

### **Hōnen Revisited: A Reappraisal of a Great Heretic**

In October 1994 I submitted a doctoral thesis to the Faculty of Non-European Languages and Cultures of Philipps University, Marburg (Germany), which bore the title, “Hōnens Buddhismus des Reinen Landes: Reform, Reformation oder Häresie? [Hōnen’s Pure Land Buddhism: Reform, Reformation or Heresy?]. The study will be published in early 1996. Since I am well aware of the regrettable fact that this dissertation, being written in German, will reach only a quite limited audience, I thought it might be a good idea to summarize some of the main results in English, in order to offer them for discussion in a broader forum.

The main purpose of the study is to reappraise critically and thoroughly the life and teachings of the monk Hōnen-bō Genkū (1133–1212, hereafter Hōnen) by examining the original biographical and doctrinal sources. Based on this investigation an attempt is made to categorize Hōnen as a certain type of religious leader from the viewpoint of religious history, taking the historical and political context into account. First of all, however, the study discusses the prevailing images of Hōnen in Western and Japanese literature. Most of the Japanese works on Hōnen are still apologetic in character. Hōnen is treated as a great saint, almost a kind of saviour, who in 1175 founded the first independent Pure Land sect in Japan, thereby institutionalizing an easy and certain way to deliverance for everybody. He is regarded as the first of the Buddhist reformers of the Kamakura period, standing in line with Eisai, Dōgen, Nichiren, and Shinran. A critical evaluation of his real historical significance from the standpoint of religious studies has yet to be carried out.

The majority of Western authors have adopted the sectarian stereotypes, although American researchers such as A. Andrews and others have contributed much to a correction of the traditional clichés. German theologians and scholars of religion in the first half of this century—most of them belonged to the phenomenological school and stressed a comparative approach—tried to incorporate Hōnen into a typology of religious authorities. As a result of this classification Hōnen was regarded as belonging to the charismatic type of reformer. Rather arbitrary comparisons of some of Hōnen’s

and Luther's doctrinal statements—totally ignoring the respective historical contexts—lead to the belief that there must have been strong parallels between the *ikkō-senju-nenbutsu* movement lead by Hōnen and the Protestant Reformation in Europe.

In the following part of the study the current theories about the so-called New Kamakura Buddhism are discussed. It is shown how difficult it is to find certain characteristic features (e.g. exclusivism, simplicity, reductionism, popularity) which would allow us to clearly distinguish the New Sects (this designation is traditionally used for Jōdo-shū, Rinzai-shū, Sōtō-shū, Nichiren-shū, and Jōdo-shinshū) from the reform wings of the old schools, such as those of Myōe, Eizon, etc. As a matter of fact, the designation “New Kamakura Sects” does not tell us much more about the thus designated sects than the simple fact that they are sects which claim to be founded by a certain man who lived in the Kamakura period. There is no homogeneous phenomenon which might be called New Kamakura Buddhism. Fortunately in recent years Japanese scholars like Kuroda Toshio, Sasaki Kaoru and Taira Masayuki—but also Western authors like J. Foard—have criticized the old conception and paved the way for a new interpretation by strongly taking into consideration the historical, social and political circumstances of the late Heian and the Early Kamakura periods.

Due to the fact that there exist about fifteen biographies of Hōnen which were written during the first hundred years after his death, along with a number of other sources, a decision had to be made as to which version of Hōnen's life should be presented in the study. I decided to follow the sequence of events which is given in Shunjō's quasi-authoritative 48-volume *Illustrated Life of Hōnen Shōnin*. Collating this text with the other biographies I mention every significant divergence in the sources in footnotes. Problematic and dubious points in Hōnen's vita which are of major importance for a realistic evaluation of his person are discussed in detail in the subsequent chapter.

First of all Hōnen's connection with the *hijiri* movement is examined. I try to show that his decision to live a life as a hermit in Kurodani was quite natural. A monk of relatively low descent would have had no real chance to rise to a high rank in the clerical hierarchy. Thus many monks who were earnestly interested in religious things did what Hōnen did: they retired from the secular life—this implies the monastic life around the big temples as well—for a second time and chose to dwell and practice in remote small temples, the so-called *bessho*, which were associated with the Enryaku-ji, the Tōdai-ji or another head temple. The stress which is laid upon the violent death of Hōnen's father as the primary motivation for his retreat to Kurodani by the biographers might therefore be merely a hagiographical topos. The early community which gathered around Hōnen in Ōtani from 1175 onwards was obviously one of a number of groups of *nenbutsu hijiri*. Much larger *nenbutsu hijiri* groups were located on Mount Kōya, Mount Kōmyō

