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**Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan
on Mahāyāna doxography**

Rethinking the distinction between Cittamātra
and Madhyamaka in fourteenth-century Tibet

Tsering Wangchuk

Introduction

Almost two millennia after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, fourteenth-century Buddhist thinkers in Tibet were still busily debating about which *sūtra* goes into which category of Mahāyāna doxography. At the center of the contention in one particular dispute is a monk from the Jo nang School named Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361),¹ a controversial Tibetan interpreter of Mahāyāna texts, who vehemently challenged the prevailing interpretation of the Mahāyāna doctrinal classification into Madhyamaka and

¹ His life in a nutshell is as follows: At the age of 17 in 1309, the young Dol po pa, who would later be known as the “All-knowing One from Dol po” (*Kun mkhyen dol po pa*), ran away from his hometown to study under a Tibetan master in Mustang in modern-day Nepal. Three years later, following his master’s advice, he went to Sa skya monastery where he received Buddhist scholastic training. Within a few years of study at Sa skya, he emerged as an influential Tibetan Buddhist thinker of fourteenth-century Tibet. Eventually, he wrote texts and gave teachings on the controversial view of other-emptiness (*gzhan stong gi lta ba*). His other-emptiness view was criticized by his contemporaries, including Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364) and Sgra tshad pa rin chen rnam rgyal (1318–1388), and also by later thinkers such as Red mda’ ba gzhon nu blo gros (1349–1412), Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419), and so forth. For an excellent book on Dol po pa’s life and doctrinal views, see Stearns 2010. For a socio-political history of fourteenth-century Tibet, see Shakabpa and Maher 2010 (Chapters 5 and 6) and van der Kuijp 2003.

Cittamātra. Not only did he contest the standard configuration, he also introduced a new set of principles that blur the hierarchical distinction between the two normative doxographical categories of Mahāyāna in Tibet. Moreover, much to the dismay of many of his learned contemporaries, Dol po pa strongly argued that an inadequate ultimate view of the Buddha emerged from both the division of Madhyamaka into Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka and Svātantrika-Madhyamaka² and the hermeneutical devices for interpreting Cittamātra texts that were prevalent during his time. This article examines Dol po pa's reconfiguration of Mahāyāna doxography³ and it situates his argument within its own synchronic intellectual context with some reference to its historical past.

Dol po pa cited numerous, strategically selected, authoritative Indic sources, as he worked to justify his interpretation of other-

² Dreyfus and McClintock (2002: 19) argue, "... the emergence of the Svātantrika-Prāsaṅgika distinction in Tibet is most frequently traced to the twelfth-century translator Pa tshab nyi ma grags and his disciples." For an excellent book on the history of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka in Tibet, see Vose 2009.

³ Although his presentation of other-emptiness view is discussed in the works of several scholars, such as Stearns, S. K. Hookham, and Jeffrey Hopkins, his articulation of Mahāyāna doxography has not been subjected to the same level of attention. For Hookham's discussion of Dol po pa's view of other-emptiness, see Hookham 1992. For Hopkins' analysis of Dol po pa's view, see Hopkins 2008. Also, see Kapstein 2001: 301–316 and Kapstein 1992. Although Kapstein discusses some of Dol po pa's points regarding the distinction between Vijñānavāda and Madhyamaka, he does not make any reference to the sub-sets of Cittamātra and Madhyamaka that I examine in this article. For his discussion of Dol po pa's presentation of Mahāyāna doxography, see Kapstein 2000. The question as to whether the different categories of Cittamātra and Madhyamaka that Dol po pa offers in his works refer *only* to different schools of thought or *only* to different doctrinal/philosophical views is not entertained, since Dol po pa employs the categories that I discuss here interchangeably. For instance, in his *Bka' bsdu bzhi pa'i don bstan rtsis chen po phyogs med ris med ces bya ba'i 'grel pa* (pp. 219–272, pp. 251–253), Dol po pa uses the term *sems tsam (cittamātra)* to refer to the school of thought and to the doctrinal view as well. For an English translation of *Bstan rtsis chen po phyogs med ris med ces bya ba'i 'grel pa*, see Stearns 2010: 205–311.

emptiness (*gzhan stong*)⁴ and to respond to the critiques that his opponents level against his controversial reading of Mahāyāna texts. He boldly argues that: 1) Cittamātra is to be divided into Conventional Cittamātra (*kun rdzob pa'i sems tsam*) and Ultimate Cittamātra (*don dam pa'i sems tsam*); 2) Cittamātra must be distinguished from Vijñānavāda; and 3) Madhyamaka is divided into Madyamaka without Appearance (*snang med dbu ma*) and Madhyamaka with Appearance (*snang bcas dbu ma*). Other fourteenth-century Tibetan scholars rejected Dol po pa's ingenious position on Mahāyāna doxography, which differs significantly from the standard Mahāyāna doctrinal classifications schema that prevailed at the time.

In order to examine Dol po pa's Mahāyāna taxonomy, several interlocking questions must be explored: What textual sources does Dol po pa have for his classification of Mahāyāna schools? Why and how does he differentiate his Madhyamaka system from Cittamātra? Why and how does he argue for the distinction between Cittamātra and Vijñānavāda?⁵ Who are his potential direct influences, if any? In explicating these issues, I will primarily rely upon Dol po pa's *Abhisamayālamkāra* commentary,⁶ *Bden gnyis gsal ba'i nyi ma* (*The Sun that Illuminates the Two Truths*), *Dpon byang ba'i phyag tu phul ba'i chos kyi shan 'byed* (*A Letter of Discerning Dharma Dispatched to Dpon byang ba*), and *Bka' bsdu bzhi pa'i don bstan rtsis chen po* (*The Great Calculation of the "Fourth Council"*)⁷ and its commentary.

The fourteenth century witnessed the emergence of several figures of great importance to later interpretive traditions, but the dynamism of that period was predicated on the hermeneutical in-

⁴ See Stearns 2010: 41–83.

⁵ On the usual interchangeability of these two terms, see Paul Williams 2000: 154.

⁶ Since the text is also referred to as *Sher phyin mdo lugs ma* or *Phar phyin mdo lugs ma*, I will refer to it as *Sher phyin mdo lugs ma* in this article. Dol po pa mentions in his own *Bden gnyis gsal ba'i nyi ma* that a detailed explanation of the distinction between the two schools is given in his *Sher phyin mdo lugs ma*.

⁷ For an English translation of the text, see Stearns 2010: 135–204.

sights that had been established in earlier centuries. The Buddha is believed to have given different discourses to different disciples based on their level of intelligence, needs, and mental disposition. According to the tradition, because of the Buddha's skillful means (*upāya*) and because of the diverse backgrounds of his followers, learned Buddhists in Asia generally claim that there exist many teachings of the Buddha that appear to be contradictory, at least, on the literal level. For instance, it is asserted that the Buddha taught the concept of no-Self (*anātman*) to some and the concept of Self (*ātman*) to others. Similarly, to some of his disciples, he taught that all phenomena are empty of inherent existence, while to others, he taught that phenomena inherently exist. It is claimed that he taught diverse and contradictory doctrines to diverse disciples in an effort to help people of differing dispositions achieve their ultimate religious goal, *nirvāṇa*, liberation from the cycle of suffering.

