the 18th century Tibet. With the rise of the rNying ma pa monasticism since the 17th century, the dGe lugs pa sectarian expansion no longer remained outside the scope of concern among the rNying ma pas who started to reinforce their self-consciousness as a unified community.³⁵

Tshe dbang nor bu starts his work with the conventional obeisance. The incorporation of Arhat Mahākāśyapa (*dgra bcom pa 'od srung chen po*),³⁶ allegedly the first patriarch of the Chan tradition, into the list of objects of prayer reflects his acknowledgement of the Chan lineage. In the subsequent verse section, Tshe dbang nor bu assertively renders Hwa shang's system, synonymous with 'Chinese Buddhism' in the text, a legitimate position in the framework of Buddhist doctrines and practices, and criticises its refutation as an 'abandonment of the Dharma' (*chos spang*).³⁷

What follows is nearly one third of the space devoted to introducing three major Chinese Buddhist traditions, namely, that of the profound view (*zab mo lta ba*, i.e. Mādhyamika), of the extensive conduct (*rgya chen spyod pa*, i.e. Yogācāra), and of the meditative practice (*nyams len bsgom pa*, i.e. Chan), all assumed to be comparable to contemporary Tibetan conventions.³⁸ In this survey, Tshe dbang nor bu had primarily drawn his sources from mGon po skyabs's *rGya nag chos 'byung*³⁹—a work composed about eight years ahead of the *dGe ba'i chu rgyun*—but with a different organisation of the information showing his own program. In introducing each tradition, Tshe dbang nor bu adopts a uniform narrative structure: (1) listing the Indian patriarchs starting with the Buddha; (2) briefly presenting biographical information of the founding master in China; (3)

³⁵ Van Schaik 2003: 198.

³⁶ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 379.1–3; D: 1b1–2.

³⁷ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 379.3–15; D: 1b2–2b3.

³⁸ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 379.21–383.12; D: 2b6–7b2.

³⁹ Tshe dbang nor bu has mentioned this work twice throughout his treatise, and called mGon po skyabs by *ching gir gung*, speculatively *fuguogong* 辅国公 in Chinese, a title of duke awarded by the Qing court. See *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 383.4–5; D: 7a3 and B: 387.25–26; D: 14a6. As is pointed out by Leonard van der Kuijp (1984: 156, n. 8), Tshe dbang nor bu used to write mGon po skyabs a letter to query him regarding his newly composed work *rGya nag chos 'byung*.

enumerating succeeding lineage-holders up to the author's time. His purpose in doing this is obvious: to prove the legitimacy of these Chinese traditions by showing an uninterrupted transmission from the Buddha. Meanwhile, Tshe dbang nor bu in passing breaks the stereotypical Tibetan understanding of Chinese Buddhism as synonymous with Hwa shang's simultaneist teaching. The latter is no more than one major strand of the former.

Moreover, Tshe dbang nor bu places the third one, which he terms as the Tsungmen (Chin. *zongmen* 宗門, i.e. the Chan tradition), atop of the other two, due to its unbroken heart-to-heart transmission (*thugs nas thugs su brgyud pa bar ma chad pa*).⁴⁰ This Tsungmen transmission has been identified elsewhere (e.g. in the *rGya nag chos 'byung*) with that of the 'teaching of the quintessential meaning' (*snying po don gyi bstan pa*), or of the 'Mahāmudrā [characterised by the unity of] the gnostic awareness and emptiness' (*rig stong phyag rgya chen po*).⁴¹

Furthermore, Tshe dbang nor bu seems to be making an effort to ground his picture of the Chan in the Tibetan sources. He mentions that the *gtad rabs* (literally "successive patriarchs [to whom the Buddha's teachings were] entrusted") lineage unique to the Chan tradition is evidenced in the Tibetan histories, such as the *Bu ston chos 'byung* and the *Deb ther sngon po*.⁴² He also cites the *Blon po bka'i thang yig*,⁴³ which he has erroneously taken as the *Lo pan bka' yi thang yig* in his text, to support the claim of the Indian and Chinese "sevenfold lineages of reincarnated teachers" (*sprul pa'i sku bdun brgyud*). The Chinese one is attributed to a lineage of seven Tsungmen masters from Huike 慧可 (c.487–593) up to Hwa shang.⁴⁴ So far, Tshe dbang nor bu has managed to put Hwa shang into a valid Buddhist transmission.

