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ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE NON-MENTATION
(*AMANASIKĀRA*) DOCTRINE IN INDO–TIBETAN BUDDHISM*

DAVID HIGGINS

I. Introduction

The first widespread use of *amanasikāra*¹ (‘non-mentation’) as a specific description of Buddhahood occurs within the Indian Siddha movement, although the term is not unknown in the Pali canon.² The

* I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Tom Tillemans for his valuable comments and suggestions on earlier drafts of this paper. I am also much indebted to the late Herbert Guenther with whom I had the opportunity to study and discuss many of the texts I have cited. The paper also benefited from dialogues with several participants of the 2006 Graduate Students Conference at Hsi Lai Temple, Los Angeles, where I presented a much abridged version of this paper. In particular, I would like to thank Elon Goldstein and Ching Keng, both of Harvard University. It would be remiss not to offer sincere thanks to the editors of JIABS, Helmut Krasser and Birgit Kellner, and the two reviewers for their close reading of the paper and many cogent suggestions and clarifications, especially Klaus-Dieter Mathes who kindly made available his forthcoming paper on Maitrīpa’s *Amanasikārādhāra* during final revisions of this paper.

¹ ‘Non-mentation’ and ‘non-egocentricity’ are two possible translations of *amanasikāra* (T. *yid la mi byed pa*), a technical term that is as rich in nuances as its counterpart *manasikāra/manaskāra* (T. *yid la byed pa*). In Abhidharma exegesis, *manaskāra* occurs as the last in a sequence of five omnipresent (Skt. *sarvaga*, Tib. *kun tu ’gro ba*) mental events (*caitta*) that are present, overtly or covertly, in all conscious processes. See, for example, *Abhidharmasamuccaya* p. 6. As the natural culmination of the third omnipresent mental event ‘intentionality’ (*cetanā*) which describes the general object-directedness of mind, *manaskāra* has the function of ‘bringing to mind’ or ‘setting one’s mind upon’ (focusing on) a particular object and remaining involved (conceptually and affectively) with it. When used as verbs, I have translated the terms accordingly. While ‘mentation’ and ‘non-mentation’ are generally adequate as translations of *manasikāra* and *amanasikāra* in their deployment as abstract nouns (and have been adopted throughout this paper for the sake of consistency), ‘ego-centricity’ and ‘non-egocentricity’ are more precise in contexts where the Sanskrit or Tibetan terms have been interpreted in line with the nuanced Cittamātra conception of *manas* as both an intentional (object-intending) and reflexive (‘I-intending’) operation that structures experience in terms of an ‘I’ (subject) and ‘mine’ (object). See below sections VIII and XII and notes 37 and 41.

² In *Majjhimanikāya* (I 436) and *Aṅguttaranikāya* (IV 425), the *amanasikāra* of the

term and its Apabhraṃśa variant *amaṇasiāra* are associated in particular with the mystical songs (*dohā* or *vajragūti*) of Saraha, the most famous of the early Siddhas,³ and a cycle of texts attributed to his commentator Maitrīpāda (aka Maitrīpa, b. 1007 or 1010)⁴ referred to in Tibet as the *Yid la mi byed pa'i chos skor* or “The Cycle of Teachings on Non-mentation.”⁵ The term also appears in certain songs of Tilopa (988–1069),⁶ the Siddha from whom the Tibetan bKa' brgyud tradition claims descent. We find in the relevant passages of these authors the seeds of an Indo-Tibetan hermeneutical tradition according to which *amanasikāra* is understood as a descrip-

concept of the multiple (*nānattasaññā*) is identified as the goal in the *ākāśaṇāñcāyatana*. On later Mahāyāna sources, see note 37 below.

³ The dates of Saraha remain subject to controversy. The problem is compounded not only by textual references to more than one Saraha but by the numerous appellations used for the different Sarahas, such as Rahūlabhadra, Śabari, Sarojavajra, Saroruha, and Saroruhavajra (Shahidullah 1928: 29). Moreover, Tibetans refer to the Siddha Saraha by various names such as Sa ra ha, Sa ra ha chen po, Bram ze chen po, mDa' bsnun pa (= Sarahan, “one who has shot the arrow”), Ri khrod pa chen po Saraha. This Saraha seems to have lived sometime between the seventh and early eleventh centuries CE. See Kvaerne (1977) and Ruegg (1981) for an examination of the available research on possible dates. Rahūl Sāmkṛtyāyan (1957: 1–39) establishes Saraha's lineal successors as contemporaries of King Devapāla (810–850), and links him with the beginning of the renaissance of Buddhism during the Pāla Dynasty, particularly at Nālandā university, under the reign of King Dharmapāla (970–810). Shahidullah places Saraha at around 1000, a date supported by the tradition that Saraha conferred initiation on a king named Ratnapāla. This could refer to the Ratnapāla who reigned in Assam from 1000 to 1030. Support for this date is also found in a Tibetan tradition which makes Maitrīpa (eleventh century) a direct disciple of Saraha. See Guenther (1969: 13). In support of this thesis, Guenther mentioned in personal correspondence the existence of a Tibetan 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud work he had seen in Ladakh that purports to be a record of a dialogue in the form of question and answer between Maitrīpa and his master Saraha.

⁴ On Maitrīpāda (alias Advayavajra and Avadhūtipāda), see *Deb ther sngon po*, da, fol. 2af. (BA 841f.). See also Mathes (2006).

⁵ This cycle is listed in Bu ston's *gSan yig*, fol. 58b1 and Padma dkar po's *gSan yig*, fol. 33b2. Its history and general significance are dealt with in Padma dkar po's *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, fol. 16a3. For a comparative listing of Bu ston's and Padma dkar po's versions supplemented with listings from the *Advayavajrasaṅgraha* and the Tohoku catalogue to the *bsTan 'gyur*, see Broido (1987), Appendix B, p. 55f.

⁶ On Tilopa (alias Tillopa, Tillipa, Tailopa, Telopa, and Taillikapada), see Hoffman (1956: 140–45) and Guenther (1963: xiv).

tion of, and often also defended as a theory of, the highest experience of Buddhist Tantrism known as Mahāmudrā (*phyag rgya chen po*).

This paper will inquire into the shifting meanings of *amanasikāra* as it developed in various contexts of Buddhist discourse, Indian and Tibetan. Attention has recently been drawn to its occurrence in certain polemical contexts surrounding the Sino-Indian controversy between Instantaneist (*cig car ba*) and Gradualist (*rim gyis pa*) approaches to the goal of awakening (*byang chub*) as they were represented at the so-called bSam yas debate by the Chinese Ch'an master Hwa shang Mahāyāna (Mo ho yen) and the Indian Buddhist monk Kamalaśīla (750–795) respectively.⁷ We will begin by sketching the genealogy of the term in these contexts, touching only briefly on those issues concerned with the debate which have been treated at length by others. Attention will then shift to the main focus of this paper: a preliminary survey of non-mentation teachings in the tradition extending from Saraha and Maitrīpāda down through a long line of Tibetan bKa' brgyud masters. While these teachings by their nature elude intellectual comprehension and resist easy classification, they have been too influential with Tibetan bKa' brgyud traditions to simply leave aside. It is therefore hoped that this cursory overview will broaden our limited understanding of this important tradition and shed light on the still poorly understood complex of influences that inspired the non-gradual Mahāmudrā teachings of Tibet.

II. *amanasikāra* and bSam yas polemics

In the *sBa bzhed*,⁸ an early Tibetan chronicle (probably eighth century) on the bSam yas debate, *amanasikāra* is presented as representative of an instantaneist doctrine attributed to Hwa shang advocating the suppression of all mental activity. Kamalaśīla criticizes a

⁷ See Demièvre (1952), Ruegg (1989: 192f.), David Jackson (1994), Roger Jackson (1982), van der Kuijp (1984), Broido (1987), and Gomez (1987: 96f.).

⁸ A succinct account of the bSam yas debate according to the early *sBa bzhed* is given by Faber (1986). Relevant materials on the debate from the later (*Zhabs btags ma*) version are found in Houston (1980). On the probable history of the earlier and later versions, see Ruegg (1989: 67f.).

similar doctrine (although the concepts used, such as *āsaṃjñīsamāpatti* are unmistakably Indian) in his first *Bhāvanākrama* without identifying its proponent (Hva shang is mentioned nowhere in his three *Bhāvanākramas*). The gist of his critique is that *amanasikāra* does not imply the suppression or cessation of mental activity but rather its progressive refinement through the gradual elimination of subjective distortions. The relevant passage from the *Bhāvanākrama* I⁹ reads:

When the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* (NPD) states that “non-mentation abandons characteristics (*mtshan ma = nimitta*) such as [material] ‘form’ (*gzugs = rūpa*),” what it means is that there is no mentation directed toward things that are not perceived when analyzed though discerning insight but it does not [mean] a simple absence of mentation.

It is not an abandonment as in the conceptless absorptions (*'du shes med pa'i snyom par 'jug pa = āsaṃjñīsamāpatti*) and so forth, [i.e. an abandonment] due to simply giving up mentation which has been attached to form and so forth since beginningless time.

Thus, Kamalaśīla singles out mistaking *amanasikāra* for the absolute non-existence of *manasikāra*¹⁰ as the major misinterpretation of this concept, a point he further clarifies in his *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī-ṭīkā*.¹¹ But this non-existence insofar as it is no thing whatsoever (*dnegos po med pa*), cannot serve as a cause of anything and thus leaves no possibility of genuine conceptual analysis (*yang dag par so sor rtog pa = bhūtapratyavekṣā*). And without such analysis, Kamalaśīla argues, it is impossible not to mentally engage (*yid la mi byed*

⁹ Tucci (1958) 261. In the following passage, I have standardized Tucci's transliteration: *nam par mi rtog pa la 'jug pa'i gzungs las yid la mi byed pas gzugs la sogs pa'i mtshan ma spong ngo zhes gsungs pa gang yin pa de yang shes rab kyi brtags na mi dmigs pa gang yin pa de der la yid la mi byed par dgongs kyi / yid la byed pa med pa tsam ni ma yin te / 'du shes med pa'i snyoms par 'jug pa la sogs pa ltar / thog ma med pa'i dus nas gzugs la sogs pa la mngon par zhen pa'i yid la byed pa spangs pa tsam gyis spong ba ni ma yin no //*

¹⁰ In Sanskrit, the negative prefix *a-* may be taken either as an absolute, non-affirming negation or as a relative, affirming negation whereas in Tibetan, these are generally, though not always, distinguished by the use of *med* for the former and *min* or *ma yin* for the latter.

¹¹ P v. 105 118.5.7f.

pa) in the characteristics of material forms and the other groupings (*skandhas*) present to cognition. Thus there is no *amanasikāra* apart from this *manasikāra* (*yid la byed pa de las gzhan yid la mi byed pa yang ma yin*) taken in the sense of “genuine conceptual analysis.” Kamalaśīla goes on to show that what is intended by *amanasikāra* is none other than this genuine analysis, the former being the result (*phala*) of the latter’s operation as a counter-agent (*pratīpakṣa*) to ordinary mentation (*manasikāra*). Conceptual meditation, in other words, is a necessary condition for non-conceptual realization.¹²

The characteristics of genuine conceptual analysis are what is intended in [using the term] “non-mentation.” While it is of the essence of divisive conceptualizing, it is nonetheless burned away by the fire of genuine gnosis arising from itself, just as a fire kindled by rubbing two sticks burns these very pieces.

As recently noted by Klaus-Dieter Mathes,¹³ Kamalaśīla’s gradualist view of *amanasikāra* as the non-conceptual outcome (*phala*) of conceptual analytical meditation reinterprets the NPD’s understanding of *amanasikāra* as direct, non-conceptual realization to bring it into line with the traditional progressivist Mahāyāna-Madhyamaka paradigm. This revisionist interpretation was not always endorsed by later Tibetan bKa’ brgyud scholars. ’Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal (1392–1481), for example, contrasts this gradualist interpretation of *amanasikāra* with the interpretation advanced by Maitrīpa advocating direct, non-conceptual realization and the abandonment of mental constructs through unmediated recognition of their luminous nature. As gZhon nu dpal states in his commentary to the *Dharmadharma-tāvībhāga-kārikās* (Mathes’ translation):¹⁴

As to what has thus been taught in the DhDhV, it is the meaning of entering the non-conceptual that has been established [here]. There are obviously two

¹² The following passage is quoted in Mathes (2005) 32, n. 48. The translation is my own. *yang dag par so sor rtog pa’i mtshan ma ni ’dir yid la mi byed par dgongs so // de ni nmam par rtog pa’i ngo bo nyid yin mod kyi / ’on kyang de nyid las byung ba yang dag pa’i ye shes kyi mes de bsregs par ’gyur te / shing gnyis drud las byung ba’i mes shing de gnyis sreg par byed pa bzhin no //*

¹³ See Mathes (2005) 12f.

¹⁴ Mathes (2005) 13–14.

traditions [, however,] of how to comprehend the meaning of this *sūtra*. Kamalaśīla maintains that the [interpretative] imaginations that must be given up can be only given up on the basis of insight resulting from thorough investigation. It is maintained in the commentary on Maitrīpa's *Tattvadaśa-ka*, by contrast, that they are not given up as a result of thorough investigation, but of a "meditative stabilization which [experiences] reality exactly as it is" (Skt. *yathābhūtasamādhi*). The latter knows the own-being of [even] that which must be given up as luminosity. Here it is reasonable to follow Maitrīpa, who [re]discovered this treatise.

