

**The Status of Pramāṇa Doctrine
According to Sa skya Paṇḍita and Other Tibetan Masters:
Theoretical Discipline or Doctrine of Liberation?**

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In the history of Indian Buddhist philosophy, two figures—Dignāga (6th c.) and Dharmakīrti (7th c.)—tower above all others as indisputably the greatest geniuses of epistemology and logic. Although these two became best known as “logicians” and theorists, the question of how they understood the religious meaning of their own epistemological or Pramāṇa school is a crucial one for a correct interpretation of the very important and influential branch of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy that they founded. In the last fifteen or twenty years, a number of scholars of Indian Buddhism have come to what is probably a basically correct understanding of the spiritual intention of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and the results of their research are now becoming more widely known.¹ But for Tibetan Buddhist studies, the situation is somewhat different.

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¹ See T. Vetter, *Erkenntnisprobleme bei Dharmakīrti*, Wien, 1964, 27 and 31f; E. Steinkellner, “The Spiritual Place of the Epistemological Tradition”, *Nanto Bukkyō*, 1982, *passim*; and T. Vetter, *Der Buddha und seine Lehre in Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇavārttika*, Wien, 1984, 105ff. R.P. Hayes, “The Question of Doctrinalism in the Buddhist Epistemologists”, *JAAR*, 51–4, 1984, 645–670, investigated the place of scripture in the Indian Pramāṇa tradition, also considering whether Buddhist epistemologists should be characterized primarily as champions of reason (as a doctrinally neutral science) or as champions of dogma (as a specific set of doctrines). See also G. Dreyfus & C. Lindtner, “The Yogācāra Philosophy of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti”, *SCEAR*, 2, 1989, 27–52, who stress the purpose of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as having been to establish and defend Yogācāra tenets. On the question of whether Dharmakīrti was a Mādhyamika, see now E. Steinkellner, “Is Dharmakīrti a Mādhyamika?” in D. Seyfort Ruegg & L. Schmithausen, eds., *Earliest Buddhism and Madhyamaka*, Leiden, 1990, 72–90.

Modern Tibetological scholars have yet to establish definitively or in any detail how the main continuators of Dharmakīrti's tradition outside of India—namely the Tibetan Buddhist scholarly tradition—came to understand the spiritual intention of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and thus how they understood the deeper purpose of their own Tshad-ma (Pramāṇa) schools.² If that question was crucial for understanding the Buddhist Pramāṇa tradition of India, then it remains equally or even more important for the parallel Tibetan traditions, for in Tibet, Pramāṇa theory became even more influential than in India.

In this paper, I would, therefore, like to take up the question of Pramāṇa's spiritual significance and soteriological utility again, but specifically with regard to how it was answered in Tibet. I would like to consider the discussion of this question by several Tibetan masters, mainly to see how they described any “secular” interpretations. And finally, I would like to investigate the opinion of the very influential 13th-century Tibetan scholar Sa skya Paṇḍita (or Sa paṇ) (1182–1251). I have a special reason for emphasizing Sa paṇ here, namely my impression that his opinions on the subject have been consistently misunderstood or misrepresented by Western scholars for the past sixty years.

One of the opinions widely accepted until now by Western specialists in Tibetan Buddhist epistemological studies is that most or all Tibetan scholars in an early period (ca. the 12th through 14th centuries, at least) considered the Pramāṇa doctrine to be a non-Buddhist and purely secular science of the same sort as medicine, art or techniques, and language studies (especially the study of Sanskrit grammar).³ The author of a recent article has even gone so far as to assert that such a secular interpretation was maintained not only by virtually all scholars of the Sa skya pa, gSang phu ba, and allied traditions, both before and after Tsong kha pa (that is to say, by all Tibetan scholars before the late 14th century), but also in particular by Sa skya Paṇḍita.⁴

² See, however, D. Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise (Section III)*, Vienna, 1987, 165ff, and L. van der Kuijp, *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology from the Eleventh to the Thirteenth Century*, Wiesbaden, 1983, on early Tibetan interpretations of Dharmakīrti's ultimate philosophical intention.

³ In other words, it was one of the four “outer” fields of knowledge, as will be discussed below. One reason why such misunderstandings of Tibetan Tshad-ma interpretations have been so easily made by modern scholars is that the religious aspect of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's writings has long been largely misunderstood or ignored, even by some specialists. See E. Steinkellner, “The Spiritual Place of the Epistemological Tradition”, *Nanto Bukkyō*, 1982, 1–7.

⁴ L. van der Kuijp, “An Early Tibetan View of the Soteriology of Buddhist Epistemology: The Case of 'Bri gung 'Jig rten mgon po”, *JIP*, 15–1, 1987, 57f. But cf. van der Kuijp, *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology*, 1983, 287, n. 182, who points out the presence of the fourfold analysis of the fruit of pramāṇa in Sa paṇ's *Rigs gter rang 'grel*, saying this was the first attested instance of that fourfold analysis.

Even at first sight, such a characterization would seem to be curious and anomalous because Tshad-ma (epistemology and logic) was a core discipline of Tibetan Buddhist scholastics that originated in the teachings of the Indian Buddhist sages Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, whose underlying intent as Buddhists was no doubt a religious one. In other words, the Tshad-ma tradition in its original Indian context was an extension of a system of Mahāyāna theory and practice aimed at attaining liberation and Buddhahood, and this was taken for granted by its main upholders. Another reason that a purely secular or “profane” characterization of Tibetan Tshad-ma would be highly improbable and unexpected is that the learned traditions of Tibet were heavily influenced at all periods by Buddhism. Truly secular branches of knowledge were mostly conspicuous in Tibet by their absence. Nevertheless, when one investigates the matter in more detail, one can indeed find evidence for the existence of some sort of “secular” or at least “non-Buddhistic” interpretations of Pramāṇa in Tibet. The questions I would therefore like to investigate here are precisely what sort of secular orientations actually prevailed among Tibetan interpreters of Pramāṇa, how they might have arisen, and in particular, to what extent such an orientation can be correctly ascribed to one of the greatest Pramāṇa experts of Tibet, Sa skya Paṇḍita.

What is Meant by pramāṇa or tshad ma?

Before taking a look at the original Tibetan sources, however, it might be best to begin by clarifying what is meant by the term *pramāṇa* or its Tibetan equivalent, *tshad ma*. In Sanskrit, *pramāṇa* generally means a “means of knowledge”, and within the Buddhist context, it means “valid cognition”. According to Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, there existed only two types of valid cognition, each possessing its respective object. These were namely direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) and inference (*anumāna*). These two each functioned in and belonged to a very different sphere of experience and reality. Of the two, inference was considered indirect knowledge: it had to be ultimately based on direct perception (which alone cognizes the raw data of experience), but inference was indirect and delusive in that it dealt with conceptually constructed universals, names, etc. Closer to the true data of reality was direct perception (e.g., sense knowledge), for it cognized real particulars directly and without conceptualization. But on a higher level, the system rejected the existence of external objects: sense cognition ultimately meant for them self-cognition. Still higher was the self-referential direct perception of a meditator (*yogin*), and highest of all was the knowledge of a Buddha. Thus the system was permeated from the top-down by a meditation- and

Buddhahood-based view—which should come as no surprise given its links with the idealist Yogācāra school of Indian Buddhism. Another distinctive “mentalistic” feature of this epistemological theory is that according to it, the two means of cognition are not separate instruments, but rather are identical with the corresponding fruit of cognition: the *pramāṇas* are not means of knowledge, but are rather acts of cognition.

One important application of Pramāṇa theory was in formal proof statements or “syllogisms”. Where, then, does logical argumentation fit in this basically twofold system of the two *pramāṇas*? Argumentation belonged to the realm of conceptual understanding and thus to inference, but it was even one step further removed from direct perception. It consisted of statements that cause inferential knowledge to occur in the mind of another. Such argumentation or formally stated proofs were not true cognition strictly speaking, but they were loosely designated as “inference” because they acted as a cause for the arising of inferential understanding.⁵ Among the Tibetans, at least, the term *tshad ma* came to be loosely used also to refer to just such inferential argumentation. And since the word in Tibetan (as in Sanskrit) also had the sense of “authority”, it is possible to distinguish at least four uses of the word *tshad ma* (*pramāṇa*):

1. *Tshad ma* meaning concretely one or both of the two accepted means of knowledge,
2. “*Tshad ma*” as a more loosely used term roughly synonymous with logical argumentation (*rtog ge, tarka*) or reasoning (*rigs pa, yukti, nyāya*),
3. *Tshad-ma* as the name of the epistemological theory or school of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, and
4. *tshad ma* in its non-technical sense of “authority” or “standard”, as in the case of a standard unit of measure.

The formal statement of proofs and the method of formal discussion or logical argumentation (*tshad ma* in its loosest sense) were thus ancillary topics belonging indirectly to the specific *pramāṇa* of inference, which in turn came under the broader epistemological system of *Tshad-ma*. These distinctions are trivial unless one fails to observe them. And as we shall see below, some Tibetan (as, well as Western) historians or interpreters of *Tshad-ma* failed to do so thus creating difficulties for themselves.

Tibetan Non-soteriological Interpretations of Tshad-ma

How, then, did Tibetan scholars describe “secular” or non-Buddhistic interpretations of these traditions? Before turning to Sa paṅ and his tradition, let us first briefly examine passages in the writings of: (1) ’Bri gung pa ’Jig rten mgon po

⁵ See Sa paṅ, *Tshad ma rigs gter rang ’grel*, 251, 4, 2 (Da 195a), here based on Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, chapter on *parārthānumāna*.

1143–1217) and his followers, (2) Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), and (3) sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705).

(1) 'Bri gung 'Jig rten mgon po

(a) The First Point of 'Bri gung 'Jig rten mgon po

The late 12th-century 'Bri gung bka' brgyud master 'Jig rten mgon po in his “Single Intention” (*dGongs gcig*) teaching (chapter 1, points 16 and 17) expounded the opinion that Tshad-ma was definitely not to be considered simply dry logic or merely a non-Buddhistic debate method.⁶ As elsewhere in this summary of the “Single Intention”, 'Jig rten mgon po's own doctrine was preceded by a contrasting or contradictory doctrine. What exactly was that opposing position that he rejected here through his sixteenth point? It was the following:

“Though there indeed exists the opinion that Tshad-ma cannot be the Buddha's religion (Dharma) because it is something existing in common with the Nyāya tradition of the non-Buddhist Indian sectarians, here we maintain Tshad-ma to be the [all-] knowing Gnosis of the Buddha”⁷

Evidently it had been a strategy of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti to phrase their arguments regarding external objects in terms and concepts acceptable not only to their Buddhist co-religionists (especially the Sautrāntikas), but also to such non-Buddhists as the Naiyāyikas, with whom they debated. Thus there is some truth in the “opponent's” position (*pūrvapakṣa*) stated here, namely that certain aspects of Pramāṇa theory could function as a sort of doctrinally neutral medium of communication and argumentation.

Nevertheless, for me at least, it is somewhat surprising to find that 'Jig rten mgon po takes such a strong “pro-Pramāṇa” position in reply to this criticism. His remarks are unexpected first of all because he himself was not an outstanding scholastic or student of Tshad-ma. He was, to the contrary, a great meditator and visionary, and he was a founder of the meditation- and practice-oriented 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud school. In such traditions, the disciplines of epistemology and debate were not usually cultivated, and this makes his statements in favor of its religious value all the more striking. In fact, I would suspect that these statements in the “Single Intention” may have been aimed as much at some of 'Jig rten mgon po's bKa' brgyud pa co-religionists as at previous or contemporary scholastics. In other points of the same work (such as the two immediately pre-

⁶ 'Bri gung 'Jig rten mgon po (actually Shes rab 'byung gnas?), *dGongs gcig yig cha*, 1, 154–188. The following two passages were first translated and discussed by L. van der Kuijp, “An Early Tibetan View of the Soteriology of Buddhist Epistemology: The Case of 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten mgon-po”.

⁷ 'Jig rten mgon po, 158.4fT (*Ka 3a*): tshad ma ni mu stegs kyi rigs byed dang thun mong du gyur pas sangs rgyas kyi chos su mi 'gyur bar 'dod pa yod mod kyi | 'dir ni tshad ma sangs rgyas kyi mkhyen pa'i ye shes su bzhed do ||.

ceding points, in fact), he adopts strikingly mainstream Mahāyāna positions in contrast to what might be expected of a radical follower of the Mahāmudrā meditation tradition.⁸ The Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa masters who had adopted a different and decidedly negative attitude toward Tshad-ma theory, especially toward inferential reasoning and argumentation, included Zhang Tshal pa (1123–1193), and evidently also his master, sGam po Tshul khriims snying po (1116–1169, sGam po pa's nephew and successor). This alternative bKa' brgyud pa tradition sharply discounted the value of conceptual means—i.e., inference and analytical investigations—and can be said to have been not only decidedly anti logic but also anti-intellectual. Ideas reminiscent of this approach can also be found in the writings of the founder of the Dwags po bka' brgyud pa, sGam po pa (1079–1153), who in the context of the Mahāmudrā had rejected inference as insufficient, basing his criticisms apparently on the Tshad-ma tradition's own evaluation of inference and all other concept-based procedures as removed from the basic data of experience and, therefore, as incapable of conveying direct insight.⁹ And a similar negative attitude toward book-learning and debate is ascribed in traditional biographies to the still earlier master Mila ras pa.¹⁰

⁸ See D. Jackson, 1990, “Sa-skyā Paṇḍita the ‘Polemicist’: Ancient Debates and Modern Interpretations”, *JIAS*, 13, 1990, 66f.

⁹ In his replies to questions posed by his student the Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa, for instance, sGam po pa classified Buddhist practice into three types:

- 1) The “definition” approach (i.e., scholastic general Mahāyāna) of the *Prajñāpāramitā* vehicle, which takes inference for its path (*rjes dpag lam du byed pa = mtshan nyid lam pha rol tu phyin pa*).
- 2) The Mahāyāna Mantra approach, 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 = gsang sngags*).
- 3) The Mahāmudrā, which takes direct perception (*pratyakṣa*) for its path (*mngon sum lam du byed pa = lhan cig skyes pa 'od gsal [phyag chen]*).

See sGam po pa, *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i zhus lan*, 438, 6: *lam rnam pa gsum du 'gro gsung ngo | rjes dpag lam du byed pa dang | byin brlabs lam du byed pa dang | mngon sum lam du byed pa gum yin gsung | mtshan nyid lam pha rol tu phyin pa ni rjes dpag lam du byed pa bya ba yin | theg pa chen po gsang sngags ni bskyed rdzogs gnyis la brten nas byin brlabs lam du byed pa yin | mngon sum lam du byed pa ni lhan cig skyes pa 'od gsal bya ba yin gsung | lam gsum la 'jug pa'i gang zag ni gnyis te | rims kyis pa dang | cig car ba'o ||* In this system there are two types of individuals who enter these three paths, namely the gradualist (*rim gyis pa*) and simultaneist (*cig car ba*).

¹⁰ Yogis of this contemplative tradition also understandably belittled book-learning, and they sometimes disparaged books in general as “stale tomes” (*dpe rul*). A famous traditional instance in the lives of Mi la ras pa and his disciple Ras chung pa as told by gTsang smyon He ru ka illustrates this well. Ras chung pa had just returned from India, with a load of books and a head swollen with book-learning. Mi la sent Ras chung off to fetch water, and while Ras chung pa was gone, Mi la went through the books, entrusting some worthwhile ones to the Dākiṇīs, while consigning the useless or harmful books—such as debate texts (or “controversial texts” *rtsod yig*) and non-Buddhist mantras—to the safe-keeping of the Dharmapālas. Then with a few stray blank pages, Mi la started the fire. Ras chung pa on his return smelled the tell-tale smoke, and suspecting the worst, began demanding again and again that Mi la return his beloved books, and would not be placated by the mind-boggling marvels that Mi la then displayed. At one point (page 609), Mi la chided him: “Ras chung pa, if you desire to attain Buddhahood, you need practical instructions that you can cultivate in meditation. We have no use for debate texts and Brahmanical incantations.” See gTsang smyon He ru ka, *rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po mi la ras pa'i rnam thar*, rKyang mgur gyi skor, 597ff. I am indebted to Mr. Ngawang Tsering for this reference. For a very similar version of the story of Ras chung pa's books, see also rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol (1494–1570), rJe btsun ras chung rdo rje grags pa'i rnam thar *rnam mkhyen thar lam gsal ba'i me long ye shes snang ba*, 134 ff(67b–). The term *rtsod yig* is sometimes used for a controversial text which disputes the doctrines of others. Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, page 631, for instance, refers to sTag tshang's work as a *rtsod yig*.

