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DOL-PO-PA SHES-RAB RGYAL-MTSHAN AND THE GENESIS OF THE *GZHAN-STONG* POSITION IN TIBET*

Cyrus Stearns, Seattle

Dol-po-pa Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan (1292-1361), the great Jo-nang-pa master, is almost always connected with the philosophical view known as *gzhan-stong*, or "emptiness of other", – the theory that ultimate reality is empty of other relative phenomena, but not itself empty. Although Dol-po-pa was certainly its most famous advocate, a number of questions remain concerning the actual genesis of the controversial *gzhan-stong* theory. According to traditional Tibetan accounts, the theory arose in Dol-po-pa's mind during a long meditation retreat, although it was not until some years later, after he had begun construction of a massive *stūpa* at Jo-nang, that he revealed his insights by establishing the *gzhan-stong* view in writing. The reception of his teachings was decidedly mixed. This was due, in part, to his use of unusual terminology, and also to the innovative and unfamiliar manner in which he used scriptural vocabulary. But the themes he addressed were not totally original. They were clearly present in a number of *sūtra* and *tantra*, and had been dealt with, although to a lesser degree, by some earlier teachers in Tibet. In this paper, I should like to present the results of some preliminary research into these topics.

The Epiphany at Mkha'-spyod bde-ldan Hermitage

Dol-po-pa's early education was primarily in the Sa-skya tradition, although he also received the esoteric transmissions of all the major and minor

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lineages in Tibet from a wide variety of teachers.[1] He first went from Sa-skya to visit the monastery of Jo-nang when he was 29 years old.[2] His disciple and biographer Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan (1319-1401), quotes Dol-po-pa as stating that up until that visit no matter how many scholars were gathered in discussion he only grew more and more confident that he could not be humbled. But when he went to Jo-nang, he had been extremely humbled and overcome with respect and awe upon seeing the number of men and women there who had gained deep insight into the nature of reality (*gnas-lugs*) through meditation.[3] This experience apparently acted as a catalyst, for in 1322, when he was 30 years old, Dol-po-pa went from Sa-skya to Jo-nang to meet the master Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (1260-1327)[4] and request the complete transmission of the *Kālacakra-tantra* and the many lineages of its perfection stage practices, the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*.[5]

Dol-po-pa's disciple and biographer, Kun-spangs Chos-grags Dpal-bzang (1283-1363), writes that on the night before Dol-po-pa arrived at Jo-nang, the master Yon-tan rgya-mtsho dreamed that the Shambhala emperor Kalkī Puṇḍarīka raised the victory banner of the *buddhadharma* at Jo-nang. This auspicious dream caused Yon-tan rgya-mtsho to give Dol-po-pa the

1 For a brief summary of Dol-po-pa's life see KAPSTEIN (1992), pp.7-21, ROERICH (1976), pp.775-777, and RUEGG (1963), pp.80-81. Other than the two full length *rnam-thar* of Dol-po-pa by Lha'i rgyal-mtshan and Kun-spangs-pa which have been used for this paper, it is known that another was written by Zhwa-lu lo-tsa-ba Chos-skyong bzang-po (1441-1528). See Dkon-mchog bstan-pa rab-rgyas, *Yul*, p.11. For an extremely abbreviated version of Lha'i rgyal-mtshan's work, see Lha'i rgyal-mtsan, *Kun*. In modern times, the Jo-nang scholar Ngag-dbang blo-gros grags-pa has written a lengthy verse *rnam-thar* of Dol-po-pa. See the editor's preface to Ngag-dbang blo-gros grags-pa, *Dpal*, p.2.

2 Tāranātha, *Dpal*, f. 13b.

3 Lha'i rgyal-mtshan, Chos, f. 9a: *mkhas pa mang po ji tsam 'tshogs kyin yang nga zhums nas mi 'gro'i stengs su spobs pa je bzang je bzang la 'gro ba gcig yod pa yin pa la / jo nang du phyin dus sgom chen pho mo re re'i sgom gyi gnas lugs rtogs tsa na nga yang shin tu zhum par gyur cing / khong tso la dad pa dang dag snang dbang med du skye ba byung /*
See Ngag-dbang blo-gros grags-pa, *Dpal*, pp.35-36 for a sketch of the life of Gha-rung-ba Lha'i rgyal-mtshan, whom other sources refer to as 'Ga'-rong-ba. See Tāranātha, *Rgyal*, p.89, where he is receiving the textual transmission for the *rnam-thar* by 'Ga'-rong-ba in 1588. See also Dkon-mchog bstan-pa rab-rgyas, *Yul*, p.11.

4 For the now available *rnam-thar* of Yon-tan rgya-mtsho, see Dol-po-pa, *Bla*.

5 Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan, *Chos*, f. 9a., and Kun-spangs, *Chos*, p.304.

complete initiation of *Kālacakra*, the transmission of Kalkī Puṇḍarīka's *Vimalaprabhā*, which is the vast commentary upon the *Kālacakra-tantra*, and the profound instructions (*zab-khrid*) of the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*. He then offered the use of the hermitage of Mkha'-spyod bde-ldan to Dol-po-pa, who immediately entered into a meditation retreat. At this time Dol-po-pa also received the teachings of the *Sems'grel skor gsum* and a wide variety of *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* transmissions.[6] After completing this retreat, he traveled for about two years both receiving and giving teachings. Upon returning to Jo-nang, he began another strict retreat at Mkha'-spyod bde-ldan, meditating upon the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* for one year.[7] During this period of intense meditation he experienced the realization of the first four levels of the *ṣaḍaṅga-yoga*. Kun-spangs-pa describes the results of this retreat:[8]

> On the basis of both *pratyāhāra* and *dhyāna*, he beheld immeasurable figures of the buddhas and pure lands. On the basis of *prāṇāyāma* and *dhāraṇā*, an exceptional experiential realization was born due to the blazing of blissful warmth.

It was during this period that the realization of the *gzhan-stong* first arose in Dol-po-pa's mind. However, according to Rje-btsun Tāranātha's (1575-1634) description of the Mkha'-spyod bde-ldan hermitage, Dol-po-pa stayed there for two to three years, and perfected just the first three branches of the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*.[9] For the meditation practice which requires total darkness for the detachment of the sense faculties from their objects, he no doubt used

6 Kun-spangs, *ibid.*, p.305-306. For a sketch of the life of Kun-spangs Chos-grags Dpal-bzang, see Ngag-dbang blo-gros grags-pa, *Dpal*, pp.32-33. The trilogy of texts known as the *Sems 'grel skor gsum* are: (1) the *Vimalaprabhā* (Peking #2064), an immense commentary upon the *Kālacakra-tantra* by Kalkī Puṇḍarīka, (2) the *Hevajra-piṇḍārthāṭīkā* (Peking #2310), a commentary upon the *Hevajra-tantra* by Bodhisattva Vajragarbha, and (3) the *Lakṣābhidhānād-uddhṛta-laghutantra-piṇḍārtha-vivaraṇa* (Peking #2117), a commentary upon the *Cakrasaṃvara-tantra* by Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi. The first section of the *Vimalaprabhā* has now been translated and studied in NEWMAN (1987).

