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Enlightenment by a Single Means

TIBETAN CONTROVERSIES ON
THE "SELF-SUFFICIENT WHITE REMEDY"
(*DKAR PO CHIG THUB*)
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Illustrations of two plants and one mineral sometimes identified as dkar po chig thub appear at the bottoms of pages 90, 154, and 175. In Tibetan Medical Paintings (London: Serindia, 1992), pp. 217 and 223, one plant is identified as Panax pseudoginseng and the stone as white pyrolusite or zeolite.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of Tibetan Buddhism, the metaphor of the dkar po chig thub has generated a surprising amount of controversy. In the 12th and 13th centuries it triggered serious doctrinal discussions, and in the subsequent centuries the inter-sectarian controversies that it occasioned took a long time to die down. The Tibetan expression dkar po chig thub, however, would seem to be innocuous enough. It can be translated as "singly efficacious white [remedy]" or "self-sufficient white [simple]." and it was derived from Tibetan medical or pharmacological terminology—the phrase originally signifying literally a white (dkar po) herbal drug or simple that by itself alone (chig) was capable (thub) of effecting the cure. But it was as a doctrinal metaphor that these words provoked disagreement, for any religious doctrine or practice characterized by this metaphor of self-sufficiency was implicitly said by its proponents to be capable of bringing about by itself alone the complete spiritual cure: perfect Awakening or Buddhahood.

The Tibetan school best known for using this metaphor was the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud. The expression dkar po chig thub is found in the writings of its founder, rJe sGam-po-pa (1079-1153), as well as in those of bla-ma Zhang Tshal-pa (1123-1193), an influential disciple of sGam-po-pa's nephew sGom-pa Tshul-khrims-snying-po (1116-1169). The corresponding doctrinal notion of a soteriologically self-sufficient teaching or factor was viewed with strong disapproval by some other Tibetan religious scholars already in the time of bla-ma Zhang. Its best-known critic, however, was the later scholar Sa-skya Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182-1251), who referred to it and rejected it in several different

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1 See S. Karmay (1988), p. 197f; D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 100f; and D. Jackson (1990), pp. 26f and p. 73, n. 20. I use the word simple as a noun in the sense of "a medicine of one constituent, a medicinal herb." In Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged, Second Edition (Cleveland & New York: 1971), the second definition for simple as a noun is: "a medicinal herb or medicine obtained from a herb: so called because each vegetable was supposed to possess its particular virtue and therefore to constitute a simple remedy." The medical meanings of this word are sometimes considered archaisms.
works including two of his major doctrinal treatises, the sDom gsam rab dbye ("Discrimination of the Three Vows") and the Thub pa'i dgongs gsal ("Elucidation of the Sage’s Intention").

Some aspects of this later Tibetan controversy and its background have already been discussed in recent studies. Nevertheless, the relevant passages from sGam-po-pa, Zhang and Sa-skya Panḍita’s writings have not yet been systematically gathered together and translated. I would therefore like to present below a translation of all known passages from these masters’ writings that mention the dkar po chig thub metaphor directly. And since the historical and doctrinal contexts of these discussions in Tibet have also not been investigated in any detail until now, I would like to begin by explaining more about those three masters, their careers as teachers, and their doctrines connected with the dkar po chig thub metaphor.

One of the special Great Seal (phyag rgya chen po: mahāmudrā) teachings for which sGam-po-pa was best known was his so-called "introduction to the [nature of] mind" (sems kyi ngo spro), by which the disciple was led to confront and directly recognize the nature of his or her mind. sGam-po-pa is said to have given such Great Seal instructions sometimes not as secret Vajrayāna precepts in connection with initiation and special yogic practices, but rather as a Sūtra-based Great Seal instruction, or even as a doctrine going beyond both Sūtra and Tantra. Later critics such as Sa-skya Panḍita (or Sa-pan, as he was known for short) maintained, however, that all true Great Seal instructions were Mantrayāna teachings that necessitated full, formal Tantric initiation into a maṇḍala. These masters denied in general the existence of any Sūtra-based or non-Tantric Great Seal, and in particular they considered the existence of any Mahāyāna doctrine outside of the classes of Pāramitāyāna and Mantrayāna to be impossible. Sa-pan himself also within the context of the general Mahāyāna criticized the notion that any one teaching or single spiritual factor could claim to be self-sufficient, including any meditative stoppage of conceptual processes in the name of "seeing the nature of mind." What especially infuriated the bKa’-bryug-pa opponents of Sa-pan was that he went on to deny in his writings that the doctrine in question originated with the Indian adept Nāropa, but asserted rather that it was in fact the teaching of the Chinese master Mo-ho-yen, which according to long-standing Tibetan tradition had been refuted by the Indian Panḍita Kamalaśīla at the bSam-yas debate.

The historical bSam-yas debate—which probably took place in some fashion in Central Tibet during the reign of the great Tibetan king Khrisrong-lya’u-btsan (d. 790s)—together with the Chinese and Tibetan sources on it, has recently inspired a large amount of modern scholarship, and here is not the place to survey it all. Nevertheless, it has become clear that the doctrines at issue at the original debate were not quite as simple or clear-cut as some later Tibetan restatements of them—including the historical summaries by Sa-pan and the sources he based himself on—would have us believe. Still, the accounts upon which Sa-pan and others based themselves were not mere fabrications, either. They seem in fact to go back to sources that include a version of the sBa bzhi, and similar traditions were familiar to Tibetan scholars before Sa-pan such as Nyang-ral Nyi-ma’i-’od-zer (1124-1192 or 1136-1204) and Lha-bri-sgang-pa (fl. late 12th c.). Moreover, one crucial Chinese source

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I have already touched on many of the same topics and sources in the article D. Jackson (1990), though there I approached the subject from a different point of departure. I have also investigated several related themes in the paper: "Birds in the Egg and Newborn Lion Cubs: Metaphors for the Potentialities and Limitations of 'All-at-once' Enlightenment," which appeared in the proceedings of the Fifth International Seminar on Tibetan Studies (Narita: 1992).

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3 See, for instance, the sources listed by D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 65 and notes 127 and 128.

4 See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 70.

5 On the history of Nyang Nyi-ma’i-’od-zer, see D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 74ff, and L. van der Kuip (1986), p. 148f. For the relevant texts of both 12th-century sources, see also H. Eimer (1991), pp. 168-172. Lha-bri-sgang-pa learned this tradition from Jo-bo Sbyin-btsun, who was connected with Atiśa’s three main disciples; this may therefore represent a mainstream bKa’-glama-pa tradition. Lha-bri-sgang-pa characterizes the Chinese master Mo-ho-yen as having advocated the cultivation of pragñā at the expense of the other perfections, using the metaphor of the soaring king of birds and the person who reaches the peak of the king of mountains. Kamalaléla is said to have criticized these metaphors, saying that a bird flies by beating his wings stroke by stroke, and that one reaches the top of the highest mountain by taking one step after another. Just so, the understanding of Emptiness by a person of highest capacity also arises from having cultivated compassionate means.
recovered from Tun-huang agrees with such sources in mentioning that Mo-ho-yen used a panacea or single self-sufficient medicine metaphor for his instantaneous, non-conceptualizing method. Doctrinally, too, the points at issue in the original bSam-yas debate did have some strong parallels with the later Tibetan dkar po chig thub controversies. The main Indian pandita at the debate, Kamalaśīla, was evidently attempting to refute the claim of soteriological self-sufficiency for a single method, and this was at the heart of the controversy addressed by his closely related Bhāvanākrama treatises and not for instance "subitism." This

6 See P. Demiéville (1952), pp. 122f, who quotes Wang Hö's Cheng-li chüeh. Here Mo-ho-yen responds to the question of whether more than one "medicines" are or are not necessary to remove separately the three distinct "poisons", i.e. kleśas. The translation of the question concludes:
S'il en est ainsi, comment donc voulez-vous extirper les passions en cultivant l'abstention des notions de l'esprit? Les rendre temporairement invisibles, ce n'est pas un moyen de les extirper radicalement.

[Mo-ho-yen's reply begins:]
D'après le Nirvāṇa-sūtra, il y a un médicament, nommé aprāda, qui guérit de toute maladie les êtres auxquelles il est administré. Il en est de [p. 123] même du sans-réflexion et du sans-examen.

See also L. Gómez (1983), p. 92, quoting the same passage from the Cheng-li chüeh of Wang Ho, p. 146b:
According to the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra, there is a certain medicinal herb that will cure all diseases in those who take it. It is the same with this absence of reflection and inspection.

This passage had been available in English translation since the appearance of E. Conze, Buddhist Scriptures (London: 1959), p. 217.

7 Some traditional Tibetan histories, including Nyang-ral's Chos byung 'bras rgyad pa'i gzhung, and the "alternative tradition" of the sBa bzhed, indeed attribute the use of the dkar po chig thub image to the Chinese side of the debate, who are said to have employed it to refer to their own special teaching. See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 100.

8 In the cig car ba manual recovered in Tun Huang (Pelliot Tib. 116) entitled the dBu ma'i spyi don: stong pa nyid 'ba' chig ma yin nol. E. Obermiller suggested already in 1935 the relevance of the third Bhāvanākrama to the debate. See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), pp. 63-4, and note 121. On Kamalaśīla's criticism of an isolated "emptiness principle," see ibid., pp. 184 and 190.


10 Go-rams-pa, Gyal ba thams cad kyi thugs kyi dgon pa zab mo dBu ma'i de kha na nyid sphyi' ngis ston pa nges don rab gzul, vol. 12, ca 173a:1: dkar po chig thub ces bya ba stong nyo kha nar bsgoms pas thams cad mkhyen pa sgrub par 'dod pa la ni mkhas pa ka ma la shi la dang sypal ldan sa skya pandita la sogs pa don ma 'khrol par gege pa mams kyi thabs kyi cha ma tshang bas rdo rje pas ri sangs rgyas sgrub par mi nus sol' shes lung dang rig pa du ma'i sgo nas sun phyung zin pas 'dor' ba ma byas söl.

11 sGam-po-pa, Dam clos... [tbar pa rin po che'i rgyan], p. 265.6 (133a): de lha bu'i stong pa nyid kyi don dang ldan nal' chos 'di la ma 'dus pa cig kyung med dol. See also H. V. Guenther (1971), p. 220.
this very thing, for as the Sūtra of the Vajra Concentration (Do rje ting nge 'dzin gi mdo: Vajrasamādhi Sūtra) states: "If you do not waver from Emptiness, this includes the six Perfections." If you dwell within the insight into the ultimate—Emptiness—for even a single moment, this is immeasurably more meritorious than studying, reciting texts, or performing such meritorious deeds as practicing generosity. Opponents may well ask: "If all those excellent virtues and merits are really included within cultivating simply the nature [of mind] or 'Mind Itself' (sems nyid), then why did the Buddha teach so many times the stages of skillful means?" The answer is: He taught them in order to guide people of inferior capacities who cannot understand ultimate reality.

My treatment of these topics in the following pages is an outgrowth of a wider investigation into the life and thought of Sa-skya Pandita that I have been pursuing over the last few years. Here I have tried to establish Sa-pan's understandings on these subjects and to ascertain what was at issue when he criticized his doctrinal opponents in these connections. I have also tried to investigate the opposing doctrines in their original writings, to see to what extent Sa-pan's characterizations of their positions were accurate or appropriate. I have not, however, succeeded in presenting the Great Seal masters or their teachings with anything like their original striking power and appeal. The soaring, utterly non-worldly viewpoint from which these masters often spoke is difficult to reduce to a doctrinal system. The Great Seal and similar teachings by their nature do not lend themselves easily to discursive description and historical analyses of the sorts I have attempted. Moreover, the traditions themselves insist that these are secret insights which are only conveyable directly—without words or thoughts—by an accomplished master to a qualified disciple.

The Tibetan Great Seal and similar traditions did, however, compose their own written manuals. Such manuals and other doctrinal and historical writings have therefore been the main sources for my depictions of the traditions. Nowadays a number of publications devoted specifically to the Great Seal and the Great Perfection traditions are beginning to appear, including a few translations. I will therefore leave it to people with more insight to point out where my word- and concept-bound analyses have missed the mark!

When quoting from the original writings of sGam-po-pa (and for some of bla-ma Zhang's works, too), I have mainly given the text as it stands. I have not attempted to "correct" the spellings of the published manuscripts I used (which presumably derive ultimately from 12th-century originals) or to bring the text in line with more recent conventions, except where the sense might otherwise be completely unclear. Studies on the early Dwags-po bk′a'-bgyud-pa will become much easier when careful editions become available.

The present study on these topics was made possible in part by the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, a research fellowship from which enabled me to begin the relevant research while at Hamburg University in 1988-89. I am also obliged to Prof. D. Seyfort Ruegg for his helpful comments in 1989, when I presented some of the translated passages from Sa-pan's works in a seminar at Hamburg University's Institute for the Culture and History of India and Tibet, and also for his later remarks. I could do some further work while on a fellowship from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science while at Kyoto University in 1990-91. Finally I revised and completed the main body of this study in 1991-2 while working at the Institute for the Culture and Intellectual History of Asia of the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Vienna. I am thankful to Mr. H. Lasic for proofreading the Tibetan texts by Sa-pan presented in the appendix and for much help in compiling the indexes. I am also indebted to Prof. John Clayton, Prof. Lambert Schmithausen, Mr. Burkhard Quessel and Dr. Dan Martin for reading this work and offering numerous valuable

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12 sGam-po-pa, Dam chos... [thar pa rin po che'i rgyan], p. 267.5 (134a): lam pha rol tu phyin pa drug kyang 'di nyid la tshang stel - rdo rje ting nge 'dzin gi mdo lasl stong pa nyid la[s] ma gysu nal/ pha rol phyin pa drug ' dus söl/ sles gsungr söl. See also H. V. Guenther (1971), pp. 221-22.

13 sGam-po-pa, Dam chos... [thar pa rin po che'i rgyan], p. 264.2 (132b): de ltar don dam shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa de'i ngang la dar cig tsam gnas na bkāl pa'i bar du nyan pa'am/ llog pa'am dge ba'i rtsa ba shyin pa la sogs pa byas pa ba bsod nams dpag tu med pa che ba yin nol/. See also H. V. Guenther (1971), p. 219.

14 sGam-po-pa, Dam chos... [thar pa rin po che'i rgyan], p. 270.1 (135a): 'o na ngo bo'am sens nyid gcig pa bsgron pa la de dag thams cad 'dus nal/ thabs kyi rim pa mang du gnungs pa dag 'byung ba ci ltar yin zhe nal gnas lugs la mong pa'i skal pa dmam pa mams khrid pa'i phyir tel... See also H. V. Guenther (1971), p. 224. Cf. L. Gómez (1987), p. 113, who has studied the remarks of Mo-ho-yen that skillful methods were taught for those of dull faculties.

15 L. Gómez (1987), p. 114, has expressed the predicament well: "...The subitists' fixation with making statements from the point of view of absolute truth is inherently disconcerting to anyone seeking doctrinal orientation."
comments. I would like to thank Mr. Burkhard Quessel once again for much help in preparing the final camera-ready copy for publication.

The main task I have undertaken here has been historical. I hope that by my gathering and interpreting these sources, interested readers will be able better to understand a few aspects of the difficult and subtle doctrinal problems faced by Tibetan Buddhists in the 12th and 13th centuries. The Tibetan Buddhist traditions concerned have almost all survived down to the present day (only bla-ma Zhang's tradition has died out, at least as an institutional entity). This means that to some extent the issues, too, live on and are not of purely historical interest. In fact, some of my findings may now and then touch a sensitive nerve of the traditions concerned or seem to verge on the controversial. This is not always easy to avoid when one presents in detail the contents of a controversy! But I should stress that the present study is merely one person's attempt at historical exploration and investigation, and it is by no means the last word. I therefore look forward to the comments of those who come to the subject from other viewpoints.

D. Jackson
Hamburg, August 1993

1

SGAM-PO-PA, SEEING THE MIND,
AND THE WHITE SELF-SUFFICIENT REMEDY

Some of the doctrinal roots of the later Tibetan dkar po chig thub controversy lay in the revolutionary reclassifying and synthesizing work of the mature rJe sGam-po-pa bSod-nams-rin-chen (1079-1153), founder of the Dwags-po bka'-brgyud tradition within the Mar-pa bKa'-brgyud.\(^{16}\) sGam-po-pa originally had been trained as a physician (lha rje) and had begun his adult life as a married layman. Indeed, he entered into intensive religious practice only after experiencing the shock of his young and beloved wife's sudden death, which had occurred when he was still in his early twenties (ca. 1100). He became one of the foremost disciples of rje-btsun Mi-la ras-pa (1040-1123), but only after extensive studies in other traditions. Before meeting Mi-la, he had already undergone full monastic ordination at the age of twenty-five (1104) and had sought out Tantric initiations in Lower Dags-po from the master Mar-yul Blo-lidan. He had also studied intensively in 'Phan-yul under masters of the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition such as Bya-yul-ba, sNyug-rum-pa and lCags-ri Gong-kha-pa. He met Mi-la ras-pa only later, and finally received instructions from him (especially on "inner heat" gtum mo) for thirteen months in 1110-11. Only then, after meditating for an additional three years, did sGam-po-pa attain Awakening. He tried to return to see his master Mi-la twelve years later in 1123, but Mi-la had already passed away. He continued a primarily contemplative life for some years, but then later in the 1220s he began his teaching career, which became more and more illustrious with the passing years. In 1126, he met his nephew sGom-pa Tshul-khrims-snying-po, and in 1132, when the latter was sixteen, he had him ordained and instructed

\(^{16}\) The following sketch of sGam-po-pa's life is based mainly on the Blue Annals (Deb ther sngon po) of 'Gos lo-tsā-ba, nya 21b-26a; G. Roerich, transl. (1976), pp. 451-462. For some information on sGam-po-pa's life, see H. V. Guenther (1955), pp. 90-96, and Guenther (1971), pp. xi-xii.
him. In 1150 at the age of seventy-one, sGam-po-pa handed over the leadership of his monastic community to that same nephew.

In his maturity, rJe sGam-po-pa exhibited a penetrating, reappraising genius in the realm of doctrinal formulations, and when it came to method, here, too, he was not afraid to reevaluate, adapt or innovate. Like all skillful teachers, he compassionately tailored his instructions to the needs and abilities of his specific students—a fact that probably accounts for many of the seeming inconsistencies or differences of approach in his writings.17

In the later part of his life, he gave increasing attention to transmitting directly the highest Great Seal insight, perhaps in part also as an outgrowth of his own deepened and intensified spiritual insight. What was somewhat revolutionary about the approach sGam-po-pa adopted was that he sought ways to transmit this insight outside of the traditional Mantrayāna method, which treated it as an ultimate and highly secret "fruit" instruction to be conveyed only after full, formal tantric initiation and in connection with special yogic practices. Certain historians or scholars in the bKa'-brgyud tradition portrayed sGam-po-pa’s Great Seal teaching method as having been in this way a significant innovation within their lineage. The bKa’-brgyud-pa historian ‘Gos lo-tsā-ba (1392-1481), for instance, stated:18

17 It should also be pointed out that many of sGam-po-pa’s "writings"—including the collections of replies to questions—were probably never corrected or arranged by him. They are groups of replies to questions given at various times and in various contexts, apparently surviving from the notes or memories of the students, and later thrown together in a fairly random order. This probably accounts in part for the situation described by M. Broido (1985), p. 13: “In this [Phag mo gru pa’i zhus lan] and in the similar Dus gsum mkhyan pa’i zhus lan nothing seems to have been further from sGam-po-pa’s mind than propagating a single unified theory about something." In his formal treatises such as the famous Thar pa rin po che’i rgyan, however, he was setting forth a unified system. The uneven quality of the collected writings of the early Dwags-po bka’-brgyud-pa masters and the presence of later interpolations within them were noticed for instance by lCang-skya Rol-pa’i-rdo-rje, p. 459.1 (cha kha 20b): ‘on kyang ’di dag gi bka’ ‘bum mams su slob ma mkhas pa dang mi mkhas pa du mas zin bris nyag nyog mang po bcug ’dag pa la yid brtan mi snang ngol’.19

18 ‘Gos lo-tsā-ba, p. 400 (nya 25b); G. Roerich, transl., pp. 459-60. See also sGam-po-pa, Writings, vol. 1, p. 271.7: yid ma ches na byin brlabs mi ’byungl yid ches pa cigs la chos mang po mi agosl chos re re kha yar la rten nas bsog pam yin. "If you do not believe, [the master’s] blessing will not occur. One who trusts does not need many religious teachings. One meditates on individual, separate teachings."

Concerning that [teaching of the Great Seal], rJe-btsun Mid-la had not given the Path of Means (thabs lam) and Great Seal [instructions] separately from one another. But [sGam-po-pa] taught the instructions on the Path of Means to those who were suitable recipients of the Mantra teachings, and he gave instructions on the Great Seal to those who were suitable as recipients of the Perfection-Vehicle (Pāramitāyāna) teachings, even though they had not received tantric initiation. He composed then a step-by-step manual of practical instruction called the Lhan cig skyes sbyor, which became popularly known also as "Dags-po’s Realization Teaching" (dags po’i rtogs chos).19 He taught that although the scriptures mention many essential qualities of teacher and student, a student need not have many qualities; it is enough if he just has devotion. He quickly produced a realization of the Great Seal even in the minds of some unintelligent, poverty-stricken or evil persons. He also composed a treatise on the stages of doctrine of the bKa’-gdams tradition,20 while teaching many practical instructions too. Therefore it was famed that from this time the two rivers of bKa’-gdams-pa and Great Seal became blended.

The 16th-century master sGam-po spyan-snga bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal (1513-1596?) similarly explained:21

Though in the practice-lineage down to the great Reverend [Mi-la] they mainly cultivated in meditation the instructions of the Mantrayāna and taught the practical instructions on the Great Seal appropriately at the times of [instructions on] Inner Heat (gtum mo) and Luminous

19 The Lhan cig skyes sbyor is an instruction which on several levels applied (sbyor) Emptiness as innately and simultaneously arisen (lhan cig skyes). See sGam-po-pa’s Collected Writings, vol. 1, p. 219-224, which is identified as this work by S. Karmay (1988), p. 144, n. 39. It is explicitly said to be a high Tantric instruction.

20 Evidently this refers to his famous bstan rim treatise, the Thar pa rin po che’i rgyan.

21 bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, sGam-po spyan-snga, p. 216 (108b): ‘on kyang rje btsun chen po yan gsi sngub brgyad la gsang sngags kyi man ngag mams gso bor sdom zhungl gtum mo dang lod gra la sogs pa’i skabs ci ngsu phyag rgya chen po’i gdams pa ston par mdzad pa las! rje sgrang po pa de thad med pa’i thugs rjes kun nas blang stel’ gdul bya mchog aman thams cad kyi rgyud sla ba’i ched dal snying po don gsi gdams pa phyag rgya chen po ’di nyid rtsal du phyag ste bstan pas shin tu ’phel zhih nyag pa dang’ skal pa can thams cad kyi bgyod pa ge’ig pa’i lam da gsur pa yin no/. Cf. the English translation by L. Lhalungpa, p. 119.
Awareness ('od gsal), nevertheless the Lord sGam-po-pa, motivated by unlimited compassion, singled out and brought to the fore this instruction of the Essential Sense, the Great Seal, in order that all disciples—superior and inferior—could easily realize [it]. And by so teaching it, [this instruction] increased very much and became widespread, and it became the sole path used by all people of fortunate endowments.

Later in his life, sGam-po-pa stressed more and more to his students the simple, direct insight into the nature of mind, and he preferred to teach them just that. Other spiritual attainments such as learning in the scriptures and purity in monastic discipline were unimportant if they were not accompanied by the crucial liberating insight. As he said: "Without the insight into the nature of mind, one will not attain the awakening of Buddhahood. As for me, I value the realization of the nature of mind as better than excellent meditation."

If one understands the nature of the mind of the individual to be not established as anything at all, there is nothing higher than to place the mind concentrated in that. If a slight conceptual thought occurs, it doesn't hurt. Having looked right at it, return back hither. There is nothing better than the nature of mind which is nothing...."

The 16th-century historian dPa'-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba, for instance, described this emphasis of sGam-po-pa's in the following way:

In the latter part of his life, he made his main instruction just the

pointing out of the nature of mind, i.e. the "[singly and] instantaneously decisive" (chig chod) Great Seal.25

Some other masters of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud likewise specified that this direct pointing out or seeing of the nature of mind was sGam-po-pa's specialty, and that this was his dkar po chig thub that later scholars such as Sa-pan criticized. The 13th-century 'Bri-gung-pa commentator rDo-rje-shes-rab, for instance, stated in his dGongs gcig commentary:26

The Lord sGam-po-pa, using an example from medicine said: 'This 'seeing of the nature of mind' of mine is called the 'self-sufficient white [remedy].'"

Bla-ma Zhang (Zhang g.Yu-brag-pa brTson-'grus-grags-pa, 1123-1193), too, indirectly alluded to the important role of the "pointing out" or "introduction to" (ngo sprod) in sGam-po-pa's method by characterizing the Dags-po system as "The introduction to the Great Seal in the tradition of Dags-po-po," contrasting it with the other lineages of the Great Seal Instructions (phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag).27 A little later (p. 557.4), he characterized it as "the pointing out of 'original mind,' Dags-po's making it seen in its naked [essence]" (gnyug ma'i ngo sprod dags po gcer mthong byed).

That sGam-po-pa had laid a special emphasis on the direct introduction to mind was stressed even more strongly by sGam-po-pa's "grand-pupil" 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten-mgon-po. The latter stated once that from among the many Indian mahāsiddhas, Tog-rtse-pa ("Mattock-man" *Kotalipa?) was the only one in India who directly pointed out Mind. In the same way, from among the numerous Tibetan adepts, sGam-po-pa was the only one to do likewise.28

22 sGam-po-pa, Collected Writings, vol. 1, p. 453: rang gi sens ma rtogs na sangs mi rgyal nga ni bsgdm bzang ba bas kyung sens rtogs pa la sris che gsung.

23 sGam-po-pa, Collected Writings, vol. 111.7: gang zag gi sens kyi ngo bo cir yang ma grub par shes nal del nga [nag] la bsag pa de las phag pa ci yang med del nam par rtog pa phra mo byung yang mi [s]roll de rang la bitas pas thur log nas 'ongsl sens kyi ngo bo ci yang ma yin pa las phag pa gang yang med del....

24 dPa'-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba, vol. 1, p. 799f.: sgs la thse smad la sens [800] kyi ngo bo ston pa phyag rgya chen po chig chod kho na gtsa bor mthug del.

25 The term chig chod was used in sGam-po-pa's Great Seal (Phyag-chen) tradition along with chig thub. It also occurs in Great Perfection (rDzogs-chen) writings with reference to their theory (ita ba) such as in the Great Perfection tantra the Seng ge rtsal rDzogs chen po'i rgyud, rNying ma'i rgyud bcu bdun, vol. 2, p. 247.3: dgos pa rang gnas ye shes chig chod kyi lta ba, and p. 248: chig chod kyi lta ba.

26 rDo-rje-shes-rab, Khyaed par lta bsgom sprod pa'i tshoms. [dGongs gcig gcig pa rdo shes ma], dGongs gcig gcig cha, vol. 2, p. 437 (22b): rje sgam pa pas sman la dpe byas nas nga'i sens kyi ngo bo mthong ba 'di dkar po gcig thub bya ba yin gsung.

27 Zhang, Writings, p. 550.2: dags po ba'i hug kyi phyag rgya chen po ngo sprod.

A telling event from very late in sGam-po-pa's life is also recorded in the Blue Annals in this connection:

In the end, when [sGam-po-pa] was passing into Nirvāṇa in the water-female-hen year (1153), two monks each holding a sacrificial cake (bali) in their hands approached, calling out: "We two request instructions on the Path of Means, so pray compassionately accept us!" "Don't let them come near," sGam-po-pa replied. Then one of his attendants advised them: "You should call out saying you are requesting the Great Seal!" Accordingly, those two also shouted out for a long time: "But we are requesting the Great Seal, sir!" Therefore sGam-po-pa said, "Now send them in," and he let them in, and also bestowed upon them the instructions of the Great Seal. In this way he brought up the Great Seal alone from among his teachings.

sGam-po-pa had discovered within himself the treasure of innate wisdom, and for him it was also essential to try to convey it to others. And convey it he did, on a scale never before attempted within his lineage. To do so, he bent the traditional rules restricting how certain Vajrayāna teachings could be transmitted. He did this out of compassion for his students, in order to establish them in what was most important: profound meditative practice and insight. As he once remarked to his disciple Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa:

"I have broken the command of my master, Mi-la." "How so, sir?" asked [Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa]. "By expounding all the teachings to people." On another occasion he remarked: "I have obeyed the command of my master." "How so, sir?" asked his student. "By devoting this entire life to practice."

sGam-po-pa's Classification of the Great Seal

sGam-po-pa did not, of course, completely reject the old tantric classifications of the Great Seal or the traditional methods for introducing it. Some of his teachings given in the more usual tantric doctrinal context follow the standard formulations, as for instance his public lecture entitled Tshogs chos legs mdzes ma, in which he contrasts the Pāramitāyāna as a "path of accumulation" (tshogs kyi lam) with the Mantrayāna, which is a "path of means" (thabs kyi lam). There he gives what must have been for him a very standard and doctrinaire summary outline of Buddhist systems:

I. Vehicle of the Śrāvaka (nyan thos kyi theg pa)
II. Vehicle of the Pratyeka (rang sangs rgyas kyi theg pa)
III. The Great Vehicle (theg pa chen po)

A. The Perfections [Vehicle], the Path of Preparatory Accumulation (pha rol tu phyin pa tshogs kyi lam)
   1. Mind-Only (sems tsam )
      a. The scriptural tradition maintaining that the cognitive image is true (rnam par bden pa'i gzhung lugs)
      b. The scriptural tradition maintaining that the cognitive image is false (rnam par rdzun par 'dod pa'i gzhung lugs)
   2. Madhyamaka (dbu ma)
      a. "Like an Illusion" (sgyu ma lta bu)
      b. "Not stationed anywhere" (rab tu mi gnas pa)
       i. "Integration in which one does not station oneself anywhere" (zung 'jug tu mi gnas pa)
       ii. "Interruption in which one does not station oneself anywhere" (rgyun chad tu mi gnas pa'i gzhung)

B. The Mantra [Vehicle], a Path of Means (gsang sngags thabs kyi lam)
   1. Old versus New [Tantras] (gsar ma/ rnying ma)
   2. Outer versus Inner [Tantras] (phyi pa/ nang pa)
   3. Father Tantra versus Mother Tantra (pha rgyud/ ma rgyud), etc.

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30 sGam-po-pa, Writings, vol. 1, p. 446.4: ngas bla ma'i la'i bka' bcag gung/ de gtsug lags zhus pas/ ngas chos thams cad mi la bshad pas gung/ yang dus cig tsa nal ngas bla ma'i bka'/ bzhin spyigs gung/ de tseg lags zhus pas/ ngas mi tsho zad mar sgrub pa byas pas gung ngol.
In this discourse, sGam-po-pa in the end set forth the tantric path, which he characterized as "the tantric path of means that makes one realize through direct cognition the innate simultaneously arisen gnosises, having identified the correct gnosises on the basis of the ‘warmth’ of the guru’s sustaining spiritual impulse."

In another discussion, he enumerated a series of pairs of usual doctrinal classifications, showing the place of both the Great Seal (Phyag-chen) and the Great Perfection (rDzogs-chen: an old Tibetan "innateist" and "simultaneist" tradition) at the pinnacle of Mantrayāna Completion Stage (rdzogs rim) practice. The scheme he utilized could be outlined as follows:33

I. Interpretable meaning, conducive to good rebirths
II. Definitive meaning, conducive to clearing away being born
   A. Vehicles of the Śrāvaka and Pratyeka
   B. Great Vehicle
      1. Perfection
      2. Resultant Mantra
         a. Production Stage
         b. Completion Stage
            i. Great Perfection (rDzogs-chen)
            ii. Great Seal (Phyag-chen, Mahāmudrā)

32 sGam-po-pa, vol. 1, p. 172.2: bla ma'i byin br labs kyi drod la ren nas l yang dag pa'i ye shes ngos zin tel than cig skyes pa'i ye shes mngon sum du rtags par byed pa'i gsang sngags thabs kyi lam.

33 sGam-po-pa, Writings, vol. 1, pp. 219-220: bka' sde snod rin po che mam pa gsun gyi cho s pos ki ri rigul tsam pa cig yod kyang/ de thams cad kyi byin brlas bya'i don bsdus na gnyis/ drang don skye bar [- ba] bzhang bar byed pa'i chos dang/ nges don skye ba 'dag par byed pa'i chos sol .... nges don la bdye na gsun yod pa lasl/ nyan rang gis = gis/ theg pa mi ston/ theg pa chen po'i gilams ngag cig ston/ de la gnyis/ pha rol tu phin yuan pa'i theg pa mi ston/ gsang sngags 'bras bu'i theg pa/ol/ da res dang po de mi ston/ gnyis pa'i gsang sngags [220] 'bras bu'i theg pa de ston/ de la gnyis/ bskyed pa'i rim pa'i gilams ngag dang rtags pa'i rim pa'i gilams ngag gnyis yod pa lasl/ 'dir bskyed rim mi ston/ rtags pa'i rim pa'i gilams ngag ston/ de la gnyis/ rtags pa chen po'i man ngag dang phyag nyen chen po'i man ngag ngag yod pa lasl/ 'dir phyag nyen chen po'i gilams ngag ston/ de la yang dri bras dang dri ma med pa'ng yod pa lasl/ 'dir dri ma med pa'ng gilams ngag cig ston. This work is identified as the Lhan cig skyes shyor by S. Karmay (1988), p. 144, n. 38.

34 In another context, sGam-po-pa linked the distinction between provisional and definitive meaning to that between method and discriminative understanding. See his Writings, Vol. 1, p. 241: drang don thabs kyi lam nyams su len pa dang/ nges don gnis lugs rtags par byed pa shes rab kyi lam.

35 This is also implied by the statement of 'Gos lo-tsā-ba quoted above: "... He gave instructions on the Great Seal to those who were suitable as recipients of the Perfection-Vehicle (Pāramitāyāna) teachings, even though they had not received Tantric initiation."

36 'Gos lo-tsā-ba, nyla 21b-22a; G. Roerich transl., pp. 451f. The first Pan-chen Rin-poche likewise held that the Sūtra basis for a Great Seal teaching could be found in this Sūtra, in the line: chos mam bu gis mang gi rang phyag rgyal chen. See Gung-thang dKon-mchog-bstan-pa'i sgron-me, vol. 3, p. 578.3 (86): pan chen rin po che/ mdo ting nga 'dzin rgyal por/ chos mams kun gi rang phyag rgyal chen/ sles pa khungs su mzas nas mdo lugs la'ang phyag chen gi thu smad zhal gis bzhes lasl. The word in the Sūtra, however, is simply mudrā, and not mahāmudrā. See Peking no. 795, vol. 31, p. 275.1.5 (mdo thu 7a) and vol. 32, p. 333.8 (mdo thu 182a.8): de la chos thams cad kyi phyag rgya gang zhe nal/. See also Dutt, Skt. ed., pp. 21.15 and 643.1; cf. pp. 234.11 and 249.3, where the word mudrā also appears.
become that Sutra's later propagator.) Such a Sutra-based method would have the advantage of avoiding the complicated ritual and practical preparations required for both Vajrayana teacher and student, and it would widen the range of those who might be taught. But on the other hand it would require the lengthy training of students through the gradual stages of the Mahayana.

The later sympathetic dGe-lugs-pa master lCang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717-1786) accepted that sGam-po-pa had taught both Sutra and Tantra methods.

The one who made very famous the terminology of practical instructions called the "Great Seal" was the matchless sGam-po-pa. In the latter's writings there are mentioned two methods for introducing the theory: (1) the tradition of the Perfections Vehicle and (2) the tradition of Mantra, and indeed he applied the term "Instruction in the Great Seal" to both. He also composed treatises that demonstrated, through the quotation of many Sutras, such points as how within the tradition of the Perfections Vehicle there exists the [authoritative, canonical] teaching of emptiness as being the Great Seal.

And this was also the opinion of certain bKa'-shis-rnam-rgyal disagreed. One finds the 15th-century translator and scholar 'Gos-lo gZhon-nu-dpal concluding his history of the Mar-pa and Dags-po bKa'-brgyud with precisely a discussion of this point:

Regarding the realization of the Great Seal, during the time of Mar-pa and Mid-la, [the masters] produced first the Gnosis of inner heat, and then by virtue of that, the realization of the Great Seal. And hence they held it also to be the Perfection Stage [of the Anuttarayoga Tantras]. Dags-po rin-po-che [sGam-po-pa]'s producing a realization of the Great Seal even in those beginners who had not received Tantric initiation was the tradition of the [general Mahayana] Perfections. Moreover, Dags-po rin-po-che said to Phag-mo-gru-pa, "The basic text of this Great Seal of ours is this Mahayānottaratantra Śāstra [Ratnagotravibhāga] composed by the Lord Maitreya." The illustrious Phag-mo-gru-pa too stated the same thing to 'Bri-khung-pa, and consequently in the writings of Lord 'Bri-khung-pa [Jig-rten-mgon-po] and his disciples there appear many expositions of the Mahayānottaratantra Śāstra.

In sGam-po-pa's writings a few clearly non-Tantric or "Sutra-class" instructions of this nature can be located. One example is found among his minor works. It is a teaching that he classified from the beginning as "gradualist" (rim gwis pa), though not specifying at the outset whether it belonged to Sutra or Tantra.

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38 lCang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje, p. 458.2 (cha kha 20b); cf. D. Lopez (1988), p. 266. S. Karmay (1988), p. 197, n. 97, notes that the Sutra/Tantra distinction was applied to the Great Seal by some later Tibetan writers, particularly by certain later dGe-lugs-pas. He quotes Gung-thang dKon-mchog-bstan-pa'i-sgron-mc and the 5th Dalai bla-ba. Such a distinction was convenient for certain dGe-lugs-pa who were trying to advance their own "dGa ldan phyag chen" or "dGa' ldan bka' bskyed." The Fifth Dalai bla-ba, however, was opposed to this eclectic movement (in his opinion, the dGe-lugs should stick to their true dGe-lugs roots). And Gung-thang dKon-mchog-bstan-pa'i-sgron-mc, vol. 3, p. 566 (2b), admitted that in Tsong-kha-pa's time this particular tradition was never called "dGa ldan phyag chen po" or "dGa' ldan bka' bskyed." The Great Fifth Dalai bla-ba, however, was opposed to this eclectic movement (in his opinion, the dGe-lugs should stick to their true dGe-lugs roots). And Gung-thang dKon-mchog-bstan-pa'i-sgron-mc, vol. 3, p. 566 (2b), admitted that in Tsong-kha-pa's time this particular tradition was never called "dGa ldan phyag chen po" or "dGa' ldan bka' bskyed." The Great Fifth Dalai bla-ba, however, was opposed to this eclectic movement (in his opinion, the dGe-lugs should stick to their true dGe-lugs roots).

39 See also sDe-gzhung Rin-po-che, p. 27: [mnyam med sgam po pa'i] ... rjes 'jug mkhas grub gong mas mdo lam phyag chen dang! sngags lam phyag chen gnyis su dbye ba mdzad
sGam-po-pa here (p. 204.2) clearly distinguished practices that were designed for cultivating separately the "Path of Means" (thabs kyi lam) and "Path of Discriminative Understanding" (shes rab kyi lam). The parallel instruction of the "simultaneist" path he briefly describes as "One that consists of being introduced through a guru's instructions to the basis, reality, the original actual state, and then taking that as the path of practice," as opposed to here where the Path of Discriminative Understanding instruction is characterized as "for the cultivation of discriminative understanding, the import of the 'unproduced' profound emptiness of all entities of existence, at first a qualified teacher must introduce one to the fact that all that appears and is heard is the dharmakāya." A simile he used (p. 204.6-7) to characterize this discovery was the poor man from a poor family who discovers a treasure [that had been present all along in the family house]. Later (p. 205.3) he also stressed the importance of learning and reflecting on the Mahāyāna teachings.

Another example of a "Sūtra-class" exposition is sGam-po-pa's most famous treatise—his "Ornament of Liberation" (Thar rgyan)—in which he explained the general Mahāyāna stages of practice. The structure of the composition is noteworthy for the emphasis it lays in the beginning on the "motivating cause" (rgyu), the Buddha Nature (de gshegs snying po: tathāgata-garbha). sGam-po-pa alluded to Great Seal practices once (p. 260.4 (130b), where he notes), and then he goes on to teach that all religious practices are included within just the seeing the nature of mind. Giving here a foretaste of the "fruit" and "simultaneist" viewpoint, he quotes several Tantras as well as a few Sūtras of a special orientation. Then he concludes on the note that the foregoing gradualist teachings were only intended for the spiritually ill-equipped. And it is in this section that we find him saying (as quoted above):

If you dwell within the insight into the ultimate—Emptiness—for even a single moment, this is immeasurably more meritorious than studying, reciting texts, or performing such meritorious deeds as practicing

46 This is more or less the same image as "refining gold," on which see L. Gómez (1987), pp. 123f, et passim. Here I think dngul chu should be read as meaning "molten silver" (dngul zhim ma) and not its more usual meaning, "quicksilver." Cf. the term kivo chu for "molten metal or brass" and gser chu for "molten gold."


48 sGam-po-pa, Dam chos... [thar pa rin po che'i rgyan], p. 263.3 (132a).

49 sGam-po-pa had already quoted one of the classic Indian Buddhist sources for inanimate introspection, attributing it to the Nam mkha' rin po che'i mdo. As is stated correctly in the cig car ba manual in Pelliot Tib. 116, p. 164.1, this verse comes from the rTen 'brel snying po (v. 7) of Nāgārjuna. See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), pp. 85-6, n. 161. See also H. Guenther, transl., p. 215, note 154.
if a person possesses the insight into Emptiness, there is not a single thing not included within this factor.\(^{51}\)

The path, consisting of the Six Perfections, is also completely present in this alone.\(^{52}\) For as the Sutra of the Vajra Concentration (\textit{rDo rje ting nge 'dzin gyi mdo}) \textit{\textsuperscript{(*)Vajrasamādhi Sūtra\textsuperscript{)}} states: "If you do not waver from Emptiness, this includes the Six Perfections.\(^{53}\)

Here sGam-po-pa quotes from several Ch'an apocryphal Sūtras,\(^{54}\)

\(^{50}\) sGam-po-pa, \textit{Dam chos... [har pa rin po che'i rgyan]}, p. 264.2 (132b): de litar don dam shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa de'i 'ngang la dar cig tsa m gvas na bskal pa'i bar du nyan pa'ani klog pa'am dge ba'i TSA ba sbyin pa la sogs pa byas pa bar bsod nams dpag tu med pa che ba yin nol'. See also H. V. Guenther (1971), p. 219.

\(^{51}\) sGam-po-pa, \textit{Dam chos... [har pa rin po che'i rgyan]}, p. 265.6 (133a): de la bu'i stong pa nyid kyi don dang ldan nal rchos 'di la ma 'das pa cig kyang med doll'. See also H. V. Guenther (1971), p. 220.