The 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud pa commentators accessible to me, however, do not give any inkling that such a negative evaluation of Tshad-ma was held within the bKa-brgyud pa traditions.¹¹ Rather, they name as previous upholders of such a “secular” view such scholars as the Indian *paṇḍita* Jayānanda (fl. 2nd half 11th c.) and, somewhat surprisingly, the Tibetan translator and highly influential scholar of Tshad-ma, rNgog Blo ldan shes rab (1059–1109).

The early dGongs gcig commentator rDo rje shes rab (13th c.) discusses the sixteenth point in some detail and describes the criticized non-Buddhist interpretation as follows:

“Maitreyaṅātha and such [great masters] as the ‘Six Ornaments of people in the World’ have, in general, composed inconceivably many treatises in order to remove the three faults of incomprehension, misunderstanding and doubt with regard to the inconceivably many particulars of the ‘vehicles’ (*yāna*) and paths of the Buddha’s doctrine. [From among them,] the master Dignāga, in particular, composed the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. Based on that, the glorious master Dharmakīrti composed the seven works of logical reasoning. For what purpose did he compose them? In India, non-Buddhists and Buddhists had debates [with each

¹¹ The main dGongs gcig commentary of the 17th-century commentator 'Bri gung Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659?), the *Dam pa'i chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i rnam bshad lung don gsal byed nyi ma'i snang ba*, page 53ff (27a) does not treat either point in great detail. It states to begin with that the opponent has erred in equating *tshad ma* with the realm of logic and argumentation (*rtog ge'i gnas*), which Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa defines as the attachment to the designations (and usage?) of logical consequences and reasons (*thai phyir tha snyad la zhen pa*). *Tshad ma*, by contrast, is unerring and direct truth (read: *drang po'i* instead of *drang ba'i?*), and that is the province of the Omniscient One himself. The commentator then refers to the opening verse of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, a passage in the *Pramānaviniścaya*, and to a Sūtra passage. In his *dka' 'grel*, dGongs gcig yig cha, 2, 592f (*wam* 4b), Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa seems to treat *tshad ma* as more or less equivalent to inferential reasoning.

other], such that the loser had to adopt the doctrine of the winner. Consequently, both disputed against each other [with] reasoning [alone], because the Buddha's word could not be cited as authoritative scripture against the non-Buddhist, the non-Buddhist scriptures could not be cited as a scriptural authority against the Buddhist, and even if they had been so cited, they would not have been an authority (*tshad ma*) for the other. Hence, [the Tshad-ma treatises] are not treatises based on [Buddhist) scriptural tradition, because the Pramāṇa teachings were composed purely through reasoning and not relying upon the Buddha's word, in order to answer effectively the disputation of the non-Buddhists.

Since treatises of reasoning are treatises common to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, it is said that the *paṇḍita* Jayānanda once stuck a volume of Tshad-ma teachings under his knee and stated, 'This is not Buddhist religious doctrine (Dharma), it is Tshad-ma!' It is also said that the translator rNgog Blo ldan shes rab, too, because he had studied 'the *pramāṇas*' (*tshad ma rnams*) under the non-Buddhist Indian sectarian Bhavyarāja, [once referred to Tshad-ma as]: 'This wild disputation (*shags rgod*) of Bhavyarāja!' In that way, Tshad-ma, since it is something existing in common with the non-Buddhists, is not a religious teaching of the Buddha."¹²

The incitement for 'Jig rten mgon po's remarks was apparently the opinion of certain Tibetan Buddhists who believed Tshad-ma to be nothing more than a purely theoretical discipline held in common with non-Buddhists. The opponent's opinion rested in part on a genuine dialectical difficulty that all Indian traditions faced. In order to prove something to a non-Buddhist, for instance, it

¹² rDo rje shes rab (or Shes rab 'byung gnas?) dGongs gcig yig cha, 1, 402, 1–403, 2 (*Nga* 28a–28b): 'di la spyir sangs rgyas kyi chos theg pa dang lam gyi bye brag bsam gyis mi khyab pa mams la ma rtogs | log rtogs | the tshom za ba gsum gyi skyon bsal ba'i phyir | mgon po byams pa dang | 'dzam bu gling pa'i rgyan drug la sogs pas | bstan bcos bsam gyis mi khyab pa brtsams | bye brag tu slob dpon phyogs kyz glang pos tshad ma kun las btus pa brtsams | de la brten nas dpal chos kyi grags pas rtog ge rigs pa'i sde bdun brtsams | dgos ched ci'i phyir brtsams na | yul rgya gar na | phyi rol pa dang nang pa gnyis rtsod pa yod pas rtsod pa gang rgyal ba de'i bstan pa la gang pham pa de 'jug dgos pas | phyi rol pa la sangs rgyas kyi bka'i lung drangs ma drangs med | nang pa la yang phyi rol pa'i lung drang ma drangs med | de phan tshun drangs kyang so sor tshad mar mi byed pas | gnyis ka yang so sor rigs pa 'thabs pas | phyi rol pa'i rtsod pa bzlog pa'i phyir tshad ma mams sangs rgyas kyi bka' la ma brten par rigs pa 'ba' zhig gi sgo nas brtsams pas lung gi bstan bcos min | rigs pa'i bstan bcos phyi nang gnyis ka'i bstan bcos thun mong yin pas | paṇḍi ta dza ya a nan ta kun [?] yang | tshad ma'i po ti dpus mo'i 'og tu bcug nas | 'di chos min tshad ma yin gsung skad | rnog lo tsa bas kyang | tshad ma rnams mu stegs skal ldan rgyal po bya ba la gsan pas skal ldan rgyal po'i shags rgod 'di gsung skad de | de ltar na tshad ma phyi rol [28b] pa dang thun mong yin pas sangs rgyas kyi chos min zer ||.

was not allowed to quote Buddhist scriptures (only the opponent's own scriptures could be quoted against him). Hence in such situations, the Pramāṇa school's own argumentation had to be based on a more doctrinally neutral standpoint.

But do these difficulties amount to anything substantial? In my view, the opponent here apparently confuses two distinct things, namely: the general philosophical doctrine of the Pramāṇa school on the one hand and what is merely one aspect of its argumentation method on the other. The opponent seems to assume that simply because a certain Buddhist tradition develops and uses forms of philosophical argumentation acceptable within wider philosophical circles, then it must follow that the philosopher of this school (here the Buddhist Pramāṇa adherent) must commit himself to a correspondingly non-Buddhist philosophical or doctrinal position. This of course is not necessarily the case.¹³ Surely it is one thing to say: (a) The argumentation of “Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇa tradition does not utilize specifically Buddhist doctrine or scripture in its debates with outsiders”, and quite another thing again to say: (b) “Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇa tradition has no basis whatsoever in Buddhism”. Therefore, the relationship between the two traditions, Nyāya and Buddhist Pramāṇa, is overlapping and not mutually exclusive

Nevertheless, to illustrate the main opinion of the opponent and to stress that it was not a merely theoretical question or classification but one of fundamental doctrinal significance, the 'Bri gung pa commentator related two interesting (though possibly apocryphal) anecdotes. The first shows that a very likely inspiration for this criticism of Tshad-ma had its sources in certain Indian and early Tibetan Mādhyamika philosophers (especially Prāsaṅgikas) who are said to have rejected the efficacy of formally stated proofs (*rang rgyud, svatantra*), theses (*dam bca', pratijñā*) and even means of knowledge (*tshad ma, pramāṇa*) as they were accepted by logicians. It is for this reason that the mention of the Kashmiri *paṇḍita* Jayānanda in the first anecdote as one who belittled the Tshad-ma teachings is probably accurate. Jayānanda is a recognized figure in the history of Tibetan Madhyamaka; he collaborated primarily with such translators as sPa tshab Nyi rna grags (b. 1055) and Khu mDo sde 'bar, both of whom were pioneers of the Prāsaṅgika approach—i.e., Candrakīrti's tradition of Madhyamaka—in Tibet. But as will be discussed below, Jayānanda probably never rejected Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's theories as non-Buddhist. He was merely rejecting the specific means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) and positively stated

¹³ The inapplicability of the argument can be seen if it is applied to the Nyāya tradition: “You Naiyāyikas are a non-Brahmanical tradition because your argumentation can function in discussions with the Buddhist logicians!”

independent inferences (*svatantrānumāna*) as effective means for establishing the highest Madhyamaka view. He favored instead the Prāsaṅgika method.

On the other hand, there also existed a strong tendency to value Tshad-ma especially highly among certain other Indian and early Tibetan Mādhyamikas—not of the Prāsaṅgika approach, but of the Svātantrika and Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis. The Yogācāra-Madhyamaka scholars, in particular, included epistemology along with the Yogācāra system as valuable means for approaching (though not finally penetrating) the highest reality. This fact is of great relevance for evaluating the second anecdote given by the “opponent”, for this anecdote mentions the great translator rNgog Blo ldan shes rab (1059–1109) and his Kashmiri teacher Bhavyarāja, who played vital roles in introducing a “spiritual” or deeper philosophical interpretation of Tshad-ma into Tibet through their translation of the *Pramāṇavārttikālamkāra* of Prajñākaragupta. But the mention of Bhavyarāja as a non-Buddhist adds a further complication to the historical picture. There is no doubt that rNgog considered this Kashmirian scholar to be one of the foremost logicians of Kashmir. He refers to Bhavyarāja in the translation colophon to Prajñākaragupta’s work as the outstanding scholar (*mahāpaṇḍita*) who aided him, referring to him as “the crest-jewel of reasoners of glorious Kashmir” (*dpal ldan kha che’i rig[s] pa ba’i gtsug gi nor bu*), and stating that he had studied or learned (*thos*) the work under him. In a previous part of the colophon, he is referred to as “*mkhan po*” (*upādhyāya*) *paṇḍita* as well.¹⁴ He also collaborated with Pa tshab Nyi rna grags on the translation of Dharmottara’s *Paralokasiddhi*. All of this would give the impression that he was a very active Buddhist *paṇḍita* who specialized in Tshad-ma.

But other Tibetan sources, such as the *lDe’u chos ’byung* by lDe’ujo sras (13th c.?), indicate that Bhavyarāja was not a Buddhist.¹⁵ J. Naudou too noticed the unusual fact that Bhavyarāja, unlike the other Kashmiri *paṇḍitas*, did not help translate any Buddhist works besides those having to do with Tshad-ma.¹⁶ And at least two major later Tibetan commentators—Shakya mchog ldan (1428–

¹⁴ See also J. Naudou, *Buddhists of Kashmir*, Delhi, 1980, 229, and M. Mejer, “On the Date of the Tibetan Translations of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and *Pramāṇavārttika*”, in E. Steinkellner, ed., *Studies in the Buddhist Epistemological Tradition*, Vienna, 1991, 191.

¹⁵ lDe’u jo sras, 148: *de nas rtse lde’i sras dbang ldes rgyags bskung nas kha cher slebs pa dang | kha che ba kun na re mkhas pa paṇḍi ta bod du bzhud na khyed ’dir ci la ’ongs zer bas ’gyod pa yang yin skad | de nas ma log par mu stegs skal ldan rgyal po la tshad ma rgyan bslabs skad* | This reference is cited in the forthcoming review by L. van der Kuijp in *Asiatische Studien*.

¹⁶ J. Naudou, *op. cit.*, 229: “Unlike so many others, who grappled by turns with all kinds of subjects, Bhavyarāja only interpreted texts on logic, either, the more often, with the aid of Blo ldan ses rab at Cakradhara, or at the Ratnaraśmivihāra of Grong khyer dpe med.”

1507) and Go rams pa (1429–1489) ascribe the introduction of Brahmanical sectarian (= Naiyāyika) interpretations to Bhavyarāja (through his disciple rNgog).¹⁷

Could then Bhavyārāja have been a Kashmiri Brahmanical *paṇḍita* who was somehow persuaded by the Tibetans to devote a large part of his life and energy to helping in the translation of Buddhist Pramāṇa works? Could rNgog’s collaboration with him have been based simply upon the fact that Bhavyarāja’s superior mastery of logic and dialectics gave him a better grasp of such difficult Buddhist masters as Prajñākaragupta, even though Bhavyarāja himself was not a Buddhist? These possibilities are hard to imagine. The modern Sa skya pa tradition considers him to have been just a Buddhist scholar specialized in Pramāṇa studies who was influenced by Naiyāyika ideas through his extensive exposure to the latter.¹⁸ In any case, it is very unlikely that rNgog for one ever rejected logic and epistemology out of hand as the above ’Bri gung pa account would seem to indicate he did. More will be said about rNgog below.

’Jig rten mgon po’s Own Opinion

How, then, according to our ’Bri gung pa commentator rDo rje shes rab, dtd ’Jig rten mgon po mean to refute the views of this opposing position and vindicate the opposite, which was namely a liberation-oriented interpretation of these doctrines? Mainly by recourse to the writings of the Indian Pramāṇa school. After he establishes the meaning of *pramāṇa* in general as reliability or infallibility and states that the Buddha is the sole infallible authoritative standard for the world, the commentator immediately quotes the benediction verse from Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and thereby identifies Tshad-ma as the gnosis (*ye shes*,

¹⁷ Shākya mchog ldan, *Tshad ma’i chos ’byung*, Collected Works, 19, 14.1, and Go rams pa, *Tshad ma rigs pa’i gter gyi dka’ ba’i gnas rnam par bshad pa sde bdun rab gsal*, Sa skya pa’i bka’ ’bum, 12, 4b6. “Nevertheless, in these there can also be seen a few instances of the intrusion of the sayings of the non-Buddhists by way of Bhavyarāja, such as that a universal is a real existent.” *’on kyang ’di dag la spyi dngos po yod pa sogs skal ldan rgyal po nas brgyur pa’i phyi rol pa’i sgros ’chugs pa ’ga’ re yang snang zhing* | Cited by L. van der Kuijp, *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology from the Eleventh to the Thirteenth Century*, 46 and n. 173.

¹⁸ Ven. Migmar Tsering, personal communication. See also R. Hayes, “The Question of Doctrinalism in the Buddhist Epistemologists”, *JAAR*, 1984, 646, who repeats the tradition that by the 11th century “it had become rather difficult to find Buddhist Paṇḍitas in India [who were fully qualified to teach Buddhist logic and epistemology]; one or two were found in Kaśmir, but they had become Buddhists late in life, and for the rest the Tibetans had to make do with some non-Buddhist scholars who had some knowledge of the Buddhist thinkers of former centuries.” Hayes found this account in the English introduction to a modern reprint of Go rams pa’s *Rigs gter* commentary (Mussoorie, Sakya College, 1975), but I am not sure what its original source might have been.

jñāna) of the Buddha. Then he quotes from Dharmakīrti the principle that correct knowledge precedes successful action, and how the possession of such knowledge makes the Buddha a perfectly reliable authority.¹⁹

At the end of a long discussion, the commentator indicates yet another explanation that 'Jig rten mgon po apparently made in favor of the religious authoritativeness of Tshad-ma treatises, in order to refute the notion that they were doctrinally neutral:

“[’Jig rten mgon po] taught that the Tshad-ma treatises establish the scriptural teaching of the Jina [Buddha], and they were composed based on [*Sūtras* of] the definitive doctrinal cycle such as the *Laṅkāvatāra* [*Sūtra*]. Therefore, Tshad-ma is a treatise which is based on both scripture and reasoning.”²⁰

Thus, according to the “Single Intention” doctrine, the fundamental Indian Pramāṇa treatises were genuine Buddhist scripture.²¹

(b) The Second Point of 'Bri gung 'Jig rten mgon po

The next major point asserted by 'Bri gung 'Jig rten mgon po in his “Single Intention”, i.e., point no. 17, is a closely related one:

“Though some indeed do maintain that there is no fruit of Tshad-ma aside from Tshad-ma’s being merely the refutation of the inferior established tenets [of others], here we maintain that the fruit of Tshad-ma is the revealing of ultimate reality, i.e., emptiness.”²²

The explanation of this passage given by rDo rje shes rab in his “Single Intention” commentary begins with the following portrayal of some putative opponent’s opinion, and here again it is this opinion which shall interest us most:

¹⁹ rDo rje shes rab, 403, 5 (*Nga* 28b): *dpal chos kyi grags pa'i | rnam nges kyi dgongs 'grel las | phan pa dang mi phan pa thob pa dang spong ba ni nges par yang dag pa'i shes pa ngon du 'gro ba can yin pas | de mi shes pa rnams kyi don du 'di brtsams | ces pas lam la 'jug pa'i thog mar | ...*

²⁰ rDo rje shes rab, 405, 1 (*Nga* 29b): *gnyis pa tshad ma'i bstan bcos rnams rgyal ba'i bka' lung gtan la phab pa dang | lang kar gshegs pa la sogs pa nges don chos kyi khor lo rnams la brten nas mdzad pas tshad ma lung rigs gnyis ka la brten pa'i bstan bcos yin gsung ||*

²¹ There is other evidence that the *Tshad ma* texts were considered to have a positive spiritual force, for instance among certain sNar thang pa scholars of ca. 1300. This is illustrated by an anecdote in the Blue Annals, 337 (*Cha* 5b = 300), according to which the master sKyo ston sMon lam tshul khriims (8th abbot of sNar thang), in order to cure bCom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri from leprosy, advised him to recite aloud the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*. The latter did as instructed, and after reciting it a thousand times, he was freed from the disease.