7 Kun-spangs, *ibid.*, p.308.

8 *Ibid.*, p.308: *sor bsam gnyis la brten nas sangs rgyas kyi sku dang zhing khams dpag du med pa gzigs so / srog rtsol dang 'dzin* [309] *pa la brten nas bde drod 'bar bas nyams rtogs khyad par can 'khrungs so.*

9 Tāranātha, *'Khyog*, f.2a: *chos rje kun mkhyen chen pos kyang lo gnyis ngo gsum bzhugs / sor sdud bsam gtan srog rtsol gsum mthar phyin pa'i tshul ston sa yang 'di lags /*. I should like to thank Dr. Franz-Karl EHRHARD, of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, Kathmandu, for a copy of this text.

the dark room (*mun-khang*) which was there.[10] Elsewhere Tāranātha describes the circumstances as follows:[11]

> [Dol-po-pa] made the instructions on the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* into experience. Except for when requesting the specific teachings, he stayed at Mkha'-spyod bde-ldan without meeting anyone. Since he perfected the experiential realization of *pratyāhāra* and *dhyāna*, the master [Yon-tan rgya-mtsho] remarked, "I should give the instructions quickly," but [Dol-po-pa] asked to be guided carefully. When he meditated he gained the signs of the perfection of *prāṇāyāma* just as explained in the [*Kālacakra*]-*tantra*.

Later in the same text Tāranātha makes this very significant statement:[12]

> Although the exceptional view and meditation of the *gzhan-stong* was born in his mind while staying at Mkha'-spyod bde-ldan, he did not speak of it to others for several years.

This retreat, which apparently took place in the years immediately preceding 1325, was the pivotal event in Dol-po-pa's spiritual development. But his communication of the *gzhan-stong* view to others would not take place for at least another five years, until he had ascended the teaching throne of Jo-nang in 1325, and had begun the construction of the great *stūpa* in 1330.[13]

Raising Mt. Meru

The huge *stūpa* at Jo-nang was under construction from 1330 to 1333.[14] Dol-po-pa had been inspired by the *stūpa* built long before by Khro-phu Lo-tsā-ba Byams-pa dpal (1172-1236) at Khro-phu. During his visit there he

10 *Ibid*, f.2a.

11 Tāranātha, *Dpal*, f. 13b: *sbyor drug la nyams 'khrid mdzad / dmigs pa zhu ba'i skabs ma gtogs su dang yang mi 'phrad par mkha'spyod bde ldan du bzhugs / sor bsdud bsam gtan gyi nyams rtogs mthar phyin pas / bla ma'i gsung nas mgyogs khrid bya gsung pa la / gol le skyong bar zhu zhus te sgom par mdzad pas / srog rtsol mthar phyin pa'i rtags rgyud nas bshad pa bzhin mnga' /*.

12 *Ibid.*, f.14a: *gzhan stong gi lta sgom khyad par can ni / mkha' spyod bde ldan du bzugs pa'i tshe thugs la 'khrungs pa yin kyang / lo shas shig gzhan la ma gsungs /*.

13 *Ibid.*, f. 14a.

14 The construction of this magnificent structure, known by many names, such as Dpal-yon-can, Skum-'bum chen-po, Dpal-sgo-mangs, and so forth, is detailed in Kun-spangs, *Chos*, pp.313-328, and Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan, *Chos*, ff. 12a-20a. Dol-po-pa

vowed to build an even grander one.[15] Dol-po-pa's primary purpose in building the monument at Jo-nang was to repay the kindness of his teacher Yon-tan rgya-mtsho. According to Kun-spangs-pa, who witnessed the events, prior to the winter of 1330, the long central poles were placed in the *stūpa* and Dol-po-pa taught the *Sems 'grel skor gsum* to a huge assembly. On this occasion he took great pleasure in making, for the first time, the clear distinction between the relative as *rang-stong* – empty of self-nature, and the absolute as *gzhan-stong* – empty of other relative phenomena.[16] Tāranātha, however, seems to say that after laying the foundation for the *stūpa* and ascending the teaching throne of upper Bzang-ldan monastery,[17] Dol-po-pa first spoke of the *gzhan-stong* theory to an audience of about ten, and this was in the context of giving an in-depth explication of the *Ten Garbha Sūtra*s.[18] Whichever the case, it is clear that it was during the building of the *stūpa*, which Dol-po-pa himself links to his realization, that he first openly taught the *gzhan-stong* and related topics.

The construction of the *stūpa* at Jo-nang was carefully based upon descriptions found in the *Vimalaprabhā*, so that upon its completion it fulfilled all the criteria necessary to be considered the same as the *Dpal-ldan*

himself also wrote two short texts in praise of the *stūpa*. See Dol-po-pa, *Mchod rten Dpal*, and *Mchod rten bzhengs*. Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan, *Chos*, f. 23a, mentions that Dol-po-pa wrote five texts concerning the Sku-'bum chen-po, the most important of which was the *Chos sgo mang du 'byed pa'i thabs mchog*, which is now available. See Dol-po-pa, *Chos*.

The *stūpa* at Jo-nang was visited and its interior art work described by TUCCI (1980), pp.190-196. Photographs of it are found in TUCCI (1973), pls. 78 and 79, although incorrectly captioned as the *stūpa* at Rgyang. See VITALI (1990), p.128, pl. 82, for a more recent photo of the ruined remains, and p.129 for the old photo from TUCCI, but with the correct caption. Another photo of what seems to be a largely reconstructed *stūpa* is found on the inside cover of the periodical *Gangs-ljongs rig gnas* (1991-4).

15 Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan, f. 8b.

16 Kun-spangs, p.323: *chos rje'i thugs dgyes nas / kun rdzob rang stong dang don dam gzhan stong gi phye bsal chen mo dang ... /*

17 Bzang-ldan chos-sde, near Byang Ngam-ring, was founded by Dol-po-pa's disciple and biographer, Kun-spangs Chos-grags dpal-bzang, who was a member of the royal family at Ngam-ring. See Mang-thos, *Bstan*, 180, and Dpal-ldan chos-kyi bzang-po, *Sde*, 171. Tāranātha taught there extensively in around 1603. Tāranātha, *Rgyal*, pp.271-275.