In Tibet, the association of *amanasikāra* with a doctrine of the Chinese Hva shang purportedly encouraging the suppression of all mental activity was introduced in several works by Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251) in order to attack, by way of analogy, a certain non-Tantric "present-day Mahāmudrā system" (*da lta'i phyag rgya chen po*) which he describes as being for the most part (*phal cher*) a Chinese doctrine or even as Chinese-style rDzogs chen (*rgya nag lugs kyi rdzogs chen*).¹⁵ This criticism and the subsequent charges of philosophical incoherence by the dGe lugs pa and

¹⁵ Sa skya Paṇḍita's critique of the "Present-day Mahāmudrā" or "Neo-Mahāmudrā" is found in his *sDom gsum rab dbye*, *Thub pa'i dgongs pa rab tu gsal ba* and *sKye bu dam pa mams la spring ba'i yi ge*. Sa skya Paṇḍita's source appears to have been the *sBa bzhed* since he refers to a *dPa' bzhed*, *dBa' bzhed*, or '*Ba' bzhed* in his discussions of Hva shang's doctrines. It is important to note that that Sa skya Paṇḍita never directly criticizes the *amanasikāra* tradition of Saraha and Maitrīpāda. This is not surprising given that the Siddha Virūpa, who is regarded as spiritual progenitor of the Sa skya tradition, similarly extols non-mentation in his spiritual songs. See for example his *Dohākośa*, in '*Phags yul grub dbang rnam kyi zab mo'i doha rnam las khol byung mi tig phreng ba*, pp. 158–9. Sa pan's critique was mainly directed at some of the non-gradual Mahāmudrā teachings associated with sGam po pa emphasizing the direct introduction (*ngo sprod*) to one's natural mind. These were repudiated on the grounds that (1) they were being taught independently of the Tantric system of *mudrās* elaborated by Nāropa and transmitted in Tibet by his disciple Mar pa, that (2) they represented newly introduced doctrinal innovations of questionable (i.e., non-Indian) provenance and that (3) they advocated an erroneous non-conceptual, non-gradual approach to goal-realization. See David Jackson (1994: 72f.) In this connection, it is worth noting that the Mahāmudrā teachings of the Indian Siddhas were decidedly non-gradual, encouraging direct, non-conceptual, spontaneous forms of meditation and instruction, and were frequently taught independently of the Tantric system of four *mudrās*. Whatever the non-Indian influences on sGam po pa's varied discourses on Mahāmudrā, it is in the teachings of the Indian Siddhas and their Tibetan successors (such as Mar pa and Mila ras pa) that we find the major source of inspiration for sGam po pa's own non-gradual Mahāmudrā teachings.

Sa skya pas (who, by the sixteenth century, had both become political rivals of the bKa' brgyud pas)¹⁶ led many bKa' brgyud masters including gZhon nu dpal, Padma dkar po (1527–92), Situ bsTan pa nyin byed (dates unknown), Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–54), Dvags po bKra shis rNam rgyal (1512–87) to respond by (i) refuting allegations that their tradition had any connection with Hva shang (the rNying ma pas were less reluctant to acknowledge his influence or Chinese influence in general);¹⁷ and (ii) defending *amanasikāra* both

¹⁶ The sixteenth century was marked by power struggles between the Karma pas and dGe lugs pas for territory in Khams and gTsang. At this time the Karma pas, Sa skya pas and dGe lugs pas all vied for patronage and assistance at the Mongol court of Gengzhiz Khan and his successors. The 'Brug pa sect of the bKa' brgyud was also drawn into the political turmoil. Ngag dbang rnam rgyal (1594–1691), the recognized incarnation of Padma dkar po (1527–1592), was forced to flee to Bhutan (in 1616) under the enmity of the House of gTsang and Rva lung monastery, the seat of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud, and its affiliates were seized by the gTsang authorities. See Smith 1970: 6. By the seventeenth century, the dGe lugs pas had gained the upper hand in these political struggles and were to maintain a theocracy up to the time of the Chinese invasions of the last century. See Stein (1962: 80f.), and Snellgrove & Richardson (1968, chapters 7–9).

¹⁷ Klong chen rab 'byams pa makes two intriguing references to a “Ha shang Mahāyāna” in his writings. In discussing the historical genesis of Mantrayāna (*gsang sngags ji ltar byung ba'i tshul*), Klong chen pa (*Grub mtha' mdzod*, fol 139b4f.) argues for a much larger number of authentic *sūtras* and *tantras* than the gSar ma redactors allowed for. He notes the presence in Tibet of “many *sūtras* and *tantras* that were to be found in India, as well as many that were not.” Concerning *sūtras*, he mentions “many *sūtras* translated into Chinese before Sūryasiddhi destroyed the manuscripts in a fire”. According to *Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India*, pp. 141–3, Sūryasiddhi (Tibetan Nyi ma dngos grub) was an anti-Buddhist king responsible for a fire at Nālandā university that destroyed a large number of Sanskrit Buddhist texts. Klong chen pa goes on to say that many of the Chinese translations including the *Avataṃsakasūtra*, [*Mahā*]parinirvāṇa[*sūtra*], and *Vinayāgama* ('*dul ba lung*) “were translated by Vairocana and 'Ba' sang shi based on originals deriving from the mind of the Chinese Pandit Ha shang Mahāyāna” (*rgya nag gi pan di ta ha shang ma hā yā na'i blo las*). It is not possible, Klong chen pa concludes, for any but the omniscient to assess the measure/scope of a teaching or an individual (*chos dang gang zag gi tshad*). Vairocana (renowned rDzogs chen scholar, translator, and student of Padmasambhava) and 'Ba' sang shi (ta) have been clearly identified with the early residents at bSam yas and are counted among the seven original Sangha members (*sad mi mi bdun*) who were ordained by Śāntarakṣita in the eighth century. (Tucci 1958: 12f.) 'Ba' sang shi served as an envoy sent by the Tibetan king Mes ag tshom to the T'ang court of China on account of the emperor's interest in Buddhism. Among the supporters of Hva shang in the ensuing rift between Indian and Chinese factions are mentioned mNya Bi ma or sNa Bye ma (possibly Vimalamitra) and Myang/Nyang Ting nge 'dzin bzang po, both important figures in the early history of rDzogs chen. rDzogs chen works from the early period such

as a valid description of the experience termed Mahāmudrā (“Supreme Seal”) and as an authenticated tradition of Mahāmudrā instructions inspired by Saraha and systematized by his commentator Maitrīpa. The corpus of twenty-five texts known in Tibet as the *Yid la mi byed pa’i chos skor nyi shu rtsa lnga*, most of which are available in Sanskrit in the *Advayavajrasaṅgraha*,¹⁸ form the main textual basis for this tradition.

as the *Chos ’byung Me tog snying po* of Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1124–1192) and the *bSam gtan mig sgron* of gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes (probably eighth century) give an impartial account of Hva shang’s teachings. The latter interestingly considers both Kamalaśīla’s and Hva shang’s positions to be deviations (*gol sa*) from the more inclusive *rDzogs chen* perspective.

One clear instance of Hva shang’s influence on classical rNying ma thought is a passage in Klong chen pa’s *gNas lugs mdzod* (fol 6b1 and auto-commentary, fol 33b2 f) which begins: “The sun of self-originated pure awareness (*rang byung rig pa*), the ultimate reality (*don dam*), / Is equally obscured by the white or black clouds [of] virtue or evil ...” See Faber (1986: 47–8) for Hva shang’s virtually identical statement recorded in the *sBa bzhed*. Klong chen pa’s commentary on this passage is most interesting (33b6): “Although at the time the Mahāpaṇḍita Ha shang made this statement, narrow-minded people could not comprehend it, it in fact holds true. It is kept secret from those on the lower spiritual pursuits; were they to denigrate it because their minds could not comprehend it, they would only plunge, on account of this *karma*, into the lower destinies.” (*slob dpon chen po ha shang gis gsungs pas de dus blo dman pa’i blor ma shong yang don la de bzhin du gnas so / theg pa ’og ma gsang ba blor mi shong bas skur pa btob dus kho las des ngan song du ltung ba’i phyir ro //*)

Later rNying ma pas did not necessarily share Klong chen pa’s high estimation of Hva shang. Mi pam rgya mtsho (1846–1912), for example, distinguishes the correct understanding of *yid la mi byed pa* – “non-mentation [resulting] from not seeing any characteristics of objective references whatsoever once all attachments to entities have been undermined” (*dnogs zhen thams cad khegs nas dmigs gtad kyi mtshan ma ci yang ma mthong nas yid la mi byed pa ...*) – from Hva shang’s annihilationist version which supports the suppression of all thoughts. Concerning the latter, Mi pham cites a passage from the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (pp. 37–8) which presents *amanasikāra* as one of five factors that are to be eliminated. See *dBu ma rgyan gyi nam bshad ’jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa’i zhal lung*, p. 57.1f.

¹⁸ See note 5 above and Bibliography under Maitrīpa.

III. Maitrīpa on *amanasikāra*

It is of interest to note that Maitrīpa's views regarding *amanasikāra* as set forth in his *Amanasikārādhāra*¹⁹ are characterized by a conspicuous concern to defend the concept against possible misinterpretation. This concern, also evident in the Siddha literature we will examine, again indicates that the Gradualist opposition to *amanasikāra* was prevalent in Indian, as well as Tibetan, polemical contexts.²⁰ Maitrīpa begins his short text by noting that this term *amanasikāra* has been widely misunderstood. Maitrīpa takes up first (i) the objection by some people that the term is ungrammatical (*apaśabda*) because "in compound [the correct form] should be *amanaskāra*."²¹ Maitrīpa responds by quoting Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* (6,3,14) where it is stated that "in the case of *tatpuruṣa* and *kṛt* [the compound] is irregular."²² Maitrīpa goes on to show that the term is both found in the *sūtras* (here he quotes the NPD) and attested in the *tantras* in order to refute two further objections: (ii) that the term

¹⁹ Sanskrit passages are based on the Japanese edition of the *Amanasikārādhāra* (hereafter AMĀ; see Bibliography). I have incorporated corrections made by Mathes in his forthcoming paper. Tibetan passages are from D v. 28, p. 276.4f.; P v. 68 p. 286.56f.

²⁰ One must nonetheless be wary of the temptation to derive "historical connections from conceptual correlations." (See Gomez 1987: 139 n. 14) Gomez argues convincingly that "the sudden-gradual opposition only reflects a very general, sometimes vague, intuition of a tension or polarity between two approaches to knowledge and action" (p. 131).

²¹ AMĀ 136,3–4: *tatra kaścīd āha / apaśabdo 'yam iti / samāse 'manaskāra iti bhavitum arhati / Tib: D v. 28, p. 276.5: yid la mi byed pa zhes bya ba 'di la phal cher log par rtogs pa ste / de la kha cig 'di skyon can gyi tshig tu smra ste / bsdus pas yid [la] mi byed pa zhes rtogs par 'gyur ro / In the last sentence, the Tibetan *yid la mi byed pa* could be corrected to *yid mi byed pa* to avoid confusion of *amanaskāra*, which it translates, with *amanasikāra*, which is invoked in the beginning of the passage.*

²² "Constructions such as *manasi* + *kṛ* are common in Sanskrit. Because a close association developed between *manasi* and *kṛ*, a syntactic compound came into being between the locative *manasi* and the verbal noun *kāra* derived from *kṛ*. When, against the general rule, the case suffix of the first member is not dropped, the compound is called *aluk* ('non-deletion')." I thank Dr. Aśok Aklujkar for sharing these grammatical observations (in personal correspondence) and refer the reader to his *Sanskrit: An Easy Introduction to an Enchanting Language* (Richmond: Svadhyaya Publications 2003), sections 29.11 fn. 7, 33.16, 34.22.

does not belong to Buddhism; (iii) that it belongs only to the *sūtra* corpus but not to the *tantras*.²³

The remainder of Maitrīpa's short text addresses a fourth objection which acknowledges the presence of the term's meaning in the *tantras* but absurdly contends (iv) that *amanasikāra* there constitutes an absolute, non-affirming, negation (*prasajyapraṭiṣedha* = *med par dgag pa*) given that *manasikāra* is the subject of the negative particle (*nañō viṣayaḥ* = *med pa'i yul*) in a non-affirming negation. To this Maitrīpa replies:²⁴

That is not the case. [A non-affirming negation] is a negation of a different type; it is a *prasajyapraṭiṣedha* ("prasajya negation") in the sense that it does not negate what is not applicable (*aprasajya*). An illustrative example: the wives of the king do not see the sun. The meaning of this is as follows: the wives of the king are kept hidden so that they do not see even the sun. This does not mean that the sun is non-existent. So what does it mean? What we negate is [only] what is applicable (*prasajya*), viz., that the king's wives see the sun. In the case of *amanasikāra* ("non-mentation") too, what we negate

²³ Maitrīpa responds to the latter objection by saying (Mathes' translation): "That is not so, for it is stated in the *Hevajra[tantra]*, in the chapter on reality [I.5.1]: 'Neither mind nor mental factors exist in terms of an own-being.' Moreover, according to the sense, [HT I.8.42ab may be] understood in terms of *amanasikāra* [as well]: 'Therefore the whole world is meditated upon [in such a way], because it should not be produced by the intellect.'" AMĀ 136,10–138, 3: *tan na / uktam hi hevajre tattvapaṭale / svarūpeṇa na cittam nāpi cetasaṃ / tathā / bhāvyaṭe hi jagat sarvaṃ manasā yasmān na bhāvyaṭe / arthād amanasikāreṇeti gamyate / Tib. D v. 28, p. 277.3f.: de ni ma yin te / he ba dzra las gsungs pa / ngo bo nyid kyis sems med cing / sems 'byung ba'ang med pa'o / de bzhin / gang phyir yid kyis ma bsgoms na / 'gro ba thams cad bsgom par bya / zhes pa'i don gyis yid la mi byed pa'o zhes rtogs par bya'o //*

²⁴ AMĀ 138,8–15: *tan na / prakārantarasya praṭiṣedhaḥ / nāprasajyaṃ praṭiṣidhyata iti prasajyapraṭiṣedhaḥ / yathāsūryapaśyā rājadhārāḥ / ayam arthaḥ / evaṃ nāma tā guptā rājadhārā yat sūryam api na paśyantīti / atra na sūryābhāvaḥ kṛtaḥ / kin nāma rājadhārānām yat sūryadarśanaṃ prasajyaṃ tan niṣiddham / amanasikāre 'pi nañā manasikāraṇaṃ yad grāhyagrāhakādi prasaktaṃ tan niṣiddham / na manaḥ / ato na doṣaḥ / Tib. D v. 28, p. 277.5: de yi ma yin na / yod pa'i dngos po'i dgag pa ni med par dgag pa'o / yang na thal ba med pa'i thal bar 'gyur ba 'gog pa'o zhes pa ni / med pa dgag pa'o / ji ltar rgyal po'i btsun mo nyi ma mthong ba ni 'dī'i don to / 'di lta bu mi mün zer zhes pa yang rgyal po'i chung ma de shin tu sbas pas nyi ma yang mi mthong ba'o / 'dir bkag pa'i nyi ma med par ma byas ba'o / gang zhe na / rgyal po'i chung ma rnam gang gis nyi ma mthong ba yod na de 'gog pa ste / yid la mi byed pa la yang yid la byed pa gang gzung ba dang 'dzin pa la sogs par yod pa de 'gog pa ste / yang ni ma yin te / 'di la skyon med do //*

by means of the negative affix [a] is only that which is applicable, viz. *manasikaraṇa* (“mentation”) consisting in [dichotomies] such as subject and object. The mind itself is not [negated]. Therefore there is no mistake.