²² 'Jig rten mgon po, 158, 5ff (*Ka* 3a): *tshad ma ni grub mtha' ngan pa sun 'don pa nyid yin pa las tshad ma'i 'bras bu med par 'dod pa yin mod kyi | 'dir ni tshad ma'i 'bras bu chos nyid stong pa nyid ston par bzhed do ||*

“The “*tshad ma*” of logical argumentation refutes the inferior established tenets of the non-Buddhists, i.e., it defeats the non-Buddhist Indian sectarian dialectical opponents. Apart from that, it does not possess [any explanation of] how one should practise the threefold [religious] path consisting of basis, path and fruit, nor [does it contain any mention] that “through having practised, this fruit will arise”, such as other [Buddhist] treatises have. Therefore, the Lord Master [Atiśa] also said:

‘There is no need for direct perception [or] inference. The learned have used them [just] in order to refute non-Buddhist opponents.’²³

Alternatively, in the treatise composed by the [Kashmiri] *paṇḍita* Jayānanda, *Tarkamudgara* (TTP 5270, TTD 3869), too, the author adduced many reasons why one cannot understand ultimate reality through the theory of Tshad-ma, and why one can [indeed] understand reality through the Madhyamaka, stating: ‘The logicians following Dharmakīrti maintain: “Through a *pramāṇa*, reality is understood.”’²⁴

²³ *Satyadvayāvātāra*, 13b–d. Peking 5298, 5380, = vols. *Ha*, 70a7, and *Gi* 7a. See also C. Lindtner, “Atiśa’s Introduction to the Two Truths, and Its Sources”, *JIP*, 9, 1981, 190–1; and L. van der Kuijp, “An Early Tibetan View of the Soteriology of Buddhist Epistemology: The Case of ’Bri-gung ’Jig-rten mgon-po”, 63. Atiśa criticizes here some Buddhists who maintain that the two ordinary *pramāṇas* are efficient means for understanding Emptiness or ultimate truth:

mngon sum dang ni rjes su dpag | sangs rgyas pa yis de gnyis bzung ||
gnyis pos stong nyid rtogs so zhes | tshu rol mthong ba’i rmongs pa smra ||

But in the system propounded here by Atiśa, the reality which can be investigated by these means of knowledge is not the ultimate, but rather only the “correct surface-level” (*yang dag kun rdzob*), which he specifies (7a2) includes objects possessing causal efficaciousness. How will one realize true (ultimate) reality? Through the practical instructions that have come down from Candrakīrti, the pupil (*sic*) of Nāgārjuna, who has realized true (ultimate) reality. The Tibetan (7b3):

chos nyid bden pa gzigs pa yi | klu sgrub slob ma zla grags yin ||
de las brgyud pa’i man ngag gis | chos nyid bden pa rtogs par ’gyur ||

²⁴ TTP 5270, *rTog ge’i tho ba, dbu ma, Ya* [425a–426a (= vol. 99, page 61, 4, 2 to page 62, 1, 4)\ 425a2:

yul dngos slob kyis zhugs pa yis || tshad ma[s] de nyid rtogs so zhes ||
chos kyi grags pa’i rjes ’brang ba’i || rtog ge pa rnam smra bar byed ||

Thus, in this work, which was translated by the author and the translator Khu mDo sde ’bar, he criticizes specifically those logicians following Dharmakīrti who say that reality can be cognized by an “objectively grounded” (*dngos stobs kyis zhugs pa, vastubalapravrṭta*) *pramāṇa*. This little treatise of some twenty verses is thus not primarily a work on logic, but it is rather a critique of logical and epistemological methods from a Madhyamaka perspective—a hammer blow as it were against logicians and epistemologists who took their means of knowledge too seriously. Cf. D. Seyfort Rugg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Wiesbaden, 1981, 114. Jayānanda summarizes his position more “positively” in the final verse (426a5):

tshad ma med kyang khas blangs dang | ’gal phyir rang gzhan log rtogs sell ||
log rtogs log pa tsam? zhig la | de nyid nges shes tha snyad brtags ||

On Khu mDo sde ’bar, who held the position that a Mādhyamika only refutes the tenets of others without propounding his own thesis, see D. Seyfort Rugg, “On the Thesis and Assertion in the Madhyamaka/Dbu ma”, *Proceedings of the Csoma de Körös Symposium held at Velm-Vienna, Austria, Vienna, 1983*, 228f and n. 65.

Accordingly, Tshad-ma, apart from refuting others in all three or four scriptural collections [?], lacks any religion which is to be practised. That being so, it has no [statement], ‘At the beginning, this is the cause.’ It lacks, ‘In the middle, cultivate this path!’ And it lacks, ‘Ultimately one attains this result.’²⁵

Here one can see that the putative opponent at first seemingly confuses the result of “*tshad ma*” (understood as intersectorian dialectic or debate) with the higher “fruit” of *tshad ma/pramāṇa* (understood as genuine knowledge or wisdom). But then the opponent makes a very straightforward objection, namely that the Tshad-ma tradition does not, as far as he can see, set forth a complete path of religious practice. Then he mentions two instances of masters who apparently rejected the efficacy of the specific *pramāṇas* (here specifically direct perception and inference): one being the Prāsaṅgika *paṇḍita* Jayānanda mentioned above, and the other being Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982–1054), whose *Satyadvayaavatāra* is quoted. The quotations are too short to reveal the context of the remarks, but it is safe to say that neither master would have rejected the two means of cognition, except as a final means for realizing the absolute. Thus, here again, we find an instance of a rejection of the specific *pramāṇas* on a high level of Madhyamaka discussion being wrongly taken by the opponent to be a rejection of the soteriological value of the whole Tshad-ma system.²⁶

²⁵ *dGongs gcig yig cha*, 1, 405, 2-408, 1 (Nga 29b–31a): ‘*di la rtog ge tshad ma ni | phyi rol gyi grub mtha’ ngan pa bkag ste | mu stegs pa’i rgol ba tshar gcod pa ma gtogs pa bstan bcos gzhan ltar gzhi lam ’bras bu gsum gyi lam nyams su len tshul lam | nyams su blangs pas ’bras bu ’di ltar ’byung bya ba med pa’i phyir | jo bo rje’i zhal nas kyang |*

mngon sum rjes dpag dgos pa med ||

mu stegs rgol ba bzlog pa’i phyir ||

mkhas pa mams kyis byas pa yin ||

ces pa’am | paṇḍi ta dza ya ā nan tas | rtog ge rigs pa’i tho ba zhes bya ba’i bstan bcos brtsams pa las kyang | tshad mas de nyid rtogs so zhes | chos kyi grags pa’i rjes ’brang ba’i || rtog ge ba mams smra bar byed | ces tshad mas de nyid mi rtogs | dbu mas chos nyid rtogs pa’i rgyu mtshan mang po bkod skad de | de ltar na tshad mas sde snod gsum rnam bzhi char la phar ’gegs pa ma gtogs pa | lag len du bya rgyu’i chos med pas | dang por rgyu ’di yin med | bar du lam ’di bsgom med | mthar thug ’bras bu ’di thob med zer te |.

²⁶ Thus, one should clearly distinguish the assertion: (a) “The Tshad-ma tradition and the ways of cognition it teaches are of no spiritual value whatsoever”, from: (b) “The Tshad-ma tradition and its two ordinary ways of cognition are not maintained on the highest level of Madhyamaka philosophical analysis when investigating ultimate reality”.

’Jig rten mgon po, by contrast, strongly asserted that the “fruit” of *pramāṇa* is the highest insight into ultimate reality, identifying it as the ultimate of the Madhyamaka through his usage of the term “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*). From this point of view, a complete soteriological path may be discovered in the Tshad-ma teachings. Such a deeper interpretation or spiritual reorientation should not be surprising coming from ’Bri gung ’Jig rten mgon po, for he was primarily a visionary and a spiritual “synthesizer”, who fused or merged many concepts in the crucible of his yogic insight. He was evidently intent upon bringing out the deepest dimension of every aspect of Tibetan Buddhist theory and practice. It is definitely not a coincidence that one of the preceding points in his “Single Intention” doctrine was that the Yogācāra teachings are ultimately to be considered Madhyamaka, i.e., the highest theory and insight of all.²⁷

Moreover, the question of how Dharmakīrti’s highest intention should be interpreted—whether as Yogācāra or Madhyamaka—was still in late 12th century and the time of ’Jig rten mgon po a live issue among Tibetan philosophers. Here the ’Bri gung pa master clearly sided with the interpretation of Tshad-ma as ultimately the Madhyamaka (as had been the tradition of rNgog), and he maintained that the Tshad-ma doctrine contained within itself a complete soteriological method leading ultimately to the realization of emptiness.

A Later bKa’ brgyud pa Master with Similar Opinions: dPa’ bo gTsug lag phreng ba

Quite similar opinions on the status of Tshad-ma are also expressed in the writings of the 16th-century Karma b.Ka’ brgyud pa master dPa’ bo gTsug lag phreng ba (1503/4–1566).²⁸ The relevant discussion occurs in his description of the five fields of knowledge (*rig gnas*) and their origins, which forms a small part of his famed history of Buddhism, the *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston*.²⁹ These remarks of gTsug lag phreng ba record (and rebut) still more arguments for a secular interpretation of Tshad-ma. He begins his discussion as follows:

“[Objection:] Tshad-ma does not explain the sense of the Buddha’s Word, for it was [already] widely known among the Brahmanical logicians (*tārkika*) previous to [the existence of] the Buddha’s Word. If you think: “Even if the Tshad-ma of non-Buddhists does not explain it, the Tshad-ma of Buddhists does”, this is not so. For as it is said in the rNam nges:

²⁷ Shes rab ’byung gnas, *dGongs gcig yig cha*, 1, 158, 7 (*Ka* 2b): *dbu ma’i bka’ dang sems lsam pa’i bka’ [3a] tha dad par ’dod de | rdo rje’i gsung || sems tsam ston pa’i bka’ nyid dbu ma ston par bzhed ||*.

²⁸ I am indebted to Mr. Ngawang Tsering for bringing this passage to my notice.

²⁹ dPa’ bo gTsug lag phreng ba, *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston*, 38b–40a. See also the edition in the Śatapiṭaka Series, 9–3, 850–2.

‘If you are led to ultimate reality by the path of logical argumentation, you will be far removed from the Sugata’s Doctrine, and will be destroyed’ ... [passage abridged].³⁰

And as Atiśa said:

‘Direct perception and inference are not necessary. They are used to refute the non-Buddhist sectarians.’

[Reply:] To these points, the omniscient Bu ston also explained: ‘So it is widely said [by others]. But as for me, I think otherwise.’ Therefore, from among the two Tshad-ma traditions, Brahmanical and Buddhist, the Brahmanical Tshad-ma postulates a ‘self’ as its subject, and it establishes mind and objects and various relations [read: *'brel pa?*] through speculation. This forms the target of criticism for the Buddhist Tshad-ma. Buddhist Tshad-ma has merely the name Tshad-ma in common with the Brahmanical tradition, whereas in substance it is different.”³¹

The dPa’ bo sprul sku goes on to explain that in general Buddhist Tshad-ma is contained within the intended meaning of the scriptures,³² and that in particular the science of Tshad-ma goes back in the Buddhist tradition to when it was first taught by Mañjuśrī to the Arhat Dharmatrāta (Chos skyobs), and that it was taught successively by Buddhist masters down to Dignāga and Dharmakīrti and their commentators. He also mentions the explanations of the Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho, who composed the treatise *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho*. A bit later he goes on to explain that after refuting the non-Buddhist’s opinions, it is also the purpose of the Tshad-ma treatises to prove the Buddha to be reliable by correctly adducing reasons and definitions, etc., in a way of proof that is acceptable to both parties, and thereby to establish the opponent in the doctrine taught by the Buddha. As he states:

“When such a non-Buddhist who enters the doctrine through critical investigation comes to believe in the Buddha, he should then adopt a

³⁰ This work, cited as *rNam nges*, is evidently not the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* of Dharmakīrti.

³¹ dPa’ bo, 850 (38b): *tshad mas kyang bka’i don ’grel ba ma yin ste tshad ma ni bka’i sngon nas mu stegs rtog ge ba mams la cher grags pa’i phyir ro || phyi pa’i tshad mas min yang nang pa’i tshad mas ’grel lo snyam na ma yin ste rnam nges las | rtog ge’i lam gyis chos nyid la khrid na || bde gshegs bstan las cher bsrings nyams pa yin || ston pa bla na med pa’i bstan pa yang || gal ste gzhan du gyur na dpyad pa’i rigs || ces dang | jo bos | mngon sum rjes dpag dgos pa med || mu stegs zlog phyir byas pa yin || zhes so || di dag la kun mkhyen bus kyang | zhes grags so kho bo ni gzhan du sems so zhes bshad pa yin no || des na tshad ma la phyi nang gnyis las phyi pa’i tshad ma ni khyad gzhi bdag khas blangs nas yul yul can dang ’grel pa sna tshogs pa rtog pas btags ste ’jog pa ste de ni nang pa’i tshad ma’i phyogs snga mams so || nang pa’i tshad ma ni tshad ma zhes pa’i ming kho na phyi pa dang thun mong pa yin gyi don khyad par ba yin no ||.*

³² Lit: *dgongs par gnas* “subsists or dwells in the intention”.

moral discipline in accordance with the Vinaya and should accomplish meditative tranquility and insight in accordance with the Sutras and Abhidharma, all of which that same Buddha taught as his doctrine. Since those scriptures do not rely on other basic texts, the above cited lines beginning ‘If you are led to ultimate reality by the path of logical argumentation ...’ were stated.

And because it is possible to realize reality even without engaging in investigations involving direct perception and inference, [Atiśa] said:

‘Direct perception and inference are not necessary ...’

Therefore, it is not the case that the Tshad-ma treatises do not at all teach the definitive meaning, for the great saints do not perceive phenomena which are not reality. And what later learned and realized masters have said about the *Pramāṇavārttika* being the song of realization (*doha*) of Dharmakīrti is also correct.”³³

The dPa’ bo sprul sku supports this by showing that Dharmakīrti’s view accords with both the definitive meaning of Asaṅga’s Mahāyāna tradition (quoting *Pramāṇavārttika*, III, 213c–d) and the definitive meaning of Nāgārjuna’s tradition (*ibid.*, II, 209c–d, and II, 253c).

Finally, he reverses himself and criticizes from the highest (i.e., Mādhyamika) viewpoint of the Mahāyāna even certain essential tenets in Dharmakīrti’s system as not being ultimately valid or real. The things he criticizes include: self cognition (*rang rig*), sensory cognition (*dbang yid*), the direct perception of the Śrāvaka and Pratyeka, and all forms of ordinary inference, whether based on objective fact, consensus or belief. He concludes that the only thing that can really count as a reliable knowledge at all times and in every respect is the Buddha. And he states that it was for this reason that ’Bri gung ’Jig rten mgon in his “Vajra Utterances” maintained *tshad ma* to be the gnosis of the omniscient one.³⁴

³³ dPa’ bo, 851 (39b): *de ltar dpyadnas ’jug pa’i phyi rol pa sangs rgyas la yid ches pa na des bstan pa’i chos ’dul ba ltar tshul khrims len mdo sde dang mngon pa ltar zhi lhag bskyed dgos ste de dag gzhung gzhon la rag las pas | rtog ge’i lam gyis sogs gsungs cing mngon rjes kyi dpyad pa ma zhugs par yang chos nyid rtogs nus pa’i phyir | mngon sum rjes dpag dgos pa med || ces gsungs so || des na tshad ma’i bstan bcos kyis nges don gtan mi ston pa ma yin sle | ’phags chen rnams kyis de kho na nyid ma yin pa’i chos ma gzigs pa dang | physis kyi mkhas grub dag gis tshad ma rnam ’grel ’di chos kyi grags pa’i do ha yin gsungs pa don la gnas ste |.*

³⁴ dPa’ bo qualifies these last criticisms of Tshad-ma tenets by saying that since these Mādhyamika arguments are not recognized in the philosophical systems below the Madhyamaka, within the context of the Tshad-ma teachings themselves, these logical entailments, that *tshad ma* is not established, do not constitute any real fault.

