TĀRANĀTHA’S “TWENTY-ONE DIFFERENCES WITH REGARD TO THE PROFOUND MEANING” — COMPARING THE VIEWS OF THE TWO GŽAN STOŇ MASTERS DOL PO PA AND ŚAKYA MCHOG LDAN\textsuperscript{1}

KLAUS-DIETER MATHES (UNIVERSITY OF HAMBURG)

1. Historical Background

The distinguishing feature of g\textit{zan} stoň Madhyamaka in the Jonangpa school, to which Tāranātha (1575-1634) belongs, is the fact that it normally restricts the validity of the common Madhyamaka assertion “all phenomena are empty of an own-being” to phenomena on the level of apparent truth. The ultimate, which is inseparably endowed with innumerable Buddha-qualities, is considered to be not “empty of an own-being” (\textit{rañ stoň}) but “empty of other” (g\textit{zan} stoň), namely accidental stains and so forth\textsuperscript{2}. It was the famous Jonangpa Dol po pa Šes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1361) who is said to have gained such an insight during a Kālacakra retreat\textsuperscript{3}. From the \textit{Ri chos ņes don rgya mtsho}, which is one of the first works in which Dol po pa expressed his new g\textit{zan} stoň understanding, it becomes clear that the latter’s full-fledged g\textit{zan} stoň theory requires including even an ultimate \textit{sambhogakāya} and \textit{nirmāṇakāya} within an ultimate realm of truth, which is equated with \textit{dharmanā}, or the unchangeable perfect nature. This, we are told, is in line with extraordinary Mantrayāṇa\textsuperscript{4}.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1} The present article is an enlarged version of a paper read at the Eighth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies in Bloomington (USA) in July 1998. Thanks to a scholarship from the German Research Council (DFG) I have been able to continue my research on \textit{tathāgatagarbha} during the last three years and can now rest my original study of Tāranātha’s comparison on a much broader basis. Improvements to my English by Philip H. Pierce (Nepal Research Centre, Kathmandu) are gratefully acknowledged.
  \item \textsuperscript{2} Mathes 2000:195-6.
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Dol po pa’s disciple Lha’i rgyal mtshan (1319-1401) informs us that his master’s realization was connected with the \textit{Kālacakratantra} (see Stearns 1995:829-31).
  \item \textsuperscript{4} Dol po pa: \textit{Ri chos ņes don rgya mtsho}, 343, ll. 19-21 & 344, ll. 8-9: “As to the two aspects of the form-kāyas, they are here the commonly known \textit{sambhogakāya} and \textit{nirmāṇakāya} of the apparent [truth]. As to the ultimate \textit{sambhogakāya} and \textit{nirmāṇakāya},
\end{itemize}
But as a commentator of non-Tantric texts, such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, Dol po pa explains that the *sambhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya* are brought forth by a fortified potential which arises from virtuous deeds being newly adopted with effort⁵, and it is only in texts such as the *Ri chos ŋes don rgya mtsho* that we are informed that the created *kāyas* are merely the ones pertaining to apparent truth. In view of this hermeneutic strategy⁶, the differences between the *Ri chos ŋes don rgya mtsho* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary appear to be so fundamental that Hookham wonders if the latter is by Dol po pa at all and not rather by the Third Karmapa Raṅ byun rdo rje (1284-1339)⁷.

Still, Dol po pa to some extent reads his originally Kālacakra-based *gzhan ston* into the Sūtras and such non-Tantric treatises as the

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⁵ Dol po pa: “*Ni ma’i ‘od zer*”, 986, l. 6-987, l. 3: “For example, in the same way as the inexhaustible treasure underground is naturally present, not newly brought about by effort, while the tree with its fruits gradually grows in a garden by bringing about [the necessary conditions] with effort, the Buddha-potential, which has the ability to bring forth the three *kāyas*, should be known to be twofold as well. It is both the natural potential, [namely] the pure *dharmadhātu* (which latter is intimately present as the nature of [one’s] mind throughout beginningless time), and the fortified potential [which is] supreme in terms of virtues (which are conducive to liberation). [The latter potential] arises from [virtuous deeds] being newly adopted with effort, [namely by] something being done, such as focusing on [the naturally present potential] and studying.”  

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⁶ The possibility that Dol po pa wrote his *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary before achieving his insight into *gzhon ston* can be ruled out, for he also refers to ultimate qualities in his “*Ni ma’i ‘od zer*” (911, l. 3-4).

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⁷ She reinforces her view with the assertion that the text was copied by Koṅ sprul Blongs mtsho’ nas nearly *verbatim* (Hookham 1991:173-4). But such an assumption is unlikely, since the text is signed by “*One Endowed with the Four Reliances*” (*tron pa’ bzi’ ldan*), which was the most common pseudonym used by Dol po pa in his works (Stearns 1999:201).
Tathāgatagarbhasūtras and the Maitreya works. The hermeneutic principles according to which he interprets the Buddhist teachings are laid out in his “bKa’ bsdu bźi pa” (i.e., his own “fourth council”\(^8\)), in which the whole of Buddhist doctrine is “reckoned” by dividing the teaching into four epochs. Alongside the four epochs of varying quality which make up a cosmic age, Dol po pa uses a lesser set of four epochs to refer to the qualitatively different periods of the teaching. He thus allocates philosophical doctrines to epochs (yuga) according to purely dogmatic criteria\(^9\). The teachings transmitted by Śākyamuni and also the Maitreya works, for example, belong to the Kṛtayuga of doctrine, while other works, such as the ones by Ārya Vimuktisena and Haribhadra, represent the teachings of the inferior Tretāyuga. The common interpretation of the Yogācāra works of Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu as mere cittamātra itself reflects for Dol po pa the historical degeneration of the Dharma. The Maitreya works are only “Kṛtayuga” Dharma when they are explained as “Great Madhyamaka” (dbu ma chen po)\(^10\).

The theories of tathāgatagarbha (“Buddha-nature”) and trisvabhāva (“three natures”, i.e., the imagined, dependent and perfect natures) in the Maitreya works offer good canonical support for a distinction between raṅgaṁ and gzan gaṅ, and it is thus no surprise that an interpretation which supports such a distinction is a major concern for the Jonangpas. Dol po pa takes the ultimate to be absolutely unconditioned, and it is the Ratnagotrabhāga among the Maitreya works which is adduced as the best support for this stance. Thus Dol po pa comments RGV I.5a in his Ri chos nes don rgya mtsho in the following way:

Even though [the verse RGV I.5a]: “[Buddhahood] is unconditioned and spontaneously present”\(^11\), and other [passages] teach that the ultimate Buddha is not conditioned, the underlying intention is that he is [also] free from moments\(^12\).

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\(^8\) Virtually the entire Buddhist tradition accepts only three great councils in India held for the purpose of consolidating the teaching after the Buddha’s nirvāṇa.


\(^10\) Kapstein 1992:24-5.

\(^11\) Cf. RGVV 7, ll. 14-5: asaṁskṛtam anābhogam aparapratyayoditam / buddhatvaṁ jñānakāryasyaśakryupetaṁ dvayārthavat //.

\(^12\) Dol po pa: Ri chos nes don rgya mtsho, 97, ll. 15-7: ‘dus ma byas śīṅ lhun gyis grub / ces pa la sogs pas mthar thug gi saṅs rgyas ’dus ma byas su gsuṅs pa yah skad cig daṅ bral ba la dgoṅs pa yin no /.
For Dol po pa’s disciple Sa bzaṅ Mati paṇ chen (1294-1376) the ultimate or Buddhahood is thus permanent in the sense of being beyond the three times (i.e., past, present and future), as becomes clear in Mati paṇ chen’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary on RGV I.6cd:

Buddhahood is unconditioned, since in the beginning, middle and end it has the nature of being free from conditioned phenomena which arise, abide and pass out of existence, as has been said in the *[Mahāpari]nirvāṇasūtra*:

“A phenomenon that abides in permanence does not belong to the three times. Likewise, the Tathāgata does not belong to the three times, and is therefore permanent.”

It is obvious that in this case the perfect nature of the Yogācāra must be restricted, as Tāranātha has done in his final summary of the *trisvabhāva* theory, to its unchangeable aspect (*nirvikāra*), since in an absolutely permanent and atemporal Buddhahood or Buddha-nature (both are ontologically the same for the Jonangpas) there is no room for an unmistaken (*aviparyāsa*) wisdom cultivated on the path, namely — according to MAV III.11cd — the perfect in terms of being unmistaken.

Already at the time of Dol po pa, the Third Karmapa Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje (1284-1339) was propounding a different “gzan ston position”, or rather a position that was eventually called *gzan ston* by a few later Kagyu-pas such as Karma Phrin las pa (1456-1539)16. Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje bases his distinction between the true nature of mind or Buddha-nature and that from which it is free on *Mahāyānasamgraha* I.45-9, in which an impure *ālayavijñāna* is strictly distinguished from a “transmudane mind”17. In this context Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje stresses the need to distinguish

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13 Sa bzaṅ Mati paṇ chen: “Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos kyi rnam par bṣad pa nes don rab gsal snaṅ ba”, 55, ll. 2-3: saṅs rgyas ‘ṅid thog ma daṅ dbus daṅ mtha’ mar ’dus byas kyi chos skye ba daṅ gnas pa daṅ ’jig pa rnam med pa’i raṅ bzin can yin pa’i phyir ’dus ma byas pa ste / mya ḋan las ’das pa’i mdo las / rtaṅ tu gnas pa’i chos ni dus gsum la (text: las) ma gtogs te / de bzin gsogs pa yaṅ de daṅ ’dra bar dus gsum la ma gtogs pa de bas na rtaṅ pa’o žes gsuṅs pa ltar ro.

14 See Mathes 2000:219-220.

15 It should be noted that the term *gzan ston* is found nowhere in the works of Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje.

16 Karma ’Phrin las pa: “Dris lan yid kyi mun sel žes bya ba lcags mo’i dri lan bžugs so” 91, ll. 1-4.

17 This is clear from Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje’s autocommentary on the *Zab mo naṅ gi don* (9b4-10b1) and commentary on the *Dharmadhūtastotra* (12b1-13b6).
“ground-consciousness” (Skt. ālayavijñāna, Tib. kun gzi rnam ʿses) from “ground” (kun gzi) in terms of suchness. Referring to this passage, Koṅ sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas (1813-1899) proceeds in his commentary on the Zab mo naṅ gi don to use the gzan stoṅ term kun gzi ye ʿses for the transmundane mind of the Mahāyānasamgraha. Koṅ sprul’s use of the term kun gzi ye ʿses does not imply, though, that he took Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje’s position to be the same as Dol po pa’s. It rather suggests that Koṅ sprul himself maintains a gzan stoṅ whose “basis of emptiness” (stoṅ gzi) is defined in accordance with Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje’s Zab don raṅ ’grel, which in this crucial point follows not the Ratnagotravibhāga but the Mahāyānasamgraha. Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje takes a gzan stoṅ pa for Koṅ sprul, but one who explains that which remains in emptiness in a way different from Dol po pa. And indeed, in the ninth chapter of his Zab mo naṅ gi don Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje takes the stainless Buddha-nature (which is liberated from everything else (Tib. gzan grol) — i.e., the basis of emptiness) as being endowed with the two truths. From the autocommentary it is clear, however, that it is not the normal apparent truth which is included in Buddha-nature here, but only a pure aspect of the latter, namely the “nonexistence of the stains [or] delusions in the eight consciousnesses.”

18 Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje: Zab mo naṅ gi don gsal bar byed pa’i ’grel pa, fol. 8a6-7: “In this regard, if ‘ground’ (kun gzi) is not mentioned [together with] the word ‘consciousness’, ‘ground’ may refer to suchness. Therefore, consciousness is mentioned [together with it].” (‘di la kun gzi ʿses bya ba rnam par ʿses pa’i sgra ma smos na de bzin ʿni d la yaṅ kun gzi brjod du ruṅ ba’i phyir rnam par ʿses pa smos so/)  
19 Koṅ sprul Blo gro s mtha’ yas: Zab mo naṅ gi don gyi ’grel pa, 17b4-6.  
20 A term thought to be newly coined by Dol po pa.  
21 Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje: Zab mo naṅ gi don, 22b6: “The [Buddha]-element in sentient beings, the stainless Buddha-nature, is endowed with the two truths.” (/sems can kham s n s gnyas kyi s mi n po dri med bden gnis ldan/).  
22 Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje: Raṅ ’grel, 62a7-62b2: “What exists ultimately? It is the mind beyond every net of thought, the naturally pure element of sentient beings, [and] the Buddha-nature (snaṅs rgyas kyi s mi n po). Because these two exist, they have been expressed by way of these [terms]. Therefore it is stated: “as for the element of sentient beings, the stainless Buddha-nature is endowed with the two truths.” In this regard, the Buddha-nature is simply the non-existence of stains [or] delusion in the above-mentioned eight accumulations [of consciousness].” (don dam par gnyig yod na / rtog pa’i drva ba thams cad las ’das pa’i sems raṅ bzin gnyis dag pa’i sems can gyi kham s rgyas kyi s mi n po dag ni yod pas de’i tshul brjod pas / sems can kham s n s gnyas kyi / s mi n po dri med bden gnis ldan ʿses smos so / de’i la snaṅs rgyas kyi s mi n po ni sbar smos pa’i tshogs brgyad kyi ’khrul pa dri ma med pa kho na yin mod kyi...).
What this latter term exactly refers to is explained a little further down in the *Zab don raṅ 'grel*, where the use of the word “truth” in the term “apparent truth” is justified on the grounds that one cannot deny mere appearance as such, even though its interpretation as a perceived object and perceiving subject is not true:

What has been imagined as the duality of a perceived and a perceiver does not exist at all, given the pronouncement [in MAV I.3] by the Venerable Maitreya: “A consciousness arises which has the appearances of objects, sentient beings, a self and perceptions. It does not have a [corresponding outer] object, and since [such] an object does not exist, it (i.e., a perceiving subject) does not exist either.”23 Thus it has been said that no perceived [objects] or perceiving [subjects] of the imagined [nature] exist at all. Well then, how can it be presented as a truth? [The answer is:] Even though it does not exist, [something] appears. This is what is called apparent truth, for it has the nature (raṅ gi Ṉo bo ŋid) of not being deceptive24.