The non-affirming negation here applies to the dichotomizing activity of mind, not to mind *per se*. This will enable Maitrīpa to argue that the absence of dichotomic mentation, with its clinging to extremes of existence and non-existence, can allow mind’s true nature, its radiant clarity to show itself. Maitrīpa goes on to consider reifications associated with mentation, particularly constructs concerning eternalism and nihilism and concludes that *amanasikāra* refers to a state in which all such superimpositions or denigrations have been completely left behind (*sarvavikalpanimittasamatikrāmā*).²⁵

Maitrīpa is now in a position to indicate how *amanasikāra* can also be understood in terms of a relative, affirming negation (*paryudāsa-pratiṣedha* = *ma yin par dgag pa*). As he states (Mathes’ translation):²⁶

Even [when *amanasikāra* is taken] in the sense of an affirming negation, there is no fault. When [someone] says “Bring a non-Brahmin,” the bringing of somebody similar to a Brahmin, a Kṣatriya or the like [is intended], but not a low-caste person of base origin, such as a wagon maker. Here, too, [where *amanasikāra* is taken as an affirming negation,] an awareness of essencelessness is maintained. Hence the tenet of Māyopamādvaya is established. From what, then, does the [undesired] consequence of the view of annihilation follow?

²⁵ For a full translation of the relevant passage, see Mathes (forthcoming).

²⁶ AMĀ 140,8–11: *paryudāsapakṣe ’pi na doṣaḥ / abrahmaṇam ānayate ukte brāhmaṇasadrśasya kṣatriyāder ānayaṇaṃ bhavati / na tu vijāṭīyasya kaṭādeḥ / atrāpi niḥsvabhāvavedanasya samsthitiḥ kṛtā / etena māyopamādvayavādasthito bhavet / kuta ucchedavādaprasaṅga itī / Tib. D v. 28, p. 278.3f.: ma yin par brtags pa’i phyogs kyang skyon med de / bram ze ma yin par khrid la shog ces pas bram ze dang ’dra ba’i rgyal po la sogs pa khrid la shog ces par gsal gyi / rigs mi mthun pa shing shing rta mkhan la sogs pa ni ma yin no / ’di la yang rang bzhin med pa’i rig pa la gnas par byas pa ste / de dag gis ni sgyu ma lta bur gnyis su med par smra bar gnas par ’gyur ro / gang^a las chad par lta bar ’gyur /*

^a Text reads *grang* but P, v. 68, 287.2.7 correctly has *gang*.

Understood in terms of an affirming negation, *amanasikāra* negates those base dualistic thought-processes that obscure reality while preserving the latter's essenceless, non-dual, illusion-like nature.

Maitrīpa finally turns his attention to understanding the specific meaning of the negative affix *a/mi* in *amanasikāra/yid la mi byed pa*. He notes that the negative particle is here taken only in a conventional (*tha snyad pa*) sense, viz. that everything is (i) illusory (*sgyu ma*) and (ii) not truly established (*yang dag par grub pa med pa*). Therefore the *a* neither negates existence nor non-existence and cannot, on the basis of this reasoning, be taken in a nihilistic sense. He further explains that *amanasikāra*

is *manasikāra* with the primary letter *a*. It is a compound in which the middle word is omitted, as in the case of 'king [fond of] greens.' In this sense, all and any mental engagement is of the nature of non-origination, i.e., *a*.²⁷

Padma dkar po will later (seventeenth century) help to clarify this passage (along with its grammatical example; see below section V), contending that 'non-mentation' is the same as 'proper mentation' (*tshul bzhin yid la byed pa = yoniso manasikāra*) or *prajñāpāramitā*, a positive application of the mind that reveals its natural condition of non-origination, unimpededness and non-duality.

Maitrīpa concludes his short text with a response to objections that his interpretation of the negative prefix *a* in terms of 'non-origination,' 'emptiness' and the like do not derive from the Buddha. We can briefly paraphrase the author's closing arguments in terms of the principal meanings he finds ascribed to this privative prefix in certain *tantras*.²⁸ (a) Firstly, in defence of understanding *a* in terms of non-origination, Maitrīpa quotes the *Hevajratantra* [I.2.1] which states that "the letter *a* is at the beginning because all phenomena

²⁷ AMĀ 142,1–3 *akārapradhāno manasikāraḥ / śākapārthivavat madhyapadalopī sam-āsaḥ / etena yāvān manasikāraḥ sarvam anutpādātmaka<ḥ / a> ity arthaḥ* / Tib. D v. 28, p. 278.5: *a yig gts'o bor gyur pa'i yid la byed pa ni yid la mi byed pa ste / lo ma'i rgyal po bzhin tshig dbus ma phyis pa'i bsdus pa'o / de gang gis ni yid la byed pa gang thams cad ni a ste skye ba med pa'i don do* / The grammatical example is found in Jayakṛṣṇa's *Subhōdīnī* commentary on the *Siddhāntakaumudī*. See Mathes (forthcoming) n. 60.

²⁸ For a full translation of this section, see Mathes (forthcoming).

have been unoriginated since the very beginning”²⁹ and the *Mañjuśrīnāmāsaṃgīti* [V.1c-2b] which similarly mentions “non-origination” as one of the senses of this ‘ultimate letter’ (*paramākṣara* = *yi ge dam pa*). (b) Secondly, in defence of understanding *a* in terms of essencelessness, Maitrīpa notes that *a* is the ‘*bija* or seed syllable of Nairātmyā,’ a feminine archetype of selflessness (*anātman*). When the *Hevajratantra* [II.4.22a] states “The first vowel symbolizes Nairātmya,” the *a* here indicates that “all acts of mentation, being devoid of self, have no abiding essence.”³⁰ (iii) Thirdly, *a* can refer to radiant clarity.³¹

Moreover, *a* is a term for radiant clarity (*prabhāsvrapada* = ‘*od gsal ba’i tshig*), and *manasikāra* is a term for self-inspiration (*svādhiṣṭhāna* = *bdag la byin gyis rlabs*). Being both *a* and *manasikāra* [i.e., *amanasikāra* is a *karmadhāraya* compound], it is called *amanasikāra*.

IV. Maitrīpa’s legacy

Before considering some key doctrinal developments of *amanasikāra* by the Siddhas and their Tibetan interpreters, it is worth briefly

²⁹ AMĀ 142,4–5: *akāro mukhaṃ sarvadharmāṇām ādyanutpannatvād ityādi* / The Tibetan here simply transliterates the Sanskrit D v. 28, p. 278.6f.

³⁰ AMĀ 142,12–13: ... *sarvamanasikāro ’nātmako ’svabhāva ity uktaṃ ca bhavati* / Tib. D v. 28, p. 279.1f.: ... *yid la byed pa thams cad bdag med pas rang bzhin med pa* /

³¹ AMĀ 142,17–18: *yadi vā / a iti prabhāsvrapadam / manasikāra iti svādhiṣṭhānapadam aś cāsau manasikāraś cety amanasikāraḥ* / Tib. D v. 28, p. 279.2: *yang na a zhes pa ni ’od gsal ba’i tshig la / yid la byed pa ni bdag la byin gyis brlab pa’i tshig ste / ’di yang a yang yin la yid la byed pa yang yin pas yid la mi byed pa’o //* The term *svādhiṣṭhāna* is important in Tantric systems such as the *Pañcakrama* where it constitutes one of the five stages and involves intitation by and self-identification with the deity. In the Siddha tradition, however, this ritual initiation and consecration is internalized such that the individual becomes directly attuned to reality without ritual mediation. Thus Maitrīpa’s student Sahajavajra states in his *Tattvadaśakaṭikā*: “The expression “fully adorned by self-inspiration” means being inspired in oneself (*bdag nyid*) in terms of the self-nature (*bdag nyid*) of the continuum of one’s mind stream becoming attuned to the self-nature of genuine reality itself. What emanates from the nature of suchness naturally adorns one ...” *rang byin brlabs pas rnam brgyan pa’o zhes bya ba ni rang nyid gnyug ma’i de kho na nyid kyi bdag nyid du ’byor pa’i sems kyi rgyun de’i bdag yid du byin gyis brlabs pa’o // de bzhin nyid kyi rang bzhin las ’phro ba rang bzhin gyis rgyan pa ...*” Cited in Mathes (2006) n. 59. Translation is my own.

assessing the impact that the interpretations of Kamalaśīla and especially Maitrīpa exerted on subsequent bKa' brgyud authors who continued defending the term against possible misrepresentation. Situ bsTan pa'i nyin byed (seventeenth century), for example, upholds Maitrīpa's elucidations of *amanasikāra* against those who had attempted to realign it with the instantaneist doctrine of Hva shang:³²

In the context of this statement “Freedom from mentation (*yid byed bral ba*) is Mahāmudrā” [from stanza 19 of Rang byung rdo rje's *Phyag chen smon lam*], some people supposed to be analytical (*dpyod ldan*) think that explaining absence of mentation as being Mahāmudrā is absurd (*ha cang thal ches*). But [we reply] there is no fault. [The reason is as follows:] The letter *a* occurring in the Sanskrit term *amanasikāra* conveys the meaning of “selflessness” (*bdag med*) or “non-origination” (*skye med*) and the like, i.e., the emptiness (*stong pa nyid*) that transcends all discursive elaborations. The remaining letters convey the idea of mentation divested of mentation (*yid la byed dang bral ba'i yid la byed pa*) where there is no attachment (*zhen*) even to emptiness itself, thus [*amanasikāra*] is established as the “Mahāmudrā of integration free from the extremes [of eternalism and nihilism]” (*mtha' bral zung 'jug gi phyag rgya chen po*).

Stated otherwise, *yid la mi byed pa* is a non-reifying understanding of emptiness in which even the tendency to identify with emptiness is abandoned. bsTan pa'i nyin byed's seemingly contradictory definition of the component *manasikāra* as “mentation divested of mentation” (*yid la byed dang bral ba'i yid la byed pa*) points to a characteristic ambivalence among the defenders of Maitrīpa's doctrine. On the one hand, *manasikāra* refers to a positive application of the mind (akin to such terms as *prajñā*, *dharmapracāya* and *bhūtapratyavekṣā*). On the other hand, it refers to a negative, egocentric operation

³² *Nges don phyag rgya chen po smon lam gyi 'grel pa*, fol. 34a1: *yid la byed bral ba 'di ni phyag rgya che | zhes pa 'di'i skabs su dpyod ldan du zhal gyis 'ches pa kha cig yid byed dang bral ba phyag rgya chen por 'chad pa ni ha cang thal ches so snyam du dgongs mod kyi skyon med de | legs sbyar gyi skad du a ma na si ka ra zhes 'byung ba'i a yig gis bdag med dang skye med la sogs pa spros pa thams cad las 'das pa'i stong pa nyid kyi don ston la | yi ge lthag ma rnams kyis stong pa de nyid la'ang zhen pa med par yid byed dang bral ba'i yid la byed pa ston pas mtha' bral zung 'jug gi phyag rgya chen por grub pa yin te ||*

of mind that hinders spiritual awakening (akin to the negative application of terms such as *vikalpa*, *mati*, and *smṛti*).