This interpretive model is further complicated by the traditional claim that the Buddha is enlightened and omniscient, which, according to the tradition, means that he could not possibly hold conflicting views with respect to reality or truth. This inspires the problem of determining precisely how to distinguish the Buddha's teachings that are definitively true from those that are not literally true. In other words, what hermeneutical devices, if any, do the Buddhist savants apply to make sense of their enlightened master's seemingly contradictory teachings?⁸ The Buddhist scholars of Tibet believe that the Buddha himself taught his disciples how to decipher the teachings that contain his ultimate view from those that are meant merely to lead his disciples to the ultimate view, the latter do not explicitly elucidate his ultimate view. Therefore, as early as the fourth century in India, long after the Buddha had died, *sūtras* such as the *Catuhpratisaranasūtra*,⁹ *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*¹⁰ and

⁸ For an excellent piece on the difficulty of classifying *sūtras*, see Lopez 1992: 1–10.

⁹ For an excellent article on the “four reliances,” see Lamotte 1992.

¹⁰ The hermeneutical device that is presented in this *sūtra* is that the first two sets of the Buddha's teachings are interpretable because the First Wheel of Dharma demonstrates that all phenomena exist inherently, whereas the Middle Wheel of Dharma teaches that all phenomena are empty of inher-

*Akṣayamatīrdeśasūtra*¹¹ began to classify the huge corpus of the Buddha's teachings. Following the hermeneutical strategies developed in these *sūtras*,¹² some *sūtras* are duly considered as interpretable (*neyārtha*) for their explication of conventionalities and some definitive (*nītārtha*) for their delineation of emptiness or ultimate truth. Furthermore, some are identified as interpretable because they teach either all phenomena as inherently existent or all phenomena as empty of inherent existence, while others are classified as definitive for their exposition of some phenomena as inherently existent and some as empty of inherent existence.¹³

However, the *sūtras* are not the only authoritative scriptures in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Drawing from *sūtras*, many later Buddhist luminaries wrote innumerable treatises (*śāstras*) to systematize the vast corpus of teachings attributed to the Buddha. Hence, Buddhist interpreters such as Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–200 C.E.), Asaṅga (ca. 4th century), Buddhapālita (fl. ca. 500), Bhāviveka (ca. 500–570), Candrakīrti (ca. 7th century), and others used different hermeneutical strategies to unravel the ultimate meaning of their deceased teacher's discourses or, to quote Dreyfus and McClintock (2002: 2), “to bring order to a wide variety of individual texts and ideas.” One such hermeneutical tool found within commentarial Mahāyāna sources is the doctrinal formulation of Madhyamaka

ent existence. However, according to the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, some phenomena exist inherently and some do not exist inherently. Hence, the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* proclaims that the Last Wheel of Dharma is definitive. For a short piece on the gist of the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, see Lopez 1992: 56–60. Also, see Powers 1993.

¹¹ It basically demonstrates that the Buddha's teachings that deal with conventionalities are interpretable and those that explicate ultimate truth or emptiness are definitive. For a short piece on the gist of the *sūtra*, see Lopez 1992: 60–64.

¹² Since my article concerns Māhayāna doxography, I mainly discuss different hermeneutical devices found in Mahāyāna literature. For an excellent piece on the Theravādin hermeneutics, see Bond 1992.

¹³ These categories, as Lopez demonstrates, are not universal, frozen categories; rather depending on which *sūtra* or which Indian master one is following, a *sūtra* that is duly classified as “interpretable” might be categorized as “definitive” by another master and vice versa.

and Cittamātra¹⁴ that are retrospectively credited to two Indian *mahāpaṇḍitas*, Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, respectively.

Madhyamaka bases its doctrinal presentation on the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*,¹⁵ the Middle Wheel of Dharma, where all phenomena are explained as empty of inherent existence. On the other hand, Cittamātra, also known as Yogācāra,¹⁶ draws its influence from the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, the Last Wheel of Dharma, where imputed phenomena (*parikalpita-svabhāva*) are explained as empty of inherent existence and perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*) as inherently existent. It is within such broader context of deciphering the ultimate meaning of the authoritative texts that Dol po pa's interpretation of Mahāyāna doxography can be placed.

Although much scholarship has been conducted on different ways of categorizing Mahāyāna texts, Dol po pa's nuanced interpretation is situated in a distinct historical, cultural, and intellectual milieu. Contemporary international scholarship, thus far, mainly focuses on the doctrinal classifications of Yogācāra-Madhyamaka and Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka,¹⁷ Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka and

¹⁴ As Dreyfus and McClintock (2002: 1–2) argue, “Labels such as Madhyamaka and Yogācāra need to be understood as hermeneutical devices intended to bring order to a wide variety of individual texts and ideas. As such they cannot be taken as providing anything more than useful but limited guidelines in the interpretation of discrete works.”

¹⁵ Seyort Ruegg (1981: 7) lists a number of other Mahāyāna *sūtras* such as *Ratnakūṭa*, *Avataṃsaka*, and so forth that are canonical sources for Madhyamaka School.

¹⁶ The term *yogācāra* is used by Āryadeva, a Madhyamaka scholar, in the title for one of his works. He preceded Asaṅga, the purported founder of what would later be known as Yogācāra and the compiler of *Yogācārabhūmi*, an authoritative text for the school. See Seyort Ruegg 1981: 52. Hence, who/what constitutes a Madhyamaka representative and who/what constitutes a Yogācāra representative is hardly found in the early Indian writings. The earliest textual record of two distinct Mahāyāna schools, that of Madhyamaka and that of Yogācāra, is found quite late in the history of Indian Mahāyāna tradition, in the work of Bhāviveka.

¹⁷ Dreyfus and McClintock (2002: 33–34, n. 6) state: “Although the early Tibetan author Ye shes sde (8th c.) is usually credited with the first use of the terms mDo sde spyod pa'i dbu ma (*Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka) and rNal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma (*Yogācāra-Madhyamaka), we also find Kamalaśīla

Svātantrika-Madhyamaka,¹⁸ and Sākāra-Cittamātra and Nirākāra-Cittamātra¹⁹ within the textual history of the Buddhist doctrinal systems.²⁰ Consequently, there is a tendency on the part of scholars to believe that Tibetan thinkers have followed the Madhyamaka, as opposed to Cittamātra,²¹ ever since the beginning of the introduction of scholastic Buddhism in Tibet in the 8th century, and that the traditional Tibetan scholars have preferred Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka over Svātantrika-Madhyamaka since the 13th century in Tibet.²² As will be shown later, Dol po pa's Mahāyāna classification does not fit into any of these Mahāyāna taxonomies that are accepted as normative. Dol po pa reconfigures Mahāyāna doxography in the Tibetan scholastic tradition of the fourteenth century. Perhaps for this reason, Dol po pa's doctrinal classification remained largely marginalized for various sectarian, political, and dogmatic reasons.

in his subcommentary on Śāntarakṣita's MA referring to the "two paths of the Madhyamaka" (MAP, D 128a: *dbu ma'i lam gnyis*) in a context in which it seems clear that one path upholds external objects conventionally, while the other follows the Yogācāra or Cittamātra tradition of rejecting external objects." Also, see Seyfort Ruegg 2010: 162, n. 7.

¹⁸ See n. 2.

¹⁹ For an excellent discussion of the term "*cittamātra*" in the Mahāyāna system from the beginning until Kamalaśīla, see Lindtner 1997.