\(^{52}\) Regarding the inclusion of all six perfections within one factor (such as the insight into Emptiness, or non-conceptualizing concentration), this was a common teaching of the \textit{cig car bar\textsuperscript{)}} traditions. In Pelliot Tib. 116 (171b.1) and 117 (verso 6.4) we find for instance a brief treatise attributed to Mo-ho-yen teaching just that, namely the: \textit{bSam brtan myi Hog a brief treatise attributed to Mo-ho-yen teaching just that, namely the:}

\(^{53}\) \textit{Las mam par dag pa'i mdo}\textsuperscript{)}... \textit{rim gyis sbyong ba ci zhigyodl...}. See Pelliot 116, p. 128.2: \textit{[duu ma a 72a]}: gal te bsam gan nyid du pha rol tu phyin pa drug dangl bceu 'das pa bshad pa'i mdo. Cf. L. Gómez (1983), pp. 79-80 and 121. In his third \textit{Bhāvanākrama\textsuperscript{}}} (Skt. pp. 25-6), Kamalāśīla refuted the thesis that the \textit{six Perfections are included within Dhyāna.}\textsuperscript{)}

\(^{54}\) Studies on these Sūtras are mentioned by Daishun Ueyama (1983), pp. 332f, namely apocryphal Chinese Sutras in Tibetan translation or their use by Chinese debaters in Tibet, see also L. Gómez (1983a), p. 395, and J. Broughton (1983), p. 57, n. 36.

\(^{55}\) In vol. 32 of the reprinted Peking Kanjur (\textit{mdo sna tshogs, du}), for instance, the \textit{Vajrasamādhi Sūtra\textsuperscript{)}} appears, though in its Tibetan title it is called not a \textit{"mdo\textquotedblright\)), but rather a \textit{"chos kyi yi ge\textquotedblright\) ("Dharma text"), and it is indicated as having been translated from Chinese. The above quotation is given on f. 131a.5: \textit{ngo bo nyid rdo rje dang mchung pas dkon mchog guam mi zhih stel stong pa'i chos mams mi gyo bas pa rol tu phyin pa drug dang la nol}. This same passage is quoted by bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, f. 102a; see also L. Gomez (1983a), p. 104, and J. Broughton (1983), p. 113. \textit{R. Buswell (1950), p. 23, describes the work as \textquotedblright\}a syncretistic apocryphon containing pronounced Ch'an elements\textquotedblright\), and in a recent book devoted the subject (\textit{The Formation of Ch'an Ideology in China and Korea: The Vajrasamādhi Sūtra, Princeton, 1989\textsuperscript{)}} he has compared \textit{catalogue evidence about the dissemination of the text with legendary accounts of its recovery to show that it was written in Korea, sometime around 685 C.E., by an early adept of the Korean Šon (Zen) tradition\textquotedblright\). As Buswell further remarks (ibid.): \textit{\'I\textquoteleft\textquoteright\textquotedblright\} introduced some three decades later into China and thence Tibet, the sūtra influenced the subsequent development of the Chinese Ch'an and Tibetan rNying-ma schools.\textsuperscript{)}
of such quotations in sGam-po-pa's general writings had been noticed by certain Tibetan scholars, as alluded to for instance by Thu'u-bkwan Chos-khyi-nyi-ma, who himself attached no particular importance to them:

Regarding the matchless Dawks-po rin-po-che's [i.e. sGam-po-pa's] composition of treatises proving the existence of the [Buddha's] teaching of emptiness in the Perfections (Pāramitā) tradition to be the Great Seal by quoting many Sūtra quotations, some have said: "Such words of the Sūtras do not appear in the canon of the translated Word (bka' 'gyur)."

Nevertheless [regarding this] my omniscient Guru has said: "Those Sūtras are found within the canon of the translated Word translated into Chinese. And though they are not worded in exactly identical ways, [passages with] the same sense can be seen also in some other Sūtras translated into Tibetan, such as the Pratyutpannabuddhasamukhāvasthitā [samādhi] Sūtra (Da liar gi sangs ngyas mgon sum du bzhugs pa'i [ting nge 'dzin gvi] mdo)."

The presence of these quotes does, however, raise several questions: Where did sGam-po-pa receive these traditions from? Did he have direct access to Chinese materials that had been suppressed in the late 8th century? Or did he merely learn them from some intermediate source, such as from the writings of one of the early Tibetan Ch'an-influenced "simultaneist" (cig car ba) traditions such as are recorded in the bSam gtan mig sgron of gNubs Sangs-rgyas-ye-shes? It seems unlikely that he would have come upon them merely through a random reading of Sūtras.

A Great Seal beyond Sūtra and Tantra

Though some clear indications of a "Sūtra-tradition" (mdo lugs) or "Sūtra-path" (mdo lam) Great Seal presentation method can thus be found in sGam-po-pa's works, such a terminology may not have actually originated with him. In fact, the 16th-century Dawks-po bKa'-brgyud master sGam-po spyan-snga bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal asserted that such a twofold division of the Great Seal teaching method into Sūtra and Tantra had not been sGam-po-pa's original teachings. Indeed, bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal maintained that such a division was introduced only by later followers of the tradition, though he himself took pains to try to show that the highest Great Seal instructions were not based on Tantric mysticism. sGam-po-pa's real position, according to bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, was that the Great Seal was a third doctrinal class quite outside all other usual doctrinal classifications, including both Sūtra and Tantra. The latter quoted sGam-po-pa as maintaining the Great Seal to be a third (or even fourth) class of teachings that was quite extrinsic to both non-Tantric Mahāyāna and Tantra, and in sGam-po-pa's own writings one finds several interesting expressions of these notions. In his answers to his disciple the Karma-pa Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa, sGam-po-pa discriminated the following three approaches to Buddhist practice:

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58 Thu'u-bkwan, p. 168.4 (kha 24b.4): min gen med dawks-po rin po ches phar phyin thig pa'i lugs la stong nyid la phyag rgya chen per gsungs pa yod teul mdo lung mang po drangs nas bkyabs pa'i bstan bcos mzas pa la 'gyur 'zhig gis mdo tshig de 'dra bka' 'gyur na mni snang zhes zer mod! rgya nag tu 'gyur ba'i bka' 'gyur khrod na mdo de dag snang la! tshig ris ji la ba bzhin min kyang don geig pa da ltar gi sangs ngyas mgon sum du bzhugs pa'i mdo sogs bod du 'gyur ba'i mdo gzhan 'go' 'zhig na'ang snang ngol!.

59 See sGam-po spyan-snga bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, pp. 99a-101a; and L. Lhalungpa (1986), pp. 110-112. Cf. Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje, who took strong exception to the view expressed by certain other bKa'-brgyud-pas that the Great Seal linked to Tantric mysticism was inferior to Sūtra-based Great Seal. See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1988), p. 1261, and Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje, p. 14.5 (Tb.5): mdo snsags so so'i dgyong par byas nas! phyag chen phyi ma las snga ma bzang ba bka' brgyud rin po che'i bzhed pa yin ces bris gsla' ba ni ches mi 'thad pas gzhun du bkyag zin tol!.

60 See, for instance, bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, sGam-po spyan-snga, Nges don, p. 101a (L. Lhalungpa transl. [1986], pp. 110-112), who quotes sGam-po-pa. sGam-po spyan-snga bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal represents sGam-po-pa as having held precisely that the Great Seal was a doctrine independent of the Sūtras and Tantras. See L. Lhalungpa transl., p. 112. As mentioned above, it was bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal's view that the integration of the teachings into the Sūtra and Tantra systems was a development introduced later by followers of the tradition. See also sGam-po-pa, Tshogs chos yon tan phun tshogs, pp. 268.6 and 283.5. But as also mentioned above, the 8th Karma-pa Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje rejected the view expressed in the writings of certain other bKa'-brgyud-pas that the Great Seal linked to Tantric mysticism was in any way inferior to the non-Tantric Great Seal.

61 sGam-po-pa, Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhus lan, p. 438 and Writings, vol. 1, p. 268. Some later Dawks-po bKa'-brgyud-pas (especially within the 'Bri-gung-pa tradition) in certain contexts have not maintained such a threefold scheme because of the unacceptable doctrinal difficulties it would entail (at least in the context of general Mahāyāna doctrinal discussions). See, for instance, 'Bri-gung rig/dbzin Chos-kyi-grags-pa, p. 45 (23a): mdo snsags gyiis las tha dad pa'i lam zhi gnod na rdo rje pa'i sangs ngyas kyi ma gsum pa'i lam du thal bas, and rDo-rje-shes-rab, vol. 1, p. 396.1 (nya 25a.1).

62 sGam-po-pa, Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhus lan, p. 438.5: lam ran pa gsum du 'gro gsungs ngol rjes dpag lam du byed pa dang la! byin brislas lam du byed pa dang la! mgon sum lam du byed pa gsum yin gsungs! mthun nyid lam pha rol tu phyin pa ni rjes dpag lam du
1) The "definition" (i.e. scholastic general Mahāyāna) path of the Perfections (paramitā), which takes inference for its path (ṛjes dpag lam du byed pa = mtshan nyid lam pha rol tu phyin pa)
2) The Mahāyāna Mantra method, which takes [the guru's] sustaining spiritual power for its path, based on the stages of generation and completion (byin brlabs lam du byed pa = theg chen gsang snyags)
3) The innately and simultaneously arising luminosity of mind [of the Great Seal], which takes direct perception (pratyakṣa) for its path (mgon sum lam du byed pa = lhan cing skyes pa 'od gsal [phyag chen])

He further asserted that there are two types of individuals who enter these three paths, namely the gradualist (rim gya pa) and simultaneist (cig car ba).

The Great Seal is shown to be the highest or ultimate in this scheme by its final position in the threefold enumeration. The key difference that sets it apart here and makes it supreme is what it uses as its special cognitive method, namely direct, non-conceptual perception (pratyakṣa)—as opposed to inference or the spiritual power of the master. (In most other contexts, however, the guru's propelling power or sustaining spiritual impulse is highly stressed as essential for the Great Seal.)

sGam-po-pa comes back to this topic in a subsequent passage, where he speaks of the characteristic practices used by three distinct traditions—(1) the Perfections, (2) Mantra, and (3) "my tradition"—for giving rise to realization (rtogs pa) in the mind. He states:

By the tradition of the Perfections, realization arises in the mind based on the trio of the Thought of Awakening (bodhicitta), [the insight of] "Like an illusion," and Emptiness. By the Mantra tradition, realization arises in the mind based on the trio of the body as deity, voice as mantra, and mind as Ultimate Reality. If you don't realize it, you don't attain Buddhahood. By my tradition, [descriptive phrase missing?], by this way of practicing religion, there is no going down, only going upwards. Those of sharpest faculties become Buddhas. Those of middling [faculties] will be born in the five abodes of the saints. Even the worst are born as gods.

Another similar threefold classification of spiritual paths given by sGam-po-pa, which likewise shows the Great Seal at the pinnacle, is the following:
1) The Perfections vehicle, a path that eliminates the basis (gehi spong ba'i lam = pha rol tu phyin pa)
2) The Mantra vehicle, [a path] that transforms the basis (gehi sgyur ba = gsang snyags)
3) The Great Seal of the highest Mantra or the point of the Great Perfection, [a path] that knows the defilements as the basis of the great gnosis (gehi shes pa = phyag chen, rdzogs chen)

Here the Great Seal practitioner is asserted to have a special relationship with the spiritual ground or basis (gehi), which in this context refers to the affliction (klesa) ridden ordinary personality. According to this scheme, the normal Perfections-Vehicle or general Mahāyāna approach is to get rid of this basis through the arising of its antidote, Gnosis, while the Mantra vehicle seeks to transform it through an altered vision which sees the divine nature of things. The Great Seal, by contrast, simply knows or understands the basis directly. This third way, the understanding of the
cognitive and emotional defilements (*klesa*) as the basis for the great Gnosis, is the ultimate reality of the highest Mantrayāna Great Seal, which is also the point of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*).

**The Great Seal and the Great Perfection**

Some of the above conceptions are indeed similar to the Great Perfection system of theory and practice, and may have been partly borrowed from or influenced by it. The latter was an ancient Tibetan simultaneist tradition that characterized itself typically as, for instance, "the doctrine that transcends all those of Sūtrayāna and Vajrayāna." It, too, characteristically discounted the efficacy of scriptures, logic, language, concepts, and other ordinary means of knowledge. Why would it need them or other purposeful methods? The fruit was already perfectly complete in the primordial basis of mind; this was the gist of the "Great Perfection." A very early Great Perfection work, the *sBas pa’i rgum chung*, elaborates on the insignificant role intellect and words can play in this matter.

To what extent does something which is the profound Non-Conceptual immediately appear as an object of intellect? [Answer:] The experience of the profound Non-Conceptual, since it is an experience, is not just that [intellectual understanding]. When investigating the phenomenon as it actually is [i.e. phenomena-as-such, the ultimate], one phenomenon cannot get at [another] phenomenon. Therefore, no matter how profound the words are that one states, how could they ever be commensurate with the actual point [of ultimate reality]?

The 11th-century Great Perfection scholastic Rong-zom Paṇḍita in his defence of the Great Perfection stressed the need for faith over reasoning, and asserted that critical reasoning finds its application only within the sphere of those who maintain the existence of substantially existent entities: "These disproofs through reasoning [of yours] are nothing more than the [fictive conceptual] objectifying of one thing standing in mutual opposition to another, by you who hold the theory that substantial entities exist." But what sort of mind could in fact apprehend the absolute? Rong-zom explained by discerning three classes of objects and their corresponding three types of intelligence or perceptual means. The first two types of knowledge functioned through the traditional Buddhist personality "aggregates" (*skandha*) of "apperception" (*samjña*) and "feeling" (*vedana*), and the last would correspond to *prajñā*, which belongs to the *skandha* of "mental forces" (*samjña*):

1. A conceptually determined object (*dmigs pa*) is known by intelligence that discriminates through (conceptually labeling) apperception.
2. An immediately appearing thing (*snang ba*) is known by intelligence that discriminates through "feeling" [i.e. simple sense perception].
3. The phenomenal mark of the ultimate is known by intelligence that discriminates through stainless discriminating understanding.

This three-fold analysis of Rong-zom's differs in details from those of sGam-po-pa, but it is similar in certain important respects—e.g. in its rejecting of conceptual means and claiming a third special means of knowledge for reaching its highest of insights.

On some occasions, sGam-po-pa seems in fact to identify the Great Seal and the Great Perfection in their essentials and to treat them as

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66 See S. Karmay (1988), p. 19. Here Karmay presents the contents of chapter 4 of the biography of the partly legendary founder of the *rdZogs-chen*, Vairocana, in which this quality is attributed to the *rdZogs-chen* doctrine of the legendary Indian master dGa’-rab-rdo-rje.

67 S. Karmay (1988), pp. 74-5:

*jii tsa’ ma yod mdzab mo shigl*  *blo’i yul du snang zhe nal*
*jii tsa’ ma yod mdzab mo nyams myong ba’  myong ba yin phyir de nyid myin*
*jii bzhin ba’i chos brtse del  chos la chos ni myi ‘jug bas*
*jii tsa’ ma yod mdzab mo’i tshig brjod kyangl*  *don dang ’tsham par ga la ’gyurl.*


Here the term *dmigs pa* seems to stand for objects of conceptually determined knowledge. The term *snang ba* indicates the object of non-conceptual or pre-conceptual sense knowledge, and *tshor ba* "feeling" apparently indicates the most fundament level of direct sense perception, the bare reaction resulting from contact.
being the same ultimate third path beyond the Pāramitāyāna and Tantra. As seen above, he taught that the completion stage is revealed through direct instruction, and that it has two types: instructions of the Great Perfection and the Great Seal. Nevertheless, on still other occasions sGam-po-pa pointedly distanced himself from the radical and unrealistic claims of instant "realization" made by some Great Perfection yogis.

Distinguishing the Perfections Vehicle from Mantra Vehicle

sGam-po-pa used the above sets of doctrinal distinctions to classify the teachings and to orient the student for receiving instructions that would show the way beyond conceptualization and toward direct insight. His schema were nevertheless based upon conceptual distinctions that had been established within the general epistemological theories of the Indian Buddhist Pramāṇa tradition as well as from theories of Tantric practice and Mahāyāna Sūtra interpretation. Moreover, sGam-po-pa's application of them was actually not ruthlessly anti-Tantric. At least twice in minor writings published with his public sermon the Tshogs chos yon tan phun tshogs, he specified the Perfections Vehicle (pāramitāyāna) method alone as being limited to taking the object as a conceptually conceived universal or as an exterior apprehended object, and thus he there remained within a more traditional tantric context. In the first passage he drew a distinction between two classes of objects that each concentrates on in their investigations, namely between external, physical objects and internal, psychological objects:

What is the difference between the Perfections and Mantra [Vehicles]? The Perfections [Vehicle] is what is called "That which takes for its object the cognitive image of the exterior object." That is because [its followers] dissolve and make empty exterior objects of sense apprehension by means of the reason of their being "devoid of one and many," saying that if the apprehended objects have been thoroughly investigated, then the fetter of the apprehending subject will become loosened of itself, [as authoritatively stated] "There being no apprehended object, there is no apprehending subject for that," and thus they do not investigate the interior mind that apprehends.

The [followers of] Mantra do not investigate external apprehended objects. They impress a seal. They say that the mind ... is not established as any nature when one views what sort of nature it may have. That sense of its not being anything is what is called "awareness" (rig pa), and it is the object of experience for Gnosis, whereas this is not seen by a mind that conceptually thinks.

In the second such passage, which is much more corrupt in the available text, the distinction hinges rather on which of the two means of cognition

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70 sGam-po-pa, vol. 1, p. 220: rDzogs pa'i rim pa gdams[r] nag ston/ de la gnyis/ rDzogs pa chen po'i man nag dang phyang rgya chen po gnyis yod pa las/. See also p. 301.2: ... phyang rgya chen po zer yang rgyang stel/ de thams cad kyi dgos byed sams las su rung ba yin/

71 See sGam-po-pa, Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhus lan, p. 438-39. Here in his reply to the questions of the Karma-pa Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa, sGam-po-pa portrayed the rDzogs-pa chen-po as following a more extreme simultaneous (cig-car-ba) doctrine. He relates a story according to which Mi-la ras-pa is said to have belittled the radical rDzogs-pa chen-po claims of instant Awakening. Mi-la is said to have pointed to a little boy of about five years of age and said: "The followers of the Great Perfection are like him. It is like this child saying that he has the powers of a twenty-five-year-old [adult]. The followers of the Great Perfection too speak of 'Buddhahood now,' but it is not really meaningful." Elsewhere (Writings, vol. 1, p. 162) sGam-po-pa himself does use the simile of the immature human child—along with those of the lion cub and the new moon—as suitable for illustrating the meditator's first glimpse of the Dharmakāya.

According to another characterization of the Great Perfection attributed to the dge-bshes brGya-yon-bdag appearing just before in the same work (p. 438.1), the rDzogs-pa chen-po typically maintained: "If you attain realization (rtogs) in the morning, you awaken to Buddhahood in the morning; if you attain realization in the evening, you awaken to Buddhahood in the evening" (nang rtogs na nang sangs rgya/ nub rtogs na nub sangs rga.). But it should be remembered that such claims were intrinsic to the so-called "fruit" (bras bu) instructions, such as the Thog bab precepts (attributed to Maitripāda).

According to 'Gos lo-tsa-ba, nya 12b (G. Roerich transl., p. 430), the great Mi-la ras-pa first received the Great Perfection instructions from 'Bre-ston Lha-dga' at Rong, but without positive results. The latter then recommended that he go to Mar-pa, who introduced his disciples to the absolute through initiation rites.

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72 sGam-po-pa, Writings, Vol. 1, p. 265.6: 'o na pha rol tu phyon pa dang gngang snang gnyis kyi khyad par gang zhes na/ pha rol tu phyon pa ni don phyi'i [sic]! mi ma pa yul du byed pa zhes bya stel/ phyi bzang ba'i yul 'di cig dang du bral goz gan tshigs kyis gzhigs nas stong pa byed/ bzang ba med cing der 'dzin med/ bzang ba'i yul rtsad chod na 'dzin pa'i/ sens sgrig rang brdal zer nas nang 'dzin pa'i [p. 266] sens la rogs sprood [= rter dpyod] mi mtog/ gug ga snangs ni phyi gug ba'i yul la rong sprood mi mtog/ rgyas ... rang bzhin ci lta bur 'dag bzuas pas ci'i ngo bor yang ma grub stel/ de lta bu ci yang ma yin pa'i don de la rgya pa zhes bya stel/ ye shes kyi sprood yul yin pa la'/ nam riq gi blo s mthong ba ma yin tel/

73 Vasubandhu, Trisñikā 28d: gung ba med pas de 'dzin med1. Skt.: grhyābhāve tadgrahāt.
the object belongs to, i.e. whether it is the universal of conceptual thought and inference, or the particular sense data of direct perception. 

What is the difference between the Perfections and Mantra [Vehicles]?

The Perfections [Vehicle] takes as its object the cognitive image of the object-universal. The Mantra takes the actual, direct object (read: don drgos) as the "path" [i.e. as the material for use in practice]. "Taking the cognitive image of the object-universal as the path" means the phenomenal mark of all factors of existence are dissolved by the [reasoning of] the absence of one and many, and thereby are unestablished. What is not established as "one" [i.e. as a single thing] is not established as an assemblage. Based on that, having made all factors of existence not established as either one or many, having mentally made [everything] as like the perfectly clear sky and then placing the mind concentratedly [in such a state] is what is called "Taking the cognitive image of the object-universal as the object."

The taking of the actual, direct object (don drgos) as the path [i.e. as object, is the following]: The path of [yogic] means forcibly subdues, 

Even when sGam-po-pa sometimes did teach the Great Seal in its traditional Mantrayāna context (i.e. as a "fruit" instruction of the "fruit" vehicle, in connection with the special yoga instructions of the completion stage), he believed that there was no single fixed order for introducing it. The teaching method depended on what type of student was to be taught. Once when he was asked by his student Phag-mo-gru-pa rDo-rje-rgyal-po whether it was better to teach "inner heat" (gtum mo) first and the Great Seal later, or in the reverse order, sGam-po-pa answered as follows, pointing out also the dangers of wrongly teaching it:

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75 sGam-po-pa, Phag mo gru pa'i zhus lan, p. 470.2: de gnyis gang zag gi' [sic] rigs kyi' byed del' na so zhan [= gzhaw!] pa rtsa dang khangs bsang ba la gtum mo rang nas khrid cing bsgoms pas drod rtags myur du 'ong' de la phyag rgya chen po btab pas nyams rtags myur du 'char gsum' na so rtags pas rlung [sic] mi chun pa'i rtags tshan cig la phyag rgya chen

Those two [methods] can be distinguished according to the class of individual [to be taught]. That is, for a youthful person with excellent [yogic] channels and elements (rtsa dang khams), signs of imminent attainment will come quickly through meditation after having been instructed in inner heat itself. By [then] imparting the Great Seal to him, experience will quickly arise. To a type of person whose psychic "air" (rtung: prāṇa) is uncontrolled due to more advanced age, it is better to impart the Great Seal or the Lhan cig skyes sbyor. By imparting the Great Seal from the beginning, it may happen that [the student] becomes set in wild or lazy ways (dred pa), having become bad in deeds when [a realization of the Great Seal] doesn't arise in [the student's] own mind.

Thus sGam-po-pa sometimes presented the Great Seal within the Mantra system of special yogas and on other occasions quite outside and removed from that system. Doctrinal justification for the latter approach could be found in the classification of the Great Seal as a separate and distinct third transmission outside of and superior to either of the two normally recognized doctrinal systems of the general Mahāyāna and the usual Mantrayāna. In this third extraordinary context—which was accessible only to an unusually well-endowed student—the special doctrine was characterized as not relying upon words and concepts or upon special yogic practices or attainments, but as consisting of the disciple's being introduced directly to the nature of his mind by an accomplished, awakened master. The ordinary general Mahāyāna approach, by contrast, relied on scripture and reasoning, and therefore it was automatically suspect because of the inadequacies of the word- and concept-based salvific approaches and cognitive means that such scriptural and rational studies utilized.

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76 As mentioned above, this is a Tantric Great Seal instruction composed by sGam-po-pa himself. See his works, vol. 1, pp. 219-224.

77 Cf. the views of Mo-bo-yen, who on the ultimate level rejected the Triple vehicle (triyāna) classification (i.e. into the vehicles of Śrāvakā, Pratyeka and Bodhisattva) "in favour of the Unique Vehicle (ekayāna) or even the Non-Vehicle (avyāna)—free from all verbalizations and conceptualizations." See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 123.

78 But when teaching the general Mahāyāna, sGam-po-pa of course stressed the need for preliminary learning and reflection. See his Writings, vol. 1, pp. 211 and 216.
even the "ordinary" Vajrayāna along the same lines. In one minor work we find him stating that *expositions (bshad pa)* of both the Sūtras and Tantras (as opposed to direct practical instructions, *man ngag*) degenerate or fall to the level of conceptualization (lit.: to the "cognitive image of an object-universal": *don spyi'i mam pa la shor*).

All the teachings taught by the Buddha can be summed up within two categories: (1) the exposition of Sūtra and Tantra, for the sake of removing erroneous imputations regarding the object of knowledge, and (2) the exposition of the sense of practical instructions received through an oral transmission, for the sake of impressing the sense upon the mind. From among those two, the first degenerates to the level of the cognitive image of an object-universal, its object of knowledge. By becoming delayed in that, one doesn’t know how to impress it upon the mind and practice experientially. Because one does not know that, [the teaching] will not become the counteragent to the cognitive-emotional defilements and conceptual thinking. Therefore I will not expound [the first kind of teaching] here. The second type, namely the exposition of the sense of practical instructions received through an oral transmission, which is for the sake of impressing the sense upon the mind, is of two types: (a) instructions of provisional meaning, the gradualist path, and (b) the instructions of the definitive meaning, the path of the simultaneist.

Here, following widely established tradition, sGam-po-pa stresses the importance of direct, practical instructions (*man ngag*) as the sole means for applying the meaning or content of such teachings to the student’s mind in a way that constitutes direct experience. Among such instructions, the "gradualist" (*rim gyis pa*) teaching is said there to be of

provisional meaning (drang don) requiring further explanation, while the "simultaneist" (cig car ba) is of final, definitive meaning (nges don). It was probably in a doctrinal context such as this that sGam-po-pa is said elsewhere to have proclaimed his (simultaneist) Great Seal instructions to be the highest of all possible doctrines, superior even to the three "greats" (*chen po gum)*: the Great [scholastic] Madhyamaka (*abu ma chen po*), the [Vajrayāna] Great Seal (*phyag rgya chen po*), and even the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po*).

Classifications of Other Tibetan Schools

sGam-po-pa thus classified his highest Great Seal teachings as being, in a sense, outside the standard textually expounded Buddhist doctrines. And the claims he made about its superiority also applied with respect to all the other Tibetan religious traditions of his period. In his reply to Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa, for instance, there is repeated a discussion between sGam-po-pa and the (bKa’-gdams-pa?) dge-brGya-yon-bdag, who was displeased with the followers of the five main Tibetan religious traditions of his own day and who considered their followers to be like self-satisfied people who each savor the sweetness of their own candy. The traditions he listed were.81

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80 The statement attributed to sGam-po-pa that his Great Seal method was distinct from and superior to the "three great [traditions]" (*chen po gum*) is discussed by S. Karmay (1988), p. 197, based on its occurrence in the dGong ge'g commentary of rDo-rje-shes-rab, pp. 403-404 (which Karmay attributes to Shes-rab-'byung-gnas). The same quotation appears for instance in Shaky-mchog-idan, Legs bshad gser thur, Collected Works, vol. 7, p. 84. Sum-pa mkhan-po said that such a threefold classification into the "Three Greats" was being maintained in his time by some who professed to follow Tsong-kha-pa, though Sum-pa himself rejected it. See S. C. Das ed. (1908), dPa' gsum ljon bzang, p. 405. For further references to the "Three Greats" see also L. van der Kuijp (1983), pp. 33 and 275, n. 109.

81 sGam-po-pa, Dus gsum mkhyen-pa'i zhus lan, p. 437.7: dge-brGya-yon bdag gi zhal nas/ bo'i nom bu kha na mngar ba'i cho'og pa mang po yod del/ rdzogs pa chen [438] po zer ba cig yin [deleto: yai]'/ nang nogs na nang sangs rgyal/ nab nogs na nab sangs rgyal/ zer ba tshan cig yod/ mtshan nyid pa zer ba cig cig dang du bral gyis gzhigs nas nga'i 'dis sangs rgya zer ba tshan cig yod/ pha rol tu phyin pa zer ba thabs dang shes rab la brten nas nga'i 'dis sangs rgya zer ba tshan cig yod/ snags pa zer ba'i rtsa rang dang thig le dang/ bskyed rdzogs la brten nas nga'i 'dis sangs rgya zer ba tshan cig yod/ bka' gdam pa zer ba'i skyes bu rab/ 'bring mam pa gsum la brten pa'i gdam ngag nga'i 'dis sangs rgya zer ba tshan cig yod del/ de thao yo log nas ci byed nga la bzlos dang gsum/ de thao yo log nas mi dge ba bcu dge ba bzhag kur ba la gzhed gan gsum/ sGam-po-pa advised him that if he did
1) rdzogs-chen-pa ("Followers of the Great Perfection")
2) mTshan-nyid-pa ("Definitionists"), who dissolve false conceptions through reasoning
3) Pha-rol-tu-phyn-pa ("Perfectionists", i.e. followers of the Pāramitās), who stress [skillful] means and wisdom
4) sNgags-pa ("Tantricists," followers of Mantrayāna ritual and meditative practice)
5) bKa'-gdams-pa ("Those Enjoined by Instructions"), whose special instructions utilize the threefold division of personality types into great, middling and lesser (following the tradition of Atiśa).

This enumeration does not include sGam-po-pa's own Great Seal, which anyway would be understood as surpassing them all (including, interestingly enough, even the Great Perfection, which here is enumerated). This list is significant for its separate specifications of the dialectical (i.e. "definitional"), the "Perfections," and the bKa'-gdams-pa approaches. Thus, though in sGam-po-pa's threefold classifications described above, the "Definitional" (mMshA nyid) and "Perfections" (phA phyn) approaches seem to be more or less synonymous, occasionally sGam-po-pa differentiates them, too, as he does here. The scholars who worked intensively with definitions and logical relations, i.e. the dialectically oriented scholars (mMshA nyid pa) in the gSang-phu-ba tradition of rNgog-lo (1059-1109) and Phywa-pa (1109-1169), were already by the mid-12th century recognized as a distinct and significant trend in the religious life of Tibet. sGam-po-pa in his reply to Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa furthermore mentions the bKa'-gdams-pa, mTshan-nyid-pa and sNgags-pa masters as following meditative traditions quite distinct from his tradition of the Great Seal.82 Likewise in a passage from one of his biographies, sGam-po-pa mentions the dialectician "mMshA nyid-pa" as distinct from bKa'-gdams-pas proper, though pointing to a fundamental similarity in their approaches, namely asserting that theirs is a mentally constructed Emptiness.83 sGam-po-pa claimed first-hand knowledge of not like those religious traditions, there was nothing left for him to do besides practicing the transformation of the ten non-virtues into the ten virtues. For similar lists of other Tibetan traditions, see also 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten-mgon-po, Works, vol. 5, pp. 407.2 and 510.

82 sGam-po-pa, Dus gsum, p. 453.3. After quoting a verse from dGon-pa-ba stressing the need for actual experience, he says: "It's like that. I have knowledge about meditation. I know what you geshes of the bKa'-gdams-pa, teachers of the mTshan-nyid-pa, Mantra practitioners and so on cultivate in meditation. But you don't have any idea what I cultivate in meditation!" The Tibetan text: de dang 'dra stel nga bsom pa la cha yod pa yinl bka' gdams pa'i dge bshes mams dang/ mMshA nyid pa'i ston pa mams dang/ sngags pa la sogs khyed cag ci bsom nga la cha yod/ nga ci bsom khyed cag la cha med/
sGam-po-pa and his followers' presentation of the Great Seal as the ultimate path was thus part of an approach based on and aiming at a special non-conceptual and direct cognition of reality. In it, an accomplished teacher attempted to open the eyes of the student to a direct perception of the mind as the ultimate, by directly and dramatically unveiling the innate wisdom that had been present all along but that had not been recognized until it was pointed out. This approach was also anti-intellectual, or more precisely, "anti-verbal" and "anti-conceptual." It sought to utilize non-conceptual experience directly and to short-circuit or circumvent the mind's rational and verbalizing processes that distance the experiencer from directly seeing ultimate reality. It necessarily discouraged intellectual investigation or reflection. In order to convey this point, and to stress the special nature and superiority of this radically different approach, sGam-po-pa and his followers sometimes derided or sharply dismissed other methods, especially intellectual ones. Buddhists who utilized rational means—i.e. the scholars or "paṇḍitas" who insisted on sound inferences and careful definitions of terms—became on these occasions objects for belittlement and sometimes even for withering scorn.

A mild example of such a rejection of intellectual methods is found in a reply sGam-po-pa made near the end of his life to his learned and accomplished Khams-pa disciple Phag-mo-gru-pa rDo-rje-rgyal-po. There sGam-po-pa spoke of the understanding he taught as being utterly beyond the range of intellectual understanding, being "unknown even by a greatly learned man or paṇḍita," saying that it only could arise through the grace of the teacher who transmitted it non-verbally.85

85 sGam-po-pa, rJe phag mo gru pa'i zhus lan, p. 471.7. See also M. Broido (1985), p. 15. For the complete Tibetan text, see below, Appendix A, part (1). He made a similar
This is not known even by a learned pandita. It is not understood by discriminative understanding (prajñā). It is not within the scope of the dialectician's activities. As for how this nature can be born within the mind: it arises without words, from [an experience] surpassing the [ordinary] mind, by the force of a sustaining spiritual power when the disciple has had faith and devotion toward a teacher who possesses realization. Its nature is free from any [conceptually framed] affirmation, even for the greatly learned scholars such as Nāgārjuna.

This doctrine is not far from the position taken in the "fruit" instructions of the "Thunderbolt Strike" (thog babs) in which the fourth of the five erroneous notions to be dispelled before the direct instruction are given is the idea that realization (rtogs pa) is reached through intelligence (rig pa) or discriminative understanding (shes rab), because in this system realization is said to be reached only through the teacher's direct, practical instruction (gdams ngag).

It is also similar to the basic Great Perfection theory, which maintains that realization consists of directly seeing—without conceptualization—the mind's primordial nature. To let intellect play any active role whatsoever would obscure the true nature further and would only go on increasing delusion through the fictive activities of conceptual thought.

On the limitations of the "pandita's" word- and concept-based approach, one can find similar statements in the Tshogs chos chen mo, a public sermon that was included in sGam-po-pa's collected works but not set down in its final form until some generations after sGam-po-pa by dPal Shes rab-gzhan-nu.

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Phag-mo-gru-pa on Intellectual Methods

sGam-po-pa's disciple Phag-mo-gru-pa, to whom some of sGam-po-pa's above-mentioned answers were directed, later wrote a general graded Mahāyāna treatise entitled Sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la rim gyis 'jug pa'i tshul "How to Enter into the Buddha's Doctrine by Stages." Like sGam-po-pa's similar Thar pa rin po che'i rgyan ("Ornament of the Jewel of Liberation"), it is a work in the bstan rim ("stages of the Doctrine") mold of rNgog lo-tsā-ba's school. In it one also finds comments on the inadequacy of conceptualizing mind for apprehending the absolute (just as one finds in sGam-po-pa's "Thar rgyan"). Chapter ten of the work characterized. See Kun-dga'-grol-mchog, Zhen pa rang grol, p. 439.4 (rwa 78a): das 'khor snyan brtus kyi gdam pa gi ges shes kun grol gyi nyams khrid chen mo ... (=yi ge med pa'i snyan brtus).

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90 Phag-mo-gru-pa, in addition to his studies under Sa-chen and sGam-po-pa, had studied many other traditions. See 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten-mgon-po, Collected Works, vol. 1 (ka), p. 295, where his studies are said to have included: rdzogs chen/ zhi byed/ thun 'jug/ a ma na se gsang snyogs kyi chags srol gnyis/ phyag rgya chen po'am dpal na ro pa'i chos drug la sogs pal.

According to his disciple 'Jig-rten-mgon-po, Phag-mo-gru-pa followed a dialectician-style of scholarship when utilizing topical outlines in his compositions, which 'Jig-rten-mgon-po compared with the practice of the great scholar gTsang-nag-pa, who used to compose many subject outlines. See 'Jig-rten-mgon-po, Collected Works, vol. 1, pp. 284-5 (142b-143a).

91 On this genre of religious literature, see my article in Tibetan Literature: Essays in Honor of Geshe Sopa (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, forthcoming).

92 Cf. sGam-po-pa, Dmar chos... p. 256.6 (128b): dbu ma nyid du yang btag tu [129a] med del/ don la der 'dzin gyi shes pa dang bral ba blo las 'das par gnas pa'ol/ p. 259.2 (130a) de litar shes rab bahl/ rang sams shes par bya ba'tshig de dag kyang/ 'rog pas bcad
has two main sections: A. the cultivation of a union of emptiness and compassion (stong nyid snying rje bde med bsgom pa) and B. the teaching of the fruit as being the attainment of the three "bodies" (kāya) (bras bu skiu gsun thob par bstan pa) (47a.6). Insight into the first can be established in three ways: 1. through reasoning (rigs pas gyan la 'bebs pa), 2. through the instructions of the guru (bla ma'i gldams ngag gis...), and 3. through scriptural quotation (lung gis...). The first two are not to be taught here, he says; only the last. Still, he utilizes concepts and distinctions developed within the Pramāṇa tradition of reasoning to reject the first and to establish the necessity of the second, namely the guru's instructions. 93

Since a theory derived from learning and reflection is [merely conceptual] understanding of the "object-universal," in order directly to understand the cognitive object as an "own-mark" [or "particular"], one needs to cultivate in meditation the orally transmitted practical instructions of the noble guru.

Phag-mo-gru-pa follows these comments with some quotations from the dohas, as sGam-po-pa had similarly done in his own general Mahāyāna treatise, the Thar pa rin po che'i rgyan, when teaching how to cultivate transcendent understanding. 94

Bla-ma Zhang on Scholastics

sGam-po-pa's "grand-pupil" Zhang Tshal-pa (1123-1193) followed sGam-po-pa's ordering and classifying of doctrine when he wrote his best-known work, the Phyag chen lam zab mtha' thug, and he, too, often treated the Great Seal as the highest pinnacle of doctrines situated outside the normal approaches. But like sGam-po-pa before him, he was not perfectly consistent in all his writings. In some contexts, he presented the Great Seal as the highest instruction, but as still within the Mantrayāna, no doubt reflecting his own extensive training and continuing participation also within the latter sphere.

Bla-ma Zhang, too, was aware of certain basic doctrinal parallels between the Great Seal and the Great Perfection, and like sGam-po-pa, he sometimes classified the two instructions as on the same level or belonging to the same class of teaching. Though I have not been able to trace any record of formal studies of the Great Perfection by Zhang, he was definitely familiar with it, and just as sGam-po-pa did, he viewed it as having a fundamental similarity with the Great Seal—the two occupying in his opinion the parallel ultimate positions within the New and Old Tantric teachings. 95 He discusses this at some length in his instructions to the (bKa'-gdams-pa?) teacher "Mal the White-headed" (Mal dbu-dkar), where in contrast with the bKa'-gdams-pa teachings and the Madhyamaka reasonings and meditations that take devoted conviction as their path, involving merely the cognitive image of an "object universal" (don spyi'i mam pa tsa'am las mos pa yul du byed pa), the Great Seal and Great Perfection are said to be tantric paths of the guru's sustaining spiritual power or "blessing." 96 In this, Zhang agreed with certain statements of sGam-po-pa, who as cited above on some occasions portrayed the Great Seal and Great Perfection as occupying a similar doctrinal position within the Mantrayāna, and indeed as being in some sense identical. 97

Bla-ma Zhang furthermore criticized intellectual thought processes in principle (especially in the context of meditation on the absolute), and in this he is traditionally said to have been strongly influenced by his teacher sGom-pa Tshul-khrims-snying-po. According to 'Gos lo-tshab-'ba's Blue Annals, Zhang met sGom-pa at age 32 (in ca. 1155) and received then

93 Phag-mo-gru-pa rDo-rje-rgyal-po, Sangs ngags kyi bstan pa la brim gis 'jug pa'i tshul, 46b: 'thos bstan gi la bas (=ba?) don spyi'i go ba yin pael don rang gi mthon nyid mgon sum du rongs pa la bla ma dam pa'i snyan bsgod kyi gldams ngag sgom dgos tel.

94 See sGam-po-pa, Dam chos..., p. 260.5 (130b) and H. V. Guenther (1971), pp. 216f.

95 As will be discussed below, he did have visions of receiving Great Perfection instructions from early masters such as Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra, and these were recorded in his "Sealed book of 'Chims-phu" ('Chims phu bka' nga ma). See dPa'-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba, (New Delhi 1959 ed.) part 1, p. 186.

96 Zhang, Mal dbu dkar la gdom pa, Writings, p. 654.7f: phyag rgya chen po don mdo rdo'cgs pa chen po la sogs pa sngags gar mying mtha' thug mams kyang bzhin phyag sngags byin brtus kyi [655] lam yin pa la.

97 Cf. the later scholar sGam-po spyi-an-sa ga bKa-shis-rnam-rgyal's similar tantric characterization of the Great Perfection as "a doctrine authoritatively" maintained to be the ultimate of Mantra teachings, the 'Aityoga." See bKa-shis-rnam-rgyal, sGam-po spyi-an-sa, p. 93b.6; L. Lhalungpa transl., p. 105. The Tibetan text: rdo'cgs chen ni a ti yo ga zhes pa gshang sngags kyi mtha' thug tu bzhed pa.
from him the *Lhan cig skyes sbyor* Great Seal instructions.\(^{98}\) After cultivating this insight in meditation, the power of Zhang's intellectual understanding increased, and he had the feeling that he could understand the sense of many individual words from the scriptures. When he reported this to sGom-pa, the latter replied: "All that is what is called 'investigative knowing' (*brtag dpyad kyi shes pa*). Meditate without investigating! This teaching of mine puts its hope in the sustaining spiritual impulse [of the teacher]." When Zhang meditated accordingly, then for the first time he distinctly perceived the ultimate nature of all entities.\(^{99}\) Later in his life when he spoke of how sGom-pa Tshul-khrims-snying-po transmitted these teachings to him, Zhang stated: "In general, there arose distinctly in my mind the spontaneously and innately born [Great Seal] through this noble, holy person, purely by means of a sustaining spiritual impulse that did not rely upon words,..."\(^{100}\)

It is not surprising, then, that Zhang as a mature master was not very concerned with words, terms or concepts. He also had no great love for the methods and fine distinctions of the scholiast or logician can also be easily seen from remarks he made in his *Lam mchog mthar thug*

treatise, which he composed apparently in the 1160s.\(^{101}\) He clarified in one passage the doctrinal basis for this non-verbal and non-investigative approach:\(^{102}\)

An assemblage of words—no matter how profoundly expressed, and even though expressed numerous times—cannot possibly alight upon the ultimate reality [inherent in] the mind. Critical investigation—however skillful and profound it may be, even though expressed for many limitless aeons—cannot possibly understand the ultimate reality [inherent in] mind because the original nature is not an object for investigative thought. For example, even if you [try to] filter out the planets and stars that appear on the ocean's surface, no matter how excellent a silk filter you may use, you cannot possibly catch even a single planet or star because those planets and stars do not exist as objectively apprehendable entities.