(2) *Tsong kha pa on a Prevailing Tibetan Interpretation*

That certain Tibetans maintained some form of a secular or non-Buddhist interpretation in an earlier period (the 12th-13th centuries) is thus quite definite from the 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud pa sources. And that such an interpretation continued to find followers in the 14th century is clearly indicated also in the writings of Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), founder of the dGe lugs pa school, who is the next authority we shall briefly consider. In one passage of his *mDun legs ma*, a brief autobiographical versified work written late in his life at dGa' ldan the famous master stated:

“Here in Tibet, numerous people—[including both] those who are learned in the basic texts of Tshad-ma and those who are unlearned—state unanimously that there does not exist anywhere in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* or in [Dharmakīrti's] Seven Treatises [a teaching of] the stages of practice for proceeding to Awakening. (At the same time, these people] take as authoritative also Mañjuśrī's granting of his approval to Dignāga when he said directly to him: ‘Compose this! In the future, this will be an eye for all living beings.’”

I saw that to be the height of unreasonable argumentation, and when I moreover investigated that doctrine [further], I gained complete certainty that the sense of the invocation verse to the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* as the establishment of *pramāṇa* proves, through a forward and backward procedure, the Buddha to be an authority for those seeking liberation, and from that, that his doctrine alone is the embarkation point for those desiring liberation. And, consequently, I was overjoyed by the fact that the essential points of the path [to liberation] of both [Great and Small] Vehicles clearly emerged, all united together, from the path of reasoning.”³⁵

³⁵ Tsong kha pa, *Rang gi rtogs pa brjod pa mdo tsam du bshad pa* [= “*bDun legs ma*”], no. 64 in *rJe thams cad mkhyen pa tsong kha pa chen po'i bka' 'bum thor bu*, Collected Works, 2, 126, 6ff (*Kha* 63b–64a): *byang phyogs 'di na tshad ma'i gzhung lugs la || sbyangs dang ma sbyangs du ma mgrin gcig tu || mdo dang sde bdun kun la byang chub tu || bgrod pa'i nyams len rim pa yod min zer || 'jam pa'i dbyangs kyis phyogs kyi glang po la || dngos su 'di rtsoms 'di ni ma 'ongs dus || 'gro ba kun gyi mig tu 'gyur ro zhes || gsung gi gnang ba stsal ba'ang tshad mar byed || de ni mi rigs smra ba'i phul byung du || mthong nas lhag par tshul der dpyad pa na || tshad ma kun las btus pa'i mchod brjod don || tshad ma grub par lugs 'byung lugs ldog gis || rnam grol don du gnyer la bcom ldan 'das || tshad mar bsgrubs shing de las de yi ni || bstan pa kho na thar 'dod 'jug ngogs su || nges pa gting nas rnyed pas theg gnyis kyi || lam gyi gnad kun 'dril bar rigs lam nas || legs par thon pas lhag par dga' bu rnyed ||*

This is quoted by E. Steinkellner, “Tshad ma'i skyes bu: Meaning and Historical Significance of the Term”, *Contributions on Tibetan and Buddhist Religion and Culture*, Vienna, 1983, 279, and it was also translated by A. Wayman, “Observations on Translations from the Classical Tibetan Language into European Languages”, *III*, 14, 1972, 180. A Japanese translation by S. Matsumoto, “sTag tshang pa no Tsong kha pa hihan ni tsuite”, *Report of the Japanese Association for Tibetan Studies*, 28, 1982, 11–14, also exists, in which this question is discussed, 12. Steinkellner, *op. cit.*, also notes that the passage referring to the status of *pramāṇa* was already interpreted by E. Obermiller in his article, “Tson kha pa le Pandit”, *MCB*, 3, 1934–5, 334f.

The brief passage quoted above is enough to show that Tsong kha pa considered his own Tshad-ma interpretations to have been a crucial step in reorienting the Tshad-ma project back to its spiritual roots. Contrary to what Tsong kha pa would seem to indicate, however, there is every reason to believe that a religiously or soteriologically oriented line of Dharmakīrti interpretation was followed by a number of influential Tibetan scholars both in Tsong kha pa's time and even well before. We have already seen one clear instance of this in 'Dri gung 'Jig rten mgon po's "Single Intention" teachings, though these take the form of two very brief and cryptic statements among more than one hundred, and do not represent a complete system of Dharmakīrti exegesis. Moreover, from a historical standpoint, Tsong kha pa's soteriological interpretation did not represent anything truly revolutionary in Tibet, for the mainstream scholastic tradition of *Pramānavārttika* exegesis had also maintained such a "non-secular" interpretation since the early 13th century. This tradition was the so-called "Sa skya tradition" (*sa lugs*) of Dharmakīrti exegesis descending from Sa skya Paṇḍita, and it was precisely in this tradition that Tsong kha pa received his initial training.³⁶ Thus, if we were to search for teachers who might have influenced Tsong kha pa in this direction, it would be among the Sa lugs scholars that we should begin.

Two masters who obviously might have influenced Tsong kha pa are the eminent scholar Nya dbon Kun dga' dpal and his equally illustrious student Red mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros (1349–1412). Nya dbon (who incidentally also served at one time as abbot of Jo nang and defended the *gzhan stong* Madhyamaka) is traditionally said to have been the fountainhead of later Tibetan Tshad-ma exposition³⁷ and he was the teacher of the most influential Tshad-ma scholars of the next generation, including g.Yag ston Sangs rgyas dpal (1348–1414), Red mda' ba and Tsong kha pa. In ca. 1375, Tsong kha pa went to study *Phar phyin* (*Abhisamayālamkāra*) under Nya dbon at rTse chen in gTsang, and after completing some studies, also requested to be instructed in the Abhidharma. Nya dbon recommended instead that he study the latter under his own pupil, Red mda' ba. The biographies and main lineage records do not men

³⁶ See D. Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise (Section III): Sa skya Paṇḍita on Indian and Tibetan Traditions of Pramāna and Philosophical Debate*, Vienna, 1987, 133ff.

³⁷ Ngag dbang chos grags, 73, 5: *tshad ma nya la thug*.

tion any direct studies of Tshad-ma by Tsong kha pa under Nya dbon.³⁸ Tsong kha pa executed these studies instead under Red mda' ba and others (including the translator Nam mkha' bzang po at E) in the following years. Moreover, Tsong kha pa apparently gained some insights through his own private reading. In early 1378, the young Tsong kha pa (then twenty-one years of age) accompanied his master Red mda' ba to Chu bar in mNga' ris, and there, among other things, he studied in detail Dharmakīrti's autocommentary on the first chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*.³⁹ Later that same year, Tsong kha pa went to Mal gro to receive various textual transmissions (*lung*) from one Mal gro lha lung gi bla ma bSod nams grags pa. After some time, Tsong kha pa went into private meditation retreat, and, during the breaks between his main meditative practices, he read and deliberated on one of the earliest Sa lugs commentaries on the *Pramāṇavārttika*, namely the Rigs mdzod by 'U yug pa Rigs pa'i seng ge, who had been the main student of Sa skya Paṇḍita for the study of the *Pramāṇavārttika*.⁴⁰ Tsong kha pa was struck then by the profound religious content of the explanations set forth by 'U yug pa in his commentary on the second (*pramāṇasiddhi*) chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, particularly the section in which 'U yug pa expounded the stages by which one gains liberation from *samsāra* and gains perfect awakening.⁴¹ He gained a strong conviction that

³⁸ See R. Kaschewsky, *Das Leben des lamaistischen Heiligen Tsongkhapa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419)*, Wiesbaden, 1971, 1, 83f, and D. Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise*, *op. cit.*, 139–145.

³⁹ Blo bzang tshul kbrims, *Kha* 13a1–3.

⁴⁰ Blo bzang tshul kbrims, *Kha*, f. 16a: *de nas ston de mal gro lha lung gi bla ma bsod nams grags pa la chos lung mang rab gsan | bar zhig tu sku mtshams bcad nas sgom sgrub mdzad | thun mtshams rnams su rnam 'grel gyi rnam bshad rigs mdzod la gzigz rtog mdzad |*

Cf. R. Kaschewsky, *op. cit.*, 1, 86f, and L. van der Kuijp, “Studies in the Life and Thought of Mkhas grub rje I: Mkhas grub rje's Epistemological Oeuvre and his Philological Remarks on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* I”, *Berliner Indologische Studien*, 1985, 77.

⁴¹ Blo bzang tshul khrims, *Kha* 16a3: *khyad par du le'u gnyis pa'i nang gi 'khor ba las grol te rdzogs byang 'thob pa'i lam gyi rnam gzhag ston pa'i skabs la legs par gzigz pas | spyir sems can thams cad 'khor bar 'khyams shing dbang med du skye 'chi sogs sdug bsngal du mas mnar ba ni rang nyid kyis bsags pa'i las kyi 'bras bu yin la | de ltar rang? la gnod pa'i las bsog pa ni chags sdang sogs nyon mongs pa'i dbang du song bas yin zhing | nyon mongs de dag 'byung ba'i rtsa ba ni nga 'o snyam du 'dzin pa'i ma rig pa las 'byung ba yin pas | 'khor ba'i sdug bsngal thams cad kyi rtsa ba ni ma rig pa 'o | de sbyong ba'i thabs ni bdag med pa'i don bsgom pa yin la | de ltar bdag med bsgom zhing dge ba'i las la 'bad na ngan pa'i skyon mams rim gyis dag ste | [16b] legs pa'i yon tan rim gyis 'phel nas mngon par rdzogs par 'tshang rgya bar 'gyur ba sogs rgyu mishan phra zhib rnams dpyis phyin par nges par gyur | de ltar nges pa'i rkyen gyis rigs pa'i dbang phyug chos kyi grags pas legs bshad 'di 'dra ma brtsams na | zab gnad 'di 'dra ga la rnyed ces drin dran pa'i dad pa dang | gzhung 'di ni snying nas thar pa 'dod pa dag la mig gcig bu dang 'dra zhes chos la dad pa dang | rgyu mtshan 'di rnams ma rtogs na 'gro ba mams gang gi skyon gyis 'khor bar 'khyams pa dang | sangs rgyas byang sems mams thabs gang gis 'khor ba las grol ba sogs gang yang mi rtogs pas don 'di zhib tu phye ba'i lam phul du byung ba'o snyam du rigs pa'i srol la dmigs pa'i dad pa rnams shugs drag po mnan pas mi gnon pa 'khrungs shing |.*

Dharmakīrti's work was extremely useful for those striving for liberation, and throughout the rest of his period of stay there, he could not glance at the *Pramāṇavārttika* without being deeply moved.⁴²

Philosophically, however, the doctrines that attracted Tsong kha pa's notice are highly unremarkable; they are merely the most basic of Buddhist soteriological teachings. But perhaps that was the point. Here in the midst of the predominantly epistemological and logical theories of Tshad-ma, the young Tsong kha pa found himself unexpectedly confronted with the very core of Buddhist doctrines of liberation.

But did this realization about the deeper soteriological content of Tshad-ma really just come to Tsong kha pa out of the blue? It is odd that Tsong kha pa was ignorant of similar passages existing for instance in Sa paṅ's *Rigs gter*, a standard work well known in the same scholarly circles, though this could perhaps be attributed to Tsong kha pa's relative youth and inexperience.⁴³ The later biographies of Tsong kha pa do not hint either at any role played by Red mda' ba in this specific connection, though the young Tsong kha pa did go on to study Tshad-ma more extensively over the next few years, especially under gZhon nu blo gros.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, there is every reason to expect that the latter exerted a considerable influence on the general understandings of Tshad-ma developed by Tsong kha pa (as well as by rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen) and hence within the subsequent dGe lugs pa Tshad-ma schools.⁴⁵ But how to document particular in-

⁴² *ibid.*: ston der bzhugs kyi ring la mnam 'grel gyi gzhung la gzigs tsam nas dad pa'i stobs kyi spu long g.yos te | spyang chab kyi rgyun gcad par mi nus pa rtag tu 'ong ba gcig byung gsung ngo || Cf. R. Kaschewsky, *op. cit.*, 1, 87.

⁴³ Tsong kha pa's greatest Tshad-ma student, rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen (1364–1432), who had also studied Tshad ma under Red mda' ba, wrote a commentary on Sa paṅ's *Rigs gter*. But this work was never printed in the accessible Central Tibetan editions of his works. It is said to survive in the Asian museum at St. Petersburg, as mentioned by Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, Leningrad, 1930, 2, 323, n. 4. A khu chin in his *Tho yig* also refers to this work (no. 11853) as having been cited by 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pain his *Grub mtha' chen mo: rgyal tshab rje'i rigs gter dar tik legs bshad snying po grub mtha' chen mor lung drang*.

⁴⁴ The latter is said to have been Tsong kha pa's greatest teacher especially for the Tshad-ma and Madhyamaka (*dbu tshad*). See Blo bzang tshul khriims, *Kha 21b5*, who stresses very strongly the unique role played by Red mda' ba in reviving these studies.

⁴⁵ This was previously suggested by E. Steinkellner, "Tshad ma'i skyes bu: Meaning and Historical Significance of the Term", 282. Cf. L. van der Kuijp, "An Early Tibetan View of the Soteriology of Buddhist Epistemology: The Case of 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten mgon-po", 57. As noted by Steinkellner, *op. cit.*, 282, such an interpretation was already given by G. Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, Rome, 1949, 118f, who stated that "it appears that he [i.e., Tsong kha pa] developed and gave greater depth to ideas already elaborated by a great master, at whose school he got his training, gZhon nu blo gros of Red mda'". Tucci further (120) commented that the acknowledging of logic as a part of religion (in the Tibetan tradition) seemed to begin with Red mda' ba. Tucci's source for this was T. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, 1, 46.

Red mda' ba was the main teacher for the *Pramāṇavārttika* to Tsong kha pa indicated in most lineage records, though mKhas grub in his record of teaching received specifies that Tsong kha pa studied under Red mda' ba's disciple dPal 'byor shes rab. See D. Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise*, 143. The latter was one of Red mda' ba's foremost students. See R. Kaschewsky, *op. cit.*, 1, 89.

stances of this influence? In the absence of the relevant works by Red mda' bu. one cannot gauge now in any detail the influence he might have had.⁴⁶ Yet as L. van der Kuijp has shown, there are several good reasons to believe that Red mda' ba's approach to Tshad-ma tended in the same direction and may even have been special within the Sa lugs. He is said to have written, for instance, a subcommentary on Prajñākaragupta's *Pramāṇavārttikālamkāra* and then taught this to Tsong kha pa in ca. 1390.⁴⁷ Red mda' ba's own commentary on the *Pramāṇavārttikā* (the *Rigs pa'i 'dod 'jo*), is stated to have followed Prajñākaragupta's interpretations on some points.⁴⁸ Therefore, it would be quite premature to rule Red mda' ba out as an important source of such influences until his writings become accessible.⁴⁹

In the case of Red mda' ba's teacher Nya dbon, moreover, there exists even more concrete evidence of his having interpreted Tshad-ma along soteriological lines. A key section of Nya dbon's brief commentary on the *Pramāṇavārttikā*, namely his comment on the *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, actually survives, and, therefore, it may one day serve as the basis for establishing his interpretation of

⁴⁶ Most of Red mda' ba's Madhyamaka writings are unavailable as well, so the historian of Tibetan Buddhism is severely handicapped also when trying to evaluate his Mādhyamika contributions and influences in any detail. The "originality" of Tsong kha pa in this field, too, will be impossible to assess in detail without the writings of this, his most important teacher.

⁴⁷ L. van der Kuijp, "Studies in the Life and Thought of Mkhas grub rje I: Mkhas grub rje's Epistemological Oeuvre and his Philological Remarks on Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya I*", 76.

⁴⁸ L. van der Kuijp, *op. cit.*, 76, quoting Ngag dbang chos grags, 74.

⁴⁹ L. van der Kuijp, 1985, *op. cit.*, 76, however, finds more significance in the fact that such specific influences are not mentioned in the sources available to him, such as the record of teachings received of mKhas grub, and in the fact that similar influences by Red mda' ba upon Bo dong paṅ chen (*sic*) are *not* specified in the biography of the latter. But here the available positive evidence should probably be given greatest weight.

the relevant themes.⁵⁰ Indeed, even the chapter title appearing in the colophon to this section of Nya dbon's commentary (fol. 27b) is phrased in unmistakably soteriological terms: it concerns specifically the establishment of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*) connected with the striving for liberation (*thar pa don gnyer gyi tshad ma grub pa*).⁵¹ Nevertheless, as quoted above, Tsong kha pa implied that he was in a minority when interpreting Tshad-ma as a soteriologically effective doctrine with its own stages of practice. So what could this respected master have been trying to express through this? Perhaps he was countering mainly the numerous scholars (*dge bshes*) of the gSang phu and allied traditions, at whose seminaries he had performed his demonstrations of scholastic proficiency (*grwa skor*), and not to his own major tradition, which after all stemmed from the Sa skya tradition of *Pramāṇavārttika* studies.⁵² Or maybe he meant to stress that his interpretation of Tshad-ma specifically contained the stages of practice (*nyams len rim pa*) [to Liberation], though indeed he had found such an approach already in the writings of 'U yug pa.