and at the Shitennō-ji. Tradition has it that Hōnen left Mount Hiei for a study trip to the south in 1156 in order to discuss doctrinal problems with renowned scholars of other schools. Following Santa Zenshin, I believe it to be more likely that Hōnen went to the south in 1175 after he had finally departed from his teacher Eikū and had moved from Kurodani to Hirodani on Nishiyama, where he stayed with Yūren-bō Enshō for a short while. The reason for his leaving Mount Hiei was probably not, as is traditionally believed, his wish to found a Pure Land sect and to propagate the teaching of the single-minded and exclusive *nenbutsu*, to which he allegedly converted immediately before that. Nor is it very likely that the growing hostility of other monks towards his doctrinal position forced him to leave the holy mountain of the Tendai-shū. In all likelihood he left Kurodani to release his teacher from a dilemma concerning the election of his successor. Eikū had promised Hamuro Akitoki that he would appoint his grandson Shinkū his successor, but in regard to age and ability he should have appointed Hōnen. Thus Hōnen cleared the situation by leaving Kurodani. This gave him the opportunity to visit the *nenbutsu* practitioner Enshō, of whom Hōnen had already heard. Furthermore, Hōnen was eager to learn about the Pure Land doctrines of the southern schools and, above all, to gain access to the complete version of Shandao's *Commentary to the Meditation Sūtra*, which was available on Mount Hiei only in a fragmentary version. He knew that copies of the text existed in the Byōdō-in of Uji as well as in Nara. Enshō may have helped Hōnen to establish contact with eminent priests in Nara. All in all it is most likely that Hōnen's conversion took place during his study trip and was caused by a passage in the fourth scroll of Shandao's *Commentary*. Perhaps because the biographers were either interested in presenting Hōnen as a Tendai thinker or as someone who was totally independent of all doctrinal traditions, we are not informed as to whether the highly developed Pure Land teachings of the southern schools did influence Hōnen in any way, although we may assume that he must have received valuable suggestions in the ideas of Yōkan and Chinkai.

One of the most important problems is the question of whether Hōnen really founded an independent Pure Land sect after his conversion. The case seems to be quite clear: in publications of Jōdo-shū members Hōnen is often simply called the *shūso* and Hōnen himself is quoted in the *Ichigo-monogatari* as saying: "When I founded the Jōdo-shū it was my intention to indicate the ordinary man's birth [in the Pure Land]." However, the term *shū* has various meanings, the word "sect" representing only one of them. Thus, Hōnen's statement does not inevitably mean that he wanted to, or actually did, establish a sectarian organization. The opposite seems to be the case. After proposing a definition of the sociological phenomenon "sect", I attempt to show why I believe that Hōnen did not even aim at institutional emancipation from the Tendai-shū or the founding of an autonomous Pure Land sect. The following are the main reasons for my conviction:

1. Hōnen did not present a genuine genealogy of Pure Land masters whom he regarded as his direct predecessors.
2. He did not appoint one of his disciples his successor.
3. He did not develop his own classification scheme (*kyōsō hanjaku*)
4. He did not build any temple as a centre for the *nenbutsu* community.
5. He did not create an independent system for the ordination of practitioners of the exclusive *nenbutsu*.

Hōnen seems to have believed, at least until 1207, that it would be possible for his community to remain as a group or faction inside the Tendai-shū. It is true that he stressed, following Daochuo's classification scheme, the distinction of the "Holy Path" and the "Pure Land Gate", but we may assume that he did not see the necessity of an institutional split along this line. Up to his times the two major divisions of Japanese Buddhism were the "exoteric" (*ken*) and the "esoteric" (*mitsu*) teachings. Both divisions formed an integral part of the Tendai-shū. Why not add the "*jōdo*" to it as a third category? One of the main reasons for the subsequent formation of several Pure Land sects after Hōnen's death was, I believe, the repression against the *nenbutsu* followers. It was the Tendai-shū which expelled the community which they denounced as heretical.

It was most certainly not just jealousy of Hōnen's success which arose the hostility of the established schools of Buddhism. The learned representatives of the so-called *kenmitsu* system saw quite clearly how dangerous Hōnen's teachings were, at least when interpreted in a biased manner by illiterate persons who doubtlessly constituted the majority of the *ikkō-senju-nenbutsu* movement. Although Hōnen himself never subsequently abstained from practices other than the recitative *nenbutsu*, he publicly preached the superiority of the *nenbutsu*, not only for spiritually weak commoners but for all mankind. Although for him, perhaps, exclusive practice was primarily a matter of the right mental attitude rather than actual abstinence from all other practices, his demand to abandon them could only lead to intolerance and fanaticism among less moderate *nenbutsu* practitioners.

Furthermore, Hōnen's disregard for the gods (*kami*) for the sake of the undivided worship of Amida involved the risk of being taken as an invitation to disobedient behaviour. The belief in the holiness of certain domains which were possessed by divinities—the temples as the actual feudal lords only functioning as stewards—was an important ideological pillar of the feudal system. Disobedience against the feudal lords meant disobedience against the gods, Buddhas or Bodhisattvas and was cruelly punished in the netherworld. Agricultural workers who did not believe in the power of the divine owner of the domain they had to cultivate, were always liable to refuse to work under certain circumstances.