In response to the objection that these mere appearances would then be the ultimate truth, since the latter is defined as not being deceptive in the treatises on logic, Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje further clarifies his understanding of the ultimate truth as follows:

These [mere appearances] are presented as the expressible ultimate (*paryāya-paramārtha*), while the ultimate truth [here] is that which25 is related to the reasoning of dharmatā, [namely] the natural emptiness previously mentioned during the presentation of the eighteen [types of] great emptiness26.

In other words, the Buddha-nature or the pure mind includes “mere appearances” in the form of the expressible ultimate truth, and it is only

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23 MAVBh, 18, II. 21-2: arthasattvātmavijñānapratibhāsam prajāyate / vijñānaṁ nāsti cāsyārthas tadabhāvāt tad apy asat. My additions in brackets are according to Vasubandhu’s bhāṣya.

24 Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje: Raṅ 'grel, 63a3-5: / gzūṅ ba daṅ 'dzin pa gniis su kun btags (text: brtags) pa ni rnam pa thams cad du med pa dag yin te / 'phags pa byams pa'i žal sña nas kyan / [MAV I.3] / ces kun btags (text: btags) pa'i gzūṅ ba daṅ 'dzin pa thams cad rnam pa thams cad du med pa ŋid du gsuṅs so / l'o na bden pa ji ltar bzag ce na i med bzin du yaṅ snaṅ ba tsam de ni kun rdzob kyi bden pa žes bya ste / bsu la med pa'i raṅ gi Ḍo bo ŋid yin pa'i phyir ro /.

25 The use of the plural particle *dag* should be noted here. It indicates that there is more than one truth related to dharmatāyukti.

26 Ibid., 63a5-6: ‘di yaṅ rnam graṅs kyi don dam par bzag pa yod mod kyi / chos ŋid kyi rigs pa'i rjes su 'brel pa dag ni ston pa ŋid chen po bco brgyad kyi rnam par bṣad pa'i raṅ bzin ston pa ņid shar smos pa de ŋid don dam pa'i bden pa yin no /.
the latter which is taken as apparent truth here. That it is different from what is ordinarily included in apparent truth is clear from Raṇ byuṅ rdo rje’s *Dharmadhātustotra* commentary, where the two aspects (*nirvikāra* and *aviparyāśa*) of the perfect nature in MAV III.11cd are explained in the following way:

The two [aspects of the perfect], the unchangeable and unmistaken, are taken [respectively] as the defining characteristics of the two truths. Acceptance by common consent (*lokaprasiddha*) and by reason (*yuktiprasiddha*) are varieties of the apparent truth\(^\text{27}\).

In other words, the unchangeable perfect is taken as the ultimate, and the perfect in terms of being unmistaken as a restricted form of apparent truth, which does not include acceptance by common consent and the like.

It should have become clear by now that Raṇ byuṅ rdo rje, in contrast to the Jonangpas, fully accepts the Yogācāra theory of *trisvabhāva*, that is, two aspects of the perfect nature. This entails that the latter possesses moments, in the *Zab mo naṅ gi don* the true nature of mind which is free from everything else (*gzan grol*) being consequently equated with dependent arising\(^\text{28}\). In this context, it is of interest that Koṅ sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas, who otherwise strictly follows Dol po pa’s *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary, deviates from the latter’s *gzan ston* understanding of the term “unconditioned” (*asaṅskṛta*) in his commentary on RGV I.6. Referring to Roṅ ston Śes bya kun rig’s (1367-1449) explanation of four ways of understanding “unconditioned”, Koṅ sprul states that the *dharmakāya* only shares this quality of being unconditioned to a certain extent, inasmuch as it does not appear to disciples. If one claimed that it is completely

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27 Raṇ byuṅ rdo rje: *dBu ma chos dbyiṅs bstod pa’i rnam par bṣad pa*, 7b1-2: *bden pa gños kyi raṅ gi mtshan ṅid kyis ’gyur ba med pa daṅ phyin ci ma log pa gños so / ’jig rten pa daṅ rigs pa’i grags pa ni / kun rdzob bden pa’i bye brag ste /.

28 Raṇ byuṅ rdo rje: *Raṅ ’grel*, 10b3-4: “As to the ‘beginningless [mind-essence]’, since a beginning and end of time is a [mere] conceptual superimposition, [the cause of everything] is here [taken as] the true nature (*raṅ gi no bo*) of both the stainless [mind] and the [mind] mingled with stains — it is precisely this dependent origination; and it is completely liberated (i.e., free) from [all] else. Since there is no other beginning than it, one speaks of beginningless time.” (thog med la žes bya ba ni / dus kyi thog ma daṅ tha ma ni riog pas sgro btags pa yin pas ’dir ni dri ma med pa daṅ dri ma daṅ bcas pa’i raṅ gi no bo ni rten ciṅ ’brel bar’ byuṅ ba de ṅid daṅ gzan las rnam par grol ba ste / de las thog ma gzan med pa’i phyir thog ma med pa’i dus žes bya ste /).
unconditioned, this would contradict the fact that it possesses knowledge, compassion and power.\textsuperscript{29}

To sum up, whether one wants to call Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje’s “free from other” (gžan las grol ba) “empty of other” (gžan stoṅ) or not, there is an alternative way of defining how the pure mind or Buddha-nature is free from or empty of other (i.e., adventitious stains), and some Kagyupas decided to call this gžan stoṅ, too. It should be noted that with an ultimate that still possesses moments a distinction founded on gžan grol (or gžan stoṅ) can be better brought into line with mahāmudrā teachings\textsuperscript{30}, and this is exactly what Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje did\textsuperscript{31}. It is thus no longer so puzzling how Situ paṅ chen Chos kyi byuṅ gnas (1699/1700-1774) “blended the seemingly irreconcilable gžan stoṅ and mahāmudrā positions”\textsuperscript{32}.

Another famous scholar whose gžan stoṅ differs from the Jonang position is gSer mdog paṅ chen Śākya mchog ldan (1428-1507). Georges Dreyfus (1997:29) has observed that Śākya mchog ldan fully endorses a gžan stoṅ view only in works written after his first meeting with the Seventh Karmapa (1454-1506) in 1484, and it is thus interesting that Śākya mchog ldan’s gžan stoṅ differs from the Jonang position in a way similar to Raṅ byuṅ rdo rje’s gžan grol (or gžan stoṅ). Koṅ sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas notices in his Encyclopedia of Knowledge (Śes bya kun khyab mdzod) that Śākya mchog ldan has his own views on what is exactly empty of what, or, to use the technical terms, how the negandum (Tib. dgag bya), the basis of negation (Tib. dgag gzi) and the mode of being empty (Tib. stoṅ tshul) are defined.

Koṅ sprul says that gžan stoṅ pas take the perfect nature as the basis of negation, the imagined and the dependent natures as the negandum, and the mode of being empty as the absence of these two neganda in the basis of negation.\textsuperscript{33} He adds, however, that Śākya mchog ldan holds a view

\textsuperscript{29} Koṅ sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas: rGyud bla ma’i bṣad srol, fol. 12b1-5; see also Tsultrim Gyamtscho & Fuchs 2000:103-4.
\textsuperscript{30} A dharmakāya that possesses moments it not entirely transcendent and can be experienced as the true nature of thoughts and the like.
\textsuperscript{31} For further information on this topic I refer to my forthcoming habilitation thesis.
\textsuperscript{32} Smith 1970:34.
\textsuperscript{33} In the subchapter on ascertaining the view (7.3.), Koṅ sprul (Śes bya kun khyab mdzod, vol. 3, 61, ll. 19-24) defines the tradition of the gžan stoṅ Madhyamaka as follows: “The basis of negation is the perfect, the sphere (dhātus), suchness, what is beyond [any]
different from this, and illustrates this by quoting from Śākyam Buddhā’s “Zab ži spros bral gyi bzad pa”:

As to the basis which is empty, it is the dependent, the entire “mind” (śes pa), which takes on various forms of a perceived object and perceiving subject. The negandum is the imagined. Given its division into perceived and perceiver, it [consists of] two. […]34

As to in what sense it is empty, the basis of negation is empty of the negandum by virtue of being “empty of other”, not by virtue of being “empty of self”, for the following reason: The negandum, namely the duality of a perceived and a perceiver, is an “other-being” with regard to the basis of negation, [namely] the mind” (śes pa), which appears as two, [duality] not being taken as its own-being. What is then the own-being of this mind which appears as two? It is non-dual wisdom, namely mere awareness and luminosity that experience knowable objects35.

Koṅsprul continues his presentation of gZhān stōn along this (namely Śākyam Buddhā’s) line of thought, elaborating it on the basis of the sixteen forms of emptiness in the Madhyāntavibhāga. Koṅsprul’s position on gZhān stōn still needs further clarification, but it is at least noteworthy that while in the sixth chapter of his Šes bya kun khyab mdzod he quotes nearly the entire dbu ma chen po paragraph of Tāranātha’s gZhān...
stoṅ siniṅ po, he skips the last part, where — against the purport of the Yogācāra works — the trisvabhāva theory is brought into line with that of tathāgatagarbha by restricting the perfect nature to its unchangeable aspect.

To sum up, from the time of Dol po pa it is possible to trace, parallel to the Jonang position, another “gzan grol” or gzan stoṅ which distinguishes the basis of negation from the negandum in a different way. Whereas for the Jonangpas the basis of negation is a perfect nature which is restricted to its unchangeable aspect and thus transcendent and doctrinally mainly based on the tathāgatagarbha theory, Śākya mchog ldan, Ran byuṅ rdo rje and some other Kagyupas adhere to a distinction based on Yogācāra, that is, mainly the Mahāyānasamgraha and the Madhyāntavibhāga.

2. Tāranātha’s Twenty-One Differences with regard to the Profound Meaning

For a short but brilliant analysis of the positions of Dol po pa and Śākya mchog ldan we are very much indebted to the Jonang master Tāranātha, who is considered to be a follower and proponent of Dol po pa’s doctrine. In each of the Twenty-one Differences with regard to the Profound Meaning a fictive initial statement of Śākya mchog ldan is followed by a similarly fictive reply of Dol po pa, Tāranātha being, of course, well aware of the fact that this is all ahistorical. To be sure, it is not possible to establish Śākya mchog ldan’s or Dol po pa’s views on the basis of this short text alone, but it does sharpen our awareness of the subtle aspects of gzan stoṅ when studying the bulky and often not very systematic works of these masters. Furthermore, critically evaluating these doctrinal differences against the background of pertinent Indian texts in such traditions as the Madhyamaka, Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha promises to be a second interesting task. Both are, however, beyond the scope of this paper. Such an evaluation will, however, be undertaken with regard to the different presentations of trisvabhāva as an example of how one might proceed.

37 Tib. zab don khyad par ēner gcig pa, which is the title according to the colophon (Tāranātha: “Zab don ēner gcig pa”, 795, l. 5.
38 Tāranātha: “Zab don ēner gcig pa”, 792, l. 4.
Tāranātha begins his somewhat delicate task of comparing the two masters Dol po pa and Śākya mchog ldan in a conciliating manner, by explaining that both supposedly see what is profound reality and hence should not have different thoughts about it. It is only in order to accommodate the different needs of their disciples that they enunciate variant views. Even though the essential gzan stoṅ view and meditation practices of both masters are the same, there are a lot of minor differences regarding tenets (grub mtha’) that arise when formulating the view on the level of apparent truth39.

The first four of the twenty-one points address differences in the exegesis of the Madhyamaka and Maitreya texts which are considered to be commentaries on the Buddha’s intention underlying the second and third turnings of the “Wheel of the Dharma” (dharmacakra)40. Points 5-8 embody Śākya mchog ldan’s and Dol po pa’s different understanding of non-dual wisdom. In points 9-16, their views on the trisvabhāva theory are distinguished. In a related topic, Tāranātha also elaborates the different understandings of self-awareness (point 11), entities and non-entities, and conditioned and unconditioned phenomena (all in point 13). Next, our attention is drawn to different ways of relating the four noble truths with the apparent and ultimate (point 17). The last four points deal with the two masters’ views on the Buddha-nature.

2.1. Translation: The Twenty-One Differences

Difference No. 1

Śākya mchog ldan41: All the views of the Prāsaṅgika- and Svātantrika-[Madhyamaka] are logically correct [and accurately represent] the Buddha’s

39 These remarks should not be taken too seriously, though. ‘Ba’ ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzan (1310-1391) launches into his “Chos rje mam gnis kyi dgon bsdad fi ma’i ’od zer” (496-8) by stating, in a similar way, that Dol po pa and Bu ston (sic) are both omniscient and must see the same reality, but teach it in various ways with hidden intentions.