In any case, Tsong kha pa and his immediate circle apparently did play the most active role in actually trying to revive Tshad-ma as a living spiritual prac-

⁵⁰ See D. Jackson, *The "Miscellaneous Series" of Tibetan Texts in the Bihar Research Society, Patna: A Handlist*, Tibetan and Indo-Tibetan Studies, 2, Stuttgart, 1989, no. 1023–1, and "Sources for the Study of Tibetan Pramāṇa Traditions Preserved at the Bihar Research Society", in E. Steinkellner, ed., *Studies in the Buddhist Epistemological Tradition*, Vienna, 1991, 101–2.

⁵¹ See D. Jackson, "Sources for the Study of Tibetan Pramāṇa Traditions Preserved at the Bihar Research Society", *op. cit.*, 102.

⁵² L. van der Kuijp, *op. cit.*, 76, has concluded that another "religious" interpreter belonging to an offshoot of the Sa lugs, namely Bo dong PaQ. chen, was mainly influenced by Rong ston, though indeed he had studied under Red mda' ba as well. But in my opinion, this does not really prove anything about Red mda' ba's position, and, anyway, in answer to the specific question of whether Dharmakīrti's doctrine had religious significance, it is likely that all of the main Sa lugs interpreters would have answered: "Yes." As mentioned above, Tsong kha pa underwent a deep religious experience when reading the *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the early Sa lugs commentary on the *Pramāṇavārttika*, namely the *Rigs mdzod* of 'U yug pa, who was the main student of Sa skya Paṇḍita for Tshad-ma. According to van der Kuijp, *ibid.*, the term *tshad ma'i skyes bu* does indeed occur in 'U yug pa's commentary. Furthermore, as will also be described below, the later Sa skya pa commentator Ngag dbang chos grags, who traces his main scholastic lineages from Sa paṅ through g.Yag ston and Rong ston, also upheld a positive evaluation of the religious content of Tshad-ma. L. van der Kuijp, (*op. cit.*, 96, n. 5), notes this and cites him together with one of Rong ston's Tshad-ma students, namely Shākya mchog ldan, as "notable exceptions" to what he supposes to have been the typically non-Buddhistic Tshad ma interpretation of the Sa skya pas. In fact, they would seem to have been fairly typical, and the contrasting strictly non-Buddhistic opinion has yet to be documented within the Sa lugs, to my knowledge.

tice in the late 14th century and early 15th century. Clearly some of Tsong kha pa's teachers and predecessors had already acknowledged Tshad-ma as being a doctrine belonging to Indian Buddhism and as a very useful preparatory discipline which also at certain crucial points addresses a higher spiritual reality and acknowledges the wisdom of the Buddha as highest authority (seeing this as the meaning of the first verse of the *Pramānaviniścaya*).⁵³ But evidently Tsong kha pa's students went one step further and composed manuals in which Tshad-ma was presented as a separate method leading itself directly to highest insight and liberation: both rGyal tshab and mKhas grub composed *Tshad ma'i lam 'khrīd* manuals.⁵⁴ I am not aware, however, that Tshad-ma is still or ever was presented this way in the usual dGe lugs pa curricula.

(3) *sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho*

Still later, some five centuries after 'Jig rten mgon po and almost three hundred years after Tsong kha pa, one finds a discussion of some of the same points in the writings of the sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). The latter found it still necessary to refute the non-religious understanding of Tshad-ma in his *Bai dūrya g.ya' sel* (composed 1688), which shows that some form of “secular” or non-Buddhist interpretation had still survived in certain Tibetan quarters until then. The learned sDe srid, who served in the late 17th century as regent of Tibet after the death of the 5th Dalai bla ma, defends the dGe lugs pa view that Tshad-ma had religious content, and gives some further clues as to why the controversy could have arisen in Tibet in the first place.

The *Bai dūrya g.ya' sel* is primarily a work on astrology and prognostication, and, therefore, it is at first sight an unexpected source for the discussion of a Tshad-ma controversy. The discussion on logic and epistemology is a sizeable digression from the main topic of the work, though there are many such excursus in the book. The status of Tshad-ma is addressed as point number 198, which is a reply to a question or objection concerning this topic. The first part of this answer consists of a general reply, showing a *tshad ma* to be in general an authoritative and unmistakable standard in the same way that a reliable unit of measure,

⁵³ This was the understanding of Sa paṇ and the Sa lugs, which, therefore, had much in common with the approach of the masters of the Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis such as Śāntarakṣita.

⁵⁴ See for example rGyal tshab, ca 1–21a, *Tshad ma'i lam 'khrīd*, Tohoku no. 5446. There was some irony in this heavy stressing of Tshad-ma by Tsong kha pa and his followers, who were nominally Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas. The Indian Prāsaṅgikas as a matter of philosophical principle rejected the argumentation methods developed by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, but the dGe lugs pa thinkers brought them back in a different wrapping. On this complicated issue, see now D. Seyfort Rugg, “On Pramāṇa Theory in Tsong kha pa's Madhyamaka Philosophy”, in E. Steinkellner, ed., *Studies in the Buddhist Epistemological Tradition*, Vienna, 1991.

for instance, is. The sDe srid then goes on to touch on more philosophical aspects of the subject, including the role of direct perception and inference as means of knowledge which hold good, and the position of “*tshad ma*” as the chief field of knowledge for defeating (i.e., refuting) those who maintain erroneous doctrines.⁵⁵

The most interesting discussion, however, begins with the giving of a familiar opinion as maintained by some unnamed opponent:

“These Tshad-ma treatises are not necessary for one seeking liberation, because being treatises on logical argumentation. they are, therefore, outside the Buddhist scriptural collections.”⁵⁶

The sDe srid began his reply to this by drawing a distinction between two kinds of logical argumentation or reasoning (*rtog ge, tarka*), namely (a) systems of reasoning established by non-Buddhist teachers and sages through mere hypothetical designations by means of conceptual theorizing and (b) a procedure of reasoning through perceiving the true nature of entities by means of apprehending merely their universal aspects, but which accordingly does not gain the really needed direct insight.⁵⁷ He quotes in addition some well-known

⁵⁵ This work of the sDe srid incidentally contains many other valuable discussions, asserting for instance (page 637) that Sa paṅ was responsible for the final four long lines appearing at the end of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. He also quotes (page 632, 5) the same lines from Atiśa’s *Satyadvayāvātara* which criticize the usefulness of the *pramāṇas*. And the sDe srid ends the section (pages 639–641) with an excellent survey of Tibetan scholastic manuals for *Pramāṇavārttika* studies, specifying which manuals were used by which college. This passage should be utilized in any future study of Tshad-ma studies among the dGe lugs pa.

⁵⁶ sDe srid, *bsTan bcos*, 2, 627 (247b): *tshad ma’i bstan bcos ’di dag grol ba don gnyer la nye bar mkho ba ma yin te | rtog ge’i bstan bcos yin pas nang rig pa’i sde snod las phyi rol du gyur pa’i phyir ro || zhes zer ro |*.

⁵⁷ sDe srid, 2, 627, 3 (247b): *de yang ’di ltar rtog ge zhes bya bani rnam pa gnyis te | phyi ro/ pa’i ston pa drang srong gling skyes la sogs pa’i rtog pas btags pa tsam gyi sgo nas bzhag pa’i rtog ge dang | yang mdo sde rgyan las |*

*rtog ge rten cing manges las ||
ma khyab lam rdzob skyo ba can ||
byis pa las ni brten par ’dod ||*

ces bshad pa ltar | dngos po’i de kho na nyid don spyi tsam bzung ba’i sgo nas rtogs pas nges dgos kyi mngon du ma gyur pa la rtog ger byas pa’o || de’i phyir de dag ston pa’i bstan bcos la ni rtog ge’i bstan bcos zhes bya’o || des na rang gi ston pa thams cad mkhyen pa’i rjes su ’brangs nas bzhag pa’i bstan bcos yin pa’i phyir ro || nang rig pa’i bstan bcos ma rig[s] par ’dod pa yang mi ’thad de | nang rig pa’i sde snod ces bya ba ni | spang bya ma rig pa spong ba dang | gnyen po bdag med rtogs pa’i shes rab skyed pa’i thabs ston pa’i bstan bcos la brjod pa yin la | tshad ma’i bstan bcos ’di dag las | gang zag dang chos kyi bdag med rigs pas gtan la phab nas | lhag pa shes rab kyi bslab pa gtso bar bstan pa’i phyir ro || de tsam gyis nang rig par mi ’gyur na nang rig pa’i sde snod gang na’ang ma bshad la |

lines from the early translator and founder of the main Tibetan dialectical tradition, rNgog lo tsā ba:

“Moreover, rNgog Blo ldan shes rab said [in his epistle entitled *sPring yig bdud rtsi thig pa*]:⁵⁸

‘After clearly understanding that entrance gate into the principle of all factors of existence being empty—which is the highest of correct reasonings taught by Nāgārjuna—from the beautiful works of the author of the [*Pramāṇa*]vārttika who has reached perfection in reasoning, one should abandon all other traditions like straw.’

And [rNgog] also said: ‘A treatise which negates all base views [and] undertakes discernment of the absolute, non-dual mind ...’, thus maintaining that [Tshad-ma] is established as a philosophical tradition of the Madhyamaka. Therefore, it belongs to [the field of knowledge of] Buddhist doctrine. And since it has a vast purpose, those endowed with discernment should rightly engage in it through energetic study and reflection.”⁵⁹

This prominent citation of rNgog in the sDe srid’s refutation indicates that the holders of the opinion criticized could well have been distant continuers of rNgog’s own school at gSang phu or its branches, i.e., followers of Phywa pa’s tradition of logic and epistemology. It was a basic rule of dialectical procedure that only an authority accepted by the opponent could be quoted against him, and so the choice here of rNgog as the only authority cited is probably significant.

The Five Fields of Knowledge

Another crucial notion presupposed in the discussion, and finally made explicit here, is that of the “five fields of knowledge”. This scheme of classification was no doubt one source of the “secular” or non-Buddhistic interpretations of Tshad-ma because in this scheme “*tshad ma*” as logical reasoning or argumentation was counted as one of the four fields of knowledge (*rig pa’i gnas*, *vidyāsthāna*) that were said to be held in common in India by both Buddhists and Brahmanical traditions and that were thus separate from the fifth field: Buddhist doctrine. The sDe srid also addressed this issue in an immediately preceding point, and he quoted there the following list from the 15th-century scholar sTag tshang lo tsā

⁵⁸ On this quote, see also D. Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise*, 167, 179, n. 9.

⁵⁹ sDe srid, 2, 627, 6f (24 7b): *gzhan yang | mgog dang [= lo] blo lkdan shes rab kyi | chos mams thams cad stong pa’i tshul du ’jug pa’i sgo || yang dag rigs tshogs klu sgrub (248a) zhal las gsungs pa de || rig[s] pa’i mthar thug rnam ’grel mdzad pa’i gzhung mdzes las || gsal bar rtogs nas lugs ngan gzhan kun btsa’ bzhin dor || zhes dang | lta ngan kun sel gnyis su med pa’i blo || don dam rnam dpyod lhur len bstan bcos ni || zhes gsungs pas dbu ma’i gzhung lugs su grub par bzhed pas | nang rig la gtogs shing dgos pa rgva chen po dang ldan pa’i phyir rnam dpyod ldan pa rnam gyis thos bsam gyi ’bad pas ’jug rigs pa yin pas tshom pa mi ’tshal lo ||.*

ba Shes rab rin chen's brief treatment of the five fields of knowledge, the *Rig gnas kun shes*.⁶⁰

- (1) Crafts/techniques (*bzo, śilpa*)
- (2) Healing (*gso ba, cikitsā*)
- (3) Grammar (*sgra, śabda*)
- (4) Logical reasoning (*gtan tshigs, hetu*)
- (5) Buddhist doctrine (*nang don* or *nang gi rig pa, adhyātma*)

The first two sciences, according to sTag tshang lo tsā ba, exist for benefitting those who strive for practical [?] aims (*don gnyer rjes 'dzin*), while the second pair, which includes logic and debate method, exists for the purpose of defeating those who propound wrong doctrines (*log smra tshar gcod*).⁶¹ Here then is another source for the notion of “*tshad ma*” being a neutral theoretical activity whose main purpose is to refute opponents.⁶²

This characterization of the basic purpose of “*tshad ma*” argumentation, however, does not really agree with Dharmakīrti's own views on the fundamental aims of argumentation as he set them forth in his debating manual, the *Vādanyāya*. The latter maintained that a debater should be motivated not by the desire for victory (i.e., to defeat the opponent), but rather by the desire to protect

⁶⁰ Its full title is: *Rig gnas kun shes pas bdag med grub pa*. This work survives in two different xylograph editions, one (the Zhol ed.?) preserved in Tohoku (nos. 6864/5), and the other (an older Central Tibetan cd.) in Patna. The latter is described in D. Jackson, *The “Miscellaneous Series” of Tibetan Texts in the Bihar Research Society, Patna: A Handlist*, Stuttgart, 1989, no. 955. His work on religious art (*bzo rig*), the *rTen gsum bzhengs tshul dPal 'byor rgya mtsho*, survives in Kyoto in the library of Otani University, no. 13701. He is best known for his doxographical work, the *Grub mtha' kun shes*, which 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa criticized extensively. Since sTag tshang lo tsa ba's influence was mirumal within the later Sa skya pa traditions, it is odd that he became the prototypical “Sa skya pa” opponent for later dGe lugs pa critics.

⁶¹ This is quoted by sDe srid, 2, 585, 4, in discussing his point number 195, to clarify a question which arose in connection with chapter 35 (of the *Bai dūrya dkar po?*) and the place of astrology/prognostication among the fields of knowledge: *don gnyer rjes 'dzin bzo dang gso ba'i dpyad || log smra tshar gcod sgra dang gtan tshigs te || phyi rol rig gnas bzhi dang zhes | phyi nang thun mong gi rig gnas bzhi dang | de steng nang rig pa ni | thun mong min pa'i mdo sngags 'dir rig bya | zhes rig pa'i gnas gts'o bo 'am che ba lnga |*.

⁶² cf. L. van der Kuijp, “Studies in the Life and Thought of Mkhas grub rje I: Mkbas grub rje's Epistemological Oeuvre and his Philological Remarks on Dignāga's Pramāṇasamuccaya 1”, 95, n. 5, who noticed this issue and stated as follows: “*Tshad-ma* is ordinarily regarded as one of the four main secular sciences by the Sa skya pa. For its position as one of the secular sciences, see Dus 'khor zhabs drung ... and [Zhu chen] Tshul khriṃs rin chen ... [Dus 'khor zhabs drung] quotes copiously from the general survey of the traditional sciences by the great Sa skya pa scholar Stag tshang lo tsa ba Shes rab rin chen (1405–?) ...”

the truth.⁶³ Moreover, it is a mystery to me how such quite drastic doctrinal conclusions could be drawn merely from this sort of general classificatory scheme. That a strict interpretation along these lines does not lead far can be seen if one applies the same reasoning to the traditional field of knowledge “arts and techniques” (*śilpa, bzo rig*). Suppose someone were to argue: “Tibetan art cannot be Buddhist, because it is art, which is a category of knowledge held in common with the non-Buddhists.” Would anyone take such reasoning seriously? Similarly, it would be absurd to insist on a purely soteriological or “religious” classification.

The actual relationships of the four “outer” fields of knowledge to Buddhism are, therefore, overlapping ones, and they should not be interpreted as mutually exclusive, radically black and white, either/or relationships. Nevertheless, the curious borderline position of “*tshad ma*” as logic/argumentation (*hetuvidyā*) in relation to Buddhist doctrine, especially within the scheme of the five fields of knowledge, obviously did provoke thought among some Tibetans. Indeed, at least one notable scholar—sTag tshang lo tsā ba—felt obliged by this scheme to insist strongly that the main Tshad-ma treatises of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti did not belong primarily to the field of knowledge comprised by Buddhist doctrine (*nang don rig pa*).⁶⁴

(4) *Sa skya Paṇḍita*

We should now be in a better position to consider how Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), one of the most prominent pre-Tsong kha pa Tibetan scholars on Tshad-ma, understood and interpreted this subject. Regarding Sa paṅ, Western scholarship has long maintained that he held the opinion that Tshad-ma was purely “secular” or non-Buddhist. Among Western scholars, this characterization of Sa paṅ has in fact enjoyed a remarkably long and distinguished following, going all the way back to the 1930s and the work of Stcherbatsky, who averred:

“[Sa paṅ] maintained that logic is an utterly profane science, containing nothing Buddhistic at all, just as medicine and mathematics.”⁶⁵

This view seemingly still prevails among most specialists working in the field. A more recent scholar, in an article which appeared in the late 1970s, has described the attitude of Sa paṅ as “agnostic”, and stated further:

“Nowhere does Sakya Paṇḍita mention Buddha as the embodiment of the valid cognitive acts as *per* the second chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, the Paths of Liberation (*thar lam*) and of Omniscience (*thams cad mkhyen*)

⁶³ See E. Steinkellner, “Remarks on Niścitagrahaṇa”, *Orientalia iosephi Tucci Memoriae Dicata*, Rome, 1988, 1441–3.