However, Hōnen did not only refuse to pay worship to divinities other than Amida, but also refused to accept the prevailing *hongaku* doctrine which, among other things, maintained that the distinction of “pure” and “impure” spheres was only a matter of perception. People who experienced their lives as full of suffering did so, not because Japan belonged to the *sahā* world and was thus a defiled land, but because they were unenlightened as a result of bad karma accumulated in the past. Political resistance was as useless as striving for another world. In contrast to this monistic and immanent world view, Hōnen, in his strictly dualistic and transcendent way of thinking, taught (at least implicitly) that this world was clearly impure and to be abandoned as fast as possible, that *nenbutsu* followers did not have to care for the prosperity of the state, and that social differences are only provisionally valid in this impure world. In his doctrine there was no room for ideas such as the sacredness of secular rule.

In accordance with his other-worldly orientation, Hōnen did not care for the current ideology of the mutual dependence of religion and state. Thus he ignored the fact that nobody could dare to preach a new doctrine publicly, which he said was superior to the traditional ones, without any official permission by the government. Such presumption on the part of an ordinary monk without rank could simply not be accepted.

It is important to note that the secular authorities hesitated to take assertive actions against the *nenbutsu* movement, not only because some influential persons sympathised with Hōnen and his teachings, but also because they were obviously unaware of the dangerous political implications of the *ikkō-senju-nenbutsu* movement. On the contrary! They feared that any action against Buddhism might arouse the anger of the divine beings. Accordingly the government did not persecute the *nenbutsu* movement earnestly until reports about the gross misbehaviour of some *nenbutsu* followers accrued to an unbearable extent.

To find out which doctrinal points provoked the opposition of the Buddhist establishment, I have thoroughly examined the criticism of the priests of Kōfuku-ji, which was written down by Gedatsu-bōjōkei in a petition to the court. However, Hōnen’s Pure Land doctrine was not only attacked by the established Buddhist schools but also by other representatives of the so-called New Kamakura Buddhism. I try to show how Nichiren in his attempt to revive true Tendai Buddhism and to protect it against the evil influence of the *nenbutsu* followers, failed to acknowledge that the Tendai-shū was pluralistic and tolerant by nature as well as the fact that every *kyōsō hanjaku* system was only an apologetic device. Although the Tendai thinkers stood firmly on the ground of Zhiyi’s classification scheme as developed in the *Miaofa lianhua jing xuanyi*—which was in fact not the only *panjiao* of Zhiyi—and on this basis maintained the superiority of the *Lotus Sūtra*, they did not deny the other schools’ natural right to believe in the correctness of their respective classification schemes. Nichiren, however, denounced Hōnen

as being a dangerous heretic precisely because he did not follow Zhiyi's classification system but Daochuo'. Thus, Nichiren neglected the pluralistic attitude of Zhiyi and his successors, who shared the common *māhāyana* belief that each sentient being has different capacities and karmic conditions and that for this reason the Buddha had taught the Dharma in different ways in accordance with the disposition of his followers.

Finally the question had to be settled as to what type of religious authority Hōnen was. As mentioned above, he was not a founder of a new sect in the strict sense. Was he a reformer in a Lutheran sense then, as most of the German authors seem to believe? For the following reasons I think that the designation of reformer does not fit Hōnen: his attitude towards the religious establishment was not antagonistic or dominated by protest. Neither did he intend to reform the whole of Japanese Buddhism or lead it back to its roots. He simply tried to implant an already existing Buddhist tradition, which he thought was the most adequate for deluded persons of the Final Age of the Dharma, into Japan. This clearly distinguishes Hōnen from Nichiren, who wanted to establish his Lotus doctrine as the only true Buddhism in Japan and, in the long term, in the whole world and to abolish all other Buddhist beliefs, which he thought were merely degenerations of original Buddhism.

In the eyes of the establishment, the young *nenbutsu* movement was doubtless a heretical one. Although Hōnen was evidently only the ideological head of the rather heterogeneous movement and not its actual leader, he was guilty of spreading heretical views and thus leading people astray. So if Hōnen was a heretic in the eyes of the orthodox, represented by the *kenmitsu* system, are we as scholars of religion or seemingly neutral observers, permitted to adopt this designation? We certainly may do so as long as we accept the terms "heresy" and "heretic" as categories of a metalanguage of religious studies. Although historically burdened, as are most of the terms we use, I think that the term heresy is quite useful for describing a universal religious phenomenon. Whenever in the course of an intra-religious conflict a dissident minority is defeated and oppressed by a majority which is powerful enough to claim orthodoxy, we witness the process of a religious party's becoming a heretical group. This has nothing to do with the question as to whose arguments are better or who represents "true Buddhism", "true Christianity", etc. It is simply a matter of political power. Furthermore, heresy is always a transitory state. There are roughly three directions in which a heresy may develop: (1) it vanishes due to persecution, (2) it is re-incorporated into the main body, (3) it evolves into an independent religious organization, be that a sect or even a new religion. What happened to the *nenbutsu* movement is, so to speak, a mixture of options (2) and (3). Both sides were, to a certain extent, willing to compromise. Although on the one hand Hōnen's successors had developed a heightened sense of sectarian identity due, amongst other factors, to the oppression which they suffered, on the other hand they felt a certain desire to be integrated into the established

traditions of Japanese Buddhism. Hence, Hōnen's successors adjusted to the situation by re-interpreting Hōnen's *nenbutsu* doctrine in a way which was more compatible with Tendai standards and succeeded in being tolerated by the established schools. While silently constructing a Jodo tradition by creating genealogies, classification schemes, etc., they remained in the temples of the established schools, mainly the Tendai-shū, until the situation became ripe for the establishment of independent Jōdo sects.