Concerning the time of Hwa shang's stay in Tibet, Tshe dbang nor bu refutes as incorrect the received view given in the annals such as the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* that it was contemporaneous with Khri Srong lde brtsan's later years, and believes that Hwa shang arrived at Tibet towards the later years of Mes Ag tshom can (r.704–755), and was banished to China when Khri Srong lde brtsan had not yet come of age.⁴⁵ Thus, the author has tacitly cut the link between the Hwa

⁴⁰ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 380.8–12; D: 7a5–7b2. The term *zongmen* originally served in the Chinese context as "the general name for sects," but "later appropriated to itself" by the Chan tradition (*DCBT*: s.v. 宗門).

⁴¹ *rGya nag chos 'byung*: 118.4–6.

⁴² *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 381.17–19; D: 5a2–3.

⁴³ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 383.16–24; D: 7b4–8a3. Cf. the *Blon po bka'i thang*: 454.14–20.

⁴⁴ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 383.13–16; D: 7b2–4. The list found in the Dunhuang sources places Bodhidharma as the first in the lineage (Karmay 1988: 93).

⁴⁵ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 383.24–384.7; D: 8a3–8b2.

shang he assumes to hold the authentic Buddhist doctrine which resembles rDzogs chen and Mahāmudrā and the Hwa shang who is taken as having debated with Kamalasīla.

Now Tshe dbang nor bu proceeds to evaluate Hwa shang's doctrinal system. First, he attributes Hwa shang's teaching, namely the Tsungmen cultivation on the quintessential meaning (*snying po don'i sgom pa*), to the Tathāgatagarbha teaching of the third turning of the wheel, and characterises it as a *sūtra*-based path in combination with special meditative techniques which could speed the progression towards the awakening.⁴⁶ Second, he attempts to show its inferiority to the tantric path by arguing that one could reach no further than the eighth *bhūmi* merely through the *sūtric* path.⁴⁷ In order to resolve the dilemma that the *sūtric* path does not directly lead to the ultimate result, Tshe dbang nor bu asserts that one of the *sūtric* path would automatically enter the tantric path from the eighth *bhūmi* onward. Through this strategic explanation, it is well established that one of the *sūtric* path equally possesses the opportunity of accessing the Buddhahood, but the tantric path constitutes the ultimate way, no matter which path was adopted at the very beginning.⁴⁸ Tshe dbang nor bu also endeavors to distinguish between the two terms *cig car 'jug pa* and *rim gyis 'jug pa*. Based on his definition, the former puts an exclusive emphasis on meditation, while the latter embraces a progressive program of study, reflection and meditation.⁴⁹ Here Tshe dbang nor bu equates the *cig car 'jug pa* taught by the Chinese Tsungmen with the mind-guiding instruction (*sems khrid*), a method pointing to the bKa' brgyud pa non-tantric Mahāmudrā.

Now after an evaluation of the simultaneist approach in terms of its *sūtric* basis, its position in a *sūtric*-tantric scheme, and its comparison to the gradualist approach, Tshe dbang nor bu outlines several speculative reasons for rejecting Hwa shang's teaching as inauthentic: first, debate as a universal form of doctrinal interactions among different schools and traditions throughout the history of Buddhism does not render any participating entity as inauthentic—quite the contrary; second, the Tibetan king prohibited the spread of

⁴⁶ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 384.12–385.2; D: 8b6–9b3. To counter the doubts regarding the efficiency of this *sūtric* path, Tshe dbang nor bu cites the *Tattvāvātāra* and the Chinese translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* to illustrate that, through the special meditative technique, one might be awakened within a short time.