41 Lit. “The one named Śākya claims that....” Here and in the following sentences simply the proponent’s name is given in bold letters.
intention in the middle turning and the corpus of analytical works. The explicit teaching of the middle [turning], in addition, [has to] be taken literally, and the corpus of analytical works is not in accordance with the explicit teaching of the last turning.

Dol po pa: Even though [the raṅstoṅ pas] are proud that these Prāśaṅgika and Svātantrika views [represent] the intention of the middle turning and the corpus of analytical works, [their interpretation of this] intention is not free from mistakes. Although the explicit teaching of the analytical works generally appears to be consistent, it is not so in a great number of cases. Since many passages of the treatises of the middle turning clearly teach gzan stoṅ, the explicit teaching of the middle turning and the analytical works [should] not be [taken] literally. The explicit teaching of most passages of the middle turning and the analytical works contradicts neither the Prāśaṅgika and Svātantrika nor the gzan stoṅ. Nevertheless, for those appealing to the extraordinary tenet known as raṅ stoṅ, it has become a cause of confusion. On the other hand, given that [these texts] do not teach different tenets, that they contradict other traditions, and that there are [in fact] many extraordinary passages which only teach gzan stoṅ, even the middle turning and the analytical works [can be said to] teach gzan stoṅ Madhyamaka. From these texts [of the middle turning], however, the extraordinary points of gzan stoṅ — namely [those reached by] following only the lines of commentary on the intention of the last turning — have not clearly or extensively emerged. They are the extraordinary tenets of the Prāśaṅgika and Svātantrika. What is nowadays known as the raṅ stoṅ view was not taught [in the middle turning]; nevertheless, this raṅ stoṅ [interpretation of] the intention of the Buddha and his sons is taught in detail nowadays.

42 E.g., the analytical works of Nāgārjuna, such as the Mūlamadhyamakakārikā.
43 Tāranātha: “Zab don ņer gcig pa”, 782, ll. 3-5: de la sākya’i mtshan can ni / thal raṅ gi lla ba ’di kun ’khor lo bar pa daṅ / rig tshogs kyi dgoṅs don ’thad ldan yin ciṅ / bar pa’i dios bstan sgra ji bzin pa yaṅ yin / rig tshogs daṅ ’khor lo tha ma’i dios bstan mi mthun par bzed la /.
44 Lit. “the great omniscient one from Jonang”.
45 Lit. “words”.
46 Tāranātha: op. cit., 782, l. 5 – 783, l. 6: kun mkhyen jo naṅ pa chen po ni / thal raṅ gi lta ba ’di ’khor lo bar pa daṅ rig tshogs kyi dgoṅs par rloṃ pa yin kyaṅ / dgoṅs pa rma med pa ma yin la / rig tshogs dios bstan gyi tshig phal cher la ’byor ba ltar snaṅ yaṅ /
Difference No. 2

**Śākya mchog Idan**\(^{47}\): With regard to the fact that the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* teaches both the tenets of *raṇ stōṇ* and *gžan stōṇ*, [Maitreya] considered the necessity of *gžan stōṇ* in terms of a meditation practice, and that of Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika, [which are at the same time] the *raṇ stōṇ* of the subsequent three works\(^{48}\), when it comes to cutting through mental fabrications with the help of the view. The remaining four Maitreya works\(^{49}\) teach only *gžan stōṇ*\(^{50}\). With regard to these [latter four] there are two types: In the *Ratnagotravibhāga* ultimately only one single path is taught and the possibility of a cut-off potential refuted. In the other three [Maitreya] works (i.e., *Mahāyānasūtraśālaṃkāra*, *Madhyāntavibhāga* and *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*) ultimately three paths and a cut-off potential\(^{51}\) are explained\(^{52}\).

**Dol po pa:** There are no different tenets in the five Maitreya works at all. The tenet of the so-called *raṇ stōṇ* is not explained even in the

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\(^{47}\) From here on, Śākya mchog Idan and Dol po pa are referred to as “the former” and “the latter”.

\(^{48}\) I.e., the *Mahāyānasūtraśālaṃkāra*, *Madhyāntavibhāga*, *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*.

\(^{49}\) I.e., the *Mahāyānasūtraśālaṃkāra*, *Madhyāntavibhāga*, *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, and *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

\(^{50}\) This does not obviously exclude recourse to a Prāsaṅgika view when cutting through mental fabrications in the *Mahāyānasūtraśālaṃkāra* etc.

\(^{51}\) Usually a cut-off potential and the potentials for entering on the paths of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas and on the Mahāyāna are distinguished.

\(^{52}\) Tāranātha: *op. cit.*, 783, I. 6 – 784, I. 3: *mīn rtoogs rgyan gyis / raṇ stōṇ gžan stōṇ gi grub mtha’ gniṅ ka ston pa ni / la ha bas spros pa gcod pa la thal raṇ gžun phyi gsum gyi raṇ stōṇ daṅ / sgom pa sngs len gžan stōṇ dgos pa la dgoṅs la / byams chos lhaṅ ma bzis gžan stōṇ kho na ston mod / de la’āṅ rigs gniṅ te / rgyud blar mthar thug theg gcig bṣad / rigs chad bka’ gžun gžan gsum du mthar thug theg gsum daṅ / rigs chad bṣad gṣun/.
Abhisamayālaṁkāra. A real cut-off potential and three ultimate paths are not explained in the [Mahāyāna]sūtrālaṁkāra and so forth\(^{53}\).

**Difference No. 3**

**Śākya mchog Idan: Raṅ stoṅ** is considered to be more profound when it comes to cutting through mental fabrications with the help of the view. When it comes to the practice of meditation, however, it is said that gžan stoṅ is more profound. The raṅ stoṅ\(^{54}\) of the latter in turn, namely Praśāṅgika and Svātantrika, is acknowledged in the tradition of the subsequent three works (i.e., the Mahāyānasūtrālaṁkāra etc.)\(^{55}\).

**Dol po pa:** The view of raṅ stoṅ as taught by the Buddha and his sons is superior in cutting through mental fabrications. Nevertheless, it is contained in gžan stoṅ, and therefore view and practice are not opposed to each other\(^{56}\). To maintain that the raṅ stoṅ, [namely,] the Praśāṅgika and Svātantrika — as it is known nowadays — is the view of the subsequent three works, [thinking that according to the latter] nothing exists ultimately, is wrong. [Such a raṅ stoṅ] is therefore not better in cutting through mental fabrications with the help of the view, for this would be a false denial\(^{57}\).

**Difference No. 4**

**Śākya mchog Idan:** Even though gžan stoṅ goes beyond Cittamātra and is thus acceptable to Madhyamaka, raṅ stoṅ is superior to it with regard

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\(^{54}\) The gžan stoṅ view includes a raṅ stoṅ that refers to the negandum, but not to what is left over in emptiness.

\(^{55}\) Tāranātha: *op. cit.*, 784, ll. 4-5: lta bas spros pa gcod pa la raṅ stoṅ zab / sgom pas ŋams su len pa la gžan stoṅ zab ces te / de’i raṅ stoṅ yaṅ thal raṅ gzuṅ phyi gsum gyi lugs la ŋos ’dzin (text: ’dzi).

\(^{56}\) As would be the case if the former were strictly raṅ stoṅ and the latter strictly gžan stoṅ.

\(^{57}\) Tāranātha, *op. cit.*, 784, ll. 5-7: rgyal ba sras bcas bṣed pa’i raṅ stoṅ gi lta ba de spros pa gcod byed mchog yin kyaṅ / gžan stoṅ du ’dus pas lta grub logs logs pa min la / deṅ saṅ grags pa’i raṅ stoṅ thal raṅ gzuṅ phyi gsum gyi lta ba don dam bden med du ’dod pa ni nor ba yin pas / lta bas spros pa gcod pa la bzaṅ ba min te / skur ’debs su ’gyur ba’i phyir yin ʿzes gsuṅ /.
to the view. Still, the former (i.e., gzhan ston) is not wrong, for it accords with the experiential object of meditation58.

Dol po pa: Rañ ston, too, goes beyond Cittamātra, and thus falls under Madhyamaka within the system of the four tenets. It is not the pure ultimate, however, the highest view being gzhan ston alone59.

Difference No. 5

Śākya mchog Idan: For this reason non-dual wisdom is not analyzed when following the Maitreya works. When critically analyzing it, after having excluded [its] opposite, [wisdom] cannot withstand such analysis. Therefore, since it cannot withstand a critical analysis [aimed at] ascertaining the ultimate, rañ ston is more profound in terms of the view. Even though it does not withstand analysis, this wisdom is experienced uninterruptedly. Therefore it abides like the experiential object of meditation, namely gzhan ston60.

Dol po pa: Non-dual wisdom does withstand critical analysis61. Therefore, this very analysis itself is self-delusion62.

Difference No. 6

Śākya mchog Idan: Non-dual wisdom is momentary awareness (rig pa), not permanent, and has no chance to abide63.

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58 Ibid., 784, l. 7 – 785, l. 1: gzhan ston sens tsam las 'das pas dbu ma go chod po yin kyi / lta ba'i 'nos nas de bas kyi rau ston mtho / 'on kyi sna ma de nor bar (text: par) ni mi 'gyur te / sgom don dañ mthun pas so gsuñ /.

59 Ibid., 785, ll. 1-2: rañ ston yah sens tsam las 'das pas / grub mtha' bzi'i dbu mar bsdu ba tsam yin kyi / rnam dag mthar thug min la / lta ba'i mtho šos gzhan ston kho na yin no gsuñ.

60 Ibid., 785, ll. 2-4: de'i rgyu mtshan du / byams chos rjes 'brañ dañ bcas par / gnis med kyi ye šes de dpyad pa mi byed pa yin la / spyi ldog nas de yañ rig pas dpyad na dpyad mi bzd pas / don dam gcod byed kyi rig pas dpyad bzd mi srid pas lta ba rañ ston zab / dpyad ma bzd kyi yin ye šes de ŋams moyo rgyun mi 'chad pas / sgom don gzhan ston ltar gnas gsuñ /.

61 For it is beyond one and many. Moreover, wisdom is omnipresent, in that the Buddhas embrace with their non-dual wisdom the all-pervading suchness of all phenomena (cf. 2.2. below).

62 Tāranātha: op. cit., 785, l. 4: gnis med ye šes rigs pas dpyad bzd yin pas / de la dpyod pa de rañ gi 'khrul gsuñ.

63 Ibid., 785, l. 5: gnis med ye šes de rig pa skad cig ma yin / rtag pa min / gnas pa'i go skabs med pa cig yin gsuñ.
Dol po pa: This [wisdom] is not momentary, but permanent and stable, in that it is beyond the three times (i.e., past, present and future).\(^{64}\)

Difference No. 7

Śākyya mchog ldan: Likewise, given that it is knowledge (śes pa), wisdom [can be] taken to be an entity/existent (dniōs po).\(^{65}\)

Dol po pa: And it [can be] taken to be beyond both [the state of] an entity/existence and a non-entity/non-existence.\(^{66}\)

Difference No. 8

Śākyya mchog ldan: Likewise it [can be] taken to be conditioned.\(^{67}\)

Dol po pa: It [can be] taken to be unconditioned, too.\(^{68}\)

Difference No. 9

Śākyya mchog ldan: If one isolates its specific aspects (rañ ldog), all knowledge is — as generally accepted in Tibet — only clarity and awareness, and here an entity of the dependent [nature]. The isolation of the specific aspects of mere dualistic appearances which arise in this [clarity and awareness] results in the imagined nature. When viewed under its aspect of being accompanied by these dualistic appearances, clarity and awareness constitute the dependent nature. From the perspective, however, that it is unstained by these dualistic phenomena throughout beginningless time, this clarity and awareness constitute the perfect nature. Based on that, dependent entities as such are by nature the same as the perfect nature, even though they are different as isolates (ldog cha) and different in terms of their respective defining characteristics.\(^{69}\)

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\(^{64}\) Ibid., 785, ll. 5-6: de skad cig ma ma yin / dus gsum las grol bas rtag pa brtan pa yin gsūl.

\(^{65}\) Ibid., 785, l. 6: de bzin du śes pa yin pa’i phyir dniōs por bzed pa daṅ /.

\(^{66}\) Ibid., 785, l. 6: dniōs po dniōs med gnīs ka las grol bar bzed pa ste /.

\(^{67}\) Ibid., 785, ll. 6-7: de bzin du ’dus byas su bzed pa daṅ /.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 785, l. 7: ’dus ma byas su bzed pa yān ste /.

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 785, l. 7 – 786, l. 3: bod spyi daṅ mihun rañ du śes pa thams cad kyi rañ ldog gsal rig tsam ’di ka gzan dbaṅ gi dniōs po yin la / de ŋid la șar ba’i gnīs snaṅ kho na’i
Dol po pa: The imagined aspect, which is imputed by the mind’s multitude of thoughts, and its appearances in the form of external objects, is the perceived. The isolation of its specific aspects is the imagined nature. The isolation of the specific aspects of the mind and mental factors results in the dependent nature, namely knowledge constituted by knowledge or consciousness of apparent truth. Clarity and awareness, by nature free from mental fabrication, is the perfect nature. Thus the imagined and the dependent are substantially the same; their defining characteristics are very different, however. Not only are the perfect and the dependent different as isolates and in terms of their defining characteristics, but they are also not the same by nature (ño bo gcig pa). The previous presentations of this [trisvabhāva-theory] were mainly in line with Cittamātra, but [Dol po pa] thinks that the tradition of Madhyamaka is only this [trisvabhāva].