I am well aware of the danger that such a brief summary of a 400-page study may lead to misconceptions, but if the above remarks result in a fruitful scholarly debate despite this, I shall be satisfied.

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### **Bhavya, *Legs Idan 'byed*—Quoting and Quoted**

One of the more civilized pleasures to be derived from indulging in the study of classical literature is that of developing an ability to recognize when a good author, consciously or not, quotes—more or less verbatim—from his predecessors.

A learned author can enrich his style by availing himself of quotations—hidden or explicit—from other authors. By doing so, he so to speak for a moment not only sees things with the eyes of another, but also provides fresh nourishment for his own thoughts. At the same time, provided his reader is conscious of his style, he leaves an impression of his erudition and informs him of the variety of his intellectual background. It goes without saying that the merits of an “artist of quotations” (to use the expression of A. Kragelund from his excellent studies of Holberg's art of quotation from classical authors such as Cicero, Seneca, Petronius, Pliny, Tacitus, Livy, Sallust, *et al.*) are inevitably obscured in a translation into another language.

When we are dealing with translations into Tibetan, Mongolian and Chinese of learned Sanskrit authors, this circumstance is bound to have unfortunate effects (so much the more if the texts from which the author quotes were never translated into the foreign language in question). Now it is by no means all Sanskrit authors that employ the art of quotation. On the contrary. But one of the Buddhist authors that did so was also one of those authors whose work exerted a considerable influence in its Tibetan translation.

I am here thinking of Bhavya, Tib. *Legs Idan 'byed* or *Bha bya*, Mong. *Tegüs qubitu*, Tibetan also *sKal Idan*, the author of *Madhyamakahrdaya[kārikā]* (MHK), *dBu ma'i sñiñ po* (in verse), and the auto-commentary *Tarkajvālā* or *rTog ge 'bar ba* (in prose). When it comes to the art of quotation, Bhavya is not quite unique among Buddhist authors. The more we look, the more we recognize that other Mahāyāna *ācārya*-s, such as Udbhataśiddhasvāmin,

Nāgārjuna, Mātṛceṭa, Śāntarakṣita and Atiśa (to mention the most conspicuous in this regard), were also aware of the benefits to be had from embellishing their works with quotations and allusions. In this brief report, I do not at all intend to be exhaustive. I merely wish to point out how Bhavya, in his MHK—*without* commenting on this fact in his TJ—quotes or alludes to various classical Buddhist and Hindu authors.

1. Mātṛceṭa. This celebrated *stotrakāra* was undoubtedly one of Bhavya’s favourites. In the TJ commentary to MHK 4.35, Bhavya quotes, among numerous other sources, two verses from Ma gol (read: khol):

| *yañ dag rdzogs pa ’i byañ chub rgyu || sems ni rin chen de ñid kyañ |*  
 | *dpa’ bo khyod kyis sñin por mkhyen || de las gžan pas riñ par gyur |*

| *dañ por khyod la phyag bgyi ’am || ’on te gañ gis khor bar khyod |*  
 | *skyon mkhyen ruñ riñ de lta bur || bžugs mdzad thugs rje che la bgyi |*

No textual source is mentioned but they can both be identified as coming from the *Śatapañcāśatka* still available in Sanskrit (ed. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Cambridge 1951), vv. 19, 59:

*samyaksaṃbodhibījasya cittaratnasya tasya te |*  
*tvam eva vīra sārājñō dūre tasyetaro janah ||*  
*kaṃ [read: kiṃ] nu prathamato uande tvāṃ mahākaruṇām uta |*  
*yayaivam api doṣajñas tvam saṃsāre dhṛtaś ciraṃ ||*

So here we have one of Bhavya’s sources for the characteristic Mahāyāna belief that it is the Buddha’s great sense of responsibility (“compassion”) that is the *cittaratna* (= *bodhicitta*), the cause of *samyaksaṃbodhi*.

In the third chapter of the *Ratnapradīpa*, also by Bhavya, the author of TJ—... *bdag gis hkod pa rTog ge ’bar ba* ...—as he says (*ibid.*), quotes a line (without any indication of source):

| *ñons moñs bag chags bcas pa ni || skob pa gcig pu la mi mna’ |*

which is, again, *Śatapañcāśatka*, 3ab:

*savāsanās ca te doṣā na santy ekasya tāyinaḥ |*

An echo of this is found in TJ to MHK 4.4: “Bhagavat is one who, by long practice of *śūnyatādarśana*, has completely uprooted the whole network of defilements, along with their impressions ... “(*stoñ pa ñid kyī lta ba yun riñ du goms par byas pas ñon moñs pa ’i dra ba ’i dri ma ma lus pa bag chags dan bcas pa rtsa ba nas spañs pa ni bcom ldan ’das yin te* ).