⁴⁷ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 385.2–6; D: 9b3–6.

⁴⁸ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 385.6–15; D: 9b6–10a5.

⁴⁹ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 385.19–26; D: 10b1–6. Interestingly enough, Tshe dbang nor bu also mentions the presence of the gradualist approach in the *Nyi zla kha sbyor gyi brgyud*, one rDzogs chen text of the quintessential instruction cycle (*man ngag sde*).

Hwa shang's teaching in Tibet primarily out of the fear of causing confusions and indeterminations; third, refutation and affirmation within Hwa shang's system were approached mainly in the context of debate.⁵⁰ These defenses, though hypothetical and partly fanciful, are quite strategic. Afterwards, Tshe dbang nor bu comes to conclude that Hwa shang's method of fixation-meditation (*'jog sgom*)⁵¹ could withstand objections from any side but the tantric path.

Then Tshe dbang nor bu elucidates on the homogeneity between Hwa shang's teaching of quintessential meaning cultivations and the instructions found in the Indian *amanasikāra* cycle, which is also the Mahāmudrā taught by Saraha.⁵² He further equates the latter with the rDzogs chen of the mind section (*sems phyogs*) in terms of the cognition of the innate nature of the mind, the absence of both abandonment and adoption, and the manifestation of all appearances as three *kāyas*.⁵³

What follows is a criticism of the later misinterpretations of these archaic instructions by means of fabrication and contamination.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, from this point onward, the text is interrupted by a one-folio lacuna. Judging from the opening words of the folio which immediately follows,⁵⁵ the author may have given in the missing folio his personal exhortations. As a conclusion of the prose section, Tshe dbang nor bu enumerates his main references, including the *rBa bzhed*, the *Bhāvanākrama*, the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, the *rGya nag chos 'byung* and several other unnamed sources.⁵⁶ In the end, the concluding verses express his confidence in the validity of this work, criticism of a list of misdeeds and misinterpretation with regard to the Dharma, and wish of immediately attaining the Buddhahood.

Although this work of Tshe dbang nor bu purportedly deals with the history of Hwa shang Mahāyāna as well as his doctrine, it is more appropriate to read it in some polemical light. Having rendered Hwa shang a valid position in the authentic Buddhist transmission of Tsungmen—listed among the three major Chinese Buddhist strands,

⁵⁰ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 386.9–23; D: 11a4–12a1.

⁵¹ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 386.23–387.1; D: 12a1–4. According to Ruegg (1989: 111), there is a typological link between Tsong kha pa's fixation-meditation and Hwa shang's simultaneist approach.

⁵² *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 387.2–5; D: 12a4–12b1. Here Tshe dbang nor bu associates Hwa shang's teaching directly with the Mahāmudrā taught by Saraha in India, which remains outside the scope of Sa Paṅ's criticism.

⁵³ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 387.5–11; D: 12b1–4). Tshe dbang nor bu cites the verse from a bKa' brgyud pa master 'Gro'i ba mgon po Ye shes rdo rje (1161–1211) to illustrate the common ground shared by the Mahāmudrā and the rDzogs chen.

⁵⁴ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 387.11–15; D: 12b4–6.

⁵⁵ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 387.16; D: 14a1: [...] *shig 'dir gdams pa bya'o* | |.