⁶⁴ His relevant work, the *Rig gnas kun shes*, is not now accessible to me, but the replies of Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan on this point will be discussed below.

⁶⁵ T. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, 1, 46.

pa'i lam) which, as will be seen below, figure so preeminently in the Gelukpa view of logic. Even in the eighth chapter of his logical work, dealing with the problem of what constitutes a valid cognitive act, no mention is made of these conceptions which are so central to the logic of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. Indeed, at the outset of the ... *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*, the reason for writing the text is explained as follows:⁶⁶

[Here I give my own translation, D.J.:]

‘Because I have seen many misconceptions among [the interpretations of] even those who claim to teach correctly regarding valid cognition, I shall compose [this treatise] in order to refute them and in order to establish the genuine state of affairs.’⁶⁷

The same scholar stated subsequently:

“Generally, ... the status of *tshad ma qua* “the science of the logical argument” (*hetuvidyā, gtan tshigs kyi rig pa*) in Tibet was one of a non-Buddhist, secular science on a par with linguistics, technology and medicine. This opinion was shared by virtually all the pre- and post-Tsong kha pa scholars of the Sa skya pa ... As far as pre-Tsong kha pa Tibet is concerned, it finds its corroboration in the Tshad-ma writings of Sa skya Paṇḍita, his student ’U yug pa Rigs pa’i seng ge, and Bu ston, all of which conspicuously lack any form of an appraisal of the soteriological possibilities of the *Pramāṇavārttika*”⁶⁸

Still another scholar has given a somewhat similar, though carefully qualified, characterization of Tibetan Tshad-ma interpretations in Sa paṇ’s era:

“It seems that the Tibetans understood the import of that tradition [of *Pramāṇavārttika* chapter 2] at its surface value only when in the 12th and 13th century they began to incorporate the school’s tenets and problems into their own spiritual and cultural life. According to all we know of this first strictly speaking Tibetan period of the school’s history—and we do not know very much due to insufficient materials available and because only a few studies have been done so far—the Tibetans seemed to

⁶⁶ L. van der Kuijp, “Introductory Notes to the *Pramāṇavārttika* Based on Tibetan Sources”, *The Tibet Journal*, 1979, 6–7.

⁶⁷ Sa paṇ, *Rigs gter rang ’grel*, 167, 4.2 (*Da 2a*): *yang dag pa’i shes pa dag la rigs pa smra bar khas mche ba rnams kyang log par rtoḡ pa du ma mthong bas de sun dbyung ba dang yang dag pa’i don gtan la dbab pa’i phyir ’di brtsam mo* | Cf. L. van der Kuijp, 1979, *op. cit.*, 7.

⁶⁸ L. van der Kuijp, 1987, *op. cit.*, 57f. See also R.P. Hayes, “The Question of Doctrinalism in the Buddhist Epistemologists”, 647, n. 2. Hayes based his account of Sa paṇ’s motives and views on the English introduction to Go rams pa’s commentary published by the Sakya College, Mussoorie, 1975.

consider the tradition of epistemology and logic as a branch of the secular sciences, together with grammar, poetics and others.”⁶⁹

But can any basis for the above characterization be found in Sa paṅ’ s own Tshad-ma writings? The only possible substantiation I have found so far is his treatment of the four common fields of knowledge at the beginning of his *mKhas ’jug* manual of scholarship.⁷⁰ Sa paṅ, in agreement with the Indian Buddhist classification mentioned above, did indeed maintain that “*tshad ma*” (as logic and argumentation) could be classed as one of the five main fields of knowledge (*rig gnas chen po*), and within that context, he classified it among the four “outer” sciences and as separate from Buddhist doctrinal science (*nang don rig pa*). As Sa skya Paṅḍita states in the introduction to his *mKhas ’jug*:

“What is a wise (or learned) man? He is one who knows without error all objects of knowledge. ... The subjects to be learned by that wise man are the five fields of knowledge:

[The wise man’s] subjects are grammar, logical reasoning, healing, external (techniques) and inner (spiritual) knowledge.

Grammar is (Sanskrit) language, logical reasoning is Tshad-ma, the “science of externals” is techniques, “internal science” is scriptural religious doctrine, and the science of healing is medical practice.”⁷¹

Thus, from one point of view, at least, Sa paṅ did classify “*tshad ma*” (i.e., logic and argumentation, *rtog ge*, *tarka*) among non-Buddhist fields of knowledge, following a traditional fivefold classification of the fields of knowledge (*rig pa’i*

⁶⁹ E. Steinkellner, “Tshad ma’i skyes bu: Meaning and Historical Significance of the Term”, *Contributions on Tibetan and Buddhist Religion and Culture*, 1983, 277. A similar consensus seems to have been reached by Japanese scholars. See S. Onoda, *A Study on Tibetan bsDus grwa Logic: Rules of Monastic Debate and Definitions of Logical Theories*, Vienna, 1992, 31 and 36, n. 44, who refers to the articles of Seiji Kimura.

⁷⁰ The passage was also noticed by L. van der Kuijp, “Studies in the Life and Thought of Mkhas grub zje I: Mkhas grub rje’s Epistemological Oeuvre and his Philological Remarks on Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya I*”, 96, n. 5, who stated: “It is nonetheless hardly arguable that Sa paṅ would have agreed with Ngag dbang chos grags’s [‘religious’] characterization of his [*Tshad ma rigs gter rang ’grel*], since he explicitly lists *tshad-ma* as a “worldly” non-insider science in his *Mkhas pa rnam’s ’jug pa’I sgo ...*”

⁷¹ Sa paṅ, *mKhas ’jug*, 8, 4, 2: *mkhas pa zhes bya ba gang yin zhe na | shes bya thams cad phyin ci ma log par shes pa yin la | gzhan yang bye brag gang bslabs pa shes pa de la’ang de nyid la mkhas pa zhes bya ba’i ming thob bo || mkhas pa des bslab par bya ba’i yul ni rig pa’i gnas lnga ste | de yul brda sprod rtog ge dang || gso ba phyi nang rig ces gsungs || brda sprod pa sgra dang | rtog ge tshad ma dang | phyi rol rig pa’i [better: pa] bzo dang | nang rig pa lung gi chos dang | gso ba rig pa sman dpyad do ||* See also D. Jackson, *op. cit.*, 3.

gnas lnga, pañcavidyāsthāna) that is attested in the *Mahāvvyutpatti* (no. 1554)⁷² and that occurs in Indian Buddhism mainly in Yogācāra texts, such as the *Yogācārabhūmi* and the *Sandhinirmocana* (9, 18, 2, 6). This was not a merely theoretical classification, for the dialectical branch of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s epistemology provided a commonly accepted method and conceptual framework through which Buddhist philosophers of that school could enter into critical discussions with non-Buddhists.⁷³

But, except for here, in the limited context of this quite usual and widely maintained classification of “*tshad ma*” (i.e., logic and dialectics) among the four “outer” fields of knowledge,⁷⁴ elsewhere, Sa paṅ clearly interprets Dharmakīrti’s writings as possessing “spiritual” and Buddhist contents.

To begin with, Sa paṅ explicitly acknowledged that the theories of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti belonged to a system of Buddhist doctrines, and this underlies his interpretations of them. Such a view is expressed in various places in his main Tshad-ma work, the *Rigs gter*. One of the main thrusts of Sa paṅ’s Tshad-ma writings was to establish concretely the truthful place of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s teachings within the four main Indian Buddhist systems (*siddhānta*), and thus to understand properly their method and intention as Buddhist philosophers. One of the most important points that he took pains to make in the first chapter of his *Rigs gter rang ’grel* was that Dharmakīrti, depending on the context, followed either the Sautrāntika or the Yogācāra, and that, in so doing, Dharmakīrti followed the intent of the Buddha himself.⁷⁵ Sa

⁷² The list in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, nos. 1555–1559: (1) *śabda-vidyā, sgra’i rig pa*; (2) *hetu-vidyā, gtan tshigs kyi rig pa*; (3) *adhyātma-vidyā, nang gi rig pa*; (4) *cikitsā-vidyā, gso ba’i rig pa*; and (5) *śilpa-sthāna-vidyā, bzo’i gnas kyi rig pa*.

⁷³ However, it is one thing to say that “*tshad ma*” (in the sense of *rtog ge, tarka*, i.e., reasoning and dialectics) should be classified in the field of knowledge *hetuvidyā*, and it is something quite different to deduce from that classification that the Tshad-ma teachings are completely devoid of Buddhist (or religious) content.

⁷⁴ Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364), for instance, also maintained this standard classification scheme. See D. Seyfort Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che*, Rome, 1966, 37, n. 1, who on the basis of the *rig gnas* (here translated as “auxiliary sciences”) scheme similarly interprets Bu ston to have considered Tshad-ma to have been a “profane science without a primarily religious purport”, in contrast with the dGe lugs paṅ “who consider logic to be an essential foundation of the Buddhist religion and in whose schools it is taught as one of the five basic sciences”. Seyfort Ruegg, *ibid.*, also notes the importance of *hetuvidyā* in other Mahāyāna systems.

⁷⁵ Sa paṅ, *Rigs gter rang ’grel*, 169, 3, 5, (*Da* 30b5) and 230, 1, 5 (126b). See also D. Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise (Section III): Sa skya Paṅḍita on Indian and Tibetan Traditions of Pramāṇa and Philosophical Debate*, 174. Even if Sa paṅ thought that Dharmakīrti was ultimately a Mādhyamika, that would be all the more reason to think that he believed the Tshad-ma teachings to be of soteriological benefit. Tshad-ma would, according to this view, have been a means for helping the student ultimately to the liberating view of the Madhyamaka.

paṅ. further held the Tshad-ma theories to be a branch of Mahāyāna philosophy ultimately embodying Yogācāra tenets, and held them to be an important stepping-stone to the highest theory, i.e., that of the Madhyamaka.⁷⁶ But in all of this, there is no justification for concluding that Sa paṅ held Tshad-ma to have no soteriological or religious significance.

Equally important and telling in this connection are the understandings and interpretations of Dharmakīrti as a religious teacher that Sa paṅ displays through his quotations from Dharmakīrti's works. In his own more general Mahāyāna writings, such as his *Thub pa'i dgongs gsal*,⁷⁷ *sDom gsum rab dbye*,⁷⁸ and elsewhere,⁷⁹ Sa paṅ quoted Dharmakīrti a number of times to support crucial points of Mahāyāna soteriological doctrine, i.e., to establish the correct understanding of how the path to liberation should be travelled. To quote a source as *āgama* or authoritative scripture in a doctrinal discussion is, of course, the same as to acknowledge its validity and importance.

Furthermore, a profoundly Buddhist doctrinal content can be found precisely where one would expect it in Sa paṅ's main treatise on Tshad-ma, his *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter*, namely, in the ninth chapter where he treats direct perception (including that of the yogi) and the fruit of valid knowledge. There (118a = 225, 4, 1), one finds precisely an exposition of ignorance and egoity as the cause of

⁷⁶ To understand the position of Tshad-ma among the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist learned traditions transmitted within the Sa skya pa, one could compare it with the study of *Abhidharma*. (which like Tshad-ma also formed one of the traditional “texts” or *po ti* in the traditional curriculum). The latter was considered an important subject of Buddhist doctrinal studies, and it was studied very seriously, but to my knowledge it has not formally presented as a method of spiritual practice, even though in principle it clearly contained all the elements of a complete spiritual path.

⁷⁷ *Thub pa'i dgongs gsal*, 11, 4, 5 (*Tha* 22b), quoting *Pramāṇavārttika*, ||, 253c: *stong nyid lta bas grol 'gyur gyi || sgom pa lhag ma de don yin ||*; p. 18, 2, 3 (35b), quoting *Pramāṇavārttika*, ||, 212cd: *byams sogs rmongs dang 'gal med phyir || nyes pa shin tu tshar gcod min ||*; p. 24, 2, 3 (47b), quoting *Pramāṇavārttika*, II, 213ab: *ma rig nyes p'ai rtsa ba ste || de yang 'jig tshogs lta ba yin ||*; p. 27, 1, 5 (53 a), quoting *Pramāṇavārttika*, II, 34a: *sgrub byed thugs rje goms pa las ||*; p. 27, 2, 5 to p. 27, 3, 2 (*Tha* 53b–54a), quoting *Pramāṇavārttika*, II, 253c–d; II, 282c–283a; and II, 136c–II 138d; etc.

⁷⁸ *sDom gsum rab dbye*, 229, 2, 6 (*Na* 5b), = *sDom gsum*, I 73, where he quotes *Pramāṇavārttika*, II, 34a, *de skad du yang rnam 'grel las || sgrub byed thugs rje goms pa las ||*, and p. 313, 4, 4 (34b), = *sDom gsum*, III 360ff, where he quotes *Pramāṇavārttika*, II, 136c: *chos kyi grags pas rnam 'grel las || rnam pa du mar thabs mang po ||* (III 360) *yun ring dus su goms pa las || de la skyon dang yon tan dag || rab tu gsal ba nyid du 'gyur || des na thugs kyang gsal ba'i phyir ||* (361) *rgyu yi bag chags spangs pa yin || thub chen gzhan don 'jug can gyi || bse ru sogs las khyad 'di yin || de don phyir na thabs goms pa ||* (362) *de nyid stong pa yin par bzhed || ces gsungs pa yang de nyid yin ||*

⁷⁹ For example, in his *sKyes bu dam pa*, page 332, 1, 6 to pages 332, 2, 2, ff. 3b–4a (*Na* 72b–73a), he quotes *Pramāṇavārttika*, II, 13 6c and II, 132a.

cyclic existence (*samsāra*), and an investigation (118b = 226, 1, 3) of the temporary and permanent antidotes which destroy cyclic existence and its causes.

Sa paṅ goes on to mention (124a = 228, 4, 2) that the Buddha as Omniscient One is established as all-knowing regarding the soteriologically essential things (*dgos pa'i don*), for he is established by valid knowledge to be unerring regarding the Four Noble Truths, which consist of the causes and results of the arising and ceasing of Cyclic Existence.⁸⁰ Sa paṅ then gives a short exposition of the omniscience of Buddhahood, quoting twice on this occasion from Prajñākaragupta (124a4 and 124b2). (Such prominent quotations of this great commentator are rare in the treatise.) He concludes this ninth chapter (125b = 229, 3, 2) with a more formal investigation of the “fruit” (*phala*, *'bras bu*) of the two *pramānas*, describing them (126a = 229, 4, 5) in terms of the four major Buddhist philosophical systems.

A Later Interpreter of Sa skya pa Tradition: mkhan chen Ngag dbang chos grags

Such religious and Buddhistic understandings of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's doctrines were also upheld by many Sa skya pa scholars after Sa paṅ. As mentioned above, both 'U yug pa (fl. mid-13th c.) and Nya dbon (14th c.) maintained such a soteriological interpretation. A prominent later upholder of this tradition was the 17th-century Sa skya abbot Ngag dbang chos grags (1572–1641), who discussed this same topic in his classic on Tibetan scholastic traditions, the *Pod chen drug gi 'bel gtam*. Ngag dbang chos grags summarized Sa paṅ's position as follows:

“In that way, the intention of the great master [Sa paṅ] was that this *pramānasiddhi* chapter [of the *Pramānavārttika*] reveals the topic in question, the definition of *pramāna*. And [he maintained that] derived from this, the Great Teacher [the Buddha] is [shown to be] a ‘Person who has become an authority (*pramāna*)’ (*tshad ma'i skyes bu*), and that the means for achieving that [Buddhahood] are explained by means of the four perfected qualities in reverse order—i.e., the stages of the path for one individual to reach Buddhahood [through perfection in (1) intention and (2) practical action], together with the perfect completion of resultant fruit of the two purposes [i.e., achieving the aims of (3) self and (4) others]—are clearly evident within the fundamental content of the basic text as subjects to be taught.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ *Rigs gter rang 'grel* (124a = 228, 4, 2): *'khor ba 'jug ldog gi rgyu 'bras bden pa bzhi la mi bslu bar tshad mas 'grub pas dgos pa'i don kun mkhyen pa'i thams cad mkhyen par grub ste |*

⁸¹ Ngag dbang chos grags, 68, 4 (34b): *de ltar na bdag nyid chen po'i dgongs pa ni tshad grub kyi le'u 'di skabs don tshad ma'i mtshan nyid sum byed yin cing | de las 'phros nas ston pa tshad ma'i skyes bu yin pa dang | de'i sgrub byed phun tshogs bzhi lugs ldog gi sgo nas bshad de gang zag gcig 'tshang rgya ba'i lam gyi rim pa 'bras bu don gnyis phun tshogs dang bcas pa ston bya gzhung gi bab nyid na gsal la | mthar grub don bsdud ba na bcom ldan 'das la tshad mar gyur pa de lta bu'i sgo nas bstod pa'i dgos pa des [35a] bstan pa'am | gsung rab las tshad ma'i de nyid mngon sum dang rjes dpag gu rnam gzhag grub pa'i don du yin par gsungs te |*

L. van der Kuijp, “Studies in the Life and Thought of Mkhas grub rje I: Mkhas grub rje's Epistemological Oeuvre and his Philological Remarks on Dignāga's *Pramānasamuccaya I*”, 96, n. 5, had noticed some of

A few folios later, Ngag dbang chos grags takes up the subject of Tsong kha pa's classification of the *Pramāṇavārttika* as a treatise of Buddhist doctrine:⁸²

“Tsong kha pa, the chief disciple of Red mda' ba, composed a subcommentary on the *Pramāṇavārttika* called the ‘Illuminator of the Path to Liberation’.⁸³ According to his opinion, the *Pramāṇavārttika* is a true treatise of Buddhist religious doctrine because in it, after refuting all the bad views of the Indian non-Buddhist sectarians, [Dharmakīrti] set forth in full detail the path to liberation by teaching without error the systematic establishment (*rnam gzhag*) of the two truths. [So Tsong kha pa] states.