For however long it is expressed in words, no matter how excellent your terminology, that is not the ultimate reality. For however long it is amenable to mental investigation, no matter how profoundly you

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\(^{98}\) This date is perhaps two years too late, because sGam-po-pa, who died in 1153, is said to have been still alive during Zhang's first visit to sGam-po. The other possibility is that Zhang did not receive these teachings from sGom-po until somewhat later.

\(^{99}\) *Gos los-tsa-ba, Deb ther nrog po,* p. 623.7-624.1 (nya, 137a-b). See also D. Seyfort Rueegg (1989), p. 104. Cf. the translation of G. Roerich, p. 714. See also Zhang's account in his *Shes rab grub ma* autobiography, p. 40 (20a): *slob dpon la zhus pas gsal ba drag du thob'I nged kyi[i] = [kyl] 'di byin brtobs la re ba yinl de ring phyag nga chen po cig bya dgos gnsal phyag nga chen poi ldams nga nan gnsal de gsum pas sman ma bcos pas nam mchka la bu'nu nag' lai ye shes kyi me mchdel de tsug 'dag de tsug 'dag 'dgu de tsug yang snyam pa rong rong byungl 'slob dpon la zhus pas tsgs spya'ad [=brtag dp Yad] ma mchsaI tsgs spya'ad kyi sgrub pa yin gnsal pa dang['] yang bogsam pas sngar bdzin shes rab mang po rong rong byung ba de la brtag spya'ad du 'dgu 'de'i rie sa ma 'brang bar klong kyiin bzhugs pas tsgs pa lhag gis shar.* Cf. The account in the *Rgyal blo ma* biography, Writings, p. 270.Sff. There (p. 271.7) the sentence occurs: *shes rab dangl brtag phya'ad (=dpa' yad) thams cad tsgs pa 'ba' zhiq tu 'dag'.*

\(^{100}\) Zhang, Writings, p. 557: *spyir skyes bu dam pa 'disI tshig la ma ren pa'i byin brtobs 'ba' zhiq gisI kho bo'i rgyag la than cig skyes pa lhag gis shar bas...*

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\(^{101}\) His composition of this work is mentioned in his biography *Rgyal blo ma,* Writings, p. 284.7.

\(^{102}\) Zhang, *Lam zab mthar thug,* 747.6 (nga 2b): *ji tsam zab pa'i brjod pa'i tshig tshogs kyiIsI mam grangs du mar brjod par byas gyur kyanglI sems kyi grnas lugs thog tu pheds mi sridI ji tsam mkhas shing zab pa'i brtag dp Yad kyiIsI bskal pa dpag med mang por brjod byas kyanglI rang bzhin gnyag ma brtag pa'i yul min phyirI sems kyi grnas lugs tsgs pa mi srid doll dper na nga mtshor shar ba'ga skar doll dar tshag ji tsam bsang bas bsgus byas kyanglI gza' skar dngos po dmigs su med [3a] pa'i phyirI gza' skar geig kyiin zin pa mi srid dollI ji srid tshig tu brjod pa de srid doll ming 'dogs ji tsam legs rong grnas lugs minI ji srid yid kyi phya'ad bzo'd de srid dollI ji tsam zab par tsgs kyang grnas lugs minI blta bya la byed gnyis 'dzin de srid dollI gnyis su med pa'i grnas lugs tsgs mi sridI mdrug na yin snyam mchkaI dag shen pa'i rnalI zhen pa'i risaI bshor ba mthuI dag spellI ji tsam zab cing stong par 'du shes kyangI rlom sens mtsshan ma dag las ma gyosI pasI mtsshan maI zhen pas phyir zhing dman par lhungI blos byas Ila ba mthuI gis gsum menI maI phyogs 'dzin zhen pa'i nad geong thugs par mchisI snyem bral tham cig skyes par mkhyen par mdzodI*
understand it, that is not the ultimate reality. For however long there is bifurcation into "thing to be viewed" and "viewer," you will not understand the non-dual ultimate reality. In brief, all thoughts of "It is" are the roots of conceptual attachment. By the root of conceptual attachment, the whole of cyclic existence is made to grow.

However profound and empty you may conceive [something] to be, it will later on fall down through attachment to phenomenal marks, since that does not go beyond hypostatizing thoughts and phenomenal marks.

Those "great meditators" who utilize theories that have been fashioned by intellect are afflicted by the chronic disease of conceptual attachment that postulates positions [through partiality]. Be free from pride, and know [reality] to be the simultaneously and innately born!

And below:103

Having thus understood, you will not be obscured [?] by terms and groups of words, and you will not be touched by the fault of words. Therefore, do not employ words and critical investigation, and don't have attachment through falsely imagining [them] to be the point!

A bit later, Zhang returns to the same themes:104

However skilled you may be at considering and investigating words, it is impossible to understand ultimate reality through intellectual investigation, for it has not been experientially practiced and has not arisen from within. [If] you do not realize the real state of things, your karmic tendencies will not be purified. Therefore don't be attached to words or to the discriminative understanding of dialectics! Practice the instructions of the master!

Zhang did, however, qualify his rejection of words. Ultimate reality does have a special relation to verbal expression, as he had explained in a preceding passage:

It is not established as a word, it cannot be conveyed through a statement. [But] it is not completely removed from words; it is the basis of all expressions.105

The technique taught by Zhang nevertheless did devalue discursive thought, and it sought to avoid critical, analytical thinking. But it certainly did not recommend the forceful stoppage of all discursive thoughts. Such a conscious blockage was seen as both unnecessary and counterproductive:106

Ignorant people who do not possess the true practical instructions and lack any karmic carry-over from previous practice make twofold divisions, such as into "issued forth" and "not issued forth," conceptual thought and non-conceptualizing, or [ordinary] mind and Dharmakaya. They view discursive thought as a fault and stop it. They desire non-conceptualizing and purposefully try to achieve it. You will never finish sweeping away waves with a broom. Non-conceptualizing that arrests conceptual thought is itself a deluded conceptual thought. It is a great darkness that obscures the Dharmakaya. Without a lot of hurried investigations, relax loosely and concentrate firmly.

103 Ibid., p. 748.6:
104 Ibid., p. 752:
105 Ibid., p. 747.4:
106 Ibid., p. 756.7:
Whatever thoughts of "It is this" may arise, [in this] there are planted the seeds of objectifying and attachment. If the sprout of mind that falsely hypostatizes should arise, the tree of cyclic existence will grow. Don't obscure the originally pure luminescence of Mind Itself with the darkness of meditative cultivation.

Don't encase this precious jewel of the Mind Itself within the mud of phenomenal marks. This will obstruct [all] needed and desired fruits. In brief, concentrate without the thought, "It is." Concentrate without the thought "It is not." The thoughts "It is" and "It is not" are mutually dependent postulations.

In a subsequent passage, Zhang discusses the arising of the Gnosis or "realization" (rtogs pa), and the complete stopping of discursive thoughts:

That dawning of the Gnosis of realization does not arise because of hopes and desires. It won't occur through being skilled in critical investigation. It won't occur through great learning. It is beyond the range of a dialectician.

However thick or vast it may be, that non-discursiveness that stops discursive thought is a great obscuration to the birth of Gnosis.

That secondarily occurring Gnosis of realization does not arise from any such things as hopeful expectation or letting go, from being skilled in critical examination or not being skilled, from great learning or inferior learning, from excellent [yogic] experience or poor, or from strong effort or weak.

"It is known through carrying out the timely sacrifices for the guru, and from one's own merit." "Carrying out the timely sacrifices for the guru" means that it will arise through the power of the sustaining spiritual impulse resulting from having pleased a master who possesses realization.

"One's own merit" means that it will arise in those who possess some karmic carry-over from previous practice.

Therefore that Gnosis of realization, since it is grounded on the path of [the master's] sustaining spiritual impulse, is within the range of those who possess faith. It will arise in those who are respectful. It will be understood by those who have [previously trained themselves through having] practiced. The universal helper [for attaining it] is diligent effort.

It will be seen by those fortunate ones of superior faculties. It won't be fathomed by verbalizers.

The lines quoted by Zhang: "It is known through carrying out the timely sacrifices for the guru, and from one's own merit," originate from the Hevajra Tantra (I viii 36) and were used by sGam-po-pa in a similar context.

Some four folios later, Zhang summarizes several of the same points:

That Nirvāṇa in which one does not station oneself anywhere (in either Saṃsāra or Nirvāṇa) is within the range of direct realization alone. That non-duality fabricated by intellect will be understood by

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107 Ibid., p. 759.3:
rtogs pa'i ye shes shar ba del/ a re 'dod kyi 'char ba min/
brtags dpnyad mkhas pas 'ong pa min/ thos pa ches bas 'ong pa min/
rtog ge pa yi sphyod yul min/
rtog pa btags pa'i ri rtogs pa jis 'thug cing shan che yang/
ye shes sbyed ba'i sgrin chen yin/
rtogs pa'i ye sbyed shugs 'byung del/ a re 'dod dang glog pa dang/
brtags dpnyad mkhas dang mi mkhas dang/ thos pa che dang chung ba dang/
nyams myongs 'byung dang nge dang pa dang/
rtogs ba drag dang shan la sos/'
gung gi kyung ni mi 'char stel/ bla ma'i dus thabs bsten pa dang/
bdag gi brra nams las sbyes yin/
bla ma'i dus thabs bsten zhes byin/
rtrogs ldan bla ma brra yin/
byin brrads stobs kyi 'char ba yin/
bdag gi brra nams zhes pa nill/ sbyangs pa'i 'phro can mams la 'char/
de phyir rtogs pa'i ye sbyes del/ byin brrads lam la gnsa pa'i phyin/
dad pa can gni sphyod yul yin/
gs pa can la 'char ba yin/
sbyangs pa can gyis rtogs pa yin/
kun gni ggs ni brson 'gns yin/
skld ldan dbang po rub kyi sbyed yin/
shig mkhan mams kyi brra mi shon/

108 sGam-po-pa, 're phag mo gnyu pa'i zhugs las, p. 471 (236a), as translated and discussed below in Appendix A, (1).

109 Zhang, Lam zab mhtar thug, p. 768.1:
mi gnsa mya ngs 'dus pa del/ rtogs pa kho na'i sphyod yul yin/
bya yis byas pa'gyis med del/ thos pa che bas rtogs 'gser del/
rtogs pa kho na'i sphyod yul yin/
ngs na' sbyed pa'gyis med 'dil/ bla ma'i byin brrads 'ba' zshig yin/
pad ldan bla ma la gnsa del/ ngsa na' sbyed pa'gyis med del/
brtags dpnyad mkhas la ci cha yod/ tshig tu sbyes pa ngas kyangs stel/
skyen ngsa thub bams mi thub brra/
those of great learning, and it is within the range of conceptual thought alone. This non-duality that arises from within is purely the spiritual impulse of the Master. Paying respect to the Glorious Master, the definitive knowledge of realization will be born from within.

What understanding does a critical investigator have? I, too, know verbal knowledge. Check [yourself] whether [that kind of knowledge] is proof against adverse circumstances or not!

And a bit later:110

Nowadays religious people, though they are learned in a mass of words, do not understand the meaning. In general, pride and disputation increases.

The reverend masters of the practice-lineage practiced following the meaning. Completely abandoning pride, etc., they realized the sense and fulfilled the intention of scripture and reasoning.

Tilopa did not speak even a single word to Nāropa, but all scripture, reasoning and instruction without exception were brought to perfection in Nāropa’s mind!111

Other Criticisms of Conceptual Methods by Zhang

In other writings, bla-ma Zhang’s criticisms of intellectual methods and scholastics sometimes became even more exuberant, and occasionally they took the form of sharp personal digs at the alleged spiritual shortcomings of his scholar opponents. In one of his autobiographical writings, written sometime in the last three decades of his life, Zhang mentions opponents who call his teaching an erroneous or perverse doctrine (log chos), while imagining themselves to be learned, though they merely mouth words with their tongue like a parrot—externally oriented sorts of people who do not know their own nature, and who are unsuitable for the hearing or own-seeing of the "self-seen" things, whose minds cannot fathom the correct, profound reality because they insistently believe in only [the surface meaning of] those words that the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have spoken with hidden intention, and who therefore call this "a perverse doctrine that does not accord with the real content of the Dharma," and who thus reject and revile the definitive meaning! Don’t mix with such confused ones, who imagine themselves to be learned—don’t send them to hell!

Later in the same work, Zhang specified logicians or dialecticians (rtog ge pa) as the ones he was criticizing:111

This innate possession of the Dharmakaya by oneself is not within the range of dialecticians who falsely imagine themselves to be learned, mouthing words with their tongues while never having meditated, those glib ones infatuated with only external critical investigations, those obstinate ones who maintain a falsely imagined learnedness for what is in fact their own minds being rigid and oppressed by the great

110 Ibid., p. 776:

deng sang dus na chos pa mams// tshig tshogs mkhas kyang don ma rtags// spnyir la nga rgyal rtsod pa 'phell// sgrub brgyud bla ma rje bsun mams// don gyi njes su 'brangs te sgrub// nga rgyal la sogs sthan spangs tell don rtags lung rigs dgongs pa rtags// tai lo pas nia ro pa la// tshig gcig tsam yang ma gsungs tell lang rigs man ngag thams cad kun// ma las nia ro'i thug la rtags//

111 The great Indian Tantric adept Tilopa and his disciple Nāropa are usually counted as the main source for the Mar-pa bKa'-brgyud.

112 Zhang, nRam thar shes rab grub ma, Writings, p. 50.1: dbang po gtul [=rtul] po'i tshogs ma bsags cing// bla ma ma rien [=bsten] pasl gzung 'dzin gos mun pas 'thom shing// ne tsho lta tshig lce sbyong ba'i gанг zag// kha phyir las pa'i mi rigs// rang ngo ma shes shing// rang mthong ba mams kyi s [kyi?] rang mthong du mi rulg thos su mi rulg sangs rgyas dang// byang chub sems dpa' mams kyi s [kyi?]// Idem por dgongs pa'i tshigs [sic] mams 'ba' zhig la a' thugs pas// zab mo'i don phyin ci log pa mams blor mi shing zhing 'di chos kyi 'bab' dang mi 'dun log chos yin zer nas// nges don spong zhing bkur ba 'debs pa'i gang zag// gi mug can mkhas su re ba mams dang kha ma 'brel khong dmyal bar ma bskyur//. The text, which is based on an old manuscript, is quite corrupt.

113 Ibid., p. 52.2: chos kyi sko rang nyid rang chas su yod pas 'di rtag ge pa sgor ma myong pa'i tshig lce sbyangs pa'i mkhas su re// kha sbyang po phyi ral gi briag sphyad 'bar zhing [=ba' zhig]?// la blo song ba' rang gi gsgud rongs shing nyon mong pa rang gsgud du shor ba'i gi mug can pos non pa la// mkhas su re khas len pa'i gyung pol/ zhen pa'i srogz [='sgrog] tu tshud pa mams kyi spyod yul ma yin rol.
confusion of the defilements becoming [for them substantially real and] self-constituted, those ones who are caught within the bonds of desire!

Zhang addressed the same opponents in a versified work entitled sNa tshogs zhi gnas.\(^{114}\)

[This] will not be fathomed by those tongue-users who are conceited about what is a mere object of [conceptual] understanding [accessible] through their critical investigations of mere [minor] experience and mere words, through the bustle (?) of mere purposeful effort. Having concealed [this truth] through their own evil thoughts, they acquire great demerit.

These criticisms by bla-ma Zhang show that his rejection of the scholastic methods was not done out of ignorance.\(^{115}\) Indeed, he had also studied scholastic treatises as a young man before shifting his main interest first to Tantric practices and then to the Great Seal. His comments accordingly embody a shrewd usage of the concepts and doctrines by which the conceptual, rational approach can be countered. Yet in general it vexed him to have to try to express his own realizations in words. Committing his insights to writing also brought him no great satisfaction, but rather frustration or regret in the end.\(^{116}\)

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\(^{114}\) Zhang, sNa tshogs zhi gnas, Writings, p. 623.3:

\[\text{rtsol sgrub rkyang pa'i phrad phrud kyis} / \text{tshig rkyang nyams rkyang brtags spyad kyis}/ \text{go yol rkyang pas nga rgyal ba'ill} / \text{ice mkhan mams kyis [?] blo mi shongl}/ \text{rang rig ngan pas bkab byas na'ill} / \text{shin tu sül pa bsags par mchi'oll} \]

The text is corrupt, though the general sense is clear.

\(^{115}\) See also Zhang, Lam zab mtkar thug, pp. 3b and 34a.5. The denial of the value or importance of words in the transmission of doctrine was addressed and rejected by Sa-pa in his sDom gsum rab dbye, p. 303.3.2 (na 14a): "Some say we do not need and should reject the profound words and meanings of the scriptures of the perfectly awakened Buddha and the extremely well expressed teachings of the accomplished adepts and learned scholars, because these are partial approximations (na ya = na yam[s]) through words."

\[^{115}\] Go-rams-pa in his commentary sDom pa gsum...mam bshad, p. 152.2, identifies those holding this opinion as "Zhang Tshal-pa and some followers of the bKa'-bryug Great Seal" (zhang tshal pa dangl bka' phyag pa la la). Cf. the description of this tradition by Kun-dga'-grol-mchog in his autobiography, p. 481 (nga 576): tshig gi na yams la don 'tshol ba'i bryug pa ma' yinl don dang don lhan cig tu sbyor ba'i bryug pa yin pa'i phyirl chos tshul 'di la phyag rgya chen po lhan cig skyes sbyor ces nyt sula brags soll. Here Kun-dga'-grol-mchog refers to both Sutra- and Tantra-based Great Seal.

\[^{115}\] In a brief poem written at Bral-dro'i Mon-pa-gdong, he lists his main writings and where he composed them, concluding on a regretful note. See his Writings, pp. 600.1-601.1. The works he lists there are: (1) rNal byor lam ring; (2) Phyag rgya chen po 'tshang 'bru (both at Bhe-brag?); (3) Bum pa'i 'phreng ba, at Gong-dkar-mo; (4) Cal cal ring mo, at 'Brog-bu lkug-pa; (5) gNyen po yig chung, at Bya mKhar-rts; (6) Mas 'dzed go rim, at Yud-bu'i gad-pan; (7) gSang sngags lag len, at sTod-lung mTshur; (8) Kha 'tsho rna tshogs, at Byang Byi-'brong; (9) Lam mchog mtkar thug, at Thul-gyi-brag; and (10) Kha na 'thon tshad at Mon-pa-gdong. A more complete listing of Zhang's works is given by Padma-dkar-po in his record of teachings received, bKa' bryug kyi bka' 'bum..., Works, vol. 4, pp. 453-456 (nga na 73a-74b).
Bla-ma Zhang and Early Critics of the Great Seal

It was inevitable that such a decidedly anti-rational and anti-scholastic doctrine would attract the attention of the dialectically and textually oriented scholars it criticized so sharply. In fact, certain Great Seal doctrines had been the subject of critical discussion among Tibetan scholars even from an early stage in the revival of scholastic studies during the incipient "Latter-Spread of Buddhism" (phyi dar) period of Tibetan history.\(^{117}\) Resistance to similar teachings is said to have gone back to at least the early-12th century, and in a general way perhaps even a generation or two earlier.\(^{118}\) For instance, the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition beginning with the master 'Brom-ston rGyal-ba'i-byung-gnas (1005-1064) is said from the start to have objected to the Great Seal's being taught ('Brom-ston was concerned in general about the suitability of Tantra-based doctrines for the Tibetans),\(^{119}\) and later some bKa'-gdams-pas took a more neutral attitude of non-approval, saying the Great Seal should neither be practiced nor criticized.\(^{120}\)

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\(^{117}\) Sa-pan was thus by no means the first to question the origins and validity of certain Great Seal teachings followed in the Dwags-po bka'-brgyud, though that has been a common misconception (see, for instance, L. Lhalungpa [1986], pp. 434f, n. 73).

\(^{118}\) Cf. the criticisms of the Great Perfection by those who "know grammar and reasoning," as mentioned by the 11th-century scholar Rong-zom, *Theg pa chen po'i*, p. 315.1.

\(^{119}\) 'Gos lo-tsa-ba relates in the *Blue Annals* that although Atiśa Dipamkaraśrijñāna (ca. 982-1054) had begun to teach Maitripāda's Great Seal, 'Brom-ston opposed its teaching. See G. Roerich, transl., pp. 843-4 (*da 3a-b*). See also D. Seyfort Ruegg (1988), p. 1273, n. 98. Prior to this there had been official restrictions imposed on the practice of Tantra. See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 130.

\(^{120}\) See 'Gos lo-tsa-ba, the *Blue Annals*, G. Roerich, transl., pp. 268 (*ca 13b*), where the early bKa'-gdams-pa dge-bshes Po-to-ba Rin-chen-gsal is reported to have said the Great Seal agreed in sense with the Samādhirāja Sūtra, but that it should be neither criticized nor
In the middle of the 12th century, too, the approach of sGam-po-pa and that of his successor sGom-tshul are said to have been singled out for criticism by others, whose numbers included dialectically trained scholars (mthshan nyid pa), i.e., probably followers of the gSang-phyu Ne'u-thog tradition. sGam-po-pa in particular is said to have inquired the criticism of certain great scholars of scholasticism and Buddhist philosophy because of his introducing young monks directly into the Great Seal insight without their having received any prior religious educational training, and thus for "wasting" many bright young monks.121 The great scholastic master Gro-lung-pa (fl. early 1100s) of rNgog-lo's home seminary gSang-phyu Ne'u-thog is also said to have criticized certain amanasikāra doctrines of Maitripāda122 as not being the Madhyamaka, which the later bKa'-brgyud-pas took to be the starting point for various criticisms of their central doctrines by Sa-pa and a number of bKa'-gdams-pas.123 sGom-tshul, too, was criticized by some [scholars?] who had never met him but who had nevertheless berated him from afar, as alluded to in a verse of praise said to have been composed in his honor by gTsang-nag-nag-pa (d. 1171), one of Phywa-pa's main students.124

Thus, by the mid-to-late 12th century, these doctrines and their upholders had already come to be criticized, notably by dialectically trained scholars (rtog ge pa or mthshan nyid pa) who in that period in

practiced. See also D. Seyfort Ruegg (1988), p. 1273, n. 98.

121 Gos lo-tsa-ba, Deb ther sngon po (Blue Annals), p. 460; Tibetan text p. 400.5 = nya 25b: thos bsam sngon du ma sngon ba'i btsun chung mpo po yang rtsogs pa la bkod pas mthshan nyid pa'i dge bka' bshes gnyen chen po 'gya zhi gisBlo gsal mpo po sgam po pas chud zos so bcc ces 'bar ba la' gung gis mthshan nyid pa mams nga la bka' bgyon ti....

122 The Indian adept Maitripāda was another main source for the traditions of the Mar-pa bka'-brgyud. For a sketch of the traditional biographical sources tell us about him, see M. Tatz (1987).

123 See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1988), p. 1257, translating Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje, p. 11 (6a.2): lugs 'di dbu mtha' chad pa la rig po sman ba gro lung pa so ge dyod ldsta mpo po ma rangs nas ma na na sti pa soge ci rigs kyi lugs dbu ma pa'i lugs dang mi mthban zhes 'og pa rtags la'i tshig 'di tsha ma brten nas sa skyab pan chen dangl bka' gdam-pa ci rigs pa zhi gis rje btsun ma tri pa'i chos mams par dag po a ma na se' skor thams cas la sldang chen byed pa dang. See also D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), pp. 110-11, and n. 212, where the location of Gro-lung-pa's discussion is cited as: bDe bar gsheg pa'i bstan pa rin po che la 'jug pa'i lam gyi rim pa mams par bshad pa (btTan rim), f. 377a-b.

124 See the Blue Annals., p. 465; Tibetan p. 405 = nya 28a.2: skal med skye bo ring med ngan brjod kyung!.

Central Tibet probably belonged to the circle of Phywa-pa Chos-kyi-seng-ge (1109-1169) and his disciples or successors, i.e. to the gSang-phyu Ne'u-thog tradition. But as just mentioned, the criticisms were not unanimous. The great scholar gTsang-nag btson-'grus-seng-ge, for instance, is said to have renounced such negative preconceptions after meeting sGom-tshul personally. Moreover, a bKa'-gdams-pa dge-bshes who honored sGom-tshul was Phya-sog-so-ba.125

If even the pacific and saintly sGam-po-pa and sGom-tshul were so criticized, then it goes without saying that the more tumultuous and outrageous bla-ma Zhang Tshal-pa would be. Zhang himself reacted bitterly to criticisms of his teachings in one of the autobiographical works that he seemingly wrote in 1166, the rNam thar shes rab grub ma.126 There he mentioned the criticisms of others who doubted that certain claims of the Great Seal doctrine under discussion were possible, and who in this way abandoned the Buddhist Teaching ("di mi srid zer nas dam pa'i chos spong du 'ong pa yin"). But he had tried to demonstrate the reverse by quoting statements from a Tantra and from the songs of Saraha, and he then replied himself: "As for whether it is possible or not, look at the mind!" (srid dam mi srid pa sms la ltos?). He goes on (p. 50.1) to belittle and dismiss such opposing scholars, saying (as translated above) that they were not to be associated with, since by their erroneous hostility to the profound teachings they would go to hell.

In the above-mentioned "Instruction to Mal the White-haired" (Mal dbu dkar la gdams pa), a work evidently addressed to an old religious scholar (dge bshes) of a non-bKa'-brgyud-pa tradition (presumably of the bKa'-gdams-pa) who had asked him to be frank, Zhang also mentioned those who were strongly repelled by his doctrine of a sudden awakening that arises from within through the guru's grace (which he admits can occur only very rarely), and who were especially bothered by the notion that this alone was the decisive thing.127 Zhang's defence of this doctrine is another clear indication that there did exist critics before Sa-

125 See ibid., p. 456; nya 28a.2.

126 Zhang, rNam thar shes rab grub ma, p. 49.3. For the dating of this work I follow the suggestion of Dr. Dan Martin.

127 Zhang, Mal dbu dkar la gdams pa, Writings, p. 657.5: 'di cig phyu yin zer ba 'di shin tu mi 'had zer nas [s]byug log log song ba mang du byung da sun nas dang po zer ba 'di 'tser ba gda' dge bshes pa nyid kyig nas ngo bshung ma byed gsungs pas dang por bgyis pa lags!.
pan's time who had singled out the notion of soteriological self-sufficiency for rejection.

Bla-ma Zhang Tshal-pa's Studies and Later Career

In order to understand better the role of bla-ma Zhang and his tradition in these controversies, a little more should be said about his background and his career as a religious master and adept.128 Zhang brTson-'grus-grags was born in 1123 at Tsha-ba-gru in sKyid-shod in Central Tibet, the son of a mantra lay-practitioner sNgags-'chang rDo-rje-sems-dpa' of the sNa-nam Zhang clan. He was an energetic and forceful person who in his youth and young adulthood put himself through a demanding series of studies and training under numerous outstanding masters from diverse doctrinal lineages. From the age of six to twenty-three his studies included investigations of the main Buddhistic doctrinal systems accessible to him: Prajñāpāramitā, Abhidharma, Pramāṇa, and the Tantras. (He also devoted some years to the practice of black magic.) At the age of twenty-five (ca. 1148) he took full monastic ordination in Khams from the mkhan-po mKhar-sgo-pa and the slob-dpon Grab-mkhar-ba, and it was then that he received the name brTson-'grus-grags.

In all, he studied under a total of thirty-six (or even forty-five) teachers, from among whom he considered these four as most important:

(1) rGwa lo-tṣā-ba (a disciple of rTsa-mi)
(2) Mal Yer-pa-ba (a disciple of Gling-kha-ba)
(3) dNgul-chu Be-ro-ba (the Indian yogi Vairocanavartula, a disciple of Surapāla)
(4) rJe sGom-tshul (a nephew and disciple of sGam-po-pa)

In addition, he sometimes added two more teachers to these to make up the list of his six "fundamental masters" (rTsa ba'i bla ma).129

Besides his instructions from sGom-pa Tshul-khrims, Zhang also received a number of important Mar-pa bKa'-brgyud instructions from the above-mentioned Mal Yer-pa, who was not a disciple of sGam-po-pa, but rather of Gling-ka-ba 'Bri-sgom ras-chen, who had studied directly under Mi-la ras-pa and was one of a group of the latter's disciples known as the "eight cotton-clad brothers" (ras pa mched brgyad).130 Another bKa'-brgyud-pa master who influenced Zhang was the above-mentioned 'Ol-kha-ba. In addition, he is said to have received the Great Seal teachings of Maitriḍāpa from the Indian tantric yogi (and paṇḍita) Vairocanarakṣita.131

Thus bla-ma Zhang was by no means the product of a single pure and homogeneous Dwags-po bka'-brgyud tradition. And in any case, the given by Zhang in his [b)rGyal pa sna tshogs kyi tho byang, Writings, pp. 426-433.

Tshal-pa Kun-dga'-rdo-rgyal-rje, Deb ther dmar po, Beijing 1981 ed., p. 127, mentions his total number of masters as forty-four, and groups the list of his six "fundamental masters" (rTsa ba'i bla ma) as follows:

(1) rGwa lo-tṣā-ba, by whom he was directly instructed (gdams pa)
(2) Mal Yer-pa-ba, through whom the yogic impediments were removed (gegs bsal)
(3) 'Ol-kha-ba, through whom the relative Bodhicitta was enhanced
(4) rJe sGom-tshul, through whom he directly realized the ultimate Bodhicitta
(5) dNgul-chu Be-ro-ba, and
(6) Ngam-shod sGlen-pa rDo-rje-seng-ge, from whom he received all textual traditions

Zhang has written a fairly extensive biography of Yer-pa. See his Writings, pp. 393-426. For the teachings Zhang received from him, and their lineages, see pp. 427 and 436.

130 On this master's life, see 'Gos lo-tṣā-ba, da 3a-b; G. Roerich, transl., p. 844-47. He is thus the same as the above-mentioned teacher of Zhang, dNgul-chu Be-ro-ba. He was an alchemist who travelled all over Asia. On one occasion he is said to have drunk a cup of mercury (hence his epithet "dNgul-chu-ba" from dngul chu, "mercury"). Zhang and Khro-phu lo-tṣā-ba's uncle rGyal-tsha are listed as two of his three main Tibetan students. According to information received from Dr. Dan Martin, he gave Cakrasamvara initiations and doka instructions to Zhang in the 1160s, after the latter had met rJe sGom-tshul and probably before he composed his Lur nam thug thug.

That this great yogi was from the city of Kosala in South India, and that Zhang studied under him are confirmed by Zhang's record of teachings received, Bla ma sna tshogs, p. 429.4 (spellings corrected): dbang dang gdamgs ngag gnis ga tshus nas ligs pa rdo rje len cig skyes bya bac mo dangs shes rab kyi po lha cho phrin lab yi ge cig ma dang zhi ge dug pa'i sgrub thabs sa ra ha'i de ha chen mol ka kha'i de hol te lo pa'i do ha nag po sphyod pa'i do ha bsa ba'i de ha mans dus so lha. See also the brief account in the rGyal blo mtha', Writings, p. 284.1 (83b).
controversies that grew up around him do not all seem to have originated in the doctrines he learned from his teachers. On some points he had no doubt followed his own special interpretations and practices, and the lineage he founded—which came to be known by the distinctive name Zhang-pa bka'-brgyud—continued this tradition. Moreover, a certain amount of the later controversy and tumult in his life would appear to have been the direct outgrowth of his own powerful and almost irrepressible personality. According to one bKa'-brgyud-pa source, the controversies surrounding Zhang had started up even before he had come into contact with the Dwags-po bka'-brgyud lineage. On the occasion that Phag-mo-gru-pa and Zhang went to sGam-po for the first time to meet sGam-po-pa in ca. 1152-55, their specific purpose for going is said to have been to see sGam-po-pa and to ask his help in settling some dispute involving Zhang. It seems that sGam-po-pa himself (who was already in semi-retirement) then did not give the same reception or instructions to Zhang.132 On the other hand, Phag-mo-gru-pa, who was Zhang's senior by thirteen years, was on that occasion privately summoned and that same evening accepted as a student and instructed in the Lhan cig skyes shyor by the aged sGam-po-pa, who had already turned over the leadership of the monastic community to his nephew sGom-tshul-ba.133

Bla-ma Zhang's rambunctious energy and potential, however, could not be overlooked, and in the end he, too, was by no means turned away from Dwags-la sGam-po empty-handed. Indeed, he is said to have been favorably received there and instructed by the acting head of the community, sGom-pa Tshul-khrims-snying-po. He is recorded, in fact, to have gained decisive awakening then when introduced by the latter to the nature of mind.134 For a number of years during this period, Zhang then wandered in remote places, practicing meditation. He became one of sGom-tshul-ba's chief disciples, and then assumed an important position in Central Tibet by the late 1150s, when he was entrusted to oversee the Lha-sa temples by sGom-pa Tshul-khrims-snying-po (d. 1169), who had pacified some severe political unrest there and had done extensive restorations.135 When his senior colleague Phag-mo-gru-pa passed away in 1170, Zhang performed at Phag-mo-gru the prayers of merit dedication, but apparently did not assume the position of monastic leader.136

Then came trouble. According to later bKa'-brgyud-pa historians, bla-ma Zhang at some point (in the 1170s?) began to engage in wide-scale political activities, violent siddha-like conduct and even armed conflict, so that after a time he was looked at askance by even some of his fellow Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud masters.137 Nevertheless, the later bKa'-brgyud tradition in general acknowledged him to have reached the highest realization, and he himself professed to the same. Therefore, in theory, he did not have to be bound by conventional morality and could justifiably conduct himself like a Tantric adept or siddha. According to the Blue Annals of 'Gos lo-tsä-ba (nya 137b), Zhang had attained siddhis of realization after receiving instructions from the bla-ma 'Ol-kha-ba. Subsequently he involved himself in some religious building projects in which he used force aggressively to achieve his aims. Some building materials he took from people, some others were freely offered to him, and still others he more or less looted. The same source goes on to relate:138 "Against those who did not obey his orders, he used to dispatch repeatedly soldiers, and he fought them." In other words, though he was an enlightened monk, he forcibly pursued certain aims in connection with his religious projects, holding that his detachment and extraordinary attainments made him exempt from the normal consequences of his deeds. As 'Gos lo-tsä-ba relates.139

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132 See 'Gos lo-tsä-ba, the Blue Annals, p. 558; Tib. nya 68a.5. 'Gos lo-tsä-ba later states, nya 137a.7, that Zhang's meeting with sGom-pa occurred in Zhang's thirty-fifth year, which would have been in 1155.

133 See 'Gos lo-tsä-ba, the Blue Annals, p. 558; Tib. nya 68a.5; and 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten-mgon-po, Collected Writings, vol. 1, p. 295.6 (148a). This episode is presented otherwise in Zhang's biography rGyal blon ma, Writings, p. 270.6ff.

134 As mentioned above, there is some question about the chronology of Zhang's meeting with sGom-pa, for 'Gos lo-tsä-ba states, nya 137a.7, that Zhang's meeting with sGom-pa occurred in Zhang's thirty-fifth year, which would have been in 1155. This was two years after sGam-po-pa's death.

135 See Dpa'-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba, vol. 1, p. 801.


137 His violent activities apparently began in the 1170s, after sGom-pa Tshul-khrims and Phag-mo-gru-pa's deaths. Although the chronology of these events is somewhat uncertain, these activities of his may have coincided with his building of the monastery at Tshal (1175), east of Lhasa on the other side of the sKyid-chu.


139 Ibid., p. 715. The Tibetan text, p. 624 = nya 137b: skabs shig tu bla ma 'od kha ba dang mjal gdam pa zhus pas byams pa dang snying rje byang chub kyi sens la bogs thon zhung grub pa bynes nas gtsug lag khang dang tha chen bzheng gi de'i cha rkyen yang la la la la blangs! la la phuhl! la la la la bisan phrogs lta bu mdzadl bka' las 'gal ba mams la drag
[Bla-ma Zhang] engaged in various activities of a tantric adept (siddha), and while these were indeed difficult for others to comprehend [and accept], Zhang himself [explained them] in his Instruct to the bSam-yas Ruler Lord Lha-btsan:

"I have abandoned the world. Many years have passed since the link with the world has been completely severed and I have entirely gone beyond into unborn space. Reckoning by these outer activities of mine, many others cannot comprehend [or accept my behavior], except for my stout-hearted disciples. Taken as objects within a worldly value system, these things are all seen to be nothing but apparently worldly activities such as metal casting, residence-bases, the closing off and controlling of roads, [enforcing] secular law, theft, and fighting. But if there fundamentally exists any connection with this world, it has died, sir."

According to a recent Tibetan historian, Zhang led armies against many independent lords in the districts of Lho-kha, 'Bri-khung, and 'Ol-kha, and thus brought under his control the people who had been the subjects of those lords. He became, in effect, the most powerful warlord in central Tibet. The 16th-century scholar and historian dPa'-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba explained the historical background of Zhang's political and martial activities by asserting that they were the natural consequence of the fragmented political situation existing in those times, and he mentioned the beneficial spiritual consequences for a number of Zhang's students who participated in the martial exploits Zhang had instigated:

In general, that period was a time when Tibet was without a national law and had become fragmented. Therefore [bla-ma Zhang] restricted the access to mountains, river valleys and roads to everyone. Against those who did not respect those restrictions, he performed acts of aggressive liberated behavior such as military battle. Among his disciples there were many in whom the realization of the Great Seal was born in the front-line of battle, and the nobleman Dar-ma-gzhon-mu beheld the countenance of Cakrasamvara while at the front line.

Zhang is said also to have taught the Great Seal to the Ti-shri Ras-pa, a realization having awakened in the latter through his teacher Zhang's words: "However you may do [or act], that is the Great Seal!" Zhang's well-travelled and widely experienced contemporary Grub-thob O-rgyan-pa remarked: "Even though the three evil destinies [i.e. existences as animals, pretas and hell-beings] are taught in Tantras to be objects for being liberated [through killing], there was nobody who actually practiced such 'aggressive enlightened behavior' (drag po'i 'phrin las) except for Virupa in India and Zhang Rin-po-che in Tibet."

This approach of Zhang's was similar in certain respects to that of some religious madmen (chos smyon pa) or siddhas, although he wielded great temporal and ecclesiastical power. But it was not enthusiastically received by all his fellow influential bKa'-brgyud-pa clerics. The Karma-pa Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa (1110-1193), for instance, which evidently saw himself as acting in part on behalf of Zhang's master sGom-pa Tshul-khrims-snying-po (who had been a known peace-maker, like Dus-gsum-
mkyhen-pa himself), is said to have stated once, apparently sometime between 1185 and 1188:

"The purpose of my coming back to Central Tibet (dBus) is to fulfill sGom-tshul's command, who had told me: 'Regardless of what situation you find yourself in Eastern Tibet (Khams), return west!' and to establish a monastery here in the midst of gZhu and 'Tshur, and to offer a hundred volumes written in gold to Dags-lha sGam-po, and to make a request to bla-ma Zhang not to engage in fighting, because people are unhappy with his fighting. I have come for these purposes." When he beseeched Zhang not to engage in fighting, Zhang consequently grasped his [Dus-gsum-mkyhen-pa's] finger, danced about a lot, and henceforth did not engage in fighting.

Evidently Dus-gsum-mkyhen-pa actually visited Tshal and met bla-ma Zhang there, at which time Zhang had numerous visions. Zhang is said to have consequently abstained from violence for the rest of his life (a period of some five years?). In 1189 when Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa built the "Upper Chapel" (mchod khang gong ma) at mTshur-Phu, bla-ma Zhang made an offering of three precious objects.

Zhang's violent approach during that late period of his life contrasted markedly with the pacific and strongly ethical teachings that Mi-la ras-pa is recorded to have given sGam-po-po. These included the instruction to continue to train oneself in serving the guru, even though one has already understood one's mind as the Buddha, and to continue to observe even small meritorious and moral matters, even though ultimately there is nothing to be cultivated or purified and one has understood that the connection of moral causation is from the ultimate point of view empty like space.

In quite a few of his writings, Zhang discussed or alluded to the disputes and controversies he became embroiled in, and he revealed his attitude toward those activities for instance in a brief autobiographical poem that he composed in a bird year (1177?) at bSam-yas. His rNam thar bsam yas ma, which relates events that occurred at bSam-yas in the fire-bird year 1177, likewise refers to his awareness that others might doubt his attainments because of his various worldly activities. Some of his songs and poems embody a ruthless and sardonic self-criticism which is so extreme that the overall effect is ironical and humorous, though not without an occasional note of wistful and discouraged melancholy.

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144 'Gos lo-tsā-ba, Blue Annals, p. 715; Tibetan text, p. 479 = nya 34a.3. The Tibetan: kho bso dbus su 'ong pa'i dgos pa gsum tshal gi zhal nas khyod kham su skyid sdog ci byung yang yar shog guung ba'i bka' sgrub pa dang! gzhu 'tshur gi bar 'dir dgon pa 'dubs pa dang! dags lha sgam por ger gzi glegs bzhag bskyod 'bual ba dang! bla ma zhang gi 'khrug pa la mi mams mi dga' ba 'dug pas! 'khrug la 'khrug pa mi mdzad pa 'zhu ba 'bual ba la 'ongs pa yin guung! zhang la 'khrug pa mi mdzad pa zhur las pas! zhang gis phya gmdzub la 'jus nas bro mung du brduong nas de phyin chad 'khrug pa ma mdzad!.

145 This refers to his founding of a monastery at stOd-lung 'Tshur-phu, which he did soon thereafter.

146 A similar passage is found in Si-tu and Be-lo, vol. 1, p. 24 (da 12b), including the references to Bla-ma Zhang: zhang tshal pa gsum chen pa 'khrugs pa mdzad pa 'dul ma ba snyan pas bshol 'debs pa dang! ... gsungs nas tshal du byonl! 'khrugs pa bsadams pasl! bla ma zhang gi rin po che la dag snang mita' yas pa gsigs tel phyag nas 'jus te bro brawang phyzu sku ma 'das kyi bar du 'khrugs pa ma ma mdzad!.

147 Ibid.
In 1187, six years before his passing, Zhang founded his main monastery at Tshal Gung-thang. He built there a huge image (of the Buddha?) called the Lha chen dpal 'bar. Later, shortly before his death in 1193, he laid the foundations for his own large reliquary stūpa.

Zhang’s successor was mNyam-med Shākya-ye-shes (d. 1207), who lead the monastic center from 1194 until his death. Afterwards there followed a succession of abbots at Tshal Gung-thang. Nevertheless, the Tshal-pa bka’-brgyud tradition did not persist as a distinct entity for more than a few centuries; it had already died out by the 16th century, according to dPa’-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba. Large fragments of Zhang’s collected writings, including numerous autobiographical reminiscences, are preserved in a modern reproduction, and these must be consulted by anyone seeking a deeper insight into his intense and by no means simple personality.

To say that bla-ma Zhang was one of the more colorful, controversial and intriguing of the 12th-century Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud masters would thus be no overstatement. And it is curious that his extreme practices—which even in the eyes of his bKa’-brgyud-pa co-religionists bordered on the scandalous—have so far gone almost completely unremarked by modern scholars. Instead, some of the few modern Western investigators of these controversies (together with certain Tibetans) have maintained that the subsequent inter-sectarian doctrinal disputes of the 13th century arose merely because of the sectarian antagonisms of Sa-skya Pandita (1182-1251), who was supposed to have been personally biased against the tradition of Zhang and other bKa’-brgyud-pas.