²⁰ José Cabezón (1990: 12–13) argues, "the fully evolved siddhānta schema outlined above [in Cabezón's article] was something that did not develop until Buddhism was already well established in Tibet, this schematization, of course, has its roots in such Indian Buddhist works as the *Mahā-prajñāpāramit[opadeśa]śāstra* attributed to Nāgārjuna (second century CE), the *Tarkajvālā* of Bhāviveka (sixth century CE), the *Tattvasaṅgraha* of Śāntarakṣita (eighth century CE), the *Tattvaratnāvalī* of Maitrīpa (eleventh century CE), and the *Vimalaprabhā*, a commentary on the Kālacakra Tantra."

²¹ Cabezón 1990: 11. However, as Cabezón succinctly points out in his article, as to what exactly it means to follow Madhyamaka, there is generally no consensus.

²² Vose (2009: 138) argues, "Virtually every important Tibetan exegete from the thirteenth century to the present ranks Candrakīrti's Prāsaṅgika as the highest interpretation of Buddhist doctrine and delineates the ways in which it is superior to Svātantrika."

Classification of Cittamātra

The term *cittamātra* is used to mean various things in many early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, as Christian Lindtner (1997: 160) argues, "... there are different ways of understanding the canonical term *cittamātra* in Mahāyāna: that of Madhyamaka and that of Yogācāra, and perhaps, that of 'Madhyamaka-Yogācāra'."²³ Therefore, although *cittamātra* is not exclusively employed by the school of thought with the same name, as a proper noun, it is used synonymously with Yogācāra or Vijñānavāda in the history of Mahāyāna doctrinal classification. It is this proper name that Dol po pa and other Tibetan scholars of his time are mainly concerned about for their interpretations of what constitutes Cittamātra.

According to D'Amato (2005: 188), early Cittamātra can be broadly structured into three major phases. In the "first phase" of Cittamātra are included *sūtras* such as *Samādhinirmocanasūtra* and *Yogācārabhūmi*; in the "second phase" there exist commentarial works such as *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* and its commentary; and the "third phase," which D'Amato refers to as "classical phase" is comprised of Cittamātra works of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu. Irrespective of whether there existed a school of thought called Cittamātra during these phases,²⁴ later Buddhist scholars take these works and figures²⁵ to be the foundational sources for a distinct

²³ Lindtner suggests that the term might even have its origin in the Pāli Canon. See *ibid.* 161.

²⁴ Cittamātra or Yogācāra was probably not seen as a distinct Mahāyāna school until the time of Bhāviveka, who clearly criticizes Yogācāra by drawing a clear distinction between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra, putting the latter on the lower rung of the hierarchy. Dreyfus and McClintock (2002: 2) argue: "In the case of Madhyamaka, for example, the main Mādhyamikas, at least after Bhāvaviveka, knew themselves as such, and the term has since been used by a lengthy succession of thinkers, who understood it, for the most part, in relatively similar way." Furthermore, both Candrakīrti and Śāntideva criticize Yogācāra in *Madhyamakāvatāra* and *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* respectively by embracing Madhyamaka as their ultimate view of the Buddha's teachings.

²⁵ For more on some of the earliest proponents of Cittamātra, see Williams 2000: 154–156 and Kritzer 2005: xii.

school of thought called Cittamātra. Furthermore, the Cittamātra that is a point of contention within the Tibetan scholastic milieu during the time of Dol po pa is the Cittamātra that had been criticized by Indian Madhyamaka scholars such as Bhāviveka, Candrakīrti, and Śāntideva in their works. The refutation of Cittamātra by these Indian masters is later faithfully followed by their Tibetan adherents.

Dol po pa obviously has a big challenge here. How could a school that is deemed secondary to Madhyamaka in Indian Mahāyāna literature, at least since the 6th century C.E., be defended in fourteenth-century Tibet, where Madhyamaka, as opposed to Cittamātra, had been declared the supreme doctrinal view? In order to answer this, we need to understand what Dol po pa's opponents' positions are with respect to Cittamātra. According to Dol po pa, many of his Tibetan contemporaries are mistaken when they assert that: 1) *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, and so forth are Vijñānavāda texts; 2) the terms such as the three natures (*mtshan nyid gsum*; *trisvabhāva*)²⁶ and all-basis-consciousness (*kun gzhi rnam shes*; *ālayavijñāna*) are unique to Vijñānavāda; 3) Asaṅga and Vasubandhu are proponents of Vijñānavāda only. As one could easily deduce from this, Dol po pa's interpretation of Cittamātra clearly differs from the Cittamātra of the "classical phase" and from the mainstream fourteenth century view of most Tibetan scholars.

Dol po pa, who is aware of the history of the tension between Madhyamaka and Cittamātra in Indian sources, cannot just refute the views presented by his Tibetan contemporaries without offering any exegetical sources, as he is fully cognizant of the fact that Asaṅga and Vasubandhu explicate Vijñānavāda view in their works. So he strategically proposes that these early Indian scholars elucidate in their texts more than the Cittamātra as understood by his Tibetan contemporaries. He argues that Cittamātra is catego-

²⁶ The three are dependent nature (*gzhan dbang*; *paratantra-svabhāva*), imputed nature (*kun btags*; *parikalpita-svabhāva*), and perfected nature (*yongs grub*; *pariṇiṣpanna-svabhāva*).

rized into Conventional Cittamātra and Ultimate Cittamātra,²⁷ setting aside the more widely-known classification of Cittamātra.²⁸ The Conventional Cittamātra, he argues, is the same as Vijñānavāda, which his Tibetan contemporaries mistakenly view as the only Cittamātra. He goes on to argue that the Ultimate Cittamātra is the final intention of Aśaṅga and Vasubandhu, which his fellow Tibetan scholars and some early Indian masters such as Haribhadra and Vimuktisena did not fully comprehend. It is this Ultimate Cittamātra, he further argues, that is the Great Madhyamaka of other-emptiness, which is at the center of his Mahāyāna view. Furthermore, he employs terms such as non-ultimate and ultimate²⁹

²⁷ Dol po pa argues, “It is mentioned that the Ultimate Cittamātra is the whole appearance of noumenon as the appearance of gnosis, and the Conventional Cittamātra is the whole appearance of mistaken phenomena as the appearance of consciousness ...” (*chos nyid kyi snang ba thams cad ye shes kyi snang ba don dam pa'i sems tsam dang chos can 'khrul pa'i snang ba thams cad rnam shes kyi snang ba kun rdzob kyi sems tsam du bshad ...*) See Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan, *Dpal yongs grub dgu'i bshad pa khyad 'phags gyu rnying* p. 229. Dol po pa also says: *'dir sems tsam la yang bden gnyis rnam dbye shes dgos shing, dom dam gyi sems ni dbu ma dang gcig ste, don dam gyi sems las gzhan pa'i chos 'ga' yang gshis la med pa'i phyir dang, don dam gyi sems ni gang gis kyang gzhom du med par rtag tu de bzhin nyid du mkha' khyab tu bzhugs pa'i phyir ro. kun rdzob yin pa'i sems tsam ni deng sang yongs grags pa'i sems tsam 'di dang gcig ste, 'di la ni rnam par shes par smra ba zhes gsungs so.* See Dol po pa, *Bstan rtsis chen po phyogs med ris med ces bya ba'i 'grel pa* p. 252. For an English translation of the Tibetan passage cited here, see Stearns 2010: 254.