If one examines it honestly and impartially,⁸⁴ one may say that this *Pramāṇavārttika* is a treatise which fulfills the requirements for being Buddhist religious doctrine, for chapter two of the *Pramāṇavārttika* teaches the afflictions and purified state as cause and fruit, and teaches in

the relevant views of Ngag dbang chos grags, citing the passage on page 77.

⁸² Ngag dbang chos grags, 76, 1–77 (38b–39a): *red mda' ba'i slob ma'i gtso bo rje tsong kha pas rnam 'grel gyi fīikka thar lam gsal byed bya ba brtsams | khong gi bzhed pas rnam 'grel 'dir mu stegs kyi lta ba ngan pa mtha' dag sun phyung nas bden bzhi'i rnam gzhag ma 'khrul par ston pa'i sgo nas thar pa'i lam yongs su rdzogs par ston pas na nang don rig pa'i bstan bcos rang yin gsung gin yod 'dug | de la gzu bo'i blos dpyad na rnam 'grel le'u gnyis par kun nas nyon mongs pa dang | rnam byang rgyu 'bras su bstan zhing | phun tshogs bzhi'i sgo nas 'tshang rgya ba'i lam rim rdzogs par bstan pa dang | mngon sum le'u'i rnal 'byor mngon sum gyi skabs kyang tshad mas grub pa'i le'u dang brjod don gcig pas rnam 'grel 'di nang [39a] don rig pa tshang ba'i bstan bcos yin zhes bya la | bstan bcos rang gi ngo bo ni phyi rig par 'jug ste | rig pa'i gnas lnga'i nang nas tshad mar [= ma] rig pa'i bstan bcos yin pa'i phyir snyam du sems | de bzhin du tshad ma rigs gter kyang rnal 'byor mngon sum gyi skabs rnam nang don rig pa'i chos su 'jug pas nang don rig pa tshang ba'i bstan bcos ym la | bstan bcos spyi ldog ni rnam 'grel dang mtshungs |*

⁸³ This title, *Thar lam gsal byed*, is actually that of Tsong kha pa's student rGyal tshab's *Pramāṇavārttika* synthetic commentary: *rNam 'grel gyi bsdus don thar lam gyi de nyid gsal byed*, Ca 1–92b, Tohoku no. 5442. Such a wrong attribution is unusual for Ngag dbang chos grags. Presumably, he was referring to Tsong kha pa's *sDe bdun la 'jug pa'i sgo don gnyer yid kyi mun sel* or to a work such as the *Tshad ma'i brjed byang chen mo* (Tohoku no. 5438) set down by rGyal tshab as lecture notes.

⁸⁴ Ngag dbang chos grags's appeal here for an honest and impartial consideration possibly shows that he expects some resistance to this comment, based probably on the classification of “*tshad ma*” in the *rig gnas* scheme.

complete detail the path to Buddhahood through the four perfected qualities (*phun tshogs bzhi*), and [also] because the content of the section on yogic direct perception in the direct perception chapter is also the same as that of the *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter. But the nature of the treatise itself should be assigned to “outer” (non-doctrinal) knowledge, for from among the five fields of knowledge, it is a treatise of “*tshad ma*” science.⁸⁵ Likewise [Sa paṅ’s Tshad-ma treatise] the *Rigs gter* too is a treatise which fulfills the requirements for being Buddhist religious doctrine, because the sections on yogic direct perception (*yogipratyakṣa*) engage in religious teachings belonging to Buddhist doctrine, whereas in its general nature as a treatise, it is like the *Pramāṇavārttika*.”

Thus, certain well-informed later followers of Sa paṅ’s tradition continued to maintain the classification of “*tshad ma*” as one of the five fields of knowledge, and specifically as one of the four “outer” or non-religious “sciences”. As a treatise or *śāstra*, the general nature (*ngo bo, spyi ldog*) of both Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇavārttika* and Sa paṅ’s own *Rigs gter* was considered in this tradition to be “logic and argumentation” (“*tshad ma*”). But at the same time, the religious contents of both works were openly recognized and acknowledged.

sTag tshang lo tsā ba: One Probable Source for Later Controversies

It is safe to conclude that for Sa paṅ and the tradition of *Pramāṇavārttika* studies which he established in Tibet, the teachings of Dharmakīrti contained much that was decidedly Buddhist. How, then, did Western scholars (and perhaps Tibetan scholars too) come to take exactly the opposite interpretation of his position? Although I have not yet traced such a non-soteriological interpretation specifically to Sa paṅ in any Tibetan sources, it may have been imputed to him because of controversies that arose later between upholders of the dGe lugs pa and Sa skya pa traditions concerning precisely where to classify “*tshad ma*” as logic/argumentation (*hetuvidyā*) within the five fields of knowledge. The first Paṅ chen rin po che Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1569–1662), for instance, devoted the last major section of his rebuttal of sTag tshang lo tsā ba Shes rab rin chen (b. 1405) to discussing exactly this point.⁸⁶ sTag tshang lo tsā ba (who had flourished some two centuries previously) in his manual on the five fields of knowledge, the *Rig gnas kun shes*, had evidently advanced a line of contrary in-

⁸⁵ Here Ngag dbang chos grags seems to designate *hetu-vidyā* as **pramāṇa-vidyā* (**tshad ma rig pa*), and the reading *tshad mar rig pa* is perhaps corrupt. The similar term *tshad ma rigs pa* was sometimes used by Tibetan translators as the equivalent of *nyāya*.

⁸⁶ This controversy is discussed by S. Matsumoto, “sTag tshang pa no Tsong kha pa hihan ni tsuite”, 12ff, and he helpfully includes (page 14) a list of all citations from the *Rig gnas kun shes* in this work. I am indebted to Ms. C. Yoshimizu for helping me go through Matsumoto’s study.

terpretation that purposefully called into question the teachings of Tsong kha pa, and he even ironically rephrased the corresponding passage from Tsong kha pa's *mDun legs ma* autobiographical verses, arguing in kind that one could just as easily demonstrate that the science of grammar also possessed a divine inspiration or origin, for example. He stated specifically that anyone who maintained Dignāga and Dharmakīrti's basic Tshad-ma works to belong fundamentally to the fifth category of "Buddhist doctrine" (*nang rig*) was mistaken, because no other works besides these were to be found as basic texts that propound the fourth Buddhist field of knowledge [i.e., "logic" *gtan tshigs rig pa*].⁸⁷ Here, by calling "logic/argumentation" the "fourth Buddhist field of knowledge" (*nang pa'i rig gnas bzhi pa*), sTag tshang lo tsā ba implied that the four "outer" fields of knowledge could all be taught in a Buddhist way. He thus did not exclude any connection whatsoever between Tshad-ma and Buddhism; rather, he seems to have been insisting on the basic or primary subject matter of these works as being logic and epistemology, and not Buddhist soteriology.⁸⁸ He further pointed out that the crucial lines in Dignāga formed merely a verse of invocation (*mchod*

⁸⁷ Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 632, 5 (37b), quotes sTag tshang lo tsā ba: *nang pa'i rig gnas bzhi pa ston pa'i gzhung || sde bdun mdo dang bcas las gzhan med phyir || 'di dag nang rig yin par 'dod rnams 'khrul ||*

The author, Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, rephrases sTag tshang lo tsā ba to be asserting that it is a mistake to maintain that these works set forth the stages leading to liberation (because they belong to the fourth field of knowledge, "logic"), and then criticizes this position accordingly. Next (page 633, 3 = 38a), he rejects the reason that Tshad-ma does not teach soteriology, for it is a tradition of knowledge held in common with the non-Buddhists. This is unacceptable, he says, because throughout these works Dignāga and Dharmakīrti have refuted as their main object of criticism the non-Buddhist systems. Furthermore (page 634 = 38b), he states that the original reason given by sTag tshang lo tsā ba himself ("because no other works existed besides these as basic texts that propound the fourth Buddhist field of knowledge of "logic") was not established—actually logical argumentation can be found in the *Sūtras* and *Vinaya*, as well as in the works of early masters including Vasubandhu. This, he says, also contradicts sTag tshang lo tsā ba's own statement in his basic text which mentions the existence of such teachings. But sTag tshang lo tsā ba's point may have been simply: "If a Buddhist wants to write a chapter of a *rig gnas* manual on the fourth field of knowledge, what can he write about if the Tshad rna tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti is excluded?"

⁸⁸ Some of sTag tshang lo tsā ba's argumentation opens him to further rejoinders, such as his statement that it is absurd to give as one's proof the reason that Tshad-ma is something which clarifies the intended meaning of the Scripture in general, for the same argument might be made about the basic grammatical treatises, which clarify the intended meaning of the words of all the scriptures: *gsung rab spyi yi dgongs 'grel yin pa'i phyir || zer na sgra mdo kun kyang der 'gyur te || gsung rab kun gyi tshig gis dgongs 'grel phyir ||* On the other hand, Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, in his reply, page 635 (39a) seems to underestimate grossly "grammar" as a hermeneutical means, reducing its scope to the mere correcting of the spelling of words such as a proof-reader might do.

brjod), and he argued that if one treated in the same way (i.e., similarly expanded the invocations of) some basic works of medicine, grammar and metrics, nobody could deny that the latter works too could then be construed as works of Buddhist doctrine.⁸⁹

Needless to say, Blo bzang ehos kyi rgyal mtshan contested sTag tshang lo tsā ba's argumentation point by point, and at one stage, to drive his refutation home, he briefly summarized Tsong kha pa's interpretation of the invocation verse of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*.⁹⁰ Finally, he quoted verbatim sTag tshang lo tsā ba's detailed definition of what constitutes the field of knowledge, "Buddhist religious doctrine" (*nang rig*), and then by quoting passages from Dharmakīrti, he attempted to demonstrate that Tshad-ma doctrine fulfills each and every condition for being so defined.

Over a century later, the dGe lugs pa master Sum pa rnkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor (1704–1788) briefly touched on these same points again in his famous history of Buddhism, the *dPag bsam ljon bzang*, in the section dealing with critics of Tsong kha pa. Here he quoted sTag tshang lo tsā ba's criticisms, and he referred to their refutation by the Paṅ chen Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan.⁹¹

Perhaps, through such citations, this discussion came to be viewed as an instance of a typical doctrinal difference between Tsong kha pa's school and the "Sa skya pas". Throughout these controversial discussions, however, there is no mention of Sa paṅ, who in any case could have been cited by either side, since he (like Tsong kha pa) attributed soteriological contents to Tshad ma and (like sTag tshang lo tsā ba) classified "*tshad ma*" within the fourth field of knowledge, the science of reasoning.⁹² The approach of Sa paṅ demonstrates that the

⁸⁹ In his rephrasing of sTag tshang lo tsā ba's view, Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (page 636, 3 = 39b) inserts the phrase that (sTag tshang lo tsā ba asserts that) "those [expansions of the invocation] do not teach a path for reaching liberation" (*de rnams kyis byang chub tu bgrod pa'i lam ma bstan te*). Later (page 636, 5 = 39b), he quotes sTag's tshang's ironical rephrasing of the *mDun legs ma* passage, before criticizing the parallel as historically unfounded, and also as being a misunderstanding of Tsong kha pa's intention. Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan points out that Tsong kha pa did not himself cite Mañjuśrī's prophecy as a reason proving the unacceptableness of the statement that Tshad-ma lacked soteriological contents, but was rather indicating the contradiction in the thinking of others who accepted the prophecy as genuine while discounting Tshad-ma as lacking a spiritual path.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, 640, 2ff (41b–).

⁹¹ Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal 'byor, 256 and 258. In the *Śatapitāka* reprint, New Delhi, sec Sum pa's Collected Works, 1, 335 (167b). This passage was also noticed by S. Matsumoto, *op. cit.*

⁹² It is curious that the commentary on Sa paṅ's *Rigs gter* by Tsong kha pa's greatest Tshad-ma student, rGyal tshab Dar ma rin chen (1364–1432) (who had also studied Tshad-ma under Red mda' ba), was in effect suppressed, and was never printed in the accessible Central Tibetan editions of his works. As mentioned above, it may survive in the Asian Museum at St. Petersburg. Recently, another copy has been located by Dr. G. Dreyfus, and one can expect that it will yield many interesting insights into the relations between the *Rigs gter* and gSang phu Tshad-ma traditions.

positions of Tsong kha pa and sTag tshang lo tsā ba on this point are not necessarily opposed irreconcilably. Both masters chose to highlight a different aspect of the tradition, and each had a reasonable motive and context for doing so.

General Conclusions

The interpretation of doctrines such as these was thus seldom unanimous or simple in Tibet. Clearly there did exist variant interpretations of the spiritual meaning of Tshad-ma within Tibetan Buddhism during most of its recorded history. The notion that Tshad-ma was non-Buddhistic was variously ascribed in the sources discussed above to several Indian and early Tibetan masters, though with only limited justification. Western scholars, beginning with Stcherbatsky, somehow picked up this attribution, and widely ascribed this attitude not only to early Tibetan scholastics in general but also to Sa paṅ in particular. The latter attribution, however, was very much in error.

As I understand the secular interpretations of some of the above-mentioned unnamed “opponents”, they sometimes seem to be based on simple misunderstandings, such as the failure to distinguish the various senses of tshad ma and consequently mistaking terminological ambiguities for doctrinal contradictions. In the same way, they fail to notice shifts from one philosophical context or doctrinal category to another. For example, many Buddhist philosophers (especially of the Madhyamaka) abandon the specific *pramāṇas* (or the *pramāṇa* of inference in particular, especially if formulated in substantialist terms) at the highest stage as not being effective for cognizing ultimate reality.⁹³ But this should not be equated with a rejection of the Pramāṇa school of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as religiously useless or completely non-Buddhist. The critics of Pramāṇa would here have been better served to discern and distinguish the several instances where specific *pramāṇas* were rejected by Mahāyānists, including:

- (1) Philosophers of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka who rejected *svatantra*-type inference, *svatantra* proof-statements, etc., as others maintained them.
- (2) The rejection of rational or conceptual means on a high level of meditation by Mahāyānists seeking to realize the absolute after approaching it through learning and reflection.

⁹³ See Sa paṅ, *mKhas 'jug*, III, 52, commentary; D. Jackson, *The Entrance Gate for the Wise (Section III): Sa skya Paṅḍita on Indian and Tibetan Traditions of Pramāṇa and Philosophical Debate*, 353: “But how could the proof that [an entity] is impermanent because it is fabricated [or] existent have objective grounding for a Mādhyamika? [The Mādhyamika] does not affirm either existence or non-existence as the characteristic of [a subject] whose “entityness” is not established, because all factors of existence (dharma) are without own-natures”

- (3) More radical meditative traditions such as the Mahāmudrā which reject quite ruthlessly the utility of conceptual and inferential methods.

Some of the criticisms leveled in the *pūrvapakśas* did, however, call into doubt the spiritual contents and completeness of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti’s doctrine. These more direct criticisms of the Tshad-ma tradition itself included:

- (1) Tshad-ma lacks a complete soteriological doctrine; for instance, it allegedly has no complete exposition of ground, path or fruit.
- (2) Tshad-ma is gnoseologically deficient, i.e., the “fruit” it teaches is not the gnosis of Buddhahood.
- (3) Tshad-ma is lacking in scriptural foundation; it allegedly relies exclusively on reasoning to defeat its opponents, and, therefore, it is not actually grounded in Buddhist scriptures.
- (4) Tshad-ma has no specifically Buddhist system of tenets or doctrines, for it occupies a dialectically neutral common ground.