18 Tāranātha, *Dpal*, f. 14a.

rgyu-skar gyi mchod-ldan, or the Glorious *Stūpa* of the Planets, in which the Buddha had first taught the *Kālacakra-tantra*.[19] Dol-po-pa stated that his realization of "the absolute as *gzhan-stong*, previously unknown in Tibet,"[20] arose due to the kindness of his teachers and the Triple Gem, whose blessings he had received because of his devotion to them and their representations, and because he had done what was to be done for the benefit of the Buddhist doctrine.[21] Lha'i rgyal-mtshan is more specific, stating that Dol-po-pa's precise realization of the nature of absolute reality was due to "the blessings of his construction of inconceivable marvelous three-fold representations, such as those of the gurus, buddhas, bodhisattvas, and the *sku-'bum chen-po* (great *stūpa*)."[22] The connection between his realization of the *gzhan-stong*, the teachings of the *Kālacakra-tantra*, and the *stūpa* of Jo-nang are made explicit by Dol-po-pa in a short series of verses speaking of his discovery:[23]

> Alas, my share of good fortune may be inferior, but I think a discovery such as this is good fortune.
>
> Is this discovery by a lazy fool due to the blessing of the Kalkī emperor?
>
> Although I have not physically arrived at Kalāpa [court], has the Kalkī entered [my] faithful mind, or what?
>
> Although I have not trained my intellect in three-fold knowledge, I think the raising of Mt. Meru has caused the Ocean to gush forth.[24]

19 Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan, f. 15a-b.

20 *Ibid.*, f. 21a: *sngar bod du ma grags pa don dam gzhan stong dang ... /* This is the first in a long and significant list of topics that Dol-po-pa felt he had been the first in Tibet to realize and explicate correctly.

21 *Ibid.*, f.22a.

22 *Ibid.*, f.22a: *bla ma sangs rgyas byang chub sems dpa' dang / sku 'bum chen po la sogs pa rten gsum ngo mtshar can dpag tu med pa bzhengs pa'i byin brlabs kyis ... /*

23 *Ibid.*, f.22a: *kye ma bdag gi skal ba rab dman yang / 'di 'dra snyed pas skal ba bzang snyam byed / le lo can gyi blun pos 'di rnyed pa / rigs ldan rgyal pos byin gyis brlabs yin nam / lus kyis ka lā pa ru ma sleb kyang / dad pa'i sems la rigs ldan zhugs sam ci / shes rab gsum la blo 'gros sbyangs min yang / lhun po bzhengs pas rgya mtsho rdol ba snyam / 'phags rnams kyis kyang rtogs par dka' ba'i gnas / gang gis drin gyis ji bzhin rtogs mdzad pa / bla ma sangs rgyas rigs ldan thams cad dang / de yi mchod rten che la phyag 'tshal 'dud //.*

24 The three-fold knowledge is that arisen from study (*thos-pa*), contemplation (*bsam-pa*), and meditation (*sgom-pa*). This single couplet is also quoted in ROERICH (1976), p.776. Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan's work is the earliest available source for it.

> I bow in homage to the gurus, buddhas, and kalkīs by whose kindness the essential points which are difficult for even the exalted ones to realize are precisely realized, and to their great *stūpa*.

The raising of Mt. Meru is a reference to Dol-po-pa's construction of the massive *stūpa*, and the Ocean which flowed forth from the blessings and energy awakened during that endeavor refers to his most famous work, the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*.[25] Although not itself dated, we now know that the *Nges don rgya mtsho* was completed well before the consecration of the *stūpa* on October 20, 1333.[26] The text is mentioned in the commentary to Dol-po-pa's *Bstan pa spyi 'grel*, completed by his disciple Nya-dbon Kun-dga' dpal (1285-1379) on May or June 30, 1333. [27] Thus, it is clear that the external construction of the great monument was for Dol-po-pa a reflection of the simultaneous internal process which produced a number of his most significant literary works.

The Initial Reception of the *Gzhan-stong*

Following his proclamation of the *gzhan-stong* view, Dol-po-pa wrote a number of minor works to explain it, but according to Tāranātha, when these works were first circulated they were incomprehensible (*blor-ma-shong*) to most scholars because of the unusual *dharma* language (*chos-skad*) he was introducing.[28] The scholars no doubt experienced a degree of hermeneutical shock when confronted with writings that they could not easily fit into any familiar category.[29] However, in another text, Tāranātha

25 See BROIDO (1989), for a useful sketch of Dol-po-pa's views as found in the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*. Several examples of the *Ri chos* have now been published. See especially the edition cited as Dol-po-pa, *Ri*, which has many useful annotations.

26 Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan, *Chos*, 17a, gives the date of consecration as *dpal ldong gyi lo smin drug gi zla ba'i dkar phyogs kyi tshes bcu*, which corresponds to Friday, October 20, 1333. This and the following date have been calculated based upon D. SCHUH, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Kalenderrechnung*, Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, Supplement Band 16, Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner 1973.

27 Nya-dbon, *Bstan*, 34a. The date of composition is given on 53a: *chu mo bya'i lo dbyar zla 'bring po'i tshes bco lnga.*

28 Tāranātha, *Dpal*, f. 14a.

29 I am borrowing the very appropriate term "hermeneutical shock" from Nathan KATZ (1983), p.110.

tells us that when Dol-po-pa proclaimed the *gzhan-stong* doctrine, all who were fortunate and courageous were delighted by it. It was not until much later that the adherents of the Sa-skya, Dge-lugs, Bka'-gdams, Zha-lu, Bo-dong, and some of the Rnying-ma experienced heart seizure (*snying-gas*) and scrambled brains (*klad-pa 'gems-pa*) upon hearing the *gzhan-stong* philosophical position (*grub-mtha'*).[30]

Writing some three-hundred years after the event, the Sa-skya-pa master 'Jam-mgon A-myes-zhabs (1597-1659) claimed that a large part of the negative reaction was outrage on the part of Sa-skya-pa scholars who felt betrayed when Dol-po-pa began to teach the unprecedented *gzhan-stong* position which contradicted the teachings of the founding fathers of Sa-skya. In this context, we should remember that Jo-nang was considered an affiliate monastery of the Sa-skya school. Dol-po-pa had been educated as a Sa-skya-pa monk, and up until this point in his career had accepted the ancient teachings of that tradition.[31] A-myes-zhab's opinion that all Sa-skya scholars totally rejected Dol-po-pa's theories is certainly an exaggeration, since we know that his own ancestor, Bla-ma dam-pa Bsod-nams rgyal-mtshan (1312-1375), the 15th hierarch of Sa-skya, requested Dol-po-pa to compose his last major works, the *Bka' bsdu bzhi pa* and its auto-commentary.[32] Tāranātha, the 17th century leader of the Jo-nang-pa tradition, remarks that all those who came to Jo-nang to discuss the issues with Dol-po-pa gained confidence in his theories and faith in him. Others who