Sa-pan was no doubt deeply disturbed by some of what Zhang had done or taught. But his doctrinal criticisms of Zhang’s teachings must be treated as genuine—i.e. as serious discussions according to doctrinal, hermeneutical and philosophical principles—and not as mere invective. Moreover, the teachings that Sa-pan criticized do

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152 Apparently there was a small dialectical seminary of dge-bshes gZad-pa at Tshal when Zhang was invited there by ‘dpön rGyal-tshas a-ma lha-cig’, which was subsequently dismantled. See Zhang, Writings, p. 150.6: dge bshes gsal pad ’i mshesan nyid kyi gra sa ’di tsam bu shig [sic] nas. (I do not know who this ‘dge-bshes gZad-pa’ was, though a bZad-pa Dar-ma’-od was the tenth abbot of gSang-phu, his thirty-year tenure having begun in the last years of the 1100s.) A seminary of the gSang-phu tradition is said to have been founded over a century later at Tshal Gung-thang Chos-khor-gling by ‘Jam-dbyangs Shākya-gzho-nu (abbot of gSang-phu Gling-smad in the early 1300s) and the Tshal-pa nobleman dGa’-bde. See A. Ferrari (1958), p. 106, and Shākya-mchog-idan, rNyog lo, p. 452.1. Later this seminary became famous, and it was sometimes enumerated with gSang-phu and sNye-thang bDe-ba-can as one of a triad of the most important dialectical seminaries in Central Tibet in the mid-to late-14th century (gsang bde gung gsum), i.e. before the founding of the three great dGe-lugs-pa convents.


154 Si-tu Pañ-chen, p. 81.3.

155 dPa’-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba, vol. 1, p. 811.

156 Writings (bka’ thор bu) of Zhang g.Yu-brag-pa brtson-gnas-grags-pa (Tashijong; 1972).
Indian Critics of the Tibetan Great Seal?

One of the reasons that Sa-pan may have linked these doctrines with China and with the Tibetan Great Perfection tradition was that the Great Seal as formulated and presented in the Dvotes-po bKa'-brgyud systems was perhaps not recognized as an established Indian Buddhist doctrine by the Indian scholars with whom he had closest contacts, for instance by the nya 84a, denied that he had written his own criticisms of the sDom gsum rab dbye out of vexation or annoyance (the sun).

In Ch'an, similar teachings were common; in fact, "see the nature and achieve Buddhahood" became the paradigmatic statement of Ch'an gnoseology, according to R. Buswell (1987), p. 341. The idea is also expressed in the concise saying on Ch'an practice traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma:

A separate transmission outside the scriptures, / No reliance upon words and letters, / Directly pointing to the human mind, / See the nature and achieve Buddhahood. See R. Buswell (1988), p. 250, note 1, who refers to further discussion of this saying in D. T. Suzuki's Essays in Zen Buddhism (London: 1958), vol. 1, p. 176. The first Chinese master to state "See your own nature and become a Buddha" was apparently Seng-liang, who flourished in the early 7th century and was inspired to that statement by a passage in the Nirvāṇa Sūtra. See D. Chappell (1983), p. 123, note 19.

A similar statement that the understanding of one's own mind is precisely the Awakening of Buddhahood is found in the Ita b'i phreng ba attributed to Padmasambhava, and it is quoted there from a source entitled Khams gsum mam par rgyal ba'i roglis pa as propounding: "The thorough understanding (or realization) of one's mind is precisely the Awakening of Buddhahood." The Tibetan: rang sems so sor rogs pa nill sangs rgyas byang chub de nyid dol. See Kong-zom Paṇḍita Chos-kyi-bzang-po's Ita b'i phreng ba commentary, p. 98, and the rTsa ba, p. 9.1.

Indian Critics

Sa-pan may have concluded that if it was not known in India, it had come from elsewhere.

One of the junior Indian Paṇḍitas with whom Sa-pan had studied a little together under Sa-pan's uncle Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan when Sa-skya Pandita and the junior Indian Paṇḍitas in the latter's entourage, who had come as to Tibet in the early 1200s. Sa-pan may have concluded that if it was not known in India, it had come from elsewhere.

For the sources on the life of this master, see D. Jackson (1990a), introduction. Indian Paṇḍitas are also traditionally said to have been opposed to the Tibetans learning rDoogs-chen, and Vairocana is said to have been slandered by the Indians. See S. Karmay (1988), pp. 25-6. These accounts, though legendary, would seem to indicate that from early times there existed some sort of tension between Indian Buddhists and Tibetan followers of the Great Perfection.

Vibhūticandra is said to have refused to honor Sa-pan's uncle Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan when Sa-skya Pandita visited Sa-skya, and later he wrote a work on the three vows, his sDom gsum 'od kyi phreng ba (Peking Tanjun, no. 4549), which apparently includes replies to Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan's views and positions. See D. Buswell (1987) sDom gsum rab dbye. Taranātha gives a more detailed account of Vibhūticandra's activities and his conflict with the Sa skya-pa in his sByor drug thun thabs, Collected Works, vol. 3, pp. 483-86 (19a-20b). I am indebted to Mr. Cyrus Stearns for this reference.

L. van der Kuij (1987), p. 67, n. 7, correctly noted the existence of the above disharmony and alluded to it as follows: "While part of Sa-skya's entourage, Vibhūticandra never seems to have met Sa-skya Paṇḍita and, instead, enjoyed close relations with the Bri-gung-pa. It would appear that his view of the interrelationship of the three vows (sDom gsum, trisamvara) was taken over by the Bri-gung-pa whereafter the latter became the target of Sa-skya Paṇḍita's sustained criticism in the sDom gsum rab dbye. That Sa-pan and Vibhūticandra met, however, can be accepted. Sa-pan probably met him together with the others in Sa-pan's retinue; Sa-pan's retinue at his very first meeting with the latter, and some of the traditionally recorded tensions apparently had their origin in Vibhūticandra's conduct while at Sa-skya (where Sa-skya spent the rainy season retreat in 1210). The study of Sa-pan and Vibhūticandra together under Sa-skya Pandita, moreover, is recorded in Sa-pan's biography by Lho-pa Rin-chen-dpal. See D. Jackson (1987), p. 27. Sanskrit manuscript materials in Vibhūticandra's hand survived at Sa-skya and were discovered there in the 1930s by Rāhula Sāmkṛtyānya. See also L. van der Kuij (1987), p. 67. On Vibhūticandra as a Madhyamaka, see D. Seyfort Ruegg (1981), p. 117 and n. 383.
Sa-pan’s teacher Šākyārībhadra (1140s–1225) by bSod-nams-dpal-bzang-po may have been a later fabrication. The traditional citing of the great wealth of the 'Bri-gung-pa, the kindness of the sTag-lung-pa and the wisdom of the Sa-skya-pa belongs typically to accounts describing a period about four decades later. But in any case, it was not presented in that biography for the purpose of discrediting the Great Seal or the 'Bri-gung-pa, for if anything, the whole account was meant to show that in spite of Šākyārībhadra’s refusal to visit 'Bri-gung though he was twice invited, the great Kashmiri master respected and approved of the 'Bri-gung-pa master ('Jig-rten-mgon-po), saying he was an emanation of Nāgārjuna. The reason Šākyāśri is said to have given for not coming is that some among his own Tibetan followers—specifically certain bKa’-gdams-pa and the strict Vinaya upholders called "Those [observing] a Single Seat" (gdan gcig pa)—might possibly accrue demerit in relation to the 'Bri-gung-pa, for if anything, the whole account was meant to show that in spite of Šākyārībhadra’s refusal to visit 'Bri-gung though he was twice invited, the great Kashmiri master respected and approved of the 'Bri-gung-pa master ('Jig-rten-mgon-po), saying he was an emanation of Nāgārjuna. 

One curious and probably not entirely coincidental fact about the dkar po chig thub controversy in 12th- and 13th-century Tibet is that two of the masters most involved—bla-ma Zhang and Sa-skya Pandita—both lived and taught for lengthy periods at bSam-yas itself. Sa-pan knew that bla-ma Zhang had been active at the historically rich site of bSam-yas, which incidentally was also the locale of many "treasure text" (gter ma) "discoveries" before and afterward. And Sa-pan spoke of the tradition of the Hwa-shang as having come back to life based on "the mere text" (i.e. the mere reading) of rediscovered books. But when he mentioned that somebody had recovered Ch’An texts from caches (where they had been hidden following the debate at bSam-yas), he was probably thinking of someone from the period of sGsam-po-pa. The latter had indeed quoted a number of apocryphal Chinese Buddhist car ba materials in his gradualist general Mahāyāna treatise, the Thar pa rin po che’i rgyan ("Ornament of the Jewel of Liberation"), but he is not linked to bSam-yas or to text finds by the usual historical sources. On the other hand, one of the teachings of bla-ma Zhang, the so-called "Sealed Book of 'Chims-phu" (‘chims phu bka’ rgya ma), was a sort of secret gter ma teaching containing Great Perfection initiations and instructions that Zhang had directly received (in visions) from Padmasambhava, Šāntarakṣita, and Vimalamitra, presumably while at 'Chims-phu near bSam-yas.

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167 There are a number of writings in the collected works of 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten-mgon-po that mention Šākyārībhadra approvingly or that have some connection with his visit to Tibet. See for instance, vol. 2, pp. 249.6–250.7, 254.6–256.7, 489.4–491 and 493.4; and vol. 3, pp. 61f, 83f, and 199-201.

168 So called because they observed the discipline of eating only once a day, i.e. at a single sitting (stan gcig pa: akāśanikā).

169 See bSod-nams-dpal-bzang-po, Sa'i steng na 'gran zla dang bral ba kha che pandi ta shākyā shri bhadrā'i man thar, p. 45a-b; de nas 'bru kungh pa mams la chos rje'i zhal nas nag'i khör la bka’ gdam pa dang gdan gcig pa la sog pa mang basl 'kyey la las phyin ci log bsags pa srid. 'Gos lo-tsā-ba (G. Roerich, transl., Blue Annals, p. 1070) also mentions Šākyārībhadra’s refusal of two invitations to 'Bri-gung, and he gives further details in an earlier passage (nya 86a-b; G. Roerich trans., pp. 599-601). 'Gos lo-tsā-ba’s account is apparently based on that of bSod-nams-dpal-bzang-po

Whatever the case, Sa-paṅ definitely had acquired first-hand experience of Zhang’s tradition and followers through his travels and protracted stays in Central Tibet. He visited dBus province more than once, and in the 1220s as well as perhaps also in the 1230s, he spent quite a long time at bSam-yas, where Zhang had formerly stayed and which just a few decades before had been a stronghold of Zhang’s support—the bSam-yas ruler brTsaṅ-po Khri-seng having been one of bla-ma Zhang’s most ardent supporters. (During the years of Sa-paṅ’s visit to Central Tibet, the head of Zhang’s main temple was one Sangs-rgyas-bum, who was expelled from his position in 1231 by sGom-pa Ye-shes-ldan, and only allowed to return in 1242 to found a meditation center [sgom sde].) Sa-paṅ by his criticisms was no doubt trying to counter the continuing influence of bla-ma Zhang’s tradition. Since followers of this school were still very active in Central Tibet, his opposition was directed against doctrines still being propounded by living doctrinal foes, and it was correspondingly forthright.

What Was Sa-paṅ Mainly Criticizing?

Sa-paṅ is thus known to have criticized certain of the special Great Seal doctrines taught in the Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud, including teachings that are found in sGam-po-pa’s writings, and especially some teachings that were later championed (sometimes in perhaps more radical forms) by bla-ma Zhang and his followers. The doctrines he criticized in connection with the dkar po chig thub were most notably:

1. That a single method or factor (even insight into Emptiness presented as the Great Seal) could suffice soteriologically
2. That the Gnosis (ye shes: jñāna) of the Great Seal could arise through an exclusively non-conceptual meditative method
3. That the Great Seal could ever be taught outside of the Mantrayāna.

Sa-paṅ rejected these doctrines, denying in particular that they were the Great Seal tradition of the Indian Tantric adept Nāropa. His criticisms were thus based on much more than just the presence of such teachings as "no mentation at all" (ci yang yid la mi byed pa: amanasikāra) in the doctrines attributed to Mo-ho-yen. Moreover, his criticisms were not merely attempts at rejecting Maitripāda’s amanasikāra doctrine, which some later Tibetans such as Thu’u-bkwan Chos-kyi-nyi-ma (1737-1802) identified as "Maitripāda’s Great Seal, the dkar po chig thub, "

Does this mean that Sa-paṅ through such criticisms was totally condemning all Great Seal instructions or all "introductions to the nature of mind"? Not at all. His chief concern in the present discussions was to establish the proper ways and contexts for teaching these. In some of the epistles preserved in Sa-paṅ’s works, one does find passages in which Sa-

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175 dPa’-'bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba, vol. 1, p. 810.
176 See the Blue Annals, p. 716; Tib. nga 1386. Though ‘Gos lo-tsa-ba does not specify the reasons for this expulsion, according to dPa’-'bo, vol. 1, p. 809, it was because of a dispute between religious and secular leaders.
177 On the life of Nāropa, see H. Guenther (1963).
179 Thu’u-bkwan Chos-kyi-nyi-ma, p. 170.4 (kha 25b.4), portrays Sa-paṅ’s criticisms as having been so directed, and therefore rejects them as unsatisfactory, saying: "Since this is clearly not the position of performing no mentation at all, it is evident that the refutations [by Sa-paṅ] in the sDom guum rab dbye were improper" (ci yang yid la mi byed pa’i phyogs mi min par gyal bas sdom guum gyi dag pa maṇis thub chod kyi gung du mngon no). However, Sa-paṅ never seems to mention specifically that the Tibetan dkar po chig thub involved the lack of "mentation" (manasikāra, yid la byed pa), but uses instead such terms as "non-discursiveness" (nīrvikalpa: maṇ par mi rIo pa), even when characterizing the Hwa-shang’s doctrine in his presentation of the traditional history of the bSam-yas debate. In the above-mentioned work, Thu’u-bkwan identifies the dkar po chig thub over-narrowly as "the Great Seal of Maitripāda" (mai tri’i phyag chen dkar po chig thub), and therefore tries to exculpate Zhang because this doctrine of "complete non-mentation" (ci yang yid la mi byed pa) is not to be found in Zhang’s [Lam zab mthar thug?] treatise. Cf. D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 109.

Many later bKa’-brgyud-pas understood Sa-paṅ to have been ‘hostile’ especially to Maitripāda’s non-mentation cycle. See for instance Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje, p. 11.3 (6a.3), and the translation by D. Seyfort Ruegg (1988), p. 1257. Here other bKa’-gdams-pas are also said to have shared this basically negative attitude, which, as mentioned in a previous note, Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje attributed originally to Gro-lung-pa’s criticisms of the Yid la mi byed pa as not being Madhyamaka.

Sa-paṅ does not seem to have criticized specifically the amanasikāra doctrines of Maitripāda. He also did not criticize here the pernicious doctrines that spread in the western Himalayas in the 9th and 10th century, for he considered those and other erroneous doctrines to have been authoritatively refuted and eradicated by previous great scholars such as Rin-chen-bzang-po and Zhi-ba’-od, as he discusses in a final passage of chapter III (verses 603-6 = 45b) of his sDom guum rab dbye. Cf. D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 104.
Nevertheless, introducing an ignorant person merely to an understanding of the nature of mind was of no great benefit, for that person would remain still ignorant of the most basic essentials. He could hardly even call himself a Buddhist. As Sa-pan explained in the “Discriminative Understanding” chapter of his Thub pa’i dgongs gsal (57b-58a):

[Question:] In general, when one introduces [the nature of] mind, is this an introduction to the nature of mind alone, or does one need to introduce also the nature of external objects? [Answer:] The introduction of [the nature of] mind alone is a non-Buddhist Indian sectarian tradition. That is an erroneous path because by means of it one cannot get rid of the dichotomous postulation of apprehending subject and apprehended object. If one needs to introduce also the nature of external objects, one must critically examine whether those objects have arisen from a creator-god such as Isvara, as [some] non-Buddhist Indian sectarians maintain, or from “atoms”, as the Śrāvakas maintain, [p. 58a] or whether from mind, as the [Buddhist Yogacāra] adherents of Mind-Only maintain, or out of interdependent origination, as the Mādhyamikas say.

If these [entities] are held to be either existent or non-existent, one must know scripture and reasoning in order to refute those [views] because they have not gone beyond eternalism or annihilationism. Even for maintaining that the appearances [of external objects] and mind are interdependently [originated], one must know the Buddhist scriptures and reasoning. If one does not know these, one will not properly understand the insubstantiality of a person and of the factors of existence. If one has not understood the insubstantiality of a person, [one’s meditation] will be no different from that of the Buddhist sectarian. If one has not understood the insubstantiality of factors of existence, [one’s meditation] will be no different from that of the Śrāvaka. In order to understand the two insubstantialities (bdag med), one must first remove one’s erroneous imputations by means of the discriminative understanding born from learning and reflection. Independent of learning and reflection, it is impossible to understand insubstantiality. If one has not understood insubstantiality, one will not know how to cultivate in meditation [a direct understanding of this] insubstantiality. If one does not know

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180 Sa-pan, bKa’ gdas nam mkha’ ‘bum, p. 416.1.5 (na 243b): dri ba bcu gcig pa’i sams kyi ngo ji bka’i spro dzer ba la’i kho bo’i lugs kyi sams la ngo bo med pas sprad rgyu mi bkog dran pa med cing yid la bya ba med pa’i sangs rgyas rjes su dran pa zhes ming tu btags pa yin. For Haribhadra on buddhānāmśīti and asamāraṇa, see D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), pp. 155 and 159f.

181 Sa-pan, sNyi-mo sgom chen la, pp. 414.4-418.5 (na 247a-248a). bcu drug pa sams stong pa rtags pa la sangs rgyas ’byung ngam mi ’byung zer ba la’i stong pa rkyang pa rtags pa las sangs rgyas mi ’byung/ shes bya thams cad rtags na ’tshang rgya ba yin/ de la’ang rtags lugs gnyis yod/ don dam pa rtags [247b] rgyu med pa rtags pa dang/ kun rdzob tu ci snyed yod pa de snyed so sor rtags pa yin/ bcu bdun pa’i khyod rtags ldan zhal gis bshes sam mi bshes zer ba la’i rgyas don dam pa chos gung yang rtags rgyu ma nyed pa/ rtags ldan du khai mi len/ tha snyad kun rdzob tu snyed yod pa de snyed so sor rtags pa yin/ bco bsgnyad pa’i khyed kyi gra pa na sams ngo ’phrod pa yod dam zer ba la’i nged kyi gra pa’i dā na’ang don dam pa sams rtags rgyu med pa gur la’i snyad kun rdzob tu snyed yod pa de snyed so sor rtags pa yin/ bco bsgnyad pa’i khyed kyi gra pa na sams ngo ’phrod pa yod dam zer ba la’i nged kyi gra pa’i dā na’ang don dam pa sams rtags rgyu med pa gur la’i snyad kun rdzob tu snyed yod pa de snyed so sor rtags pa yin/ bco bsgnyad pa’i khyed kyi gra pa na sams ngo ’phrod pa yod dam zer ba la’i nged kyi gra pa’i dā na’ang don dam pa sams rtags rgyu med pa gur la’i snyad kun rdzob tu snyed yod pa de snyed so sor rtags pa yin/ bco bsgnyad pa’i khyed kyi gra pa na sams ngo ’phrod pa yod dam zer ba la’i nged kyi gra pa’i dā na’ang don dam pa sams rtags rgyu med pa gur la’i snyad kun rdzob tu snyed yod pa de snyed so sor rtags pa yin/ bco bsgnyad pa’i khyed kyi gra pa na sams ngo ’phrod pa yod dam zer ba la’i nged kyi gra pa’i dā na’ang don dam pa sams rtags rgyu med pa gur la’i snyad kun rdzob tu snyed yod pa de snyed so sor rtags pa yin/
how to cultivate [that] in meditation, there will not arise discriminative understanding born from meditative realization. If discriminative understanding born from meditative realization does not arise, it is impossible for the Path of Seeing of the Saint (Arya) to arise.

In one of his longer epistles, the sKyus bu dam pa, Sa-pan presented in more general terms his opinion about the introduction to the nature of mind:

... It is not taught in any Sutra, Tantra or great treatise that one can awaken to Buddhahood by a Self-sufficient White [simple method], as distinct from [through] the perfectly replete possession of means and discriminative knowledge. [Some] Sutras and Tantras do indeed teach that one can gain Buddhahood by merely respectfully saluting or circumambulating, and by offering one flower, or by reciting a single dhāraṇī, or by reciting just the name of the Buddha, or by a single act of worshipful reverence, or by the arising of a single thought of Bodhicitta, or by the mere understanding of Emptiness. Yet one should understand those as being [statements with special] intention (dgongs pa) or allusion (Idem dgongs), but they are not direct expression. As Maitreyanātha said [in the Mahāyānasūtraśāstra I 20]:

If one understands the sense literally, one becomes haughty oneself and one's mind is destroyed. For example, if the [various] threads do not come together, the designs on brocade will not appear. And if the seed, water and manure do not come together, [4b] the crop of a field will not appear. If all the interdependently connected [causes and conditions] do not come together, perfectly complete Buddhahood will not arise. Such is my understanding.

Generally speaking, one does require a direct recognition of the nature of mind. Nevertheless, this can be seen to be of two types: good and bad. If one directly recognizes the nature of mind having completed the excellent qualities through [compassionate] means, there will occur the attainment of Buddhahood. But without having completed the excellent qualities, no matter how excellent the direct recognition of mind is, it is taught that [in the best case a person can attain] the Arhatship of the Śrāvaka, in the middling case [he will be reborn in] the sphere lacking even fine substance (ariyādhatū), and in the worst case that one will be born in the evil destinies. A statement by Nāgarjuna, namely [MMK XXIV 11]: "If they err in the viewing of emptiness, those of small intelligence will be destroyed," was also stated with this in mind.

Similarly, though ears of grain must come from a field, there are two ways for them to come: good and bad. If the ears appear on completely developed stalks, that will be a good harvest. If they appear on [plants that] have not reached full development, there will be a poor harvest. Likewise the direct recognition of the nature of mind, too, will be sufficient if it occurs at the right time. If it happens at the wrong time, it is of no use. With these things in mind, it was taught in the Akāśagarbha Sūtra that to propound emptiness to those of untrained minds was a fundamental infraction, [teaching this] with the words: "And the proclaiming of emptiness to a living being who has not trained his mind...." If [thus to teach emptiness is a fundamental infraction], it goes without saying that [there would be an infraction] if it is understood.

As seen above, sGam-po-pa and his successors did prize a certain non-conceptual, non-intellectual, non-verbal approach, and they strongly devalued the reverse. Phag-mo-gru-pa's Inga idan system of the Great Seal practice even termed the main theory to be cultivated and understood specifically as the "non-discursive theory" (mi rtog pa'i lta ba). But that referred to the insight into the ultimate, and not really to a meditative method. Moreover, Sa-pan himself agreed that at the final stage, the ultimate could not be known directly by conceptual thought, which could only apprehend its object indirectly through "exclusion of other." Furthermore, the "non-discursive" method of both sGam-po-pa and bla-ma Zhang clearly tried to avoid certain pitfalls of a forced non-conceptual approach. sGam-po-pa, for example, on one occasion criticized those who would consciously suppress all discursive thought (rtog pa), saying: "Some view as a virtue the concentrated placing of mind in non-discursiveness, having stopped all discursive thoughts that appear. But that will not advance one along the Path. Such a thing is called 'lame

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182 Sa-pan, sKyus bu dam pa, p. 332.2-3 (ff. na 73a-b = 4a-b). This whole passage is translated and quoted below in the Appendix, part II, B.

183 On this quotation, see below, Appendix, part II, B.

184 See also the sources referred to in D. Jackson (1987), p. 396, n. 95.
Gnosis. And as mentioned above, Zhang similarly rejected a purposeful suppression of conceptual thought:

Ignorant people ... view discursive thought as a fault and stop it. They desire non-conceptualizing and purposefully try to achieve it. You will never finish sweeping away waves with a broom. Non-conceptualizing that arrests conceptual thought is itself a deluded conceptual thought. It is a great darkness that obscures the Dharmakāya.

Questioning the Origin of a Doctrine

One line of Sa-pan's criticisms was to deny the historical authenticity of how some masters of the Dzog-pa bKa'-brgyud presented the Great Seal. In Sa-pan's opinion, the latter tradition—which was claimed to be from Nāropā—did not derive from its reputed source, but instead from somewhere else. Sa-pan had received three lineages of Nāropā's "Six Dharmas" teaching and also had studied various dohas including apparently those of Maitripāda, but he had not come across the doctrines in question at that time. On the other hand, he must have noticed the strong similarities between certain of the teachings in question and the Great Perfection-like Ch'an doctrines that Mo-ho-yen had taught, and therefore he concluded that they had been picked up through "merely the

185 sGam-po-pa, Works, vol. 2, p. 111.6: la las rtog pa byung tshad bka' nas rtoy med la blo drel 'jog pa la yon tan du bta' stel des lam good mi nus ye shes phyel [read: 'phyel] bo bya ba yin1. See also Zhang, Phyag chen lam zab mthar thug, p. 78.2

186 Zhang, Lam zab mthar thug, pp. 756-7.

187 For the record of Sa-pan's study of the three conceptual traditions of the Nā ro chos drag as well as various doha teachings, see the dDom gsum rab dbye III 656 (p. 320.3.4 = na 48a.4). As Sa-pan stated in a previous passage of the same work (III 497, p. 317.1.2 = na 41a.2), whatever criticisms he made of this Phyag ngyu chen po tradition could only be made through pointing out contradictions with what Nāro-pa had taught: "Similarly, a follower of the Great Seal, too, reveres Nāropā, and if there is a contradiction with the basic teachings of Nāropā, that will refute a follower of the Great Seal."

188 Sa-pan, DS III 175 = 26a. Cf. D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 109. The phrase yi ge tsam could also have been an ironical reference to the claim of others that these teachings did not rely on words, texts, etc.

189 Zhang, L. Gomez (1967), p. 114. Zhang (1967), p. 114. Zhang also indicated that these quotations and teachings bear a marked similarity with the early Ch'an traditions translated into Tibetan in the snga-dar period can be seen from a quick glance at the manual for followers of the "Mahāyoga" preserved in the ancient Tun Huang manuscript Pelliot Tib. 116, namely the dMyigs su med pa tshul gyig pa'i gzhung. It is also possible that Sa-pan himself had also come across such writings in Central Tibet. Works attributed to Mo-ho-yen's school enjoyed at least a limited circulation among later Tibetan scholars. Taranātha, for instance, in an answer to a query (Collected Works, vol. 13, p. 544.4) mentions having seen the mDo sde bkyad bcu khung. And in the 13th century, such traditions were still being transmitted by certain Tibetan Buddhist masters. The Jo-nang-pa master Kun-spangs-chen-po Thugs-je-brtson-'grus, for instance, is recorded to have given rdZogs-chen and Chinese "Ha-shang" practical instructions to Yon-tan-rgya-mtsho, a teacher of both Bu-ston (1290-1364) and Dol-po-pa (1292-1361): rdZogs chen sens phyogs dang'i rgya'i ha shang gi man ngag gi skor mams gngan ngol. See A-mes-zhabs, bDpal gsang ba 'das pa'i dam pa'i chos 'byung ba'i tshig las par bshad pa gсан 'das chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed, p. 133.3 (sha 67a). I owe the last two references to Mr. Cyrus Stearns. Someone will have to study the occurrence of such quotations in sGam-po-pa's works in more detail in the future. But I think it is safe to say that rje sGam-po-pa (like bla-ma Zhang) did not adopt a critical attitude when dealing with materials stemming from other Tibetan cig car ba traditions. He apparently noted the great parallels in their approach and outlook, and simply accepted them as useful, not concerning himself about their historical background or precise origins. In this he was in a sense remaining true to the spirit of his tradition, though less so to the letter.

190 I have studied one or two of these in 'Birds in the Egg and Newborn Lion Cubs: Metaphors for the Potentials and Limitations of 'All-at-once' Enlightenment,' forthcoming in the proceedings of the Fifth International Seminar on Tibetan Studies (Narita: 1992). As I show there, both sGam-po-pa and Zhang had adopted these elements. An interesting borderline case is where sGam-po-pa implicitly uses the image of the sun obstructed by clouds. (See his Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 218.) It is not enough merely to use the intellect to remove false conceptual imputations about the nature of things, he says. You also have to get rid of the intellect that removes those. Otherwise it is like removing black clouds but [the sun] still being obscured by white clouds. The Tibetan text: chod byed kyi shes pa'i blo dang mi 'bral tel' de dang ma bral na sprin nag po bsal yang ikar pos bsgrub pa dang 'dra'ol]. On this image in Mo-ho-yen's writings, see L. Gómez...
terms of real, historical links with the Mo-ho-yen’s writings, and of a real break from or adulteration of the authentic Indian tradition of Nāropa that had been transmitted in Tibet by Mar-pa the Translator (1012-1097) to his student Mi-la ras-pa (1040-1123). Such newly introduced doctrines, he argued, should not be accepted, because they were the same as those that had already been officially rejected at the bSam-yas debate. He argued further that such doctrinal innovations—like any inventions whatsoever in a traditionalist religious system—were bogus in principle.

sGam-po-pa usually stressed Nāropa as the main source of the Great Seal lineage. Although he mentioned to Dus-gsum-mkhen-pa the differentiation of Nāropa’s teachings—which are "possessing meditative cultivation" (bsgom yod) and "for the time of the path" (lam dus su)—with those of Maitripāda, which are contrastingly described as "without cultivation" (bsgom med), he himself seems to have stressed rather the

unity of all Dharma and the identity of all meditative experience and realization. Bla-ma Zhang, too, in his record of teachings received gave Nāropa as the origin of some of the teachings in question. But one of the similar instructions that bla-ma Zhang did identify as coming from Maitripāda was the Thog bab[s] ("Thunderbolt Strike"), which (like the Lam cig car) he had received from rJe-bsun Yer-pa and not from rJe sGom-tshul. A brief "fruit" (bras bu) instruction by this name is also found in the collected works of sGam-po-pa and indeed is attributed to his authorship. It contains a formulation of several key principles of the cig car ba approach, and if presented as a practice outside the Completion State of the Mantrayāna or as anything more than a description of the "fruitational" Gnosis, it would have been rejected by Sa-pan (for whom

194 sGam-po-pa, Dus gsum mkhen, Works, vol. 1, p. 425.2 (sha 13a): da la ma lat byor pa la rgya ma zhiq pa yin/ zhi[s] nas da la la btsun btsun log ges geal la rgya cher byo ba yin/ pha rol da phyin pa dang/ gsang sngag gyis kyi khyad ci yod nal/ lam nye ring la khyad yod/ nal ro pa'i lugs kyi bsgoms yod yin/ ma tri pa'i lugs kyi bsgom med yin/ lam gyi dus na bsgom yod yin/ "bras bu" di dus su bsgom mi bsgom gi risis gdab med/ chos thams cad gcig yin/ nyams dang rtags po la gcig tu 'dod pa yin/. Cf. below, 425.6: bsgom chen rab la snam mi snang m gi risis gdab med [sic] pa yin/!

195 Sa-pan’s tracing of the Great Seal lineage through Nāropa was not unfair, because this is precisely what Zhang Tshal-pa himself did in his own lineage record, where it is given as one and the same as his Six Yogas lineage: blGyud pa sna tshogs, Writings, p. 439.2: phyag rgya chen po dang/ na ro pa'i chos drug 'dil dbang du byas nal/ bcom idam 'das rdo rje 'chag gzis sprul pa te lo pas/ na ro pa la byin gzis bralabs des mar po la tsha ba la byin gzis bralabs/ mar mgog mam gyis kyi rje btsun mi la ra pa la bshad/ des bla ma dags po nyid sgyom pa la bshad/ des bla ma dags po sgyom tshil la bshad/ des bda bga' ol/ The Lam cig car ba is also considered by Zhang to be a teaching of Nāropa. See his Bla ma na sna tshogs kyi tho byang, p. 427.3: rje bsin rin po che yer pa la las/ lam cig car ba la sogs pa na ro pa'i glams ngag sna tshogs/ tshogs bab la sogs mi pa tri pa'i glams ngag sna tshogs/ .... The lineage for the Lam cig car ba is given as follows: [blyGyud pa sna tshogs, 436.4]: lam cig car ba dang/ rna kyi kyis pa dang/ kha 'thor ba'i dbang du byas nal/ bcom idam 'das dpal dge bya rdo rje/ sa bsa pa'i byang chub sems rdo rje bying po la bshad/ des sngags pa sku te lo pa la bshad/ des ro na ro pa la bshad/ des rje bsin mar po la tho brag pa la bshad/ des rje bsin rjag ni bo ba la bshad/ mar po mgog gyis kyi rje btsun mi la ra pa la bshad/ des rje bsin gling ka ba 'bri sngags ma chen la bshad/ des ma lat byor chen po mal ye pa la bshad/ des zhang gi shrdang bna bda bga' ol/!

"Fruit" teachings belonged to the "Fruit Vehicle"). 199

The tradition of stressing the role of Maitripāda’s Great Seal teachings as paramount and of tracing the origin of the key Great Seal teachings through him back to Saraha (and to Nāgārjuna) apparently arose at a stage of the tradition subsequent to the time of sGam-po-pa and Zhang, approximately during the life of Sa-pa, perhaps even as a response to the questions he had raised. According to the later bKa'-bgrvyud-pa scholars 'Gos lo-tsa-ba (1392-1481) and Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje (8th Karma-pa, 1507-1554), this origin was asserted especially by rGong-tshang-pa (1189-1258?) or by both him and his chief disciple. 200 'Gos lo-tsa-ba, alludes to this theme once in his chapter of the Blue Annals devoted specifically to Maitripāda’s Great Seal, after having treated the Mar-pa bKa'-bgrvyud and such masters as sGam-po-pa and Zhang as holders of a separate and

vehicle, the Vajrayāna. See also S. Karmay (1988), p. 147.

199 The title of the work as it appears in sGam-po-pa’s collected writings is Chos rje dags po lha rje’i guang phog babs kyi rtsa ba, and it begins with the phrase: "With regard to this instruction of the Great Seal, the Thunderbolt Strike, which is applied on top from above..." (phyag rgya chen po’i gdams ngag thog babs yas thog tu gsal ba ’di la...). To begin with, before the actual practical instruction, five erroneous notions are refuted:

1) Maintaining that a later excellent Gnosis is attained after one has gotten rid of the evil mind that one presently has. (This is unacceptable because as the root of all dharmas, the mind is not to be abandoned in this system.)

2) Maintaining that the five poisons or klesas are to be purified. (This is unacceptable because in this system the poisons are to be assimilated and incorporated into the path.)

3) Maintaining that realization (rtogs pa) is reached after three long aeons. (This is unacceptable because in this system, realization is maintained to be right now.)

4) Maintaining that realization is reached through intelligence (rig pa) or discriminative understanding (shes rab). (This is unacceptable because in this system realization is said to be reached through the direct, practical instruction [gsal ma ngag].)

5) Maintaining that there is a qualitative distinction of better or worse between a Buddha and an ordinary sentient being. (This is unacceptable because in this system, there is no difference between them, beyond the presence or absence of realization [rtogs pa].)

The gcig car ba’i lam gsto bbor bton pa Thog babs bhis instructions are classified within Padma-dkar-pa’s gsum ’gyi as belonging to the section gsal ma ngag nyan len gis skor. See Padma-dkar-pa, bKa’ bgrvyud pa, pp. 376 and 377.2.


201 Mar-pa is however listed in an alternative list of Maitripāda’s four “spiritual sons,” and the lineages from Maitripa translated and transmitted by Mar-pa were termed a “side-” or “lateral-transmission” tradition (aur ’gyur). See ‘Gos, da, p. 2b; G. Roerich, transl., p. 843.


204 See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1988), pp. 1256-58; Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje, pp. 10-11 (5b-6a).

Regarding the existence of at least some Ch'an or rDzogs-chen contacts somewhere in the lineage, Sa-paṅ was certainly not just imagining things, as can be seen from some of sGam-po-pa's quotations and doctrinal formulations. It can also be said in Sa-paṅ's support that the early Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pa masters after sGam-po-pa such as bla-ma Zhang did not always carefully distinguish a separate origin for these teachings, and they sometimes did apparently combine lineages of Nāropa and Maitripāda, for example, when accounting for the transmission of the Great Seal.206

When Sa-paṅ called these Great Seal teachings "present-day" (lit.: "present" da lta'i) doctrines or stated in the sDom gsum rab dbye that the related teachings were not known until after Mar-pa and not before Mi-la, he was implying that they had newly come into currency within that tradition during the time of sGam-po-pa, the great innovator and systematizer of this school. The main Sa-skyā-pa commentators agreed that Sa-paṅ in his criticisms of gcig-thub teachings was chiefly criticizing teachings of sGam-po-pa or his lineages.207 The Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pas, too, characterized sGam-po-pa as having been the one who significantly altered the methods of the Great Seal presentation or instruction within their tradition, and a number of bKa'-brgyud-pa masters agreed that most of the great Mar-pa bKa'-brgyud early adepts, including even Mi-la, had combined the Great Seal and Great Perfection.208

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206 See also 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rtsen-mgon-po, Collected Works, vol. 1 (ka), p. 295, when describing the studies of his master Phag-mo-gru-pa, enumerated the two traditions of amanaskāra as distinct from the Great Seal, the latter being treated as the same as the Six Dharmas of Nāropa: rdo zogs chen shi byed thun yug la ma sa se gyang snyags kyi chags srot gyis phag rgya chen po 'am dpal na ro pa'i chos drag la sogs pa'

207 See for instance Shākyā-mchog-ldan, Legs bshad gser gi thur ma, Collected Works, vol. 7, p. 85: gzhung 'dir yar la la gcig thub sgrub pa bya de' rje la bsgo ba bya dgos zer zhes sogs mams kyang nje dags po'yi bgyud 'dzin mams la gsey ba yin pas sot.

208 dPa'-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba, (N. Delhi, 1959, ed., tha), part 1, p. 186: rje mi la sogs mar pa'i bka' brgyud kyi grub chen phal chen kyis phag rdo zogs gi tshur zhing 'bri gung 'jig rten mgon po dang thams cad mkhyen pa rang byung rdo rje sogs kyis rtsa 'khor la lnga la sngub pa bka' brgyud kyi rigs lnga dang rtsa phran la ghan gsum bsdod pa dang rje nges par dza lсан la rgyan dus de'i skor du rdo zogs chen gru rgyud thob mang po mig la dang rje yang dgon pa'i thugs dam rdo zogs chen las 'khrungs pa dang zang gyi brag pa'i 'chims phy bka' rgya ma zhes slob dpon padma bo dhi satwa bi ma la mi tra mams la dang su sgar pa'i rdo zogs chen gi dbang gams ngag yod pa sogs g[sgar ma nyid kyi yang skyes chen miha' dag gi sgs dang pa mdzad cing]. Here dPa'-bo is demonstrating that the Great Perfection was widely recognized even among gSar-ma-pa masters, and just before this he cites Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas and the latter's teacher Buddhaguhya, as Indian teachers of the Great Perfection, as well as one of the teachers of Śākyasribhadra whom I have not been able to identify.


210 There is a tendency among some modern students of Tibetan Buddhism to lose sight of this fact. See, for instance, S. Matsumoto (1990), p. 19, who finds something
case of such widely experienced and broadly based Buddhists, one must always ask on what level they were speaking and from what doctrinal standpoint, thus keeping their multifarious background in mind. If we were to consider Sa-pan as a mere dialectician or scholastic of the general Mahāyāna, for instance, we would completely lose sight of the full dimensions of his own spiritual life, the deepest level of which consisted of his experiences through Tantric meditation. We would then also lack an adequate background for understanding his doctrinal discussions of Tantric practice.

Many sources indicate that Sa-pan, in addition to his other fields of expertise, was highly proficient in the theory and practice of the Mantrayāna. Tantra was the main subject of his studies in his youth, and he was the main recipient of a vast amount of Vajrayāna teachings from his uncle, the preeminent master Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan. Many of his studies with the Indian panditas such as Śākyaśrībhadra were also devoted to Tantric subjects. Later in his life he continued to devote considerable efforts to Tantric subjects—by actively transmitting the same lineages to his nephew 'Phags-pa (1235-1280) and many other disciples, by his discussions of related issues in his doctrinal treatises, and by his editing the vast corpus of Tantric writings left by two of his uncles (bSod-nams-rtse-mo and Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan) and his grandfather (Sa-chen Kun-

dga'-snying-po). Once or twice it seems that Tantric doctrines influenced his interpretations of important topics even within a more general Mahāyāna context.

One of the main principles Sa-pan appealed to for making his critical comments was that of genuine lineage. The importance of authentic origins and unbroken later transmission was recognized by all Tibetan Buddhist traditions, though especially by the Vajrayāna, and this principle, which is both religious and historical, opened another avenue for evaluating the authenticity of doctrines. For his own knowledge of Tantric precepts and practice, Sa-pan, too, had to depend in large part on the explanations given to him by competent masters who faithfully upheld the lineages in question. When he noticed great divergences between two traditions claiming similar origins (or strong similarities between those claiming dissimilar origins), he considered himself entitled to ask what particular lineages both parties were following—i.e. what the "pedigree" of the teaching had been. In this way, questions about unusual or doubtful doctrines could sometimes be approached through a concrete historical question of origins. The answers given to such questions could also open the way for further investigations, because after one had identified the basic lineage of the other tradition, one could then pinpoint the contradictions between the original tradition and its later manifestation.

For Sa-pan and his tradition, it was essential for a Buddhist to preserve and maintain the core doctrines and vital practices of Indian Buddhism. He believed that to do this, a Buddhist adherent had to

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211 According to Taranātha, sByor drug thun thabs, p. 754.3 (153b), Sa-pan's main meditative practice had been the sByor drug. I am indebted to Mr. Cyrus Stearns for this reference. The Sa-skya-pa tradition, however, would stress his practice of its own central tantric precepts such as the Lam 'bras.

212 On Sa-pan's early studies and the sources thereon, see D. Jackson (1987), pp. 15ff and 24.
discern carefully his own theory and practice from those of other Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions. In the realm of vows or ethics, three main traditions and several sub-traditions had been inherited from Buddhist India and should, in his view, be distinguished and kept distinct, even while practicing all of them. These main traditions were (1) the Vinaya system of monastic discipline belonging to the Śrāvakā tradition, (2) the Bodhisattva vow system belonging to the Pāramitāyāna, and (3) the Vajrayāna vows of the Tantras. Sa-pan devoted one of his main works, the *sDom gsum rab dbye*, to discriminating these systems and to clarifying their interrelations. According to him, it vitiated the power of the respective traditions to blur these essential distinctions and to practice teachings of one system according to the principles of another.

Sa-pan adhered, moreover, to the traditional opinion that Buddhist Mahāyāna doctrine in general should be carefully divided into two departments: (1) the common approach of the Bodhisattva path with its Perfections (*pāramitā*) and very long-term project, and (2) the special Mantrayāna approach, with its special short-cut methods and its cultivation of the two stages (*rim pa: krama*) of Tantric meditation. Both paths had as their goal the direct understanding of the ultimate or śūnyatā through meditation and the cultivation of compassionate skillful means, though the methods and ways of meditation were different for each. Within the general Mahāyāna, one sought to win insight into reality through the Mahāyāna theory (which could only be approached through preliminary learning and reflection) in connection with the cultivation of various other compassionate means and qualities.