V. Padma dkar po's defence

A more elaborate defence of the term is offered by Padma dkar po in his *Phyag chen gan mdzod*.³³ There he delineates three conceptions of *amanasikāra* that represent the authentic interpretation of Maitrīpa's *Yid la mi byed pa'i chos skor*, a cycle of non-gradual Mahāmudrā teachings considered valid and important by bKa' brgyud traditions generally. Against this background, we may paraphrase his summary:

- (i) First, *amanasikāra* is considered in terms of the locative case used with reference to mind [indicated by the *i* of *manasi/la* of *yid la*]. Since the locative case refers to a locus or founding basis, the privative *a* of *amanasikāra* implies the absence of a locus or founding basis for any intentional object (*gang du dmigs pa'i gnas sam rten gzhi med pa*). This is the view expressed in the *Samvarodaya*.³⁴ Since the sense of having such a locus is refuted by the initial letter *a*, we speak of *amanasikāra*. While this firm mental fixation which holds tightly to its intentional object through a mode of apprehension characteristic of the *manasikāra* included in the five omnipresent mental events is deemed necessary in the context of establishing an ordinary calm abiding (*thun mong gi zhi gnas*), it is refuted here [in Padma dkar po's tradition] .
- (ii) Second, when *amanasikāra* is rendered as a *tatpuruṣa* compound, this *manaskāra/yid byed pa* [in which *-i/la* is not present] seems to be construed as a genitive form of the *tatpuruṣa* and is glossed as *yid kyi las = yid kyi byed* [i.e., activity of the mind], it is the activity of the mind which is here claimed to stand in need of refutation. More precisely, it is the arduous application belonging to the mode of apprehension of a grasping 'intentionality' (*sems pa*) among the five mental events that is refuted. The mental event of intentionality refers to mental activity which builds up conditioning factors in mind and has the function of setting the mind on wholesome, unwholesome or indeterminate actions. Such conditioning

³³ For the full passage from *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, v. 21, p. 38.5f. (paraphrased above), see Appendix.

³⁴ P v. 52, n. 2230.

factors are refuted. While they may establish a calm abiding, Mahāmudrā is beyond such activities and has nothing to do with *karma* that is built up. Thus, he concludes, “everything that functions as mental activity, having been established in conjunction with an intentional object – here it is shown definitively that all [such] intentional objects are completely stilled.”

- (iii) Third, the prefix (*var bcad*) *a* in *amanasikāra* may be understood in the sense of non-origination (*anutpāda* = *skye ba med pa*): *Manasikāra* is explained as *yid la byed pa*; in this case the meaning of the letter *a* is that of ‘proper mentation’ (*tshul bzhin du yid la byed pa*) or ‘taking things as they are’³⁵ and may be termed *a yid la byed pa*, ‘bringing to mind *a* [non-origination]. “In that case, the intermediary ‘*mi*’ does not figure just as [in the case of] the “king fond of greens” (*lo ma’i rgyal po*) whose name is [truncated to] “king greens.” In this case, any mental engagements (*manasikāra*) are of the nature of non-origination. Thus, Padma dkar po concludes, *a* refers to the transcending function of discerning insight (*shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa* = *prajñāpāramitā*). By way of such expressions as ‘non-origination,’ ‘unimpededness’ and so forth, such insight is able to reveal all the teachings of non-duality. As the commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* indicates, in the Mantrayāna approach, “non-duality” refers to the intrinsic essence of supreme bliss (*bde ba chen po’i ngo bo nyid*) in which there is no duality between discerning insight (*prajñā*) and skilfull means (*upāya*). In the Pāramitāyāna approach, all dualities between subject and object, knowing and the known, “I” and “mine,” which persist so long as there are the vacillations of ego-mind (*ji srid yid kyi rnam par g.yo ba*), become resolved into non-duality. The lack of individuating principle (*bdag*) in all phenomena devoid of discursive elaborations is the intrinsic nature of non-duality. Since *amanasikāra* is revealed by meanings such as those [summarized above], we speak of the “*Cycle of Teachings on Non-Mentation*,” teachings that were composed by the great teacher Maitrīpa, alias Advayavajra.

To summarize, *amanasikāra* can be understood in any of three ways, depending on how its grammar is construed: (i) no engagement in mind [locative], (ii) no engagement of mind [genetive], or (iii)

³⁵ In *Phyag chen gan mdzod* (p. 280.1), Padma dkar po quotes a *sūtra* entitled *Sangs rgyas yang dag par sdud pa’i mdo* (not included in catalogues to the Peking or Derge editions) in which “appropriate” is given as the meaning of “non-origination” (*skye ba med pa ni tshul bzhin no*).

proper mental engagement in the sense of *prajñāpāramitā*. Of particular interest in Padma dkar po's account is his equation of *amanasikāra* with proper mentation (*tshul bzhin yid la byed pa = yoniśomanasikāra*), an equation he returns to frequently in his *Phyag chen gan mdzod* and other works.³⁶ In a later passage of the *Phyag chen gan mdzod* (101.6 f) which glosses two quotations from the *Hevajratāntra*, Padma dkar po describes proper mentation as the ever-present primordial gnosis (elsewhere specified as pure awareness: *rig pa* or even *rig pa chen po*, 265.2) that reveals itself through the purifying (*dag*) of improper mentation (*tshul bzhin ma yin pa'i yid la byed pa*). This improper mentation is the source of mental agitation or distractiveness (*yengs pa*) that arises owing to the power of beginningless latent tendencies (*thog ma med pa'i bag chags kyi mthu las byung*). Mentation is a state of ignorance (*ma rig pa*) which, as mental agitation, constitutes a deviation away from proper mentation (*tshul bzhin yid la byed pa las gzhan du phyogs pa*). The retrieval of proper mentation involves firmly deciding between pure awareness and ignorance (*rig ma rig gnyis su kha tshon gcod*), the roots of nirvana and samsara respectively.

Now the terms *yoniśomanasikāra* and its counterpart *ayoniśomanasikāra* have a long history in Buddhist thought, their earliest deployment being found in the Pali canon.³⁷ Padma dkar po's spe-

³⁶ For example, *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, pages 38.2, 102.2, 116.2, 265.3, 271.3, 280.1, 287.6 and *Klan ka gzhom pa'i gtam bzhugs*, v. 21, p. 559.3.

³⁷ On *yoniśomanasikāra* (Pāli *yonisomanasikāra*), see *Dīghanikāya* III 227, *Vibhaṅga* 373. On *ayoniśomanasikāra* (Pāli *ayonisomanasikāra*), see *Dīghanikāya* III 273, *Vibhaṅgāthakatha* 148. The two terms are also found in certain works attributed to Aśaṅga/Maitreya; *yoniśomanasikāra*: *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* I 16; *ayoniśomanasikāra*: *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* XI 4; *Uttaratantra* I 55–6, 58–9. Padma dkar po's understanding of improper mentation as an adventitious distortion of appropriate mentation or pure awareness closely resembles *Uttaratantra* I 56 where improper mentation, the basis of adventitious *karma* and *kleśas*, is said to be itself based entirely on the clarity of Mind (*sems kyi dag pa la rab gnas*).

Where the term *amanasikāra* occurs in Aśaṅga/Maitreya's works, it is generally given a negative valuation. In *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* XI 3, *amanasikāra* and *ayoniśomanasikāra* are both included in a list of sixteen obstacles to the accumulation of merit and knowledge. In *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (p. 37 f), *amanasikāra* is included in a list of five impediments (*pratipakṣa*) to non-conceptual primordial gnosis (*avikalpajñāna*) whereas *manasi-*

cific (and decidedly Tantric) usage of a standard Buddhist term as a synonym for *amanasikāra* invites comparison with the synonyms invoked by both Kamalaśīla – “genuine conceptual analysis” (*yang dag par so sor rtog pa = bhūtapratyavekṣā*)³⁸ and Maitrīpa – “genuinely valid cognition” (*yang dag par rig pa*). What these terms commonly imply is a mode of cognizing things that is not channelled through the dualistic categories of representational thinking, the crucial difference being whether this cognition is “arrived at” as the fruition (*phala*) of a long drawn-out process of moral refinement and elimination of hypostases through analytical investigation (Kamalaśīla) or “disclosed” in its originary condition through a more radical clearing of dualistic tendencies (Maitrīpa and Padma dkar po).

VI. sGam po pa on *manasikāra* in Madhyamaka and Mantrayāna

The attempt made by various Indian and bKa’ brgyud authors to equate *amanasikāra* with a positive appraisal of *manasikāra* may be viewed in the light of their more general concern with legitimizing controversial ideas by showing their continuity with Mahāyāna and Mantrayāna modes of discourse. A case in point is an analysis of *manasikāra* by sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen (1079–1153) in which he compares Madhyamaka and Mantrayāna conceptions in order to show that both lead to goal-realization, albeit in different ways.³⁹ The Madhyamaka involves bringing to mind the general idea (*don spyi yid la byed pa*) of reality such that the negation (*bkag*) of

kāra provides access to non-conceptual primordial gnosis. See, however, *Madhyāntavibhāga* V 12 and *Vṛtti* where *manasikāra*, understood as the belief in an “I” or “mine” (*ahaṃkṛti = ngar ’dzin*), is presented as one of six types of distractedness (*vikṣepa*) and is said to be characteristic of the narrow-mindedness (*chung ngu’i sems*) resulting from the application of *manasikāra* in the Hīnayāna. In a similar vein, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* V 28–9 (together with Haribhadra’s *Sphuṭārthā*) specifies not setting one’s mind (*amanasikāra*) on the quintessence of awakening (*bodhigarbha*) as characteristic of the *manasikāra* of the Śrāvaka family (*gotra*) amongst the Hīnayāna.

³⁸ In *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, p. 116.2, Padma dkar po equates *yid la byed pa* with *so sor rtog pa*.

³⁹ *Zhal gyi bdud brtsi thun mongs (sic!) ma yin pa*, v. DZA, fol. 7b1f.

the four extremes (*mtha' bzhi*) pertaining to the conventional (*kun rdzob*) reality – namely, existence, nonexistence, both or neither – is claimed to yield, on the ultimate level (*don dam par*), freedom from discursive elaborations (*spros bral*) which eludes all positions (*khas len pa*). Thus the *Prajñāpāramitā* [i.e., *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*] states that although from the conventional standpoint, form is emptiness and emptiness is form, these being non-dual, from the ultimate perspective, no entities are perceived (*mi dmigs par*) at all. The Mantrayāna involves bringing to mind the actual reality (*don dngos yid la byed pa*), as illustrated by Tilopa: “Alas, self-awareness (*rang gi rig pa*) is primordial gnosis of suchness (*de kho na nyid kyi ye shes*); it is nothing whatsoever that could be shown by me!” In this case, states sGam po pa, view (*lta ba*) is devoid of any duality; felt experience (*nyams myong*) flows unobstructedly (*rgyun chad med*); cultivation (*bsgom pa*) does not succumb to bias (*phyogs su ma lung pa*); conduct (*spyod pa*) is free from acceptance or rejection (*dgag bsgrub dang bral ba*); and the goal is free from hope and fear (*re dogs bral ba*).

VII. *amanasikāra* as description and explanation

The various interpretations of *amanasikāra* formulated in response to criticisms raised at the bSam yas debate or in Indian circles should not allow us to overlook the fact that the idea first gained currency as a description of goal-realization in contexts of a mystical, rather than polemical, nature. Within the Siddha genre of mystical songs, *amanasikāra* is used to describe certain transformative experiences and modes of being, characterized by ecstasy, radiant clarity and loss of the customary sense of self, rather than to define or defend a particular line of Buddhist thought. This contrast can perhaps be best understood in terms of the distinction between a ‘description’ and an ‘explanation.’ A description is the immediate articulation, verbally and conceptually, of an actual experience one is having. Where the available words and concepts in their possible semantic combinations are inadequate to convey the experience, new words or new nuances of old words are coined. Explanation is any concept or theory that attempts to go behind an experience or description of an experi-

ence, to account for it or legitimize it, in terms of something other than what is experienced, and often for purposes extraneous to experience, be they doctrinal or tactical.⁴⁰ It would be wrong to make this distinction a categorical one. Every description, by virtue of its communicative thrust and its participation in the “system of associated commonplaces” (Max Black) surrounding every word, carries with it the sedimentation of explanatory rules. Likewise, every explanation, by virtue of its rootedness in the referential ground of language, reveals something about the world.

While it is true that the descriptive and explanatory uses of *amanasikāra* have tended to overlap in the history of its usage so that it could come to function simultaneously in soteriological and doctrinal contexts, the tradition of the Siddhas in which the term was first widely used paid curiously little attention to sectarian issues of doctrinal affiliation, even when adopting or reinterpreting standard Buddhist concepts. A matter of greater importance to them was how to actually convey an extraordinary experience by means of a medium that almost invariably falsifies, distorts or conceals what it tries to express. This factor accounts for the Siddhas’ frequent use of unconventional and antinomian uses of standard terms, one obvious example being the recurrent espousal of ‘selfhood’ (*ātmya* = *bdag nyid*) in flagrant opposition to the central Buddhist doctrine of ‘selflessness’ (*anātman*). In this light, it is not hard to see how *amanasikāra* could constitute a semantic inversion of the notion of *manasikāra*, an idea which was generally favoured in the Buddhist tradition and endorsed by the Buddha himself who frequently admonished his disciples to apply their minds (Pali: *manasi karotha*) to his teachings. It will become clear from the Siddha elucidations of *amanasikāra* examined below (section IX) that the later attempts to legitimize and domesticate the concept by bringing it into line with such standard notions as *manasikāra* and *ayoniśomanasikāra* by no means reflect

⁴⁰ Schmithausen (1981: 200) draws a similar distinction between an “immediate verbalization of an actual experience” and “the secondary transformation of such a primary verbalization effected for logical, doctrinal or even tactical reasons.”

the intentions of those who first popularized the term as an apophatic description of Buddhahood.