The Buddha of Mātṛceṭa is not just free from all the *kleśas* (or *doṣas*), including their *vāsanās*, he is also in possession of *mahākaruṇā*, and he is *sarvajña*. Mātṛceṭa has much more to say about this than any of his predecessors in the Mahāyāna lineage. One of the chapters in his *Varṇārhavarṇastotra*, the third, is entitled *Sarvajñatāsiddhi* (vv. 1–22; ed. J. U. Hartmann, *Das Varṇārhavarṇastotra des Mātṛceṭa*, Gottingen 1987, pp. 137–53). Here he gives expression to the idea that the virtuous behaviour of the Buddha is not determined by any specific intention (13):



*na te prāyogikaṃ kiṃ cit kuśalam kuśalāntaga |  
icchāmātrāvabaddhā te yatrakāmāwasāyitā ||*

In MHK 4.17 Bhavya does not deny that the Buddha, in everyday life and practice, may have ideas determined by a specific intention (17cd):

*prāyogikādibuddhīnām (utpādo yan niṣidhyate) |*

Already at the time of Mātṛceṭa—and long before that—there were several candidates for the epithet *sarvajña*. Indeed, a Bhagavat is *sarvajña* by definition. He knows everything worth knowing, i.e. he knows what is good and what is bad. It is therefore not the least surprising that the Buddhist *stotrakāras* should praise *their* bhagavat (as opposed to Mahāvīra, Kṛṣṇa, *et al.*) for being omniscient. Chapter 10 of Bhavya’s MHK/TJ is entitled *Sarvajñasiddhi*, and its purpose is naturally to show that *not* Mahāvīra *et al.* but the Buddha is worthy of that epithet. Again, Mātṛceṭa’s *Sarvajñatāsiddhi* may more or less consciously have been in the mind of Bhavya when he chose that title.

As already pointed out in SCEAR 1 (1988), p. 105, *Varṇārharavarnastotra*, 7.20ab,

*kaḥ śraddhāsyati tat tasmin pūrvāparaparāhatam |*

has left an echo in MHK 8.87ab:

*kaḥ śraddhāsyati tām tatra pūrvāparaparavirodhinīm |*

For the *dṛṣṭānta* in MHK 8.87cd,

*atyantātulyajātīyaṃ maṇiratnam ivāyasaḥ |*

we have to look in Mātṛceṭa 7.19cd:

*tat tatrātulyajātīyaṃ jātarūpam ivāyasi |*

The idea is common; see for instance Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin’s *Viśiṣṭastava*, where the words of the opponents are said to be *ltag ’og ’gal* (57c) or *sṇa phyi ’gal ba* (58b). This is also implicit in Nāgārjuna’s *Ratnāvalī*, 1.2, q.v.

As also already pointed out (SCEAR 1 (1988), p. 104), Mātṛceṭa and Bhavya share the celebrated *pañkaprakṣālananyāya*. In MHK 5.54cd it runs:

*prakṣālanād dhi paṅkasya dūrād asparśanam varam |*

In this case—as elsewhere—the source is probably *Mahābhārata* (as quoted by Otto Böthlingk, *Indische Sprüche*, Osnabrück, 1966, No. 3117):

*dharmārtham yasya vittehā varam tasya nirīhatā |  
prakṣālanād dhi paṅkasya śreyo nasparśanam nṛṇām ||*

Especially in MHK 9 Bhavya has many allusions, etc., to the *Mahābhārata*.

2. As my friend, the late V. V. Gokhale, first pointed out in his “Masters of Buddhism Adore the Brahman through Non-Adoration”, *IJJ* 5 (1963), pp. 271–5), Bhavya was not afraid of interpreting Brahman in the sense of

Buddhist *nirvāṇa*. He might well have added that Bhavya was not the first Mahāyāna author to do so. In the seventh chapter of *Varṇārhavarṇastotra*, entitled *Brahmānūvāda*, Mātṛceṭa made a “new translation”, or “interpretation” (*anuvāda*), of Brahman/Brahmā in the sense of Dharma/Buddha. Echoes of *Brahmānūvāda* are also found in MHK, chapters 2 (ed. V. V. Gokhale, in *IJJ* 14 (1972), pp. 40–5), and, as said, 8 as well as 9 (cf. esp. 22 with 9.152–4).

When Bhavya and Mātṛceṭa identified Brahman/Brahmā with Dharma/Buddha (in the ultimate sense the same), they were, in a way, responding to what the audacious author of the *Gita* was doing when *he* identified the Buddhist *nirvāṇa* with Brahman—for this is how the term *brahmanirvāṇa*, coined by him, should be taken in BG 2.72.

