

# The "great debate" of bSam yas : construction and deconstruction of a Tibetan Buddhist myth

Autor(en): **Bretfeld, Sven**

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# THE 'GREAT DEBATE' OF *BSAM YAS*

## Construction and Deconstruction of a Tibetan Buddhist Myth

Sven Bretfeld, Berne

### *Abstract*

Although the historicity of the famous 'Great Debate' between Kamalaśīla and *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna in late 8<sup>th</sup> century Tibet can be doubted in various ways, the narrative of this event nevertheless played an important role in later Tibetan Buddhist discourses. The author analyses this story in a wider cultural perspective as part of an extensive founding myth, shaping cultural and religious group-identities.

From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards, various Buddhist polemicists utilized this myth by identifying certain rival religious doctrines and practices with the 'old heresy of the *hva śaṅ*'. In this way they strengthened the thrust of their criticisms by linking their view of the state of Buddhism in their own days to the well-remembered ancient situation of crisis and its effect on the unity of Tibetan Buddhists. In order to counter polemical attacks of this kind directed against *rDzogs chen* and *Mahāmudrā* practices, the renowned *rÑin ma pa* scholar Kaḥ thog Rig 'dzin Tshe dbaṅ nor bu wrote a highly interesting treatise aiming at a historic-critical deconstruction of the traditional myth of the 'Great Debate'.

### 1. Introduction

One event stands out in the history of 8th century Tibet that was a source of inspiration for Tibetan religious protagonists of later times and has become an attractive field of research for modern scholars of Buddhist studies. This is the famous 'Great Debate' about the nature and structure of the Buddhist path to enlightenment which is said to have taken place in the Central Tibetan monastery of *bSam yas* in 792-794 A.D. between the two Buddhist masters Kamalaśīla from India and the Chinese *ho-shang* (和尚) Mo-he-yan (摩訶衍) – or, *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna, as he is called in Tibetan. In the Tibetan historical tradition, especially the *Chos 'byuṅs* ('Religious Histories'), this controversy ranks among the most prominent events of the early phase of Tibetan Buddhism. According to these sources the debate was officially convoked by the Tibetan king to clarify once and for all the question of whether buddhahood had to be achieved by a gradual spiritual development or whether a 'sudden' or 'simultaneous' approach

was also possible. Tibetan tradition is unanimous that the controversy resulted in a royal decision in favour of Kamalaśīla, who vouched for the gradual method. Since the two masterful studies of this topic by Paul DEMIÉVILLE (1952) and Giuseppe TUCCI (1958) an enormous amount of research has been done that has shed new light on the historical circumstances and the contents of this interesting encounter of Chinese and Indian Buddhism on Tibetan soil. Particularly comparisons with some of the Tibetan and Chinese texts on *Chan* Buddhism unearthed in the Dunhuang caves – some of them attributed to *ho-shang* Mo-he-yan himself<sup>1</sup> – have led to the supposition that the information given in the indigenous Tibetan historiography is more an idealized religiously biased construction of the past than a reliable documentation of historical events. Several problems around this ‘Great Debate’ have been discussed in scientific papers and books, but still leave many questions about its actual contents, style, and consequences unanswered – even including the question as to whether the debate had ever actually happened.

The aim of this paper is not to expound a new theory of what actually happened in the *bSam yas* monastery in 792-794. My approach is rather to treat the traditional Tibetan accounts of the debate as a specific Tibetan Buddhist myth. This implies first of all considering what the *Chos 'byuṅs* have to say on this topic as meaningful narrations in their own right, making sense within the framework of a Tibetan-Buddhist world-view. From this point of view it is of less interest to look for the historical truth behind this tradition than to ask about its meaning and function instead. As a starting-point, I try to illuminate the background and intention of a text called *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuṅ tshul* by the famous 18th century *rÑin ma*-scholar Rig 'dzin Tshe dbaṅ nor bu. This work was written in reaction to a polemical utilization of the myth in controversies between scholars belonging to different Tibetan-Buddhist schools: Based on the tradition that *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna was a Chinese master who promulgated a wrong interpretation of Buddhist doctrine in Tibet until he was duly refuted by Kamalaśīla and ordered to leave the country by the Tibetan king,<sup>2</sup> from the 13th

1 On these texts see GÓMEZ, 1983b; HOUSTON, 1984 and 1985, and UHEYAMA, 1981, especially for Japanese studies of early *Chan*-Buddhism in Tibet.

2 I think this can indeed be called a kind of mainstream view on this figure. The *Biographical Dictionary of Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism* by KHETSUN SANGPO has little more to say either: *hva śaṅ mahā ya na ni: chos rgyal khri sroṅ lde'u btsan gyi sku che'i smad tsam la bod du slebs nas chos log maṅ po bstan pa'i tshe mkhan chen ŷi ba 'tsho'i bka' luṅ bžin mkhas pa kā [sic!] ma la śī la spyān draṅs nas rtsod bas pham par mdzad nas slar rgya nag tu btaṅ ba de yin no* (KHETSUN SANGPO, 1973, s.v. *hva śaṅ mahā ya na*).

century onwards some Buddhist authors used terms like 'system of the *hva śaṅ*' (*hva śaṅ gi lugs*) to stigmatize certain contemporary Buddhist beliefs and practices by 'proving' their proximity to or identity with those of the Chinese 'heretic' of old. This polemic has often been directed against the meditation-systems of *rDzogs chen* and *Mahāmudrā*, and it goes without saying that some adherents of these traditions vehemently rejected this rebuke, emphasizing the differences of their own systems from that of the *hva śaṅ*.

As we shall see, Tshe dbaṅ nor bu does not himself enter into that discourse by refuting any connection or similarity of *rDzogs chen* and *Mahāmudrā* to the system of the *hva śaṅ*. On the contrary, his investigation presents the teaching of the Chinese master as a fully valid and approved path to buddhahood, thereby trying to cut the ground from under the feet of those polemicists. To get an idea of the implications of Tshe dbaṅ nor bu's text we first have to reconstruct the meaning and ideology of the interpretation of the *hva śaṅ* he is turning against. This is not the 'historical' *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna we are trying to capture with the tools of historical criticism, but a typified figure which entered the Tibetan Buddhist cultural symbol system – to use the language of Clifford GEERTZ – as a prototypical propagator of heretical lore.

## 2. The Shaping of a Myth: *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna in Tibetan Historiography

### 2.1 *History as Myth*

When I speak of the traditional Tibetan accounts of the Great Debate of *bSam yas* as a 'myth', I first have to explain precisely how I understand this term.

Western Tibetologists have often complained that the historiographical tradition of Tibet – especially the *Chos 'byun* genre – presents history from a specific religious perspective. This may be seen as a deficit by someone who is mainly interested in so-called 'historical facts' (whatever is meant by this term). But, on the other hand, it can be a fruitful task to investigate the very intentions underlying these traditions, i.e. not to ask about the historical trustworthiness of the sources but to ask why their authors chose to present history in the way they did. In this way we are able to reconstruct the specific manner of imagining the past and to determine the identity forming function of this activity within Tibetan culture.

Historiography is communication between an author and his readers based on common culturally specific conventions. On the other hand, it is not only



based on these conventions but, actually, one of the various – and maybe one of the most powerful – instruments of shaping and and re-shaping them. Thus, the historiographers take part in the process of forming the cultural identity of the social unity they are addressing (and they themselves belong to) in describing their common origins as well as by communicating collectively binding cultural values. Not rarely this inherent force of historiography is used to consolidate and legitimate political power. Therefore, although its object is the past, its intentions lie with the present and the future. In the context of this paper it is illuminating to approach Tibetan historiography as a generic medium of the Tibetan ‘Cultural Memory’. The German egyptologist Jan ASSMANN coined the concept of Cultural Memory (“kulturelles Gedächtnis”) to explain the process of tradition and the transmission of cultural meaning.<sup>3</sup> For ASSMANN social and cultural identity is constituted by a collective memory of a common past mediated through all kinds of cultural tokens that point to a specific meaning: rites, symbols, icons etc., as well as texts in the broader sense of the term (oral and literal). A collective reconstruction of the past is central for every social group building up its cultural identity, as much as for every individual who by his affiliation with these communities participates in their communicative processes. Cultural Memory refers to events – connected to a specific temporal and spatial localization – important and meaningful for the group or individual involved in the process of remembrance. The past reconstructed thereby is not a memory of unchanging ‘historical facts’, but is subject to a continuous reorganization of the memorizable in order to give meaning to the memorizers’ present. These ‘founding memories’ (“fundierende Erinnerung”) are objectified in solid forms – oral or literary texts, pictures, rituals etc. – that demand institutionalized specialists to preserve and communicate them to the average members of the community.

The past, in this concept, is only relevant – even only real – as *remembered past*. And this memory serves the sole purpose of giving meaning to the present. It is clear that within this model it is of no use to distinguish between history and myth, between ‘historical facts’ and ‘mythical fictions’.<sup>4</sup>

3 Cf. ASSMANN, 2000:29-66 for the following.

4 To put it in ASSMANN’s words: “Der Unterschied zwischen Mythos und Geschichte wird hier hinfällig. Für das kulturelle Gedächtnis zählt nur erinnerte Geschichte. Man könnte auch sagen, daß im kulturellen Gedächtnis faktische Geschichte in erinnerte und damit in Mythos umgewandelt wird. Mythos ist eine fundierende Geschichte, eine Geschichte, die erzählt wird, um eine Gegenwart vom Ursprung her zu erhellen. (...) Durch Erinnerung wird Geschichte zum Mythos. Dadurch wird sie nicht unwirklich, sondern im Gegenteil erst

For us, this theory provides a conceptual framework for locating the *Chos 'byuñs* in the sphere of Tibetan culture – they are media of the Cultural Memory. The first scholar who treated Tibetan historiography *in toto* as myth – in the sense of ASSMANN – was Peter SCHWIEGER.<sup>5</sup> I regard his very insightful and inspiring article as a major step towards an understanding of the cultural functions of Tibetan historiography. To summarize some of his arguments, SCHWIEGER discerns two main ideological conceptions in the *Chos 'byuñs*:

1. They present the Tibetans as the 'chosen people' who are entrusted with the sacred mission of preserving the only true Buddhist tradition.
2. The history of this 'chosen people' follows a meaningful plot characterized by the continuous activity of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas via emanations and incarnations to work for the welfare of the living beings of Tibet.

1.) The 'true' Buddhist tradition was regarded as the religious heritage of Tibet taken over from India, where Buddhism was gradually dying out, around the same time the early *Chos 'byuñs* were composed. The preservation of this heritage is presented as the special cultural legacy of Tibet that demands an intellectual elite to vouch for it. In the sphere of politics this ideology, according to SCHWIEGER, not only serves as a means of legitimation for the political power of the Buddhist institutions, but also for the suppression of religious communities that did not – or not exclusively – subscribe to the same truth(s).<sup>6</sup> Tibetan historiography, in this respect, has the specific function of ensuring the authenticity of the tradition by constructing an unbroken continuity from the very origins of Buddhist tradition up to the present and, what is more, of constituting the preservation of this heritage as a cultural value.