For the Mantra approach, the highest "non-elaboration" (*nisprapaṇca: spros bral*) theory (i.e. the ultimate truth) to be known was the same as that of the Madhyamaka, but the methods for knowing it were different. For practicing within the Mantrayāna, one had to be first formally initiated into the mandala by a qualified master and there introduced to the insight into ultimate reality, which would gradually be intensified and stabilized through the two stages of Tantric meditative practice. Regarding the latter approach, Sa-pan wrote in his *Epistle to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions* (*Phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas*...):

> ...It is taught that the cultivation of the Great Seal is a Gnosis arisen from consecration and a special meditative absorption (*samādhi*) of the two stages [of Tantric meditation].

Or as he summed up in the *sDom gsum rab dbye* (III 162-165):

Even though that meditation [of yours] may be excellent, it is not higher than the meditation of the Madhyamaka. Though that meditation of the Madhyamaka is indeed excellent, still it is very

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216 See also sGam-po-pa's comments on the need for integrating the three vows within one person: Writings, vol. 1, pp. 158 and 163.6. 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten-mgon-po, too, strongly insisted on this point, pointing to the example of both Atśśa and Phag-mo-gru-pa. See his collected works, vol. 2, pp. 63.4 and 343.2.

217 As will be described more fully below, one of the extreme doctrines Sa-pan criticizes in this regard was a radical doctrinal relativism that maintained that all vehicles were true in their own context. *sDom gsum rab dbye* III 410 (36b-37a): kha cig theg pa rang sa nall bden pa yin zhes kun la sprogs!!.

218 See also sGam-po-pa on the need for preliminary learning and reflection within the general Mahāyāna: Writings, vol. 1, pp. 211 and 216.6.
difficult to be understood. As long as the two preparatory assemblages 
are not completed, for so long will that meditative cultivation not 
reach perfection. Its completion of the two preparatory assemblages 
is taught to require an innumerable aeon. Our Great Seal is the 
Gnosis arisen from tantric consecration and the spontaneously arisen 
Gnosis that has arisen from the meditative absorption (samādhi) of the 
two stages. A realization of this can be achieved in this life if one is 
skilled in the means of the Mantra [teachings]. The Buddha taught no 
other understanding of the Great Seal besides that.

Moreover, according to Sa-paṅ and the tradition he followed, the term 
maḥāmudrā did not belong or apply to the Pāramitāyāna Madhyamaka, 
but rather was properly used only within the Mantrayāna.

In brief, then, Sa-paṅ held that there were only two possible methods 
to penetrate and know the ultimate within Mahāyāna Buddhism. The 
first, viz. the slow method of the Bodhisattva on the general Mahāyāna 
path, was based on scripture and reasoning, and was approached through 
preliminary learning and reflection. The second, viz. the quick method of 
the Vajrayāna, was based on the initiations and instructions of a qualified 
Vajrayāna master and was carried out through the meditative practice of 
the two stages.

SA-PAN’S PRINCIPLES 
OF CRITICAL DOCTRINAL SCHOLARSHIP

The intellectual context of Sa-paṅ’s controversial writings and also the 
broader background to the above discussions become still clearer the 
minute one begins to look into his aims and methods as a scholar of 
Buddhist religion and philosophy. One of Sa-paṅ’s chief aims was 
carefully and critically to preserve and transmit the established traditions 
of Indian Buddhism. He overtly set forth much of his scholarly program 
for this purpose in the manual of scholarly practice he composed, namely 
the mKhas pa raṃs ’jug pa’i sgo (mKhas ’jug), and he also explicitly 
explained or implicitly utilized these methods in his other major doctrinal 
or philosophical treatises such as, most notably, the sDom gsun rab dbye 
and Thub pa’i dgongs gsal. From what he stated in these and other works, 
one can see that his goals as a scholar and also the principles guiding his 
doctrinal criticisms derive from long-standing Indian Buddhist intellectual 
traditions. This should not be surprising for, as just mentioned, one of the 
things he urged most strongly was critical fidelity to genuine tradition.

In reading the following characterizations, however, one should keep 
in mind that Sa-paṅ was here discussing intellectual procedures that were 
recommended for the level of learning and reflecting, i.e. for the context 
of studying, teaching and debating within the general Mahāyāna. This 
method, however, did not apply directly to Tantric practice, and even in 
the non-Tantric Mahāyāna it was inadequate for the final steps when 
penetrating ultimate reality, in Sa-paṅ’s view. For the latter task, 
conceptual mind would not do: at a higher stage, the only approach was 
through the concentrated direct insight of a yogi.222 On this higher

222 See for instance Sa-paṅ, Thub pa’i dgongs gsal, ff. 63b-64a; KhJ I 34 (84.3.4); and 
KhJ III 37, autocommentary.
level, then, Sa-pan's Mahāyāna doctrine had more in common with the approach of sGam-po-pa, et al., than with those Tibetan masters who taught that intellect could directly engage and fathom the ultimate.223

The Legitimacy of Doctrinal Criticisms

As a scholar of the general Mahāyāna, Sa-pan adhered to the Indo-Tibetan tradition that accepted, and large, that debate or philosophical disputation between upholders of different traditions were legitimate and important ways for settling conflicting doctrinal claims. Such disputational activities formed in fact a necessary aspect of the career of many scholars in this tradition—just as necessary as, for instance, the explication of texts or the composition of treatises. The composition of a critical or controversial treatise combined in a single activity all three of the so-called "entrance gates for the wise"—i.e. composition, explication and debate—to which Sa-pan devoted his mKhas 'jug treatise.

In other words, Sa-pan held that there could be principled and justified controversy or doctrinal disputation, and that it was legitimate to engage in such discussions.224 This point was accepted by Indian philosophy in general, and by Dharmakīrti and his school in particular, whose views later came to influence the whole Tibetan learned tradition. In Dharmakīrti's manual of disputation, the Vādanyāya, it is maintained that proper disputation is motivated by the desire to guard the truth and to defend genuine tradition.225 It should not be motivated just by the desire to win or to vanquish the opponent, and it must use honest methods: sound reasoning grounded in objective fact or based on the citation of scriptures accepted by the opponent was the sole criteria by which a definitive judgment could be reached.226 It must also avoid ignoble and blame-worthy methods such as trickery, deceit, slander, abusive language, etc.

Traditional Tibetan Buddhist scholars found it useful to differentiate carefully the criticism of a person (gang zag) from that of the doctrine (chos) he maintained. Within this tradition, even "minor" faults such as redundance or irrelevancy were considered grounds for "defeat" during a formal debate, for the only legitimate function of a debater was soundly to state either the arguments proving his position or the reasoning that refuted the opponent.227

Sa-pan's criticisms were often phrased in rigorous, straightforward terms, and therefore some adherents of the traditions he criticized felt that he had overstepped the boundaries of mere doctrinal criticism, and that in doing so he must have been motivated by vindictive personal animosity.228 Sa-pan himself had been fully aware that his motives for

223 Cf. P. Williams (1992), pp. 196ff. Still more similarities would be found in the Mantrayāna traditions maintained by Sa-pan, but he does not discuss these in detail in this predominantly non-Tantric context. For more on the opinion of Sa-pan and other Tibetan scholars on the role played by mind in knowing the absolute within the general Mahāyāna, see D. Jackson (1987), p. 396, n. 95. gTsang-nag-pa for instance held the opposing view that the ultimate could be reached through reasoning (rigs pas myed pa).

224 sGam-po-pa in his Tshogs chos legs mdzes ma, p. 187, by contrast, advises his followers to avoid sectarianism and not to indulge in criticisms of other religious traditions, specifying the great faults this would entail for both followers of Śūtra and Tantra. He does allow as an exception criticisms through which one rejects a lower philosophical theory and enters a higher one, as is mentioned in the Bodhicaryāvatāra, chapter 9. Cf. the much later Padma-dkar-po, Phgyag chen mdzod, p. 1893-6 (3a), who accepts the legitimacy of doctrinal criticisms and exhorts others not to get angry when their own traditions are criticized!

225 See T. M. Much (1991), pt. 1 (Skt.), pp. 22.22-23.1, and part 2 (German transl.), p. 51. See also E. Steinke (1980), pp. 1441-43. Sa-pan discusses this in his Rigs ger rang 'grel in the commentary to XI 3ab. See also his mKhas pa ma ngyi 'jug pa'i sgo, III 12-13 (D. Jackson [1987], p. 329) and the references in the same publication, p. 378, n. 27. Sa-pan stresses there the fundamental motivation as being to maintain one's own doctrines honestly.

226 The situation was of course far more complicated in actual practice, because, as will be described below, both sides could maintain some scriptures which one of them interpreted for instance to be of only "provisional meaning" (drang don). To avoid a self-contradiction, they could interpret the contradictory scripture as not having "definitive meaning" (nges don).

227 This was stated by Dharmakīrti in the opening verse of his Vādanyāya. See M. T. Much (1991), part 1, p. 1; and part 2, p. 2. See also the Rigs ger rang 'grel, commentary on verse XI 4cd. See also D. Jackson (1987), p. 324 and n. 11.

228 sGam-po-spyan-snga bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, for instance, attributes the criticisms of Sa-pan to a sheer wish to criticize, questioning whether Sa-pan was dispassionate in his criticism or influenced by personal feelings, jealousy, etc. See L. Lhalungpa (1986), pp. 105f et passim; sphyin-snga bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, p. 93b:6: smra 'dod pa tsam du zad, p. 94b:1: rang gi zhe 'dod bden par sgub pa'i rdzun rib khor na snang stel, p. 94b:4: ma nges bzhin du bsnyon nas smra ba gur gnas mams kyi sproy ul ma yin pa'i phyir, p. 97a:6: phrag dog gi sgo nas sgo biags kyi skur 'dehs smra bar mi rung, etc. Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje also takes a similar tack at times. See the translation of D. Seyfort Ruegg (1988), pp. 1257 and
making such criticisms would be questioned, and therefore he devoted one
of the final sections of the sDom gsum rab dbye to a discussion of the
legitimate aims and motivations of doctrinal criticism as well as to the
history of such criticisms in India and Tibet. At the end of the treatise,
he listed the various religious lineages that he had received himself, and
he denied accordingly that his criticisms were one-sidedly biased. Before
that, he declared that if perchance in an uncollected moment he
has been guilty of any vilification of others, he renounced that as a
morally reprehensible mistake.

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But as he explained further:

If you say that the differentiation of erroneous from correct religion
is anger and jealousy, in that case, how [otherwise] are sentient beings
to be saved from the ocean of cyclic existence?

To differentiate carefully right doctrines from wrong was thus for Sa-pan
crucial to the task of maintaining the Buddhist Doctrine, and thus for
making possible liberation itself.

1262, and Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje, pp. 11 and 15 (6a.3 and 8a.5). Padma-dkar-po too becomes
on occasion quite exuberant in his criticisms, terming Sa-pan's comments "a madman's
words" (smyon pa'i tshig) in his Phyog chen gan mdzad, pp. 580.1 (198b) or as "the mad
leaping of a Tibetan" (bod smyon mchong), ibid., p. 589.3 (203a). In his Klan ka ghom pa'i
gtan, p. 563 (zha nga 6a) he states that the mere objections (klan ka) of a biased ordinary
individual (so so skye bo) cannot disprove anything because such people praise their own
side and dispraise the positions of others: so so skye bo dag ni rang gi la bstdol gshan
phyogs la smod pas / de dag gi kla kta sam gi ci la gnol and adds that there is no use
gazing with the blind eye of bias: phyogs 'dzin zhar ba'i mig des bshas kyang cil.

229 Sa-pan, sDom gsum rab dbye III 660 = p. 320.3.6 (na 48a):
de phyir chos mams phal cher thos// des na bdag la phyogs lhung med//
dey phyir gu bu dbyad pa 'dil// blo ldan mams kyi 'di 'tul zung//

230 Ibid., III 625 = p. 319.4.4 (46b.4):
bdag ni sams can kun la byams// gang tag kun la bdag mi smod//
bnya la mnyam par ma bzhag pas// smad pa srid na'ang sdiig de bshags//

231 Ibid. III 633, p. 320.1.2 (47a.2):
chos log pa dang ma log pa'ill mam par dbye ba byas pa la//
sdang dang phreng dog yin zer na// 'o na 'khor ba'i rgya mtho las//
sems can mams ni ji 'lar bogs//

Cf. also above, 46b.

Justification for this Approach in Sa-pan's
Epistle to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

In another of his critical writings, the shorter but very important Epistle
to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions (Phyogs bcu'i sangs
rgyas...), he explains and justifies the background and principles of his
critical work, as he himself understood them. These are degenerate times,
he states, and most of the Buddha's doctrine has already disappeared from
the world. In Tibet in particular, there have proliferated a swarm of
erroneous opinions, whereas genuine doctrines as well as their
practitioners receive little honor or support. The teachings of the great
masters of India are purposefully avoided, while the false opinions of
(Tibetan) impostors are widely spread among the ignorant as "teachings
of Tantric adepts (siddha)." In this depressing situation, he chose to play
an active role, based first of all upon learning and understanding:

[In the world, possessors of discriminative understanding are rare.
Possessors of merit are extremely few. Therefore upholders of the
jewel of the Noble Doctrine, Your scriptures, are rare.
Having understood that, and fearing that the Shākya [Sage]'s doctrine
would disappear, I studied most of the scriptures and [ways of]
reasoning, in order to learn well myself and intending to benefit
others, too.
By virtue of that, I have understood a bit about the establishment of
what is erroneous and non-erroneous regarding the essentials of
religion.
He then invokes the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, learned masters and adepts
as his witnesses, saying that he will explain to them what criticisms he has
made, and upon what basis.
Therefore I beg You to listen briefly to [these statements] of mine [about what is] "correct" and "incorrect."

In your word, the following is stated: "Monks or learned scholars should accept my word having investigated it like gold, through burning, cutting and rubbing, but [should] not [accept it merely] out of reverence."

Moreover, [I] have kept in mind what is stated in a Sūtra, namely: "You should not condemn that which is worthy of praise, and you should not praise that which is worthy of condemnation."

I have also understood as true that which Ratnakarāṣṭīni said: "A lack of faith is the chief of enemies; an excess of faith is an occasion for great delay. That is because the omniscience [of a Buddha] is understood through correct cognition (pramāṇa); through devotion, there will not come about omniscience."

Acordingly, I have seen that in all the divisions (or "baskets") of scripture and in all the great treatises, all errors have been energetically refuted, [and] that which is not erroneous is established. Desiring to lead a noble life, I too have followed that [doctrine] and have made a few discriminations of religious doctrine.

Most intelligent upholders of the scriptures are pleased by that. [But] most unlearned, unintelligent, angry and passionate people speak ill of it.

Procedures and Principles of Debate

The main function of debate or legitimate "controversy," as Sa-pan conceived it, was to preserve and defend established tradition, i.e. the Buddha's doctrine. Whether in a formal debate or a critical composition, the aim should be to uphold the established tenets of a valid and recognized tradition. Sa-pan explained this when he set out step by step the following ground rules of formal debate.

Preparatory Steps of Debate

Disputation should be done methodically, he tells us in section III of his mKhas 'jug, beginning by identifying and observing the roles of those taking part. The two main participants in a debate are: (a) a proponent who maintains his own tradition, and (b) a respondent who tries to refute that. The third participant, likewise essential to the debate, is an arbiter who impartially witnesses and judges the debate.

The proponent who takes part in a disputation should do so motivated by the wish to protect the Doctrine (KhJ III 1). In fact, all doctrinal debate should be for the sake of "making known the unmistaken facts of the matter, with the aim of maintaining one's own doctrine" (KhJ III 12). It should not be motivated by desire and hatred, or aim at just attaining it is the first path for those possessing the strength of burning energy (brtson 'grus 'bar ba'i stobs ldan). Those Bodhisattvas who for the sake of Awakening practice for long periods through extreme difficulties are heroes, he thinks. For a synopsis of this interesting work, see S. Katsura (1976).

234 This quotation is also quoted by Tsong-kha-pa near the beginning of his Drang nges legs bshad snying po. R. A. F. Thurman (1984), p. 190, n. 12, located the quote also in Sāntarakṣita's Tattvasaṅgraha. See also Donald S. Lopez (1988), p. 5.

235 Not yet identified.

236 I have not yet identified the source, but here Ratnākaraśānti was speaking in a non-Tantric context. Near the beginning of his Prajñāpāramitopadeśa (Peking 5579, Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag), sems tsam, ku 151b.2, he contrasts the approaches of the Tantric and non-Tantric Mahāyāna, specifying that the former is easier, quicker, and for those whose minds are "increased" (made strong) through faith (dad pas mar par phel ba'i blo can mams). The Bodhisattva's path produces its fruit through long difficulties, and it is the path for those possessing the strength of burning energy (brtson 'grus 'bar ba'i stobs ldan). Those Bodhisattvas who for the sake of Awakening practice for long periods through extreme difficulties are heroes, he thinks. For a synopsis of this interesting work, see S. Katsura (1976).

237 For an English translation of this passage of the KhJ, see D. Jackson (1987), pp. 323ff.
victory for oneself or vanquishing the opponent. Why? Because the latter sort of disputation will not protect the Doctrine, and it will develop into anger and enmity, which are the causes for rebirths in evil destinies.

Generally speaking, then, one should practice disputation that “accords with Dharma” (i.e. agrees with moral or religious principle); it should be the debate of a “noble person.” Elsewhere Sa-pan explained what such religiously principled debate meant, and stated that a noble person such as the Buddha could thus not be meaningfully opposed in principled debate.238

All criticisms should thus be made by truthfully and straightforwardly stating the defects of the opponent’s established philosophical tenets (KhJ III 13). They should not be made in any other way. Sa-pan specifically rejects as illegitimate such methods as: attacks against personal faults, through deceit, self-praise, abusing others, tormenting others, maintaining one’s tenets merely out of attachment, caviling against other’s tenets out of hatred, and all stratagems that are neither sincere nor to the point, such as nonsensical prattle, laughter, dancing, talking too fast to be intelligible, etc., etc. These all amounted to a defeat for oneself if one practiced them, but they were not capable of defeating the opponent. The latter point was particularly important, and Sa-pan also explicitly rejected all deceitful means as incapable of upholding a doctrine. Not only does deceit fail as a defense, he says, but it makes the defended doctrine itself impure (KhJ III 14). For example, in debate it is going too far if one party cries out “I have won” merely because the opponent is sitting there silently. If the mere occurrence of silence could decide the outcome, then might would make right: it would be enough to threaten or otherwise intimidate the opponent until he became speechless. Such manipulations obviously have no place in the sincere pursuit of truth.

A System of Established Tenets should be Maintained

In doctrinal debate, it was assumed that the participants each belonged to an established school or tradition, and that in the debate each would maintain his respective system of established philosophical tenets (grub mtha’: siddhânta). Debaters should explicitly affirm which system of tenets they maintain. When Sa-pan spoke of these “established tenets,” he had in mind the four main Indian Buddhist systems or the various recognized non-Buddhist systems of India. (The Tibetan Buddhist schools were not considered to have their own siddhânta, and in this period their identities as separate doctrinal entities were less rigidly defined than they became later.)

Sa-pan mentioned (KhJ III 38-39) the exceptional case of some Madhyamikas who attempt to refute others without advancing or professing a system of established tenets. Furthermore he had already stated (KhJ III 17-18) that when one does maintain the established tenets of a system, one is only required to maintain those tenets that one advances at that time and that are immediately relevant to the topic at hand. One did not have to maintain all statements ever put forward on any topic whatsoever by every single master within one’s own philosophical school.

The importance of identifying and maintaining a genuine Buddhist tradition could hardly be stated more clearly than by Sa-pan when he described what for him constituted a doctrine that could be legitimately learned or taught (KhJ II 3, autocommentary).

As for the religious doctrine to be learned, one must study and expound that religious doctrine that the Buddha proclaimed, that has come down through a succession of learned masters, that was cultivated through meditation by the Tantric adepts (siddhas), that was expounded by the great scholars (panditas), that was translated [from Sanskrit to Tibetan] by translators, and that is well known among all the Indian and Tibetan learned adherents to the scriptural traditions.

The Illegitimacy of Doctrinal Inventions

In this very traditionally minded context, all innovations were considered illegitimate by definition. As Sa-pan went on to say:240

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238 Sa-pan, ThGS, p. 46.4.2 (92a).
240 Sa-pan, KhJ, p. 95.1.2 (191a).
Enlightenment by a Single Means

If [the doctrine] is not such [an authentic one], the learned masters of India will deride it, and they will disapprove, saying: "The Buddha taught no such religious doctrine. To expound a religious doctrine of one's own fabrication harms the Doctrine." Even nowadays I see the learned masters of India delighting in the correct exposition of scriptures and reasoning by Tibetans. [And] I see them deriding those [teachings] that are not in harmony with scripture and reasoning, saying: "[This] is not the Doctrine of the Buddha."

Tibetan novelties and inventions were thus, for him, unacceptable in principle, and in this he saw himself as agreeing with the Indian masters of his time. Implicit in this rejection of new doctrines was the idea that the Buddha had taught his Doctrine well and completely, and that the basic philosophical positions had already been worked out by the various Indian schools on all topics considered most important. Newly formulated ideas or interpretations that had no affiliation to any existing system of tenets were not worthy of serious refutation. Therefore, simply to demonstrate that a doctrine had no ascertainable origin or no authentic source among the established systems was enough to discredit it. It held no water to say "But this is my guru's teaching!" if such a teaching ignored or contradicted the original doctrine of that school (DS III 513 = 41b).

Sa-pan appeals to this principle that innovations are bogus in principle at least twice in the sDom gsum rab dbye (DS III 481 and 514 = 40a and 41b).

An important corollary of this was that one should be able to show that the tenet or point of doctrine one maintained had a recognized place in the system of religious practice or philosophical tenets that one upheld. If it could be shown to be no innovation, then the opponent was obliged to refute it by other reasoning, while maintaining himself his own system of established tenets (cf. DS III 482 = 40a). Incompatibilities between siddhānta systems should be resolved through reasoning (DS III 489 = 40b; KhJ III 40).

Having asserted that teachings without established origins were not really worthy of being contested in debate, Sa-pan nevertheless conceded that sometimes it was permissible or even desirable to refute them. He feared that if they were allowed to spread unchecked, such teachings might proliferate so widely that they would crowd out the true doctrine, like rank weeds choking out the desired crops. As he said in the KhJ (III 41-42):241

The philosophical tenets that are adhered to by learned men are two: Buddhist and non-Buddhist. [Anything] besides those are tenets that have been haphazardly considered [or constructed] by the ignorant. (KhJ III 41)

... Thus these two are suitable as objects for learned persons to prove or refute. But new philosophical tenets that are other than these and that were fabricated by ignorant persons are empty of reasoning [and] in contradiction with the scriptures. [They are] falsehoods concocted by "non-virtuous friends" [i.e. sham spiritual teachers] for the sake of [acquiring] the necessities of life, [and they are] tenets upheld by ignorant people out of desire and hatred. But since they originate from no authentic source, they are indeed unworthy of refutation or proof.

Nevertheless, if errors spread excessively like weeds [growing] in a field, they will hurt the doctrine of the Buddha. Consequently one should appropriately refute them by means of scripture and reasoning. For even if passionate and angry fools do not understand, it will be understood by learned men who dwell in rectitude.

Here in the Land of Glaciers there also exist many tenets of ignorant people that are different from [the tenets of the Buddhists and non-Buddhist Indian sectarians]. Because ignorant people can easily understand [those], learned men have usually ignored them. (KhJ III 42)

In the sDom gsum rab dbye he went even further, stating that if a doctrine contradicted dhārna (religious principle), it should be refuted through scripture and reasoning (DS III 510-11 = 41b). Moreover, he argued that if one accepted a fabricated doctrine, one would thereby lose the basis for rejecting other false doctrines. As he stated (DS I 241-243):242


242 Sa-pan, sDom gsum rab dbye, I 240-243 (13b-14a):
sangs rgyas gsum dang mi mthun yangl (241) 'di 'dra bden par 'dod na ni // lag len phyin ci log gzhân yangl // khrul zhes brjod par mi nus tell // 'ga' zhig bden la 'ga' zhig nil // brdzun pa yin zhes dpwyul mi rlung // mu stegs la sogs chos log kyang // sun dbyung bar ni mi nus tell // 'lung rigs med par mthunings pa la // bden brdzun dbye ba nus ma yin //
If you maintain that such [erroneous practices] are true even though they do not accord with the Buddha's word, then you will not be able to say about other erroneous practices either that they are false. For, being doctrines which contradict authoritative scripture, they all are alike in being inventions, and it is not acceptable to investigate them, saying "Some are true" and "Some are false." Nor will you be able to refute erroneous doctrines such as those of the Indian non-Buddhist sectarians, for you will not be able to differentiate true from false, since [both your and their traditions] will be alike in their lacking authoritative scripture and reasoning.

The Only Two Criteria: Scripture and Reasoning

There were only two means for decisively rejecting or accepting tenets: logical reasoning and scriptural quotation. Mastering this pair was the basis for his own critical scholarship. These means also had to be applied consistently and universally; otherwise, as Sa-pan maintained in the passage just quoted, one would lose the basis and possibility for refuting other erroneous doctrines (DS I 242-3).

Reasoning

Legitimate controversial discussion should be conducted in accordance with the long-established traditions of Buddhist epistemology and logic, the high points of which were Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, but which had a history of development even before them. It was agreed that when one argued in favor of a certain tenet, one's argumentation had to be stated in the form of sound inferences or formal statements of proof. The subject of the inference had to be acknowledged by both sides, and the reason had to be based on objective grounding or on scripture maintained by both sides or at least by the opponent. The reasoning should be logically consistent and be free from the recognized logical fallacies.

Identifying Logical Flaws. The main job of the critic was to identify the logical flaws in the opponent's statements of proof. These flaws, when occurring in the formally stated inference, were the failure of any of the three logical characteristics or "forms" (tsul gsum: tri-rupya) of a sound reason. Otherwise, when examining the opponent's general reasoning or interpretation, other fallacies of a more general nature could also be identified, such as:

1. logical inconsistency ('gal) (DS I 17 = f. 3a; I 119-120 = 8a)
2. logical or semantic "overextension" (ha cang thal bar 'gyur: atiprasangā) (KhJ III 14, autocommentary; DS I 83 =6a; II 28 = 15b, etc.)
3. infinite regression (thug med: anavastha) (DS II 28 = 15b)
4. the entailment of some other undesired and absurd consequence (thal 'gyur: prasanga)

Sometimes Sa-pan also criticized the opponent's reasoning more generally, describing it as rash or unconsidered (gzu lam). (DS I 201 =12a)

Problems of Terminology or Semantics. Sometimes Sa-pan identified a problem in the opponent's designation of terms. Some terms might be generally inappropriate or unacceptable (mi 'thad) for reaching the opponent's interpretation, or the concepts implied by the terms might be incompatible ('gal) for reaching the opponent's interpretation (DS I 86-7 = 6b). One specific problem of designation that he identified was that in which a positive designation had been erroneously imputed to a thing based merely on the absence of a thing's opposite (DS I 77-81 = 6a). Or two Tibetan technical terms that the opponent understood as different might be explained as synonymous, being merely different renderings of the same Sanskrit original term (DS III 392 = 36a).

Sometimes, too, Sa-pan found it necessary to distinguish between a mere designation, and the thing as properly defined (mtshan nyid pa) (ThGS 73b). It was of no use to quibble over mere designations or
terminology.246

Exhausting the Logical Possibilities. A general method of argumentation that Sa-paṅ used on occasion was the typical scholastic procedure of analyzing or examining a subject in a way that exhausted all logical possibilities (DS I 122 = 8a). One way to do this was to reduce the matter to an either/or choice between two mutually exclusive possibilities, for instance A and non-A (DS II 38 = 16a). This employed the law of excluded middle.

Replies. In debate, the reply consisted of identifying the logical fault of the opponent’s proof. In other contexts, objections of the opponent could be answered either through the actual direct reply (lan rnal ma or lan dngor) or through parallel reasoning that answers “in kind” (mgo bsGRE or mgo snyoms) (DS I 222-225 = 13a; ThGS 10a-b).247

Scriptural Quotation

Quotation of scriptures was the basic way for giving additional support to one’s argument in debate or discussion. Moreover, when dealing with extremely difficult matters, scripture was the only recourse, since inference based on objective facts gained through direct perception could not prove anything regarding the “completely hidden” objects such as Buddhahood, the dharmaḥṣtu, etc., those objects being inaccessible to direct perception. Still, scripturally or consensually based logical marks (yid ches pa’i rtags) should not contradict the ordinary pramāṇas of direct perception and inference. And they could not be cited against followers of other traditions who did not maintain them as their own.

Scripture and tradition required an authentic origin for them to be valid (DS III 135 = 24a-b).248 In other words, to have any force, a quotation had to have originated from a work that was recognized as belonging to an established corpus of authoritative writings (such as a Sūtra, Tantra, or recognized sāstra) or as belonging to the writings of a recognized master. Conversely, if a doctrine was nowhere to be found in the authentic scriptures, it was unacceptable (DS III 388 = 38b-39a). Just what constituted the general Buddhist canon or corpus of accepted translations of Indian Buddhist writings had not yet been firmly established in Sa-paṅ’s day, and this complicated matters. The bKa’ ‘gyur and bSTan ‘gyur canonical collections as we now know them had yet to be compiled. Still, Sa-paṅ is said to have made some contributions to the process by rejecting a number of apocryphal Sūtras from the proto-canon.249

The Danger of Apocrypha. Sa-paṅ considered the possibility of meeting with inauthentic scriptures to be very real. As he apparently knew from experience, some putative translations of Indian Sūtras and Tantras were definitely later Tibetan forgeries. Sa-paṅ in his works even names a few of such spurious works.250 To cite them and to try to trace back their origins to the Buddha Vajradhara (in the case of Vajrayāna texts) was an occasion for self-contradiction, he held (DS III 508-9 = 41b). He listed the following types of inauthentic works:

1. volumes recovered from hidden caches (gter nas byung ba’i glegs bam)
2. religious traditions stolen from others (gzhan nas brkus pa’i chos lugs)

246 A detailed theory of designation (analogous to the system of analyzing an intentional statement) was utilized by the later Sa-skya-pa scholar Go-rams-pa (1429-1489) in his lTa ba’i shan ‘byed.
247 See also D. Jackson (1987), p. 434f.
248 As mentioned above, sGam-po-pa too acknowledged the need for a genuine origin and a valid lineal transmission. See his works, vol. 1, p. 216.4: brgyud pa dang mi idan na gdam ngag khyad par can mi ’byung ba’i shyon yod do!1.
250 Sa-paṅ, DS III 539 = 42b-43a; and see also Go-rams-pa’s sDom gum rab dbyei mam bzhad, p. 193.2. See further Sa-paṅ’s comments in his Chag lo’i zhus lan, 232a: bod na’ang mdo bskul spog skya ma bya ba la sogs pa mong po gda’ stel, and 234b: bri ba bcu gcig pa gsal snags gsar mying ma la bod kyis sbyar ba’i rgyud sde lugs kyang pa’aṅg snags mying ma la lha mo skye rgyud dang/ bum rtul mchog la sogs pa shin tu mang bar gda’/ gsar ma la bod kyis sbyar ba’i rgyud dus ’byung dang/ phyag na rdo rje mchog’ gro dang/ ra li ngyi shu rtsa bzhil la sogs pa shin tu mang po brjod kyis mi ljang ba cig gda’ stel thams cad gsal ba ston na phog thug pag tsam yod par gda’ bas khyed nyid kyis dpyod mdzod/. ‘Bri-gung dPal’-dzin’s controversial treatise also listed numerous questionable works, especially of the Old School. This critique was quoted verbatim by Shākya-mchog-ldan in his sDom gum dris lan legs bzhad gsar gi thur ma, but this led to further questions, to which he gave his definitive reply in his Collected Writings, vol. 17, pp. 528ff.
Scriptural Contradictions. When the participants in a debate both maintained the same scriptures, they could use them against each other. But if the two disputants came from different traditions, then only the other party's own scriptures could be used against him, and not one's own. As he stated in the skYes bu dam pa (333.2.6 = na 75a): "If you do not contradict the established tenets that you yourself maintain, then there is no harm even if you contradict (read: 'gal) the established tenets maintained by others." It was likewise pointless to quote one's own scriptures against the opponent if the latter did not accept them as his own (DS III 491 = 40b; KhJ III 31-32). To disprove an opponent through scripture, one always had to show him to be in self-contradiction. For instance, one could cite the texts or early teachers of a lineage to refute the later followers of the same lineage (DS II 6 = 14b; III 490-1 = 40b, 496-8 = 41a). Therefore, it was necessary to determine from the beginning what the opponent's basic lineage or school was.

Interpretation as the Main Escape from Apparent Scriptural Self-Contradictions. If in the course of a debate or controversy, one disputant was charged with being in contradiction with his own scriptures, and there did indeed seem to be a contradiction, he needed then to be able to explain these contradictions as being merely apparent and not real (KhJ III 33). In order to reply satisfactorily, he needed to show the true intended sense of the scripture, and therefore it was necessary to draw certain hermeneutical distinctions, such as between scriptures spoken with a hidden or ulterior intention and those simply spoken directly with no special intention. The debater had to be able to show for instance that the scripture in question was not literally binding because it was spoken with a special or hidden motive. Sa-pan also mentioned these hermeneutical principles near the end of section II of the KhJ, because they were presupposed for successful explication of scripture through the method of "objections and replies."251

Through [the method of] objections and replies, one should establish the purport of the text by means of scripture and reasoning. (KhJ II 33)

There exist words and meanings that are extremely weighty and difficult to understand, apparent mixtures of non-Buddhist Indian Sectarian and Buddhist established tenets, and many subjects for debate regarding the differences of theory and practice not only between the Greater and Lesser Vehicles of Buddhism, but also within the Lesser Vehicle, between the four basic monastic communities and the eighteen schools that developed from them. And also within the Great Vehicle, there are differences between the Perfections (Pāramitā) and Mantra [approaches], and there are many apparent contradictions of established tenets such as in the Perfection (Pāramitā) [Vehicle] between Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, and within the Mantra between the four classes of Tantras. Consequently, one should expound by establishing [one's subject] through [stating] the objections [of opponents] and the replies [of one's own school], making use of both scriptural quotations and logical reasoning. For if on such occasions one does not ascertain [the matter] through objections and replies, one will not know wrong doctrine from right.

That person who knows the "six alternatives" is extremely learned at explaining texts. (KhJ II 34)252

For the explanation of major scriptures, one needs to know the "six alternatives" [or six principles of interpretation], which are: (1) special intention (dgongs pa), (2) without special intention (dgongs pa ma yin pa), (3) provisional meaning (drang ba'i don), (4) definitive meaning (nges pa'i don), (5) literal (sgra ji bzhin pa), and (6) non-literal (sgra ji bzhin ma yin pa).253

(1.) Statements [having] special intention. By understanding the four intentions (dgongs pa, Sanskrit abhipraya) such as "sameness" (samata) and the four allusions (lde mgs, Sanskrit abhisamadhi) such as "the allusion of introduction" (avatāra-abhisamādhi), one will understand the apparently contradictory words and meanings of the

251 Sa-pan, KhJ, pp. 101.2.2 = 203b.

252 Sa-pan, KhJ, pp. 101.2.5ff = 203b ff.

Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and therefore they will become non-contradictory. I have not written on these in detail, fearing that [my text will become] excessively long. Therefore [to learn more] one should refer to such works as the Mahāyānaśūraśālāmārāṇā [Skt. XII 16-18].

(2.) Statements without special intention are words and meanings that themselves directly convey the intended import of the Buddha without one's having to seek another special intention as above.

(3.) [Provisional meaning] is [found in teachings given] for the sake of assisting some sentient beings. [Such teachings], though not the truth, conform with those [sentient beings'] dispositions, and gladden and lead their minds, and serve as the basis for them afterwards to enter into definitive meaning.

(4.) Definitive meaning is the sense that is correctly understood by individuals of sharp capacities through following the words themselves. One should understand the preceding two [types of meaning] in more detail from such [scriptures] as the Samādhiṃoccana [Sūtra].

[Objection:] All the Buddha's words are of definitive meaning alone, but they cannot possibly be of interpretable meaning, for if there were such a thing as interpretable meaning it would mean that the Buddha uttered falsehoods.254 [Reply:] Those persons [who say this] are simply ignorant of the intent of the Sūtras and Tantras. For if [all the Buddha's utterances] were exclusively of definitive meaning, the different doctrinal systematizations such as the three kāyas, the three "baskets of scripture" (tripiṭaka), and the three trainings (trīśikṣā) would for the most part contradict each other, and how could there be disparate doctrinal systematizations in the definitive meaning of ultimate truth? [Such doctrinal differences] were established based on conventional usage, the surface-level truth, [and] provisional meaning.

Furthermore, if such statements [by the Buddha] as "I have perfectly understood all dharmas...", and also: "I have become wholly awakened. There exists nobody like me....' were of definitive meaning, infinitely great faults would be entailed. For instance, there would be the consequence of [the Buddha's] postulating a self like the non-Buddhist Indian sectarian, and also his indication of past and future would establish the three times as substances.

(5.) Literal [expressions] are those that signify the sense in exact accordance with the words, such as [the words] "the salutary" (dge ba) and "the preparatory accumulations [or 'equipment'] of merit and Gnosis," and such statements as: "Generosity leads to the enjoyment of wealth, and moral discipline leads to happiness."255

(6.) The non-literal consists of words that signify something different [from their usual referent], such as the line "father and mother are to be killed."256 And instances of [such non-literal usages] are found in the Sūtras and Tantras, and in some poetical treatises. Fearing that [the present work] will grow too large, I have not written in detail about these methods [here]. If one does not know the "six alternatives," one will err whether teaching Sūtra or Tantra, for as Candrakīrti said:257

"Whoever says that he has definite understanding without the 'six alternatives' is just like someone who, wanting to look at the moon, looks at the tips of his fingers."

Sa-paṅ employed these six "alternatives" or "limits" in various passages of his sDom gsum rab dbye and other doctrinal writings in order to interpret the scriptures and to refute their erroneous interpretation. He often employed these principles separately in other combinations or separate pairs, not counting them as a set of six:

(1) Types of "explicational statement" (bshad pa). He divided these into three types: (DS I 139-40 = 9a; III 416 = 37a): (a) having a special intention (dgongs pa), (b) having a hidden intention (i.e. as allusion) (ldem por dgongs), and (c) having straightforward intent (drang por dgongs).

(2) Types of meaning (don): definitive (nges don) or provisional (i.e. indirect) meaning (drang don) (DS I 142-3 = 9a; III 411 = 37a). Sometimes he identified a scripture as having one or the other kind of meaning. He showed for instance the faulty identification

254 This is the dgongs geṅg ("single intention") doctrine of 'Bri-gung Jig-rten-mgon-po. See the latter's Collected Works, vol. 4, pp. 409-410, where he specifically speaks against analyzing according to the "six alternatives" and states, "All is definitive meaning alone" (thams cad nges don 'ba' zhis pa...). Later dGongs geṅg commentators explained how this was to be interpreted.


256 See also KhJ III 24 and D. Jackson (1987), p. 386, n. 58.

257 This was probably from Candrakīrti's Pradīpodyotpāna: sGron ma gsal bar byed pa zhes bya ba'i nga cher 'grel pa (P. vol. 137, no. 2650). The exact quotation has not yet been located, though the work refers many times to the application of the "six alternatives."
Enlightenment by a Single Means

of provisional as definitive (DS I 155-6 = 9b-10a). He also strongly objected to the notion that all scriptures were of definitive meaning.

(3) Types of expression: literal (sgra ji bzhin) or non-literal (sgra ji bzhin ma yin pa) (DS III 411 = 37a). These two overlapped closely with 1(c) and 1(ab) respectively.

In addition, Sa-pan utilized a number of other basic distinctions to classify scriptures, doctrines or practices in his DS and elsewhere. To list some of the main ones here:

1. Different "Vehicle": mundane (jigrten) or supramundane (jigrten las 'das) (DS III 412 = 37a, 523-4 = 42b)
2. Buddhist versus non-Buddhist doctrine or practice (DS I 143 = 9a; cf. ThGS 48b)
3. Different systems of established tenets (siddhanta: grub mtha') (DS I 19-20)
4. Different categories of Buddhist doctrine: theory (ita ba) versus practical conduct (spyod pa) or meditative cultivation (sgom pa) (DS III 518ff = 42b).
5. Different levels or classes of Buddhist vows (sdom pa), i.e. distinguishing among the three classes of vows: Pratimokṣa, Bodhisattva, and Mantra. He clearly distinguished between the Śrāvaka Pratimokṣa and the Bodhisattva vows (DS I 1-3 = 2a; I 35-39 = 4a; I 151-154 = 9b) or between the Pratimokṣa and the Mantra (DS I 27 = 3b)
6. Different levels of truth: surface (kun rdzob) versus ultimate (don dam) (DS III 70-71 = 21a-b)
7. Different levels of doctrinal importance, i.e. whether a teaching is an essential or crucial doctrine (gnad) or merely an incidental one (DS III 421 = 37a-b, 460-1 = 39a).
8. Difference between relatively coarser (rags pa) or more subtle (phra ba) doctrinal formulation or systematization (mam gzhag) (ThGS 75a).

There also existed several more technical conceptual schemes that had important scholastic applications, such as the threefold scheme of definiens (mtshon byed), definiendum (mtshon bya), and exemplification of the definiendum (mtshan gzhig) (ThGS 63b). But the above should be enough to show the sophisticated tools that scholars in this tradition had at their disposal.

Hierarch of Importance

Underlying the utilization of these various concepts and procedures lay a number of basic presuppositions, sometimes explicitly discussed and sometimes not. One of the fundamental points was that there was a hierarchy of importance in doctrine, a hierarchy of levels (skabs). Higher and lower levels—i.e. different doctrinal or philosophical contexts—should not be confused. Otherwise any discussion will be at cross-purposes. One should also know what are the vital points (gnad), and these should not be injured or vitiated even slightly (DS III 460-1 = 39a, cf. III 421 = 37b). Where a distinction between two levels has been made, one should recognize and follow the higher or most important of the two. For example, one should follow the definite meaning, and not rely on provisional meaning (DS I 160-1 = 10a; III 416 = 37a). One must know that certain scriptural statements had a special intent that the words themselves do not make explicit. In such cases, one must try to discern the underlying or deeper intention. Certain sayings to the same effect were well known in the Indo-Tibetan tradition and they derive from canonical authority, as for instance the four "reliances" (pratisaṅga):

1. Don't rely on the person (gang zag), rely on the doctrine (chos).
2. Don't rely on the letter (tshig), rely on the spirit (don).
3. Don't rely on the provisional meaning (drang don), rely on the definite meaning (nges don).
4. Don't rely on ordinary consciousness (mam shes), rely on Gnosis (ye shes).

Similarly, as mentioned above, it was essential to discriminate and specify which sphere of doctrine was being discussed: Was it theory (ita ba), or non-concentrative practical conduct (spyod pa), or meditative practice (sgom pa) (DS III 518ff = 42b)? These were essential distinctions even from the time of the bSam-yas debate, and the official judgment which arose from the debate (as transmitted by the sBa-bzhed tradition and the standard Tibetan histories following it, such as those of Bu-ston and dPa'-bo gTsug-lag-phreng-ba) addressed each of these categories separately. According to the judgment, henceforth Tibetans

258 See E. Lamotte (1988); M. Kapstein (1988), p. 160f; etc.
were to follow: (a) for theory, the Madhyamaka tradition of Nāgārjuna,\(^259\) (b) in non-concentrative conduct, the six perfections, and (c) in meditation, the cultivation of insight into the absolute through the three kinds of discriminative understanding.\(^260\) Such distinctions sometimes allowed a scholar to clarify seeming differences of doctrine as mere confusions of doctrinal category or context. As mentioned above, Shākya-mchog-ldan was one who used them as a legitimate avenue for explaining and justifying the *dkar po chin thub* metaphor in terms acceptable to other doctrinally trained scholars.\(^261\) And indeed, many of the points of apparent difference between later Sa-skya-pa and Dwaṅ-po bKa'-brgyud-pa scholars could be resolved in a similar way.