30 Tāranātha, *Zab*, p.793-794.

31 'Jam-mgon A-myes-zhabs, *Dpal*, vol. 2, p.285: ... *kun mkhyen dol bu yis / sngon med gzhan stong lta ba'i srol btod pas / 'di la mkhas mchog rnams kyis mgrin gcig tu / khyed* [286] *nyid sa skya'i grub mtha'i rjes 'jug tu / khas lan bzhin du rje btsun gong ma yi / gsung dang 'gal ba'i lta ba 'di 'dod pa / 'thad pa min zhes rtsod ngag mang du bsgrags /.*
A-myes-zhabs's following declaration that Dol-po-pa repented of the *gzhan-stong* view as a result of a visit to Sa-skya, during which he touched a robe of Sa-skya paṇ-ḍi-ta's to his lips, and then again upheld the *rang-stong* position for the rest of his life, must be regarded as nothing more than wishful thinking on the part of the Sa-skya hierarch. A similar polemic claim that Paṇ-chen Shākya mchog-ldan (1428-1507) repented of the *gzhan stong* view at the time of his death, and suffered greatly in his later rebirths because of the vile views he had held, is found in RUEGG (1963), p.90.

32 See for example, Dol-po-pa, *Bka'*, p.417. A translation and study of this text and its autocommentary is in progress by the present writer.

sent written objections and refutations were said to have gained understanding upon receiving his well reasoned replies.[33]

A very clear example of this is related by 'Ba'-ra-ba Rgyal-mtshan dpal-bzang (1310-1391), who studied with both Dol-po-pa and Bu-ston Rin-chen 'grub (1290-1364). 'Ba'-ra-ba had doubts about some points concerning Dol-po-pa's distinction between *kun-gzhi ye-shes* and *kun-gzhi rnam-shes* and sent written questions to Dol-po-pa and some of his main disciples. He received answers from the disciples but his doubts were not resolved. Later he received a response from Dol-po-pa himself which was much more satisfying but different than what the great disciples had said. Finally, he was able to meet with Dol-po-pa at Sa-skya Chu-bzang to discuss the points in question. Dol-po-pa, in person, was consistent with his written answer and 'Ba'-ra-ba realized the true import of his teachings.[34] In this way, after establishing his viewpoint through discussion with many different scholars, Dol-po-pa composed his major works, such as the *Ri chos nges don rgya mtsho*.[35]

Influences on Dol-po-pa's Development of the *Gzhan-stong*

It is clear from Dol-po-pa's own statements that the most important scriptural sources for his controversial theories were the *Sems 'grel skor gsum*, which

33 Tāranātha, *Dpal*, f. 13a.

34 'Ba'-ra-ba, *Skyes*, pp.637-639. See especially p.639, where he quotes from Dol-po-pa's letter to him, entitled *Rnam dag lung gi gter mdzod*: *'di skad ces byung ste kun gzhi la dbye na / ye shes yin pa'i kun gzhi dang / rnam shes yin pa'i kun gzhi gnyis lung rigs rnam dag gi legs par grub kyang / de gnyis rang bzhin tha dad du de ni mi 'dod cing / gzhan 'dod pa 'dug na'ang / 'di skad byung ste / lung rig rnam dag gi dgag pa byed do gsungs pas / slob mas chos rje'i dgongs pa mtha' ma longs pa'i bab chol smras par zad //*. Dol-po-pa's statements in this letter directly contradict the opinions of his disciples quoted by 'Ba'-ra-ba on p.638. Therefore, there would seem to be some truth to 'Ba'-ra-ba's final comment that the so-called great disciples did not really comprehend the depth of Dol-po-pa's thought. The same point about the chief disciples not truly mastering Dol-po-pa's ideas was later made by the Byams-gling Paṇ-chen Bsod-nams rnam-rgyal (1400-1475), specifically when discussing the master's works concerning the *Kālacakra-tantra*. Kun-dga' grol-mchog quotes Byams-gling Paṇ-chen, *Rigs*, f. 22b: *kun mkhyen chen po nyid kyi mkhyen rab zab cing gting dpag dka' pa'i cha rnams slob ma'i gtso bor grags pa kun gyis kyang / ji bzhin du ma rtogs pa 'dra /*. TUCCI (1980), p.164, mistakenly attributes this work to Tāranātha.

35 Tāranātha, *Ibid.*, f. 14a.

are the definitive commentaries on the *Kālacakra-tantra*, the *Hevajra-tantra*, and the *Cakrasaṃvara-tantra*. For example, in a text which he sent to the ruler of the principality of Byang, he credits these three texts as being the key scriptural factors in his conversion from the *rang-stong* view.[36] From among them, the *Vimalaprabhā* of Kalkī Puṇḍarīka held special significance for him. He once remarked, "Since I discovered all the essential points of profound definitive meaning from the great commentary of the *Kālacakra-tantra*, it has been very kind."[37]

It is important to keep in mind that Dol-po-pa was a consummate practitioner of the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*, the perfection stage practices of the *Kālacakra-tantra*, and although he based his doctrinal discussions upon scripture, in particular the *Kālacakra* related cycles, his own experience in meditation was crucial to the formation of his theories. Indeed, as George TANABE has recently emphasized in his study of the Japanese master Myōe, "Buddhists have long insisted that the primary experience – and experience is primary – is that of meditation and practice."[38] Dol-po-pa obviously felt that he had experienced a special insight into the definitive meaning of the Buddha's message as known in the land of Shambhala, but not understood in Tibet. As quoted above, at one point he acknowledged that although he had not physically traveled to the Kalāpa court of the Kalkī emperors in Shambhala, he had experienced their blessings in his mind. But one morning in 1335, although he had been in his room behind closed doors in meditation as usual, he told his attendant that he had gone to Shambhala the night before. When he perceived that the man doubted him, he revealed to him a fresh leaf from the Malaya garden in Kalāpa, the imperial court at Shambhala. He then gave an extensive exposition about the layout of Shambhala, its relation to the rest of the universe, and the inner teachings of the *Kālacakra-tantra*.[39] After directly seeing Shambhala, he composed versified praises of it, in one of which he declared that he had discovered

36 Dol-po-pa, *Dpon*, p.487.

37 Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan, *Chos*, f.20b: *chos rje'i zhal nas / nges don zab mo'i gnad thams cad dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud 'grel chen po nas rnyed pas khong shin tu bka' drin che /*.

38 TANABE (1992), p.1.

39 Kun-spangs, *Chos*, p.348.

the precise manner in which Shambhala and Kailash exist, which was previously unknown to Indian and Tibetan scholars.[40]

When giving personal meditation advice to his students Dol-po-pa most often spoke of the special knowledge that he had discovered. He emphasized that although many in Shambhala understood the experiences arising from meditation upon the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*, no one in Tibet did except for him, and that his own awareness was due solely to the kindness of the Kalkī emperors.[41] The combination of Dol-po-pa's experience in meditation upon the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* and his visionary contact with the land of Shambhala, its Kalkī emperors, and their special blessings, certainly provided the primary inspiration for his theories. But there is also considerable evidence that many of the themes of interpretation which came to fruition in his teaching had been present within the Buddhist tradition for centuries.