2.) The 'true' Buddhist tradition was not considered to have come to Tibet by chance. It was purposefully established by the activity of Buddhist masters – Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava, Kamalaśīla Ye śes dbaṅ po, to name just a few of

Wirklichkeit im Sinne einer fortdauernden normativen und formativen Kraft" (ASSMANN, 2000:52).

5 Cf. SCHWIEGER, 2000, for the following.

6 SCHWIEGER, 2000:951, mentions the Bon po-tradition in this context. I think this can – at least to a certain degree – be extended to the rñiñ ma pa-tradition as well, as this school of Tibetan Buddhism refers to an authoritative canon of religious literature separate from the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* canon(s) which was often criticized by followers of the other schools.

them. These persons were intensively fostered by early Tibetan kings – first of all, Sroñ btsan sgam po, Khri sroñ lde btsan and Ral pa chen, who are remembered by tradition as the so-called three Religious Kings (*chos rgyal*) and interpreted as incarnations of the three bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi. We can concur with SCHWIEGER that these figures can aptly be called ‘cultural heros’ (“Kulturheroen”) since they are worshipped as the initial founders of Tibetan Buddhist culture, who appeared in the glorified past of the early Tibetan kingdom. Historiography is one of the various media used to preserve and activate the memory of this glorious past which, according to SCHWIEGER, maintained its normative and formative power to shape Tibetan culture through the centuries. Indeed, there is more to this memory of the origins of Tibetan Buddhist culture because it gives meaning to history itself. The religious activities of later figures could be understood as a continuation of the mission of the early ‘cultural heros’, and this interpretation led to a notion of history as “Heilsgeschichte”. SCHWIEGER describes this notion with the following words:

Der Heilsplan, der der Geschichte zugrundegelegt wurde, versprach nicht die Erlösung vom irdischen Unheil am Ende der Zeiten. Vielmehr war er die Versicherung steter Fürsorge durch die Heilsgestalten, die Versicherung ihrer ständig wiederkehrenden Präsenz und ihres nicht ablassenden Bemühens um die Errettung der Lebewesen aus dem Geburtenkreislauf, dem Ozean des Leidens. Die Botschaft der Geschichte war nicht nur, dass die Möglichkeit zum Heil in Tibet stets gegeben ist, sie war darüber hinaus, dass man zur Verwirklichung des Heils stets mit dem Beistand und der Führung mächtiger Helfer rechnen kann.<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 *The Debate of bSam yas as a Precedent for Religious Censorship*

The narrative of the *bSam yas*-debate was frequently retold in Tibetan historiography, sometimes at considerable length.<sup>8</sup> And, as mentioned above, it returns in various scholarly treatises on Buddhist doctrine and practice, mostly to serve polemical purposes. From the frequency and context in which this story recurs in Tibetan cultural communication we can infer two things: first, that this story was known to a significant part of Tibetan society – at least to most of the literate monks and historically educated lay-persons –, and second, that it was ‘loaded’ with meaning for the Tibetan Buddhist identity.

7 SCHWIEGER, 2000:967.

8 For example, Bu ston devotes more space to the events connected to the account of the Great Debate (ca. 5 folio pages, counted from Śāntarakṣita’s prophesy about a future split in the *dharma* of Tibet [142a5] up to the killing of Kamalaśīla by the murderers sent by the *hva śan* [144b3]) than to any other coherent narrative of the so-called *śna dar* period.

The oldest available accounts are contained in the *Chos 'byuñ Me tog sñiñ po* by Ñaṅ Ñi ma 'od zer (12th century) and the *sBa bzed*.<sup>9</sup> There are two other old references to the *bSam yas*-debate. The first one is contained in Lha 'Bri sgañ pa's commentary to the *Be'u bum sñon po* by Dol pa Dmar źur ba śes rab rgya mtsho that seems to be contemporary with or even older than the *Chos 'byuñ me tog sñiñ po* and has not yet received much scholarly attention.<sup>10</sup> The second one is by Sa skya Paṇḍita (13th century) who was also the first to make use of this myth in attacking a rival Buddhist tradition.<sup>11</sup> There is a considerable degree of development of the episode of the Great Debate within the Tibetan *Chos 'byuñ*-tradition. But this is not the place to enter into a comprehensive source-critical investigation which would be completely beyond the scope of this paper. Fortunately, however, we can rely on D. S. RUEGG's excellent compara-

9 This latter text seems to be based on an ancient family-chronicle of the sBa clan which was active during the early kingdom (RUEGG, 1989:71). However, it has come down to us in different versions dating from a time not before the 11th century. The so-called 'Supplemented *sBa bzed*', which was the first version known to Western scholarship through the edition of R. A. STEIN, even dates to as late as the 14th century. Several different versions of varied size of the *sBa bzed* – also spelled *dBa' 'Ba' rBa bzed* (and some further variants) – were already known to early Tibetan historiographers (cf. Per SØRENSEN's preface to the translation and facsimile edition of the *dBa' bzed* by P. WANGDU and H. DIEMBERGER, also for tentative dates suggested for the extant versions [p. XIV]). Some historians, like dPa' bo gtsug lag and Tāranātha, connected the different spellings of the title to different versions of the text (cf. KUIJP, 1984:176-180; RUEGG, 1989:68 ff.; FABER, 1986:34 ff. and WANGDU/DIEMBERGER, 2000:3 f.). The narratives of the *bSam yas*-debate in these versions differ to a certain extent and can in themselves be studied from the viewpoint of the historical development of this story (see FABER, 1986). The *sBa bzed* is traditionally ascribed to sBa gSal snañ who lived in the 8th century and who is said to have been an eye-witness of the Great Debate. Although the extant versions of the text belong to a period considerably later than the lifetime of its alleged author, it is likely that at least some older material is contained therein.

10 The relevant passage was edited by EIMER (1991). EIMER observes that this passage belongs to the same literary tradition as the *sBa bzed* and the *Chos 'byuñ me tog sñiñ po*. It is remarkable, however, that unlike these texts the commentary to the *Be'u bum sñon po* refers to the transmission lineage of the *cig car* tradition that is also known from the *bKa' than sde lña*. It starts with Ārya Kāśyapa and was brought to China by Bodhidharma and later to Tibet by *hva śaṅ Mahāyāna: ston min gyi lugs de yañ 'phags pa 'od sruñ nas | slob dpon dar ma ta la [la bya ba la] brgyud pa man chad yin | dar ma ta las phyi'i rgya mtsho'i 'gram nas cig car 'jug pa'i lugs de rgya nag tu dar byas pas | phyis rgya nag gi btsun pa hva śaṅ ma hā ya na bya ba | bsam yas su 'oñs pas* | (cf. EIMER, 1991:168).

11 See below, pp. 33 ff.

tive study of some of the major sources.<sup>12</sup> It appears that the accounts of the Great Debate in most – if not all – of the *Chos 'byuñ* texts are, directly or indirectly, based on or at least modelled after its presentation in the *sBa bžed*-tradition. This is true especially for Bu ston's *Chos 'byuñ* (14th century).<sup>13</sup> And texts later than this are based on either the *sBa bžed* or/and Bu ston.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it seems best to base our interpretation of the myth mainly on the account of these two texts. In the case of the *sBa bžed* we can find additional help in the careful philological study of the *bSam yas*-debate contained in the different versions of this text by F. FABER (1986).<sup>15</sup>

Prophecies and their fulfilment form a major narrative figure in Tibetan *Chos 'byuñs*. It is not different in our case. The events leading to the controversy between Kamalaśīla and *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna are anticipated in the 'last words' of Śāntarakṣita. This celebrated Indian master who is credited with the establishment of *bSam yas* – the first Buddhist monastery on Tibetan soil – and the ordination of the first Tibetan monks (779?) is said to have handed over a testament (*žal chems*) to his Tibetan pupil Ye śes dbaṅ po shortly before his death. This consisted of a prophecy (*luñ bstan*) given by Bu ston in the following words:

Thereafter the ācārya Bodhisattva [i.e. Śāntarakṣita] declared that although no *mu stegs pas* [i.e. followers of non-Buddhist doctrines] would appear in Tibet, the Teaching of the Buddha itself would split into two fractions, and that a dispute would take place. Therefore, – said he, – when this time will come, you must invite my pupil Kamalaśīla and, after a debate has been held, all strife will be pacified in the direction of the (true) *dharma*.<sup>16</sup>

- 12 RUEGG, 1989:56-92. For further studies of the *bSam yas*-debate from the perspective of source-criticism see TUCCI, 1958; HOUSTON, 1974; 1980 (but see KUIJP's [1984] sharp criticism of this work), R. JACKSON, 1982; KUIJP, 1984; 1986; FABER, 1986; EIMER, 1991; RUEGG, 1992; D. JACKSON, 1994.
- 13 Bu ston's account of the Great Debate seems to be based on at least two different versions of the *sBa bžed* (cf. FABER, 1986:42).
- 14 Cf. RUEGG, 1989:70. But also the *Chos 'byuñ Me tog sñiñ po* as well as the notes of Sa skya Paṇḍita on the *bSam yas*-debate seem to go back to one of the versions of the *sBa bžed* or an unknown but closely related source. As for the *Chos 'byuñ Me tog sñiñ po* see RUEGG, 1989:74 ff. and FABER, 1986; Sa skya Paṇḍita's sources were investigated by KUIJP, 1986 and D. JACKSON, 1994.
- 15 His results need now to be reconsidered, since a manuscript of a hitherto unknown version of the text was published recently by WANGDU/DIEMBERGER, 2000).
- 16 Bu ston 142a5-6: *de nas ā tsā rya bo dhi da tva'i žal nas | bod du mu stegs ni mi 'byuñ gi | saṅs rgyas kyi bstan pa ñid kha gñis su gyes te | rtsod par 'gyur bas | de'i tshe ña'i slob ma*



Apart from the fact that the immediately following events are anticipated, the prophecy makes two implicit statements that refer to the framework of a specific imagination of time and space in which the following story of the Great Debate is situated. For our interpretation we have to make this framework explicit, which I try to do in answering two hermeneutical questions:

1. Why is it that *mu stegs pas* cannot occur in Tibet?
2. How is it possible that the Buddhist community can be split?

Regrettably, Bu ston gives no explicit answer to either of these questions. However, in the different versions of the *sBa bzed* at least two variants of the prophecy have been transmitted, each giving an explanation answering one of these questions. Both explanations appear in later *Chos 'byuṅs* too, and it might be assumed that they were also known to Bu ston. In one variant the future absence of *mu stegs pas* is presented as a consequence of Padmasambhava's conversion of the twelve *bstan sruṅ ma* (female deities entrusted with the protection of the Tibetan country)<sup>17</sup> turning them into guardians of the Doctrine.<sup>18</sup> This obviously refers to Padmasambhava's well-known activity of subduing anti-Buddhist Tibetan deities by his magical powers.<sup>19</sup> In the *sBa bzed* this is interpreted as an act of pacification, or even 'taming', of the Tibetan country itself, thereby transforming it into a suitable homeland for Buddhism.<sup>20</sup>

The second question may appear somewhat naïve at first sight, since to us it seems only natural that disharmony and controversy can occur in a religious community. But from the perspective of a religious concept of meaningful history this might not be so self-evident and needs explanation. This is given in the second variant of the prophecy transmitted in the *sBa bzed* tradition. It is only slightly different in wording, but quite different in intention. In it no reference is made to Padmasambhava, but to the well-known concept of the 'decline of the true *dharma*' (*saddharmavipralopa*): The future split of the *dharma* is connected

*ka ma la śī la spyān droṅs la | rtsod pa byed du chug cig byas pas | rtsod pa chos phyogs su  
 ži bar 'gyur ro ||.*

17 For the twelve *bstan ma* see KOLLMAR-PAULENZ, 2002:1243 f.

18 BŽC 72,22, also occurring in KhGT, 113a5: *bod yul sruṅ ba'i bstan ma bcu gñis po | slob dpon padmas dam la btags pas na | bod tu mu stegs phyi pa mi 'byuṅ mod.* A similar statement occurs in the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me loṅ* and several other texts (cf. p. 399 of SØRENSEN's translation of the text together with note 1361).