²⁸ There are two [types] of Cittamātra: Satyākāra-Cittamātra and Alīkakāra-Cittamātra” (*sems tsam la rnam bden rnam brzun gnyis*). See Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan, *Chos dbyings bde ba chen po'i 'ja' sa* p. 359. Since Dol po pa believes these two as a part of what he calls Conventional Cittamātra, he does not elaborate on the distinction between the two schools in his collected works. On the other hand, he has much to say about the other divisions of Cittamātra, since he wishes to show that there is a drastic difference between the Cittamātra that he follows as the ultimate system and the Cittamātra that others attribute to figures such as Aśaṅga and Vasubandhu. For a brief discussion of the origin of the two categories of Cittamātra, see Brunnhölzl 2007: 380–382, endnote 542. On discussions of Nirākāravāda and Sākāravāda of Yogācāra system, see Lindtner 1997: 175–187.

²⁹ “There are two [types] of Cittamātra also: the Ultimate and the Non-Ultimate.” (*sems tsam la yang don dam yin min gnyis dang*) See Dol po pa

and mundane and supramundane³⁰ to speak of the two Cittamātra categories. Hence, for Dol po pa, there is no difference between the Ultimate Cittamātra and the Madhyamka that he faithfully follows, which is none other than the Madhyamaka with Appearance; the latter will be explained more fully below. Nor does he see any disparity between the Conventional Cittamātra and the Cittamātra that others mistakenly, according to Dol po pa, attribute to be the final view of Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.

So, what is Conventional Cittamātra and what exegetical sources, if any, does Dol po pa have to support his claim? As Dol po pa argues, “Because mere consciousness is asserted as ultimately existent, it is Cittamātra [that is, Vijñānavāda].”³¹ Furthermore, Dol po pa says, “Those who assert that the ultimate phenomena are truly [existent as well as] consciousness are proponents of Cittamātra. Those who assert that [the ultimate truth] is gnosis that is beyond truly [existent] and consciousness are proponents of Madhyamaka.”³² Therefore, Dol po pa mainly defines Conventional Cittamātra as a school that professes mere consciousness (*rnam shes tsam*) as ultimately existent, which, for him, means that consciousness (*rnam shes*; *vijñāna*) that is not the domain of gnosis (*ye shes*; *jñāna*) is accepted as ultimate reality. Interestingly, because of this, he argues that “Conventional Cittamātra is the same as the well-known Cittamātra of today, and it is called Vijñānavāda.”³³

shes rab rgyal mtshan, *Rang rig rang gsal gyi rab tu dbye ba* p. 332.

³⁰ See Hopkins 2006: 239.

³¹ *rnam par shes pa tsam don dam du 'dod pas sems tsam pa dang* See Dol po pa, *Sher phyin mdo lugs ma* p. 289.

³² *mthar thug gi chos rnam dngos po dang rnam shes su 'dod pa sems tsam pa dang / dngos po dang rnam shes las 'das pa ye shes su 'dod pa ni dbu ma pa ste*. See Dol po pa, *Bden gnyis* p. 721. On the following page of *Bden gnyis*, Dol po pa suggests that Vijñānavāda does not assert mind and perfected nature as ultimately existent, rather it is consciousness that is accepted as ultimately existent. However, contrary to what Dol po pa suggests, early Vijñānavāda certainly asserts both consciousness and perfected nature as ultimately existent.

³³ “*kun rdzob yin pa'i sems tsam ni deng sang yongs grags pa'i sems tsam 'di dang gcig ste / 'di la ni rnam par shes par smra ba zhes gsungs so*.” See Dol po pa, *Bstan rtsis chen po phyogs med ris med ces bya ba'i 'grel pa* p. 252.

While he asserts that consciousness as ultimately existent is a defining characteristic of Vijñānavāda, he does not accept that the three natures³⁴ and eight consciousnesses³⁵ are distinguishing features of Conventional Cittamātra.³⁶

As for exegetical sources for the distinction between Vijñānavāda and the Cittamātra that he asserts as the ultimate school of Buddhism, he argues, “In brief, asserting the ultimate phenomena as entity and consciousness is [Conventional] Cittamātra, and asserting [the ultimate phenomena] as gnosis, which is beyond entity and consciousness, is Madhyamaka, as explained in the Śrīkālācakra ... and its commentary, Vimalaprabhā...”³⁷ In Dol po pa’s defense, neither Kālācakra nor Vimalaprabhā provides any correlation between Vijñānavāda and the concepts of the three natures and all-basis-consciousness; rather both texts explain Vijñānavāda within the purview of asserting everything as consciousness only.³⁸ While the term Cittamātra is not employed in both Kālācakra and Vimalaprabhā, the terms Vijñānavāda and Yogācāra are used interchangeably in Vimalaprabhā to refer to the school that Dol po pa labels as Conventional Cittamātra in his works. The fact that these

Stearns (2010: 254) translates the sentence as follows, “The Cittamātra that is relative is identical to this Cittamātra that is nowadays famous. Adherence to this is taught to be ‘Vijñānavāda (Advocates of Consciousness)’.”

³⁴ For more on the three natures, see D’amato 2005.

³⁵ The eight are eye consciousness, nose consciousness, ear consciousness, tongue consciousness, body consciousness, mental consciousness, afflicted mind, and all-basis-consciousness.

³⁶ ... ngo bo nyid gsum 'dod mi 'dod dang / rnam shes tshogs brgyad 'dod mi 'dod dang / kun gzhi'i rnam shes 'dod me 'dod dang, rigs chad 'dod me 'dod dang / don dam du grub pa'i chos 'dod mi 'dod las dbu ma dang sems tsam gyi khyad par 'byed pa ni rgyal ba'i bka' yang dag dang sa bcu pa rnams kyi ma gsungs so / See Dol po pa, *Sher phyin mdo lugs ma* p. 292.

³⁷ mdor bsdus par bstan na, mthar thug gi chos rnams dngos po dang rnam shes su 'dod pa sems tsam pa dang / dngos po dang rnam shes las 'das pa ye shes su 'dod pa ni dbu ma pa ste / dpal dus kyi 'khor lor ... shes dang / 'di'i 'grel pa dri med 'od du ... zhes dang. See Dol po pa, *Bden gnyis* p. 721. For an English translation of the quotes that Dol po pa cites from the *Kālācakra* and *Vimalaprabhā*, see Wallace 2004: 241–246.

³⁸ Wallace 2004: 244 and 2001: 34.

authoritative texts use the term Vijñānavāda, not Cittamātra, to speak of the distinction between the two Mahāyāna schools probably gave Dol po pa the platform to distinguish Vijñānavāda from the Cittamātra that he deems as the final view of Mahāyāna.