The earliest Tibetan master through whom the *gzhan-stong* lineages are usually traced is Btsan kha-bo-che (b. 1021), who is most intimately connected with the transmission of the *Uttaratantra*.[42] Jo-nang Kun-dga' grol-mchog (1507-1566) records some of the teachings of Btsan kha-bo-che under the title of *Gzhan stong gi lta khrid*, which he states have been condensed from the instruction manual of Btsan kha-bo-che himself (*btsan kha-*

40 Dol-po-pa, *Zhing*, p.860: *rgya bod mkhas pas sngon chad ma rnyed pa'i / sham bha la dang dpal ldan ke la sha'i / gnas tshul ci bzhin bdag gi skal bas rnyed /.*
Kun-spangs, *Chos*, pp.333-337 records a praise of Shambhala which Dol-po-pa composed after directly perceiving (*nye-bar gzigs*) that pure land.

41 Dol-po-pa, *Shes*, p.628: *tshul 'di deng sang mkhas par grags rnams dang / bsgom bzang rtogs pa mtho bar 'dod rnams dang / grub thob chen po rlom pa phal cher gyis / ma tshor ba de rigs ldan drin gyis rnyed /.*
Dol-po-pa, *Nye gnas dad*, p.634: *lar drang por smras na gzhan mi dga' / gzhan gang zer byas na slob ma bslu /* [635] *dus da lta'i slob dpon bya bar dka' / de yin yang khyed la drang por smra / byang sham bha la na rigs ldan bzhugs / ka la pa chos kyi pho brang na / nyams 'di 'dra mkhyen pa mang du bzhugs / bod kha ba can gyi rgyal khams na / nyams 'di 'dra shes pa kho bo tsam /.*
Dol-po-pa, *Nye gnas sang*, p.638: *sham bha la chos kyi pho brang na / nyams 'di 'dra mkhyen pa mang du bzhugs / yul gangs can khrod na kho bo tsam / de kha po ma lags drang gtam yin / pha chos rje'i snying gtam sems la babs /.*
Kun-spangs, *Chos*, p.385: *lta ngan med pa'i dpal ldan sham bha lar / sems nyid mkhyen pa'i skye bo mang du bzhugs / yul gangs can khrod na kho bo tsam / bu khyod yang dag chos la 'jug par 'tshal /.*

42 ROERICH (1976), pp.347-348.

bo-che'i lta-khrid las btus).[43] This short text provides a fascinating glimpse into an early source for the *gzhan-stong* tradition in Tibet. There are very definite themes present here which can be identified in the later work of Dol-po-pa, but none of Dol-po-pa's characteristic terminology, such as the term *gzhan-stong*. In a related text, Kun-dga' grol-mchog records an excerpt from the *Padma lcags kyu*, an ancient manuscript notebook (*zin-tho*) of Btsan kha-bo-che himself, in which he quotes his Kashmiri master Sañjana as emphasizing the importance of the distinctions of a definitive nature made in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhaṅga* and the *Uttaratantra*. Kun-dga' grol-mchog regards this as an extremely important example of an early precedent for the distinctions later formulated by Dol-po-pa. He states that it is Sañjana's opinion that only the Third Turning of the Wheel, wherein clear distinctions are made between phenomena and their true nature, represents the definitive meaning of the Buddha's teachings. This, he feels, is enough to refute the criticism made by Tibetan critics who claimed that the *gzhan-stong* tradition was completely unknown in India and Tibet until the time of Dol-po-pa. Kun-dga' grol-mchog further remarks that even the great Bu-ston commented that Dol-po-pa had enhanced an earlier Tibetan philosophical position held by one Rta-nag-pa Rin-chen ye-shes, and refers the reader to one of Bu-ston's replies to questions (*dris-lan*).[44] This is an extremely interesting comment, but unfortunately there is no mention of Dol-po-pa in the replies of Bu-ston which have been preserved. To complicate matters, there is indeed a reply to a Bla-ma Rin-chen ye-shes included in

43 Kun-dga' grol-mchog, *Zab*, pp.412-413.

44 Kun-dga' grol-mchog, *Khrid*, pp.325-326: *gzhan stong lta khrid yang btsan kha bo che'i gsung las / kha che paṇḍi ta sadzdza na'i gsung gis rgyal bas 'khor lo dang po bden bzhi / bar pa mtshan nyid med pa / mthar legs par rnam par phye ba'i chos kyi 'khor lo bzlas pa lan gsum bskor ba las snga ma gnyis dngos btags ma phye ba / phyi ma don dam par nges pa'i tshe / dbus dang mtha' phye / chos dang chos nyid phye* [326] *nas gsungs zhing / chos nyid rnam 'byed dang rgyud bla ma'i dpe'i phi mo tsam g.yar ba la yang dpe 'di gnyis nub na byams pa bde bar gshegs pa'i tshod tsam yin zer bka' gnad chen po byung zer la / padma lcags kyu'i ming bzhag pa'i btsan kha bo che rang gi zin tho rnying pa zhig snang ba 'dis / phyis gzhan stong bya ba'i tha snyad rgya gar du gtan ma grags bod du yang kun mkhyen dol bu phyi na byung zhes sgrog pa la bya gtong du mtshon zhing / thams cad mkhyen pa bu ston gyi dris lan zhig na'ang / sngon rta nag pa rin chen ye shes pa'i grub mtha' zhig yod pa phyis dol bu pas rtsal 'don du skyong bar snang gsungs pa la yang zhib dpyod mdzad 'tshal /.*

Bu-ston's collected works, but there is no passage corresponding to that indicated by Kun-dga' grol-mchog.[45] Kun-dga' grol-mchog, as the leader of the Jo-nang tradition, is of course making these points to show doctrinal precedent for the positions maintained by the Jo-nang-pa after the time of Dol-po-pa.