19 Cf. BŽD 11b; Bu ston 140b-141a.

20 Cf. BŽD 11b.



to the fact that the teaching of the Buddha has already reached the last 500-year-period of its existence, and that within this time the usual problems with the *mu stegs pas* will not occur, but – what is worse – discrepant views of the Buddhist doctrine itself will arise instead.<sup>21</sup>

This prophecy – in its different variants – can be taken as a key to the interpretation of the myth of the Great Debate, since it locates the controversy within the framework of a generic Tibetan Buddhist imagination of time and space. On the one hand, Tibet is presented as a special space which was turned into a homeland of Buddhism, where the Doctrine is safe from danger due to rival religious traditions. On the other hand, Tibet inherited the *dharma* in a difficult time, when the doctrine of the Buddha had already entered the last phase of the inexorable progress of continuous decline. So, a new danger is about to come. This time crisis will not be induced by an external foe, but from tensions within the *Samgha* itself.

Now, as the danger ‘from outside’ has been eliminated ‘for good’, tensions within the community of Buddhists in Tibet begin to occur and Śāntarakṣita’s prophesy sets out to come true. The *Chos ’byuñs* report that after the master’s death the community of Buddhists was split into two fractions. One was headed by the Chinese *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna whose meditative practices attracted more and more Tibetans. The other group consisted of the few pupils of Śāntarakṣita who still adhere to the traditional way of their late master. Right from the start the sources leave no room for doubt about who is on the right side and who is on the wrong. So, Bu ston declares the meditation method of the *hva śaṅ* to be the ‘nihilistic view’ that buddhahood could be attained by perfect inactivity,<sup>22</sup> while the

21 BŽC 66,6: *bod yul du bstan pa lña brgya’i tha ma la byuñ pas | mu stegs kyi rgol ba ni mi ’byuñ | saṅs rgyas pa ñid lta ba ma mthun te rtsod par ’gyur*. This variant occurs nearly verbatim also in KhGT, 115b5 f. based obviously on the same tradition of the *sBa bžed*. BŽS 56,2 f. and BŽD 19b1 f. contain the same statement with some minor variant readings. The *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* cites yet another variant, seemingly also going back to a version of the same text – but spelled *rBa bžed* this time – which is mentioned in the preceeding passage (KhGT, 120a5). In this version of the prophecy Śāntarakṣita concretely foretells the coming of a Chinese master who will preach a false path to enlightenment characterized by the rejection of ‘means and wisdom’ (*thabs dan śes rab*) and the application of a ‘single white medicine’ (*dkar po chig thub*) instead: KhGT, 120a7-b2: *mkhan po žal chems kyi skabs su ña ’das po’i ’og tu rgya nag gi mkhan po gcig ’byuñ ste des thabs dan śes rab la skur pa ’debs pa dkar po chig thub bya ba sems rtogs pa ’ba’ žig ’tshañ rgya’o zer ba*. (see RUEGG, 1989:88 f. on this matter; on the *dKar po chig thub* see also R. JACKSON, 1984; KUIJP, 1986; BROIDO, 1987; RUEGG, 1992 and D. JACKSON, 1994).

22 Bu ston 142b1.

*sBa bzed* mentions that due to the spread of this doctrine the practice of virtuous actions were completely stopped in Tibet.<sup>23</sup>

After the situation escalated, king Khri sron lde btsan decided to act according to Śāntarakṣita’s testament and invited Kamalaśīla and *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna to an official debate in order to settle the conflict once and for all. The dispute was arranged along the traditional rules of a formal debate (*vāda*), its arena being the *Byaṅ chub gliṅ*-temple at the *bSam yas*-monastery. The king himself participated as a witness-arbiter (*dpaṅ po*, skt. *sākṣin*) who had to proclaim the winner in the end. He sat in the middle of the room flanked by Kamalaśīla on his left side and *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna to his right, both adversaries were surrounded by a retinue of their followers. The two groups are named after their main distinction, which is concerned with the path to the attainment of buddhahood. As the followers of Kamalaśīla maintained that enlightenment could only be achieved by the gradual attainment of the ten different levels of a bodhisattva (*byaṅ chub sems dpa’i sa*, skt. *bodhisattvabhūmi*), they were called *rim gyis pa*, “maintainers of the gradual (entrance to buddhahood)”. According to *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna and his pupils, in contrast, the state of a Buddha could be attained spontaneously – or simultaneously – by a direct experience of true reality; therefore they became known by the name of *cig car pa* “maintainers of the spontaneous (or simultaneous entrance to buddhahood)”.<sup>24</sup> The texts give yet another name for each group that are Tibetan transliterations of Chinese terms with the same meaning – so the *rim gyis pa* were also known as the *btsen min pa* (< chin. *jianmen* 漸門) and the *cig car pa* as the *ston mun pa* (< chin. *dunmen* 頓門).<sup>25</sup>

The *hva śaṅ* speaks first. From the various versions of his speech transmitted in the sources, it might be sufficient here to quote in full the short version given by Bu ston:

23 BŽS 54,8. This is not reported in BŽD.

24 Quite a complex set of notions is connected to the term *cig car* or *cig char*. An excellent study of the historical background and the systematic implications of this concept was done by RUEGG, 1989:150-182. Cf. also STEIN, 1971; HOUSTON 1976.

25 Several different spellings of these terms are found in Tibetan literature: (*s*)*ton min/mun*, (*br*)*tse(n) min/mun* and some other variants. In BŽS 54,13-16 these labels were explained by a fanciful etymology: *brtsen min pa* meaning “those without mercy (*brtse*)”, and *ton min pa* “those without a teaching (*ston*)”. However, the compiler of this version – as well as Bu ston – knew that these are misunderstood Chinese terms: *ston min dan* | *rtsen min rgya skad yin pas bod skad du cig car ba dan rim gyis pa bya ba yin gsuṅs* | (BŽS 54,11 f.; Bu ston 144b2 contains a similar statement). The BŽD contains neither of these explanations.

If one commits good or bad deeds, one (merely) reaches the higher or lower states of rebirth (respectively). Therefore, he does not attain deliverance from Saṃsāra, and the attainment of buddhahood is blocked. An example: White and black clouds alike obscure the sky. But he who does not think, he who does not wish, will be fully delivered from Saṃsāra. He who does not think, not reflect, not investigate, brings about non-perception. By this, one enters (buddhahood) spontaneously (*cig car du 'jug pa*). He is like (a bodhisattva) who dwells on the 10th stage.<sup>26</sup>

Kamalaśīla, who speaks next, admits that indeed the state of non-reflection (*rnam par mi rtog pa*) is the gateway to buddhahood, but that this cannot be attained by merely stopping to think about anything whatever, requiring, rather, discriminative understanding (*śes rab*, skt. *prajñā*) as a precondition:

If the mere absence of recollection is regarded as sufficient, it follows that at a time of faint or intoxication one attains the state of non-reflection [and thereby buddhahood, S. B.]. But, without correct analysis there is no means of entering the state of non-reflection. If we merely cease to recollect and have no correct analysis, how can we come to the cognition of the non-substantiality of all phenomena? And, without the realization of emptiness, it is impossible to remove the defilements. Therefore, (only) discriminative understanding can cast away the misconceived phenomena.<sup>27</sup>

Whereas Kamalaśīla, thus, refutes the *hva śaṅ*'s teaching from an epistemological point of view, the other speakers of the 'Gradualists' put forward ethical and soteriological objectives respectively. Further arguments are, e.g., that by neglecting the gradual path the 'perfections' of a bodhisattva (*pha rol tu phyin pa*, skt. *pāramitā*) could not be developed and that the spontaneous entrance of the *hva śaṅ* would make the accumulation of religious merit and mental training (*blo*) unnecessary.<sup>28</sup>

26 Bu ston 143a3 f.: *las dge mi dge spyad na mtho ris daṅ ṅan soṅ du 'gro bas | 'khor ba las mi thar žiṅ | saṅs rgyas thob pa la sgrib pa yin | dper na | sprin dkar nag gaṅ gis kyaṅ nam mkha' la sgrib pa daṅ 'dra | gaṅ žig ci la yaṅ mi sems | ci yaṅ mi bsaṃ pa de 'khor ba las yoṅs su thar par 'gyur ro | ci la yaṅ mi sems mi rtog mi dpyod pa ni | mi dmigs pa yin pas | cig car du 'jug pa ni sa bcu pa daṅ 'dra'o ||*.

27 Bu ston 143b1 f.: *dran pa med pa tsam po la byed na | brgyal ba'am | 'bog pa'i dus su rnam par mi rtog par 'gyur ro | yaṅ dag pa'i so sor rtog pa med par | rnam par mi rtog pa la 'jug pa'i thabs med do | dran pa tsam po bkag kyaṅ | yaṅ dag pa'i so sor rtog pa med na | chos thams cad ṅo bo ṅid med pa la ji ltar 'jug nus | ston pa ṅid ma rtogs par | sgrib pa spaṅs par mi 'gyur ba kho na'o | des na yaṅ dag pa'i śes rab kyi | phyin ci log gi snaṅ ba rgyaṅ bsrin pa yin no ||*.