However, Dol po pa labors to cite authoritative sources to support his reconfiguration of Conventional Cittamātra or Vijñānavāda. Unlike his Tibetan contemporaries, he struggles to identify any *sūtras* or Indian commentarial works as authoritative sources for Vijñānavāda.³⁹ He also, for obvious reasons, does not claim Asaṅga as a founding father of Vijñānavāda. However, Dol po pa skillfully argues that the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* and treatises attributed to Maitreya and Asaṅga temporarily teach Cittamātra.⁴⁰ For him, these

³⁹ Tāranātha (1575–1634) interestingly argues that some Vijñānavāda commentarial works existed before the time of Nāgārjuna. Tāranātha argues, “Even though it is clear that there existed some miscellaneous Cittamātra śāstras, they did not follow the treatises of Maitreya, Asaṅga and his brother Vasubandhu because they were in circulation before Ārya Nāgārjuna as they were rejected in śāstras such as *Bodhicittavivarana*, and so forth that came before Asaṅga. Therefore, it seems to be the case that [the proponents of the Cittamātra] were the five hundred Yogācāra masters such as Mahābande Avitarka, Jñānātala, and so forth, who are known to have existed. [But], their treatises were not translated into Tibetan.” (*sems tsam pa'i bstan bcos thor bu 'ga' zhig ni yod par gsal na yang byams chos dang thogs med sku mched kyi gzhung gi rjes su 'brang ba ni ma yin te byang chub sems 'grel sogs thogs med kyi sngon du byung ba'i bstan bcos nas bkag pa sogs kyis 'phags pa na gar ju na'i snga rol du byung ba'i phyir ro / des na btsun pa chen po a vi tar ka dang jna na la sogs pa rnal 'byor spyod pa slob dpon lnga brgya byung bar grags pa ltar yin par mngon no de dag gi bstan bcos ni bod du ma 'gyur ba yin*). See Rje tsun Tāranātha, “Gzhan stong dbu ma'i rgyan” p. 212.

⁴⁰ The translation by Hopkins (2006: 249) says, “Therefore, although the profound *sūtras* of the third wheel such as the *Sūtra Unraveling the Thought* and so forth, Maitreya's *Ornament for the Great Vehicle Sūtras*, *Differentiation of the Middle and the Extremes*, and so forth, and Asaṅga's *Grounds of Yogic Practice*, *Summary of the Great Vehicle*, *Summary of Manifest Knowledge*, and so forth temporarily teach mind-only ...” Tāranātha, second only to Dol po pa in the Jonang tradition, also offers a similar response in two of his texts. “[We] assert that there is no distinct set of *sūtras* for Madhyamaka and Cittamātra because [the two schools] are only different in terms of interpreting one set of *sūtras*.” (*dbu sems gnyis la mdo sde tha dad du med par ni 'dod de mdo sde gcig la dgongs pa 'grel lugs kyi khyad par tsam yin pas*

scriptures *temporarily* teach Vijñānavāda, in that they employ certain Vijñānavāda nomenclature on the literal level which serve as stepping stones for ultimately understanding Ultimate Cittamātra, which is what the *sūtras* ultimately and thoroughly teach. However, Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes (1247–1320), the second patriarch of the Jonang tradition, explicitly identifies both Aśaṅga and Vasubandhu as proponents of Cittamātra or Vijñānavāda and their treatises as textual sources for Cittamātra,⁴¹ without making any distinctions between Conventional Cittamātra and Ultimate Cittamātra.

In brief, as a controversial fourteenth-century Tibetan interpreter of Mahāyāna treatises, Dol po pa goes against the mainstream Tibetan configuration of Cittamātra, which is generally seen as inferior to Madhyamaka in terms of its explication of ultimate truth. Using reliable Indic sources, Dol po pa formulates two categories of Cittamātra: Conventional Cittamātra and Ultimate Cittamātra. He, thereby, makes the latter school, which is none other than the Madhyamaka that his lineage follows, at the center of his Jonang

...) See Rje btsun Tāranātha, “Tshul gnyis rnam ’byed nges don ’jug ngogs” p. 245. Furthermore, in his *Gzhan stong dbu ma’i rgyan* (p. 212), Tāranātha responds to the question of whether there are separate *sūtras* and *śāstras* for the Cittamātra by stating, “There is no separate *sūtra* [for the Cittamātra] just as there is no separate sutra for the two [Hīnayāna] schools of Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika.” (*mdo sde ni logs su yod pa ma yin te / dper na bye mdo gnyis la yang mdo sde tha dad med pa bzhin no*).

⁴¹ He says, “This Dharmarāja [referring to Kun spangs thugs rje brtson ’grus] studied and excelled in Cittamātra *sūtras* and *śāstras* such as Ārya Aśaṅga’s treatises, and particularly, Vasubandhu’s eight prakaraṇas, such as *Viṃśatikā*, *Triṃśikā*, and so forth ...” (*chos rje ’dis sems tsam ston pa’i mdo rnams / ’phags pa thogs med kyi btsan bcos rnams dang / khyad par du slob dpon dbyig gnyen gyi sems tsam nyi shu pa dang / sum cu pa la sogs te pra ka ra na sde brgyad rnams dang sems tsam ston pa’i bka’ bstan bcos ma lus pa rnams gsan nas mkhas par bslabs shing ...*) See Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes, *Dpal ldan dus kyi ’khor lo’i jo nang pa’i lugs kyi bla ma brgyud pa’i rnam thar* p. 95. Furthermore, Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes lists Nāgārjuna’s *Six Collections of Reasoning*, Āryadeva’s *Catuhśatakaśāstrakārikā*, Candrakīrti’s *Prasannapadā*, *Madhyamakāvatāra*, and Bhāviveka’s *Prajñāparadīpa* as Prāsaṅgika’s treatises and Śāntarakṣita’s *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, and Kama-lāśīla’s *Madhyamakāloka* as Svātantrika’s texts. See *ibid.* p. 102.

tradition. It is to the section on the classification of Madhyamaka that we now turn.

Classification of Madhyamaka

As a Tibetan scholar trained at a prominent scholastic monastery like Sa skya, during the fertile fourteenth-century Tibet, Dol po pa is certainly aware of all the Madhyamaka doxographical categories,⁴² such as the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka and Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka that were in use between the 8th and 11th centuries in Tibet and Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka and Svātantrika-Madhyamaka that dominated the literature dealing with Tibetan doctrinal system since the 13th century. Additionally, he is fully cognizant of the growing influence of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka within the Buddhist scholastic discourse in fourteenth-century Tibet. However, since his main agenda is to delineate the concept of other-emptiness and to criticize the self-emptiness view as a whole, Dol po pa does not express any interest in expounding on the distinction between the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka and Svātantrika-Madhyamaka in his works.⁴³

While fourteenth-century Tibetan scholars generally view Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka as the highest school of the Mahāyāna system, Dol po pa instead openly argues that the highest Buddhist school must promulgate what he calls “other-emptiness” (*gzhan stong*), not self-emptiness (*rang stong*). Therefore, real Madhyamaka, for Dol po pa, refers to the school that is free not only from

⁴² However, the Madhyamaka categories such as Yogācāra-Madhyamaka (*rnal 'byor spyod pa'i dbu ma*), Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka (*mdo sde spyod pa'i dbu ma*), Māyopamādvayavādin (*sgyu ma rigs sgrub pa*) and Sarvadharmāpratiṣṭhānavādin (*rab tu mi gnas pa*) are not mentioned in Dol po pa's extant primary works.

⁴³ “Division of the Madhyamaka into Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika schools is not feasible to be a division of Madhyamaka ...” (*dbu ma pa ni rang rgyud thal 'gyur zhes 'byed pa dbu ma'i dbye bar mi rung ste ...*) See Dol po pa, *Bka' bsdu bzhi pa'i don bstan rtsis chen po* p. 181. Also in his *Bka' bsdu bzhi pa'i bsdu don 'grel pa* (p. 209), Dol po pa argues that Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika schools can not be the divisions of Madhyamaka. Also, see Stearns 2010: 259.

the extreme of mere consciousness as ultimately existent, but also from the extreme of ultimate truth as empty of inherent existence. Hence, Dol po pa proposes that it is Madhyamaka with Appearance⁴⁴ that is the highest school of Buddhism, even surpassing what he calls “Madhyamaka without Appearance”⁴⁵ into which Dol po pa includes Madhyamaka schools such as Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka, Svātantrika-Madhyamaka, and others. Therefore, Dol po pa argues that it is this Madhyamaka classification⁴⁶ that is a viable Madhyamaka taxonomy, not the others that are present during his time.