In the lineage of the *Kālacakra-tantra* transmissions in the Jo-nang-pa school the definitive aspect of the teaching was being emphasized long before the 14th century. This is most obvious in the *Gsal sgron skor bzhi* by the 11th century *Kālacakra* master Yu-mo-ba Mi-bskyod rdo-rje.[46] Dol-po-pa received the transmission of Yu-mo-ba's teachings in which Yu-mo-ba is clearly dealing with some of the same themes that Dol-po-pa later elaborated. In fact, Tāranātha identifies Yu-mo-ba as having "initiated the tradition of the philosophical system of tantric *gzhan-stong*."[47] It is very significant, however, that none of the key terms associated with Dol-po-pa's theories, such as *gzhan-stong* or *kun-gzhi ye-shes*, appear in the extant writings of Yu-mo-ba, nor does he use any of the terminology which Dol-po-pa apparently borrowed from certain *mahayāna sūtra* and *śāstra*.[48]

Nevertheless, the Dge-lugs-pa master Thu'u-bkwan Blo-bzang chos-kyi nyi-ma (1737-1802) much later states in his Grub *mtha' shel gyi me long* that Yu-mo-ba was the originator of the *gzhan-stong* teachings, which he so named, and that they were passed down orally until the time of Dol-po-pa as a hidden doctrine (*lkog-pa'i chos*) without any written texts.[49] Although it is known that Dol-po-pa actively taught Yu-mo-ba's *Gsal sgron skor bzhi*, he neither mentions Yu-mo-ba in his own writings, nor quotes from his texts.[50] Indeed, it is striking that he almost never refers to or quotes any earlier Tibetan masters, seeking to establish his doctrine solely on the

45 Bu-ston, *Thams*, pp.185-216.

46 See Yu-mo-ba Mi-bskyod rdo-rje, *Gsal*.

47 Tāranātha, *Dpal*, f. 8b: *sngags kyi gzhan stong grub mtha'i srol ka phye* /.

48 It should be noted that Thu'u-bkwan seems to attribute the use of the terms *rtag*, *brtan*, and *ther zug* to Yu-mo-ba, but they are not found his available writings. See Thu'u-bkwan, *Thu'u*, p.217, and RUEGG (1963), p.83.

49 RUEGG (1963), pp.82-83.

50 In a eulogy written at the time of Dol-po-pa's death, his disciple, Ma-ti paṇ-chen 'Jam-dbyangs blo-gros (1294-1376), refers to him as one who taught the *Gsal sgron rnam bzhi* of Grub-thob Yu-mo. Ma-ti paṇ-chen, *Chos*, 1087/2.

basis of scripture. It is also noteworthy that none of the terms associated with his special terminology, such as *gzhan-stong* or *kun-gzhi ye-shes*, occur in the full length biographies of earlier masters of the Jo-nang-pa tradition, such as Kun-spangs Thugs-rje brtson-'grus (1243-1313), the founder of Jo-nang, or his successor Rgyal-ba ye-shes (1257-1320).

Obviously, there were a variety of possible influences which contributed to the formation of Dol-po-pa's system of thought. It is of considerable interest that some Tibetan sources speak of the third Karma-pa, Rang-byung rdo-rje (1284-1339), as a possible influence, or even as the first adherent of the *gzhan-stong*.[51] The earliest available account of the meeting between these two teachers is by the Sa-skya-pa master Mang-thos Klu-sgrub rgya-mtsho (1523-1596?), who remarks:[52]

> Moreover, this lord [Dol-po-pa] met with Karma Rang-byung rdo-rje, and it is said that since [Dol-po-pa] upheld the *rang-stong* philosophical position, the Karma-pa prophesied that he would later become an adherent of the *gzhan-stong*. In general I think the system of the *gzhan-stong* was first upheld by Karma Rang-byung rdo-rje. They became *gzhan-stong* at Jo-nang following the Great Omniscient [Dol-po-pa].

According to Tāranātha this meeting seems to have taken place when Dol-po-pa was 29 or 30 years old, just prior to his trip to Jo-nang to meet Yon-tan rgya-mtsho in 1322. He describes it like this:[53]

51 I have found absolutely no evidence in the writings of Rang-byung rdo-rje, or any other early Tibetan source, that would support the assertion in HOOKAM (1991), p.173, that Rang-byung rdo-rje "was very much influenced by Dolpopa and his Shentong doctrine." At the time of their meeting, it seems clear that Dol-po-pa was encouraged by the Karma-pa, and not the other way around. Nor do the biographies of Dol-po-pa or Rang-byung rdo-rje provide any information to justify HOOKAM's certainty that the Karma-pa visited Jo-nang. Furthermore, her hypothesis that Rang-byung rdo-rje was actually the author of Dol-po-pa's commentary on the *Uttara-tantra* is totally without basis. She seems unaware that *Rton-pa bzhi-ldan*, found in the colophon, is the most common pseudonym used by Dol-po-pa in his works.

52 Mang-thos Klu-sgrub-rgya-mtsho, *Bstan*, p.179: *des na rje 'di karma rang byung rdo rje dang mjal te rang stong pa'i grub mtha' bzung bas / karma pas phyis gzhan stong par 'gyur bar lung bstan zer / spyir gzhan stong pa'i lugs thog mar karma rang byung rdo rjes bzung bar sems / jo nang du ni kun mkhyen chen po man chad gzhan stong par song ba yin no //.*

53 Tāranātha, *Dpal*, f. 13b: *de nas lha sa dang 'tshur phu sogs su phebs / chos rje rang byung pa dang chos kyi gsung gleng mang du mdzad / rang byung pas rje 'di'i lung*

> Then [Dol-po-pa] traveled to Lha-sa, 'Tshur-phu, and so forth. He had many discussions about *dharma* with Chos-rje Rang-byung-pa. Although Rang-byung-pa could not match the scriptural reasoning of this lord [Dol-po-pa], he had fine clairvoyance, and prophesied, "You will soon have a view, practice, and *dharma* language (*chos-skad*) much better than this which you have now."

Tāranātha seems to directly quote the Karma-pa's prophecy, but makes no mention of him as a possible source for Dol-po-pa's development of the *gzhan-stong* view. Unfortunately, there is no record of this meeting in any of the extant early biographies of either teacher.[54] There is, however, mention of it in the late history of the Karma Kaṃ-tshang tradition written by Si-tu Paṇ-chen Chos-kyi 'byung-gnas (1700-1774). According to the chronology of this work the meeting can be dated to between 1320 and 1324.[55]

Innovations in Dharma language

As suggested above, one of the most innovative aspects of Dol-po-pa's philosophical enterprise was his development of a new *dharma* language which he utilized to express a wide range of themes found in *mahayāna* and *vajrayāna* scripture. For instance, as quoted above, Tāranātha mentioned that when Dol-po-pa first taught the *gzhan-stong*, he wrote a number of texts containing a certain *dharma* language (*chos-skad*) which was incomprehensible to many scholars, who upon reading them experienced a state of hermeneutical shock. In his prophecy Rang-byung rdo-rje also alluded to a new and superior terminology which Dol-po-pa would soon develop.

Dol-po-pa did two things in regard to language that were largely unprecedented in Tibet. Although much research into these points needs to be done, it seems probable that he first developed a special terminology that involved the appropriation of a number of terms from certain *mahayāna-*

rig gi zhal ya ma thegs kyang / mngon shes bzang po mnga' bas / khyed la lta grub dang chos skad da lta'i 'di bas kyang ches bzang ba cig myur du 'ong / ces lung bstan /.