But Bhavya took a further step in his syncretism. Not only was he prepared to accept everything that made sense in Vedānta (MHK 4.56ab: *vedānte ca hiyat sūktam tat sarvaṃ buddhabhāsitam*), but he would even to some extent adopt Manu’s “definition” of “*idam*” 1.5 (itself an allusion to 10.129):

*āśīd idam tamobhūtam aprajñātam alakṣaṇam |  
aprataṛkyam avijñeyam prasuptam iva sarvataḥ ||*

into *his* own definition of *tattva* in MHK 1.1:

*aprataṛkyam avijñeyam anālayam alakṣaṇam |  
anirūpyam svasaṃvedyam anādinidhanam śivam ||*

So, the learned contemporary reader of MHK would immediately have recognized the allusion to Manu’s initial stanzas. From the very beginning of his work, Bhavya wanted to make his syncretism clear, and it would have been almost an insult to the reader to spell this obvious fact out in the TJ commentary.

3. Another author that played a very considerable role for Bhavya—in fact for all Buddhist *ācāryas* beginning with Dignāga—is Bhartṛhari (cf. my paper, “Linking up Bhartṛhari and the Bauddhas”, *Asiatische Studien* 47 (1993), pp. 153–213). Already the compound in MHK 1.1, *anādinidhanam*, is taken over directly from *Vākyapadīya* 1.1a. So, with his first verse Bhavya is already sending out the “signal” that this is, of course, a Buddhist work, but to some extent quite compatible with the views of Manu and Bhartṛhari. That I am not reading too much into the text is amply proved from many of the following verses.

Manu (12.106) and Bhartṛhari (VP 1.30; 1.151), as will be recalled, had emphasised that *dharma* could only be achieved with the help of *tarka* (or *anumāna*) that is ancillary to *āgama*. In itself, without *agama*, *anumāna* or *śuśkatarka*, dry logic, is as pernicious as can be. This is an important point, and it is exactly the position taken by Bhavya in all his works. (It may be noted here that Vasubandhu had already taken a similar stand, cf. John

Powers, *Hermeneutics and the Tradition in the Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*, Leiden, 1993, p. 49, n. 21). For Bhavya *tattva* is not within the range (*viśaya*, *gocara*) of *tarka*, and *anumāna* or *yukti* (often synonyms) are, nevertheless, absolutely essential for refuting misconceptions (*tattvajñānavipakṣa*) about *tattva*. There is, in Bhavya, as little room for blind faith as there is for dry logic.

There is another passage in Bhavya that can better be understood when we keep Manu in mind. In the introduction to his *Prajñāpradīpa* (written after MHK/TJ), Bhavya states that Bhagavat “taught to those travelling on the best Vehicle (=Mahāyāna) the excellent jewel of *pratītyasamutpāda*, which does not disregard birth, age, caste, place of residence and time of day ...” (see William L. Ames, “Bhavaviveka’s *Prajñāpradīpa*”, *JIP* 21 (1993), p. 214). The commentator, Avalokitavrata (*ibid.*, p. 236), explains: “It is not to be taught to one who is too young or too old. It is to be taught to those who are *brāhmaṇas* or *kṣatriyas*, not to *vaiśyas* or *śūdras*. It is to be taught to those born in the middle country and those living in villages or monasteries; it is not to be taught to those in the border countries and those living in cemeteries or crossroads. It is to be taught at dawn and in the daytime or nighttime, not at dusk ...” As Bill Ames notes (p. 236, n. 20), “It is difficult to see how the statements about caste can be reconciled with the usual Buddhist attitude on this subject.” He goes on to note that Avalokitavrata quotes a “text of the non-Buddhists” in connection with caste, but does not identify it.

Now this text (as first pointed out by J. W. de Jong in *Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka*, Leiden 1990, p. 58) is a literal translation of *Manusmṛti* 4.80:

*na śūdrāya matiṃ dadyān nocchiṣṭam na haviṣkṛtam |*  
*na cāsyopadiśed dharmam na cāsya vratam ādiśet ||*

J. W. de Jong wonders “whether we do not have here an indication of a tendency among Buddhist scholars, authors of learned philological śāstras, to assimilate tenets found in brahmanical learnings” (*loc. cit.*) Correctly so, of course. (Note also the other allusions to Manu in Avalokitavrata’s commentary!)

Now in this connection it could be useful to point out that (as Ames suggests), we are here dealing with a controversial matter. In his *\*Viśiṣṭastava*, 59, Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin (ed. J. Schneider, Bonn 1993) writes:

*/ chos 'dad pa dag dmañs rigs la || blo gros sbyin par bya min zer /*  
*/ khyod ni gdol pa rnams la 'aṅ || thugs rjes dam chos ston par mdzad /*

Schneider (who fails to identify the hidden quotation) translates: “Die, die den Dharma wünschen, sagen, daß man den Śūdras kein Wissen (wörtl: “Einsicht”) vermitteln sollte; du (aber) hast aus Mitleid auch den Caṇḍālas den guten Dharma dargelegt.” (This is wrong, and should of course be: “[Manu 4.80] says that one must not impart knowledge to people interested

in dharma (in case they) belong to a low caste ... .”) But as opposed to Bhavya and Avalokitavrata, Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin disapproves of what is said in Manu 4.80, and does *not* share the attitude of Bhavya and his commentator. Perhaps this is simply a natural reflection of the different social backgrounds of the Buddhist authors in question? So once again it proved useful to point out that Bhavya also in this respect is influenced by Manu.