28 Bu ston 144a2-6.

After the Gradualists had ended their speeches, the *ston mun pa* were unable to answer and accepted defeat.<sup>29</sup> When the debate was over, the king made an official proclamation. Bu ston gives only a short extract from the *sBa bzed*, and the versions of the latter are quite different. I give the impressive verdict of the king, which is contained in the version edited by STEIN (BŽS):

By adhering to the *dharma* of 'simultaneous entrance' of the *hva śaṅ*, the ten *dharma*-practices are considered faulty, the mind gets lazy, and one does not accumulate the (two kinds of) equipment [i.e. merit and discriminative understanding]. Because you [*scil.* the *hva śaṅ*] have given up the purification of the minds of others, the *dharma* will also decline. Therefore, stop that and meditate yourself! Henceforth, as regards theory, the system of Nāgārjuna shall be accepted. In practice, the six perfections shall be practiced and the ten *dharma*-practices shall be followed. Meditation shall be based on the three types of discriminative understanding. And as regards the purification of mind, one shall meditate on the union of means and discriminative understanding. From now on, everyone shall practice Buddhism: my Tibetan subjects as well as the king and his ministers. Tibet is (merely) a border-land, and there are many who delight in foolish beliefs. And the *dharma* is deep and difficult to understand. Therefore, the king has invited well-known masters from India. What has been verified by the learned translators, that shall be adhered to. Whatever *dharma* has not been patronized by the king and not been verified by the learned translators, that must not be adhered to.<sup>30</sup>

*Hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna, then, had to leave Tibet. It is of major interest to our present investigation that the sources indicate that the problem is solved only for the moment and that a continuation is lurking in the dark. On the one hand, the *sBa*

29 Bu ston 144a2.

30 BŽS 62,3-13: *hva śaṅ gi chos cig car 'jug mchi ba des chos spyod bcu la skyon bkal | sems ni byin | chogs ni mi bsog | gzan gyi blo sbyonś 'phro bcad pas chos kyañ nub par 'gyur bas | 'phro chod la khyod rañ bsgoms śig | deñ slad chad lta ba na ga ju na 'i lta ba bzun | spyod na pha rol tu phyin pa drug la bgyis chos spyod bcu ñams su blañ | bsgom pa śes rab rnam gsum la bgyis | blo sbyonś la thabs śes zun du 'brel bar bsgoms | da slan chad na 'i bod kyi 'bañs rje blon gañ dañ chos bya ba rñams kyis | bod thañ khob du gyur pa dañ | rig pa blun zin rañ dga' ba mañ ste chos rtog par dka' zin zab par byur pas | rgya dkar gyi mkhas par rab tu grags pa | rgyal pos spyān drañs te | lo tsa mkhas pas gtan la phab pa de la 'jug par bya'o | rgyas pos yon bdag ma byas lo tsa mkhas pas gtan la ma phab pa 'i chos gañ la yañ 'jug par mi bya bar |* Not in all versions is the king's proclamation that explicit and powerful in expression. However, most texts of this genre – including Bu ston and all known versions of the *sBa bzed* – agree with the version cited in substance. An interesting exception should be noted. In the *Chos 'byun me tog sñin po* the *ston mun pa*-teaching is regarded not to be in disagreement with the *brtsen min pa*-system in substance, but to be a *dharma* (or path) only for 'persons whose faculties are highly developed' (*dbañ po yañ rab sbyaṅs pa can gyi chos* [v. 1. *lam*]), cf. RUEGG, 1989:84 f.

*bžed*, Bu ston and several other texts state that the books written by *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna were collected and hidden in *bSam yas* as ‘treasures’ (*gter ma*). On the other, the so-called ‘Alternative Version’ of the account of the Great Debate contained in BŽC relates that prior to his departure to China *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna placed one of his shoes in the temple of *bSam yas*:

It is said that when he left a shoe in the college, he prophesied to his followers: ‘If you want to interpret that omen, when the Buddha’s teachings are about to be destroyed, my teaching will be left, like my shoe.’<sup>31</sup>

We will see that this story returns later in doctrinal polemics.

There are, of course, many ways to interpret the meaning and function of the myth of the Great Debate.<sup>32</sup> I deem it somewhat superficial to interpret the figure of *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna, as he is depicted in the *Chos ’byuṅs*, simply as a Buddhist ‘heretic’ of the same type as, e.g. Mahādeva, who is well remembered as a proclaimer of false notions in Indian, Chinese and Tibetan texts.<sup>33</sup> The story of *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna seems more to me than the repetition of an old stereotype. It is situated in a context that is valued as the ‘Golden Age’ of Tibetan Bud-

31 *Chos grva der lham lus pas | ltaś de las spags na saṅs rgyas kyi bstan pa ’jigs khar na’i bstan pa yaṅ lham tsam cig lus par ’gyur ro | žes ’khor rnamś la luṅ bstan to žes grag go |* (BŽC 73, cf. FABER, 1986:55, translation: 57). According to Ņaṅ ral pa chen (12th century) this anecdote is but hearsay (*gti*) told by some people (*la la*) – as well as the account that the *hva śaṅ* committed suicide out of despair by putting fire to his own head or by crushing his genitals. The prophecy runs somewhat different in this text: *lham ya cig lus pas ma ’oṅś pa na na yi bstan pa lhi* [or *lham?*] *tsam cig yod ces ’khor la luṅ bstan pa daṅ* (ChBMT, fol. 336b1-4). dPa’ bo gtsug lag (16th century) regarded this story as a later addition to the *sBa bžed* not contained in the original (cf. WANGDU/DIEMBERGER, 2002:2). However, it was retold by bSod nams rgyal mtshan (14th century), who says in his *rGyal rabs gsal ba’i me lon* that the *hva śaṅ* left one of his shoes in Tibet proclaiming: “There are (after all) still (going to be) some adherents of my doctrine in Tibet” (*de nas ha śaṅ slar rgya yul la bžud pa daṅ | lham ya cig bod du lus pas ha śaṅ gi žal nas da ruṅ bod du na’i lta ba ’dzin pa ’ga’ re yod par ’dug gsunś so*; GL, 222,20-22; translation: SØRENSEN:402). This anecdote brings to mind the well-known story of Bodhidharma, who is said to have left a shoe in China when he found his teaching rejected by the Chinese. The parallelism and a probable historical dependance was already noted by TUCCI, 1958:44.

32 For example, KAPSTEIN, 2000:43, interpreted it as a struggle between cultural order and antinomianism. From another perspective we can see it as a historical memory that justifies a cultural orientation of Tibet towards India instead of China; thus, it has often been argued that the debate and its result reveal a strong political impact (see for example RICHARDSON, 1998a).

33 Cf. LAMOTTE, 1958:300-312.



dhism. In the imagination of time that is communicated by Tibetan historiography this 'Golden Age' functions as a point of reference against which the *status quo* of the respective author's or reader's present can be judged. With this memory of the period of the early kings the Tibetan Cultural Memory possesses 'its own' ideal period of time – distinct from the lifetime of Buddha Śākyamuni but no less normative, and moreover, exclusively Tibetan.<sup>34</sup> With the story of the Great Debate an act of canonizing the Buddhist doctrine was placed within this Golden Age. 'Canonization' is understood here with A. HAHN as the fixation of certain cultural aspects as sacred or binding. As a general rule, canonization is always accompanied by an act of censorship, and moreover, as HAHN rightfully states, the censored alternatives are usually not forgotten by a culture but remain part of its historical tradition as 'threatening possibilities'.<sup>35</sup> In our context, the king's order to adhere to certain religious principles can be referred to as an act of canonization, the prohibition of the *hva śaṅ*'s teaching as the corresponding censorship.

In the *Chos 'byuṅs* the king is presented as having prescribed these items for the totality of Tibetan Buddhists (in the version quoted, even for the whole of Tibetan culture). It is important for the legitimation of this act that it was not attributed to an ordinary living being, but to king Khri sroṅ lde btsan, who is believed to have been an incarnation of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. This decision is thereby affirmed to be undoubtedly correct and justified, which is also accepted by Tshe dbaṅ nor bu, despite his defense of the *hva śaṅ*'s teaching, as we shall see. The *Chos 'byuṅs* transport this story as a 'founding memory' and we can assume that the normative impact of the story was deemed by their authors to remain valid for the totality of Tibetan Buddhists for all times. That it, indeed, was widely accepted can be inferred from two facts, First, the presentation of the Great Debate is similar in outline in a great number of *Chos 'byuṅs* produced by authors belonging to all the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>36</sup> Second, the

34 Cf. SCHWIEGER, 2000:964: "Als dieses glorreiche Zeitalter wurde in der tibetischen Historiographie weniger die Zeit Buddha Śākyamunis als vielmehr die Epoche der [sic!] tibetischen Königtums dargestellt, in der Kulturheroen wie die ersten tibetischen Könige und der buddhistische Missionar Padmasambhava das Fundament der tibetischen Kultur schufen." Also in the sphere of politics, the early Buddhist kingdom, as it is presented in historiography, served as a normative ideal. Revivals of the old kingdom were attempted several times, e. g. by Byaṅ chub rgyal mtshan (14th century) and the 5th Dalai Lama (17th century).

35 Cf. HAHN, 1987:28-29.

36 This is also true with regard to the adepts of *rDzogs chen* of the *Ñiṅ ma pa*-school, who were most often accused of continuing the old 'heresy' of the *hva śaṅ*. RUEGG, 1989:74 ff.,



teaching of the *hva śaṅ* was judged to be faulty by the majority of Tibetan Buddhist scholars throughout all school-systems. The question of whether the *hva śaṅ*'s teaching could claim any validity or authenticity on its side was – to my knowledge – rarely even raised.<sup>37</sup>

It is important to note that acts of canonization and censorship are not *descriptions* of a culture but *normative self-presentations*. To what extent a canon is accepted in a certain culture is a matter of the protagonists. HAHN draws our attention to yet another fact, namely that canonization and censorship operate in the *modus pars pro toto* and never comprise the totality of possibilities.<sup>38</sup> Consequently, an individual act of canonization and censorship does not entirely fix cultural meaning and freeze any further developments – this is also a major objection against SCHWIEGER's analysis of Tibetan culture – but opens up a tension-field of different interpretations as to what point its exact limits extend.

This brings us to yet another dimension of the myth of the *bSam yas*-debate: the identification of later ideas and practices as continuations or repetitions of the 'old heresy' of the *hva śaṅ*. Had not the Chinese master predicted that some followers of his teaching would remain in Tibet, and were not his books buried as *gter mas* that could be found by some person who is not able to distinguish their contents from the 'true *dharma*'? The 'Alternative Version' of the *sBa bžed* reveals that already in the time of its compilation certain contemporary

has shown that the presentation of the Great Debate in the *Chos 'byuṅ me tog sñiṅ po*, one of the oldest forms of evidence of this story (12th century), resembles closely the account of the *sBa bžed*. The author, Ñaṅ ral, is regarded as having been a *rDzogs chen* master. RUEGG, therefore, raises doubts about the thesis that the whole story was invented in order to discredit this tradition.

37 With the exception of a small number of authors mainly belonging to the *rñiṅ ma pa*-school, namely gNubs saṅs rgyas ye śes, who in his *bSam gtan mig sgron* considers the *cig car* system to be a valid method, ranging higher than the *rim gyis*-system but below *rDzogs chen*; the *bKa' thaṅ sde lña* locates *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna as the seventh successor of Bodhidharma in the transmission-lineage (well known from Chinese *Chan*) reaching back to Kaśyapa; Klon chen rab 'byams pa and 'Jigs med gliṅ pa also defended the teaching of the *hva śaṅ* – the latter even stated in his *Kun mkhyen źal luṅ bdud rtsi'i thigs pa* that what is alleged to be a defect of the *hva śaṅ*'s teaching is actually the quintessence of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and only the Buddha could decide whether the *hva śaṅ* is correct or not. On the last two scholars cf. GUENTHER, 1977:140 f., note 2. For the tradition that the *rDzogs chen* master A ro ye śes 'byuṅ gnas was a tradition-holder of the sevenfold lineage of Chinese *hva śaṅs* and to have passed this to Roṅ zom Paṇḍita (11th century) see RUEGG, 1989:102, note 201; EHRHARD, 1990:12, and BARBER, 1990. There is also the major exception of Tshe dbaṅ nor bu on whom I will focus in section 4 of this paper.