⁴⁴ Stearns (2010: 410–11, n. 764) says, “Here the terms *snang bcas* (having appearance) and *snang med* (no appearance) probably refer to the Madhyamaka of perfect appearance (*yang dag snang ba’i dbu ma*), in which it is taught that perfect reality directly appears and is seen in meditative equipoise and is the authentic Madhyamaka of apprehensible emptiness (*dmigs bcas stong nyid*), and to the Madhyamaka of no appearance (*snang med dbu ma*), in which it is taught that seeing nothing is seeing reality.”

⁴⁵ See n. 44.

⁴⁶ “There are two [types] of Madhyamaka: [Madhyamaka] with Appearance and [Madhyamaka] without Appearance.” (*dbu ma la snang bcas snang med gnyis*) See Dol po pa, *Chos dbyings bde ba chen po’i ’ja’ sa* p. 359. As will be shown later, in some of his texts, Dol po pa adds adjectives “ultimate” and “temporary” to “Madhyamaka with Appearance” and “Madhyamaka without Appearance” respectively. Hence, we come across nomenclatures “ultimate Madhyamaka with Appearance” (*snang bcas mthar thug gi dbu ma*) and “temporary Madhyamaka without Appearance” (*snang med gnas skabs kyi dbu ma*). For instance, Dol po pa states, “the meaning of the Madhyamaka, which goes beyond Cittamātra, abides within the temporary Madhyamaka without Appearance; [however] the meaning of the Last Wheel, which goes beyond [the temporary Madhyamaka without Appearance], must remain within the ultimate Madhyamaka with Appearance.” (*sems tsam las ’das nas bka’ bar pa’i dgongs pa snang med gnas skabs kyi dbu ma la gnas pa dang / de las ’das nas bka’ tha ma’i dgongs pa snang bcas mthar thug gi dbu ma la gnas dgos kyi*). See Dol po pa, *Bden gnyis* p. 724. Sgra tshad pa rin chen rnam rgyal, a formidable fourteenth-century thinker, is arguably the first Tibetan thinker to criticize Dol po pa’s classification of Madhyamaka in the former’s *De bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po mdzes rgyan gyi rgyan mkhas pa’i yid phrog*, a commentary on Bu ston’s *Bde gshegs snyin po gsal ba’i rgyan*. See Sgra tshad pa rin chen rnam rgyal 2000: 191.

In order for his schema to be given credence, it is necessary according to Tibetan exegetical conventions that Dol po pa cite accepted exegetical sources that uphold his Madhyamaka classification. He argues that the two types of Madhyamaka he identifies are mentioned in a *sūtra* called *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.⁴⁷ The verses from the *sūtra* read:

Relying on mind-only,
One does not imagine external objects.
Relying on non-appearance,
One passes beyond mind-only.

Relying on observing reality,
One passes beyond non-appearance.
If yogis dwell in non-appearance,
They do not perceive the great vehicle.⁴⁸

Immediately following the verses from the *sūtra*, Dol po pa concludes, “The intent of the Middle [Wheel] *sūtras* abides in the temporary Madhyamaka without Appearance, which is beyond Cittamātra, and the intent of the Last [Wheel] *sūtras* must abide in the ultimate Madhyamaka with Appearance, which is beyond the temporary Madhyamaka without Appearance.”⁴⁹ Although the

⁴⁷ Dol po pa proclaims, “Two levels of Madhyamaka that are beyond Cittamātra are explained in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.” (*lang gshogs su sems tsam las 'das pa'i dbu ma pa rim pa gnyis gsungs te*) See Dol po pa, *Bden gnyis* p. 724.

⁴⁸ Dol po pa quotes the verses from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. The English translation of the verses is taken from Dol po pa's *Mountain Doctrine*, where it appears in a similar context. See Hopkins 2006: 237. It is interesting that Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes, the second patriarch of the Jonang School identifies Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanakrāma* and the *Kālacakra* as the treatise for meditation oriented practice (*sgom pa nyams len gyi gzhung*) (*Bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* p. 102). Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanakrāma* uses *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* as one of its major sources and it is in this text where the same exact quote that Dol po pa cites for his justification of the two Madhyamaka categories is also found. See Lindtner 1997: 160.

⁴⁹ *sems tsam las 'das nas bka' bar pa'i dgongs pa snang med gnas skabs kyi dbu ma la gnas pa dang, de las 'das nas bka' tha ma'i dgongs pa snang bcas mthar thug gi dbu ma la gnas dgos kyi* / See Dol po pa, *Bden gnyis* p. 724.

exact terms, “Madhyamaka with Appearance” and “Madhyamaka without Appearance,” are not evident in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, Dol po pa argues that the verses cited above explain the three Mahāyāna schools, Vijñānavāda, Madhyamaka without Appearance, and Madhyamaka with Appearance, in an ascending hierarchical order on the rung of Mahāyāna doxography.⁵⁰

Furthermore, Dol po pa points to other sources to substantiate his view. As Vesna Wallace (2001: 11) claims, “Although the *Kālacakra* tradition acknowledges the Mādhyamika view of emptiness as its primary theoretical foundation, it has its own unique interpretation of emptiness, not only as a mere negation of inherent existence (*svabhāva*), but also as the absence of material constituents of the individual’s body and mind. ... It is a form that is endowed with all the signs and symbols of the Buddha.” While the two Madhyamaka categories identified by Dol po pa are not explicitly mentioned in the *Kālacakra*, arguably the most fundamental treatise for Dol po pa and his Jonang School, the text nevertheless explains emptiness that is not merely empty of inherent existence as delineated in the Middle Wheel *sūtras*; rather it explicates emptiness endowed with fully enlightened qualities that are found in *tathāgata*-essence *sūtras* such as *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* and *Śrīmāladevisūtra*. Therefore, it is based on authoritative works such as *Kālacakra*, *Vimalaprabhā*, and *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* that Dol po pa’s distinction between the two Madhyamaka schools can be understood.

While, according to Dol po pa, *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* is one of the very few *sūtras* where the two Madhyamaka categories are mentioned, there are many *sūtras* such as *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, and so forth that are included either in the group of ten definitive *sūtras* (*nges don gyi mdo bcu*)⁵¹ or in the

⁵⁰ While Kamalaśīla obviously does not employ the terms that Dol po pa uses here, but the former’s *Bhāvanakrāma* quotes the exact verses from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and explains three different modes of realization in an hierarchical order, the last one being the ultimate realization. See Lindtner 1997: 159–160.