54 There is a mere mention of gifts sent (?) by Chos-rje Rang-byung rdo-rje to Dol-po-pa at Jo-nang around 1335. Kun-spangs, *Chos*, p.347.

55 Si-tu paṇ-chen, *Bsgrub*, p.208: *kun mkhyen dol po pa chen pos kyang 'di skabs mjal bar 'dug cing khyed kyis da lta'i 'di ma yin pa'i lta ba khyad 'phags zhig rtogs par 'dug gsungs pa / khong de skabs dbu ma rang stong gi grub mthar dgyes kyang / mi ring bar gzhan stong dbu ma chen po'i gnad ji bzhin du mkhyen pa la dgongs par 'dug /.*

sūtra and *śāstra*; terms which were acceptable in their original context within scripture but were almost never used in ordinary scholarly discourse. Then he created, or a least made first extensive use of, several Tibetan terms, such as *gzhan-stong* and *kun-gzhi ye-shes*, to express scriptural themes which he wished to emphasize. He also drew into his vocabulary some key terms such as *dbu-ma chen-po*, or *mahāmadhyamaka*, which had been in use in Tibet for centuries.

In his unique use of language, Dol-po-pa first borrowed loaded terminology from *mahayāna-sūtra* and *śāstra* and incorporated it into his own compositions. A few examples will illustrate this unusual facet of his work. One of the controversial points in his teaching is the assertion that ultimate truth, referred to by terms such as *tathāgatagarbha*, *dharmadhātu*, and *dharmakāya*, is a permanent or eternal state. Statements to this effect are not unusual in certain *mahayāna-sūtra* and *śāstra*, but for the most part, the hermeneutical approach was to view them as requiring interpretation (*drang-don*).[56] Dol-po-pa began to use freely the terminology of these scriptures himself, in a manner which required no interpretation, and this was no doubt shocking. For instance, the Tibetan terms *bdag* (Sanskrit: *ātman*), *rtag-pa* (Sanskrit: *nitya*) , *brtan-pa* (Sanskrit: *dhruva*), and *ther-zug*, *g.yung-drung*, and *mi 'jig pa* (all of which were used to translate Sanskrit *śāśvata*), are found in the Tibetan translations of *śāstra* such as the *Uttaratantra*, and *sūtra* such as the *Laṅkāvatara*, *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Aṅgulimālīya*, *Śrīmālā*, and *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, where they are used to describe the *dharmakāya*, the *tathāgata* and/or the *tathāgatagarbha*.[57] The four terms, which may be translated as "self," "permanent," "everlasting," and "eternal", are used by Dol-po-pa throughout his writings, not just when discussing the

56 See especially RUEGG (1989), pp.19, 25-25, etc.

57 Rgyal-ba ye-shes, Kun, f.2a, quotes the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* in regard to the status of the *tathāgatagarbha* as: *rtag pa dang / brtan pa ther zug ...* |
Dol-po-pa, *Bde*, p.426, quotes the *Gaṇḍavyūha*: *de bzhin gshegs pa ni rtag pa / brtan pa ther zug mi 'jig pa ste ... /*
On p.432 he quotes the *Rab tu zhi ba rnam par nges pa'i cho 'phrul gyi mdo*: *bde bzhin bshegs pa ni rtag pa'o / de bzhin bshegs pa ni g.yung drung ngo /.*
On p.433 he quotes the *Aṅgulīmālīya*: *bde bzhin bshegs pa rtag pa dang yang dag pa nyid du bsngags par bya'o.*
For the occurrence of these terms in the *Śrīmālādevī*, *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, and the *Uttaratantra* itself, see TAKASAKI (1966), especially pp.38-40, and 256-257. Also see RUEGG (1969), pp.360-371, etc.

meaning of a passage in scripture.[58] Bu-ston's refutations of the Jo-nang-pa position in regard to the interpretation of these very terms, as used in scripture, clearly shows that this was one of the areas in which Dol-po-pa's contemporaries reacted strongly.[59]

In one of his early short texts, the *Bstan pa spyi 'grel*, which is nevertheless considered a major work, most of the terms in question are already in use.[60] In another early and important work, the *Dbu ma'i man ngag khyad 'phags*, which he wrote at the request of the master from whom he received ordination, several of these terms are also found, and a number of the themes he would later develop more fully may be seen in embryonic form.[61] These terms continue to be found in all of his later writings. In his last major work, the *Bka' bsdu bzhi pa*, written in the year of his death (1361), Dol-po-pa frequently used all the terms listed above, as well as other unusual compounds, such as *g.yung-drung sku*, and *ther-zug sku*.[62]

Unfortunately, Dol-po-pa never dated his works, but it may be possible in the future to establish an approximate chronology of his writings through analysis of the terminology used in the different works. For example, the *Bstan pa spyi 'grel* and the *Dbu ma'i man ngag khyad 'phags* do not contain the terms *gzhan-stong* or *kun-gzhi ye-shes*. This gives the impression that they are very early works, and that the borrowing of vocabulary from scriptural sources, which is present in these works, was the first step in the evolution of his use of language, later to be followed by the creation of his own *dharma* language.

The term *gzhan-stong* is most often associated with Dol-po-pa, who is usually thought to have coined it.[63] There is, however, some evidence of at least a few isolated occurrences of this term before his time. Dol-po-pa

58 Very rarely Karma-pa Rang-byung rdo-rje also uses at least one of these terms, *bdag*, in a similar context. *Zab*, 1b.

59 See RUEGG (1973), especially pp.122-140.

60 Dol-po-pa, *Bstan*, p.494. A translation and study of this text is in progress by the present writer. See ROERICH (1976), where it is listed among Dol-po-pa's most important works.

61 For example, see *Dbu*, pp.1172, 1174, 1177, and 1178.

62 Dol-po-pa, *Bka'*, pp.364, 375, 394, etc. The date of the composition of the *Bka' bsdu bzhi pa* is given by Mang-thos Klu-sgrub rgya-mtsho, *Bstan*, p.178.