Difference No. 10

Śākya mchog ldan: The imagined nature fully pertains to what is not true, the perfect to what is true, and the dependent to both.

raṅ ldog nas kun brtags (text: brtags) yin no / gsal rig gnīs snañ de dañ bcas pa’i cha nas gnān dbañ dañ / gsal rig de la gnīs chos gdod nas ma gos pa’i cha nas yoñs grub yin pas / gnān dbañ yoñs grub ldog cha nas tha dad ciñ / mtshan ŋi kyi cha nas tha dad kyān gnān dbañ gi dhos po de ŋīl dañ / yoñs grub ŋo bo gcig par bzed do /.

70 This negation of identity has been often misunderstood and misleadingly represented. (Cf. Newland, who writes that for Dol po pa the two truths are different entities (ño bo tha dad pa). Instead of referring directly to the Jonang material, however, he quotes Seyfort Ruegg, Hopkins and Thurman (Newland 1992: 30 & 260). In fact, Dol po pa negates not only identity but also difference. In his “bDen gnīs gsal ba’i ŋi ma”, 23, ll. 2-3) he explains that “the two truths should be called neither identical (de ŋīl) in terms of their nature nor different (gnān) [in terms of their nature].” Cf. also Mathes 1998:465-6.

71 Tāranāṭha: op. cit., 786, ll. 3-6: blo rnam rtog sna tshogs pas brtags pa’i brtags cha dañ / phyi don du snañ ba’i snañ cha ste / gzuñ ba’i rañ ldog kun brtags (text: brtags) dañ / smsms smsms byuñ ŋes pa’i rañ ldog kun rdzob pa’i ŋes pa’am rnam ŋes bsduñ pa’i ŋes pa gnān dbañ dañ / spros pa dañ bral ba’i rañ bzin gsal rig yoñs grub ste / des na kun brtags (text: brtags) ni gnān dbañ las rdzas tha dad du med kyān / mtshan ŋi kyi sgo nas ni ŋin tu tha dad do / yoñs grub dañ gnān dbañ ni / ldog cha dañ mtshan ŋið tha dad par ma zad / ŋo bo gcig pa yah ma yin no / ssha ma’i rnam gząg ni smsms tsañ dañ mthun šas che la / dbu ma’i lugs ni / ’di kho na’o ŋes dgoñs so l.

72 Ibid., 786, ll. 6-7: kun brtags (text: brtags) la bden md kyis khyab / yoñs grub la bden yod kyis khyab / gnān dbañ la cha gnīs mdzad l.
Dol po pa: The imagined and the dependent both fully pertain — that is to say, through and through — to what is not true.\(^{73}\)

Difference No. 11

Śākyā mchog ldan: All self-awareness — understood as the isolation of its specific aspects — [belongs] exclusively to the ultimate [truth].\(^{74}\)

Dol po pa: Given that the self-awareness\(^{75}\) of consciousness [belongs] exclusively to the apparent [truth], self-awareness, too, has both an apparent and an ultimate aspect.\(^{76}\)

Difference No. 12

Śākyā mchog ldan: The perfect [nature] is emptiness. The imagined [nature] is not emptiness, even though it is purely empty.\(^{77}\) Emptiness fully pertains to the ultimate [truth].\(^{78}\)

Dol po pa: Everything, phenomena and their true nature, can only be called emptiness. Emptiness does not pertain to (lit. “is not pervaded by”) the ultimate truth. It is not counted unambiguously among the synonyms [of the ultimate]: [emptiness] is related to [the ultimate only] in a general sense.\(^{79}\)

Difference No. 13

Śākyā mchog ldan: The works on valid cognition, the Abhidharma etc. are mostly [written] in accordance with general Dharma terminology.

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\(^{73}\) Ibid., 786, l. 7: kun btags (text: brtags) g’zan dbaṅ gnis ka la mtha’ geig tu bden med kyi khyab par mdzad do /

\(^{74}\) Ibid., 786, l. 7 – 787, l. 1: raṅ rig thams cad raṅ rig gi raṅ ldog nas don dam kho na yin gsuṅ la /

\(^{75}\) The Tibetan uses the plural: “moments of self-awareness”.

\(^{76}\) Ibid., 787, ll. 1-2: kun rdzob rnam šes kyi raṅ rig rnams kun rdzob kho na yin pas / raṅ rig yaṅ kun rdzob don dam gniṅ yod par brjed do /

\(^{77}\) I.e., it is the negandum and nothing more.

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 787, l. 2: yoṅs grub stoṅ pa ŋid yin / kun btags (text: brtags) stoṅ pa tsam yin kyaṅ stoṅ pa ŋid min / stoṅ pa ŋid la don dam gyis khyab par brjed /

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 787, ll. 2-3:chos daṅchos ŋid thams cad la stoṅ ŋid tsam du brjed dgos / stoṅ ŋid la don dam gyis ma khyab / miṅ gi rnam graṅs la khyab mtha’i ma rtsi / gtso bo’i don du sbyor gsuṅ /
This being the case, the attainment of pacification fully pertains to both categories, those of entities/existence and non-entities/non-existence\textsuperscript{80}; knowledge (\textit{s}es \textit{pa})\textsuperscript{81} [only] to that of entities\textsuperscript{82}. The ultimate is not an entity. Since it is not conditioned, it is a non-entity, [like] the sky and so forth. There are different aspects of the unconditioned — suchness not being conditioned by causal defilements, or mere clarity and awareness not being newly produced, etc. Therefore, when one enumerates categories, these are designated as unconditioned. They are, however, not the [real] unconditioned as opposed to the conditioned (\textit{‘du byed}) and the defining characteristics (\textit{mtshan \textit{n}id}); therefore, they are unconditioned only in a metaphorical sense\textsuperscript{83}.

**Dol po pa:** Explanations along the lines of Pramāṇa or Abhidharma belong to traditions that mainly ascertain the apparent truth. With regard here to definitive meaning, when it is mainly the ultimate truth that is being ascertained, entities and non-entities fully pertain to the apparent [truth] and vice versa\textsuperscript{84}. The ultimate truth is neither an entity nor a non-entity; therefore, the attainment of pacification\textsuperscript{85} certainly does not pertain to the ultimate. [If it did,] wisdom would not be an entity, while being knowledge at the same time. Therefore, knowledge would not pertain to [the category of] entities, while to maintain that the ultimate truth

\textsuperscript{80} Pacification, or cessation, falls under this latter category by virtue of being unconditioned.

\textsuperscript{81} In the context of the Abhidharma: usually the “knowledge of the destruction [of passions etc.]” (Skt. \textit{k}ṣayajñāna, Tib. \textit{zad pa \textit{s}es \textit{pa}) and the “knowledge of no further occurrence [of passions etc.]” (Skt. \textit{anupādajñāna}, Tib. \textit{mi skye \textit{b}a \textit{s}es \textit{pa}).

\textsuperscript{82} In the following Tib. \textit{d}hios \textit{po} is rendered as “entity”, even though the Sanskrit equivalent \textit{bhāva} also means “existence”.

\textsuperscript{83} Tāranātha: \textit{op. cit.}, 787, ll. 3-6: \textit{tshad ma’i gziṅ daṅ mñon pa sogs spyi skad daṅ phal cher mthun par / / źi grub pa la dhios po dhios med gaṅ ruṅ gis khyab / \textit{s}es pa la dhios pos khyab / don dam dhios po mìn / ‘dus ma byas (text om. byas) pas ni dhios med nam mkha’ sogs yin / de bźin ŋid la las ŋon giy ‘dus ma byas daṅ / gsal rig tsam gsar du ‘dus ma byas sogs / ‘dus ma byas pa’i cha re yod pas / rnam graṅs kyi sgo nas ‘dus ma byas su btags pa yin gyi / ‘du byed daṅ mtshan ŋid ‘gal ba’i ‘dus ma byas ma yin te / des na ‘dus ma byas btags pa ba yin gsun /.

\textsuperscript{84} This means that the totality of entities and non-entities is exactly identical with the apparent truth.

\textsuperscript{85} Dol po pa restricts the ultimate truth to the actual cessation, which exists throughout beginningless time. The actual pacification attained thus still forms, together with suffering, a dualistic concept yet to be transcended.
is a non-entity would be improper Dharma. To maintain that the ultimate is an entity [is in accordance with] the tradition of maintaining the ultimate existence of entities. All non-entities like the sky etc. which the Ābhidharmikas take to be unconditioned, are there considered to be conditioned, and for this reason, both entities and non-entities fully pertain to the conditioned. The ultimate is the real unconditioned. The sky etc. are thus unconditioned [entities] only in a metaphorical sense.

Difference No. 14

Śākya mchog ldan: The “very face” (rañño) of the dependent, being empty of the imagined, that is, the negandum, is the basis of emptiness. It may be taken as the ultimate being empty of the apparent.

Dol po pa: The perfect is the basis of emptiness. It is empty of the two neganda, the dependent and the imagined, in that the ultimate is empty of the apparent. [The explanation of] the dependent as being empty of the imagined applies only when ascertaining mere apparent truth.

Difference No. 15

Śākya mchog ldan: Even though the “pure dependent” is widely known in Tibet, it is in reality not the dependent but rather what is “perfect in

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86 This *reductio ad absurdum* presupposes the inclusion of wisdom under the ultimate truth.

87 Tāranātha: op. cit., 787, l. 6 – 788, l. 3: tshad mňon sogs su bšad pa de / kun rdzob gtso bor gtan la ’bebs pa’i lugs yin / don dam gtso bor gcan la la’än kun rdzob kyis khyab / don dam dňos po yañ min / dňos po dňos med (text: mod) kyañ min pas zì (text: gţi) grub la ſes ma khyab / ye ſes dňos po ma yin la ſes pa yin pas / ſes pa la dňos pos ma khyab dňos med don dam du ’dod pa chos mi rigs la / don dam dňos por ’dod pa dňos smra ba’i lugs so / mňon pa ba rnam ’dus ma byas su ’dod pa’i nam mkha’ sogs / dňos med thams cad kyañ skabs ’dir ’dus byas yin pas / dňos po dňos med la ’dus byas kyis khyab / don dam ’dus ma byas dňos yin / nam mkha’ sogs ’dus ma byas btags pa ba yin gsuñ ./

88 Ibid., 788, l. 4: stoñ gţi gţan dbaṅ gi rañño de dgag bya kun btags kyis stoñ pa ste / de ∫iṅ kun rdzob kyis stoñ pa’i don dam du mdzad do /.

89 Ibid., 788, ll. 4-6: stoñ gţi yoṅs grub / dgag bya gţan dbaṅ kun btags (text: btags) gɲis kyis stoñ pa / don dam kun rdzob kyis stoñ pa’i don yin la / gţan dbaṅ kun btags (text: btags) kyis stoñ pa ni / kun rdzob bden pa kho na gcan la ’bebs pa’i skabs kho na yin par bžed do ./
terms of being unmistaken.” The latter is the actual perfect nature. Since
the origin and usage of the conventional [term] “pure dependent” is not
clear, it is not good to use it.90

Dol po pa: Even though the usage of the conventional [term] “pure
dependent” is not clear — the term is not found in the treatises — its
meaning is fully established [in them], and therefore it is proper to use
it. This follows from the fact that the Buddha’s teaching is based on mean-
ing [rather than words proper], and that in olden times in Tibet all agreed
on such a convention. Therefore, it is appropriate not to find any fault
in the transmitted pith-instructions deriving from Maitreya. Even though
some [parts of the] wisdom of the noble [path of] learning are [called]
“perfect in terms of being unmistaken” in [certain] passages of the
[Maitreya works], the presentation of its conventional [term] (i.e., the
term “pure dependent”) is good. This is because of [instances] where
some [phrases] such as “for those who have attained the [Bodhisattva]-
levels the ground appears as gold” are also [taken as denoting] “perfect
in terms of being unmistaken”91.

Difference No. 16

Śākya mchog ldan: The perfect in terms of being unmistaken fully per-
tains to the actual perfect nature.92

Dol po pa: This [being unmistaken] is only taught as being the express-
ible perfect, in the same way as the twelve limbs of the Buddha’s speech

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90 Ibid., 788, ll. 6-7: dag pa gzhan dbaṅ žes bod spyi la grags kyaṅ / don la gzhan dbaṅ
min ciṅ phyin ci ma log pa’i yoṅs grub yin la / phyin ci ma log pa’i yoṅs grub kyaṅ yoṅs
grub mtshan ṇid pa yin ciṅ / dag pa gzhan dbaṅ gi tha sṅad pa’iṅ kyuṅs gsal med pas /
de’i brda ’chaṅ byed pa mi legs par dgoṅs so /

91 Ibid., 788, l. 7 – 789, l. 3: dag pa gzhan dbaṅ žes pa’i tha sṅad gżuṅ las gsal po ma
byuṅ yaṅ / don tshaṅ bas tha sṅad byar ruṅ ste / saṅs rgyas kyi bstan pa don la brton pa
yin pa daṅ / bod sṅa ma thams cad tha sṅad de lta bu mthun par byed pas / byams pa nas
bṛgyud pa’i maṅ nag ma nor ba yin du ruṅ bas so / de’i naṅ tshan ’phags pa sloṅ pa’i ye
šes ’ga’ žig phyin ci ma log pa’i yoṅs grub yin kyaṅ / sa thob pa nnams la sa gzi gser du
snaṅ ba soṅs ’ga’ žig phyin ci ma log pa’i yoṅs grub yin pa’iṅ yod pas / de’i tha sṅad
nnam gzaṅ legs par dgoṅs so /

92 Ibid., 789, l. 4: phyin ci ma log pa’i yoṅs grub la / yoṅs grub mtshan ṇid pas khyab
par bzhed /.
have been also said to be the perfect [in terms of being unmistaken]. Thus the latter, in contrast to the unchangeable perfect nature, is in reality something that belongs to the pure dependent and is the perfect only in a metaphorical sense. The unmistaken perfect which is the same as the unchangeable [perfect] is called the “ultimate perfect in terms of being unmistaken.” It is purely unchangeable\(^{93}\). Therefore, when one ascertains the true state of being, it is only this “[ultimate] perfect”. When one explains in detail [its] synonyms, both types [of the perfect] (i.e. the unchangeable and the perfect in terms of being unmistaken) are presented\(^{94}\).