Such basic distinctions and principles could be learned. Once learned, they should be applied in the appropriate cases (DS I 188 = 11a). But to begin with, one had to base oneself on a solid and wide knowledge of scripture. That way, even if one erred, it would only be a mistake regarding the incidentals and not the essentials (DS III 527-531 = 42a-b).

Sa-pan spelled out the necessary attainments of a religious scholar when he described in his *sKyes bu dam pa* epistle what sort of scholars or "noble individuals" (*skyes bu dam pa*) he hoped would examine and investigate the differences between what his and others' interpretations of doctrine:

\[\text{Noble individuals who understand how to discriminate the letter and the spirit regarding these [doctrines], who are masters in the essentials of scripture and reasoning, who are not ignorant in the content of the Perfection and Mantra [systems], who know how to practice without contradiction the essential points of the practical instructions and basic treatises, [who understand] the division of parts of Sūtras according to provisional meaning and definite meaning and who understand without error the vital points of intention and hidden intention, i.e. learned scholars who know how to explain literal and non-literal expressions, those possessing discriminative understanding which is capable of analyzing the meaning, dispassionate ones who dwell in unbiased rectitude, whose minds are not possessed by the demon of base philosophical tenets,...}^\]

\[\text{Doctrinal Relativism}\]

Implicit in all this was thus that one must know how and when each principle or distinction should be applied. Each established system of practice could claim to some extent its own validity within its own level or context. The different Buddhist monastic traditions, for instance, were each valid for their adherents (DS I 175-185 = 10b-11a; KhJ III 21, autocommentary). Just because they differed, one could not say one was ultimately right and another one wrong. As long as one had committed oneself to a certain system of practice and discipline, one was bound by its regulations. Moreover in religious teaching, as in gardening, certain methods were appropriate for one situation but completely inappropriate for another (DS I 195-8 = 11b; cf. II 11-13 = 14b-15a; KhJ III 32, autocommentary).

A sort of pragmatism thus existed on the level of practice—the rightness or wrongness of practice depended on its efficaciousness in bringing one to Buddhahood. But on the level of theory, there was never a lapse into relativism. By putting a theory or tenet in a wider context or applying a higher level of analysis to it, one could show it to be unreasonable or unacceptable. Higher views refute the lower, but not vice versa.\(^263\)

\[^259\text{It is said that the previous ruler Khri lDe-srong-btsan had already issued a decree in favor of Nāgārjuna's Madhyamaka. See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 130, n. 250.}\]

\[^260\text{The last specification regarding meditation was crucial because the first two types of discriminative understanding (*shes rab: praṇā)* were namely those arisen from learning and reflection. (The third was of course that which arises from meditative realization.) This account of the judgment is based on the dba bzhed tradition. See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 83f, who points out the similarities between the accounts of Bu-ston (Chos 'byung 129b), dPa'-bo (muKhA pa'i dga' ston 119a) and Padma-dkar-po (Chos 'byung 165a). The Chinese Tun huang materials such as the *Cheng-či čhōh* (f. 129a), however, state that the outcome of the debate was an edict authorizing the Ch'an teachings. See D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 83.}\]

\[^261\text{Shākya-mchog-ldan, Phyang ngya chen po gsal bar byed pa'i bstan bcos tshangs pa'i 'khor los gzhan blo'i dregs pa nyams byed, Collected Works, vol. 17, p. 344 (7b).}\]

\[^262\text{Sa-pan, *sKyes bu dam pa*, p. 333.2.3 (na 75a): 'di dag tshig dang don gSis marm 'bye shes pa'i lung dang rigs pa'i gned la mkhas pa'i pha rol tu phyin pa dang/ gsnangs kyi don la ma mongs pa gzung dang g dangs ngug gi gned mi ga bar nyams su len pa shes pa' dang don dang nges don gis mdo'i cha phyed pa dang/ dgyongs pa dang idem dgyongs kyi gned ma 'khrul par thugs su chud pa/ sgra ji bzhin pa dang ji bzhin ma yin pa'i tshig 'chad shes pa'i mkhas pa/ don mam par 'byed par nur pa'i shes rab can/ chags sdang med cing ga' bar gnas pa grub mtha' ngan pa'i gdon gis blo ma bsta'd pa'i sKyes bu dam pa ma mams}\]

\[^263\text{Cf. Santideva, BCA IX 3cd-4ab. Cf. also Sa-pan's KhJ III 45 and 52.}\]
Thus to say that each doctrine was ultimately "true in its own place" (rang sa na bden) was unacceptable (DS III 410 = 36b-37a). As mentioned above, one of the extreme doctrines Sa-pan combatted in this regard was a radical doctrinal relativism that maintained for instance that "All vehicles were true in their own context." Go-rams-pa in his sDom gsum rab dbye commentary ascribed this doctrine to such people as "Dam-pa Phyung-chung-ba, etc.," evidently referring to the early Zhi-byed master Dam-pa Phyar-chung, the first Tibetan instructed by the Indian siddha Dam-pa Sangs-rgyas (d. 1117). According to 'Gos lo-tsa-ba, Dam-pa Sangs-rgyas introduced him to a special instruction according to which Tantra and Pāramitāyāna did not need to be distinguished. Sa-pan strongly criticized in his sDom gsum rab dbye (III 133-136 = 24a) doctrines that belonged to neither Paramitāyāna nor Mantrayāna nor Śrāvaka.

Most contemporary Buddhists do not belong to the religious tradition of the Perfections, because they do not practice the three Disciplines. Because they lack initiation and the two stages [of tantric practice], they do not belong to the doctrine of the Vajrayāna. Since they don't know the Vinaya section of the scriptures, they are not a religious tradition of the Śrāvakas, either. Alas, [to] whose doctrine can they [belong]? Even though there may be many sons who have no [acknowledged] fathers, they cannot be included within a patrilineal family lineage. Just so, religious practitioners who have not originated from an authentic source are not [to be included] within the [Buddhist] Doctrine.

The Need to Apply Criteria Impartially

Finally, one of the features of Sa-pan's procedure was that it was best applied by "dispassionate" (chags sdang med pa) people who dwell in "unbiased rectitude" (gsu bor gnas pa). The critical principles should in fact be impartially applied—as much to himself as to others. Sa-pan invited others to employ the same criteria against himself, if they applied, saying, for instance: "If I possess the fault I criticize others for [here especially: bogus innovations], then let the learned disparage me!" (DS III 515 = 42a). Or as he stated in his sKyes bu dam pa:

If my words are true, then may you noble ones say: "Well done!" But if this is faulty, then refute it through scripture and reasoning!

And still more broadly, in his Phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas..., he invited the displeasure of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, whom he had invoked as his witnesses, if what he was teaching was erroneous:

If I am teaching falsely, then may you [Buddhas and Bodhisattvas] disapprove of me; but if I am teaching truly, then may you be pleased with me!

But when asked certain delicate questions, sometimes he gave just a general indication of his answer. Then, diplomatically skirting a direct reply, he advised the questioner to conduct his own thorough investigation of the matter—i.e. to apply the appropriate criteria himself.
Sa-pan’s Outline of Critical Method

Probably the best and most succinct summary of Sa-pan’s critical “theological” method is given in one of his own brief, versified works, which in the Derge edition bears the title “Why it is Necessary to Expound in Conformity with Correct Scripture and Reasoning” (Lung rigs mam dag dang mthun par 'chod dgos tshul). The work belongs to the period of the author’s mature doctrinal writings: it post-dates the Tshad ma rigs gter (composed ca. 1219?), and probably his sDom gsum rab dbye (composed ca. 1235?), as well. In some lists of his works, it is even referred to as the "basic text" (rtsa ba) of the sDom gsum rab dbye. Though it seems unlikely that Sa-pan himself ever gave it this title, the little work does in a way reveal the critical principles otherwise best exemplified by the sDom gsum rab dbye among his major works. Even though the work has already been translated into English, its contents can be clarified still more by presenting them again here in paraphrase and translation.273

The introductory first verse of the work summarizes the author’s own qualifications for stating the principles which follow: He was a Buddhist monk who had widely studied under learned masters, who possessed an intellect capable of critical discrimination, who kept carefully moral discipline, and who possessed the correct philosophical theory. The next verse (v. 1) clarifies his pessimistic historical view and his personal motivation: Though the Buddha’s teaching had once flourished in India and had been effectively introduced into Tibet through the work of the great translators, nowadays it has mostly declined, he states. But (verses 2-3) wishing to make the Doctrine flourish once again, he studied and made himself proficient in the traditional fields of knowledge, the collections of non-Tantric and Tantric scriptures, and the universally recognized systems of established philosophical tenets (of India). He mentioned (v. 4) that a precedent for his activities could be found among the critical works of past great Buddhist scholars, and that he considered himself to be following in their footsteps:

The learned have discriminated erroneous philosophical tenets from those which are not erroneous. Following them, I, too, have investigated a little through scripture and reasoning.

What sort of criticisms had Sa-pan himself already made? He mentions here (vs. 5-6) first of all that Tibetan dialecticians of his day for the most part maintained a position similar to that of non-Buddhist Indian dialectics, according to which such things as substance (dravya), individuals (vīśeṣa), attributes (guna), genus (sāmanya) and relations (sambandha) were accepted as real entities. He says he has already refuted these theories thoroughly, indirectly referring to his previously composed treatise on Buddhist epistemology and logic (Pramāṇa), the Tshad ma rigs gter. Secondly (v. 7), he has heard (or read) many erroneous expositions of the basic scriptures such as the Prajñāpāramitā, Abhidharma, treatises of the Vijnapti(mātra) and Madhyamaka philosophies, as well as the four classes of Tantras in the Mantrayāna system. He has (v. 8) also seen some vow-imparting rituals conducted in ways that did not conform with the Sutras or Tantras—in the Pratimokṣa system, beginning with the vows of refuge, in the conferring of the Bodhisattva vows through the formal engendering of the Thought of Awakening (bodhicitta), and in the conferring of Vajrayāna pledges through tantric initiations. (vs. 9-10:) In the realm of certain yogic practices and insights of the highest Tantras, too, he has seen some explanations which did not agree with the word of the Buddha. Accordingly (v. 11), he critically investigated these through scripture and reasoning, saying regarding the established tenets of those traditions: These [tenets] are acceptable,” and “These [others] are not acceptable.274

Then he mentioned (v. 12) the mixed reception that his critical investigations had found in Tibet, and his own advice to others in the face of those partly negative reactions:

Concerning that, some have said "Excellent!" Some others have said, "That is unacceptable!" Even so, those endowed with discriminative understanding should investigate it well. If it is acceptable by way of reasoning, then accept it! If it is not so, then you should reject it.

273 See J. D. Schoening and P. K. Sørensen (1988), pp. 42-49. For the versification, I follow that study. For references to other previous studies touching on this work, see D. Jackson (1987), p. 50.

274 The doctrinal criticisms he referred to here were no doubt chiefly those he had made in his sDom gsum rab dbye, which he structured as a discussion of the three systems of vows.
What criteria were to be applied when accepting something through reasoning and scripture? He explained (vs. 13-14):

Acceptance, too, should be done through scripture and reasoning. With scripture, furthermore, take the definitive meaning as the decisive criterion. Don't rely on provisional meaning! With reasoning, moreover, you should uphold objectively grounded reasoning. Fallacious reasoning is pointless. To accept and reject after examining the intention is the way of the learned. To hold as chief the teachings of the non-Buddhist Indian sectarian and the tradition of the "old [Tibetans]" is the conduct of the ignorant.

Through this method, noble individuals could maintain the Noble Dharma as the highest of religious traditions, he added (v. 15). And if one did so, the Noble Dharma itself would reach its highest intention.

On that thought, he ended the main body of his versified summary of method. But he was still not quite finished. The prose colophon that remained gave him one more opportunity to make several important points. For instance, he took pains explicitly to reject a biased approach, both for himself and others, urging instead the principled application of this method as a widely applicable and individually verifiable procedure:

Therefore, in conformity with the teaching of the noble gurus and following scripture and reasoning, I have expounded the stainless Sutras and Tantras of the Lord Buddha—this tradition being established through scripture and reasoning, taught by the learned, accomplished by the adepts, and something to be passed through by the Saints. [And in so expounding them,] I have said: "This way is acceptable." But I have not expounded that through a biased mind. Therefore I respectfully request everyone to examine with an honest, open mind whether what I have expounded here accords with scripture and reasoning or does not.

Thus he also used this opportunity to sum up his conception of what constitutes the body of the Buddha's genuine teachings—namely, those doctrines of the genuine Sutras and Tantras that agree with scripture and reasoning, that have been expounded by the recognized great scholars, that have been meditatively cultivated by the Tantric adepts, and that constitute the very spiritual path traversed by the saints on their way to Awakening. He denied that his own critical conclusions about what is acceptable doctrine (i.e. genuine, effective Buddhist tradition) had been reached through partisanship, and he invited others to apply the same criteria to his conclusions, and thus to test those conclusions for themselves. Implicit in this is that he saw himself as appealing to a more objective and more widely applicable standard of truth. His own conclusions, he believed, could be verified by other honest and disinterested parties.

His Reaction to the Reception of his Criticisms

Just as was to be expected, the upholders of the traditions that Sa-pan questioned did not receive these criticisms with much enthusiasm. In fact, some adherents of those other traditions attributed his remarks to base personal motives, including hatred and bigotry. The fact that he felt his aims and principles to have been widely misrepresented or misunderstood prompted Sa-pan later to write a further work in his own defence and justification, his Epistle to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the Ten Directions (Phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas...). By turns impassioned, critical and discouraged, Sa-pan reveals in this work rare glimpses of his personality, and his epistle is a masterpiece of Tibetan religious literature. The following passage shows Sa-pan's frustration at the no-win situation he felt himself to be in:

Most worldly people praise living beings who refute the Noble Doctrine. Because I have refuted non-religion, most worldly people speak ill me. Most worldly people do not [appreciate or] follow after the Buddha [who is] kind toward the world. These worldly people

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275 Sa-pan refers with the term "old [Tibetans]" (gan po) to his Tibetan Buddhist predecessors in general, and not just to such earlier dialecticians as Phywa-pa. As mentioned above, he uses the similar term bod bges po in his Nga brgyad ma'i 'grel pa p. 151.2.3 (hza 305a) to refer to traditions he seems to have considered as specifically Tibetan, and there he mentions: the Great Seal, Great Perfection and the bKa'-gdam-pa (Tibetan followers of Atiśa's tradition). In his Tshad ma rigs ger rang 'grel, Sa-pan refers generally to the Tibetans as bod mams, bod phal cher, and bod 'ga' zhig. In one passage of the work, however, he contrasts bod snga rabs pa with the bod kyi stog ge pa phyi rabs pa.
follow [Kāma,] the deceiver who has flowers for arrows. Alas, people of inferior merit propitiate demons because they have lost their divine heritage! 

Thus, while I have made refutations and proofs in conformity with scripture and reasoning while investigating what is erroneous and non-erroneous in meaning and wording, most worldly people speak ill of me through thoughts of desire and aversion. But You [Buddhas and Bodhisattvas], who possess the eye of omniscience, are pleased. Just what the Master Nagarjuna said has come to pass, namely: "The teaching was not taught by the Tathāgatas for the sake of disputation, but it burns the theories of others like fire burns firewood."

I, too, have not taught with the thought of disparaging others. And yet, by teaching in accord with Your scriptural divisions, this has burned the religious traditions of others. When one lays down a plumb line straight, it annoys those having crooked shapes. In the same way, by [my] establishing Your teachings [correctly], those [followers of] counterfeit doctrines are not pleased. I am without desire and aversion, but if, wishing to preserve the doctrine, I speak truthfully, then the person I address becomes furious. If I speak a falsehood, it is a great evil.

Now, [reverently] folding my hands, I implore the Buddhas in [all] ten directions: Am I to speak the truth, or should I speak falsely? If

I speak truly, all those who speak falsely are angered. But if I speak falsely, I fear that it contradicts Your word. Moreover, if I protect the Doctrine, this refutes all erroneous doctrines. But if I preserve the feelings of worldly people, this promotes erroneous doctrines. If I speak truly, it offends the feelings of others. If I speak falsely, it destroys the Doctrine. If I abstain from speaking, the matter will not be understood. Therefore the noble conduct is difficult!

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276 Sa-pan, Phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas, pp. 327.1-2 (na 62a-b): 'gro ba dam chos sun 'byin pa'i le la 'jig ren phal cher bstod// bdag gis chos min sun phyung bas// 'jig ren phal cher bdag la smod// sangs rgyas 'jig ren thugs brise la// 'jig ren phal cher rjes mi 'jug// stu byed me tog mda' can gyi// rjes su 'jig ren 'di dag 'brang// kye ma bsood nams dnu pa'i m// lha skal chad pas 'byung po sgrub//

277 Ibid.: de itar don dang shig dag gis// 'khrul dang ma 'khrul dpjad pa la// lung dang rigs pa mi 'gal bar// bdag gis dgog sgrub byis pa las// 'jig ren phal cher chags sdang gis// bsams pas bdag la smod mod kyi// thams cad ggis pai snyan mnga' bal// khyed ni bdag la dyes pas bsams// 'phags pa lha sgrub 'di skad du// chos 'di de bzhin gohegs mans kyis// rtsod pa'i don du ma gzung mod// 'on kyang 'di ni ghan la mans// me yi bud shing bzhin du bregs// zhes gsungs pa de bthog tu bali//

278 Ibid.: bdag kyang gzhin la khyad good pa'i// bsams pas bshad pa ma labs mod// 'on kyang khyed kyi sde snod bzhin// bshad pas gzhan gi chos lugs breg// thig rhad drang por bshag pa nai// ya yo can mams sams la gsal// de bzhin khyed kyi gzung sgrubs pas// chos litar bocs mams mnyes ma gyal// bdag la chags sdsang ma mchis mod// 'on kyang bstan pa brung 'dod pas// bden par smras na pha rol khrul// brdzun par smras na sldg pa l//

279 Ibid.: da ni phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas la// thal shyar nas ni don 'di zhul// bdag gis bdun par smra langs sam// 'on te brdzun par smra bar bdull// gal te bden par smras [=smra?] na nil// brdzun par smra ba thams cad khrul// de ste [?] brdzun par smras [=smra?] na nil// khyed kyi gzung dang 'gal du dogs// gzhin yang bstan pa bsrang na nil// chos log thams cad sun 'byung 'tshall// 'on te 'jig ren sems briung nai// chos log la yang bstod 'shal loll// bden par smras na gzhinan sams breg// brdzun par smras na bstan pa 'jig// smra ba sams pa don mi nrog// des na dam pa'i spyd pa dka//.
LATERN COMMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Some useful additional help for understanding the historical and doctrinal points discussed by Sa-paṅ is given by later Sa-skya-pa commentators, among whom the learned royal monk of Mustang, Glo-bo mkhan-chen bSod-nams-lhun-grub (1456-1532), occupies a prominent position. The latter was one of the greatest commentators on Sa-paṅ's writings. He gave some very pertinent explanations for instance in his 'Khruṅ spong dgon gnyan, a treatise in which he tried to develop further the replies Go-rams-pa bSod-nams-seng-ge (1429-1489) had given to the controversial questions raised by Shākya-mchog-dbyen about certain passages in the sDom gsum rab dbyer. To lend additional support to Go-rams-pa's answers, and to show that Go-rams-pa had adhered to well-established tradition in making his remarks, Glo-bo mkhan-chen gathered and quoted a number of lengthy quotations from relevant works. In the present instance, he cited in fact teachings given by his own main teacher, rGyal-tshab Kun-dga'-dzang-pa (1424-1478), the highly accomplished nephew of Ngog-chen Kun-dga'-bzang-po (1382-1456). Kun-dga'-dang-pa had served as 4th abbot of Ngog from 1465-1478, and his authority extended to both camps for he had been a Vajrayāna master not only of Go-rams-pa (who served after him as Ngog abbot, 1483-86) but also of Shākya-mchog-ldan.

The source cited and quoted by Glo-bo mkhan-chen was not something actually preserved among Kun-dga'-dang-pa's writings; rather, it was a record of his explanation set down in writing by one of the latter's disciples, a certain IDan-ma bka'-bcu-pa bSod-nams-dpal, who had questioned Kun-dga'-dang-pa and did not want to forget the answer.

3. Shāntipa (Ratnakaraśānti)

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280 On his commentarial writings, see D. Jackson (1987), pp. 212ff and 221, n. 20.
281 For more on these works, see D. Jackson (1991), pp. 234-37.
he gave. Glo-po mkhan-chen cited this reply at length, stating that it supplied the answer for instance to the following doubt raised by Šākyamchog-ldan about a verse in the third, i.e. Tantric-Vow, chapter of the sDom gsum rab dbye (III 505 = 41a):

I ask what was the intended meaning of the basic text [that is, of Sa-skya Pandita's sDom gsum rab dbye] about whether or not the Six Dharmas [of Nāropa] existed in the lineage down to Lord Mi-la [ras-pa, 1040-1123]. If it did exist, then since this is maintained to be Nāropa's lineage, what is the contradiction? If it did not, then what were the three ways in which [Sa-pan] received the three traditions of the Six Dharmas?

Glo-po mkhan-chen begins his reply:

It is widely said that there occurred some investigations regarding this point even from the very first, and nowadays, too, one can see many who have their doubts. But only the present words of the noble reverend Kun-dga'-dbang-phyug, written down by the same master's direct disciple IDan-ma bka'-bcu-pa [bSod-nams-dpal], is certain to be the continuous teaching transmission [from Sa-pan], and it definitely serves to answer these questions. It states as follows:

The mTshur-bu Gu-shri283 had said to [IDan-ma bka'-bcu-pa]: "Detailed knowledge about Śākyamuni is possessed byĀnanda. Detailed knowledge about Virūpa is possessed by you Sa-skya-pas. Detailed knowledge about Nāropa and Mar-pa [1012-1097] is possessed by us, the Dwags-po bka'-brgyud-pa. Therefore whether or not there existed the Six Dharmas after Mi-la and whether Mar-pa had an initiation-rite for Vajravarahi is known by us, but not by you! 

[IDan-ma bka'-bcu-pa] respectfully reported this to the lord master Vajradhara [Kun-dga'-dbang-phyug], who replied:

"Generally speaking, [Sa-pan] in the sDom gsum rab dbye and Thub pa'i dgongs gsal has refuted what most of these incorrect Great Meditators have done: namely, squandering their own profound religious tradition of Nāropa, and haphazardly following as their own practice the religious teachings of other [traditions] such as the Great Perfection, and then, without receiving the maturing tantric empowerment of their own tradition, granting the Great Seal instructions and practicing it wrongly. But how could [Sa-pan] have refuted the essence of the Great Seal taught by the accomplished masters such as Nāropa and Maitripāḍa?

"Also, generally speaking, Mar-pa possessed a complete and unerring collection of religious instructions of the four Tantric classes, including those of the Father Tantra Guhyasamājā. The Great Meditators have probably not known the matter exactly. The Lord Nārotapāḍa possessed two religious traditions: (I) the religious tradition of long lineage, the intact instructions, and (II) the religious teaching of the essence, the profound sense.285 To my knowledge, the first are all these religious instructions of the three [Cakrasamvara traditions]—Lūhipāḍa, Kṛṣṇapāḍa and Gaṇṭapāḍa—which came down through the panḍitas such as the Pham-mthing-pa brothers [of Nepal]. To my knowledge, the second are all these religious teachings given by Vajradhara to Tilopa, by him to Nāropa, and by him to Mar-pa lo-tsa-ba.

To my knowledge, this teaching called "the Profound Sense, the Six Dharmas of Nāropa," is a way of practicing through practical instructions a summation of the entire sense of the Cakrasamvara Basic Tantra by way of six points, which are namely: (1) the dharma of empowerment, which ripens, (2) the dharma of the path of means, which liberates, (3) the dharma of the gnosism of the Great Seal, which is realization, (4) the dharma of the pledges and vows, which is an assistant, (5) the dharma of the great stimulation of benefits, which is the conduct, and (6) the dharma of the Fruit, which is spiritual accomplishment.

Kun-dga'-dbang-phyug goes on to describe these six teachings one by one, enumerating, for instance, the practices belonging to the Path of Means.

282 Glo-po mkhan-chen, sDom pa gsum, pp. 310ff (51b-).

283 Probably he was Go-shrī dPal-'byor-don-grub (ca. 1427-ca. 1489), who served as regent of mTshur-phu at the death of Karma-pa mThong-ba-don-ldan in 1452-3. A brief sketch of his life is given in Si-tu and Be-lo, vol. 1, pp. 525-6 (da 263b-264a). He is counted as the first rGyal-tshab sprul-sku.

284 A section discussing the phag mo'i byin brilbs controversy has been omitted here for the sake of brevity.

285 Cf. 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten-mgon-po, Works, vol. 2, p. 263.3: nā ro chen po'i brgyud pa 'dil tshig don gnis la skyon med grags tshig gi brgyud pa mang na yang don brgyud mos gus can gyet sheyl thugs nas thugs su brgyud pa yil...
These consist of the practice of the Stage of Generation, in full or abbreviated form, and the instructions of the Stage of Completion, being six instructions including the three basic teachings: Inner Heat, Clear Light and Phantom Body, and the three branch teachings: Dream, Thought-transference at death, and the Intermediate Stage. He continues:

The reason that it is so is this: Mar-pa gave to Mes-ston the full set of teachings of the four classes of Mother Tantras. The latter bestowed it on 'Khon sGyi-chu-ba dKon-mchog-'bar. He gave it to Sa-chen [Kun-dga'-nying-po 1092-1158]. And it came down to the Dharma master Sa-pañ through an intact lineage. The great cotton-clad yogi Mi-la in the company of rNgog-ston Chos-sku-rdo-rje received from Lord Mar-pa the empowerment based on the Basic Tantra of Cakrasamvara, the exposition [of the Tantra], as well as the practical precepts of the Six Dharmas of the Profound Sense. After receiving this, he practiced it as something transmitted only a single generation. And when such disciples as Ras-chung rDo-rje-grags-pa [1083-1161] and Dwags-po lha-rje [sGam-po-pa] requested the Profound Sense, the Six Dharmas of Naropa, he did not confer the Tantric empowerment in the way he had received it from Mar-pa, but instead had them receive the empowerments from others. And then, bestowing [on them] each of the six dharmas of the Completion Stage and giving an instruction in the theory [of the ultimate], he made this the tradition of giving the full instructions. Therefore, even though Mi-la had received from Mar-pa those six instructions of the dharma of empowerment, which matures, and the rest, according to their own tradition, Dwags-po lha-rje and the others had not received them. With this in mind, [Sa-pañ] said (DS III 505 = 41a):

Down to Mi-la, there was nothing besides that instruction called "The Six Dharmas of Nāropa."

After concluding the second part of this record of Kun-dga'-dbang-phyug's teachings (which addressed a related controversy), Glo-bo mkhan-chen quoted still another such text attributed to Kun-dga'-dbang-phyug as set down in writing by the same IDan-ma bka'-bcu-pa, this one explaining how Sa-pañ himself could assert in the sDom gsum rab dbye (III 655 = 48a) that he had received three traditions of the Six Dharmas when he himself had also stated that the Six Dharmas had not been transmitted after Mi-la.

On another occasion [IDan-ma bka'-bcu-pa] asked: "Did Mar-pa lo-tsā-ba bestow the Profound Path Six Dharmas of Nāropa upon all four of his own great disciples? Since the Dharma Master [Sa-pañ] taught that after Mi-la there was no Six Dharmas of Nāropa, doesn't this contradict the statement [in the sDom gsum rab dbye] that he himself had received "the three traditions of the Six Dharmas of Nāropa"?

Kun-dga'-dbang-phyug answered: "To my knowledge, Mar-pa, while expounding the Basic Tantra of Cakrasamvara, bestowed on all four the complete content of the Profound Sense, the Six Dharmas of Nāropa. But as for instructions given according to the basic works of separate practical precepts such as the "Vajra Song of the Six Dharmas," these [Mar-pa] only gave to Mi-la. For example, it is like instruction in the separately existing practical precepts of the Five Stages (rin Inga) and Six Applications (shyor drug) [which is given] even though the full sense of the Five Stages and Six Applications is present when explaining the Tantras of Guhyasamaja and Kalacakra. [Sa-pañ's] statement [DS III 505 = 41a-b] that after Mi-la the Six Dharmas did not exist had in mind that the complete set of the Profound Sense Six Dharmas, comprised of the maturing Dharma of empowerment and the rest, did not exist [any more]. His statement [DS III 656 = 48a] that he had received three traditions of the Six Dharmas had in mind his having received the Six Dharmas of the Stage of Completion, comprised of Inner Heat and the rest.

The firmly Tantra-based Sa-skya-pa tradition (which based itself on a large corpus of gsar-ma-pa Tantric exegesis and precepts) considered it to be of the highest importance to give such secret instructions as the Path of Means and the Great Seal only in their original fully Tantric context in which Nāropa and his lineage down to Mar-pa had formulated and

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266 See also H. Guenther (1971), p. xv, n. 1.
267 Glo-bo mkhan-chen, sDom pa gsum, p. 313.5 (33a-b).
286 This was Mes-tshon-pa bSod-nams-rgyal-mtshan, who founded the most important exposition lineages passing from Mar-pa. See G. Roerich transl. p. 405; 'Gos lo-tsā-ba, nyal 3b.
289 Glo-bo mkhan-chen, sDom pa gsum, pp. 317.3f (55a-b).
transmitted them. In Sa-pan's view, the disciples of the great anchorite Mi-la had dispensed with some of the necessary points of ritual and instruction, and in this way Nārōpa's full tradition had suffered.\(^{290}\) (Mi-la according to this account had not given the consecrations himself, but had let his disciples receive them from others, as was also quite legitimate.) Later followers of the Sa-skya-pa order, such as Glo-bo mkhan-chen, continued to stress as essential the transmission of Tantric empowerments together with the other practical precepts and instructions.

Comments by Shakya-mchog-Idan

Another key 15th-century authority for understanding why Sa-pan criticized the dkar po chig thub and related traditions of the Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud was the scholar and commentator Shakya-mchog-Idan (1428-1507), author of the above-mentioned hundred-odd questions regarding Sa-pan's sDom gsum rab dbye. Shakya-mchog-Idan was well versed in both Sa-skya-pa and bKa'-brgyud-pa traditions, and seems to have attempted in places to harmonize the seemingly disparate doctrines of Sa-pan and sGam-po-pa.\(^{291}\) Regarding the present discussion, he attempted to give his own explanations of the same controversial statements in Sa-pan's sDom gsum rab dbye (III 505-6 = 41a-b) that he had earlier called into question.\(^{292}\)

Down to Mi-la, there was no [Great Seal instruction in the lineage] beside that instruction called the "Six Yogas of Nārōpa." After discarding the Six Yogas and while cultivating the instructions of others such as the "Path with its Fruit" (Lam 'bras) and the Great Seal, they maintain that those are Nārōpa's lineage. Needless to say this contradicts [the tradition of] others. It contradicts even their own tradition!

When trying to explain these lines, Shakya-mchog-Idan proceeded with great caution and deliberate exactness: like a tightrope walker, his every step was precise, and every movement calculated to avoid tipping too far toward either side.\(^{293}\) He was in a delicate position because of his close links on the one hand with the Sa-skya-pas (his main teacher had been a student of Rong-ston, 1367-1449) and on the other hand with the Rin-spungs-pas (then the rulers of Tibet), and hence with their close associate the Zhwa-dmar Karma-pa Chos-grags-ye-shes (1453-1524). He also enjoyed warm personal relations with the Zhwa-nag Karma-pa himself, Chos-grags-rgya-mtsho (1454-1506). Nevertheless, in his role as commentator on this work, Shakya-mchog-Idan seems to have agreed with Sa-pan to a considerable extent when explaining some of the above-mentioned controversial passages in the sDom gsum rab dbye, saying for instance that little can be seen to distinguish the theory (ita ba) of the master Mo-ho-yen as better or worse than that of the (Great Seal) exponents of "this bKa'-brgyud," though he stressed the superiority of the non-meditative practice (spyod pa) of the latter, and warned that it should not be falsely criticized.\(^{294}\) He specified carefully which particular unacceptable doctrinal statements of the early bKa'-brgyud-pas he believed Sa-pan had in mind when he criticized the "present-day Great Seal" as a "Chinese tradition of the Great Perfection," and then asserted:\(^{295}\)

Concerning how those matters are unacceptable, [Sa-pan] composed the basic works that identify the modern-day Great Seal and the Chinese-tradition Great Perfection as one and refute them.

\(^{290}\) See also M. Broido (1985), p. 35f, who contrasted the method of another of Mi-la's students, Ras-chung rDo-rje-grags, with that of sGam-po-pa. The former had more strictly maintained the Mantrayāna and "Path of Methods" context of these instructions.


\(^{292}\) Sa-pan, sDom gsum rab dbye, chapter III, verses 506-507: nā ro chos drug zhes bya'i 'khrul/ mid la yan chad de las med/ chos drug bor nas lam 'bras dang/ phyaṅ rgya chen po la sogs pal/ gzhlan gyi sams ngag bsgom bzin dull/ nā ro'i brgyud pa 'dod byed pal/ gzhlan dang 'gal ba bila cis smos/ ragn lungs kyang dang 'gal ba yin/

\(^{293}\) In the relevant section of his Legs bshad gser gi thur ma, Collected Works, vol. 7, p. 85, Shakya-mchog-Idan incidentally displays a good familiarity with bKa'-brgyud-pa doctrines such as the dGonggs geig, quoting the latter twice (pp. 84.2 and 85.1) in connection with sGam-po-pa's views on the chen po gsum gyis ma reg pa and dkar po chig thub.


\(^{295}\) Shakya-mchog-Idan, ibid., p. 84.7-85.1: don de dag mi 'thad pa'i dbang du mdzad nas/ deng sang gi phyaṅ rgya chen po dang/ rgya nag lugs kyi rdzogs chen gnyis don geig tu mdzad nas 'geg par mdzad pa'i gzungs mams gsung pa yin noll. 
He goes on to quote the sDom gsam rab dbye passage (III 347 = 34a), "Some say one needs merit dedication after cultivating the Self-sufficient White [Remedy]..." specifying that these remarks were directed against upholders of sGam-po-pa's tradition, and that therefore here the main things criticized were the failure to identify the real Great Seal and the terming of such a wrongly conceived "Great Seal" as a "Self-sufficient White [Remedy]." But according to Shākyā-mchog-ldan, Sa-paṅ was not (here at least) demonstrating that contemporary meditators of the Great Seal were practicing the religious tradition of the Chinese master Mo-ho-yan.296

Still later in the same work, Shākyā-mchog-ldan explains Sa-paṅ's position in these words:297

So you ask what is [the meaning]? [It is this:] Among the followers of Nāropa's tradition down to Mi-la there was no mastering of such teachings as the Lam 'bras or the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] (dkar po chig thub) called "Great Seal," which is different from that Six Yogas of Nāropa. But the Lord Dags-po lha-rje [sGam-po-pa], having discarded the emphatic cultivation of solely the Six Yogas within his own tradition, took as his meditative cultivation the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] which was termed "Great Seal." And Phag-mo-grupa, having apparently achieved realization through mastering the Lam 'bras, and while cultivating instructions other than those from Nāropa, concealed that other lineage and maintained that he upheld the lineage of Nāropa alone. Doing this contradicts both their own and other traditions. This is what [Sa-paṅ] stated in composing the [sDom gsam rab dbye] treatise ....

And once again in the next section he presents Sa-paṅ's position as being precisely:298

[Question:] So what is [the intended sense]? [Answer:] It means: "If one invokes the lineage of Nāropa while cultivating that Chinese-tradition Great Perfection which had been given the name 'Great Seal,' it contradicts both traditions." As it is said in this very same work: "The present-day Great Seal is for the most part a Chinese religious tradition."

Shākyā-mchog-ldan no doubt had good reasons for indicating sGam-po-pa as the one who introduced the Great Perfection-like "dkar po chig thub" (with its non-Tantric sens kyi ngo 'phrod) into the bKa'-brgyud-pa Great Seal stemming from Nāropa. And as a doctrinal innovation within Mar-pa and Mi-la's tradition, it could be termed a "present-day Great Seal" (da lta'i phyag rgya chen po), Sa-paṅ maintained. But Shākyā-mchog-ldan's own attitude toward these criticisms by Sa-paṅ, while not overt rejection, is hardly that of zealous, uncritical acceptance either. He lives up here to his obligation as a commentator to penetrate and accurately represent the original author's intention, yet he is somewhat constrained in his agreement, and elsewhere when no longer a commentator and when writing a treatise specifically in defence of the Great Seal and as a follower of the latter tradition, he does of course express contrary opinions or tries to clarify misunderstandings and bring into harmony ostensible disagreements. For instance, in one of his treatises in justification of the Great Seal in the Dwags-po tradition, he referred to the Hwa-shang comparison in these words:299

296 Shākyā-mchog-ldan, ibid., p. 194.6: 'o na ci zhe nal rgya nag lungs kyi rdo rje chen la phyag rgya chen po ming byas pa de byas bzhin du / na ro'i bdro gcan pa 'dod na lungs gnyis dang 'gal zhes pa'i don tel / ji shad du / gzhung 'di nyid lal / da lta'i phyag rgya chen po ni/ phal cher rgya nag chos lungs yin/....

297 Shākyā-mchog-ldan, ibid., p. 192: 'o na ci zhe nal mid la yan chad du nil na ro pa'i [b]gyud 'dzin dag la na ro'i chos drug de las gzhung/ lam 'bras dang/ phyag chen gi ming can dkar po chig thub sogs la goms par byed pa med la/ rje dags po lha rjes chos drug kho na ral/ [b]gyud la nan tan du goms par byed pa bor nas/ phyag rgya chen po'i ming 'dogs can gi dkar po geig thub la gzhung du byas pa dang/ phyag mo gnyis gsum gams pas grub pa byes pa lta bu/ na ro ta pa las gzhung gyi gsum gams bzhin du/ b'gyud pa gzhung de dag gsang nas/ rje na ro pa kha na'i [b]gyud 'dzin du 'dod pa ni rang gzhung gyi lungs gnyis dang 'gal zhes bstan bcos mtha'ad pa....
Although [Sa-pan] has said that the theory descending from above is the same as the meditation of the Hwa-shang, in most of the Mantra tradition it is explained that one should enter the path after beginning with theory.

A little bit later he explains and justifies the dkar po chig thub notion:

The "self-sufficient white [remedy]" refers exclusively to theory, but it is not an expression denigrating the preparatory accumulations of merit. Moreover, it means precisely that the Great Seal by itself alone is sufficient, there being no necessity to exert oneself in applying separate remedies to the individual afflictions (kleśa) and thought-constructions.

In both his direct comments and his independent treatises, Shākyamchog-ldan thus makes much of the distinction between "theoretical" (Ita ba) scriptural statements and those relating to non-concentrative "practice" or "conduct" (spyod pa), a distinction that Sa-pan himself stressed in his sDom gsam rab dbye.

In some other treatises and replies to the great Karma bKa'-brgyud-pa masters and their Rin-spungs-pa patrons, Shākyamchog-ldan's defenses of this tradition are even more ambitious and elaborate. There the teachings of sGam-po-pa, which started with some revolutionary reordering and synthesizing, seem to have forced upon Shākyamchog-ldan the necessity for further synthesizing and harmonizing, which he attempts sometimes in light of yet another theoretical system, that of the "Emptiness of Other" (gzhan stong) Madhyamaka.

The Reception of Sa-pan's Ideas among Later dGe-lugs-pa Scholars

Sa-pan's interpretations of the doctrinal and historical points in question were received in various but generally positive ways by later followers of Tsong-kha-pa. Some highly influential clerics, whose opinions are accepted as more or less definitive in their respective colleges and whose influence thus continues strongly down to the present, accepted Sa-pan's ideas as basically correct. 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa Ngag-dbang-brtson-grus (1648-1721), for example, exhibits in his monumental Grub mthwa' chen mo a very close agreement with Sa-pan. In the course of his rejection of certain rDzogs-chen and Phyang-chen doctrines as a spurious Madhyamaka, 'Jam-dbyangs-bzhad-pa quotes the sDom gsam rab dbye at least twice. He also refers (27a.5) to the "Replies to the Karma-pa [Mi-bskyod-rdo-rje]" (Kar lan) composed by both Se-ra rje-bsun Chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1469-1546) and Pan-chen bSod-nams-grags-pa (1478-1554).

Similarly, Sum-pa mkhan-po Ye-shes-dpal-'byor (1704-1776), the elder contemporary and senior of Thu'u-bkwan Chos-kyi-nyi-ma at the A-mdo monastery of dGon-lung, openly espoused in his famous history of Buddhism the criticisms found in Sa-pan's sDom gsam rab dbye, quoting the latter work at length. He also repeated the identifications that it was Zhang Tshal-pa who was being criticized, for instance in connection with the dkar po chig thub.

The comments of ICang-skya II Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717-1786) in this context were, by contrast, considerably more qualified and circumspect.

300 Shākyamchog-ldan, Phyag rgya chen po gsal bar byed pa'i bstsan bcos tshangs pa'i khos los gzhan blo'i dregs pa nyams byed, Collected Works, vol. 17, p. 344 (7b):
dkar po chig thub zhes bya ba/ lta ba rgyang pa'i ldog cha naa l/ yin gyi bsod nams tshogs dag lal/ skur ba 'debs pa'i tshig ma yin l/ de yang nyon mong mam par tog l/ so so'i gnyen po thu daad lal/ 'bad mi dgos par phyag rgya chen l/ gcig pas chog pa'i don nyid do l/ 301 Sa-pan, sDom gsam rab dbye, III, verses 517-519 distinguishes scriptural teachings relating to "theory" (ita ba) from those of "practice" (spyod pa) and "meditation" (bsgom pa):
dper na phyag dang mchod pa dang l/ shyan dang tshul khrims sogs mi dgos l/ sems bskyed dbang bskur bya mi dgos l/ bsam gtan klog pa 'dir mi dgos l/ dge dang sding pa gnyis ka med l/ sangs rgyas sems can yod min sogs l/ 'di 'dra guungs pa'i lung mams kun l/ lta ba yin gyi bsgom pa dang l/ spyod pa gnyis kyi lung ma yin l/ 302 See also D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), pp. 105-8. 303 Cf. S. Karmay (1988), p. 199. 304 Ibid., ff. 648.6 (18b): 'jam mgon sa skya pandi ta'i sdom gsam las l/ da lta'i phyag rgya chen po dang l/ rgya nag lugs kyi rdo zogs chen la l/... don la mam par dbye ba med l/... See also p. 658.2 (23b): blun po phyag rgya che bsgom pa l/... 305 See S. C. Das ed. (1908), dPag bsam ljon bzang, pp. 403ff.
As the latter wrote in his well-known treatise on philosophical schools:

The term 'Self-sufficient White [Remedy]' (dkar po chig thub) had no wide dissemination before Zhang Tshal-pa; Zhang Tshal-pa even wrote a treatise which treated the 'Self-sufficient White [Remedy]' as its main subject. It appears that this was also the main object refuted by Mañjunaṭha Sa-skya Paṇḍita.