⁵¹ For the list, see Stearns 2010: 316–317, n. 29. However, it is not clear from his writings what criteria he follows for the inclusion into, or ex-

set of ten *tathāgata*-essence *sūtras* (*snying po'i mdo bcu*) that are authoritative sūtric sources for Madhyamaka with Appearance. As mentioned above, Dol po pa generally does not accept the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras*, the foundational sūtric sources for the Madhyamaka School that late fourteenth-century Tibetan scholars declare are definitive, including Red mda' ba gzhon nu blo gros, Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, and so forth.⁵² In terms of authoritative *śāstras* for Dol po pa's Madhyamaka with Appearance, works of Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu become influential.⁵³

clusion from, the category of the ten definitive *sūtras* or the group of the ten *tathāgata*-essence *sūtras*. For instance, Dol po pa asserts both the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* and the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* as authoritative sources for his school, but the former is included in the group of the ten *tathāgata*-essence *sūtras* and the latter in the category of the ten definitive *sūtras*, irrespective of his claim that both explain *tathāgata*-essence explicitly.

⁵² For information on how Dol po pa asserts that the Middle Wheel teachings are interpretable, see Hopkins 2006: 24. Dol po pa states: “The Bhagavān in the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* states that the First Wheel and the Second Wheel teachings are interpretable.” (*bka' 'khor lo dang po dang gnyis pa drang don du bcom ldan 'das kyis mdo dgongs pa nges 'grel du gsungs la*) See Dol po pa, *Bden gnyis* p. 724.

⁵³ As pointed out earlier in the previous section, Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes, the 2nd patriarch of the Jonang tradition, does not assert the works of Maitreya, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu as authoritative sources for his Great Madhyamaka. Instead Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes lists Nāgārjuna's *Six Collections of Reasoning*, Āryadeva's *Catuḥśatakaśāstrakārikā*, Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā* and *Madhyamakāvatāra*, and Bhāviveka's *Prajñāparadīpa* as Prāsaṅgika treatises; Jñānagarbha's *Satyadvayavibhaṅgakārikā*, Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, and Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakāloka* as the Svātantrika texts; and Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanakrāma* and the *Kālacakra* as the treatises for meditation oriented practice (*sgom pa nyams len gyi gzhung*). Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes does not use the term “Great Madhyamaka” to refer to any of these texts, except for the *Kālacakra*. He argues, “Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanakrāma* and the transmission of the Great Madhyamaka stemming from the bodhisattva and king, Sucandra, etc. are the treatises of meditation oriented practice ...” (*Ka ma la shi la'i sgom rim gsum dang byang chub sems dpa' zla ba rgyal po nas brgyud pa'i dbu ma chen po'i khrid la sogs pa sgom pa nyam len gyi gzhung rnams dang ...*) See Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes, *Bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* p. 102. Here one could certainly read the passage so that the phrase “transmission of the Great Madhyamaka” could include Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanakrāma* as well. In that case, Kamalaśīla's

While the influence of Indic sources on Dol po pa's rather unique way of categorizing Mahāyāna doxography is quite obvious, one may wonder whether his contemporaries in Tibet had any impact on Dol po pa for his articulation of Mahāyāna doxography.⁵⁴ Dol po pa mentions "great eminent scholar Dkon bzang" (*mkhas dbang chen po dkon bzang*) as one possible influence: "Regarding the differences between the eminent scholar Dkon bzang ba and Dpon byang ba [in terms of their doctrinal beliefs], there are, according to the perspective of some Tibetan masters, more [disciples following the doctrinal presentation of] Dpon byang ba, [but] based on the [doctrinal] beliefs of buddhas and bodhisattvas, there seem to be more [disciples following] Master Dkon bzang ba."⁵⁵ Dkon bzang ba's doctrinal presentation is seen in conformity with Dol po pa's presentation,⁵⁶ whereas Dpon byang ba's formulation is not in compliance with Dol po pa's configuration.

Although it is not entirely certain, there is some reason to believe that Dol po pa had the famous Rgyal sras thogs med bzang

Bhāvanakrāma would also be a Great Madhyamaka treatise. However, more research is needed to determine how these terms are used in the literature of early Jonang scholars and in non-Jonang literature from the same period. It is interesting that Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes lists *Prajñāparādīpa*, a text that explicitly criticizes Buddhapālita, as a Prāsaṅgika text. This goes against the way scholars sometimes trace the lineages of Svātantrika-Madhyamaka and Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka by associating the former with Bhāviveka and the latter with Buddhapālita.

⁵⁴ Here one could provide the names of a number of Tibetan scholars, whose written works or oral transmissions and so forth may have influenced Dol po pa's doctrinal presentation, but I will restrict myself to two scholars, Mkhlas dbang chen po dkon bzang and Rin chen ye shes, whose doctrinal presentations seem to have directly impacted Dol po pa's presentation.

⁵⁵ *mkhas pa chen po dkon bzang ba dang dpon byang ba'i bzhed lugs mi mthun pa 'di la bod kyi slob dpon 'ga' zhig gi dbang du byas na, dpon byang ba mang bar 'gyur zhing sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa'i bzhed pa'i dbang du byas na slob dpon dkon bzang ba mang bar mngon te ... (Gshag 'byed bsdus pa p. 368).*

⁵⁶ Dol po pa repeatedly mentions in his texts that his doctrinal system was propounded by the Buddha and the tenth-level bodhisattvas, whereas the doctrinal presentation propagated by Haribhadra, and so forth is not propounded by the Buddha and the tenth-level bodhisattvas.

po (1295–1369) in his mind, the author of *Rgyal sras lag len so bdun ma* (*The Thirty-Seven Practices of Bodhisattvas*), who is also known as Dkon mchog bzang po. In the biographies of Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po written by his two disciples,⁵⁷ it is mentioned that he was a staunch proponent of the works attributed to Maitreya and Asaṅga. He is even known to have self-identified himself as the “second Asaṅga” (*thogs med gnyis pa*)⁵⁸ or the “new Asaṅga” (*thogs med gsar ma*)⁵⁹ for his expertise in, and propagation of, Asaṅga’s works. However, since much of Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po’s works remained unavailable until recently, a thorough study of the extent to which his works influenced Dol po pa cannot be undertaken at the present moment. Nonetheless, Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po’s *Uttaratantra* commentary certainly explains many doctrinal concepts that are thematically in accordance with Dol po pa’s presentation of buddha-nature.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Btsun pa dpal gyi rin chen and Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan wrote a biography each of their teacher, Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po, *Rgyal sras dngul chu thogs med kyi rnam thar*.

⁵⁸ Btsun pa dpal rin and Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal sras dngul chu thogs med kyi rnam thar* p. 30.

⁵⁹ Btsun pa dpal rin and Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal sras dngul chu thogs med kyi rnam thar* p. 179.

⁶⁰ See Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po, *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma’i nges don gsal ba* pp. 365, 376, 379, and 383. However, Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po is reported to have said: “The doctrinal presentation of the All-Knowing One [that is, Dol po pa] is taught in many *sūtras* and tantras, and it was even an old system in India. Therefore, we do not see any fault with it. The Abbot Bu ston’s doctrinal presentation is also not merely his own [new school’s position], rather it is the intent of most of the *sūtras* and tantra and of most of the Indian and Tibetan scholars and adepts. Therefore, in no way do I see any fault with [Bu ston’s doctrinal presentation]. He [that is, Bu ston] is right.” (*kun mkhyen gyi grub mtha’ ’di ni mdo rgyud mang po na bshad / rgya gar nas kyi grub mtha’ rnying pa yin pas rang res nor bar ma shes / mkhan bu ston pa’i grub mtha’ ’di yang ni khong cig pu’i ma yin / mdo rgyud phal mo che thams cad dang rgya bod kyi mkhas grub phal che ba thams cad kyi dgongs pa yin pas de bas kyang ’o skol gyis nor bar ma shes / khong bden gsung*.) See Btsun pa dpal rin and Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal sras dngul chu thogs med kyi rnam thar* pp. 85–86. This seems to suggest, at least in Btsun pa dpal rin’s opinion, that Rgyal sras thogs med may have preferred Bu ston’s doctrinal presentation over Dol po pa’s formulation of Buddhist