VIII. The Siddha conception of *manas*

Central to Tibetan developments of the *amanasikāra* doctrine were the varying conceptions of mind (*manas*) elaborated in the Indian Buddhist philosophical systems. The Yogācāra-Cittamātra conception of ego-mind⁴¹ (*manas*) as a bipartite Janus-faced process of constitution – reflexively constituting itself as a self ('I') by looking back upon the horizon from which it emerges while intentionally constituting its world by looking outward in the act of structuring its sensory-ideational information into an intelligible unity – and the possibility of reversing (*parāvṛtti*) this process, had particularly far-reaching consequences for later Tibetan interpretations of *amanasikāra*. One such interpretation will be discussed below in section XII. At this juncture, however, we will briefly consider another conception of *manas* which is of immediate relevance to the Siddha interpretations we will be examining. Padma dkar po draws our attention to a specifically Tantric and Siddha use of *manas*⁴² which diverges from both the Abhidharma conception of the mental faculty

⁴¹ This conception is traditionally distinguished from the Abhidharma-based Śrāvaka (Vaibhāṣika and Sautrantika) interpretation of *manas*, as summarized, for example, by mChims ston Blo bzang grags pa (probably fourteenth century) in his commentary on the *Abhidharmakośa* (*Chos mngon pa gsal byed legs par bshad pa'i rgya mtsho*, fol. 27a2f.):

The two Śrāvaka schools [Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas] maintain a six-fold pattern of conscious operations (*rnam shes tshogs drug*). The two Ācārya brothers [Vasubandhu and Aśaṅga], however, maintain an eight-fold pattern [which expands the six to include]: (1) a substratum consciousness (*kun gzhi'i rnam par shes pa*) which by objectifying the totality of external and internal, phenomenal and individual, referents, remains [itself] qualitatively non-distinctive (*rnam pa mi gsal*) and uninterrupted (*ma chad pa*); and (2) an emotionally tainted ego-mind which, by objectifying this [substratum consciousness], has the aspect of believing in an "I" (*ngar 'dzin pa'i rnam pa can*).

Whatever its philosophical limitations as an idealist construct, the Cittamātra eightfold model of mind provided a fruitful and highly influential conceptual scheme for elucidating the genesis, and possible transcendence, of dualistic experience.

⁴² *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, 270.3f.

(*yid dbang shes*) that becomes apparent when the six modes of perception cease and the Yogācāra-Cittamātra conception of an ‘I’ and ‘mine’ intending process (*nga dang ngar sems pa*). These latter, Padma dkar po argues, fail to describe the mind of yogis (*rnal ’byor pa’i yid*) who have gone to the heart of meditative composure (*mnyam bzhag gi ngo bor song ba*). For such individuals, mental activity (*yid kyi las*), by which we can understand thinking, feeling and conceptualization in general, continues in various forms on the level of subjective mind, but is now fed, so to say, from a higher source. The Siddhas therefore use certain terms such as genuine mind (*gnyug ma’i yid*) or mind devoid of objective reference (*dmigs pa med pa’i yid*) to describe this transformed or ex-centric subjectivity. As Padma dkar po goes on to elaborate.⁴³

Next, if one has to purify the whole complex of mind involving active dichotomic cognition (*rnam shes bya ba dang bcas pa’i yid*) at the time of settling in the realization of genuine mind (*gnyug ma’i yid*), then it [is mind (*manas*) which] serves to demarcate realization from non-realization. Here in this context of calm abiding (*zhi gnas*), the type of mental engagement that is to be abandoned (*yid byed spang rgyu*) consists in the improper forms of mental engagement.

Mind thus emerges within the field of consciousness as the pivotal factor from which the dual inclinations toward realization [direct self-recognition] or non-realization [non-recognition] proceed.

IX. Siddha interpretations of *amanasikāra*

The idea of non-mentation as it is developed in certain mystical songs attributed to Saraha and Tilopa, serves as one among many negative descriptors of an experience considered so rich and profound as to defy expression in thought and language. It is akin to, and frequently occurs alongside, a variety of other negative descriptors such as ‘transcending intellect’ (*blo las ’das pa*), ‘devoid of

⁴³ *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, 271.2f.: *de las gnyug ma’i yid bsgrub pa la bzhag pa’i tshem rnam shes bya ba dang bcas pa’i yid de thams cad dag pa dgos pa na rtogs ma rtogs kyi mtshams ’byed pa la yin no | zhi gnas kyi skabs ’dir yid byed spang rgyu ni tshul bzhin ma yin pa’i yid la byed pa de dag go ||*

representational thinking' (*bsam med, bsam du med pa*), 'devoid of subjective grasping' (*'dzin med*), 'free from discursive elaborations' (*spros bral*) 'devoid of meditation' (*sgom med, bsgom du med pa*), terms which commonly refer to a depth dimension of experience that eludes the appropriations of dualistic mentation. It is of interest to note that Saraha elaborates on the term in a relatively small number of his many Dohās. The term scarcely occurs in his famous and much commented upon *Dohā Trilogy* (*Doha skor gsum*),⁴⁴ for example, or in his *Kakhasyadohā*⁴⁵ (for which we have his *Tippana*), or in the songs attributed to him that are included in Munidatta's *Caryāgī-tiviniścaya*.⁴⁶ It is a central theme, however, in his Vajragīti Quartet comprising the *Kāyakośāmṛtavajragīti*, *Vākkośarucirasvarajagīti*, *Cittakośajavajragīti*, and *Kāyavāccittāmanasikāranāma*,⁴⁷ as well as in his *Mahāmudropadeśa*.⁴⁸ It is unfortunate that the term is given detailed attention in works for which we have no Indian or Tibetan commentaries. In the case of Tilopa, the term occurs in several of his mystical songs on Mahāmudrā including the *Dohākośa*, *Acintyama-hāmudrā*, and *Mahāmudropadeśa*.⁴⁹

At the outset, we must note a certain ambivalence in Saraha's use of *amanasikāra* and its variants. When regarded as a polemical position, Saraha is as quick to criticize its (anti-intellecualist) supporters as its (intellectualist) detractors. Early in the *Kāyakośa* we find Saraha critically assessing various Buddhist and non-Buddhist ap-

⁴⁴ See Guenther (1993). A Hindi translation and transliteration of the trilogy has been made by R. Sāṃkṛtyāyan (1957) 38f., 83f. and 99f. respectively.

⁴⁵ P v. 69, nos. 3113 and 3114 respectively. A Hindi translation and transliteration from the Tibetan *Kakhasya dohā* (but not *tippana*) is given in Sāṃkṛtyāyan (1957) 127f.

⁴⁶ See Kvaerne (1977) songs 22, 32, 38, and 39.

⁴⁷ P v. 69, nos. 3114–3118. In Sāṃkṛtyāyan (1957) 141f., 185f., 203f. and 215f. respectively.

⁴⁸ P v. 69, no. 3119. In Sāṃkṛtyāyan (1957) 249f.

⁴⁹ P v. 69, no. 3128, vol 82, no. 4635, and v. 69, no. 3132 respectively. Even a cursory comparison of existing Apabhraṃśa and Tibetan versions of the Dohās reveals considerable differences in content and arrangement and indicates that various recensions of the songs must have been in circulation. See R. Jackson (2004) 48f.

proaches to realization, among which he includes the tendency to find fault with either *yid la mi bya ba* or its opposite *yid la bya ba*:⁵⁰

Though true understanding varies with knowledge interests,
 In non-reflection (*dran med*),⁵¹ there has never been anything false.
 Though the goal varies according to efforts on the path,
 In reflection (*dran pa*), there has never been anything true.
 Though each one's meditative fixation varies with his state of indifference,
 In non-origination (*skye med*), there has never been any duality.
 Though people ascribe fault to either 'mentation' or 'non-mentation,'
 In transcending intellect (*blo 'das*), there has never been anything to search for.

Saraha's critique of the opposing positions regarding *amanasikāra* provide further evidence that the type of contentious issues staged at bSam yas during the Sino-Indian controversy were prevalent in India (though dates are less certain). What is of particular interest, however, is Saraha's exposé of the vain purposiveness common to both intellectualist and anti-intellectualist positions, the former disparaging non-mentation, the latter disparaging mentation. Both fail to go beyond intellectual deliberation.

Tilopa begins a song entitled *Dohākośa* by admonishing his listeners not to reduce *amanasikāra* to popular prejudices or to subjective demands.⁵²

⁵⁰ P v. 69, p. 103.4.3; D v. 28, p. 196, 213.3.

mos pa'i shes pas rtogs pa tha dad kyang /
dran med 'di la brdzun pa yod re skan /
lam gyi rtsol bas 'bras bu so so yang /
dran pa 'di la bden pa yod re skan /
btang snyoms dbang gis re 'jog tha dad kyang //

⁵¹ On the four symbol (*brda' bzhi*) terms *dran pa*, *dran med*, *skye med*, and *blo 'das* see Guenther (1969) 11f. and 14. I have somewhat loosely rendered *dran pa* (*smṛti*) as 'reflection' to cover the two basic cognitive operations it describes, namely, 'memory' (mnemonic reflection) and 'attention' (thematic reflection), both involving reflexivity, a reflecting *on* experience. See Padma dkar po's cogent analysis of the concept as it relates to Mahāmudrā teachings in his *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, 271.4f.

⁵² P v. 69, 131.2.3; D v. 28, p. 204, 271.6:

yid la ma byed gnyug ma'i rang bzhin la /
brdzun pa rnam kyis skur ba ma 'debs shig /
rang dbang yod pas rang nyid 'ching ma byed //

Non-mentation, [one's] genuine nature –

Do not disparage it by way of lies!

Since it is present by its own power, do not hold it as one's own 'self'!

A recurrent paradox in Siddha descriptions of goal-realization is that what is most natural comes most naturally precisely when egocentred identifications subside. Herein lies the basis for the Tantric distinction between the sense of self (*bdag*) which, as a subjective construct, is amenable to deconstruction, as in the Buddhist no self doctrine (*anātman* = *bdag med*), and authentic selfhood voiced in the first person (*bdag nyid*) which is precisely what the Siddhas mean by non-mentation. As Tilopa states it (*Dohākośa*):⁵³

The natural expression of stainless mind

Should be known by anyone [in] self-awareness (*rang rig*).

I myself am 'living being,' I myself am 'Buddha.'

I myself am non-mentation (*bdag nyid yid la mi byed pa*).

The term self-awareness (*rang rig* or *rang gi[s] rig pa*), as elaborated by Saraha, describes the experience of recognizing spontaneous ever-present gnosis as it is, stripped of all subjectivizing and objectifying tendencies. When fully recognized, it is open awareness (*rig pa*). When not recognized, it is ignorance or un-awareness (*ma rig pa*), a process-product term which at once describes the non-recognition of one's natural condition (not understanding it as it is) and the ensuing mis-apprehension (taking it for something it is not, viz. a 'self'). Saraha begins his *Cittakośa* with the following passage:⁵⁴

⁵³ P v. 69, 131.3.4; D v. 28, p. 204, 272.7:

dri med sems kyi rang bzhin la /
gang zhig rang rig shes par bya /
bdag nyid 'gro ba bdag nyid sangs rgyas te /
bdag nyid dri ma med cing bdag nyid yid la mi byed pa //

⁵⁴ P v. 69, p. 107.3.3; D v. 28, p. 198, 230.5:

skye bo lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes ni /
rang gi nyams su myong ba de kho na /
rig dang ma rig rang rig gsal ba de kho na /
mar me mun gsal rang gi rang gsal rang la sad /
'dam gyi padma 'dam la ma zhen kha dog legs /
gzung 'dzin dri ma ma spangs snying po gsal /

Spontaneous gnosis [in each] person –

That alone is felt and experienced individually.

That alone is the radiance of self-awareness in awareness and un-awareness,

A darkness-illuminating light, intrinsically self-luminous, aroused in oneself.

A lotus in a swamp resplendent in colours, unconditioned by the swamp,

One's vital quintessence shines without removing the grime of subject and object.

As a deer living in an alpine forest wanders alone,

That alone is goal-realization, unconditioned by causality.

Like the *lumen naturale* (natural light) of the medieval scholastics, self-awareness comes to light naturally for the very reason that self-illumination and self-disclosure are intrinsic to being human.⁵⁵ That our vital quintessence (*snying po*) can shine forth without having to remove the accretions of subject and object is only possible because humans are always already pervaded by spontaneous gnosis (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes*).⁵⁶

The possibility of existential recovery would be of little relevance if the tendency to glide away or go astray (*'khrul pa*) from authentic possibilities into a world of appropriated objects (*yul*) were not like-

nags khrod gnas pa'i ri dags gcig pur rgyu /
rgyu la ma zhen 'bras bu de kho na //

⁵⁵ See Heidegger's discussion of *lumen naturale* in *Being and Time*, pp. 133 and 170 and in several essays such as "Moira," in *Early Greek Thinking* (1975: 97), and "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking," in *Basic Writings* (1977: 286). In "Moira" (p. 97), Heidegger writes: "The essence of *aletheia* [i.e., truth as 'unconcealedness'] remains veiled. The visibility it bestows allows the presencing of what is present to arise as outer appearance [*Aussehen*] (*eidos*) and aspect [*Gesicht*] (*idea*). Consequently, the perceptual relation to the presencing of what is present is defined as 'seeing' (*eidenai*). Stamped with this character of vision, knowledge and the evidence of knowledge cannot renounce their essential derivation from luminous disclosure, even where truth has been transformed into the certainty of self-consciousness. *Lumen naturale*, natural light, i.e., the illumination of reason, already presupposes the disclosure of the duality [i.e., of the presencing of what is present]. The same holds true of the Augustinian and medieval views of light – not to mention their Platonic origins – which could only develop under the tutelage of an *Aletheia* already reigning in the destiny of the duality."