38 HAHN, 1987:30.

Buddhist practices were explained in this way by some authors: Following the episode of the *hva śaṅ* leaving his shoe in the temple of *bSam yas* (cf. above, p. 28) the text states:

Later learned spiritual teachers have said: 'Although the Chinese master did not understand the *dharma*, he knew a little bit of augury.' This is said, because nowadays the reliable *dharma* has been abandoned by many people, and thinking they will become enlightened by a face-to-face recognition of mind, they resort to the 'single white panacea'.<sup>39</sup>

Such polemical utilizations of the myth of the Great Debate occur frequently from the 13th century onwards and I have the impression that they were inflationarily applied by Tshoṅ kha pa and his followers. They could, of course, hardly ever be directed against Buddhist groups that viewed themselves to be upholders of the *hva śaṅ*'s tradition. We will take a closer look at this subject in the next section. In this section, however, we have to explain the mythological background of these polemics on the basis of the ideology that *Chos 'byun* texts communicate.

The *hva śaṅ* – as a kind of 'cultural anti-hero' – brought the Golden Age of Tibetan Buddhism to a crisis. When the crisis was overcome, an ideal state was achieved where the *dharma* was free from the stains of misconceptions and the country was ruled by Buddhist principles. In this presentation of Tibet there is an obvious reminiscence of the land of Śambhala,<sup>40</sup> but unlike this mythical land, Tibet is not safe from the natural law of gradual decline of the *dharma* (*saddharmavipralopa*). Ye śes dbaṅ po – Śāntarakṣita's main pupil and successor – is said to have proclaimed that once Tibet indeed had a chance of becoming such a 'paradise', where the true Doctrine could have endured until the advent of the future Buddha Maitreya, but that this chance was destroyed when the king sent messengers who interrupted his (Ye śes dbaṅ po's) meditation-retreat

39 BŽC 73,21: *phyis dge ba'i bśes gñen mkhas pa rnams na re | rgya nag mkhan pos chos mi śes kyaṅ ltas cuṅ zad śes pa śig ste | diṅ saṅ chos khuṅ ma rnams bor nas sems ño 'phrod pas saṅs rgya bar 'dod pa dkar po chig thub du 'gro ba'i rgyu mtshan de yin gsuṅ* | Text: FABER, 1986:55.

40 That Tibet is viewed as a country possessing religious expertise and competence that comes very near to that of Śambhala is not only a myth of modern Western 'Orientalism' (cf. LOPEZ, 1999) but also part of a self-imagination and self-representation of some – perhaps many – Tibetan Buddhists. See, for instance Tshe dbaṅ nor bu's glorifying description of Tibet in the prelude to the international treaty between Ladakh and Purig of 1752/53 A. D. (SCHWIEGER, 1999:104 f.; translation: *ibid.*:182 f.).

and forced him to intervene in the quarrels with the *hva śaṅ*.<sup>41</sup> Now, even in Tibet – the purified sanctuary of the true *dharma* – the Buddhist tradition is continually endangered and, thus, the great cultural heritage of Tibet has to be guarded carefully. Although the rivalry of *mu steg pa*, according to Śāntarakṣita's prophesy, was eliminated forever, a possibly even more serious danger continued to threaten the purity of the *dharma*, i.e. misinterpretations or misconceptions of the Buddhist doctrine itself. Especially the return of the 'heresy' of *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna was symbolically announced by the hidden texts and the shoe left at the temple of *bSam yas*.

### 3. The Utilization of a Myth: *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna in Tibetan Buddhist Doxography

Polemical uses of the figure of the *hva śaṅ* are most often connected to refutations of a certain type of soteriological 'short-cut path' to enlightenment, skipping (what the respective polemics understand as) the proper gradual path of spiritual development by stages. As RUEGG puts it:

In many Tibetan historical writings, and above all in philosophical and doxographical works, the expressions theory (*lta ba*) of the Hva śaṅ, Dharma-system (*chos lugs*) of the Hva śaṅ and tradition (*gzuñ lugs*) of the Hva śaṅ have come to be used in a sense that is for all practical purposes dehistoricized and universalized. These expressions have thus come to be widely employed as generic designations for a *type* of theory or teaching that is characterized as quietist, spontanist, innatist and simultanist.<sup>42</sup>

Although the *rDzogs chen* of the rÑiñ ma pa and *Mahāmudrā* of the bKa' brgyud pa were among the traditions most often subjected to this accusation, it would be wrong to diagnose a fully determined borderline between these traditions and other Buddhist schools of Tibet – e. g. the Sa skya pa, bKa' gdams pa and dGe lugs pa – in the sense that the later ones represent an 'orthodoxy' maintaining a gradual conception of the path to salvation and combating every deviating soteriological model.<sup>43</sup> The situation is much more complicated, be-

41 Cf. BŽS 55,15-56,1, BŽD 19a. This story was not reported by Bu ston.

42 RUEGG, 1989:123.

43 TUCCI draws such a line when he says with reference to the *rDzogs chen* tradition of the rÑiñ ma pas: "The progressive method of the Bodhisattva, which Kamalaśīla supports and explains, is considered by them as one of the inferior vehicles; their classification of the Tantras is quite different from that postulated by the Vajrayāna (Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, Anut-

cause the Tibetan schools are far from being monolithic homogeneous systems of doctrines, interpretations and practices subscribed to by all of their members and identical through space and time. It is my impression that we cannot determine a uniform conception of orthodoxy even within a single Buddhist school, and much less can we expect to find any such notion on a level comprising more than one individual school-system.<sup>44</sup> So, I think we are on the safe side if we attribute the polemical '*hva śaṅ*-accusation' to the level of individual protagonists or groups. If this has anything to do with an orthodoxy/heterodoxy dichotomy, we have rather to deal with a kind of 'virtual orthodoxy' imagined by an individual scholar who considers his own point of view to be in conformity with the ancient guiding principle fixed by king Khri sroṅ lde btsan, while the standpoint of his opponents is not.

The use of this '*hva śaṅ*-accusation' in Tibetan Buddhist polemics has not yet been studied systematically. There are a number of case-studies, mainly centered around Sa skya Paṇḍita's criticisms of the so-called 'single white panacea' (*dkar po gcig thub*).<sup>45</sup> Other instances of this rhetoric are dealt with in passing by KARMAY (1988), RUEGG (1989, 2000) and some other authors. A comprehensive study of this subject cannot be the purpose of this paper either. It will be sufficient to exemplify how the figure of *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna is used as a symbol in later scholarly controversies on the basis of some selected examples.

Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182-1251) was the first author to have used the myth of the Great Debate in an argument against certain meditation practices of his time. A key-passage of his polemic are the following lines of his *sDom gsum rab dbye*:

tara) and they proclaim the Atiyoga as superior to all revelations; they praise its methods as surpassing all other means of salvation. *That explains why the rDzogs c'en were considered as in some way heretical (...)*" (TUCCI, 1958:60, my emphasis).

44 The situation does not become clearer by statements like the following by Samten Gyaltsen KARMAY, 1998:72: "The orthodox scholars among the Sa-skyapa, 'Bri-gung bka'-brgyudpa and dGe-lugs-pa have never failed to connect rDzogs chen with Hva-shang's teaching whenever the opportunity arose." Although KARMAY rightly ascribes the devaluation of the *rDzogs chen* tradition to individual groups of protagonists instead of school-systems as a whole, he still categorizes them as representatives of an orthodoxy, leaving open the questions of what sort of orthodoxy these unnamed scholars exactly subscribe to – and, what is even more important, by what kind of institution the orthodoxy is vouched for. Orthodoxy – in order to mean more than the mere claim of a certain individual or group to hold the (or a) correct interpretation – has to be connected to political power that provides a means to actually and, if necessary, forcefully exclude deviants.

45 Michael BROIDO, 1987; Roger JACKSON, 1982; David JACKSON, 1992; 1994; and David Seyfort RUEGG, 1989; 1992.

Regarding the present-day Great Seal [i.e. *Mahāmudrā*, S. B.] and the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) of the Chinese tradition, in substance they are without difference, except in a change in the designation of names of ‘descending from above’ and ‘climbing from below’ as ‘Simultanists’ and ‘Gradualists’. The appearance of such a religious tradition occurred in exact accord with what the Bodhisattva Śāntarakṣita had foretold to the king Khri Srong-lde’u-btsan. Listen, for I shall relate that prophecy:

[The wording of the prophecy follows, including the reference to Padmasambhava’s conversion of the twelve guardian deities and the coming of a Chinese monk who teaches the *dkar po gcig thub*, cf. above, p. 24, note 21.]

Afterwards everything came to pass just as he had said. After the disappearance of that Chinese tradition, the religious tradition of the Gradualists was widely propagated. Later the royal polity disappeared, and based on merely the written texts of the fundamental treatises of the Chinese master, they secretly changed the designation of the name of that [tradition] to the Great Seal. This having been done, the Great Seal of the present day is for the most part a Chinese religious tradition.<sup>46</sup>

Although Sa skya Paṇḍita does not mention whom he actually addresses by the term ‘Great Seal of the present day’, David JACKSON (1994) has convincingly shown that sGam po pa bsod nams rin chen (1079-1153), the founder of the Dvags po bKa’ brgyud tradition, and his pupil, the controversial Žaṅ tshal pa (1123-1193), were most probably meant. Sa skya Paṇḍita’s writings contain many further arguments why he regarded the present-day *Mahāmudrā* to be nothing else than a continuation of the doctrinal system of the *hva śaṅ*. These were extensively studied in the work by D. JACKSON just mentioned. I will briefly summarize them in the following:

Sa skya Paṇḍita’s criticism aims at the claim that the *Mahāmudrā* technique of his opponents could provide a single self-sufficient method of attaining buddhahood by gazing directly into the true nature of mind right from the beginning of the adept’s yogic career. He deals with this technique under the label ‘single white panacea’ (*dkar po gcig thub*), which was also used to denote the *hva śaṅ*’s teaching in some of the *Chos ’byuṅs*.<sup>47</sup> This term is understood by Sa skya Paṇḍita to denote a meditative practice of stopping any discursive or conceptual thought (*rnam par mi rtog pa*) or no-mentation whatsoever (*yid la mi byed pa*) which, as his opponents believe, results directly in a ‘face-to-face recognition of mind’ (*sems kyi no sprod* or *’phrod*). RUEGG and JACKSON have dealt with this practice at great length, so it is not necessary to repeat their re-

46 Translation: D. JACKSON, 1994:162; text: *op. cit.*, 164.

47 See above, p. 24, note 21, and p. 31.



search in this paper.<sup>48</sup> Suffice it to note that Sa skya Paṇḍita attributes this kind of practice to the 'present-day *Mahāmudrā*' – i.e. *sGam po pa* and *Žaṅ tshal pa* – as well as to *hva śaṅ Mahāyāna*.<sup>49</sup> In Sa skya Paṇḍita's own opinion, a state of absence of awareness and mentation (*dran pa med cin yid la bya ba med pa*) is indeed an advanced experience of an expert *yogin*,<sup>50</sup> but this has to be prepared by a long progress of gradual insight into the emptiness of all things. However, by the method of his opponents a proper discriminative understanding of emptiness is obstructed right from the start due to the suppression of any conceptual thought and mentation. And without discriminatively understanding emptiness buddhahood cannot be achieved.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, this method will inescapably lead one astray: in the best case it will lead to arhantship of the Hīnayāna and in the worst case to rebirth in evil destinies.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly Go rams pa bsod nams seṅ ge (1429-1489), who wrote an extensive commentary to Sa skya Paṇḍita's *sDom gsum rab dbye*, discriminates between the *Mahāmudrā* tradition of his own school (Sa skya pa) and the *Ma-hāmudrā* 'of others' (*gžan lugs*). While the former is a tradition properly established by Indian transmission, the latter he denotes as a Chinese system (*rgya nag lugs*) that teaches a faulty form of insight by suppression of thought-construction, resulting not in enlightenment but in a fruitless cataleptic fixation on emptiness.<sup>53</sup> Later scholars of different school traditions have similarly used comparisons with the *hva śaṅ*'s meditative approach to criticize certain *Ma-hāmudrā* and *rDzogs chen* practices as well as certain theories of Madhyamaka exegesis.<sup>54</sup> Some adherents of the traditions thus accused, in turn, reacted with refutations and counter-criticisms. These cannot be dealt with here.