Difference No. 17

**Śākyā mchog ldan**: The [noble] truth of the path also [belongs to] the ultimate truth\(^{95}\).

**Dol po pa**: Among the four noble truths the truth of cessation is the ultimate, and the other three are the apparent truth. To be more precise, only the actual cessation, which exists throughout beginningless time, [is called] ultimate [truth]. The other three [noble] truths and the analytical cessation fully pertain, in reality, to the apparent truth. Hence the actual [noble] truth of the path fully pertains to the apparent [truth], and the actual truth of cessation to the ultimate [truth]. This follows from the fact that the [noble] truth of the path in its ultimate aspect is one with the beginningless

\(^{93}\) The distinction between “perfect in terms of being unmistaken” and “ultimate perfect in terms of being unmistaken” reflects the Jonangpas’ view that wisdom,\(^a\) like all other Buddhist-qualities, mainly pertains to the unchangeable ultimate truth and only to limited extent to the apparent truth.

\(^{94}\) In the Yogācāra, “the perfect in terms of being unmistaken” usually refers to non-conceptual wisdom cultivated on the path.

\(^{95}\) Tāranātha: op. cit., 789, ll. 4-7: de ni rnam graṅs kyi yoṅs grub tu bstan pa tsam ste / gsuṅ rab yan lag bcu gis kyaṅ yoṅs grub tu gṣuṅs pa daṅ ’dra’o / des na / ’gyur med yoṅs grub kyi zlas draṅs pa’i phyin ci ma log pa de ni gzan dhaṅ dag pa pa yin ciṅ / yoṅs grub ḏtags pa bā yin / ’gyur med ņid daṅ geṅ pa’i yoṅs grub phyin ci ma log pa de la / don dam pa’i phyin ci ma log pa’i yoṅs su grub pa žes bya ste / ’gyur med kho na’o / des na / gnas tshul gtan la ’bebs pa’i skabs su yoṅs grub de ņid kho na yin la / rnam graṅs rgyas par bṣad pa’i skabs su gis kyi rnam gṣag byed do gsuṅ /.

\(^{96}\) Ibid., 789, l. 7 – 790, l. 1: lam bden yaṅ don dam par māṭad la /.
[ultimate truth]. Because it is [in reality] the [noble] truth of cessation, [this ultimate aspect] is the [noble] truth of the path [only] in a metaphorical sense\textsuperscript{96}.

**Difference No. 18**

\textbf{Śākya mchog Idan}: There is no Buddha-nature in the mind-stream of sentient beings. The natural luminosity of the mind of sentient beings is merely the cause of the Buddha-nature and [its] “basic element” (\textit{kham}). Therefore, there is a Buddha-nature or basic element as a cause in all ordinary sentient beings, but it is not like the actual [Buddha-nature], which is rather the [same as] Buddha-wisdom\textsuperscript{97}.

\textbf{Dol po pa}: The actual Buddha-nature is nothing else than [the Buddha-nature] of the mind-stream of sentient beings, and if it is the actual [Buddha-nature] of a Buddha, then it is established that sentient beings possess it, precisely because it is the \textit{dharmatā} of sentient beings. This is proven, in particular, by a number of canonical passages. The explanation [of the Buddha-nature] as the basic element and cause [refers to] a cause different from the sphere/element (\textit{dbyi\textsubscript{s}})\textsuperscript{98}, given that the latter is neither an efficient cause nor an efficient sphere\textsuperscript{99}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 790, ll. 1-3: bden pa bzhir phyre ba'i 'gog bden don dam dañ / bden pa gzan gsum kun rdzob tu bžed / žib mor na / 'gog bden mchshan ŋid pa gdod ma'i 'gog bden la don dam kha na dañ / gzan bden pa gsum dañ / so sor brtags 'gog la kun rdzob kyis khyab par don la gnas pas / lam bden mchshan ŋid pa la kun rdzob kyis khyab / 'gog bden mchshan ŋid pa la don dam gyis khyab / don dam pa'i lam bden ni gdod ma dañ gcig pa'i phyir / 'gog bden ŋid yin pas / lam bden btags pa ba yin gsuñ./

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid. 790, ll. 3-5: sems can kyi rgyud la bde gšegs sñiñ po med sems can kyi sems rañ bžin 'od gsal de / bde gšegs sñiñ po'i rgyu dañ kham tsam yin pas / rgyu bde gšegs sñiñ po'am kham bde gšegs sñiñ po sems can thams cad la yod kyañ / de ni de 'dra mtsban ŋid pa min / sañs rgyas kyi ye šes bde gšegs sñiñ po'o /.

\textsuperscript{98} The Buddha-nature with all its qualities is already present in one’s mind-stream and thus does not need to be generated. Here, Buddha-nature as cause means that focusing on the true nature of mind, which is the Buddha-nature, causes the removal of all defilements.

\textsuperscript{99} Tāranātha: op. cit., 790, ll. 5-7: sems can gyi rgyud kyi de ka bde gšegs sñiñ po mtsban ŋid pa yin te / sañs rgyas de kyi mchshan ŋid pa yin na / de ŋid ka sems can gyi chos ŋid yin pas / sems can bde gšegs sñiñ po can du grub la / khyad par luñ mtha' yas pas grub bo / kham dañ rgyur bṣad pa yañ / skyed rgyu dañ skyed kham mìn par dbyiñs dañ bral rgyu la dgoñs pa'o gsuñ/.
\end{footnotesize}
Difference No. 19

Śākya mchog ldan: [Passages which] state that the Buddha-nature is endowed with essentially inseparable qualities refer only to the fruit [of the path]. On the level of the cause, the qualities still have to be developed. Having this capability, the Buddha-nature exists only as seeds [in ordinary sentient beings].

Dol po pa: The essentially inseparable qualities are naturally present. They exist even in the Buddha-nature of the basis, since [firstly] something that arises, [in the sense of being] newly [acquired], may possibly be not naturally present; [secondly], the division of basis, path and fruit applies only to the level of “phenomena” (dharmin) [or] apparent truth; and [thirdly], there is, [in terms of] the nature [of phenomena], only one Buddha-nature. It must henceforth be the Buddha-nature, adorned with all the qualities of the ultimate.

Difference No. 20

Śākya mchog ldan: The major and minor marks and the like [of a Buddha] do not belong to the qualities of the dharmakāya.

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100 Ibid., 790, l. 7 – 791, l. 1: sūn po la yon tan ńo bo dbyer med rañ bžin ŋid ldan du gsuṅs ba ‘bras bu kho na’i skabs yin la / rgyu’i skabs su yon tan ‘byuṅ ruṅ gi nus pa sa bon tsam yod par bžed /.

101 In the context of phenomena (dharma) and their true being (dharmanā), dharmin refers to the dharmas which possess dharmaftū [see Mathes 1996:185].

102 Ibid., 791, ll. 1-4: yon tan ńo bo dbyer med / rañ bžin ŋid ldan de gzi bde gṣegs sūṅ po la yah yod de / gsar du byuṅ bas rañ bžin gyis ldan par mi ‘gro ba’i phyir dah / gzi lam ‘bras bu gsum kun rdzob chos can gyis phyre ba ma gtos / rañ bžin bde gṣegs sūṅ po gcig kho na yin pa’i phyir / bde gṣegs sūṅ po yin phyin chad don dam pa’i yon tan thams cad kyis bryyan pa yin dgos par bžed do /.

103 The Yogācāras use the term dharmakāya in an exclusive as well as in an inclusive sense. In its exclusive sense, the term dharmakāya is defined as the transformation of the basis which results in the non-conceptual wisdom of the purity of suchness. In its inclusive sense, it refers to the totality of Buddhahood including all kāyas. The interpretation of the dharmakāya as a distinct kāya, which does not include the sambhogakāya, is also found in the particular four-kāya theory of Haribhadra’s commentary on the Abhisamatattāyālakāra. Haribhadra qualifies the dharmakāya for the first time with the compound jñānātmaka “the dharmakāya consisting of wisdom”, and understands it as conditioned jñānas on the level of apparent truth. It is only the svabhāvikakāya which encompasses suchness, or the ultimate emptiness of all phenomena. Contrary to this, Ārya Vimuktisena
Dol po pa: With regard to all types of Buddha-qualities, there is an aspect of them that pertains to the ultimate qualities of the dharmakāya, and appears only to the Buddha himself, and another aspect that pertains to the apparent qualities of the form-kāyas, and appears to others, namely the disciples [of the Buddha]. As for the explicit teaching of the Ratnadhārikāsūtra and the Uttaratantra [Ratnagotravibhāga], in general it is necessary to explain them in terms of the qualities of the two kāyas. On the whole, with respect to the major and minor [marks of a Buddha], [Dol po pa] only makes analogies in accordance with what is generally accepted. When taken as taught in other Sūtras, and the Tantras, both [the dharmakāya and the form-kāyas] share aspects common to all of them.

What is different [from the Ratnagotravibhāga] when Mantra[yāna is taught] with regard to gžan stōṅ is precisely this [inclusion of all qualities in the ultimate].

Difference No. 21

Śākya mchog ldan: Only the seeds of the fruit are inherently present in the form of the natural luminosity of mind. [Their] improvement is achieved by meditating on the path, until the fruit is finally actualized.
**Dol po pa:** Throughout beginningless time wisdom is effortlessly perfect in the form of the ultimate *maṇḍala*. On the path, stains are removed by meditating on it, and [this ever-present wisdom] is actualized\(^{111}\).

### 2.2. Tāranātha’s Conclusion

Having elaborated Śākyā mchog Idan’s and Dol po pa’s twenty-one differences with regard to the profound meaning, Tāranātha concludes by pointing out one fundamental difference, to which all the other ones basically refer:

Pañ chen Śākyā mchog Idan takes non-dual wisdom to be non-abiding and impermanent in every moment, in that it is not something single but multiple. [For the] omniscient Jonangpa (i.e., Dol po pa) it is in reality neither one nor many; provisionally he accepts it as reasonable when [wisdom] is presented as being single, and takes it as being permanent, impartible, all-pervading, free from mental fabrication and ineffable. In view of this, the [main] difference is, in short, that [the former] takes [wisdom] as being impermanent, and [the latter] takes it as being permanent\(^{112}\).

We are further informed that Dol po pa infers from the omnipresence of non-dual wisdom that all qualities of a Buddha are already present in ordinary beings. For the same reason, non-dual wisdom cannot be impaired by reasoning, such as that it is neither one nor many, and hence withstands analysis. On these grounds the tenets of the Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika, which assert the destruction of non-dual wisdom by analysis, is wrong, and hence these Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika views are impure. One comes to know this by way of analysis which makes use of reasoning without distorting the original intention of the middle turning. Dol po pa and Śākyā mchog Idan agree, however, that ultimately the Buddha-nature is beyond words and thoughts, and the unmistaken object of

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\(^{111}\) *Ibid.*, 792, ll. 1-2: gdod ma nas ye śes don dam pa’i dkyil ’khor du lhun grub tu rdzogs pa de lam bsgoms dri ma bsal te mìon du gyur pa yin par bzhed do /.

\(^{112}\) *Ibid.*, 792, ll. 5-6: pañ chen śākya’i mtshan can ni / gños med kyi ye śes de gcig pu ma yin pa du ma’i tshul can / skad gcig gis mi gnas pa mi rtag par bzhed pa dañ / kun mkhyen jo nañ pa ni / de dños gnas la gcig min du ma yañ min par nes mod / gnas skabs su gcig pu’i (text: bu’i) rnam gžag ’yang Idan du mdzad ciñ / de rtag pa / cha med kun khyab / spros bral brjod bral yin par bzhed pa’i dbañ las te / mdor na mi rtag pa dañ rtag par bzhed pa’i khyad par ro /.
non-conceptual wisdom. Tāranātha concludes by explaining at length that Dol po pa’s “permanent” is not the ordinary opposite of impermanent:

This [“permanent”] is free from mental fabrications. It is the unchangeable sphere which is free from both the impermanence of an established entity and the permanence of a negated non-entity. It is free from the characteristic signs of permanence\(^{113}\).