In conclusion, with the “hidden quotations” from Manu and Bhartṛhari *et al.*, Bhavya attempts to use their authority to establish his own Madhyamaka position. This important point, obviously, can only be established on the basis of the original Sanskrit sources. For this and for many other reasons it will, of course, never be sufficient to deal the Indian texts *merely* from later Tibetan (Mongolian) or Chinese sources. The historical perspective and the sense of continuity is apt to be easily lost.

Another point. It takes time to realize *tattva*, or *paramārthasatya*. It cannot be done without *saṃvṛtisatya*, which, as it were, serves as a ladder to the absolute (if we wish to use that term). The image of the *sopāna* is not quite unknown to the Buddhist canon (one reference is *Theragāthā*, see “Similes in the Nikāyas”, *JPTS* 5 (1906–7, p. 149), but there are several passages in Mahāyāna (and Vajrayāna). MHK 3.12:

*tathyasamvṛtisopānam antareṇa vipāścitaḥ |  
tattvaprasādāsikharārohanam na hi yujyate ||*

For Bhartṛhari, on the other hand, the means gradually to realize Brahman, *śabdatattva*, etc., is, first of all, *vyākaraṇa*; VP 1.16ab:

*idam ādyaṃ padasthānam siddhisopānaparvaṇām |*

When we recall that *saṃvṛti[satya]* is largely a matter of language (*nāma-mātra*, *prajñāpti*, *saṃketa*, *vyavahāra*, etc.), the difference is not all that essential. Both depend and rely on language in order to transcend the plurality of its activity. For Kambala (who also knew Bhartṛhari, and who was known to Bhavya) the Buddha’s *saṃvṛtīdeśana* was also merely a means comparable to a ladder, *Ālokaṃālā* 176:

*ādikarmikalokasya paramārthāvatāraṇe |  
upāyas tv eṣa saṃbuddhaiḥ sopānam iva nirmitaḥ ||*

So there is, after all, essential agreement about *tattva* and how and to whom to display its achievements.

This, incidentally, raises a most crucial question: Would it all have been possible without Sanskrit? Probably not.

4. Without Bhavya and his MHK/TJ there would hardly have been any such thing as Tibetan doxographical literature, voluminous as it is. Almost without exception all the later Tibetan works belonging to this genre depend more or less on Bhavya (and other Indian texts that, again, depend on Bhavya). This, then, brings me to the second main part of this paper, the later quotations *from* Bhavya.

As a rule, the later Tibetan authors of *Grub-mtha*’-s, or *siddhānta*-s, would use the canonical translation of MHK/TJ prepared by Atiśa and Tshul khriṃs rgyal ba. But there is, as we shall see, a very notable exception to this rule. There is evidence to the effect that other versions of MHK/TJ were, at a fairly early date, available to the Tibetan savants.

In his very idiosyncratic translation (if one can call it that) of Tsong Kha-pa’s *Speech of Gold in the Essence of True Eloquence* (Princeton, 1984, p. 271, n. 22), Bob Thurman observes that the canonical version of MHK 5.20cd runs,

| *yul du snañ bar ma gtogs par || sems kyi bdag ñid gžan ci yod* |

Whereas Tsong Khapa’s text either “was differently worded, or, more remarkably, [that] he was quoting from memory, getting the sense right but altering the wording”:

| *yul du snañ las gžan gyur pa’i || sems ñid ji ’dra ba žig snañ* |

To be sure, the Sanskrit text, which has only recently become available, runs (fol. 14a):

*viṣayābhāsatām projjha cittātmanyō ’sti kīdrśaḥ* |

In order to decide whether Tsong Khapa (1357–1419) was quoting from memory, or from another version of MHK (and TJ?) than the canonical one (i.e. from a “para-canonical” version), we must first cast a brief glance at yet another Tibetan source, namely the huge *Grub mtha’ chen mo* of ’Jam dbyaṅs bžad pa (1648–1722), of which I am using the blockprint edition (New Delhi 1973, a copy of which was kindly given to me by K. Mimaki): this author has numerous quotations from Bhavya’s MHK, or *dBu ma sñiñ po*, especially chapters 4 and 5. A glance at some of these will enable us to decide whether Tsong Khapa quoted MHK 5.20cd from memory or from a para-canonical version of MHK.

On fol. 826,3 he quotes MHK 5.17:

| *sems tsam du ni dmigs byed ciñ || gzugs la sogs pa mi ’dzin na* |  
| *luñ dañ grags pa dag gis ni || ji ltar dam bcas pa la gnod* |

The canonical version differs:

| *sems tsam du ni dmigs pa dañ || gzugs la sogs pa mi ’dzin na* |  
| *khas blañs pa dañ grags pa yis || dam bcas pa la gnod par ’gyur* ||

The Sanskrit original runs (fol. 14a):

*cittamātropalambhena rūpādyagrahaṇaṃ na ca* |  
*abhyupetapratītibhyāṃ pratijñā bādhyate yataḥ* ||

The two Tibetan versions are clearly interrelated but they are also different on some points. In line c, *khas blañs pa* in the canonical version is clearly a more accurate rendering of the Sanskrit *abhyupeta* than the *luñ* (i.e. the usual equivalent but metrically impossible *āgama*) of the “para-canonical”

version. The canonical version seems to be a revised version of the para-canonical one.