⁵⁶ According to sGam po pa bsod nams rin chen, "'spontaneous primordial gnosis' (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes*) refers to one's natural awareness in the present moment (*da lhar gyi tha mal gyi shes pa*) as it is primordially present (*ye nas yod pa*)." In *Zhal gyi bdud rtsi thun mongs* (sic!) *ma yin pa*, v. dza, fol. 7a2.

wise constitutive of the kinds of being (*'gro drug*) we are. According to a beautiful passage from Saraha's *Kāyakośa* quoted below, 'going astray' is engendered by mnemonic and thematic reflection (*dran pa*, see n. 51) which mentally and subjectively schematizes its content into particular appearances (*snang ba*). By this is meant not that these reflected-on appearances (*dran pa'i snang ba*) conceal an original something of which they are a mere copy or distortion but that perception is normally reduced to certain aspects of what is perceived as dictated by subjective demands (things appear *as* this or that in accordance with this or that purpose). Just as the true enjoyment of what life has to offer is only possible when one stops looking for it, so authentic subjectivity, as a process of individuation,⁵⁷ can only blossom in the absence of subjective deliberations. The *Kāyakośa* states:⁵⁸

⁵⁷ The term 'individuation' was coined by Carl Jung to describe the process of becoming a complete individual who is aware of his or her unique individuality. It refers specifically to the gradual opening of an individual's consciousness to the complete range of possible elements that are already inherent in the individual at a preconscious level. The Siddhas seemed well aware that the opening of ego-mind (*manas*) to non-egocentricity (*amanasikāra*), not unlike the conscious ego's integration of unconscious elements in Jungian psychology, does not lead to the annihilation of the subject (*bdag med*) but rather to its fulfillment in authentic selfhood (*bdag nyid*).

⁵⁸ P v. 69, p. 104.3.8; D v. 28, p. 196, 217.5:

gang la mi gnas chags pa med par spyod /
me tog sbrang rtsi sbrang mas 'thung dang 'dra /
so sor rtog pa'i ye shes thabs yin te /
ro dang phrad na ro la zhen pa med /
de ltar kun gyis shes par 'gyur ma yin /
snying po'i don gyi 'gro drug khyab mod kyang /
'gro ba dran pas bcings te pad tra'i srin /
sems las dran pa byung phyir 'khrul pa'i rgyu /
yid la mi byed shes na sangs rgyas nyid /
'khrul pa de la thabs dang shes rab med /
kye ho dbyer med shes na thabs mchog de kho na /
sangs rgyas sems can chos rnam thams cad kun /
rang gi sems nyid dag dang lhan cig skyes /
yid la mi byed yid la skyes tsam na /
dran pa'i snang ba nub ste bden brdzun med /
de phyir de nyid kho na'i yul ma yin /
dper na mig gi yul du sgra mi snang /
rnam par mi rtog rtog pa'i yul ma yin /

Like a honey bee sipping honey from flowers,
 Not staying anywhere [but] enjoying [each] without attachment,
 So individually-conceiving gnosis is the skillful means
 [To] encounter [aesthetic] flavours without attachment to [any] flavour.

It is not known by all in this way.

Though life's vital quintessence pervades the six kinds of beings,
 Beings become imprisoned by reflections [like] insects by a flower's petals.
 Because mind-based reflections arise, they become the cause of errancy.

If one recognizes non-mentation, this is Buddhahood.

[But] in this errancy, there is neither skillful means nor insight.

Alas! If one knows their indivisibility, that alone is the highest means!

Buddhas, sentient beings, the whole phenomenal [world],

Arise together with one's own pure Mind itself.

At the time when non-mentation emerges in mind,

Reflection's appearances vanish so nothing of 'true' or 'false' remains.

Therefore [non-mentation] is not an object for itself,

Just as sound does not appear as an object for seeing.

Non-conceptuality is not a conceptual object.

But when reflections become illumined by the condition of emptiness,

Reflection's appearances vanish and there is no more looking.

This lengthy passage helps us to understand how *amanasikāra* is able to function in the Siddha mystical songs as a negative description of a positive experience. The apophatic description serves as a counter-tendency to any assertive claims about the experience, be they epistemological (the attempt to reduce it to an object of knowledge), ethical-axiological (to evaluate it as good as opposed to evil) or ontological (to assert it as real as opposed to unreal). According to the *Kāyakośa*:⁵⁹

Where there is no egocentric deliberation, [that] is Mahāmudrā.

*stong pa'i rkyen gyis dran pa gsal tsam na /
 dran pa'i snang ba nub nas mthong ba med //*

⁵⁹ P v. 69, p. 105.2.6; D v. 28, p. 221.1:

*gang la yid la byar med phyag rgya che /
 mshan ma'i dran rig sna tshogs ji snyed pa /
 de nyid phyag rgya che la dbye ba med /
 rtogs dang mi rtogs gnyi ga so so min //*

However varied awareness's reflections on its [self-imputed] characteristics, These are indivisible with Mahāmudrā.

Conceptualization and non-conceptualization are not two separate things.

If apophatic descriptions point to what is ineffable in experience, they are nonetheless frequently used alongside more positive (cataphatic) descriptions such as 'radiant clarity' (*'od gsal*) or 'ultimate reality' (*chos nyid*), expressions that emphasize the positive, fecund character of mystical experience. A clear example of the mixing of the apophatic and cataphatic orders of discourse is found in the opening verse of Tilopa's *Acintyamahāmudrā*:⁶⁰

Radiant clarity, ultimate reality unborn and unceasing is
The way of Mahāmudrā, inexpressible in thought and language.
It is non-mentation, beyond what can be identified.
Homage to the unconditioned, profound and calm!

The peculiarities of negative description have enabled us to see how *amanasikāra* could paradoxically serve as a primary description, and later as a key hermeneutical definition, of the utterly positive experience known as "Mahāmudrā." But given that *amanasikāra* is precisely that which eludes positive assertions, how then is it to be cultivated (*sgom*)? Saraha's answer is, as we could expect, negative: The best cultivation (*sgom mchog*) is that which comes of its own accord in the absence of any willful cultivation. As Saraha states in his *Dohākośanāmahāmudropadeśa*:⁶¹

In Mahāmudrā which is non-mentation,
Since there is not the slightest reason to meditate, there's no meditation.
Without meditating or being divorced from what its is about is the best meditation!

⁶⁰ P v, 82, n. 4635, p. 38.5.4 f; D v, 28, 490.4:
skye 'gag med pa'i chos nyid 'od gsal ni /
smra bsam brjod med phyag rgya chen po'i lam /
ngos gzung dang bral yid la mi byed pa'o /
zab zhi 'dus ma byas la phyag 'tshal lo //

⁶¹ P 69, 110.5.3; D v, 28, p. 246.3:
yid la mi byed phyag rgya chen po la /
sgom rgyu rdul tsam med pas mi bsgom ste /
sgom med don pa 'bral med sgom pa'i mchog //

The theme is elaborated in another passage from the author's *Dohā-kośanāmamahāmudropadeśa*.⁶²

Mind cut off at its root is like the open sky.
 There being nothing to meditate on, there's no mental engagement because
 Ordinary awareness, perfectly natural in its own way of being,
 Is not deceived by artificial thought objects.
 There is no need to fake this naturally pure mind.
 So, without holding or dismissing it, leave it where it is most happy!

As 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang (1310–1391) notes in connection with these two preceding passages,⁶³ the term “meditation” (*sgom*) is to be understood in the sense of “preserving the Mahā-mudrā experience” (*phyag rgya chen po skyong ba*) or “non-mentation” (*yid la mi byed pa*), terms which similarly indicate that “there has not for a moment been any cause to interfere with it” (*de nyid la yengs rgyu skad cig kyang med pa*). The term “ordinary awareness” (*tha mal [gyi] shes pa*) also requires explication. According to Padma dkar po (*mDzub tshugs & Phyag chen gan mdzod*),⁶⁴ it is synonymous with “natural awareness” (*rang bzhin gyi shes pa*), *tha mal* and *rang bzhin* both being translations of the Sanskrit *prakṛta*. In

⁶² P v. 69, p. 110.4.7; D v. 28, p. 245.7:
rtsa ba chod pa'i sems nyid nam mkha' 'dra /
sgom du med pas yid la mi bya ste /
tha mal shes pa rang lugs gnyug ma la /
bcos ma'i dmigs pa dag gis mi bslad de /
rang bzhin dag pa'i sems la bcos mi dgos /
ma bzung ma btang rang dga' nyid du zhog //

⁶³ *Ngo sprod bdun ma'i 'grel pa Man ngag rin po che'i sgron me*, v. 11, p. 234.1f. Yang dgon pa's *Ngo sprod bdun ma* is found in the Pha jo ldings edition of the author's *bKa' 'bum* (*mGur 'bum* collection, v. 3, p. 274.1). The song is not contained in the rTā mgo edition which has a much shorter *mGur 'bum* but is otherwise identical in contents. 'Ba' ra ba was regarded as a re-embodiment of Yang dgon pa and was heir to his lineage, the sTod 'Brug, through his own root teacher Zur phug pa Rin chen dpal bzang, a student of Yang dgon pa's leading disciple Sphyan snga rin chen ldan (1202–1329). See Smith (1970: 9f.) and *Deb ther sngon po*, ja, fol. 127af. (BA 692f.). As Smith (p. 7) notes, “The sTod 'Brug ... gave rise to a host of important schools: the Ne-rings bKa' brgyud pa, the Mdo bo che ba, and the Yang dgon bka' brgyud pa among others. The Yang dgon school produced ultimately the 'Ba' ra bKa' brgyud pa, a sect that had maintained its identity up to 1959.”

⁶⁴ *rNal 'byor bzhi mdzub tshugs*, p. 484.3f. See also *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, p. 103.5f.

Padma dkar po's 'language of experience' (*myong ba'i skad*), it refers to that free-rising cognition (*thol skyes kyi rig pa*) which is arising continuously (*shar shar ba*) but only becomes fully manifest once the net of concepts (*rtog pa*) that obscures it has cleared.⁶⁵

The unwilling cultivation of non-mentation is described in the Siddha texts as a process of "spiritual attunement" (*rnal 'byor = yoga*). This process, according to Saraha's own definition (*Kāyavāccittamanasikāra*),⁶⁶ is a matter of remaining attuned to one's natural condition (*rnal ma'i don la gnas pa'i rnal 'byor*). Since this occurs only in the absence of subjective interference – either accepting or rejecting – of a grasping subject, it is known as the true concentration (*bsam gtan nyid*) as distinct from ordinary fixation involving dualistic object apprehension. When all representational and objectifying thinking has dissolved into the single flavour of non-mentation, gnosis is present as one's vital quintessence. As stated in Saraha's *Kāyavāccittamanasikāra*:⁶⁷

Without accepting or rejecting, it is naturally free in every respect.

The attunement without grasping or egocentricity is the true concentration.

Since that which cannot be cultivated as anything or sought anywhere is Inconceivable, Alas! it is the same flavour as non-mentation.

Gnosis, inconceivable and uncontrived like the sky, one's vital quintessence:

Alas! It is nothing that can be intellectually thought about or verbalized!

Mahāmudrā as an absolutely positive experience is characterized negatively during the path of recovery where its self-disclosure is made possible by a *via negativa* which gradually strips away the egoic projections and appropriations that attempt to make of it something other than it is. From the perspective of self-disclosure, how-

⁶⁵ *rNal 'byor bzhi mdzub tshugs*, p. 485.1f.

⁶⁶ P 69, 108.4.7.

⁶⁷ P v. 69, p. 108.5.6; D v. 28, p. 199, 237.3:
btang gzhag med cing rang bzhin rnam par grol /
'dzin med yid la bya med rnal 'byor bsam gtan nyid /
gang la mi bsgom gang du'ang bisal ba med pa de /
bsam du med pas yid la mi byed ro snyoms kye /
ye shes mkha' dra bsam bral ma bcos snying po don /
'di la blos yis bsam zhing brjod du med do kye //

ever, where the positive stands completely in the open and is no longer cognized as ‘other,’ propositions about mentation and non-mentation no longer apply. The *Kāyakośa* states:⁶⁸

Settled in what is neither mentation nor non-mentation,
 Since self-awareness emerges as Mahāmudrā itself,
 Mahāmudrā reveals itself to itself by itself.

X. The Siddha impact on bKa’ brgyud pa views of *amanasikāra*

What can we conclude in this final section of the paper about the Siddha interpretation of *amanasikāra* and its impact on later developments? First, it must be recognized that the idea at this formative stage in its development had not yet been codified into a unified, systematic doctrine, even if contemporary opponents of the term already identified it with the Siddha teachings. Perhaps the polyvalent significations of the term in Siddha contexts and its resistance to any univocal or unequivocal definition reflects the general tenor of the Siddha movement: its spirited disavowal of intellectual systems of any variety and of ideological identification in general. This aspect of the movement should be borne in mind when examining later attempts by Tibetan authors to retrospectively identify the concept with particular schools of Buddhist thought. For example, Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554), the eighth Karmapa, discusses *amanasikāra* in his commentary on Candrakīrti’s *Madhyamakāvātāra* and *Bhāṣya*⁶⁹ as if it were a Madhyamaka doctrine (*yid la mi byed pa’i dbu ma*) of Maitrīpa in which he had synthesized the Madhyamaka teachings of Saraha (younger and elder), Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. Although the influence of Madhyamaka on Maitrīpa’s doctrine is unmistakable, one is hard pressed to identify Saraha’s teachings with the Madhyamaka (apart from certain conceptual

⁶⁸ P v. 69, 105.3.2; D v. 28, p. 197, 221.4:
yid la bya dang mi bya med par gzhas /
rang rig phyag rgya chen po nyid la byung /
phyag rgya chen po nyid la nyid kyis bstan //

⁶⁹ *dBu ma la ’jug pa’i nram bshad*, fol. 5a4f. See also Ruegg (1988) 125.

correlations) given his own frequent critiques of all the Buddhist philosophical systems, Madhyamaka notwithstanding. In fact, Saraha's *Kāyakośa*, the work in which he gives the fullest elaboration of *amanasikāra*, begins with such a critique:⁷⁰

The Vaibhāṣikas, the Sautrāntikas,
 The Yogācāras, the Madhyamakas and the rest,
 Find fault with one another and engage in [endless] disputes.
 Oblivious to *That itself*, the sky[-like] sameness of appearance and emptiness,
 They turn their backs on spontaneity.