3. Tāranātha’s Presentation of Dol po pa’s and Śākya mchog lدan’s Positions

A comparison of Tāranātha’s summary of Dol po pa’s position with what we find in the latter’s pertinent works, such as the *Ri chos ’nes don rgya mtsho*, shows that the subject matter is correctly presented. Of particular interest are Tāranātha’s elaborations on difference no. 20, where he confirms my own observation that Dol po pa explains the Buddha-nature more in line with general Mahāyāna when commenting the *Ratnagotravibhāga*\(^{114}\). Also, the presentation of the *trisvabhāva* theory is in accordance with the *Ri chos ’nes don rgya mtsho*, in which Dol po pa explains:

The basis which is empty of the imagined is the dependent, and the basis which is empty of even the dependent is the true nature of phenomena, the perfect\(^{115}\).

A little further down Dol po pa further explains:

It has been taught that phenomena which [belong to] the imagined [and] the dependent do not really exist, and that the true nature of phenomena, [namely] the perfect really does. The meaning of *raṅ stoṅ* and *gẑan stoṅ* is taught in these two statements\(^{116}\).

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\(^{113}\) *Ibid.*, 794, ll. 6-7: ‘*di ni spros bral te / dños po sgrub pa mi rtag pa daṅ / dños med dgaṅ pa rtag pa gñis ka las grol ba’i dbyiṅs ‘gyur med de yin / rtag pa’i mtshan ma las grol žiṅ ./.

\(^{114}\) See my introductory remarks on Dol po pa in the first paragraph of this paper.

\(^{115}\) Dol po pa: *Ri chos ’nes don rgya mtsho*, 148, ll. 3-4: ‘*kun btags (text: brtags) kyis stoṅ pa’i gzi ni gẑan dbaṅ no / / gẑan dbaṅ gis kyaṅ stoṅ pa’i gzi ni chos ŋid yoṅs grub bo (text: po) ./.

\(^{116}\) *Ibid.*, 149, ll. 8-10: ‘*kun btags (text: brtags) gẑan dbaṅ gi chos rnams ni yaṅ dag par med pa daṅ / chos ŋid yoṅs grub ni yaṅ dag tu yod par bstan te ’di dag gis kyaṅ raṅ stoṅ daṅ gẑan stoṅ gi don bstan pa yin no ./.
These two quotes clearly show that it is only the perfect which really exists as the basis which is empty of the dependent (and also the imagined). Moreover, the following passage from the *Ri chos ŋes don rgya mtsho* confirms Tāranātha’s observation in difference no. 14 that “[the explanation of] the dependent as being empty of the imagined applies only when ascertaining mere apparent truth”:

As to the lack of an own-being in the imagined, the [imagined] does not exist in terms of its own defining characteristics. Being established as the mere apparent, [or rather as] the mere mistaken apparent, it is established neither as apparent truth nor as the correct apparent. As to the lack of an own-being in the dependent, even though [the dependent] exists on the level of apparent [truth] as an own-being which arises from something else, it does not exist as an own-being which arises from itself, and is not in the least established in reality. In this way, the two lack an own-being, because they are *raṅ stoṅ*. As to the true nature of phenomena, the perfect, or the basis of the non-existence of these two (i.e., the imagined and dependent), even though it is not the case that it lacks an own-being, it is the basis for the lack of an own-being in the phenomena of apparent [truth], which are different from [this basis]. Therefore it is the own-being of the ultimate truth, or the “body belonging to the own-being” (*svābhāvikakāya*)\(^{117}\).

That the ultimate basis of emptiness is restricted to the unchangeable perfect becomes clear in the following passage where the perfect in terms of being unmistaken is equated with the form-*kāya* of the apparent truth:

Thus the ultimate Buddha is the *kāya* of the five self-arisen wisdoms. He abides permanently in the form of [these] five wisdoms, which are suchness and the unchangeable perfect. The form-*kāyas* of the apparent [truth] possess correct wisdom, namely the perfect in terms of being unmistaken, and [thus] the wisdom of the Mahāyāna[-path] of no more learning which is not beyond moments\(^{118}\).

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\(^{117}\) *Ibid.*, 319, ll. 16-24: *kun btags ŋo bo med pa ni raṅ gi mtshan ŋid kyis med pa ste kun rdzob tsam mam log pa’i kun rdzob tu grub pa tsam las kun rdzob bden pa’am yaṅ dag kun rdzob tu yaṅ ma grub bo / gzan dbaṅ ŋo bo ŋid med pa ni kun rdzob tu gzan las skye ba’i no bor yod kyi aṅ raṅ las skye ba’i no bor med ciṅ yaṅ dag par na ciri yaṅ ma grub pa ste de ltar de gñis ni raṅ stoṅ yin pa’i phyir raṅ gi ŋo bo med pa’o // de gñis med pa’i gzi chos ŋid yoṅs grub ni raṅ gi ņo bo med pa ma yin yaṅ de las gzan pa kun rdzob kyi chos rnams kyi ņo bo ŋid med pa’i gzi yin pa’i phyir don dam bden pa’i ŋo bo ste ŋo bo ŋid kyi sku….

\(^{118}\) *Ibid.*, 356, l. 22 – 357, l. 2: *de ltar don dam pa’i saṅs rgyas ni raṅ byuṅ ye sles lha’i sku yin la / de yaṅ de bzin ŋid daṅ ’gyur med yoṅs grub ŋid ye sles lhan rtag tu bžugs pa’o
For Dol po pa, the ultimate is beyond moments and the three times (i.e., the past, present and future). The permanence of the ultimate wisdom is thus not an ordinary permanence as opposed to impermanence, but one that is, as Tāranātha puts it, beyond these latter two categories. To be sure, for Dol po pa all kāyas have an ultimate aspect that is beyond the three times:

That the permanent Buddha and the liberation of the Buddha are form, that even space is the form of the Buddha, and so forth — the meaning of such statements must be understood in the context of forms etc. being explained [on the level] of suchness or as forms etc. which are beyond the three times and the threefold world.

Such an extreme form of transcendence explains Dol po pa’s sharp distinction between the ultimate and apparent truths — which he defines with the phrase: “a difference in terms of a negation of an identity” (gcig pa bkag pa’i tha dad pa). From this it does not follow, though, that the two truths are different entities, but simply that the ultimate exists and the apparent does not (negation of identity). To be sure, since there is only one essence for Dol po pa, namely that of the ultimate, it does not make sense to speak of an essential difference, since this would require the existence of another essence from which it differs. This also means that Dol po pa’s distinction between ultimate and apparent kāyas does not entail the absurd ontological view that there really are two different sets of kāyas. It is rather that only the ultimate kāyas exist ontologically. The kāyas of apparent truth, which are equated with the perfect in terms of being unmistaken, do not really exist, any more than the apparent world does. Still, on the level of apparent truth they are produced to the same extent as the accidental stains of the apparent truth are removed (which

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119 Ibid., 142, ll. 17-9: saḥs rgyas rtig pa daḥ saḥs rgyas kyi thar pa gzugs yin pa daḥ nam mkha’ yaḥ saḥs rgyas kyi gzugs yin / žes pa la sogs pa’i don ni […] de bzin ŋid kyi gzugs sogs daḥ / khams gsum daḥ dus gsum las ’das pa’i gzugs sogs žes pa la sogs pa ’chad par ’gyur pa’i skabs su rig par bya....

120 See Dol po pa: “bDen gniś gsal ba’i ṃ ma”, 23, ll. 2-3: bden pa gniś ni ṃ bo de ŋid daḥ gzan du brjod du med pa gcig pa bkag pa’i tha dad pa yin te / .

121 See also Broido (1989:88), who has made the same observation with regard to two sets of skandhas in the Ri chos ņes don rgya mtsho.
enables the ultimate to manifest on the level of apparent truth), and in this sense there are accumulations of merit and wisdom. Tāranātha’s restriction of the perfect to its unchangeable aspect is thus perfectly in line with the position of Dol po pa.

Things become a bit more complicated in the case of Śākya mchog ldan. Even later Tibetan thinkers had difficulties in pinning down his position\textsuperscript{122}. To give an example, in his short presentation of the Buddha-nature which was written in 1474\textsuperscript{123}, Śākya mchog ldan endorses Bu ston Rin chen grub’s (1290-1364) and Sa skya pāṇḍita’s (1182-1251) Madhyamaka hermeneutics\textsuperscript{124} of ascribing a provisional meaning (neyārtha) to the tathāgatagarbha theory. But in difference no. 21 Śākya mchog ldan is said to hold that the seeds of the fruit (Buddhahood) are naturally present in the form of the natural luminosity of mind. This is strikingly similar to the position of ‘Gos Lo tsā ba gŽon nu dpal (1392-1481), who speaks of “subtle qualities” or “seeds of qualities” in the mind-stream of sentient beings. By explaining a natural growth of qualities, gŽon nu dpal is able to read the Ratnagotravibhāga as a teaching with definitive meaning (nītārtha), without being forced to accept the ontological consequences of the tathāgatagarbha theory\textsuperscript{125}. It is likely that Śākya mchog ldan later adopted such a stance, Tāranātha being right in this point, but only a careful study of Śākya mchog ldan’s works written after 1484 will tell.

The notion in points 1-4 that raṅ gstone is more profound when mental fabrications are cut through with the help of the view finds support in Śākya mchog ldan’s Dharmadharmatāvibhāga commentary, in which the commentator shows that the teaching of a transformation of the basis (āśrayaparivṛtti) does not contradict the Svātāntrika and Prāsaṅgika views\textsuperscript{126}.

\textsuperscript{122} For a short description of Śākya mchog ldan’s position see also Tillemans & Tomabechi (1995: 891-6).
\textsuperscript{123} Śākya mchog ldan: “Saṅg rgyas gyi sūn po’i mam bṣad mdo rgyud kyi sūn po”, 136, l. 3.
\textsuperscript{124} See Seyfort Ruegg 1973:29-33.
\textsuperscript{125} See Mathes 2002:88-9. In his Ratnagotravibhāga commentary, gŽon nu dpal refers to these qualities in sentient beings as “seeds” (see Mathes 2003:121, ll. 6-7).
\textsuperscript{126} Śākya mchog ldan: “Byams chos lha’i lam gyi rim pa”, 154, ll. 1-7. See also Mathes 1996:176.
A comparison with the “Zab zi spros bral gyi bzhad pa”\textsuperscript{127} shows that Tāranātha also got the main points of Śākya mchog Idan’s definition of the basis of emptiness and the negandum right. Tāranātha’s difference no. 14, though, which has Śākya mchog Idan equating the emptiness of the dependent from the imagined with the ultimate which is empty of the apparent, is problematic. In fact, Śākya mchog Idan takes the dependent to exist ultimately only when describing Cittamātra. Thus he says in his “Śīṅ rta srol gños mam dbye”\textsuperscript{128}:

Outside objects and what is explained as general characteristics are the imagined, and empty of an own-being. What appears as [the imagined] through mental imprints is the dependent and truly established. Emptiness which [is taken as] the basis of negation (the dependent), empty of the negandum (the imagined), is the perfect. Therefore it is the ultimate truth\textsuperscript{129}.

The Yogācāras, on the other hand, who according to Śākya mchog Idan\textsuperscript{130} belong to the Madhyamaka, are not said to claim the ultimate existence of the dependent nature. Ultimate truth is equated rather with the unchangeable perfect nature:

The Yogācāras explain: “The imagined is empty of an own-being, and the dependent empty of an other-being. The remainder left over as something which does not lack an own-being is precisely the nature of the dependent or the so-called perfect. […] When both Mādhyamikas (i.e., the Yogācāras and the Asvabhāvavādins) postulate what must be meditated upon or experienced in the meditative equipoise of the Noble Ones, their perception is in mutual accordance: both explain it as the wisdom of dharmadhātu. When labelling it after rising from meditative equipoise, they differ: The Yogācāras label it [the experiential] wisdom of dharmadhātu or non-dual wisdom, which goes by the name “unchangeable perfect” — the actual ultimate truth,

\textsuperscript{127} I.e., the two passage (114, ll. 3-4 & 114, l. 7 – 115, 1) quoted above in the first paragraph of this paper.

\textsuperscript{128} According to Dreyfus (1997:29) this work was written in 1489.

\textsuperscript{129} Śākya mchog Idan: “Śīṅ rta srol gños mam dbye”, 476, ll. 3-5: [sems tsam pa’i mñam bžag gi lta ba ni… des draṅs pa’i rjes thob kyi grub mtha’ ni] phyi rol gyi don daṅ spyi mñshan du bṣad pa rnams ni kun btags daṅ raṅ gi ho bos stoṅ pa’o / / bags chags kyis der snaṅ ba ni gzan dbaṅ daṅ bden par grub pa’o / / dgag gzi gzan dbaṅ de dgag bya kun btags kyis stoṅ pa’i stoṅ pa ni yoṅs grub daṅ / des na don dam pa’i bden pa’o /.

\textsuperscript{130} The Yogācāras treatises on the Maitreya works, for example, are taken to go beyond Cittamātra and thus to be in accordance with the intention of the Madhyamaka. See Śākya mchog Idan: “Byams chos l’a’i ńes don rab tu gsal ba”, 6, ll. 3-7; and Mathes 1996:174.
the supreme self, the permanent, stable, quiescent, steady and truly established.131

In other words, Śākyamchogldan restricts the ultimate truth in the same way as the Jonangpas to the unchangeable perfect nature, which is also equated with wisdom. Against the background of this passage, the quintessence of Tāranātha’s comparison of Dol po pa with Śākyamchogldan, namely that they take wisdom to be resepectively permanent and impermanent, appears questionable. The main difference is rather that Śākyamchogldan does not define gžan stoṅ as the ultimate being empty of the apparent, but includes the dependent nature within the basis of negation. This is also clear in the following passage from the “Zab ŋi spros bral gyi bţad pa”, where Śākyamchogldan disagrees with a popular gžan stoṅ position:

The apparent [truth], [comprising] all conditioned entities, is empty of an own-being (raṅ stoṅ), while the ultimate, everything132 unconditioned, is empty of other (gžan stoṅ). This explanation is the assertion of the great Mādhyamika Vasubandhu, for this is how it is explained in the Bhāvaviveka. Such an explanation does not hold true, since it is not in accordance with the basic Maitreya works, and contradicts the clear gžan stoṅ teachings of the indisputable works of Asaṅga and his brother as well as the text tradition of Dignāga and his disciple133.