Many later [scholars belonging to] our own and other [traditions] also seem to have made many refutations of this thesis. If the thesis asserted by Zhang Tshal-pa himself consists in the thesis of 'no mentation whatsoever,' then those refutations are right on target; but I do not wish to elaborate on it [here] in detail.

Thus the IČang-skya sprul-skü mentioned Sa-paṇ as a main doctrinal opponent of Zhang. But he was not that clear himself about what actually had been at issue. For him, the really telling later criticisms in this connection had rejected the "non-mentation" (amanasīkāra) doctrine. But he was not completely sure whether or not this was what Zhang had actually been maintaining by his 'Self-sufficient White [Remedy]' doctrine.

IČang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje's comments seem to have served as the point of departure for the further remarks of his younger contemporary Thu'u-bkwan Chos-kyi-nyi-ma (1737-1802). The latter was in fact one of the few dGe-lugs-pa scholars who directly disagreed with Sa-paṇ on these points, and when touching on these topics in the bKa-brgyud-pa chapter of his survey of Buddhist philosophical and religious systems, he indeed tried to be even-handed and conciliatory toward the bKā'-brgyud-pa.

As briefly alluded to above, Thu'u-bkwan portrayed Sa-paṇ's criticisms as having been directed against "non-mentation" (as might easily be read into IČang-skya's account). He therefore rejected them as unsatisfactory, saying: "Because this [bKā'-brgyud-pa teaching] is clearly not the position of 'performing no mentation at all,' it is evident that the refutations [by Sa-paṇ] in the sDom gsum rab dbye were improper." Since Thu'u-bkwan had narrowly specified the dkar po chig thub to be precisely "the Great Seal of Maitripāda" (mai tri'i phyag chen dkar po chig thub), he could attempt to exonerate Zhang here simply on the grounds that such a teaching of "complete non-mentation" (ci yang yid la mi byed pa) did not occur in Zhang's work.

The comments of IČang-skya and Thu'u-bkwan seem to show that the discussion was by their time going on at a greater remove from its original context, with only occasional direct reference to what Sa-paṇ or Zhang had actually written. Moreover, both of the latter scholars had close associations with the Manchu Imperial court in Peking, and they could distance themselves—both geographically and doctrinally—from the sectarian frictions of Central Tibet.

dBal-mang dKoṅ-mchog-rgyal-mtshan

The still later A-mdo scholar dBal-mang dKoṅ-mchog-rgyal-mtshan (b. 1764) wrote in 1833 an interesting work that briefly describes a number of key differences between the bKā'-brgyud, rNyigs-ma and Sa-skya traditions. Though other passages of dPal-mang's work seem more even-handed, in his section 3 on the bKā'-brgyud schools (vol. 6, p. 288.6ff = cha 37a), he quotes the sDom gsum rab dbye several times with obvious approval. In one passage he gleefully repeats the critical lines of Sa-paṇ that identified the "Neo-Great Seal" with the Ho-shang's discredited teachings, applying these lines to his contemporary "red-hatted" rivals in the "New-Tradition" (gsar ma) schools.310

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310 dBal-mang dKoṅ-mchog-rgyal-mtshan, p. 292.6 = 39a: deng sang zhwa dmar po can gti gser ma tshos kyang rang rang mying mar rrom pa dang/ phyag chen dang rdo zogs chen gcig par rrom naschos lugs gyis su yges pa'i nang gi hwa shang ltar byed pa mong mar snang stel sdom gsum rab dbye lasl phyi nas rgyal khrams nub pa dang/ rgya nag mkhan po'i zhung lugs kyil yi ge tsam la bren nas kyung/....
Nowadays one can see many cases of even those red-hatted "New Tradition" followers who pride themselves on being "Old Tradition" and, imagining the Great Seal and Great Perfection to be one and the same, practice like the Hwa-shang who [had represented] one of the two religious traditions into which [Buddhism] had become divided [in those old times]. As is stated in the sDom gsum rab dbyen....

He goes on (f. 39b) to mention the similarity between the terminology followed by many New and Old traditions such as the Great Seal and Great Perfection whereby the meditative cultivation of Emptiness is called "recognizing the nature of mind" (sems ngo 'phrod pa).  

Gung-thang dKon-mchog-bstan-pa'i-sgron-me

The attitude among the dGe-lugs-pas toward the Great Seal and dkar po chig thub controversies was further complicated by the fact that a significant number of them accepted the existence of their own "dGe-ldan Great Seal" tradition (dge ldan phyag chen).  

Evidently the latter tradition, which claimed to descend from Tsong-kha-pa through the so-called dBen-sa snyan-brgyud, received significant support from the eclectic first Pan-chen Rin-po-che Blo-bzang-chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1567-1662), though Pan-chen bSod-nams-grags-pa (1478-1554) for example had already written a "Great Seal" manual for it. But the 5th Dalai bla-ma Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtshan (1617-1682)—never a big lover of the original bKa'-brgyud-pa traditions—was not at all pleased that a "dGe-ldan bKa'-brgyud" was springing up in his very midst.  

This historical information was provided by Gung-thang dKon-mchog-bstan-pa'i-sgron-me (1762-1823), who in his dGe Idanphyag rgya chen po'i khrid kyi zin bris zhal lung bdud rtsi'i thigs phreng mainly recorded the explanations of his main teacher 'Jam-dbyangs-bshad-pa II dKön-mchog...

'jigs-med-dbang-po (1728-91).  

Gung-thang in this same work also classified the subject matter as belonging to the middle Wheel of Dharma—i.e. to the doctrinal cycle of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras. Even the "Tantric tradition" of the teaching here is said to uphold the same doctrine, though through a special mode of apprehension ('dzin stangs). Nevertheless, Gung-thang taught the correct theory to be that the accumulation of Gnosis was most fundamental from among the two preparatory accumulations (tskogs gnyis) and that Discriminative Understanding was the chief of the pair, Skillful Means and Understanding.

The same author conceded, however, that in the time of Tsong-kha-pa (1357-1419) himself, the terminology "Great Seal" was not directly applied to these teachings. Rather, this instruction was called "the Great Madhyamaka" (dbu ma chen po). However, "Yongs-'dzin rin-po-che" is said to have maintained that Tsong-kha-pa had been actually referring to this "Great Seal" instruction when he mentioned that he had "yet another more profound instruction" in his written Replies to Red-mda'-ba.

Thus on these topics there existed a surprising diversity of approach and opinion even within the supposedly monolithic "dGe-lugs."

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POSTSCRIPT

One of Sa-pan's most influential contributions to the religious and intellectual history of Tibet was no doubt the efforts he made to strengthen rational and critical methods in order to preserve and transmit genuine tradition. He insisted on the importance of discriminative intellectual insight and conceptual clarity, and he sought to apply critical, intellectually rigorous standards carefully and conscientiously in nearly all spheres of religion, philosophy and scholarship. This, I believe, was at the bottom of his great concern with mastering the principles and methodologies of each branch of scholarship, and then propagating them through teaching and writing. Nowhere was this concern made clearer than where he treated differences of doctrine in a controversial or didactic context, trying to evaluate and verify or reject philosophical or doctrinal statements through the use of criteria that were themselves definable and defensible.

But as seen above, his critical method was never that of a rootless agnostic or skeptic. It was always used in the service of tradition, i.e. to defend the recognized doctrines and practices of Indian Buddhism to which he was heir. To be effective, his critical method had to be based on a very wide and deep knowledge of scripture and doctrine. Moreover, learning and reflection were not ends in themselves, nor were they, in Sa-pan's view, sufficient means for knowing the absolute. Still, some of his opponents viewed such a rational, critical procedure as a non-productive trap or as a dangerous, potentially self-destructive two-edged sword. These opponents included certain contemporary followers of Tibetan "all-at-once" contemplative traditions, who from the start placed little emphasis on (or even belittled) critical intellectual examination and who affirmed the primacy of direct, non-conceptual apprehension of the ultimate. For his part, Sa-pan argued forcefully to the contrary that to maintain Buddhist tradition publicly was part of the duty of a Mahāyāna
master, and that there was no other principled way to do so besides the method of reasoning and scripture. Moreover, in the realm of religious practice, Sa-paṅ maintained that there was no way to prepare oneself for higher yogic insight within the non-Tantric Mahāyāna, apart from an understanding gained through learning and reflection.

That other viewpoints on these controversies continued to be maintained in Tibet was demonstrated by the replies to Sa-paṅ’s criticisms by subsequent bKa’-brgyud-pa masters from the 16th century onward, and even by the occasional further questions by and differences between later Sa-skya-pa commentators. Regarding the precise origins of sGam-po-pa’s Great Seal teachings, moreover, modern scholars would probably agree that they were complicated and are still not very well understood, much like some of the doctrines that might have influenced their formulation, such as, most notably, the Great Perfection, Zhī-byed and gCod-yul.

Modern readers of Sa-paṅ will find nothing surprising in many of his critical remarks. But certain others of his judgments might seem too narrow and tradition-bound. Modern, more eclectic-minded students of Buddhism, for instance, might ask: “What difference does it make if certain Tibetan traditions were linked to Ch’yan traditions through some ancient connection? Isn’t Ch’yan also a legitimate tradition of Buddhist meditation?” But for a Tibetan Buddhist to admit such a doctrinal link—however ancient and indirect—was a difficult thing to do, precisely because of the bSam-yas debate and its later ramifications.

 Faithful modern practitioners of the traditions in question might also

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316 Some would moreover say that the basic historical question remains unanswered: “How could the non-Tantric doctrine of Mo-ho-ye ū have been the origin of rDzogs-chen or Phyag-chen traditions, which are largely Mantrayāna-based teachings?” Similar lines of argumentation had in fact been advanced already in the 16th century by Padma-dkar-po and bKra-shis-ram-rgyal, on which see D. Jackson (1990), p. 95, n. 87. Sa-paṅ evidently thought he had recognized some extrinsic, non-Tantric elements as having been newly introduced by sGam-po-pa into the originally Tantra-based lineage of Nāropa and Mar-pa. His criticisms and identifications, however, do not relate to the whole tradition, but rather to only a few restricted aspects of it: for instance, to the non-Tantric “Sūtra-path” practice of introducing the Great Seal as the nature of mind, and to the notion that to realize the nature of mind through such a non-conceptual introduction will suffice to bring about Buddhahood.

317 Dam-pa Sangs-rgyas, for instance, is said to have taught sGom-pa dMar-sgom the “Instruction on the three ‘Singly and Instantaneously Decisive [Factors].’” See ‘Gos lo-tsa-ba, p. 809.4 (na 21a): sgom pa dmar sgom la chig chod gsum gyi gdirs pa; G. Roerich, transl., p. 911.

318 Many masters of these traditions did not feel called upon to refute such criticisms. See L. Lhalungpa (1986), p. 434, n. 73, and p. 451, n. 130. But some scholastically trained scholars noted the difficulties of maintaining these doctrines in a general Mahāyāna doctrinal context. See for example the case of ‘Bri-gung rig’dzin Chos-kyi-grags-pa, as quoted in D. Jackson (1990), pp. 66f, and mentioned above in note 61. And in fact his comment on the strict impossibility of a cīg car ba approach had already been taught by ‘Jig-rten-mgon-po. See the latter’s Collected Works, vol. 3, p. 5.1.


This sort of eclecticism, however, contrasted with another deeply rooted tendency in Tibetan Buddhism, which manifests itself within the simultaneist schools as well. This is the tendency to preserve separately and discreetly the teachings of each lineage. For a tradition to be unmixed (lugs ma 'dres pa) was in general a point to be praised and esteemed among Tibetan Buddhists. But for the simultaneist traditions, a certain sort of eclecticism was almost inevitable. By nature they tended to affirm the One behind the multifarious Many. Theirs was a synthesizing, equalizing insight, no doubt akin to what is described on the level of Buddhahood as the Gnosis of Equality (mnyam pa nyid kyi ye shes). This insight was not primarily cognizant of the discreetness and diversity of things. For the moment, such analyzing, discriminating insight was suppressed, though on the level of Buddhahood a transformed discrimination, too, was acknowledged as an essential aspect, as for instance in the Gnosis of Analytical Understanding (so sor rtog pa'i ye shes)\(^{321}\).

\section*{Two Legends}

Were the pair, discrimination and concentrated insight, irreconcilable on the level of meditative practice? And on the doctrinal level, could one balance the tendencies toward eclecticism and conservative traditionalism? There were no easy answers. Each Buddhist meditator or tradition was forced to find its own balance and "middle path" between these contrasting tendencies. Certainly there was something almost paradoxical in the relationship of such complementary "opposites" as the two opposing tendencies among Buddhist practitioners—the gradualist, intellectual analytical procedure of the scholar on the one hand and the simultaneist, innateist realization of the yogi on the other.

That these two poles were somehow inextricably linked would also seem to be expressed, for example, through the legendary life stories of two Tantric adepts of India: Koṭāli the mattock-man and Śāntipa the great scholar. It will perhaps be remembered that the early bKa'-brgyud-pa master 'Jig-rten-mgon-po once asserted that sGam-po-pa was similar to the Indian mahāsiddha Tog-rse-pa ("Mattock-man") in one important respect: from among the many Indian and Tibetan adepts, these two alone each laid a special emphasis on the direct pointing out of Mind.\(^{322}\) The common approach of these two might therefore be considered the embodiment of an extreme innateist pole of theory and practice. The opposed gradualist pole, by contrast, could be said to have been embodied in Indian Buddhism by such a great master-scholar and teacher as Ratnakaraśānti, known to the Tibetans as "Śānti-pa." The latter was a highly competent scholar of both the general Mahāyāna and the Mantra Vehicle who at one stage became a doctrinal opponent of Maitripāda, according to one tradition. It was indeed Ratnakaraśānti who wrote one of the strongest explicit statements of the danger of excessive faith (within the general Mahāyāna), and the necessity for using the means of knowledge (pramāṇa) for gaining the omniscience of Buddhahood—a statement that Sa-paṅg quoted when arguing for the importance of a critical approach within the general Mahāyāna.\(^{323}\)

But in the legends of the great siddhas, what is the relationship of the Mattock-man and Śāntipa? At first glance, Mattock-man the siddha would seem to have been the hero of both tales. Yet without the master Śāntipa's kind instructions and inspired oversimplifications (pointing out the mind as the field to be tilled), the Mattock-man would never have left off scratching at his little patch of earth. Though he later became Śāntipa's teacher, the Mattock-man could not have become so had he not also been the other's student. Śāntipa, too, was paradoxically both teacher and student of the other. But let the stories speak here for themselves.

\section*{The Story of Mattock-man the Solitary Farmer\(^{324}\)}

Once in a remote spot in central India, four day's journey from the city of Rāmeśvara, a man named Koṭāli (the mattock-man) was hoeing on a hillside for the sake of establishing a farm and settling there. As he was working, the great Buddhist teacher Śāntipa, who was on his way back to Magadha, happened to pass by.

\footnote{\(^{321}\) Cf. also the traditional division of the Buddha's Gnosis into ji ita ba and ji snyed pa mkhyen pa'i ye shes.}\footnote{\(^{322}\) 'Jig-rten-mgon-po, vol. 5, p. 510.}\footnote{\(^{323}\) Sa-paṅg, Phyogs bcu'i... , p. 324.3 (57a).}\footnote{\(^{324}\) The tale has been abridged. Cf. the translations of James B. Robinson (1979), pp. 155-157; and K. Dowman (1985), pp. 238-241, no. 44, who calls the Mattock-man "the peasant guru."}
"What are you doing?" asked the great teacher.
After first inquiring politely after the master's health, the man replied:
"I am hoeing the hillside."
"Why are you doing that?" asked the teacher.
"All the evil rulers have oppressed and afflicted us, destroying our homeland. And since we have no homeland, I am going to make my home and dwelling here in this spot, after I have excavated this hill."
Śāntipa replied: "If I had a spell and instructions for hoeing hills, wouldn't you want it?"
The Mattock-man said he would, so Śāntipa instructed him as follows:

By such work as yours,
the body has grown tired.
So this is very bad work.
It is six wrong kinds of action:
Hoeing the land is [your] generosity.
Not harming others is moral discipline.
[You have] patience which patiently accepts suffering,
diligence which exerts itself in that,
concentration which is not distracted from that,
and the discriminative understanding which understands that—
Thus you have six wrong kinds of activity.
You should avoid those, and practice the six correct activities.

Revering the teacher is generosity.
Guarding one's own mental continuum is moral discipline.
Patience which patiently accepts the nature of mind,
diligence which cultivates that,
concentration which is not distracted from that,
and the discriminative understanding which understands that—
Cultivate these at all times!

"Please tell me a little more about the meaning of that!" requested Koṭali.
Śāntipa continued: "Revere the teacher. Since all pleasure and pain comes from your own mind, cultivate the sense of one's own primordial mind. Moreover, one's own changeless primordial mind is like the hill. The awareness that is lucid and unceasing is like the hoe. So dig! The pair of (meditation and?) diligence are like your two arms. You must always hoe with them." To that he added this verse:

All pleasure and pain comes from the mind.
Through instructions, hoe the hill of mind!
Even though you hoe a hill of dirt,
you won't realize the primordial great bliss!

The peasant cultivated those teachings, and after twelve years he attained siddhis. After performing many helpful deeds for other beings, he passed directly to the Ḍākini realm in that very body.

The Story of Śāntipa, the Great Scholar

Once in India at the great Buddhist seminary of Vikramaśila there lived the outstanding scholar Ratnākaraśānti who was known as Śāntipa. A Brahmin by birth, he attained great eminence as a Buddhist teacher who had mastered all traditional arts and sciences.

His fame spread far and wide, and finally reached the ears of a ruler of an island off the southern coast of India. The latter and his people invited Śāntipa to come and teach them the Buddhist doctrine, which the scholar-master after due consideration agreed to do. He spent some three years teaching in that place, and finally returned to India heavily loaded with precious gifts of all sorts.

On his return journey he travelled much of the way overland, and at one point passed through a desolate, mountainous tract that took seven days to cross. It was at this time that he met the peasant Mattock-man and taught him.

After his return to his home monastery, Śāntipa grew old and infirm, and his vision failed. His students drove him around in a buffalo cart, and (since he had lost his teeth) he lived on a diet of finely ground foods. When he reached about one hundred years of age, he entered a twelve-year meditation retreat.

During those same years the peasant Mattock-man, his student, was also in meditation retreat. But while Śāntipa practiced discursive

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325 I have abridged the first part of the story severely. Cf. the translations of James Robinson (1979), pp. 60-64; and K. Dowman (1985), pp. 94-99, no. 12, who calls Śānti-pa "the complacent missionary." I do not know what relation, if any, this legend has to the life of the historical master Ratnākaraśānti.
contemplation, his student was absorbed in non-conceptual insight, and he attained the highest attainment of the Great Seal, dwelling in primordial reality. When Śaṇṭipa left his retreat hut, his students attended him reverently. But when Mattock-man arose from his meditation all the dakinis as well as various divinities came to anoint him with nectar and to honor him. They all said: "This is the real Vajrasattva." .... He himself said: "Until I received my guru's instructions, I tilled this external hillside. Now, after gaining his instructions on tilling this hill of the mind, I have won mystic attainment (siddhi)."

The great god Indra and his retinue invited Mattock-man to come to such heavens as the divine realm of the Thirty-three. But he refused, saying: "I must go to pay homage to my guru, who is kinder even than the Buddha." ....

With his supernatural vision Mattock-man saw that it would take him six months to make the journey on foot, so instead he projected a mental body which made the journey in an instant. He bowed and paid homage to his guru and the retinue of students. But then he realized that he was invisible to them. He materialized his physical body, and then repeated many times his respects.

"Who are you?" asked the teacher.
"I am your disciple," replied the Mattock-man.
"As I have countless disciples, I do not recognize you."
"I am the the Mattock-man," he replied. Teacher and student then recognized each other, and they happily conversed as some length. Then Śaṇṭipa asked him what attainments he had gained from his practice.

"Following your instructions, I have obtained the attainment of the Great Seal, the highest Dharmakāya," he replied.

"I have given highest priority to teaching, but not to meditative practice," said Śaṇṭipa, "and I have not myself directly experienced the ultimate reality that I teach, while you have devoted yourself primarily to practice, but not to teaching, and have directly encountered the ultimate. I have even forgotten the instructions I gave you. Please return the teachings to me and also show me the attainments you have achieved."

The Mattock-man took Śaṇṭipa to a remote place and revealed many qualities of the Dharmakāya, also returning the instructions to his teacher. Śaṇṭipa then practiced these instructions for twelve more years, whereupon he finally gained the highest attainment of the Great Seal. Then, after serving others faithfully, he passed away to the Dakini's Realm.
EXTRACTS FROM THE WRITINGS OF SGAM-PO-PA AND ZHANG

These subjects remain open for discussion, and detailed investigations in the future will no doubt clarify further the main doctrinal points involved, their historical antecedents, and their later ramifications. But when trying to follow such a Tibetan doctrinal controversy, a modern reader must first of all try to discern which doctrinal context each remark belongs to. If presented as a Mantrayana "fruit" teaching, for instance, many of the doctrines of the Self-sufficient White Remedy would become acceptable even to Sa-pan, who had rejected them in a general Mahāyāna doctrinal context. Debaters who fail to clarify from the beginning which level of doctrine is being addressed and which lineages or systems of established tenets are being followed will soon be speaking at complete cross-purposes. Similarly, the modern reader of such a discussion who fails to clarify the same things will soon be completely at sea.

Moreover, before trying to make sense of the later stages of a Tibetan doctrinal discussion, the modern reader should try to ascertain exactly what the main early participants (here, sGam-po-pa, Zhang, and Sa-pan) themselves actually said on the relevant points. In order to facilitate this, I present here in translation all the presently known instances of the expression dkar po chig thub in the writings of rje sGam-po-pa, bla-ma Zhang, and Sa-skya Paṇḍita.

A. sGam-po-pa's Mentions of the dKar po chig thub

(1) The Reply to Phag-mo-gru-pa's Questions

A first occurrence of the phrase dkar po chig thub in sGam-po-pa's writings is in his reply to the questions of his learned and accomplished
Khams-pa disciple Phag-mo-gru-pa rDo-rje-rgyal-po. There he speaks of the realization he teaches as being utterly beyond the range of intellectual understanding (being "unknown even by a greatly learned man or pandita" and beyond the range of a dialectician) and asserts that it is only arises through the grace of an accomplished teacher who transmits it nonverbally and non-conceptually to a devoted, reverential disciple. Even the greatest scholars such as Nāgārjuna can assert nothing regarding its nature. He adds:

When it has arisen, since this has become a Self-sufficient White [Remedy], i.e. full liberation through knowing one thing, Buddha[hood] is acquired in oneself.*

To translate the passage in full:

[Phag-mo-gru-pa] asked: "In that case, by what is the nature acquired?"

[sGam-po-pa replied:] "It is acquired through the sustaining spiritual impulse of the guru, from one's own reverence and devotion, and by the power of meditatively cultivating through diligent effort, whereas otherwise it will not be acquired. For as it is also stated in the Hevajra Tantra:

The innately born is not told by another, and it is not received from anyone. It is known through observing the timely sacrifices for the guru, as a result of one's own merit.326

"This is not known by a learned scholar, a pandita. It is not realized through discriminative understanding. It is beyond the range of a dialectician. For the nature to arise in the mind: it will arise without words, [in a way] beyond the range of intellect, by the power of the sustaining spiritual impulse, from a guru who possesses realization, by a student who respects and reveres him. Its nature is devoid of any assertion [that can be made], even by greatly learned scholars such as Nāgārjuna. As it is said in the Hevajra [Tantra].327

There is no meditator, nor anything to be cultivated in meditation. No deity, nor any mantra. There is not even the slightest thing to be cultivated in meditation. The deity and mantra reside in a nature possessing no [conceptual] elaborations.

"And as stated in the Mañjuśrī[nāmasaṅgiti], v. 86]:328

He realizes the three times as time-less; he understands all benefits for all living beings.

"Accordingly, when it has arisen, since this has become a Self-sufficient White [Remedy], i.e. full liberation through knowing one thing, Buddha[hood] is acquired in oneself. Since by that, the fetter that binds one to cyclic existence has been loosed of itself, one's own mind achieves the level of great bliss."

The Tibetan text, rJe phag mo gru pa'i zhus lan pp. 471.6-472 (da 236a-b), cf. rTsib-ril spar-ma ca 2, f. 4b:

'o na ngo bo gang gir myed pa langs zhus pasl
bla ma'i byin brlabs dangl rang gi mos gus dangl brtson 'grus kyi
bgsoms pa'i stobs las myed kyl de las gzhan du mi myed del de yang dyges
pa rdo rje lasl
gzhan gyis brjod min lan cig skyesl gang du yang ni mi myed del
bla ma'i dus thabs bsten pa dangl rang gi bsod nams las shes byal
ces sol!

di mkhas pa pañdi tas kyang mi shesl shes rab kyis mi rtogsll rtog ge
ba'i spyod yal ma yinl [p. 472 = 236b] ngo bo rgyud la skye la ba la ma
rtogs idan cig la slob mas mos gus byas byin brlabs kyi stobs kyi tshig dang
bral ba blo'i yul las 'das pa las rab 'char tel ngo bo 'phags pa klu gsurb la

\[326\] The first quote is Hevajra Tantra I viii 36, which differs a little in its canonical version and Sanskrit original, for instance by having the instrumental case in the final two lines. See D. Snellgrove ed., pt. 2, pp. 28-29:

gzhan gyis brjod min lhon cig skyesl gang du yang ni mi myed dell
bla ma'i dus thabs bsten pa yisl bdag gis bsod nams las shes byal
The Sanskrit: nānayena kathyaḥ suhaḍaṁ na kasmīn api labhyaḥ/
ātmakā śāhyate punyāḥ guratpavopasevyāḥ/
The term dus thabs is Skt. parva "observance, sacrifice offered at a fixed time."

\[327\] This is Hevajra Tantra I v 11, the canonical Tibetan in Snellgrove’s edition being: bsgom pa po po med sgom pa'ang medl lha med snags kyong yod ma yinl spros pa med pa'i rang bzin lastl snags dang lha ni yang dag gnasll.

\[328\] The text in the Peking edition, vol. 1, p. 120.3.6 (rgyud ka 5b) is apparently corrupt: das gsum das med rongs par gnasll sems can kun kyi glu chen polll. The actual reading in Tibetan should be: das gsum das med rongs po polll sems can kun gis klu chen polll. See Ronald Davidson (1981), p. 56, tryadhvanadhvagatimgataḥ sarvastvatvarnahāṅgā... and translation, v. 86: "Beyond the filth of all defilements, he thoroughly comprehends the three times and timelessness; he is the great snake (mahāṅgura) for all beings, the crown of those crowned with qualities." See also Mañjuśrīmitra's commentary, Peking Tanjur, rgyud 'grel si 18b.7 (vol. 74, p. 179.4.7); da (=de?) ltar byung ba ste das gsum las 'das pa na dus gsum das med rongs polll dam pa'i chos kyi bād rtsi' arg char ges sems can gis gis rgyud tshim par mzdad pa'i phynr sems can kun gis klu chen po'lll.
A second place where the expression dkar po chig thub appears in sGam-po-pa’s writings is near the beginning of his reply to the questions of Karma-pa Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa. The latter had received instruction from sGam-po-pa, and then after a few days of meditating, he underwent an experience of great lucidity, though he had had no idea where it had come from. sGam-po-pa advised him:

That is the "Self-sufficient White [Remedy]." Such will always occur tomorrow, the next day, and later, and therefore you should use a warm curtain behind you, wear thin clothing, and so meditate. You will probably be able to bind consciousness (shes pa) to your service.

The Tibetan, Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhugs lan, p. 376.7 (tha 187b), cf. rTsibs-ri spar-ma, ca 3, f. 1b-2b:

bla ma rin po che la phyis kho bos gdam ngag cig zhus nas/ bsgom pas zhang 'ga' lon pa dang gang nas byung cha med pa't gsal sing nge ba'i nyams cig byung zhus pas/

de dkar po chig thub bya ba yin gsung/ sang gnangs dang dus phyis rtag tu de tsug 'ong ba yin pas rgyab yol dro bar gyi/ gos brabar par gyis las [=la?] bsgoms dang/ shes pa [b]kol tu btub par 'dug gis gsung/

(3) A Second Occurrence in his Reply to Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa

The third known usage by sGam-po-pa of the expression is found in the same work. In this context, Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa had requested explanations of the tantric Path of Means (thabs lam). sGam-po-pa’s reply (ibid., p. 380 = 189a-b) stressed the sufficiency of the very thing that he always taught (kun tu bshad pa des chog). To give a complete translation of the passage:

Moreover, one day [Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa] told [sGam-po-pa] that he would like to request the Path of Means [instructions].

[sGam-po-pa] replied: "That very thing that I always teach will do. If you don't meditatively cultivate that, then in the intermediate stage (bar do) it will not help even if you know the practical instructions. If you, too, are able to cultivate that still more, it will suffice to foster just that. Also at the time of the intermediate stage it should be cultivated. The Clear Light will follow it. The natural Clear Light will come out to welcome [you] in advance."

[Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa then] asked: "If I am able to cultivate [it], will that suffice?"

[rJe sGam-po-pa] replied: "The 'Self-sufficient White [Remedy]' refers to that. I, too, have nothing besides that."\(^{330}\)

The Tibetan text:

yang nyin cig thabs lam zhu byas pas/ de go kun tu bshad pa des [189b] chog/ ma bsgoms na bar dor gdam ngag shes kyang mi phan/ khyed rang yang da rlung bsgom dus na de skyangs pas chog par 'dug! bar do'i dus tshod du yang bsgom 'od gsal de'i rjes su 'brang/ rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal gyis rgnon [=sngon] bsa ba yin gsung/

bsgom nus na des chog gam zhus pas/ rin po che'i zhal nas/ dkar po cig thub de la byed pa yin/ nga la yang de las med gsung/

\(^{330}\) Compare also the statement in sGam-po-pa's Collected Works, vol. 2, p. 327.5: "I have nothing else to view besides the 'Nature of Mind' (sems nyid) alone": nga la bita rgyu sems nyid gtsig pa las med.
Summary

Thus sGam-po-pa used the phrase dkar po chig thub with a definite awareness of its meaning as a self-sufficient remedy. (This was its original medical meaning, and he, the Doctor of Dwags-po [dwags po lha rje], had after all been initially trained as a physician before becoming a great meditator.) In the first instance he employed the expression when describing to Phag-mo-gru-pa how the insight imparted through this teaching was enough to enable one to find the Buddhahood within oneself: “Because this has become a Self-sufficient White [Remedy], i.e. full liberation through knowing one thing,...” In the first usage with Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa, such a nuance is not so obvious from the context. But he used the phrase to characterize very positively the first meditative experience of great lucidity that had arisen for Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa after the latter had been instructed and had meditated for a few days. He called it a "Self-sufficient White [Remedy]" and predicted that it would continually arise in the future, also predicting that Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa would have success in bringing consciousness under his control. The second time he used the words with Dus-gsum-mkhyen-pa, however, he employed them to stress precisely the sufficiency of the Great Seal insight he normally taught, and to say that such specialized Tantric instructions as on the bar do would be of no use if one had not mastered this most central of teachings.

B. Zhang Tshal-pa's Mentions of the dKar po chig thub

(1) A First Occurrence in the Phyag chen lam zab mthar thug

Zhang Tshal-pa's most important use of the dkar po chig thub metaphor is traditionally held to be found in his Great Seal treatise the Phyag rgya chen po lam zab mthar thug, one chapter of which is entitled "Showing it [i.e. the Great Seal] to be a Self-sufficient White [Remedy]" (dKar po chig thub tu bstan pa). Zhang nowhere explicitly defined the expression dkar po chig thub in this chapter or elsewhere, and he actually used it only once there, and then merely in the title appearing at the chapter's end. There the words are used metaphorically to characterize the main point of the chapter: that the realization of the nature of mind is sufficient in and of itself to bring about spontaneously and instantaneously the simultaneous consummation of all virtuous qualities, including Buddhahood itself. This point is succinctly expressed in the opening verse (rTsibs-ri ed., p. 107.5; nga 2, f. 30a.5):

In the moment of realizing [the true nature of] your own mind, all "white" (i.e. excellent, virtuous) qualities without exception are effortlessly completed simultaneously.

rang sems rtogs pa'i skad cig mar// dkar po'i yon tan ma lus pa// bsgrub pa med par dus gcig rdzogs//

Probably there is a play on the word dkar po chig thub here, since the word "white" (dkar po) appears once, and the element "one" (cig/gcig) appears twice. Here, however, "white" (dkar po) is a quality of what comes to completion, instead of the agent effecting that, and cig/gcig forms a part of both the ideas of "an instant" skad cig ma and "simultaneous" dus gcig.

Zhang makes similar points earlier in the treatise, for instance in the first chapter, where he says:

[When] you definitely understand [the nature of] your own mind, all the Gnosces of Nirvāṇa will arise as great bliss. Therefore, since everything without exception issues forth from your own mind alone,
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if you recognize the reality of your own mind, you will come to know the reality of all sentient beings. By knowing that, you know all dharmas such as Nirvāṇa. Thoroughly understanding all dharmas, you pass beyond the whole of the three-realm [universe]. By knowing the one, you becomes learned in all. If the root falls over, the leaves naturally fall over. Therefore establish only [the nature of] your own mind!

The Tibetan, rTsib-ri ed., p. 53 (nga 2, f. 3a):

rang sems nges rtops mya ngan 'das pa yil/

ye shes mtha' yas bde ba chen por shar/
dey phyir ma lus rang gi sems nyid las/

'phros phyir rang sems chos nyid ngo shes nal/
sems can kun gi cho byo nyid shes par 'gyur/
de shes mya ngan 'das sog sogs kun shes/
chos kun yongs shes kham's gsum kun las 'das/
gcig shes pas ni kun la mkhas par 'gyur/
rtsa ba 'gyel bas lo 'dab ngang gis 'gyell/
dey phyir rang sems gcig pu gstan la dbab/

(2) A Second Occurrence in the Same Treatise

A second case of the usage of this expression is found in another section of the same work, the brief chapter on vows or "pledges" (dam tshig). Here Zhang presents this tradition as a system of practice in which the ordinary monastic vows are taken to be mainly the concern of "beginners." The system includes the achieving of: special Tantric yogas, the experience of non-conceptualization, the nature of one's own mind, non-duality, and the "not going beyond the true nature of things" (dbyings, that "nothing-to-be-guarded" (or: "the unguardable," srung du med) is the highest pledge. [It] is called the "Self-sufficient White [Remedy]."

How are the pledges to be observed? While a beginner, you should not break the command of the Sugata-Guru, i.e. the vows such as the Pratimokṣa [monastic discipline]. (1)

When cultivating the "channels" (rtsa) and "winds" (rlung), you should abandon all things not conducive to bliss and heat. After the experience of non-conceptualizing (mi rtog) has arisen, you should avoid all factors inimical to meditative absorptions (samādhi).

(2)

Having seen the nature of your own mind, you should abandon all harm to the mind.

After the realization of non-duality has arisen, you should avoid all specially directed activities (ched du bya ba). (3)

In all cases your own mind should be made the "judge" (lit.: "the witnessing arbiter" dpang po).

Having realized the reality of not going outside "the true nature of things" (dbyings), that "nothing-to-be-guarded" (or: "the unguardable," srung du med) is the highest pledge. [It] is called the "Self-sufficient White [Remedy]."

(3)

The third and last place where bla-ma Zhang is known to have used the expression is in a briefer instructional treatise, the Man ngag snying po gsal ba'i bstan bcos. Here Zhang stresses the need for the disciple's previous preparation and for the guru's grace, and says (p. 705.7-706.1) that when through those conditions one knows the ultimate reality of one's own mind (rang gi sems kyi [=kyi] de kho na nyid rtops par gyur na), one goes in that very moment to the highest level of all the Buddhas (dus gsum gyis sangs rgyas thams cad kyi go 'phang mchog skad cig de nyid la bsgrod par byed do/)

Others of less merit, however, will not understand this doctrine, and therefore he warns that it is important to keep it very secret.

Mentions by bla-ma Zhang
How to gain the master's grace and hence the ultimate insight? He explains (p. 711.7):

That which gladdens the guru
brings about perfect completeness without depending on anything [else];
that is the great "Self-sufficient White [Remedy]."

The second line is a gloss of the phrase dkar po chig thub, similar to sGam-po-pa’s placing of the phrase cig shes kun grol in apposition to dkar po chig thub in one of his usages of the expression.

Zhang expressed very similar teachings in his Phyag chen lam zab mthar thug (Tshib-ri ed.), pp. 79.6-79.1 (15b-16a), though there two factors are stressed as necessary for the attainment of realization: the teacher’s grace and the student’s previously acquired merit. (Zhang based himself here no doubt on the Hevajra Tantra I viii 36 quoted also by sGam-po-pa.) Later in that same work (p. 96, 24b.1), he stressed the master’s grace as the singly decisive factor: bla ma'i byin brlabs 'ba' zhit yiin/. Zhang devoted another brief treatise to the importance of the guru’s grace: gNad kyi man ngag, Writings, pp. 696.7-703.5, and stressed the same point in his Mal dbu dkar la gdams pa, p. 656.4.

Summary

Zhang Tshal-pa thus used the expression dkar po chig thub metaphorically in the three differing contexts of soteriology, gnoseology, and ethics. In each case it characterized a single factor that was believed to be sufficient to effect the highest good. In his view: (1) the evocation of the awakened guru’s spiritual power or grace is sufficient by itself to effect realization in the qualified student, (2) the insight into the nature of mind so conferred to the disciple is sufficient to actualize all enlightened qualities and realizations, and (3) the liberating insight into the nature of mind likewise has the power to resolve all moral dilemmas.

In the pages that follow, I will present all occurrences of the expression dkar po chig thub that I have been able to locate in the writings of Sa-skya Pandita. These occurrences are found in the following four treatises:

1. sDom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba
2. sKyes bu dam pa rnams la spring ba'i yi ge
3. Thub pa'i dgongs pa rab tu gsal ba
4. Phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems pa rnams la zhu ba'i 'phrin yig

These writings (here arranged in their approximate chronological order) are all mature works of Sa-pa. Two of them—the sDom gsum rab dbye and Thub pa'i dgongs gsal—are independent "technical treatises" (bstan bcos: šāstra) on Buddhist doctrine. Of this pair, the sDom gsum rab dbye is to a large extent a critical or controversial treatise. In it, Sa-pa uses an exposition of the interrelations and distinctions between the three systems of vows as the framework within which he makes many criticisms of contemporary Tibetan Buddhist theories and practices. He mentions the dkar po chig thub, for instance, in chapter 3, where he investigates the tantric system of vows, in the sub-section in which he examines Great Seal traditions.

The second of the two major doctrinal treatises—(no. 3) the Thub pa'i dgongs gsal—also contains a number of such criticisms of contemporary traditions, but here they are much less prominent, the main line of exposition being concerned mainly with setting forth positively the path of the Bodhisattva’s practices, following a traditional ordering of key topics as found in one verse of the MSA (XIX 61-62). The mentions of the dkar po chig thub occur in the chapter on the Six Perfections, in the section on the Perfection of Discriminative Understanding.
The remaining two works (nos. 2 and 4) are both epistles of sorts (sprin yig /'phrin yig). The first is addressed by Sa-pan to the "noble individuals"—i.e. excellent Buddhist practitioners—of Tibet. The second is a petition formally addressed to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe. Both epistles were meant to explain and justify his previous critical investigations and discussions of other Tibetan Buddhist traditions. They can be viewed as summaries and further clarifications of the comments made in the sDom gsun rab dbye and Thub pa'i dgongs gsal treatises.

The following translations of these extracts basically follow the texts as preserved in the Derge edition of Sa-pan’s collected writings, and as reprinted in the Sa skyapa'i bka’ bum (Tokyo: Tōyō Bunko, 1968), vol. 5. For the sake of convenience, I have used the same verse numbering for the sDom gsun rab dbye as in J. Rhoton (1985). Eventually these and all other important writings of Sa-pan will need to be critically edited.

A. Criticisms of the Self-sufficient White Remedy in the sDom gsun rab dbye

(1) The First Occurrence (p. 309.2-3-309.4.2 [na 25b-26b])

Even if [they] cultivate the Great Seal, it is merely a cultivation of the closing off (kha ’tshom) of discursive thought. Regarding the Gnosis born from the two stages [of tantric meditation practice], they do not know [it] as the Great Seal.

The meditative cultivation of the Great Seal by the ignorant is taught to be for the most part a cause of [rebirth] as an animal. If not [reborn as an animal], they are born in the sphere lacking even fine material (arupadhatu). Or else they fall into the cessation of the Śrāvaka.331

Even though that meditation may be excellent, it is not higher than the meditation of the Madhyamaka. Though that meditation of the Madhyamaka is indeed excellent, still it is very difficult to be realized.

As long as the two preparatory assemblages are not completed, for so long will that meditative cultivation not reach perfection. The completion of the two preparatory assemblages is taught to require an innumerable aeon.

Our Great Seal is the Gnosis arisen from tantric consecration332 and the spontaneously arisen Gnosis that has arisen from the samadhi of the two stages. The realization of this can be achieved in this life if one is skilled in means.333 The Buddha taught no other realization of the Great Seal besides that.

Therefore, if you feel confident appreciation for the Great Seal, practice it according to the basic scriptures of the Mantra tradition.

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Regarding the present-day Great Seal and the Great Perfection (rdzogs chen) of the Chinese tradition, in substance they are without difference, except in a change in the designation of names of "descending from above" and "climbing from below" as "Simultaneist" and "Gradualist."

The appearance of such a religious tradition occurred in exact accord with what the Bodhisattva Sāntaraksita had foretold to the king Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan. Listen, for I shall relate that prophesy:

"O king, here in this Tibetan land of yours, the [traditions of] the non-Buddhist Indian sectarianists will not arise because the Ācārya Padmasambhava has entrusted [it] to the twelve guardian deities (britan ma).

Nevertheless, through the cause of several interdependent [causes and conditions], the [Buddhist] religious tradition will become twofold. And regarding that, to begin with, a Chinese monk will appear after my death and will teach a Simultaneist path called the 'Self-sufficient White [Remedy].'

At that time, invite from India my student the great scholar called Kamalasāla, and he will refute him. Then, order that the faithful should practice in accord with his religious tradition."

Afterwards everything came to pass just as he had said. After the disappearance of that Chinese tradition, the religious tradition of the Gradualist was widely propagated. Later the royal polity disappeared, and Mahāmudrā will be impossible."

As for that which is the Great Seal of Naropa and Maitripāda—those respected one[s] maintained that very thing just as it is mentioned in the Mantra [tradition] Tantra: "That [mudrā includes] karma, dharma, samaya and Mahāmudrā."

Arya Nāgārjuna, too, taught [the Mahāmudrā] thus as the fourth mudrā: "If, by not understanding the karmamudrā one does not understand the dharmamudrā, the understanding of even the name of the Mahāmudrā will be impossible." In the other great Tantras and great treatises too, the Great Seal has been prohibited to the person who is unconnected with tantric consecration.

If one understands the Great Seal that is the Gnosis arisen from the consecration, there is no longer any dependence on all efforts possessing phenomenal marks (mtshan ma).

Nowadays some people, having transformed the mind [of the student] through mere reverence toward the guru, introduce a partial cessation of conceptual thought as the Great Seal.