Despite the multiplicity of connotations in the Siddha treatment of *amanasikāra*, we can extract from the passages we have examined two overlapping deployments which strongly influenced later Tibetan interpretations: (i) Firstly, its use in didactic and rhetorical contexts as a critique of subject-centered rationality in intellectual and ethical pursuits. This is evident in the two passages of Saraha and Tilopa that were cited at the beginning of the previous section. (ii) Secondly, its use in descriptive contexts to provide a phenomenological-psychological account of the transcendence of subject-centered mind and the recovery of non-dual gnosis. This is apparent in the apophatic descriptions of *amanasikāra* examined throughout the previous section. Some examples of these influences will now be examined.

XI. *amanasikāra* and the critique of purposive rationality: sGam po pa and Rang byung rdo rje

What the use of *amanasikāra* as a counter-measure to the subjectivizing and objectifying tendencies of dualistic mind principally seeks to undermine is the purposiveness or instrumentality that surrepti-

⁷⁰ P v. 69, p. 103.3.5; D v. 28, p. 212.5:

bye brag pa dang mdo sde sngags pa dang /
rnal 'byor pa dang dbu ma la sogs te /
gcig la gcig skyon 'gel zhing rtsod par byed /
snang stong mkha' mnyam de nyid mi shes pa /
lhan cig skyes la rgyab kyis phyog par 'gyur //

tiously controls all rational-calculative thinking. We have seen that non-mentation (*yid la mi bya*) becomes no less an impediment to the free flow of experience than mentation (*yid la bya*) so long as willful deliberation is involved. For several bKa' brgyud pa authors including sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen (1079–1153) and the third Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), Mahāmudrā is precisely what comes to the fore in the absence of instrumental rational or moral deliberation. sGam po pa, for example, defines Mahāmudrā as follows:⁷¹

Here, “Mahāmudrā” means not reducing anything to ego-mind (*yid la ci yang mi byed pa*): one neither cultivates any qualities such as “non-dividedness” or “emptiness” nor eliminates any defects such as conceptualizing. That which is naturally free (*rang grol ba*) from the intellect with its dualistic beliefs is what is [meant by] “Mahāmudrā.”

The third Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje similarly disclaims the validity of a moralism which belies subjectivistic deliberations in his commentary on Tilopa's *Mahāmudropadeśa* (stanza 10):⁷²

In the context of worldly appearances, it is commonly declared that awakening to Buddhahood is attained solely on the basis of accumulating stores of merits. But when life's vital quintessence is no longer reduced to ego-mind (*yid la ma byed pa*), then ‘good’ does not yield the slightest benefit and ‘evil’ does not bring the slightest harm. If one goes to the core of radiant clarity, beyond all attachments and desires, and deeply understands it, then all phenomena belonging to samsara and nirvana [in their] multiplicity assume the single flavour of basic equality and all the masses of notions that arise in one's ego-mind (*rang gi yid*), apart from becoming friends with the Dharma-kāya in its basic equality, do not become harmful.

⁷¹ *Phyag rgya chen po rtsa ba la ngo sprod pa*, v. YA, fol. 2b5f.

⁷² *Phyag rgya chen po Gang ga ma'i 'grel pa*, p. 42.1f. The arrangement of lines in this version of the *Dohākośa* are quite different from the bsTan 'gyur version. ... 'jig rten pa'i snang ngo la bsod nams kyi tshogs gsog pa'i rten 'ba' zhig bsgrub cing 'di yis sangs rgya bar byed zer yang / snying po'i don yid la ma byed pa / dge bas phan spu tsam ma byas / sdiq pas gnod pa spu tsam yang ma bskyel zhing / zhen pa dang 'dod pa kun dang bral ba'i 'od gsal ba de nyid khong du chud cing rtogs na ni / 'khor ba dang mya ngan las 'das pa'i chos thams cad mnyam pa nyid du ma ro gcig par 'gyur zhing rang gi yid la byung ba'i rtog pa'i tshogs thams cad ni / mnyam pa nyid chos kyi sku'i grogs su 'gyur pa ma gtogs pa gnod par mi 'gyur ba yin te / ...

XII. *amanasikāra* and transformed subjectivity: Yang dgon pa's *Cittamātra-Mantrayāna* synthesis

The Siddha conception of *amanasikāra* in terms of a goal-sustained transformation of subject-centered consciousness was to be given its most lucid expression in the *Cittamātra*-based interpretations of *amanasikāra*, such as we find, for example, in the writings of the sTod 'brug mystic rGyal ba Yang dgon pa (1213–1258).⁷³ It is of interest to note that Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje, who has traced three distinct Madhyamaka lines of interpretation of the *amanasikāra* doctrine in Tibet, specifies the *Cittamātra*-based interpretation (more specifically the *sems tsam rnam rdzun gyi dbu ma*) as the one which follows the sense of the Dohās. This tradition, represented by Yang dgon pa, who evidently received it from rGod tshang pa (1189–1258?),⁷⁴ is distinguished from the Mantra-Madhyamaka (*sngags kyi dbu ma*) and Sūtra-Madhyamaka (*mdo'i dbu ma*) interpretations which are said to derive in their entirety from Marpa and Mila ras pa. The Sūtra-Madhyamaka tradition was chiefly represented and widely propagated by sGam po pa. The *Cittamātra*-Madhyamaka interpretation, like the Dohās, emphasizes an awareness devoid of the subject and object (*gzung 'dzin gyis stong pa'i shes pa*) characterized as self-radiant self-awareness (*rang rig rang gsal*).

The interweaving of *Cittamātra* and Siddha views regarding the transformation of ego-mind is conspicuous in Yang dgon pa's interpretations of *yid la mi byed pa* as presented in certain of his "Mountain Teachings" (*Ri chos*) texts. His most extensive account is

⁷³ On Yang dgon pa, see above note 63.

⁷⁴ *dBu ma la 'jug pa'i rnam bshad*, fol. 6a2f. This line is said to have been widely represented in India and Tibet by Phyag na (Vajrapāṇi) of India, a direct disciple of Maitrīpa. Yang dgon pa claims to have received a cycle of Mahāmudrā teachings from his root teacher rGod tshang pa called the *Phyag rgya chen po skor tsho* that passed through Maitrīpa (Me tri pa) and Vajrapāṇi (rgya gar Phyag na). See *Ri chos kyi phyag len gsal ba'i sgron me*, v. 1, fol. 2b5f. On the importance of rGod tshang pa in the transmission of Maitrīpa's Mahāmudrā teachings, as later noted by 'Gos lo tsa ba and Karmapa Mi bskyod rdo rje, see David Jackson (1994) 82ff.

given in first part of his *Ri chos kyi rnal 'byor bzhi pa* within the context of a lengthy elucidation of Mahāmudrā:⁷⁵

The meaning of the term *yid la mi byed pa* [derives from] the term *amanasikāra* in the Sanskrit language. As derived from this term used in the locative case, *manas* is rendered as *yid*, *sikara* is rendered as [*la*]byed *pa* and these are negated by the *a*. One thus speaks of an absence of mentation (*yid la byed pa med pa*) in the sense of not dwelling in ego-mind (*yid la mi gnas pa*), being free from ego-mind (*yid las grol ba*) or transcending ego-mind (*yid las 'das pa*). If we translate it as “not dwelling in ego-mind,” the meaning of the term is easy to understand.

However [the translation] *yid la mi byed pa* (non-mentation; literally, “the ego-mind not focusing upon”) [means that] divisive concepts (*rnam rtog*) and hypostases (*kun rtog*) [i.e., the ego-mind] arisen from sources of error are taken as the subject, and then [*yid la mi byed pa*] is “these agents (*de byed pa*) not doing.” Given that understanding [of the term], then even when there is non-mentation [in this sense], there will nonetheless be activity in one’s mind. The point is that however the all-pervasive substratum (*kun gzhi*) and its five sensory operations arise, they are but the self-effulgence of the conceptless and this is the intrinsic dynamics of “Mahāmudrā.” Thus, when the emotionally-tainted ego-mind (*nyon yid*) gazes inwardly upon the all-pervasive substratum, it holds it to be its ‘self.’ And when the egoic con-

⁷⁵ *Ri chos kyi rnal 'byor bzhi pa Phyag rgya chen po snying po'i don gyi gter mdzod*, in *rGyal ba Yang dgon pa bKa' 'bum* (rTa mgo edition), v. 1, p. 247.5f.: *yid la mi byed pa zhes bya ba'i sgra don ni / sam tri [sic!] ta'i skad du / a ma na si ka ra la zhes bya ste / yi ge bdun po de'i sgra las drangs na / a ma na yid / si ka na [sic!] byed pa yin la de as bkag pas / de ltar na yid la byed pa med pa zhes bya ste / yid la mi gnas pa'am / yid las grol ba'am / yid las 'das pa zhes pa la 'jug la / de yid la mi gnas par 'gyur na sgra don go bde ba la / yid la mi byed pa la 'khrul gzhi byung nas / rnam rtog dang kun rtog gis yul can byas nas / de byed pa la mi byed par go nas yid la mi byed par rang yid la byed par yong ba yang 'dug / de'i don ni kun gzhi dang sgo lnga ji ltar shar yang rtog med du rang gsal ba phyag rgya chen po'i rang gshis yin / [248] de la nyon yid kyis kun gzhi la kha nang du bltas nas bdag tu bzung / yid shed [sic!] kyis sgo snga la phyir bltas nas rigs su bcas [sic!] / de ltar yid gnyis kyi bzung 'dzin ni 'khor ba'i chos dang / bzang ngan gyi 'dzin pa thams cad yid yin la / de las 'das shing mi gnas pa phyag rgya chen po yin no // Unfortunately, both the available editions of Yang dgon pa's bKa' 'bum are rife with spelling errors. Many of the works in this collection were committed to writing by Yang dgon pa's leading disciple, sPyan snga rin chen ldan. The passages pertinent to this essay are particularly problematic because of the transliterations from Sanskrit, a language with which the author, scribe and copyist were probably not too conversant.*

sciousness (*yid shes*)⁷⁶ looks outward through the five sensory gates, it divides it into the categories [of the life-world] (*rīgs su bcad*).⁷⁷ Hence, all that presents itself as samsara, as the subject object [duality] of the two-fold ego-mind (*yid gnyis*), and all our beliefs in good and evil are what is meant by “ego-mind” (*yid*). To go beyond this and not remain in it is “Mahāmudrā.”

Through a masterful synthesis of the Cittamātra model of consciousness and the Siddha interpretation of *amanasikāra*, Yang dgon pa is able to account for both the genesis and transformation of subject-centered consciousness. The emergence of ego-mind, the sense of ‘self’ through which experience is structured in terms of subject (‘I’) and object (‘mine’) is elaborated according to the Cittamātra notion of an all-pervasive substratum (*kun gzhi*) and its concomitant intentional and reflexive conscious operations. On this account, it would be incorrect to characterize the transcendence of dualistic consciousness in terms of the type of suppression or cessation of mental activity associated with Hva shang. *Yid la mi byed pa* does not imply the suspension of all mental activity but only of those subjectivizing and objectifying operations which concurrently give rise to our hypostatized sense of self and objects.

How then is non-egocentric, selfless experience possible and how is its possibility actualized? Yang dgon pa articulates the Cittamātra eightfold ensemble of consciousness (*rnam shes tshogs brgyad*) as a process of co-constitution, simultaneously constitutive of objects (intentionality) and the subject to *whom* they belong (reflexivity). We gather from his account that this process of co-constitution actually prescinds from what is non-constitutive, the pre-reflective non-thematized flow of experience. In other words, when the incipient phase of constitution is attended to closely, what is disclosed is not a transcendental subject or foundational presence of any sort, but rather a sheer absence, a non-constitutive, non-subjectivizing experience which makes possible the self-manifesting of dualistic experience. Thus Yang dgon pa can speak of the emergence of the pervasive substratum and its conscious operations as self-effulgence of the

⁷⁶ The text incorrectly has *yid shed*.

⁷⁷ The text incorrectly has *rīgs su bcas*.

conceptless and this latter as the intrinsic dynamics (*rang gshis*) of Mahāmudrā. Going beyond subjectivizing experience really means going back before it, but this “going back” is more properly “not dwelling” (*mi gnas*) in it in the first place. What is actually meant by this latter expression is clarified by the author when he returns to the theme of *amanasikāra* in his *Ri chos Yon tan kun 'byung gi lhan thabs chen mo*.⁷⁸

Yid la byed pa is *amanasikāra* in the Sanskrit language. Its meaning may be rendered as ‘not dwelling in ego-mind (*yid la mi gnas pa*)’ ‘the ego-mind not focusing upon [various objects] (*yid la mi byed pa*),’ or ‘free from ego-mind (*yid las grol*).’