One point, however, deserves special mention: the question of authenticity. We have seen in the passage quoted on page 34 that Sa skya Paṇḍita directly

48 RUEGG, 1989:93 ff., 192 ff.; and D. JACKSON, 1994:*passim*.

49 For the uses of the terms *dkar po gcig thub* and *sems kyi ño 'phrod* by these two bKa brgyud pa-masters see D. JACKSON, 1994:9-66, and RUEGG, 1989:102 ff. *Hva śaṅ Mahāyāna* might himself have used the metaphor of an antidote called *agada* that heals all illnesses (taken from a passage in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*) for his method of non-reflection and non-examination. This, at least, was attributed to him by Wang-xi (cf. DEMIÉVILLE, 1952:122 f.).

50 Cf. D. JACKSON, 1994:74.

51 Cf. Sa skya Paṇḍita, *Thub pa'i dgoṅs gsal*, 57b-58a as cited in D. JACKSON, 1994:75 f.

52 Sa skya Paṇḍita, *sKyas bu dam pa*, na 73b as cited and translated in D. JACKSON, 1994:172; 174 f.

53 Go rams pa, *sDom pa gsum gyi rab tu dbye ba'i rnam bśad* 104b as surveyed by RUEGG, 1989:104 f.

54 Cf., for instance, RUEGG, 2000:72-87; KULJP, 1983:45 with note 168.



links the tradition of his opponents to *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna by a factual historical connection, claiming that their tradition was “based on merely the written texts of the fundamental treatises of the Chinese master”.<sup>55</sup> According to D. JACKSON (1994:79) this refers to the story that the texts composed by the *hva śaṅ* were collected and hidden as *gTer mas* after the Great Debate.<sup>56</sup> Sa skya Paṇḍita seems to assume that his opponents found these hidden texts and practiced the methods described in them.<sup>57</sup> A historical connection to the teaching of the *hva śaṅ* was also attributed to the *rDzogs chen* tradition of the rÑiṅ ma pa school: ’Bri guṅ dPal ’dzin (14th century), for example, claimed that *rDzogs chen* is a Tibetan invention and is nothing but a mixture of the Indian tradition of *atiyoga* and the doctrine of the *hva śaṅ*. This contaminated system, he believes, was fabricated by gNubs saṅs rgyas ye śes, the author of the *bSam gtan mig sgron*.<sup>58</sup> Sometimes a connection of a certain tradition to the *hva śaṅ* was constructed in a rather strange way: Se ra rje btsun pa (1469-1546), for example, does not claim that any texts of the *hva śaṅ* were used by his opponents but that the existence of false doctrines in Tibet was a consequence of the shoe left by the *hva śaṅ* after his defeat.<sup>59</sup>

It is obvious that constructing a historical or ideological connection to *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna was intended to utterly discredit the adherents of a rival tradition by stigmatizing them with the name of an infamous Buddhist ‘heretic’ known from the traditional histories. Sometimes the mere claim that a certain teaching resembled the system of the *hva śaṅ* was deemed sufficient to refute it. In this sense mKhas grub rje (1385-1438) states in his *sTon thun chen mo*:

According to the tales told by most of the meditators of this Land of Snow [i.e. Tibet, S. B.], to have the ‘view’ (*lta ba*) is to be devoid of beliefs. ‘Meditation’ is being devoid of all thought, being devoid of all action, both positive and negative. The ‘fruit’ is to be devoid of all hope. This is what they advertise. However, all of this reduces to nothing more than the view that maintains that the mind should be blanked out, that nothing should be apprehended.

55 Sa skya Paṇḍita, *sDom gsum rab dbye*, chapter III, verse 174-175: *rgya nag mkhan po’i gžun lugs kyi || yi ge tsam la brten nas kyan ||* (= D. JACKSON, 1994:164 f.).

56 Cf. above, p. 28.

57 D. JACKSON, 1994:79 f., sees an indirect justification for this interpretation by the fact that sGam po pa indeed quotes some Chan sūtras in his *Ther pa rin po che’i rgyan*. JACKSON also refers to some further hints that texts of the *hva śaṅ* were in circulation in Tibet up to a much later time.

58 Cf. KARMAI, 1988:140-142. In this context cf. also BARBER, 1990 and MEINERT, 2002.

59 Cf. Se ra rje btsun pa, *Zab mo ston pa ñid kyi lta ba la log rtog ’gog par byed pa’i bstan bcos lta ba ñan pa’i mun sel źes bya ba bśes gñen chen po go bo rab ’byams pa bsod nams seṅ ge ba la gdam pa*, 4-5 as translated by LOPEZ, 1996:217.

Thinking that nothing is so or not so, they pride themselves on having generated understanding in their minds. Those who maintain this great nihilism, that in our own system we have no beliefs, are singing the same tune as those who maintain the view of Hva Shang, that the mind should be blanked out.<sup>60</sup>

Any further argumentation can be considered pleonastic since the matter has already been decided long ago and with utmost authority.

To sum up, the myth of the Great Debate – as an item of Cultural Memory – was used by certain Buddhist scholars who apparently understood themselves to be in a situation comparable to that of the Buddhist masters of yore who defended the 'true *dharma*' against the false teaching of the *hva śaṅ*. Thus, a comparison or identification of a certain contemporaneous teaching with the doctrine of the *hva śaṅ* can be understood as a hermeneutical act that intends:

1. to explain and evaluate an unfortunate situation of the present – namely the existence of teachings deviating from the canon of acceptable Buddhist theories and practices, that the respective author supposes to be subscribed to by the totality of Tibetan Buddhists – from a historically founded teleological point of view by linking it to a specific item of the Cultural Memory that demonstrates the danger of this situation for the Tibetan Buddhist "Heilsgeschichte";
2. to execute an act of censorship – even if in most cases this might have been only a virtual one, perhaps rather intended to consolidate the inner identity of the respective author's own tradition than to aim at actual religio-political consequences – by referring to a historical precedent well-known and unquestionable to his readers.

#### 4. The Deconstruction of a Myth: Tshe dbaṅ nor bu's *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuṅ tshul*

When in 1744 A. D. Rig 'dzin Tshe dbaṅ nor bu (1698-1755) wrote the *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuṅ tshul*, his reinterpretation of the validity of *hva śaṅ* Māhāyāna's teaching and the role he played in the history of Tibet, his intention seems to have been threefold. First, the author is well-known for his interest in

60 mKhas grub dge legs dpal bzān po, *sTon thun chen mo*, p. 308 (of the edition in the Mādhyamaka Text Series, ed. Lha mkhar yoṅs 'dzin bsTan pa rgyal mtshan, New Delhi, 1972; this edition is not available to me at the moment). Translation: CABEZÓN, 1992:266.

the early history of Tibet which he was used to investigating in a tradition-critical way, relying on the available original sources (inscriptions etc.) themselves.<sup>61</sup> So, the topic seems to have interested him from a historical perspective, especially since he judged the information from the Tibetan historiographical tradition to be historically inaccurate in this matter. The extensive description of Chinese Buddhism in mGon po skyabs' *rGya nag chos 'byun* ('History of the *dharma* in China'), which was written about eight years earlier (1736 [?]), no doubt, inspired him to take a fresh look on the historical *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna on the basis of the Chinese background of his teaching.<sup>62</sup> Second, as a *rDzogs chen*-master of the *rÑin ma pa*-school Tshe dbaṅ nor bu belonged to a Buddhist tradition that has often been accused of promulgating a teaching resembling or indebted to the old heresy of the Chinese *hva śaṅ*. Even if it is not stated explicitly in the text, it is obvious that his investigation aims at a deconstruction of the '*hva śaṅ* myth' in order to uproot this argument. Third, he combines this purpose with a call for religious tolerance that should be based on meditative experience transcending any scholarly quarrels about theoretical issues. In this respect Tshe dbaṅ nor bu might be seen as a forerunner of the *ris med*-movement which started in his home area some decades later.

The question as to what extent the political quarrels between China and Tibet during his lifetime might have influenced his work must regrettably remain outside the scope of this paper. Although this point would be of great interest, since Tshe dbaṅ nor bu was not only an outstanding scholar but also an important political protagonist of his time, it has to be postponed until his biography can be illuminated by a comprehensive study.

61 Because of this characteristic RICHARDSON, 1967, has called him a "Tibetan antiquarian", and SMITH, 2001:20, judged his approach to history as "unique among Tibetans of his time."

62 Tshe dbaṅ nor bu relies on the *rGya nag chos 'byun* for a major part of his historical arguments and reproduces some of its information almost verbatim. The author was known to him personally. VAN DER KUIJP, 1984:155 ff., note 8, mentions that mGon po skyabs sent the text of his work to Tshe dbaṅ nor bu before it was published to ask for his comments (regrettably VAN DER KUIJP does not mention his source for this information). That both were in contact is also clear from the fact that in 1747 Tshe dbaṅ nor bu sent a letter with questions on the *rGya nag chos 'byun* to its author.

#### 4.1 The Author

The emphasis on practical experience – more than once vigorously expressed in the *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuṅ tshul* – seems to mirror a characteristic feature of the author's personality. He calls himself simply a 'vagabond yogin' (*rnal 'byor rgyal khams pa*)<sup>63</sup> or a 'little yogin free of duties' (*bya bral rnal 'byor pa phran bu*).<sup>64</sup> But despite this modest self-characterization there can be no doubt that he was one of the most highly esteemed *Bla mas* of his days, and it is not easy to evaluate this extraordinary and multi-faceted personality. He was a member of the Kaḥ thog monastery of the *rÑiṅ ma pa*-order in Derge (Khams).<sup>65</sup> A voluminous *gsuṅ 'bum*<sup>66</sup> bears witness to his learned scholarship. But he also acted as a skilled diplomat and had a close relationship to the 7th Dalai Lama, the Tibetan ruler Pho lha ba bSod nams stobs rgyas and to the royal courts of Mustang, Nepal and Derge.<sup>67</sup> In 1752/53 he served as a mediator in a conflict between the kingdoms of Ladakh and Purig resulting in an international treaty that was negotiated with his help.<sup>68</sup> His religious activities in Ladakh, where he stayed until 1754, set the foundations for the establishment of the *rÑiṅ ma pa*-school in this area. He also played an eminent role for the spread of this school in Nepal,<sup>69</sup> where he went after leaving Ladakh and where he died about one year later.