Each of these objections could have been answered by Tibetan followers of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti by considering the proper context in which these subjects were treated in the main works of the Tshad-ma system. The first two are related to the treatment of the fruit of *pramāṇa* and the direct perception of yoga. The last two are either problems of “inference-for-others”—i.e., dialectical procedures, especially for debating with outsiders—or of authoritative scripture (*lung, āgama*) as the basis for a consensually accepted reason in inference. They all involve—sooner or later—the question of the status of the Buddha as a spiritual authority: What makes the Buddha a veritable embodiment of *pramāṇa* and therefore a reliable source for soteriologically effective teachings?

In Tibet itself, whatever truly and strictly non-soteriological understandings of Dharmakīrti’s philosophy actually existed among scholars of Tshad-ma perhaps grew up in the 12th century in a tradition which based itself on a partial and incomplete sample of Dharmakīrti’s writings, namely those such as the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* which do not treat in detail the relevant aspects of, for example, the Buddha as authority (Tib. *tshad ma’i skyes bu*). This “secular” interpretation, however, was not current among the chief lineage of *Pramāṇavārttika* interpretation, namely the Sa skya tradition founded in the 13th century by Sa paṅ (which was also the origin of Tsong kha pa’s lineage of *Pramāṇavārttika* studies). It may, therefore, have reflected instead an opinion current among the Tibetan tradition of logic prevalent before Sa paṅ, that of the gSang phu school, especially as developed by Phywa pa (1109–1169) and his successors, who maintained many non-Dharmakīrtian and peculiarly Tibetan interpretations.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ L. van der Kuijp, “Phya pa Chos-kyi-seng-ge’s Impact on Tibetan Epistemological Theory”, *JIP*, 5, 1978, 357, suggests that Phywa pa may not have known the *Pramāṇavārttika*. Nevertheless, he must have known of rNgog’s translations and interpretations.

Perhaps through this gSang phu association, the theory also became ascribed retroactively to rNgog lo tsā ba himself. But as mentioned above, it is highly unlikely that rNgog ever really maintained such a position, for there could hardly be found a Tibetan scholar more deeply appreciative of the full potentials of the Tshad-ma teachings than he was.

In other words, any truly “secular” interpretation that might have existed in early Tibetan scholarly circles may have gone back to post-rNgog (i.e., 12th-century) followers of the same gSang phu tradition, such as Phywa pa and his students, and thus the following hypothesis of Steinkellner still seems plausible:

“This [non-religious] attitude towards the Pramāṇa tradition is reflected in the fact that the early Tibetan scholars who started to give their own interpretations of Dharmakīrti’s works evidently concentrated on Dharmakīrti’s *Pramāṇaviniścaya*—it may of course also be considered as a result of this fact.⁹⁵”

The adequacy of this explanation will undoubtedly become clearer as more sources from the early gSang phu tradition become accessible. But however that historical point may be decided, modern Tibetologists need to be wary of oversimplified descriptions when seeking to clarify how the spiritual status of Tshad-ma was interpreted by early Tibetan scholars. In most cases, any real questioning of the soteriological usefulness of Tshad-ma within the tradition actually involved issues that cannot be reduced to a simple secular-versus-religious opposition. One does not need to dig very far to discover that these discussions mainly reflect differences of doctrine, philosophy or practice between Buddhist traditions, and result precisely from the differing degrees to which rational or conceptual thought was accepted as a means of worthwhile insight. Some of the more radical of the Buddhist philosophers and meditators rejected as impossible the philosophical neutral ground that the Tshad-ma scholars had tried to stake out and considered as counterproductive even the most exacting of rational thinking. But the moment they began to theorize with any precision about their own more strictly liberation- or ultimate-truth oriented projects, even many of these “anti- Prāmaṇa” masters were glad to make at least partial use of the conceptual tools provided by the theories of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.

For the later Tibetan scholiasts, the most vexing problems arose through trying to reconcile the soteriological aspects of Dignāga’s and Dharmakīrti’s teachings with the standard classification of the science of reasoned proof or argumentation (*gtan tshigs rig pa*) as separate from Buddhist doctrine (*nang don rig pa*).

⁹⁵ E. Steinkellner, “Tshad ma’i skyes bu: Meaning and Historical Significance of the Term, Contributions on Tibetan and Buddhist Religion and Culture, 1983, 278.

Nevertheless, the actual relation of the Buddhist Pramāṇa tradition to the commonly held concepts and theories of Indian logic and argumentation (like its relation to the Nyāya school in particular) was one of partial sharing and was not one of either complete mutual exclusion or identity. In the context of inter-sectarian dialogue it therefore made good sense for a Buddhist Pramāṇa adherent to stress the neutral elements held in common by both traditions. But in other contexts, the same Pramāṇa adherent could rightly emphasize the points that marked the Pramāṇa system of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti as specifically Buddhist.

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Postscript

After completing the above study, a pertinent article by Seiji Kimura came to my attention, which treats the same theme but on the basis of a different set of materials. It is: “Chibetto Bukkyō ni okeru Ronrigaku no Ichizuke” [“The Position of Logic in Tibetan Buddhism”], in Z. Yamaguchi, ed., *Chibetto no Bukkyō to Shakai* [Buddhism and Society in Tibet], Tokyo, Shunjū-sha, 1986, pp. 365–401. I am indebted to Mrs. Chizuko Yoshimizu for pointing it out and for going through it with me. Two related later articles also by Kimura (but not seen) are: “Dharmakīrti no Shisōteki Tachiba o Megutte—Chibetto Bukkyō ni okeru Kaishaku” [“On the Standpoint of the Thought of Dharmakīrti—The Interpretation in Tibetan Buddhism”], *Journal of the Faculty of Buddhism*, Komazawa University, 46, March 1988, pp. 35–47; and “Ronrigaku ni kansuru Tsong kha pa no Kenkai” [“Tsong kha pa’s View on Buddhist Logic”], *Bukkyō-Gaku*, [Journal of Buddhist Studies], 29, 1990.

Here, I would like to summarize some of the main points made by Kimura (1986), as explained to me by Mrs. Chizuko Yoshimizu. Kimura takes as his point of departure the statements of Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, Bibliotheca Buddhica, 26, parts I (1932) and II (1930), and he also refers to S. Matsumoto, “sTag tshang pa no Tsong kha pa hihan ni tsuite”, *Report of the Japanese Association for Tibetan Studies*, 28, pp. 11–14. He mentions further the early Japanese Tibetologist H. Hadano, who had noted the religious significance of Tshad-ma for Tsong kha pa, and mentions how the latter had been impressed by the *thar lam* aspect of the *Pramāṇavārttika*.

In section II of his article, Kimura discusses Bu ston’s theory that *hetuvidyā* is non-Buddhistic, according to the scheme of the five *vidyāsthānas* found in the catalogue of scripture section of his History of Buddhism, *Chos ’byung, Ya* 17a4–5 (cf. E. Obermiller, *History of Buddhism*, 1931, p. 44). In the same work, 17b4–5, Bu ston says the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and the seven treatises of Dharmakīrti are not treatises of the Abhidharma, because *hetuvidyā* is *tarkaśāstra* (*rtog ge’i bstan bcos*) while Abhidharma is Buddhist. Bu ston quotes (17b7)

the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (Levi, ed., vol. 1, p. 5) about the nature and limitations of *hetuvidyā*.

Kimura then (p. 368) investigates the dGe lugs pa position. He begins by translating the relevant passage from rGyal tshab's *Tshad ma'i brjed byang chen mo* (Nga 2a1–2b6), in which rGyal tshab mentions the opposing opinion that *hetuvidyā* is not Buddhistic—and not necessary for one seeking liberation—before refuting this notion. Kimura has also found discussions of the same point in the writings of other masters, including mKhas grub rje's *rGyas pa'i bstan bcos ... rigs pa'i rgya mtsho* (*Tha* 16b5–17b6), and *Tshad ma sde bdun gyi rgyan yid gyi mun sel* (*Tha* 2b6–4a1), and the *Tshad ma'i bstan bcos chen po rigs pa'i rgyan* (Nga 2b2–3b2) of dGe 'dun grub pa. The relevant texts are quoted by Kimura in footnote 22. He also refers (note 23) to the parallel passage in 'Jam dbyangs bzhad pa'i rdo rje (1648–1722), *Tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi mtha' dpyod thar lam rab gsal tshad ma'i 'od brgya 'bar ba* (*Pha* 7b6–8a4).

The author next discusses Sa pañ, mentioning Stcherbatsky's interpretation and expresses his doubts about the correctness of the latter's opinion. Kimura goes on to point out the contradictory statements found in the mKhas 'jug (*Tha* 217a1–2). There Sa pañ refers to the step-by-step negation of lower philosophical views by the higher, and he asserts that Dharmakīrti's intention was that if you understand well the Yogacāra, you can then understand the reality of the Madhyamaka. Kimura states that this seems to differ from Bu ston and apparently is closer to the position of the dGe lugs pas. But he admits that he has not yet referred to Sa pañ's main Tshad-ma works, the *Rigs gter* and *Rigs gter rang 'grel*.

In section III, Kimura describes how Bu ston in his *Chos 'byung* (*Ya* 17b–18a) quotes directly from the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (TTP 5701, *Ce* 93a3–4; and TTP 5702, *Ce* 176b6–177a1), saying Dignāga composed the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* because he wanted to reject the assertions of non-Buddhists, and not to enter the teaching of the Tathāgata, since the latter is not an object for logic. (Bu ston's quote is close to the 2nd translation of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*). Then Kimura refers to mKhas grub's *Rigs pa'i rgya mtsho* (*Tha* 20b6–21a6), and in a footnote to rGyal tshab's *Tshad ma'i mdo'i rnam bshad* (Nga 121a2–3), including the criticism of “*sngon gyi mkhas pa chen po kha cig*”.

In Section IV Kimura compares Bu ston's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* commentary with rGyal tshab's, especially regarding the differentiation between the *kun tu tha snyad pa'i tshad ma* and *don dam pa'i tshad ma*. He says that both give almost the same explanation of Dharmakīrti's statement regarding these two types of *tshad ma* found in the *pratyakṣa* chapter of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (cf. T. Vetter, 1984, p. 100). Based on Bu ston's statements here, Kimura doubts

whether Bu ston really understood Tshad-ma in a strictly non-Buddhistic way. But, for the moment, he postpones giving any final judgment on the issue.

In section V, Kimura demonstrates how important the *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* was for dGe lugs pa scholars. He translates a passage from rGyal tshab's *Pramāṇavārttika* commentary (*Cha* 268a3–4) dealing with *yogipratyakṣa* which directly cognizes the reality of the Four Noble Truths. He also translates from the same author's *rNam nges ṭik chen dgongs pa rab gsal* (*Ja* 3a3–6) *Tshad ma'i brjed byang chen mo* (*Nga* 5b2-3) and *mNgon sum le'u'i brjed byang* (*Ca* 2a4–6); as well as from mKhas grub, *Rigs pa'i rgya mtsho* (*Tha* 16a3–4). Finally (p. 382), he also refers to the construction of Dharmakīrti's arguments for an “authoritative person” (*tshad mar gyur pa, pramāṇabhūta*) and its proofs, i.e., [the knowledge of] the Four Noble Truths, etc., in the *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter in accordance with the explanation given by the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* invocation verse. Kimura points out that the Tibetan scholars such as rGyal tshab, *rNam nges ṭik chen dgongs pa rab gsal* (*Ja* 3a6–3b2), dGe' 'dun grub, *Tshad ma'i bstan bcos chen po rigs pa'i rgyan* (*Nga* 6a1), Sum pa mkhan po, *dPag bsam ljon bzang* (pp. 222, 5; 229, 9), and Shākya mchog ldan (*dKa' 'grel rigs pa'i nang ba*, 26b–27a), make a twofold analysis of the invocation verse according to forward and reverse order.

Kimura in section VI sums up his five main conclusions:

- (1) The theory that Tshad-ma is a Buddhist science maintained by early dGe lugs pa masters is the theory which asserts the validity of the Pramāṇa theory of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti [as Buddhist] based on the identification(?) of it with the stages of the Highest Dharma of the Path of Application (*sbyor lam chos mchog*) and below, which is necessary for striving for liberation. This theory also asserts that the Pramāṇa works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti should not be excluded from the Buddhist sciences, since they treat the same problems as the latter.
- (2) Early dGe lugs pa masters regarded the *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* as most important since it discusses in detail such topics as the *pāramārtha-pramāṇa*, *yogipratyakṣa*, *sarvajñā*., *mukti*, etc., relying on logical investigation.
- (3) Early dGe lugs pa scholars regarded the *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter as important since it sets forth the science of reasons for the striving for liberation. They considered that the idea of the science of reasons for the striving for liberation had been first established in the invocation verse of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and that Dharmakīrti composed his *pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* following this idea.
- (4) Bu ston asserts in his *Chos 'byung* the theory that Tshad-ma is no Buddhist science and acknowledges merely Tshad-ma's role as an instrument of debate.

But some doubts are raised about his fundamental opinion if one consults his commentary on the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* and compares it to the similar explanations given by rGyal tshab regarding Dharmakīrti's Pramāṇa doctrine.

- (5) Sa paṅ in his *mKhas 'jug* takes Dharmakīrti's Tshad-ma as a way for attaining a right understanding of Madhyamaka. In some respects Sa paṅ's position seems closer to the early dGe lugs pa than to Bu ston.

To conclude this synopsis, I would like to give my own translation of the passage from rGyal tshab's *Tshad ma'i brjed byang chen mo* (*Nga* 2a1–2b6), to illustrate the main lines of argumentation used by Tsong kha pa's school to establish Tshad-ma as more than just dry logic and as having great soteriological value:

“[Objection:] These Tshad-ma treatises are not essential for the striving for liberation, because they are a treatise of logical reasoning (*tarkaśāstra*) and because they are the science of reasons (*hetuvidyā*), which occupies a position outside the treatises of Buddhist doctrinal knowledge.

[Reply:] I will explain that. There are two things that are referred to by the word logical reasoning [*rtog ge, tarka*]: (1) In the doctrine of non-Buddhists, the treatises established through mere speculation by their own basic teachers such as the sage Gling skye (?), who have not directly cognized all objects of knowledge, as well as the treatises of those [sages'] followers, are termed “treatises of logical reasoning”. (2) Also, it is taught in the verse [of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*]: ‘Logical reasoning is held to be dependent [on *Sūtras*], uncertain, non-pervasive, surface truth, involving exhaustion, and resorted to by the childish.’ Accordingly, the failure to cognize directly what is definitely needed (soteriologically), because one understands the ultimate reality of things through apprehending merely the object universal, is also referred to as “[mere] logical reasoning”.⁹⁶

From among the above two [applications of the word], the first [kind of “logical reasoning”], it is true, is not needed for striving for liberation. But you yourself never asserted that these [Buddhist] treatises of reasoning were that, and this is unacceptable also from the point of view of reasoning, because [these Pramāṇa treatises of ours] follow our own basic teacher [the Buddha] who did directly see all knowable things. If you maintain it to be as in the second meaning (2) above, then anyone on

⁹⁶ I read: *rtogs*, instead of *rtog*. The point is phrased by the sDe srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho in the same way. See, vol. 2, 627, 3 (247b): *dngos po'i de kho na nyid don spyi tsam bzung ba'i sgo nas rtogs pas nges dgos kyi mngon du ma gyur pa la rtog ger byas pa'o* ||.

the stage of the “Highest Dharma” of the Path of Application and below [i.e., any non-Saint] who is striving for liberation would lack something essential, because [such a person] does need to make ultimate reality the object of conceptual thought [as long as he has not reached the direct, non-conceptual realization of the Path of Seeing].

It is also wrong to maintain [these Pramāṇa treatises] to be something apart from the treatises of Buddhist doctrine. This is because these treatises correctly establish through reasoning the insubstantiality of a person and of a factor of existence, and because they teach as their main subject matter the training in higher discriminative understanding. In these basic texts there is correctly taught, by way of setting forth in detail how *samsāra* comes into play and ceases, the method for making the mind avoid wrong ways and enter the correct path. Therefore, you need to tell us what correct way you have for maintaining something to be “Buddhist doctrine” that is more than this!

Further, it is unacceptable to maintain that [this Pramāṇa doctrine] is not necessary for the striving for Liberation merely because it is the science of reasons (*hetuvidyā*). Its purport is called the “science of reasons” (*rgyu mtshan rig pa*), and it is also the “science of logical reasons” (*gtan tshigs rig pa*) because these [Pramāṇa] treatises are the chief means for making known (*rig pa*), by way of a sound reason (*rgyu mtshan*), the intention of all the sacred scriptures. The mere (or “pure”) science of reasons which is not Buddhist doctrine consists of the establishment of merely such matters as examples [used in proofs], logical reasons, and how the opponent and proponent debate with each other.”