If it had been translated as ‘not dwelling in ego-mind,’ this would have been straightforward. But as it was translated as *yid la mi byed pa*, certain people went somewhat astray. When they said ‘the ego-mind does not focus upon the past, the future or the present,’ ‘the ego-mind’ served as the subject (*yid kyi yul can byas*) and those [three times] served as the object (*de dag gis yul byas*), and then they said that not focusing on them (*de la mi byed pa*) was the ego-mind not focusing upon [objects]. But here, the past, the future, the present, existence, non-existence, samsara and nirvana are all superimpositions of ego-mind (*yid kyi sgro btags pa*), and the point of the above [renderings of *amanasikāra*] is that Mahāmudrā [whether understood as] ‘the ego-mind not focusing upon’ or ‘[one’s] not dwelling in ego-mind’ (*yid la mi byed pa'am mi gnas pa*), is, to put it concisely, not dwelling in existence, non-existence, past, future, samsara or nirvana. Thus the terms “transcending the intellect” (*blo 'das*), “free from discursive elaborations” (*spros bral*), ‘integration’ (*zung 'jug*), and ‘Mahāmudrā’ (*phyag rgya chen po*) are all synonymous.

⁷⁸ rGyal ba Yang dgon pa bka' 'bum (rTa mgo edition), v. 2, 76.4f.: *yid la mi byed ces pa ni / sang kri ta'i skad du na / a ma na sri [sic!] ka ra / de'i don yid la mi gnas pa'am / mi byed pa'am / yid las grol zhes bya ba la 'jug ste / yid la mi gnas par bsgyur na bde ba la / yid la mi byed pa zhes bsgyur nas / 'ga' zhig cung zad nor nas / 'das pa yid la mi byed / ma 'ongs yid la mi byed / da lta ba yid la mi byed ces / yid kyi[s?] yul can byas / de dag gis yul byas / de la mi byed pa la yid la mi byed zer / 'dir 'das pa'am / ma 'ongs pa'am da lta ba'am / yod pa'am / med pa'am / 'khor ba'am / 'das pa'am / de thams cad yid kyi sgro btags pa yin cing / de la phyag rgya chen po yid la mi byed pa'am / mi gnas pa de / mdor na yod med du mi gnas / 'das ma 'ongs la mi gnas / 'khor 'das la mi gnas te / gong ma rmams kyi don no / blo 'das zhes bya / yid la mi byed pa zhes bya / spros bral zhes bya / zung 'jug zhes bya / phyag rgya chen po zhes bya / de thams cad don gcig pa yin //*

Not dwelling in ego-mind means *not remaining stuck in constructs of what is itself already a construct*. It is not enough to go about suppressing the subjectivizing or objectifying tendencies of thought while leaving intact the insidious habit of labeling experience and identifying with these labels. It is in and through language that humans constitute themselves as subjects. This is not to say that language causes subjectivity, but only that it determines the sense the experiencer has of being a psychic unity that transcends actual experiences.

Yang dgon pa's elucidation of *amanasikāra* here brings the deconstructive strategies of Madhyamaka philosophy to bear upon the Cittamātra phenomenology of constitutive experience. This move is not arbitrary, for any attempt to examine the constitutive activity of experience must eventually grapple with the role of language in this activity.⁷⁹ The emphasis here shifts from what we experience to how we experience what we experience by means of the sedimented cultural-

⁷⁹ Language plays a central role in self-representation, the construction of an '*I who*' experiences which lies at the heart of subjectivizing-objectifying awareness. One contribution of recent neurophysiological research has been to elucidate some of the neurological processes at work in the construction of a sense of self. In the words of one neurophysiologist, Sam Harris:

The sense of self seems to be the product of the brain's representing its own acts of representation; its seeing of the world begets an image of a *one who sees*. It is important to realize that this feeling – the sense that each of us has of *appropriating*, rather than merely *being*, a sphere of experience – is not a necessary feature of consciousness. It is, after all, conceivable that a creature could form a representation of the world without forming a representation of *itself* in the world. And, indeed, many spiritual practitioners claim to experience the world in just this way, perfectly shorn of self.

A basic finding of neurophysiology lends credence to such claims. It is not so much what they *are* but what they *do* that makes neurons see, hear, smell, taste, touch, think, and feel. Like any other function that emerges from the activity of the brain, the feeling of self is best thought of as a *process*. It is not very surprising, therefore, that we can lose this feeling, because processes, by their very nature, can be interrupted. While the experience of selflessness does not indicate anything about the relationship between consciousness and the physical world (and is thus mute on the question of what happens after death), it has broad implications for the sciences of mind, for our approach to spirituality, and for our conception of human happiness.

See his *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror and the Future of Reason* (New York: Norton, 2005) p. 212.

linguistic patterns at our disposal. The subject can never be present to himself as a pure prelinguistic subjectivity but only as an emergent centre of operations who is inexorably caught up in the flux of experience and linguistic self-implication. The point of not dwelling in ego-mind is to catch oneself in the act, so to speak, of linguistically implicating oneself as the proprietor of this or that situation as it unfolds. It is in this moment of losing one's self that the dominative and instrumental deliberations of dualistic thought lose their hold. An account of the contemplative practices for experiencing non-mentation or loss of self obviously falls outside the scope of this preliminary survey. A wide range of Buddhist practices may be said to have *amanasikāra* as their aim. Thus Yang dgon pa can mention several synonyms of *amanasikāra*⁸⁰ (see above quotation) deriving from a variety of Buddhist teachings: "Dissociation from discursive elaborations" (*spros bral*) is a term used in Madhyamaka thought but also constitutes the second of sGam po pa's four *yogas* (*rnal byor bzhi*)⁸¹. "Transcending the intellect" (*blo [las] 'das*) constitutes the fourth of Saraha's four symbol terms (*brda bzhi*)⁸² and is met with frequently in teachings on Mahāmudrā. "Integration" (*zung 'jug*) is a term well known in Buddhist Tantrism which refers, in particular, to the indivisibility of insight (*prajñā*) and action (*upāya*). "Mahāmudrā" is of course the *sine qua non* of Tantric and Siddha praxis. Suffice it for the present to close this essay with a passage from Yang dgon pa that indicates how the four *yogas* facilitate the transformation of egoic mind through the clearing of the eightfold consciousness as anticipated in his account of *amanasikāra*:⁸³

⁸⁰ A much longer list of synonyms is given in the *Ri chos kyi rnal 'byor bzhi pa Phyag rgya chen po snying po don gyi gter mdzod*, 4b2 f.

⁸¹ Namely, *rtse gcig*, *spros bral*, *ro gcig*, and *sgom med*. Yang dgon pa diverges from the majority of Tibetan authors on the *rNal 'byor bzhi* who take pains to establish Indian sources for this doctrine, in the *sūtras* as well as the *tantras*. According to Yang dgon pa, "... these teachings on the *rNal 'byor bzhi* are not actually expressed in the *tantra* corpus because their content corresponds to things as they are (*don ji lta ba*). They are therefore special teachings that cannot be compared to the *tantra* corpus but which represent the doctrine of Dvags po rin po che (i.e., sGam po pa)" (ibid., fol. 2b1 f.).

⁸² See above note 51.

⁸³ *rGyal ba Yang dgon pa bka' 'bum* (rTa mgo edition), fol. 8b3f.

The manner in which the presencing of the eight-fold pattern of consciousness (*tshogs brgyad*) is cleared away (*'dag*) in the post-composure awareness (*rjes shes*) through a deep understanding (*rtogs*) which is free from the five constituents [that make up an individual] in the composure state (*mnyam bzhas*) is as follows: During time of single-pointed focusing (*rtse gcig*), one is free from the constituent of form (*gzugs*) and the five sensory operations are cleared away. During the time of freedom from discursive elaborations (*spros bral*), one becomes free from the constituents of feeling (*tshor ba*) and conception (*'du shes*) and subjective consciousness (*yid shes*) is cleared away. During the time of one-flavouredness (*ro gcig*), one is free from the constituent of motivational tendencies (*'du byed*) and the emotionally-tainted subjectivity (*nyon mongs pa can gyi yid*) is cleared away. During the time of non-meditation (*bsgom med*), one is free from the constituent of consciousness (*rnam par shes pa*) and the all-pervasive substratum awareness (*kun gzhi'i rnam par shes pa*) is cleared away.

Appendix

Phyag chen gan mdzod, v. 21, p. 38.5f. (cf. n. 33 above)

de yang yid la mi byed pa zhes pa'i don la rnam pa gsum gsungs pa'i dang po /
 (1) *a ma na si kā ra zhes pa'i si'i t̄ yig ni / yid la zhes pa'i la yig bdun pa'i don*
yin / bdun pa 'di la gnas gzhi'i rkyen zhes bya bar sgra'i mdor /

gang kun nas 'dzin pa de gnas gzhi'o zhes 'byung //

de ltar gnas gzhi can gyi don de thog ma'i a [39] yig gis bkag pas / a ma na si ka
ra zhes pa / gang du dmigs pa'i gnas sam rten gzhi med pa la bya dgos par shes
te / sdom 'byung las

dnagos med dnagos po la rten nas / brten pa med pa'i bsgom pa bya /
yid med yid kyi byas nas su / cung zad tsam yang mi bsam mo //

zhes gsungs so / de bas sems byung yid la byed pa'i 'dzin stangs kyis / dmigs pa
la bsgrims nas sems 'dzin dam por byed pa thun mong gi zhi gnas bsgrub pa'i
skabs la dgos kyang 'dir de bkag pa yin no / de yang thogs med kyis / de la 'jog
par byed pa dang / yang dag par 'jog par byed pa la mi bsgrims te 'jug pa'i yid
la byed pa yod do zhes pa'o //

(2) *gnyis pa a ma na si kā ra zhes pa'i bdun pa'i t̄ de'i skyes bu'i bsdud ba byas*
nas yid mi byed pa zhes pa / la yig mi mngon par byas pa'i bshad pa gnyis pa
mdzod do / de'i don ltar na'ang / yid mi byed pa zhes pa yid kyi las 'dir dgag

byar bzhed pa ste / mngon par /

yid kyi las gang zhe na / sems pa yid kyi las yin no //

zhes sems byung sems pa'i 'dzin pa'i 'dzin stangs la nan tan du byed pa de [40]
dgag pa'o / sems byung sems pa'ang sems mngon par 'du byed pa'i yid kyi las
te / de nyid du /

dge ba dang mi dge ba lung du ma bstan pa rnams la sems 'jug par byed pa'i
las can no zhes ba'o / don mngon par 'du byed pa dgag pa'o / nyes pa lnga
spong ba'i 'du byed brgyad lta bu zhi gnas bsgrub pa la yin gyi / phyag rgya
chen po la ni byas pa rnams dang bral zhing bsags pa las min

zhes dang /

nga ni 'gro 'ong mi len mi 'dor ro

dang / dgyes rdor las /

gang phyir yid kyi mi bsgom par /

zhes pas so // des na /

yis kyi de nyid dmigs pa bcas //

zhes yid kyi las su bya ba gang yin thams cad 'dir dmigs pa dang bcas par gzhas
nas dmigs pa thams cad nye bar zhi ba cig nges par bstan no / des bas na /

kun tu rtog pas ma brtags pa / rab tu mi gnas pa yi yid /
dran pa med cing yid byed min / dmigs pa med la phyag 'tshal 'dud //

ces ston pas gsungs pa de legs par bshad do / dran pa med pa sogs rgyas pa 'og
tu 'byung ngo /

(3) gsum pa / a ma na si kā ra zhes pa'i a yar bcad nas / a yig skye ba med pa'i
don du [41] byas te / ma na si kā ra yid la byed par bshad do / de ltar na a yig gi
don tshul bzhin du yid la byed pa ni / a yid la byed pa zhes byar te / de yang / bar
gyi tshig mi mngon par byas pa lo ma la dga'i rgyal po la lo ma'i rgyal po zhes
pa bzhin no / 'dir a ni shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'o / a nu tpa nna / a ni ro
dha zhes pa lta bu'i sgo nas / skye med 'gag med sogs gnyis su med pa'i rnam
grangs thams cad mtshon nus so / mtshan brjod las /

a ni yig 'bru kun gyi mchog / don chen yi ge dam pa yin /
kong nas 'byung ba skye ba med //

sogs kyi so / mtshan brjod kyi 'grel chen las /

sngags kyi tshul gyis ni shes rab dang thabs ni gnyis so / de gcig tu gyur pa ni
gnyis su med pa ste / shes rab dang thabs gnyis su med pa bde ba chen po'i
ngo bo nyid ni gnyis su med pa yin par 'dod de / de las byung ba'o / pha rol
tu phyin pa'i tshul gyis ni / gzung ba dang 'dzin pa'am / bdag dang bdag

gi'am / shes pa dang shes bya ste / ji srid yid kyi rnam par g.yo ba de srid du
 gnyis so / g.yo ba de srid du gnyis so / g.yo ba thams cad dang bral zhing /
 spros pa med pa chos thams cad bdag med pa ni gnyis su [42] med pa'i ngo
 bo nyid chos nyid kyi bdag nyid can gyi sku 'byung ste / de bas na gnyis su
 med par 'byung ba'o / gnyis su med par 'byung ba yang mi skye ba'i rnam
 pas khyad par du dbye ba'i phyir / mi skye'i chos can zhes bya ba smos te

zhes gsungs pa'o // de lta bu'i don gyis yid la mi byed pa ston pas yid la mi byed
pa'i chos skor zhes bya'o / de thams cad slob dpon nges par sbyangs pa gnyis su
med pa'i rdo rje zhes sam / grub pa'i slob dpon chen po mnga' bdag Mai tri pas
mdzad pa'o //

Abbreviations and bibliography

- D Derge Tibetan Tripiṭaka. *The Tibetan Tripiṭaka*, Taipei Edition. Taipei, Taiwan: SMC Publishing 1991.
- P Peking Tibetan Tripiṭaka. *The Tibetan Tripiṭaka*, Peking Edition. Tokyo-Kyoto: Tibetan Tripiṭaka Research Institute 1957.

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