#### 4.2 The Text

According to its colophon the *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuṅ tshul* was composed on the 22nd of June in 1744,<sup>70</sup> while the author lived in a meditation-cottage (*bsam gtan gyi spyil po*) in the lJon pa-valley in the land of rKoṅ. The full title of the text is *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuṅ tshul grub mtha'i phyogs sna bcas sa bon tsam smos pa yid kyi dri ma dag byed dge ba'i chu rgyun źes byuṅ bźugs* "The

63 SCHWIEGER, 1999:13.

64 In the treaty between Ladakh and Purig, fol. 25r, cf. SCHWIEGER, 1999:116.

65 Concerning the early history of this monastery see the recent article by EIMER, 2003.

66 *The Collected Works* (gsuṅ-'bum) of Kaḥ-thog Rig-'dzin Chen-po Tshe-dbañ-nor-bu, Vol. I-IV, Dalousie, 1976-1977; *Selected Writings of Kaḥ-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbañ-nor-bu*, Vol. I, Darjeeling, 1973.

67 SCHWIEGER, 1999:13.

68 See the extensive study by SCHWIEGER, 1999, of this highly interesting example of a Tibetan cleric involved in Himalayan political diplomacy.

69 EHRHARD, 1989.

70 GNHŚ, 450,2: *śiṅ pho byi ba'i lo ston gyi zla ba'i dkar phyogs kyi rgyal ba gsum pa*.

Stream of Virtues that Purifies the Defilements of Mind (or) Short Treatise on the Core of the History of the Chinese *hva śaṅ* Together with Other Systems”.

To my great regret, I have not been able to trace any other version of the text apart from the incomplete edition contained in the *Collected Works* of Tshe dbaṅ nor bu.<sup>71</sup> An *dbu med*-manuscript of the text is reproduced in pages 419-450 of volume V of the *Collected Works* and consists of 30 pages (15 folios) with 6 lines per page. One folio is missing (p. 443/444). The language is quite difficult in some passages and the manuscript contains numerous obvious scribal errors and corruptions. The text seems to have been dictated by the author to two scribes named in the colophon, which might explain some of the scribal errors that increase whenever Chinese terms from the *rGya nag chos 'byuṅ* are quoted. I have prepared a complete German translation that, however, needs to be carefully revised before it can be published.

The *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuṅ tshul* was introduced to Western scholarship in a footnote to an article by VAN DER KUIJP.<sup>72</sup> A survey of the text's main arguments is contained in MALA, 1985 and RUEGG (1989) made occasional references to some passages.

### 4.3 Contents and Intention

As mentioned above, Tshe dbaṅ nor bu does not explicitly reject any connection of *rDzogs chen* to the teaching of the Chinese master. Rather, he argues in favor of his *cig car* method as being a valid and historically testified path to buddhahood, virtually not much different from the *rDzogs chen* and *Mahāmudrā* approaches. His main point is to connect *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna to a tradition of Chinese Buddhism which he calls *ñams len bsgom pa'i brgyud*, “tradition of Practice Meditation”, that turns out to be nothing other than the Chinese tradition of *Chan* (禪). The author puts forward the hypothesis that the mainstream tradition of *Chos 'byuṅs* has wrongly mixed up *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna with one of his pupils, and that scholars who criticize the whole of the *cig car* method and doctrines similar to it have completely misunderstood the nature of this teaching and the true reasons why it has been prohibited by Khri sroṅ lde btsan. Tshe dbaṅ nor bu even accuses those critics of committing an act of ‘abandonment of the *dharma*’

71 DALHOUSIE, 1977, see the bibliography for the full reference.

72 KUIJP, 1984:155-157, note 8.



(*chos spañs*), since they are denigrating a valid Buddhist tradition without having entered into the essence of its meaning by practical experience.

Already the introductory homage-formula of the text reflects the author's programme. Homage is paid, apart from Samantabhadra, also to the arhant and bodhisattva Mahākāśyapa. With this famous disciple of the Buddha an authority is mentioned who is recognized not only by the Tibetan tradition, but who is also referred to as the first patriarch of the tradition of *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna later in the text.

The main text starts with a reference to the various methods taught by the Buddha to guide disciples of different spiritual capacities. Despite their difference, these methods are all equally valid in so far as they all lead to liberation.<sup>73</sup> This can be understood as the main basis of the author's argumentation. Turning to *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna, he first rectifies the erroneous opinion that the term '*hva śaṇ*' might mean something other than a true Buddhist:

In India (they say) *bandhe*, in Nepal *bhadanta*, in Tibet *btsun po*, in China *hva śaṇ*. Apart from the different wording the meaning is all the same. All (these words) are exclusively applied to denote adherents of the Buddha's doctrine.<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, the author complains, some ordinary ignorant scholars (*mkhas rmons phal*) of the past have perceived the teaching of the *hva śaṇ* to be non-Buddhist (*mu stegs*) – a judgement that is based on mere intellectual consideration. This, according to Tshe dbaṇ nor bu, is nothing other than an abandonment of the *dharma* (*chos spañs*), because

it is difficult to truly understand the characteristics of the teachings (*chos rnams*) without having obtained the 'Spotless *dharma*-Eye'. What else, then, could the different methods of the *Mahāyāna* of the Buddha's doctrine be than an object of belief and devotion? Furthermore, the mere intellectual reconstruction of the essences of the teachings by repeating parrot-fashion what one has heard of their traditions, but without entering into these essences (by personal experience): this behavior is propounded by the Buddha as casting away the essences of the teachings.<sup>75</sup>

73 GNHŚ, 420,3-4: *skyes bu 'dul mkhas sgyu 'phrul sras de yis | gdul bya rnams kyi mos bsam dan mthun par | them pa'i thabs tshul bsam gyi mi khyab bstan | kun kyaṇ thar par g'zöl mdzad 'dir tsha phyuñ.*

74 GNHŚ, 420,4-421,1: *'phags yul bandhe bal por bhadanta | bod du btsun pa rgya nag hva śaṇ z'es tha dad miñ las don du ldog pa cig | kun kyaṇ thub bstan rjes 'brañ kho nar zad.*

75 GNHŚ, 422,1-3: *des na chos mig rdul bral ma thob par | chos rnams mtshan ñid śin tu rtogs dka' bas | thub bstan theg chen chos tshul sna tshogs par | dad gus bskyod pa'i yul las g'zan*



The next nine pages<sup>76</sup> are devoted to a survey of different Buddhist traditions of China. Tshe dbaṅ nor bu distinguishes three major schools: Chinese Madhyamaka (*zab mo lta ba*), Chinese Yogācāra (*rgya chen spyod pa*), and a Chinese tradition he calls ‘Practice Meditation’ (*ñams len bsgom*). The last is his designation for the Chinese *Chan*-tradition founded by Bodhidharma and reaching back to the Buddha’s disciple Kāśyapa. By Chinese Madhyamaka the Tian-tai school (天台) is meant, which started with Zhi-yi (智顗, 538-597)<sup>77</sup>, while Chinese Yogācāra is the school founded by Xuan-zang (玄奘, 600-664)<sup>78</sup>. The information on these schools is taken from the *rGya nag chos ’byuṅ* – some passages are reproduced almost verbatim. Tshe dbaṅ nor bu describes each school following a homogeneous pattern. First, the Indian patriarchs are listed; these always include illustrious names of Indian Buddhist history. Next, a short characterization of the founders of the Chinese traditions is given followed by an attempt to date their lifetimes.<sup>79</sup> Finally, the later tradition-holders (*rgyud ’dzin*) in China up to the author’s present are named. The intention of these historical

*ci zig | ’on kyaṅ chos kyi gnad rnams ma ’chugs [l. chugs] par | de pa’i źal luṅ rgyud ldan  
ñan pa las | dcal [= cal col] bśad blo bzos chos kyi gnad rnams pa | de tshul riṅ du dor bar  
rgyal bas bśnags.*

76 pp. 423,1-432,2.

77 Tshe dbaṅ nor bu calls him *hva śaṅ Ṭi ce dā śi thā waṅ* which obviously reflects an alternative form of address Zhi-zhe da-shi (智者大師) “great master Zhi-zhe”. The *rGya nag chos ’byuṅ* (99,6) spells his name Ṭi cī dā śi, while the *Grub mtha’ śel gyi me lon* (Kap. 11, fol. 9v4) has Ṭi ce dā śi’u. The component *thā waṅ* does not occur in the two other texts; perhaps this is a transliteration of Zhi-yi’s ‘zi-name’ (字) *De-an* (德安). But this remains doubtful because it is unclear from where Tshe dbaṅ nor bu could have known this name.

78 He is named *Thaṅ Zan tsaṅ* throughout the text as well as in the *rGya nag chos ’byuṅ* as well as in *DThNP*, fol. 28a2 (= BA 55). The first part of the name indicates his (alleged) relationship to the family of the Chinese Tang dynasty. *Zan tsaṅ* is a transliteration of Chinese *san-zang* (三藏) which means ‘Tripiṭaka’ and is a well-known title of Xuan-zang, referring to his great merits as a translator of Buddhist texts. Tshe dbaṅ nor bu knew the meaning of this title as is clear from his introduction of this master: *lo tsā ba chen po thaṅ zan tsaṅ ste thaṅ sde snod gsum par grags pa mkhas pa chen po* (426,2; cf. also *DThNP*, loc.cit.).