⁵⁶ *dGe ba'i chu rgyun* B: 387.19–388.2; D: 14a3–14b2.

a device some 18th century Tibetan writers (e.g. mGon po skyabs and Thu'u bkwan) applied to their understanding of Chinese Buddhism—through intentional arrangement of historical and legendary facts, Tshe dbang nor bu endeavors to confirm the link between the tradition he himself has derived from—i.e. that of the rDzogs chen and Mahāmudrā—and Hwa shang's *cig car ba* teaching. For Tshe dbang nor bu, Hwa shang's Tsungmen transmission lays an emphasis on the cultivation of the quintessential meaning extracted from sūtric scriptures of the Tathāgatagarbha category, a meditative practice which still prevailed in Tibet in his own time, and shares a common ground with the rDzogs chen and Mahāmudrā. He even links this quintessential meaning cultivation (*don sgom*) with Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* instructions. However, tending to regard Hwa shang's approach as no more than a sūtric path, Tshe dbang nor bu gives priority to the tantric path in its providing the ultimate access to the Buddhahood. This being the case, Hwa shang's teaching is again vulnerable to attack since it does not directly lead to the awakening. In order to make conciliation, Tshe dbang nor bu adds that this sūtric path will automatically turn into the tantric path at a certain point. At this point, Tshe dbang nor bu has managed to dissolve in his own way the attack imposed upon the rDzogs chen and Mahāmudrā. He has admitted the typological resemblance the rDzogs chen and Mahāmudrā have with Hwa shang's *cig car ba* teaching which he took pains to prove as a valid Buddhist path, and meanwhile, has given preference to the tantric path over the *cig car ba* which he deemed as a sūtric path, in that the former directly leads one to the Buddhahood.

5. Concluding Remarks

The story of the bSam yas debate as it circulated in Tibet turns out to be a politically charged narrative. As the Dunhuang archives have shown us, Moheyan's instruction does not contain so much an extremist quietism excluding any mental engagement and virtuous conduct as it contains the meditation practice of 'observing the mind' combined with an antipractice rhetoric. His method even allows some room for the gradualist cultivation of six or ten perfections. This doctrinal presentation, in fact, does not seem to depart too much from that found in the three *Bhāvanākramas* authored by Kamalaśīla who debated against Hwa shang Mahāyāna. Such a distortion had been reinforced by the *phyi dar* context of the sectarian constitution and conflict. The narrative initially served to support the sBa claim to the imperial Buddhist heritage. Latter contexts of its usage witnessed

a subtle shift of tone. Hwa shang Mahāyāna, who was said to have lost the debate, came to represent the Chinese Buddhist religion which was in turn considered to be invalid and even heretical, a general statement more or less echoing the *phyi dar* rhetoric of esteeming an Indic origin over the Chinese one. Sa paṅ's critique of sGam po pa's transcending Mahāmudrā path free from both the sūtric and tantric rubrics had pushed the figure Hwa shang Mahāyāna to the fore. The *cig car ba* teaching Sa paṅ as the 'Chinese-style rDzogs chen'—the antipractice rhetoric of which had been aggrandised in the debate story well received in the Tibetan milieu—was compared to sGam po pa's *dkar po chig thub* method which introduces the disciple directly to the luminous nature of mind without entailment of tantric initiation. However, it was the bKa' brgyud pa teachers of subsequent generations that emphatically linked this non-tantric Mahāmudrā with Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* doctrine, probably as a response to the issues about the transmission authenticity. Tshe dbang nor bu, the author of the text under investigation in this article, inherited this line of thinking. He attributed the practice of cultivating on the quintessential meaning extracted from the Tathāgatagarbha *sūtras* to Hwa shang's Tsungmen transmission, and confirmed that it shares a common ground with the Mahāmudrā transmitted from Saraha through Maitrīpa, as well as with the rDzogs chen. However, Tshe dbang nor bu's acceptance of Hwa shang's *cig car ba* teaching is not without reservation. The *don sgom* (quintessential meaning cultivation) as a sūtric path in Tshe dbang nor bu's doctrinal hierarchy still gives way to the tantric one in its proximity to the ultimate Buddhahood.

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Abbreviations

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PT. Pelliot tibétain: Bibliothèque Nationale shelf mark for Tibetan manuscripts recovered by Paul Pelliot from Dunhuang.

ITJ. British Library shelf mark for Tibetan manuscripts recovered by Aurel Stein from Dunhuang.

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