131 Śākyamchogldan: “Śūn rta srol gñis rnam dbyae”, 483, l. 7 – 484, l. 4: rnal ’byor spyod pa pas ni / kun btags raṅ gi ho bos stoṅ pa daṅ / gžan dbaṅ gžan gyi ho bos stoṅ pa daṅ / de’i šul du raṅ gi ho bos mi stoṅ par lus pa ni / gžan dbaṅ gi ho bo’am yoṅs grub ces bya ba de ŋid do / žes ’chad [...]/ dbu ma pa de gñis ka yaṅ ’phags pa’i mñam gžag gis bsgom bya’am mñam su myoṅ bya žig khas len pa’t tshe ṇos ’dzin tshul ni mthun pa yin te / gñis kas kyāṅ chos kyi dbyin’s kyi ye şes la ’chad pas so / mñam gžag de las laṅs pa’i rjes thob tu tha sṅad ’dogs tshul ni mi mthun pa yin te / rnal ’byor spyod pa pas ni ’gyur ba med pa’i yoṅs grub ces bya ba’i miṅ can / chos dbyin’s ye şes sam gñis su med pa’i ye şes de ŋid don dam pa’i bden pa dūṅs daṅ / bdag dam pa daṅ / rtag brtan ži ba g.yuṅ druṅ daṅ / bden par grub pa ŋid du tha sṅad ’dogs par byed la /

132 The plural particle shows that there is more than one unconditioned element.

133 Śākyamchogldan: “Zab ŋi spros bral gyi bţad pa”, 117, ll. 1-3: kun rdzob ’dus byas kyi dūṅs po thams cad raṅ stoṅ daṅ / don dam ’dus ma byas rnam’s gžan stoṅ du ’chad pa’di ni dbu ma pa chen po dbyig gñen gyi bţed pa yin te / yum gyi gnod ’joms las de ltar bţad pa’i phyir / žes ’chad pa ni rigs pa ma yin te / / rje bisun gyi gžuṅ rtsa ba daṅ mi mthun žiṅ / thogs med sku mched kyi gžuṅ rtsod med rnam’s daṅ / phyogs glaṅ yab sras kyi gžuṅ lung las gžan stoṅ gi ’chad tshul gsal par gṣuṅs pa rnam’s daṅ ’gal ba’i phyir ro /.
Śākya mchog ldan continues by presenting his own definition of gžan stöṅ based on the Madhyāntavibhāga, namely that the dependent is empty of the imagined, and explains:

Just as in the lines: “False imagining [equated with the dependent nature] exists. Duality is not found in it”\textsuperscript{134} the dependent is “phenomena” (dharmin), or the basis of emptiness, and both [aspects of the] imagined, the perceived object and the perceiving subject, are the neganda, or that of which [the dependent] is empty. There is an explanation of the wisdom beyond the duality of a perceived object and the perceiving subject as an entity which is empty, but [the latter] is not taken as the subject, or the basis of emptiness\textsuperscript{135}.

It should be noted that for Śākya mchog ldan the dependent nature, or false imagining, exists in terms of its own-being, specific marks and its own nature, but not truly, on the level of ultimate truth, or in reality. It is like an illusion\textsuperscript{136}. This presentation is based on the reasonable interpretation of the Yogācāra works as implying that the dependent nature only exists on the level of apparent truth. Śākya mchog ldan is, of course, well aware that in the Ratnagotravibhāga and the Byhaṭṭīkā the perfect nature is taken to be empty of the imagined\textsuperscript{137}.

\textsuperscript{134} MAVBh, 17, 1. 16 (MAV I.1ab): \textit{abhūtaparikalpo \'sti dvayan tatra na vidyate /}.

\textsuperscript{135} Śākya mchog ldan: “Zab \textit{zi} spros bral gyi bzhad pa”, 117, l. 5: ji skad du / yaṅ dag ma yin kun rtog yod // de la gniš po yod ma yin / žes \textit{byuṅ} ba ltar / gžan dbaṅ stöṅ gzi'i chos can daṅ / gzuṅ \textit{\'dzin kun btags} (text: btags) gniš po gaṅ gis stöṅ pa'i dag bar daṅ / gzuṅ \textit{\'dzin gniš med kyi ye śes la stöṅ pa'i dhos por bśad pa žes bya ba žig yod pa yin gyi / stöṅ gzi'i} chos can du \textit{\'jog pa ma yin te /}.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 115, l. 3: de ltar na gžan dbaṅ yaṅ dag pa ma yin pa'i kun tu rtog pa žes bya ba raṅ bzin kyi yod pa daṅ / raṅ gi mtshan ňid kyi daṅ / raṅ gi ho bos yod pa ni yin la / bden pa daṅ / don dam par daṅ / de kho na ňid du yod pa ni ma yin te sgrub byed go rim bzin du / dag bar dag gniš kyi stöṅ pa'i phyir daṅ / don dam pa'i bden pa ma yin pa'i phyir daṅ / de kho na ňid ma yin pa'i phyir daṅ / sgyu ma bzin no /.

\textsuperscript{137} Śākya mchog ldan: \textit{“Śiṅ rta chen po'i srol gniš rnam dbye"}, 520, ll. 2-3: \textit{rgyud bla ma daṅ yun gyi gnod} \textit{\'joms su chos ňid yoṅs grub dag} bya kun btags kyi stöṅ par bśad pa'o}. In other words, here again the dependent nature is not included in the negandum. The Byhaṭṭīkā (Karmapa Tanjur (Töhoku no. 3808), ñes phyin, pha, 572, l. 5) supports the Jonangpas, however, in that the ultimate, or the perfect nature, is defined as “that which is \textit{free} from these names (roughly referring to the imagined nature in the Byhaṭṭīkā) and the forms of mistaken appearances (i.e., the dependent nature),\textsuperscript{a} and that which is inef-fable and the form of signlessness.” (gaṅ miṅ daṅ / phyin ci log tu snaṅ ba'i rnam pa de daṅ bral ba brjod du med pa / mtshan ma med pa'i rnam pa gaṅ yin pa de ni don dam pa yoṅs su grub pa'i ho bo ňid de /).

\textsuperscript{a} The expression “forms of mistaken appearances” defines the dependent nature: “The forms, which, under the sway of ignorance and so forth, appear to the consciousness in a
From what has been said till now, it is clear that the way Tārānātha summarizes Śākya mchog Idan’s view on trisvabhāva is not strictly accurate. Even though the dependent nature is undoubtedly taken to be the basis of negation, Śākya mchog Idan describes it as existing ultimately only in the Cittamātra, but not in the Yogācāra. And it is the presentation of the trisvabhāva in the Yogācāra which reflects his own gzan ston view. It is also questionable whether wisdom is really only a conditioned entity for him; as we have seen above, Śākya mchog Idan explains the unchangeable (!) perfect nature as being non-dual wisdom.

4. The Theory of trisvabhāva in the Madhyāntavibhāga and Its Commentaries

The trisvabhāva theory of the Madhyāntavibhāga plays an important role not only for those gzan ston pas who define the basis of emptiness in line with Yogācāra, but also the Jonangpas, whose main doctrinal support otherwise is the tathāgatagarbha theory. How is it possible, though, that such different positions on emptiness can be doctrinally supported by one and the same text?

The main focus for the proponents of both “Yogācāra gzan ston” and “Tathāgatagarbha gzan ston” lies on the initial two stanzas of the first chapter of the Madhyāntavibhāga, in which the Middle Path is defined by three philosophical propositions: (a) false imagining exists; (b) subject-object duality, though created by false imagining, is not found in the latter itself; (c) false imagining is found in relation to emptiness in the sense that emptiness is found in false imagining as its true nature138.

mistaken way as phenomena, are the dependent nature.” (ma rig pa la sogs pa’i dbaṅ gis rnam par śes pa la chos rnam s su phyin ci log tu snaṅ ba’i rnam pa gaṅ yin pa de ni gzan dbaṅ gi hō bo ņid do /, ibid. 572, ll. 4-5).

138 While (a) and (b) are the pādas MAV I.1a and I.1b, proposition (c) reflects the double locative relationship between false imagining and emptiness in the second part of MAV I.1 (But emptiness is found there (i.e., in false imagining) and [false imagining] is found in relation to it (i.e., emptiness) as well). If the second locative (tasyāṁ, i.e., śānyātāyām) is taken literally in the sense that x is found in y, and y in x, x would be y. Total identity, however, of false imagining and emptiness can be excluded on the grounds that the first is considered to be conditioned and the latter not (cf. MAVBh on I.2). I therefore suggest the preliminary translation “in relation to” for the two locatives.
One has to bear in mind that the root text, which does not make much use of *trisvabhāva* terms in the initial stanzas, equates the perceived object with the imagined nature, false imagining with the dependent nature, and the absence of duality, or emptiness, with the perfect nature in MAV I.5.

As I have already noted in my paper on Tāranātha’s “gŽan ston šnīṅ po”[^139], the relationship between false imagining and emptiness can be variously defined along the lines of two different *trisvabhāva* models, in the *Madhyāntavibhāga* and its Indian commentaries. The central focus of the first model, which is mainly based on the first section of the first chapter (MAV I.1-11), lies on a false imagining or dependent nature which at times is taken to exist ultimately, though not by Maitreya and Vasubandhu. Duality and emptiness are just two different aspects of false imagining, namely the way it appears and the way it really is. In the second section (MAV I.12-22) a positively understood emptiness (comparable to suchness or the Buddha-element in the RGV) replaces false imagining at the centre of the old equation. It is now emptiness, defined as natural luminosity, which can appear in two modes, either as being accompanied by adventitious stains (under which false imagining is included) or free from these stains (see below). This results in two *trisvabhāva* models which come close to what Sponberg (1981:99) calls the pivotal and progressive exegetical model of *trisvabhāva*. The first model is centred on the dependent nature as a bearer of the perfect, which latter is understood as something abstract, like the state of suffering or impermanence. In the progressive model the focus lies more on an emptiness which pervades or transcends all phenomena of the dependent nature. This all-pervading emptiness possesses positive qualities and can exist, contrary to the first model, in its own right. The three natures represent three levels, each revealing a progressively deeper degree of reality[^140].

This leads to the question whether the *Madhyāntavibhāga* takes the dependent nature as existing on the level of ultimate truth[^141]. One might

[^140]: See Mathes 2000:204-14.
[^141]: This is what Tsön kha pa (1357-1419), for example, claims on the basis of MAVṬ I.1, where the verse *abhūtaparikālaṃ stī* is glossed as *svabhāvataḥ*. A little further down Śhiramati does not object to an opponent’s claim of its ultimate existence: “[Opp.:] If thus duality was entirely non-existent, like a hare’s horn, and false imagining existed ultimately
argue that the Yogācāra does not distinguish existence on two levels of truths, its trisvabhāva theory being rather an alternative to the apparent and ultimate truths of the Madhyamaka\textsuperscript{142}. Many passages in the Madhyāntavibhāga support this. This becomes particularly evident in the third chapter (on reality), where older concepts relating to truth/reality, such as the four noble truths of early Buddhism or the apparent and ultimate truth of the Madhyamaka, are explained in terms of the new trisvabhāva. Even the noble truth of cessation is subsumed under the scheme of the imagined, dependent and perfect natures. A continuity between mainstream Buddhist thought and Yogācāra is thereby established. It is noteworthy, however, that in the case of the ultimate truth of the Madhyamaka only the perfect nature is accepted as a fit candidate for it, the dependent nature, or false imagining, being dismissed as something to be ultimately given up. If one applies this to the definition of the madhyamā pratipat in MAV I.1-2, it would be safe to say that the propositions “the existence of false imagining” (MAV I.1a) and “the non-existence of duality” (MAV I.1b) refer to the level of apparent truth, while “the mutual existence of false imagining and emptiness” (MAV I.1cd) defines the relation between apparent and ultimate truth. Resorting to two levels of truth not only explains the initial stanzas in a meaningful way, but also resolves some of the tensions between the two parallel trisvabhāva models mentioned above. And this is exactly what Śāntarakṣita did when he explained the theory of trisvabhāva in terms of his favoured Yogācāra-Svātantrika-Madhyamaka\textsuperscript{143}. The first chapter of the Madhyāntavibhāga is divided into two sections, one on false imagining and the other on emptiness. While the latter is in perfect harmony with the Ratnagotravibhāga, the former seems to draw on older strands of more conservative Yogācāra material. Vasubandhu (and to some extent also the author of the root text) nevertheless managed to harmonize the originally unbalanced strands. In MAV I.1 false imagining and emptiness are said to mutually exist in each other, and based on this Vasubandhu defines emptiness in his bhāṣya as

\begin{quote}
\textup{[yadi evaṁ dvaṁ śaśavīśānavat sarvathā nāsti / abhūta-parikalpaṁ ca paramārthataṁ svabhāvato śty...], MAVT, 10, ll. 17-9.}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{142} See Boquist 1993:17-22.
\textsuperscript{143} See Lindtner 1997:193.
“the state of this false imagining being free from the relation of a perceived object and perceiving subject”\textsuperscript{144}.