63 Cf. KAPSTEIN (1992), pp.23-24.

himself quotes a master whom he identifies as Rje Po-ri-pa, who makes a statement that we would expect to hear from Dol-po-pa:[64]

> Relative truth is empty of self-nature (*rang-gis stong-pa*) and absolute truth is empty of other (*gzhan-gyi stong-pa*).
>
> If the mode of emptiness of the two truths is not understood like that, there is danger of denigrating perfect buddhahood

Although this is certainly the most significant occurrence of the term by a writer who may predate Dol-po-pa, I have not been able to locate any information about the otherwise unknown Rje Po-ri-pa. Another example before the time of Dol-po-pa is in the biography of Rwa Lo-tsā-ba Rdo-rje grags (11th-12th cent.), who uses the term *gzhan-stong* in contrast to the term *rang-stong* in a spiritual song.[65]

Dol-po-pa's contemporary, the esteemed Rnying-ma master Klong-chen Rab-'byams-pa (1308-1363), also mentions the term on one occasion in the context of a discussion of the *trisvabhāva* theory of the Yogācāra school. He contrasts the three categories of *rang-gis stong-pa*, *gzhan-gyis stong-pa*, and *gnyis-kas stong-pa*, but with none of the connotations inherent in Dol-po-pa's usage.[66] During a discussion of the nature of the *tathāgata-garbha*, the expression *gzhan-stong*-pa is also used once in a text attributed to Padmasambhava in the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig*, which was revealed in the 13th century by Padma Las-'brel rtsal.[67] Once again, the usage of the term is not similar to that found in Dol-po-pa's works.

This evidence shows that the term *gzhan-stong* had been used in Tibet before the time of Dol-po-pa, albeit only in isolated instances, and without the same connotation that he attached to it. Although the tradition itself

64 Dol-po-pa, *Bden*, pp.814-815: *rje po ri pas / kun rdzob bden pa rang gis stong pa dang / don dam bden pa gzhan gyi stong pa ste / bden gnyis stong* (815) *tshul de ltar ma shes na / rdzogs sangs rgyas la bskur pa btab nyen gda'o //*.

65 Rwa Ye-shes seng-ge, *Mthu*, p.178: *'di* [i.e. *rig pa ye shes*] *rang stong min te bdag 'dzin yul las 'das / 'di gzhan stong min te shes 'dzin dri ma med /*. There is, however, some evidence that the biography of Rwa Lo-tsā-ba contains information which was inserted into the text at a later date.

66 Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa, *Rdzogs*, pp.220-221. I would like to thank Prof. David GERMANO, University of Virginia, for providing me with this information, as well as the other references from Klong-chen-pa and Padmasambhava cited below.

67 Padmasambhava, *'Bras*, p.64: *gzhan la ma ltos pas gzhan stong pa /*.

certainly considers him as the one who coined the term, it is probably more accurate to say that Dol-po-pa made use of an obscure term which had very limited use before him, and gave it a place of fundamental importance in the expression of his philosophy.

Another central theme of Dol-po-pa's thought is the contrasting of *kun-gzhi rnam-shes* – literally, consciousness as the ground of everything, with *kun-gzhi ye-shes* – literally, gnosis or pristine cognition as the ground of everything. The term *kun-gzhi ye-shes* is not known to have occurred in the writings of any earlier Tibetan authors. Dol-po-pa himself includes *kun-gzhi ye-shes* in a listing of the various topics previously unknown in Tibet which he felt he had realized and explicated.[68] As noted above, Karma-pa Rang-byung rdo-rje may have had some role in the development of Dol-po-pa's ideas. Although there is no occurrence in Rang-byung rdo-rje's extant works of the terms *gzhan-stong* or *kun-gzhi ye-shes*, the latter term may have been used in a work which is not available at the present time. In his commentary to Rang-byung rdo-rje's *Zab mo nang don*, Jam-mgon Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas (1813-1899), himself an adherent to the *gzhan-stong* view, speaks of Rang-byung rdo-rje's own use of the contrasting terms *kun-gzhi rnam-shes* and *kun-gzhi ye-shes* in his autocommentary (*rang-'grel*) to the *Zab mo nang don*. Unfortunately, Kong-sprul does not directly quote Rang-byung rdo-rje's text.[69] Rang-byung rdo-rje wrote the *Zab mo nang don* in 1322,[70] apparently the year after his meeting with Dol-po-pa. According to the chronology in the sketch of Rang-'byung rdo-rje's life as found in the *Blue Annals*, he wrote the autocommentary before

68 Lha'i Rgyal-mtshan, *Chos*, f. 21a.

69 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, *Rnal*, f. 17b: *'dir rang 'grel las / 'khor 'das thams cad kyi gzhir gyur pa'i chos nyid de bzhin nyid la kun gzhi'i sgrar gsungs nas de'i nang gses dag pa dang bcas pa la kun gzhi'i ye shes dang sa bon thams cad pa'i cha nas kun gzhi'i rnam shes su gsungs te sems la dag ma dag gnyis su dbye / kun gzhi'i rnam shes las 'khor ba snang ba'i tshul dang kun gzhi'i ye shes las myang 'das snang ba'i tshul sgrub byed theg pa* [18a] *gong 'og gi khyad par dang bcas pa gsungs so //*. I am indebted to Mr. Kurtis SCHAEFFER, University of Washington, for pointing out this reference to me.

70 Kon-sprul, *ibid.*, f. 188b, quotes the colophon of an edition of the *Zab mo nang don*, in which the year *chu-pho-khyi* (1322) is given. The available published edition of the *Zab mo nang don* gives the year of composition with only the single element *khyi*. See Rang-byung rdo-rje, *Zab*, f. 32a.

1326.[71] This is considerably before the writings of Dol-po-pa began to circulate in Tibet. However, a short text in the collected spiritual songs of Rang-byung rdo-rje, which is devoted to defining the nature of *kun-gzhi*, uses neither the term *kun-gzhi rnam-shes* nor *kun-gzhi ye-shes*, and the ideas expressed are definitely incompatible with Dol-po-pa and the *gzhan-stong* doctrine.[72]

The phrase *kun-gzhi me-long lta-bu'i ye-shes* is found in one of the works of Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa. He uses this term to characterize the *dharmakāya*, and contrasts it with the *kun-gzhi* as one of the eight modes of consciousness.[73] In this one instance there are some similarities with Dol-po-pa's ideas, but Klong-chen-pa's usual position is to identify the *kun-gzhi* only with impure states of mind.[74]

Conclusions

Dol-po-pa Shes-rab rgyal-mtshan was responsible for the widespread dissemination of teachings which may not in themselves have been completely unprecedented, but which were not openly proclaimed before his time. He did this in an public fashion beginning in approximately 1330, in conjunction with the construction of a great *stūpa* at Jo-nang. The impact of his language and ideas is still strongly felt among scholars and practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism. One of the most distinctive features of his approach was the innovative use of a new vocabulary, including such terms as *gzhan-stong*, and the borrowing of further terminology from scriptural sources. Extensive research into his life and tremendously influential ideas is now finally possible with the recent publication of his collected writings.

71 ROERICH, (1976), p.492.

72 Rang-byung rdo-rje, *Rang*, pp.97-98.

73 Klong-chen rab-'byams-pa, *Rgyab*, pp.263-270.

74 See GERMANO (1992), pp.231-261.

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