Another Tibetan master who may have influenced Dol po pa is Rin chen ye shes, one of the primary teachers of Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po. It is difficult to give exact dates for Rin chen ye shes' life, but he seems to have lived up until the mid-fourteenth century, most likely as an older contemporary of Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po, Bu ston, and Dol po pa.⁶¹ In the biographies of these three formidable fourteenth-century scholars, Rin chen ye shes, who was an expert on the *Five Treatises of Maitreya*, is mentioned as having a lama-disciple relationship or a collegial relationship with all three of them. For instance, in the biographies of Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po, Bla ma rin chen ye shes is mentioned by its abbreviation "bla ma rin ye ba" several times.⁶² The latter taught the *Five Treatises of Maitreya* along with their commentaries to Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po.⁶³ In the biography of Bu ston, the full name, Bla ma rin chen ye shes, is employed.⁶⁴

In Bu ston's 'phrin yig gi lan rin po che'i phreng ba (Precious Garland of Rebuttals),⁶⁵ he demonstrates that Rin chen ye shes as-

doctrine.

⁶¹ Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po went to Chos lung to see his teacher, Bsod nams grags pa (1273–1345), and a few months later, the latter passed away. Thereafter, Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan, one of the two biographers, informs that Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po visited Rin chen ye shes, who would also die soon after their meeting. From this, one can deduce that Rin chen ye shes most likely passed away in, or sometime after, 1345. See Btsun pa dpal rin and Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal sras dngul chu thogs med kyi rnam thar* pp. 197–198.

⁶² Btsun pa dpal rin and Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal sras dngul chu thogs med kyi rnam thar* pp. 43, 51, 56, 68, 82, 97, 180, 198, and 201.

⁶³ Btsun pa dpal rin and Gzhon nu rgyal mtshan, *Rgyal sras dngul chu thogs med kyi rnam thar* pp. 43 and 180.

⁶⁴ Seyfort Ruegg 1966: 114.

⁶⁵ While the biography of Bu ston does not explain the exact nature of relationship between Bu ston and Rin chen ye shes, the letter that Bu ston sent to Rin chen ye shes suggests that Bu ston had great respect for the former as an unbiased accomplished scholar. For reference, see Bu ston rin chen grub, 'phrin yig gi lan rin po che'i phreng ba pp. 190–191. Although the letter does not begin with the title mentioned here, it ends with the title given above. It was completed in 1326–1327 (*me pho stag gi lo*). The letter is included in the section called *Thams cad mkhyen pa bu ston rin po che'i gsung rab thor bu*.

serted treatises such as the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, *Uttaratantra*, and *Sūtrālaṃkāra* to be definitive and beyond the four tenet schools. Bu ston argues:

In another letter [from Rin chen ye shes, Rin chen ye shes argues that] since the Last Wheel sūtra [*Samdhinirmocanasūtra*] teaches that it is superior to the Middle [Wheel of Doctrine], the content of the Last [Wheel of Dharma] is better... Because the *Sūtrālaṃkāra*, the *Uttaratantra*, and so forth comment on the Last Wheel sūtra, their content is better. [Some] assert them as Cittamātra texts, but their content is beyond the four tenet schools [Sautrāntika, Vaibhāṣika, Cittamātra, and Madhyamaka] ...⁶⁶

Like Dol po pa, who does not see his unique Mahāyāna view fit into any of the mainstream Mahāyāna classification schemas of the fourteenth-century Tibetan doxography, Rin chen ye shes also argues that the ultimate view taught in authoritative treatises such as the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra* and *Sūtrālaṃkāra* cannot be found in the four mainstream Buddhist philosophical schools. While Bu ston does not explicitly mention that Rin chen ye shes influenced Dol po pa, Kun dga' grol mchog (1507-1566) later writes that Bu ston claimed that Dol po pa was articulating a view held by Rin chen ye shes.⁶⁷

Moreover, Rin chen ye shes' *Uttaratantra* commentary,⁶⁸ which has recently become available, reinforces Dol po pa's doctrinal presentation on several important points. Although both Rgyal sras thogs med bzang po and Rin chen ye shes do not employ the dox-

⁶⁶ Bu ston argues, “*yi ge logs shig pa de na, ...bka' tha ma nas 'di bar pa las khyad par du 'phags par bshad pas tha ma brjod bya bzang ngo... des na mdo sde rgyan dang rgyud bla sogs bka' tha ma'i dgongs 'grel yin pas brjod bya bzang ngo. de dag sems tsam du bzhed pa yang mang mod kyi, grub mtha' bzhi ga las brgal ba'i don yin no zhes bya ba gda'...*” See Bu ston, *'phrin yig gi lan rin po che'i phreng ba*, 201.

⁶⁷ Furthermore, Stearns (2010: 43) states, “He [Kun dga' grol mchog] further remarks that even the great Butön commented that Dōlpopa had enhanced an earlier Tibetan philosophical tenet held by one Tanakpa Rinchen Yeshé ...”

⁶⁸ Rin chen ye shes, *Rgyud bla ma'i 'grel pa mdo dang sbyar ba nges don gyi snang ba* pp. 126, 170, and 275.

ographical terms advanced by Dol po pa in their main works, the ways in which they interpret Mahāyāna texts using the buddha-nature literature attributed to the Buddha, Maitreya, and Aśaṅga, the fact that Dol po pa studied with both scholars, and how other scholars noticed strong connection between Dol po pa's and Rin chen ye shes' doctrinal positions strongly suggest that their writings influenced Dol po pa's articulation of the Mahāyāna doxography.

In conclusion, reacting against his contemporaries, who relied on texts such as Prajñāpāramitāsūtras, *Madhyamakāvatāra*, and so forth for their interpretation of Mahāyāna doxography, Dol po pa instead employed the *Samdhinirmocanasūtra*, works of Maitreya, Aśaṅga, and Vasubandhu to make sense of the vast corpus of Mahāyāna doctrinal texts. Whereas later commentarial works played a major role in interpreting Mahāyāna texts for his contemporaries, for Dol po pa, *sūtras* and *tantras* played as much of an important role as later commentarial works in interpreting Mahāyāna texts. Hence, in contrast to the distinction between Cittamātra and Madhyamaka of Mahāyāna doxography and between Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka and Svātantrika-Madhyamaka of Madhyamaka that were widespread in the Tibetan Buddhist scholastic culture of his time, Dol po pa argued for a distinction between Vijñānavāda and Cittamātra, between Conventional Cittamātra and Ultimate Cittamātra, and between Madhyamaka with Appearance and Madhyamaka without Appearance. Such a reconfiguration of the Mahāyāna doxography allowed Dol po pa to interpret the Mahāyāna texts in a rather unconventional way for his time, but the interpretation that has its roots in early Indic sources. As Jonathan Z. Smith (1993: 308) clearly articulates, “we value those who (even though failing) stubbornly make the attempt at achieving intelligibility, who have chosen the long, hard road of understanding.” Dol po pa, then, should be applauded for trying to make the incomprehensible coherent by following the difficult path of demarcating, yet blurring, the distinction between Cittamātra and Madhyamaka.

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