Another example where the two Tibetan versions differ. On fol. 847,6 'Jam dbyaṅs bžad pa quotes MHK 5.29:

| gal te rnam brtags dañ stoṅ pa 'i || rnam par śes pa bsgrub ce na |  
| ma brtags don du yod pa 'i phyir || don spaṅs par ni 'gyur ma yin |

The canonical version again differs:

| gal te rnam brtags don stoṅ pas || rnam par śes pa sgrub byed na |  
| brtags pa ma yin don yod phyir || yul med par ni mi 'gyur ro |

The Sanskrit original runs (fol. 14a):

*vikalpītārthaśūnyaṃ ca vijñānaṃ yadi sādhyate |*  
*akalpītārthasadbhāvaṃ na syād arthanirākriyā ||*

Again the canonical version seems to be a revision of the “para-canonical” one, which is, however, with *don* for *artha* in line d, at least more faithful to the Sanskrit. It is inconceivable that the variants in the “para-canonical version are due to *lapsus memoriae*. These—and many other—quotations from the para-canonical version of MHK (and perhaps also TJ) leave no doubt that a para-canonical version of MHK actually was available in Tibet, at least from the time of Tsong Khapa. A comparison with the Sanskrit original proves that the variants in the two Tibetan versions cannot be explained by assuming that those authors quoted from memory.

Another example: on fol. 849,3 we find MHK 5.35:

| gal te bsags pa 'i dños śe na || gtan tshigs ṅid ni ma grub ste |  
| gžan pa 'i gzugs kyi phan byas nas || blo la der snaṅ 'byuṅ phyir ro |

The canonical version runs:

| ci ste bsags pa 'i gzugs la ni || gtan tshigs ma grub ṅid 'gyur te |  
| gzugs gžan dag gi bsags pa ni || der snaṅ blo ni skye phyir ro |

The Sanskrit original runs (fol. 14b):

*atha saṃcitarūpasya hetor evaṃ asiddhatā |*  
*rūpāntarair upakṛtais tannirbhāṣodayād dhiyaḥ ||*

Again the canonical Tibetan version leaves the impression that it is based on a previous Tibetan version which it corrects, or alters, on the basis of a Sanskrit original: *ci ste* is more accurate than *gal te* for *atha*, *ma grub ṅid* more accurate for *asiddhatā* than just *ma grub ste*, etc. These examples must be sufficient to demonstrate that the available canonical version of MHK was at least in part based on an earlier Tibetan translation that was *not* incorporated into the canon (only as a “revised version”), but that nevertheless survived so as still to be available to authors writing in seventeenth century Tibet.

When he edited MHK, chapter 1 (in *Miscellanea Buddhica*, Copenhagen 1985, pp. 76–108), V. V. Gokhale wrote, “The Tibetan TJ was finalized by the learned Atiśa (981–1054 A.D.) at Lhasa and dictated to his Lotsawa Jayaśīla, according to the colophons, in the eleventh century. The much earlier Tibetan versions, which are not available at present, are found mentioned in the Denkarma-catalogue of ca. 800 A.D. These versions may not have been accessible to Atiśa.”

In view of the new evidence, I think that we can safely say that the “earlier Tibetan versions” *were* in fact available to Atiśa. What he did was to *revise* rather than to translate the MHK (and TJ?) anew from scratch. It remains to be seen whether the first translation(s) of MHK is still available today as it was at least in the seventeenth century. If not, it may be because it, like so many other texts, did not survive “the recent holocaust in Tibet” (to use Bob Thurman’s apt expression *op. cit.*, p. 54, n. 70).

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### **SBS News**

We are pleased to announce an addition to our editorial board, Dr. Alexander Mayer of the University of Heidelberg. Dr. Mayer began his studies in 1975, reading Chinese and Indology in Berlin, Bonn, Tübingen, T’ai-pei, and Kathmandu. He also attended subsidiary courses in Japanese and Tibetan. His M.A. thesis, written in 1985 after a stay at the Graduate School for Historical Studies of Shih-fan University in T’ai-pei, was on the Ming dynasty “salt monopoly”. Until 1989 he worked on the biography of Xuanzang as a member of the Uigur Manuscript Research Project. This culminated in a Ph.D. thesis on the biographical writings on Xuanzang, which was published by Harrassowitz in two volumes, in 1991 and 1992. Since 1992 he has been working on *Vajracchedika* commentaries of the high Tang, mainly on those ascribed to Kuiji, to be completed by the end of 1996. He has written a number of articles, with topics ranging from Chinese Buddhist translation techniques in the *Vajracchedika-sūtra* to the Gostana and Kunala myth in the various traditions of India, China and Tibet, and on Buddhism and the philosophical question of transcendence. He has also published on esoteric dimensions in Chinese Buddhism (beyond and apart from the Esoteric tradition).

(IA)