Whereas emptiness is simply taken here as a property of the dominant “false imagining”, the latter hardly matters in the definition of emptiness in the second part of the first chapter, where emptiness is not only the absence of something in false imagining, but something more positive, the own-being of non-duality, which is associated with positive attributes such as the natural luminosity of the mind. In fact, in MAV I.22 emptiness is defined in the same way as in the Ratnagotravibhāga:

[Emptiness is] \textit{neither defiled nor undefiled, neither pure nor impure.} (MAV I.22ab) How is it that it is neither defiled nor impure? It is because of the natural \textit{luminosity of mind} (MAV I.22c). How is it that it is neither undefiled nor pure? It is \textit{because of the adventitious nature of defilements} (MAV I.22d)\textsuperscript{145}.

It is obvious that the natural luminosity of the mind has taken the place of false imagining here\textsuperscript{146}. That the latter cannot truly partake of the luminous nature is clear from a passage in the Sāgaramatiparipṛcchā quoted in RGVV I.68, in which the example of an ever-pure vaiḍūrya stone drawn out from mud is taken to illustrate the relation between the luminous mind and accidental stains:

In the same way, O Sāgaramati, the Bodhisattva knows the natural luminosity of the mind of sentient beings. He also perceives that it is defiled by adventitious defilements. Then the Bodhisattva thinks as follows: These defilements would never penetrate into the natural luminosity of the mind of sentient beings. These adventitious defilements have sprung from false imagining\textsuperscript{147}.

\textsuperscript{144} MAVBh, 18, ll. 2-3: \textit{sānyatā tasyābhūtaparikalpasya grāhyagrāhakabhāvena virahītā}.
\textsuperscript{145} MAVBh, 27, ll. 5-9: \textit{na kliṣṭā nāpi vākliṣṭā śuddhā 'śuddhā na caiva sā / kathaṁ na kliṣṭā nāpi caśuddhā / prakṛtyaiva / prabhāśvaratvac cītasya / kathaṁ nākliṣṭā na śuddhā / kleśasyāgantukatvathā /}.
\textsuperscript{146} What is defined as all defilements (\textit{saṅkleśa}) in MAV I.10-1 can here only be the adventitious defilements.
\textsuperscript{147} RGVV, 49, ll. 9-12: \textit{evam eva sāgaramate bodhisattvāḥ sattvānāṁ prakṛtiprabhāśvaratāṁ cītasya prajāṁ / tāṁ punar āgantuṇopakleśopakliṣṭāṁ paśyati / tatra bodhisattvasyaiva bhavati / nate kleśāḥ sattvānāṁ cītaprakṛtiprabhāśvaratāyāṁ praviṣṭāḥ / āgantuṁ ete kleśaḥ abhūtaparikalpasamutthitaḥ /}. 
It is now luminosity which is centred on and occurs in two modes, one of which is being stainless and thus even free from the false imagining which causes these adventitious stains. That the natural luminosity of the mind refers to an originally pure nature of the mind in the Madhyāntavi-bhāga, too, becomes clear in stanza I.16, on the differentiation of emptiness:

How should the differentiation of emptiness be known? As being defiled as well as pure (MAV I.16a). Thus is its differentiation. In which state is it defiled and in which is it pure? It is accompanied as well as not accompanied by stains. (MAV I.16b) When it occurs together with stains it is defiled, and when its stains are abandoned it is pure. If, after being accompanied by stains it becomes stainless, how is it then not impermanent, given that it has the property of change? This is because its purity is considered to be like the one of water, gold and space. (MAV I.16cd) [A change is admitted] in view of the removal of adventitious stains, but there is no change in terms of its own-being.\(^{148}\)

It should be noted how the terms “defiled” and “pure” of the first section are explicitly equated with the imported terminology “accompanied by stains” and “stainless”. The latter doubtlessly stem from the Ratnagotravibhāga, where the Buddha-nature is defined as suchness accompanied by stains (samalā tathatā) and the transformation of the basis as stainless suchness (nirmalā tathatā).

To sum up, the Madhyāntavibhāga combines the traditional Yogācāra formula “the perfect is the dependent empty of the imagined” with strands from the tathāgatagarbha theory, according to which unconditioned\(^{149}\) Buddha-element is empty of adventitious stains, but not of the inseparable Buddha-qualities\(^{150}\).

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\(^{148}\) MAVBh 24, ll. 4-13: kathaṁ śīnyatāyāḥ prabhedo jñeyah / samkliśtā ca viśuddhā ca / ihy asyāḥ prabhedaḥ / kasyāṁ avasthāyāṁ samkliśtā kasyāṁ viśuddhā / samalā nir- 

malā ca sā / yadā saha malena varttate tadā samkliśtā / yadā prahiṇamalā tadā viśuddhā / yadi samalā bhūtvā nirmalā bhavati kathaṁ vikāradharminīrtvād anityā na bhavati / yas-

mād asyāḥ abdhatukanakākāśaśuddhivac chuddīr iṣyate // āgantukamālamāpamāṁ na tu 
tasyāḥ svabhāvāntvān bhavati /.

\(^{149}\) See RGV I.5-6, where Buddhahood is taken to be without beginning or end and thus unconditioned (RGVV, 7, l. 14 – 8, l. 1: “Buddhahood is unconditioned. […] As having neither beginning, middle nor end by nature, it is unconditioned.” asaṁskṛtam […] bud-
dhatvaṁ […] // anādīmadhyāntamadhvanaprakṛtivīrvād asaṁskṛtam /).

\(^{150}\) RGVV, 76, ll. 3-4 (RGV I.155): “The [Buddha]-element is empty of adventitious [stains], which have the defining characteristic of being separable; but it is not empty of
However one wishes to combine these two formulas, a consistent reading of the *Madhyāntavibhāga* requires, as I already pointed out in my paper on Tāranātha’s “gŽan stoṅ sñiṅ po”, operating with the Madhyamaka distinction of two truths, and following MAV III.10 in accepting only the perfect nature as the ultimate truth. In doing so, one should not overlook the fact of two models of trisvabhāva which reflect varied, not yet completely harmonized strands of thought. In this respect, the *Madhyāntavibhāga* does not differ from other texts of the early Yogācāra school in not only drawing on early Mahāyāna thought but also featuring a rich background of Abhidharma analysis. Sthiramati’s uncertainty about the ontological status of false imagining may thus reflect the Abhidharmic background of this early Yogācāra material. Thus, it is generally asserted in the Hinayāna schools that conditioned, dependently arising entities really exist. On the other hand, such a stance would of course be incompatible with a Madhyamaka understanding of the Yogācāra, which is at least attempted in some passages.

5. Conclusion

Both Śākya mchog ldan and Dol po pa profit from the tensions between different trisvabhāva models in the pertinent passages of the *Madhyāntavibhāga* and its commentaries, and follow the exegetical solution by restricting the ontological status of false imagining to the level of apparent truth. But from this point onwards the two masters depart from each other. Śākya mchog ldan remains more faithful to the Yogācāra, in taking the dependent nature as being empty of the imagined. What remains in emptiness is thus not only an unchangeable perfect nature, but also the perfect in terms of being unmistaken. This is similar to Raṅ byun rdo unsurpassable qualities, which have the defining characteristic of not being separable.” *(śūnyā āgantukair dhātuḥ savinirbhāgalakṣaṇaiḥ / aśūnyo ’nuttaraiḥ dharmair avinirbhāgalakṣaṇaiḥ //)*.

151 See v. Rospatt (1995:69ff.), who observes that in the early Yogācāra the contradiction between Abhidharma and Mahāyāna ontology was solved by more or less incorporating the doctrine of the existence of momentary caused entities into the description of the dependent nature. The Mahāyāna stance that the momentariness of the dharmas means nothing other than their mere non-existence could then be comfortably brought into line with the imagined nature of the trisvabhāva doctrine.
rje’s “mere appearance”, which corresponds to the apparent truth included in the Buddha-nature. Following the Yogācāra definition of emptiness in such a way, the Ratnagotravibhāga must be interpreted in terms of a Buddha-nature which is inside time and thus consists of moments. This allows for a theory of seeds which naturally grow into the qualities of a Buddha. For Śākyamchog Idan, the basis of emptiness is thus not the ultimate truth alone. In other words, his Yogācāra-based gzan stōn is not defined along the lines of an ultimate being empty of the apparent.

Dol po pa, on the other hand, follows more the Ratnagotravibhāga when defining his gzan stōn: an unconditioned Buddha-element interpreted as being completely transcendent (beyond the world and time) is taken to be empty of adventitious stains. Such a tathāgatagarbha-based gzan stōn requires reinterpreting the trisvabhāva theory by taking a perfect nature restricted to its unchangeable aspect as the basis of negation. Given the Ratnagotravibhāga elements in the Madhyāntavibhāga, such an interpretation is not completely out of question. One could argue in support of Dol po pa, that Śākyamchog Idan’s gzan stōn interpretation of the first part of the first chapter in the Madhyāntavibhāga which is centered on false imagining or the dependent nature defines in a first step the emptiness of the correct apparent from the false apparent. From that one still has to go one step further, though, and explain the emptiness of the ultimate from the correct (and false) apparent in line with the Ratnagotravibhāga.

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MAV: Madhyāntavibhāga. See Madhyāntavibhāgaabhāsyas
MAVBh: Madhyāntavibhāgaabhāsyas

152 It is not the case though, that all parts of the Ratnagotravibhāga explain Buddha-nature or Buddha-hood in such a way. Thus the explanations of the three kāyas in the second chapter rather suggest that the latter constantly remain in sansāra — and thus in time — as long as sentient beings need help (see Takasaki 1966:331-5).
MAVŢ: Madhyāntavibhāgaṭīkā
   See also NGMPP reel no. A 38/10.
RGV: Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra
   the Ratnagotravibhāga śāryākhyā)
RGVV: Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā. See Ratnagotravibhāga

TIBETAN TEXTS

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   “Dris lan yid kyi mun sel žes bya ba lcags mo’i dris lan bzung so”. The Songs
   of Esoteric Practice (mGur) and Replies to Doctrinal Questions (Dris lan)
   of Karma 'Phrin las pa, 88-92. Reproduced from prints of the 1539 Rin chen
Karma pa Raṇ byuṅ rdo rje (the Third Karmapa)
   — dbu ma chos dbyiṅs bston pa’i rnam par bśad pa bzung so. 52 fols., dbu med,
     unpublished.
   — zab mo naṅ gi don žes bya ba’i gzung bzung so (block print). Published
     together with the rNam šes ye šes ’byed pa and the bDe bar bṣegs pa’i sṅiṅ
   — Raṇ ’grel: zab mo naṅ gi don gsal bar byed pa’i ’grel pa bzung so (block
     print). No place, no date. (The work itself was composed at the O rgyan kyi
     mkhan po padma ‘byuṅ gnas kyi sgrub gnas in 1325 (fol. 92b6)).
Koṅ sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas:
   — rGyud bla ma’i bṣad srol: Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos sṅiṅ
     po’i don mhon sum lam gyi bṣad srol daṅ sbyar ba’i rnam par ’grel pa phyir
     mi ldog pa seṅ ge’i ē na ro žes bya ba bzung so. Rumtek Monastery: no date.
   — zab mo naṅ gi don gyi ’grel pa: rNaṅ ’byor bla na med pa’i rgyud sde rgya
     mtsho sṅiṅ po bsdus pa zab mo naṅ gi don ŋuṅ ŋu’i tshig gis rnam par ’grel
'Gos Lo tsaṅ ba gZon nu dpal
   Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos sṅiṅ po’i bka’i gsum pa hrsi
   dka’i me loṅ. Ed. by Klaus-Dieter Mathes (Nepal Research Centre Pub-
Tāranātha:
   — “gZan sngo sṅiṅ po”, rJe btsun tāranātha’i gsum ’bum bzung so, vol. 4, 491-514.
   — “Zab don ŋer gcig pa bzung so”, op. cit., vol. 4, 781-95
Dol po pa Šes rab rgyal mtshan:
   — “bKa’i bsdus bzi pa’i don gtsi tshigs chen po”, Kun mkhyen dol po’i gsum ’bum,


’Ba’ ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzañ


Sa bzang Mati pan chen ’Jam dbyangs Blo gros rgyal mtshan


gSer mdog pan chen Śākya mchog ldan


— “Byams chos lha’i lam gyi rim pa gsal bar byed pa’i bstan bcos rin chen sgron gyi sgo ’byed ces bya ba bzhugs so”, op. cit., vol. 11, 39-155

— “Zab zhi spros bral gyi bsdad pa stoñ ñid bdud rtsi’i lam po che gsal ba bzhugs so”, op. cit., vol. 4, 107-207

— “Sni rta chen po’i srol gnis kyi mam par dbye ba bsdad nas ñes don gcig tu sgrub pa’i bstan bcos kyi rgyas ’grel bzhugs so”, op. cit., vol. 2, 471-619.


OTHER WORKS


—. (2003). See ‘Gos Lo tsā ba gZon nu dpal: Thig pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i bstan bcos kyi ’grel bṣad de kho na nūd rab tu gsal ba’i me loṅ.