The Tibetan text, chapter III, verses 160-182 (pp. 309.2.2-309.4.2 = na 25a-26a):

\[
\text{phyag rgya chen po bsgom na yangl/ rto pha kha 'tshom nyid bsgom gyi/ rim gnyis las byung ye shes la/ (160) phyag rgya chen po ril mi shes so/ blan po phyag rgya che bsgom pa/ phal cher dued 'gro'i rgyu ru gsungs/ min na gzugs med khams su skyel/ (161) yang na nyan thos 'gog par ltung/}
\]

\[
\text{gal te de ni bsgom legs kyang/ dbu ma'i bsgom las lhag pa med/ dbu ma'i bsgom de bzang mod kyil/ (162) 'on kyang 'grub pa shin tu}
\]

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337 Sa-pan in his ThGS, 50b-51a, attributes this passage to the Catumādrāniścaya of [the Tantric] Nāgārjuna. A similar passage is found in the canonical version of P. 3069 Phyag rgya bzhi gsal la dba' ba, vol. 68, p. 259.2.6 (rgud 'gel mi 82b): chos kyi phyag rgya ma shes pa las kyi phyag rgya bcos ma ba' bu' zhiig las lhun chen skyes pa'i rgyan bzhi msang ma ma yin pa ji lar 'byung zhung skyi bar 'goar/. Cf. bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, 88b-89b; L. Lhalungpa (1988), p. 100, where a work by the same title is attributed to Maitripāda. This work was apparently by a 'Klu-sgrub-snying-po who quotes as an authority (f. 82b.6) the famous rTen 'brel snying po verse beginning: bsdal bar ba ci yang med// gshag pa bya ba cung zad med//... There was a work entitled Phyag rgya bzhi pa attributed to Nāgārjuna whose authenticity was doubted by certain scholars of both India and Tibet. See Sākyā-mchog-ltan, Legs bshad ger gyi Thur ma, vol. 7, p. 81-83.5. This doubt is also briefly addressed by Go-rams-pa, sDom gsun ... 'khrul spong. p. 263.1.5 (45b).


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Mentions in Sa-pa's zDom gsum rab dbye

(2) The Second Occurrence (p. 313.3.1-3 [na 34a])

Some say that the three "Bodies" (kāya) [of Buddhahood] arise as an effect from a Self-sufficient White [Remedy] (dkar po chig thub). However, an effect cannot arise from a single [cause or condition]. Even if an effect could arise from a single [cause or condition], that result, too, would be a single thing, like the cessation (nirūda) of the Śrāvaka.340

Some say that the dedication of merit is needed after cultivating this "singly efficacious" (chig thub) [practice]. In that case the "singly efficacious" would become two-fold. If, in addition to that, one requires

340 For a discussion of this verse and Padma-dkar-po's replies, see D. Jackson (1990), p. 48ff.
such things as going for refuge, the generation of bodhicitta, and meditative practice involving a tutelary deity, the "singly efficacious" would be manifold. Therefore, such a tradition of a "singly efficacious" (chig thub) [practice] has not been taught by the Buddha.\(^{341}\)

The Tibetan text, chapter III, 346-350:

\[kha\ cig\ dkar\ po\ chig\ thub\ las\ (346)\ 'bras\ bu\ sku\ gsum\ 'byung\ zhes\ zer\ //\ gcig\ las\ 'bras\ bu\ 'byung\ mi\ nus\ //\ gal\ te\ gcig\ las\ 'bras\ bu\ zhih//\]

\[byung\ yang\ nyan\ thos\ 'gog\ pa\ bzhin// (347)\ 'bras\ bu\ de\ yang\ gcig\ tu\ 'gyur//\ 'ga\ chi\ chig\ thub\ bsgoms\ pa\ yil\ //\ rjes\ la\ bsnso\ ba\ bya\ dgos\ zer//\]

\['o\ na\ chig\ thub\ gnyis\ su\ 'gyur// (348)\ de\ la'ang\ skyabs\ 'gro\ sems\ bskyped\ dang//\ yi\ dam\ lha\ bsgom\ la\ sogs\ pall\ //\ dgos\ na\ chig\ thub\ du\ mar\ 'gyur//\ des\ na\ chig\ thub\ 'di\ 'dra'i\ lugs// (349)\ ndzogs\ sangs\ ngyas\ kyi\ gsungs\ pa\ med//\]

(3) The Third Occurrence (p. 315.4.4-5 [na 38b]):

The Conqueror has taught in all Sutras and Tantras that the root of all dharmas is emptiness whose essence is compassion, i.e. the integration of [skillful] means and discriminative understanding.

Some say that simple freedom from discursive elaborations is the Self-sufficient White [Remedy]. I fear that this, too, alters the essentials. Even though a few other doctrines that are not essentials may be incomplete or redundant, or are a little bit mistaken, this will not be capable of producing a great fault. If the essentials of the Teaching are altered, however good the other [parts of] the teaching are, one will not attain Buddhahood [thereby].

The Tibetan text, chapter III, 447-49:

\[gnad\ mams\ min\ pa'i\ chos\ gzhan\ 'ga'll\ ma\ tshang\ ba\ dang\ lhag\ pa\]

\(^{341}\) For a discussion of this passage, see D. Jackson (1990), pp. 35f.

\[^{342}\] This was discussed above by Sa-pa\(n\) in his DS, III 3ff = 18b.

\[^{343}\] As noted in the dissertation of J. Rhoton (1985), introduction, this tradition was identified by Go-rams-pa (\textit{zDom gsum rab dbye mam bshad}, p. 153.2.) as that of the dge-bshes Phyag-sor-ba, who gave the Bodhisattva vows to all manner of disciples after having dreamt of Maitreya on a great throne imparting the vows to a large gathering.

\[^{344}\] This refers to the fable of the foolish rabbit who panicked after hearing the loud splash (\textit{chat}) of something falling into the water, and who ran away, heedlessly spreading the rumor that something terrible and sinister was afoot. It is more or less the same as the fable of the rabbit who cried out: The sky is falling!” See also L. Lhalungpa (1986), p. 454, n. 163. bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, f. 289a, uses the same image in a critical reply to Sa-pa\(n\) (see L. Lhalungpa, p. 307).
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yi dam bsgom pa dkrongs bskyed dang/ dkar po chig thub la sogs pa/
(610)
sangs rgyas bstan dang 'gal ba yi/ chos log du ma deng sang 'phel/
mkhas mams 'di la mi dgyes kyang/ dus kyi shugs kyis bzlog ma nus/
(611)
blun po sbyang pa chung ba mams/ 'di 'dra spyod pa bden mod kyil/
mkhas pa sbyangs par rnom pa yang/ ri bong chal bzhin 'di la spyod/
(612)
'di 'dra'i rigs can 'phel gyur nal/ sangs rgyas bstan la gnod mi gnod/
mkhas pa mams kyis dpyod la smros/

(5) The Fifth Occurrence (pp. 320.1.5-320.2.1 [na 47a-b]):

In this way [just explained] one can maintain the Doctrine. You should know that if the opposite of that happens, it will harm the Doctrine. I, too, could gather a larger assembly than this if I taught the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] to those I had given the blessing-empowerment of Vajravaraha, and [if I] then taught the meaning of "nothing to be achieved through effort" after identifying as the Path of Seeing some slight meditative experience arisen in them. The offerings of wealth, too, would increase. In the minds of ignorant people, too, there would arise admiration [for me] as if I were the Buddha.

The Tibetan text, chapter III, 638-40:
'di las bzlog pa byung gyur nal/ bstan la gnod par shes par gyis/
bdag kyang rdo rje phag mo yi/ byin rlabs tsam re byas pa la/
(638)
dkar po chig thub bstan nas kyang/ myong ba cung zad skyes pa la/
mthong lam du ni ngo sprad nas/ rtsol bsgrub med pa'i don bstan nal/
(639)
tshogs pa'ang 'di bas mang ba 'dul/ longs spyod 'bul ba'ang mang bar 'gyur/
blun po mams kyi bsam pa la'ang/ sangs rgyas lta bur mos pa skye/
(640)

B. Sa-pan's Treatment of the dKar po chig thub in his sKyes bu dam pa mams la spring ba'i yi ge

In this work, the expression dkar po chig thub occurs in a summary and further discussion of the bSam-yas debate, pp. 331.4,6-332.4.3 (na 72a-74a = 3a-5a). A part of this passage has already been presented above in chapter 4.

The Chinese master said: "[Regarding] the cause for birth within Cyclic Existence, [it is] the outcome of one's not recognizing one's own nature (rang ngo rang gis ma shes pas). If one recognizes one's own nature, one awakens into Buddhahood. Therefore, if one directly recognizes mind (sems ngo 'phrod), [that] is the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] (dka' po chig thub)."[3b]

[The Chinese monk] composed five treatises. In order to establish the basic doctrinal tradition of this [or: of his], saying "It is sufficient to rest if one has confronted and recognized mind," [he wrote] the bSam gtan nyal ba'i 'khor lo. [To] reveal the main points of that, [he wrote] the bSam gtan gyi lon. To clarify [read: gsal?] its key points, [he wrote] the bSam gtan gyi yang lon. To establish through reasoning the practical instructions on that, [he wrote] the Ita ba'i rgyab sha. In order to establish it through scripture, [he wrote] the mDo sde bryad cu khung.[36]

And regarding the religion of his tradition, [he maintained that] there existed the two traditions of "Simultaneist" and "Gradualist," the so-called "descending from above" and "climbing from below."[37] "This [tradition] of ours is the simultaneous tradition that is similar to the eagle's descent from the sky," he said. Kamalaśīla refuted those [tenets], and having done so, he composed the great treatises such as the three Madhyamakāraṇas and the Madhyamakālōka. Then the king Khri Srong-lde'u-btsan had his [the Chinese master's] religious teachings concealed in

346 For some references to these works attributed to Mo-ho-yen, see D. Jackson (1987), p. 403, n. 104.
hidden caches, and ordered that henceforth in the Tibetan domain whoever practiced the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] would be punished. The historical accounts of these things can be seen to be in agreement [in the ancient records of] the rGyal bzhed, the dPa' bzhed, and the 'Bangs bzhed.348 I, too, set it forth following the Äcärya Kamaläšäla. I see that the intended sense of the Sütaras, Tantras and Sästras is also this.

[From] the Self-sufficient White [Remedy], the [attainment of] omniscience regarding all objects of knowledge is impossible. I understand that omniscience is achieved through an understanding of emptiness that is skilled in various [compassionate] means through the tradition of either the Mantra or Perfections [vehicles].

As it is said in the Bodhicaryävatära (IX 12):

And that illusion that arises from various conditions is various. Nowhere is it the case that a single condition is capable of all.

And as it is said many times in the [Pramäna] Värttika, such as (II 136c-):

From the becoming adept (goms pa), over a long period, at many means in numerous ways, [4a] the faults and excellent qualities will become manifest.

And (II 132a):

The Compassionate One, wishing to overcome suffering, applied himself to means. That goal [achieved through] means is 'hidden.' It is difficult to explain.

And [as stated in the Mahäyä nasütraämläkära]:349

Just as the particular features of the knotting makes a cloth brightly colorful or not, so too the power of the motivating force makes the

Gnosis of liberation brightly colorful or not.

And as it is said in the Vairocanäbhisambodhi Tantra:350

The teaching [by the Buddha] of disciplines and Gnosis that possess no means was expounded by the Great Hero for the sake of introducing the Śrävakas into that. Those who are the Buddhas of the past, present and future attained the unconditioned highest vehicle, having trained in that which possesses means and discriminative knowledge.

And likewise it is not taught in any Sütara, Tantra or great treatise that one can awaken to Buddhahood by a Self-sufficient White [simple method], as distinct from [through] the perfectly replete possession of means and discriminative knowledge. It is indeed taught in [some] Sütaras and Tantras that one can gain Buddhahood by merely respectfully saluting or circumambulating, and by offering one flower, or by reciting a single dhärani, or by reciting just the name of the Buddha, or by a single act of worshipful reverence, or by the arising of a single thought of Bodhicitta, or by the mere understanding of Emptiness. Yet one should understand those as being [statements with special] intention (dgongs pa) or allusion (Idem dgongs), but they are not direct expression. As Maitreyänätha said [in the Mahäyä nasütraämläkära I 20]:

If one understands the sense literally, one becomes haughty oneself and one's mind is destroyed.

For example, if the threads do not come together, the designs on the brocade will not appear. And if the seed, water and manure do not come together, [4b] the crop of a field will not appear. If all the interdependently connected [causes and conditions] do not come together, perfectly complete Buddhahood will not arise. Such is my understanding.

348 On the sBa bzhed and the others, see D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), pp. 67ff and n. 136. Sa-pan's mention of these sources was noted by A. Vostrikov already in the 1930s. These sources were also cited by Sa-pan in his ThGs 50b. See also the references in D. Jackson (1987), p. 403, n. 104.

349 MSA IX 35. Cf. Sa-pan, DS III 366-68 (34b-35a), where the same passage is quoted:

dgra bcom pa dang rang langs ngas // rdzogs pa'i langs ngas mam pa gsun //
mam par grol bar mthungs na yang (366) // bzung ngan thabs khyis phyis ba yin //
de yang mdo sde rgyan las ni // ji ltar mdud pa'i bya brag gis //
gos la tshon bkra mi bkra ba (367) // de bzhin 'phen pa'i dbang gis ni //
grol ba'i ye shes bkra mi bkra // de skad gsungs pa'ang don 'di yin //

Mentions in Sa-pan's sKyes bu dam pa...

350 Peking Tanjur rgyud tha 185b (p. 268.3.7):

gang dag 'das pa'i langs ngas dang // de bzhin gang dag ma byon dang //
gang yang da tai ne pon mams // thabs dang shes rab idan pa la //
bslabs nas bla med byang chub ni // 'das ma bzar pa des thob bo //
thabs dang mi idan ye shes dang // bsalbs pa dag kyang bshad pa ni //
dpa' bo chen po rnam thos mams // de la gung ba'i phyir bshad do //

Note that in Sa-pan's quotation, the order of the verses is reversed. The first three quarters have been condensed, and the wording differs slightly here and there, for instance reading byang chub instead of theg pa, de instead of des, gsungs pa instead of bshad pa, and gzhang pa instead of gzang ba'i. These differences do not materially affect the meaning, and may reflect an intermediate source or quotation from memory.
Generally speaking, one does require a direct recognition of the nature of mind. Nevertheless, this can be seen to be of two types: good and bad. If one directly recognizes the nature of mind having completed the attainment of Buddhahood. But without having completed the excellent qualities, no matter how excellent the direct recognition of mind is, it is taught that [in the best case a person can attain] the Arhatship of the Sravaka, in the middling case [he will be reborn in] the sphere lacking even fine substance (arūpadhātu), and in the worst case that one will be born in the evil destinies. A statement by Nagarjuna, namely (MMK XXIV 11): "If they err in the viewing of emptiness, those of small intelligence will be destroyed," was also stated with this in mind.

Similarly, though ears of grain must come from a field, there are two ways for them to come: good and bad. If the ears appear on completely developed stalks, that will be a good harvest. If they appear on [plants that] have not reached full development, there will be a poor harvest. Likewise the direct recognition of the nature of mind, too, will be sufficient if it occurs at the right time. If it happens at the wrong time, it is of no use. With these things in mind, it was taught in the Ratnakātiya Sūtra—how five hundred [monks] who would have attained Arhatship if Śāriputra had taught the Dharma were reborn as five hundred hell beings as a consequence of Manjusri’s teaching of Gradualist and Simultaneist [approaches] of those sorts, such as are nowadays widely known.

Moreover, two ways of teaching can be seen: (1) a gradual application [of the student] afterwards to practice having first taught him the theory, and (2) a subsequent teaching of theory, [after having taught him the practice from the beginning]. Yet, while these two are dissimilar stages of the path according to the particular features of mind, I have never seen them explained as Gradualist and Simultaneist.

In general, our master, the great Lord of Dharma of Sa-skya [Grags-pa-rgyal-mtshan], has taught: "Whether one does teaching or practice, if it accords with the Word of the Buddha, it is the Buddha’s Doctrine. If it does not accord, it will not be the Doctrine." This, my good sirs, is the significance also of our own energetically accomplishing [the teachings] in accord with his word. I request that you investigate whether this tradition is correct or incorrect.

The Tibetan text:

rgya nag mchan po na rdz 'khor ba skye ba'i rgyu rang ngo rang gis ma shes pas lan! rang ngo rang gis shes na 'thang rgyal de'i phyir sems ngo 'phrod na dkar po [72b] tshig thub yin! 'di yi gzhung 'dzugs pa la sems ngo 'phrod pa na nyal bas cho ga zer nas! bsam gian nyal ba'i 'khor lo! de'i gnad ston pa bsam gian gvi lori! de'i gags sel ba la bsam gian gvi yang lori! de'i gdams ngag rigs pas sgrub pa la lta ba'i rgyab shal! de lung gis sgrub pa la mdo sde brgyad cu khungs zhes bya ba bstan bcos Ina hyas! de'i lugs kyi chos la yang yas 'bab dang mas 'dzeg ces bya ba! cig car ba dang! rin gis pa'i lugs gnyis yod pa las! nged kyi 'di khyung nam mkha' las bab pa dang 'dra! cig car ba yin zer rol! de dag slob dpon ka ma la shi las sun phyung nas! dbu ma bsgom rim gsum dang! dbu ma snang ba la sogs pa bstan bcos chen po mdzad dol! de nas rgyal po khrong lde bisan gis! kho'i chos lugs mams gser du shas nas! da stan chad bod kyi rgyal khams su dkar po chig thub cu byed la chad pa yod do zhes khrims bcas! 'di dag gi lo rgyus mams! rgyal bzhed! dpa' bzhed! 'bangs bzhed mams mthun par snang! bdag gi kyang! slob dpon ka ma la shi la'i rjes su 'brangs nas bshad! mdo rgyud bstan bcos kyi dgon gyis pa'ang 'di yin par mthong! dkar po chig thub la shes bya thams cad mkhyen pa mi srid! gsang sngags sam pha rol tu phyin pa'i lugs kyi thabs sna tshogs la mkhas pa'i stong pa nyid go ba thams cad mkhyen pa nyid grub par gol! de'ang spyod 'jug las! sna tshogs rkyen las byung ba yil! sgyu ma de yang sna tshogs nyid/ rkyen gcig gis ni kun nus pa/ gang na yang ni yod ma yin!
zhes bya ba dang! rnam 'grel las!
 rnam pa du mar thabs [73a] mang pol! yun ring das su goms pa las!
de las skyon dang yon tan dag! rab tu gsal ba nyid du 'gyur!
zhes bya ba la sos pa du ma dang!
 brise ldan sdug bsngal gzhom 'dod pas! thabs rams la ni mngon shyor
 mzdad! thabs byung de ni lkg gyur pal! de 'chad pa ni dka' ba yin!
zhes gsungs pa dang! [mdo sde rgyan las]
 ji ltar mdud pa'i bye brag gis! gos la tshon bskra mi bskra bal!
de bzhin 'phen pa'i dbang gis na! grol ba'i ye shes bskra mi bskra!
zhes bya ba dang! rnam snang mngon byang las!
thabs dang mi ldan ye shes dang! bslab pa dag kyang gsungs pa nil!
dpa' po chen pos nyan thos rams! de la ghug pa'i phyir bshad dol!
gang dag dus gsum sangs rgyas mams! thabs dang shes rab ldan pa!
bslabs nas bla med theg pa nil! 'dus ma byas pa de 'thob pol!
zhes gsungs las! de bzhin du mdo sde dang rgyud sde! bstan bcos chen po
thams cad las kyang! thabs dang shes rab phun sum tshogs pa ma gtos pa
dkar po chig thub kyi 'tshang rgya bar ma gsungs! mdo rgyud las phyag gam
bskor ba tsam dang! me tog re phul ba'am! gzung re bton pa'am! sangs
rgyas kyi mishan tsam brjod pa'am! mos gus re byas pa'am! snying rje re
skyes pa'am! stong nyid go ba tsam gis 'tshang rgya bar gsungs pa yod
kyi! de dag ni dgongs pa dang! ldem dgongs su shes par bya'i! sgra drang
po ma yin tel! mgon po byams pas!
don sgra ji bzhin yongs rtags na!
bdag nyid bsnynems shing blo nyams
'gyur!
zhes gsungs pa litar rol!
dper na rgyu spun ma 'tshogs na za 'og gi ri mo mi 'byung la!
sa bon dang chu lau ma 'tshogs na! zhiig gi ston thog mi 'byung! rten 'brel thams
cad ma 'tshogs na! rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas mi 'byung bar go!
spiyir sens ngo 'phrod pa dgos mod! 'on kyang bzang nag gnyis su
snaang! thabs kyiis yon tan rdzogs nas sens ngo 'phrod na 'tshang rgya bar
'gyur la! thabs kyiis yon tan ma rdzogs par sens ngo 'phrod pa la ji ltar
bzang yang! nyan thos kyi dgra bcoml! 'bring gzung med kyi khams! tha ma
ngan song du skye bar gsungs! slob apon klu bgrub kyi!
ston pa nyid la lta na nyes na! shes rab chung rams phung bar 'gyur!
zhes gsungs pa yang de la dgongs! de bzhin du zhiig las snee ma 'od dgos
kyang! 'ong lugs bzang nag gnyis yod! sdong bu rdzogs nas snee ma byung
na lo legs 'byung! ma rdzogs par snee ma byung na lo nyes 'grol! de bzhin
du sens ngo 'phrod pa'ang! dus tshod la 'phrod pas chog! dus ma yin par

'phrod pa la gregs med! 'di dag la dglon nas! nam mkha'i snying po'i mdo
las!
blo sbyang ma byas sens can la! stong pa nyid ni sgrogs pa dang!
zhes blo ma sbyangs pa la stong pa nyid bshad pa la rtsa lung 'byung nal
stong nyid go na smos ci dgos! dkon mchog brtsegs pa las! shu'i ri bus chos
bshad na dgra bcom lnga brygar 'gro ba zhig! jam dapal gis chos gsungs pas!
dmyal ba pa lnga brygar skyes pa'ang! yon tan ma rdzogs par sens ngo
'phrod pa dgag pa'i phyir gsungs pa yin!
des na rgyud las rim gis pa dang!
cid car ba gnyis gsungs pa nil! bsnyen gnis la sos pa'i sdom pa dang!
yan than! sens tsam! dbu ma'i lta ba la rim gis sbyangs nas! phyis dbang
bskur bya stel! lam rim gnyis la slob nal! rim gis pa zhes bya la!
dang po [74a] nyid du gsang sngags kyi dbang bskur tel! rim pa gnyis la slob pa la
cig car ba zhes zer tel! 'deng sang grags pa'i rim gis pa dang!
cig car pa de lta bu mdo rgyud nas gsungs pa ma mthong!
yang dang po lta ba bstan nas!
phyis spyod pa la rim gis sbyor bal!
dang po spyod pa la rim gis sbyangs nas!
phyis lta ba ston pa'i bkti lugs gnyis snang stel!
'di gnyis blo'i bye brag gis lam rim mi 'dra ba yin gis!
'di dag la rim gis pa dang!
cig car ba bshad pa ma mthong!
spiyir nged kyi bla machos rjes skya pa chen po'i zhal
nas!
bshad pa dang lag len gang byed kyang!
sangs rgyas kyi gshang mthun na sngs rgyas bstan pa yin!
mthun na bstan par mi 'gyur zhes
gsungs!
nged kyi kyang de'i gsung bzhin 'bad nas bsgrub pa'i don lags!
lugs 'di 'thad mi 'thad mam par dpyad par zhub!

Mentions in Sa-pan's sKyes bu dam pa...
C. Sa-pan’s Refutation of Earlier and Later dKar-po-chig-thub Doctrines in the Thub pa’i dgongs gsal

The following discussion is found in the Thub pa’i dgongs gsal, pp. 24.4.3-26.1.4 (tha 48b-51a).351

(1) Account of the bSam-yas Debate

The refutation of a previously appeared Chinese tradition. In the time of the king Khri Srong-lde’u-btsan, there was a Chinese monk who taught the following: “Words have no real pith. By means of a dharma of conventional usage [expressible through words and including conventional practices] one will not gain Buddhahood. If one understands the mind, that is the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] (dkar po chig thub). Having composed treatises entitled bSam gtan nyal ba’i ‘khor lo, bSam gtan gyi lon, [bSam gtan gyi] yang lon, ITa ba’i rgyab sha, and mDo sde brgyad cu khungs, he spread throughout the realm of Tibet this doctrine of the Self-sufficient White [Remedy].

Then, because that doctrine did not accord with the [Buddhist] religious tradition of India, [49a] the king invited dBa’ Ye-shes-dbang-po [to court] and asked him which religious tradition was true, that of India or of China. Ye-shes-dbang-po told the king:

Ācārya Śāntarakṣita stated this in the testament that he left behind: “The heterodox [non-Buddhist] religion will not arise [in Tibet] because the Ācārya Padmasambhava has entrusted the Tibetan realm to the twelve guardian deities (brtan ma). But it is the "greatness" [i.e. essence] of dependent origination that things appear in pairs—day and night, right and left, waxing and waning [of the moon], and [even] pure and impure [Buddhist] religion. Consequently, after I have died, there will appear a Chinese master. And there will appear [his] doctrine, a denigration of means and discriminative understanding called the Self-sufficient White [Remedy], which will teach that one gains Buddhahood through merely the understanding of mind. Since the Lord Buddha taught in a Sūtra that one of the five impurities, the impurity of view, is the delighting in emptiness, it is the nature of

351 Cf. Roger Jackson (1982), pp. 91-93.
things that not only [some people] in Tibet, but all individuals in whom the five impurities thrive, delight in that. If this spreads, it will harm the doctrine of the Buddha in general. Therefore, at that time, you should invite from India my disciple the great scholar named Kamalaśīla and have him debate with the Chinese master. Then let the tradition of whoever wins be followed!"

Since [Śāntarakṣita] foretold this, I beg you [O king] to act accordingly.

[The king] then invited Ācārya Kamalaśīla and [convened a meeting]. At bSam-yas the king and the learned men acted as witnessing arbiters, and collected all weapons. When garlands of flowers had been placed in their hands, the disputants vowed to bow [in respectful submission] to the victor and to discard the defeated tradition. They also assented that whoever did otherwise should be punished by the king.

At that time, in the row of Kamalaśīla, there were only several adherents of the Indian religious tradition and a very few others such as the minister 'Gos. [49b] In the row of the Chinese preceptor, there was assembled a very large group that included the royal consort of the 'Bro clan named Byang-chub and the chamberlain (gzim mal ba) gCo-rma-rma.

At that time, the Ācārya Kamalaśīla elicited his opponent's position by asking: "What is the religious tradition of China like?" The Chinese master then replied: "Your religious tradition, which begins with taking refuge and generating a resolve to attain Awakening, climbs from the bottom up, like a monkey climbing to the top of a tree. This religious tradition of ours consists of attaining Buddhahood through merely understanding the mind, having cultivated in meditation the absence of conceptual thinking, because one cannot attain Buddhahood through a Dharma that consists of accomplishing actions [e.g., religious duties]. Our tradition is called the Self-sufficient White [Remedy], because it is a religious teaching that descends from above, like an eagle descending out of the sky onto the top of a tree."

To that Kamalaśīla replied: "Both your analogy and your meaning are unacceptable. Of these two, first of all your analogy is unacceptable. Does that eagle descend from the sky to the top of a tree after having taken birth suddenly with completely developed wings? Or does he descend having first been born somewhere [on the ground] such as on a crag and then having developed wings? The first [alternative] is impossible. And the second is suitable as an analogy for the gradual approach, but it is not suitable as an analogy for the simultaneous approach."

Then, when the Chinese preceptor had no reply regarding his analogy, the Ācārya Kamalaśīla said: "Not only is your analogy wrong, but your meaning is also mistaken. What is that meditative cultivation of non-conceptualization? Is it merely the stopping of one part of conceptual thought, or does one have to stop conceptual thinking in its entirety? If you say it is the stopping of one part, then the consequence would be that such things as sleep and fainting would also be 'non-conceptualizing,' because they possess a mere stopping of one part of thought. If you say it is the stopping of conceptualizing thought in its entirety, in that case [I must ask:] When you meditatively cultivate non-conceptualizing, do you or do you not need to formulate beforehand the thought, 'I will cultivate non-conceptualizing'? If you do not need to, [50a] then that meditative cultivation would arise in all sentient beings of the three realms of existence (dhātus), for meditation would be born even though a thought of meditating had not been formulated beforehand.

"If you do need to formulate beforehand the thought of cultivating non-conceptually, since that is itself conceptual thinking, your assertion of meditatively cultivating non-conceptualization is ruined. Just as, for example, one's observance of silence is broken if one says, 'Don't make any noise!'"

Thus, with such words as these, Kamalaśīla refuted [that doctrine] by means of scripture and reasoning. Thereupon the Chinese master lost the capacity to respond. At that, the king said: "If you have an answer, then please give it." The master responded: "I am as if struck on the head by lightning; I know no answer." The king said: "In that case, offer the garland of flowers to the Ācārya and beg his pardon. Abandon the religious tradition of the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] and practice according to the religious tradition of India that does not conflict with either scripture or reasoning." [The king] promulgate throughout Tibet the edict: "Henceforth whoever follows the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] will be punished." And the Chinese texts were gathered together and hidden in a cache at bSam-yas.

Thereupon the Chinese master felt distraught and returned to his residence. It is said that when going he accidentally left behind at the religious school one of his shoes, and that on the basis of that sign he prophesied to his followers: "When the doctrine of the Buddha is about
to perish, there will yet remain a little of my doctrine—as much as a
"352 shoe." Afterwards learned religious teachers of Tibet said: "Though
the Chinese master did not understand religious doctrine, he did know a
bit about prognostication, for that [leaving behind of his shoe] is the
reason why nowadays people are discarding genuine religious traditions
and are going over to the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] that holds that
one attains Buddhahood by the direct recognition of mind." [50b]
I have also seen written in another testament (bka’ chems) an account
that a Chinese monk other than that preceptor left his shoe behind when
despondently leaving for China, and that the above [prediction] was said
about his shoe being left behind.
Then the Chinese master lit a fire on top his head and facing toward
Sukhivatt in the west, he passed away. gCo-rma-rma the chamberlain
committed suicide by beating his sexual organ, and so on and so forth.
Here I have not set down the rest of the story because this book will
become too long. But one should read about it in the rGyal bzhed, dPa’
bzhed and 'Ba’ bzhed histories."353

(2) Refutation of A Present-day Great Seal Linked with that Tradition

The Refutation of the Tradition of Recent Generations [which Follows
That]. Nowadays there are some people [who teach the following] instructions on the Great Seal:354

Avoiding the three delaying diversions (gol sa) and the four occasions
of lapsing (shor sa), one should cultivate the innate [mind], letting it
be original, unaltered and relaxed, like the spinning of a Brahmin’s
[sacred] thread.

They say the sense of that is: Meditational cultivation of the Great Seal
can become delayingly diverted in pleasure, luminosity or non-
conceptualization. If one becomes delayingly diverted in pleasure, one
will be reborn a god of the sphere of desire (kāmadhātu). If one becomes
delayingly diverted in luminosity (gsal ba), one will [be reborn as a god]
in the sphere of "fine material" (rūpadhātu). And if one becomes
delayingly diverted in non-conceptualization, one will be born in the
sphere lacking even fine material (arūpadhātu).

The four occasions for lapsing are (a) lapsing into [erroneous conceptions of] the original nature [of the ultimate] (gshis la shor), (b)
lapsing into [erroneous] meditative cultivation (bsgom du shor), (c) lapsing
into [erroneous conceptions of the] path (lam du shor), and (d) lapsing
into [erroneous] "sealing" (rgyas ‘debs su shor). Avoiding these, one should
place the mind in the "original" (so ma), "unaltered" (ma bcos), "relaxed"
(lhugs pa), "softly at ease" (’bol le), and "loosened" (?) (shig ge) state, like
the spinning of a Brahmin’s sacred thread.

This [teaching] follows the Self-sufficient White [Remedy] of China,
but it is not the Great Seal taught by the Buddha. Moreover, the Great
Seal in general was not explained in the Sūtra, Vinaya or Abhidharma
scriptures. In particular, I have never seen in those the teaching of a Great Seal (Skt. mahāmudrā) such as this. In the four divisions of the
Tantras, there are explained [the four mudrās] as in the passage: "karma,
dhāraṇa, samaya and Mahāmudrā."355 But the above is not the system
of those four. In the Caturmudrāniścaya of Arya Nāgārjuna it is said:356

If those who do not understand the karmamudrā will not understand
the dharmamudrā, [51a] how will they understand even the name of
Mahāmudrā?

Likewise, that sort of the Great Seal is refuted in the Tantras and [tantric]
treatises, though here I have not written down the [relevant] quotations
from scripture because they belong to the Mantra tradition.

[Question:] Even though this [Great Seal] may not be explained in the
Sūtras, Tantras and treatises, is there any contradiction in practicing
them? [Answer:] The above [teaching] contradicts the Sūtras and Tantras,
and it is clearly unacceptable from the point of view of reasoning [when
one analyzes it]. The reason is that it is a greater delaying diversion to be

352 On the motif of the shoe or boot left behind, see D. Seyfort Ruegg (1989), p. 13,
33 n. 16.
353 These sources were also quoted in the skYes bu dam pa 3b. For more references,
see above, note 348.
354 This is attributed by bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal (263a) to rje Phag-mo-gru-pa. See also
355 bKra-shis-rnam-rgyal, f. 89a, refers to these four as appearing in Naropa’s
commentary on the Hevajra Tantra and in Maitripāda’s (sic) Caturmudrāniścaya. See also
356 The similar quotation found in the Phyag rgya bzhi gan la dbab pa (P. 3069)
appears in the translated section of the sDom gsum rab dbye, part 2.A.1 (DS III 177-8).
See above, note 337.
born as a god with no freedom to practice religion than to be born as one of the gods of the three [above-mentioned] delaying diversions, since all Sutras and Tantras contain the prayer: "May I not be born in the eight circumstances that lack the freedom to practice religion!" Another reason is that some methods of [meditation through] letting one's mind remain in an unaltered state are explained as the "meditative cultivation of delusion" (rtogs pa'i sgrub pa), being mentioned with the words:

One who meditatively cultivate [unconscious, unaware] delusion will attain delusion through delusion.

And another reason is that it has not even the slightest difference from delaying diversions of the Sravaka and Pratyekabuddha. .... [Several lengthy quotations follow, here omitted.]

The Tibetan text:

gsum pa nyan thos dang theg chen gnyis ka ma yin pa sangs rgyas kyi bstan par 'dod pa dag pa la bzhis stel sngon byung ba rgya nag gi lugs dang/ de'i rjes su 'brang ba phyi rabs pa'i langs dang/ deng sang grags pa sens tsam mam med kyi sgrub la phyag rgya chen por 'dod pa'i langs dang/ shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa litar snang phyag rgya chen por 'dod pa dag pa'ol/ dang po ni rgyal po khris srog ide btsan gyi dus su rgya nag gi dang long na rel/ tshig la snying po med tha snyad kyi chos kyi 'tshang mi rgya sems rtags na dkar po chig thub yin zer/ de'i btsan bcos gsam gtan nyid ba'i 'khor la/ bsam gtan gyi lon/ yang lond lla ba'i phyab shal/ mdo sde bryad cu khungs zhes bya ba btsams nas/ dkar po chig thub 'di bod kham thams cads du 'dod la/ der rgya gar gyi chos langs dang ma mthun nas dpa' ye [49a] shes dbang po rgyas po spyan drangs rgya gar rgya nag gi chos langs gbbu brens pa/ ye shes dbang po'i zhal nas slob dpon zhi ba mthos zhal chems 'di litar bzhag stel/ bod kham 'di slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi btsan ma bceu gnyis la gtag pas mu stegs ni mi 'byung/ 'on kyang nyin mthshan dang g,yas g,yon dang yar ngo mar ngo dang chos ma dag gnyis gnyis 'byung ba rten 'grel gyi che ba yin pas/ da 'dus pas og tu rgya nag gi mkhan po zhih 'byung des thabs dang shes rab la skar ba 'debs pa dkar po chig thub ces bya ba sens rtags pa 'ba' zhih gis 'tshang rgya'o zhes zher ba gcig 'byung bar 'gyur/ de bcom ldan 'das kyi sdo las/ snyigs ma lnga'i nang na lta ba'i snyigs ma zhes bya ba stong pa nyid la dga' ba yin par gsangs par bsho kha nor ma zad snyigs ma lnga bdo ba'i gang zag thams cad de la dga' ba chos nyid yinl/ 'di 'phel na sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa spyi la gnod pas/ de'i the nga'i slob ma ka ma la shi la zhes bya ba'i mkhas pa chen po de rgya gar nas sphyen drongs la rgya nag mkhan po dang rtsod du chug dang rgyal ba de'i lugs gshis shes ces long bstan pas de litar mtha/ 'shal/ zhes zhus nas slob dpon ka ma la shi la sphyen drangs/ bsam yas su rgyal po dang mkhas pa mams kyi dbang po byas nas thams cad kyi mishon cha mams bsdus lag tu me tog gi phreng ba gtag nas/ dang rgyal ba la btud de pham pa'i langs por/ de ltar mi byed ba mams la rgyal pos chad pas gcod par dam bcas pa'i tshel ka ma la shi la'i gral du/ rgya gar gyi chos lugs 'dzin pa 'ga' dang blon po 'gos [49b] la sogs pa nyung/ zad cig las ma byung/ rgya nag mkhan po'i gral du rgyal po'i bsun mo 'bro za byang chub dang gzi[m] dmal ba gco rma la sogs pa tshogs pa shin tu che bar 'dus sol/ de'i thes slob dpon ka ma la shi las/ rgya nag gi chos lugs ji litar zhes phyogs snga dris pa nal/ rgya nag na rel/ khyed kyi chos lugs skyabs 'gro dang sams bskyed nas bzung nas spre'u shing rtser 'dzeg pa litar mas 'dzeg yinl/ nged kyi chos lugs 'di bya byed kyi chos kyi 'tshang mi rgya bas mam par mi rtag pa bsogms nas sams rtags pa nyid kyi 'tshang rgyal stel khyung nam mkha' las shing rtser 'bab pa litar yas 'bab kyi chos yin pas dkar po chig thub yin no zhes zer rol/

de la slob dpon gnis dpe don gnis ki ma 'thad pa la thog mar dpe mi 'thad del/ khyung nam mkha' las glo bur du 'dab gshog rdzogs par skyes nas shing rtser 'bab baml/ brag la sogs par skyes nas rim gis 'dab gshog rdzogs par byas te 'bab/ dang po ni mi srid la/ gnyis pa ni rim gis pa'i dper nung gi cig car ba 'dper mi rnyug ngol/ de nas mkhan pos dpe la lar ma thebs pa dang/ der slob dpon gnis khyod kyi dpe nor bar ma zad don yang 'khrul tel/ nam par mi rtag pa sogs de ci mams rtag phyogs gcig bkag pa tsam yin nam/ mam rtag mtha' dag dag agos/ phyogs gcig bkag pa yin no zhe nal/ de ltar na gnyid dang bryad ba la sogs pa yang mam par mi rtag par thal/ rtag pa phyogs gcig bkag pa tsam yod pa'i phyir rol/

mam par rtag pa mtha' dag bkag pa yin no zhe nal/ de ltar khyod mi rtag po sogs pa tshes mi rtag pa bsogs snyam pa'i rtag po sogs du ghtong dgos sam mi agos/ mi dgos na kham gsam gyi sams can thams [50a] cad la'ang sogn skye bar that tel/ bsogs snyam pa'i rtag po sogs du ma biang yang sogn skye ba'i phyir rol/ mi rtag po sogn snyam pa'i rtag po sogn du ghtong dgos na de nyid rtag po yin pas mi rtag po bsogs pa'i dam bca' nyams
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Mentions in Sa-pan's Thub pa'i dgongs gsal

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D. Criticisms of the dKar-po-chig-thub or Great Seal
in Sa-pan's Phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas dang
byang chub sms pa thams cad la phul ba'i yi ge

In this work, the criticisms of the dkar po chig thub is found on pp. 326.2.3-326.3.2 (na 60b.3-61a.2 = 6b-7a):

[O Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,] in Your scriptures it is taught that the cultivation of the Great Seal is a Gnosis arisen from consecration and a special meditative absorption (samādhi) of the two stages [of tantric meditation]. Some people, regarding the Self-sufficient White [Remedy], introduce [it] as the Great Seal. [They teach the following] and term it "Great Seal":

Having avoided the four occasions of lapsing and the three delaying diversions, one ought meditatively to cultivate the primordial mind (mnyug ma).

Like spinning a Brahmin thread, one should leave it in the original, unaltered, relaxed [state]."

When I examine the sense [of] this, I see the following: If one leaves it in its original state, it is just [fibres of] wool. If one makes it into a thread, it is altered. Therefore there exists here a fault in the analogy.357

Moreover, I see the faults of meaning, as follows: If one attained the Great Seal merely by avoiding the three delaying diversions, the Srāvaka cessation, too, would be that.358

The thought, "I will avoid the four occasions for lapsing," is not the Great Seal. [But] without [that] thought, one is unable to avoid them. If one could avoid them even in the absence of [that] thought, why would the Great Seal not arise effortlessly for all sentient beings? Therefore if it is the Great Seal itself, it is without delaying diversions and occasions for lapsing. If it has them, it is not the Great Seal.359 [61a = 7a]

Therefore [You, O Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,] have not taught a Great Seal of such a religious tradition.

Consequently [I] do not maintain that Great Seal which was not taught in the Tantras. When I announce that publicly, those who do not know the Tantras become angry.

Who is right, those angry ones or I? O Conquerors and Sons, I pray that you consider [this].

The Tibetan text:

phyag rgya chen po bsgom pa yang// dbang las byung ba'i ye shes dang// rim gnyis ting 'dzin khyad par can// yin zhes khyed kyi gsung las 'byung//

kha cig dkar po tshig thub la// phyag rgya chen po ngo sprod byed// shor sa bzhi dang gol sa gsum// spangs la gnyug ma bsgom par bya//

bram ze skud pa 'khal ba ltar// so ma ma bcos thug par gzhag// 'di la phyag rgya chen po zer// 'di don brtags na 'di ltar mthong//

so mar bzhag na bal nyid yin// skud par byas na bcos par 'gyur// de phyir 'di la dpe skyon yod// don gyi skyon yang 'di ltar mthong//

gol sa gsum po bcad tsam gyis// phyag rgya chen po 'gyur na nil// nyan thos 'gog pa'ang der 'gyur ro// shor sa bzhi po spang snyam pa'i//

rnam rtog phyag rgya chen po min// rtog pa med na spong mi nus// rtog pa med kyang spong nus na// sens can kun la 'bad med par//

phyag rgya chen po cis mi skye// des na phyag rgya chen po nyid// yin na shor sa gol sa med// yod na phyag rgya chen po [61a] min//

de phyir 'di 'dra'i chos lugs kyil// phyag rgya chen po gsungs pa med// des na rgyud nas ma gsungs pa'il// phyag rgya chen po de mi 'dod//

de skad bdag gis bsgrags pa la// rgyud sde mi shes pa mams khro// khro ba de dang bdag gang bden//

ABBREVIATIONS

BCA = Śāntideva, Bodhicaryāvatāra
D = Derge edition
DS = Sa-pan, sDom gsum rab dbye
KhJ = Sa-pan, mKhas 'jug
MMK = Nāgārjuna, Mulamadhyamakakārikās
MSA = Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra
P = Peking edition
PV = Dharmakirti, Pramāṇavārttika
RGV = Ratnagotravibhāga
ThGS = Sa-pan, Thub pa'i dgongs gsal
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