79 Zhi-yi is dated only vaguely by his synchronism with Wen-di (隋文帝), the founder of the Chinese Sui dynasty (581-602) whom Zhi-yi served as a teacher (423,5). From the fact that this dynasty was soon removed by the Tang, Tshe dbaṅ nor bu concludes that this master lived not more than one generation earlier than Xuan-zang (424,5-6). The latter is dated as a contemporary of the Tibetan king *Sroṅ btsan sgam po* (426,3). As for Bodhidharma, according to Tshe dbaṅ nor bu he arrived in China three generations before the Tang dynasty started. He estimates that this event occurred while king *’Broṅ gñen lde ru* was ruling in Tibet (429,6-430,1).

surveys is clear: the author wants to prove that the schools of Chinese Buddhism can be traced back to the Buddha and his main disciples in an unbroken chain of transmission. This is a vital precondition for his further argumentation, namely that the *cig car* method is an approved Buddhist practice that has been unjustly labelled a *mu stegs* system by some Tibetan scholars. As expected, Tshe dbaṅ nor bu insists especially on the blamelessness of the *ñams len bsgom* tradition because this is the tradition he believed *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna to have belonged to. It is even superior to other systems because it is based on an unbroken mind-to-mind transmission from the Buddha up to the present day.<sup>80</sup> He even finds evidence that the lineage of its patriarchs is reflected in Tibetan historiography.<sup>81</sup> But the *cig car* method is of much greater significance to Chinese Buddhism because it is not limited to the *ñams len bsgom* tradition alone but also belongs to the canon of soteriological methods of the Tian-tai school. Zhi-yi had already distinguished *ton men* (= *cig car*) and *tsi yan men* (= *rim gyis*) as two of eight 'gates' (*'jug sgo brgyad*) leading to buddhahood.<sup>82</sup>

80 GNHŚ, 431,5-432,2: *gaṅ ltar bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam graṅs su byas pa de rnams mchog tu gyur pa rdzogs pa'i saṅs rgyas bcom ldan 'das nas da lta thug gi bar bstan pa'i gtad rabs kyi rjes su 'brel žiṅ rjes su mthun pa bsgom pa bsam pa gtan gyi 'khor lo chad pa med par bskar ba byin brlabs kyi rgyun ma ñams śiṅ ñams myoṅ bsgom pa'i yon tan thugs nas thugs su brgyud pa bar ma chad pa'i rgya nag hva śaṅ gžan las mchog daṅ phul du gyur pa žig go |.*

81 The *Deb ther sñon po* and Bu ston's *Chos 'byuṅ* are explicitly mentioned: *de yi rgyud pa'i rim pa ni rdzogs pa'i saṅs rgyas nas bstan pa'i gtad rab kyi tshul pa byuṅ ba ste | de yaṅ ci ltar že na mkhas mchog bu ston daṅ 'gos ku ma ra śri sogs kyi chos kyi deb ther rnams yaṅ bkod par mdzad pa daṅ | rgya nag gi lo rgyus su yaṅ de daṅ mthun par snaṅ la* (427,2-3). This obviously refers to Bu ston and *Deb ther sñon po*, where 'transmission lineages of the Doctrine' (*bstan pa'i gtad rabs*) are given, consisting of more or less the same persons whom the Chan Buddhists regard as their Indian patriarchs (cf. *BThNP*, fol. 14b1 ff., = *BA* 22). The list of Chan patriarchs given by Tshe dbaṅ nor bu is taken from the *rGya naṅ chos 'byuṅ* by mGon po skyabs (pp. 94 f.). The sources of the latter are uncertain. The list given in this text resembles closely – but not completely – the list of Chan patriarchs given in the *Bao-lin-zhuan* 寶林傳 by Zhi-ju 智炬 (completed 801 A. D.); see the synopsis of different Chinese lists in YAMPOLSKY, 1967:8 f. Tshe dbaṅ nor bu reproduces the patriarch-list with some alterations. Later in the text (431,3-5) he criticizes mGon po skyabs to have mixed up some names relying on corrupt historical information (*lo rgyus ma dag pa*). This passage, however, is not completely clear to me, also arithmetically. I have the impression that Tshe dbaṅ nor bu tries to rectify the list given by mGon po skyabs in the light of the evidence from Tibetan literature.

82 GNHŚ, 424,3-4: *sgo brgyad ni | ton men cig char 'jug pa'i sgo | tsi yan men rim gyis 'jug pa'i sgo | bī mi gsaṅ ba thun min gyi sgo | de bžin ma ñes pa'i sgo | sde snod kyi sgo | rig*

After giving the necessary background information on Chinese Buddhism, Tshe dbaṅ nor bu has to prove that *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna has actually been a representative of the *ñams len bsgom* tradition. According to him this was already stated in the *Blon po bka' thaṅ yig* and some other ancient Tibetan texts where *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna appears in a lineage of seven Chinese successors of Dharmottara (= Bodhidharma) who brought Kāśyapa's '*phal chen*-school of the Immediate Entrance' ('*od sruṅ cig car 'jug pa phal chen sde*) to China.<sup>83</sup>

Thus having shown the historical justification of *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna, Tshe dbaṅ nor bu puts forward his boldest hypothesis, which is a reinterpretation of the information given in the traditional Tibetan historiography:

Concerning the time when *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna stayed in Tibet: Many annals like the *rGyal rabs* (*gsal ba'i me lon*) state that this happened towards the end of (the reign) of his majesty Khri sroṅ lde'u btsan. But it must be acknowledged that, in fact, many annals contemporaneous to this event (originally) were in disagreement (regarding this information). But they have been contaminated due to doctrinal bias (*grub mtha' dbaṅ*) and have thus been corrupted in the course of time. Therefore, in some reliable annals (*lo rgyus khuṅ dan ldan*) (it is stated) that Mahāyāna (in reality) stayed in Tibet towards the end (of the reign) of his majesty Mes ag tshom. I see this information as being in accordance with the well-known fact that (the *hva śaṅ*) was exiled to China by some ministers who had turned renegade on the *dharma* during the time when the divine Khri sroṅ lde'u btsan was still not of mature age. (Formerly) in the time when the *dharma* of the ministers was still pure, he served as a

*pa'i sgo | rnam par dbye ba'i sgo | yoṅs su rdzogs pa'i sgo sde brgyad do ||*. This refers to the so called 'Eight Teachings' (*ba-jiao* 八教) of Zhi-yi's *pan-jiao*-hermeneutics (判教). The terms *ton men*, *tsi yan men* and *bī mi* are transliterations of Chinese *dun-men* (頓門), *jian-men* (漸門) and *bi-mi* (秘密). On Zhi-yi's thoughts on the 'Sudden' and 'Gradual' approaches to enlightenment see DONNER, 1987. Zhi-yi's classification of the Sūtras into 'Five Periods' (of revelation) (*wu-shi* 五時) are also mentioned by Tshe dbaṅ nor bu, using the term *dus tshigs lña*. The whole passage follows closely *rGya nag gi chos 'byuṅ*, 99,20-100,2 which is reproduced verbatim in *Grub mtha' śel gyi me lon*, Kap. 11, fol. 10r3-5. DAS, 1988:179, has completely misunderstood the passage in his translation of the latter text.

- 83 GNHŚ, 432,2 ff. Tshe dbaṅ nor bu cites this passage as belonging to the *Lo paṅ bka' thaṅ yig*. Actually, it occurs in *Blon po bka' thaṅ yig*, ca, p. 19a-b. This passage was edited and translated in TUCCI, 1958:68 f.; 81 f. For the *phal chen*-school of Kāśyapa cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *phal chen pa'i sde*. According to Tshe dbaṅ nor bu this seven-fold Chinese tradition consists of seven successors of Bodhidharma, starting with *hva śaṅ* Hu'i khe (= Shen-guang Hui-ke [神光慧可], 487-593 A. D.) – his immediate successor – and continuing on *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna. However, Hu'i khe is not mentioned in the quoted passage. Two seven-fold traditions – one of Indian and one of Chinese masters – are also mentioned in the *Deb ther sñon po* (BA 167) in connection to the *rDzogs chen* lineage of A ro ye śes byuṅ gnas (cf., above, p. 30, note 37; cf. also KARMAY 1988:93, note 42).

teacher of rBa gsal snañ etc. When some histories state that he was asked for advice on meditation and that even Myañ tiñ (ñe) 'dzin asked the *hva śaṇ* for meditation instructions, it is clear that this happened in the same period [i.e. while the ministers were still devoted to the *dharma*]. Therefore, I am sure that the one who debated with Kamalaśīla was but a disciple of *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna.<sup>84</sup>

Tshe dbaṇ nor bu thus distinguishes between the *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna of the *Chos 'byuṇs* and the one referred to in *rDzogs chen* texts by dating the 'real' *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna some decades earlier than the Great Debate is believed to have taken place. But this distinction seems to be of no major importance to his following arguments, because he does not appear to imply that this alleged disciple taught a system different from *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna. The author obviously identifies *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna with one of the earlier *hva śaṇs* that were mentioned in the *Chos 'byuṇs* as teachers of sBa gsal snañ, Myañ tiñ ñe 'dzin and others.<sup>85</sup>

The author proceeds with an evaluation of *hva śaṇ* Mahāyāna's soteriological system. Following the *bSam gtan mig sgron* by gNubs chen sañs rgyas ye śes (10th century?) he judges the *tun min*-system as faultless due to its partial similarity to *rDzogs chen*.<sup>86</sup> According to Tshe dbaṇ nor bu the *tsuñ men*-method<sup>87</sup> of Bodhidharma and his successors is a special Mahāyāna-teaching exclusively focussed on the *ñes don sñiñ po*-Sūtras<sup>88</sup> which were revealed by the Buddha

84 GNHŚ, 433,3-434,3: *hva śaṇ ma hā ya na bod du byuñ ba'i dus ni rgyal rabs sogs lo rgyus mañ žig tu khri sroñ lde'u btsan kyi sku che'i tha mar yin par bśad kyañ de skabs kyi lo rgyus mi 'dra ba mañ žig grub mtha'i dbaṇ gi bslad yañ ci riñ bsres par rtogs mod | des na lo rgyus khuñ dañ ldan pa kha cig tu ma hā ya na bod rje mes ag tshom can gyi sku che'i tha ma la phyogs pa'i skabs su bod du byon žiñ | lha khri sroñ lde'u btsan sku nar ma son pa'i dus su bod blon chos la gśag pa rnams rgya nag tu brdzañs bar grags pa 'di don la gnas par mthon žiñ | de skabs blon po chos la dkar na rba gsal snañ sogs kyi bla mar bkur žiñ | bsgom luñ žus pa dañ | myañ tiñ 'dzin bzañ po kyañ hva śaṇ la bsgom luñ žus par lo rgyus kha cig nas gsuñs na de yañ 'di skabs ñid du mñon | des na slob dpon ka ma la śi la dañ btsod par byed pa po ni hva śaṇ ma hā ya na'i slob ma'i skabs tsam du 'grig la |.*

85 On these earlier *hva śaṇs* cf. RUEGG, 1989:61.

86 GNHŚ, 234,4 f.: *dgos pa ni rdzogs chen dañ cha 'dra bas mi nor ba'i ched du yin par gsuñ ba dañ | hva shang gi chos de yañ mañ dag pa'i lam du bzhed po 'o |.*

87 Tshe dbaṇ nor bu seems not to differentiate between the *tun min* discussed in the *bSam gtan mig sgron* and the *tsuñ men* of Bodhidharma. mGon po skyabs speaks of *tun min* (as opposed to *tsi yan men*) in connection with the Tian-tai school as one of the Eight Teachings of Zhi-yi, while he uses the term *tsuñ men* for Bodhidharma's tradition (cf. RUEGG, 1989:117, note 225).

88 This seemingly refers to Sūtras teaching the *tathāgatagarbha*-doctrine. The term *sñiñ po don* is also used to refer to the *Dohā* literature and the *Mahāmudrā* of the bKa' brgyud pa tradition (cf. RUEGG, 1989:117, note 224).



during the Third Turning of the *Dharma*-Wheel. These Sūtras, he states, are understood in China as teaching a Sūtra-based short-cut path to buddhahood that allows an adept of special abilities to omit the wearisome burden of accumulating religious merit and discriminative understanding:

In this way the Chinese translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, which belongs to the *ñes don sñin po*-Sūtras says: ‘Therefore, if someone who is very skilled in means (*thabs*, skt. *upāya*) intensively engages himself in (the ways of) this Sūtra, he will reach the utmost perfect enlightenment within a short time.’ Because this has been said, the special meditation method of this Sūtra-path has to be understood as an opportunity to realize buddhahood in a very short time. Accordingly, there are different causes (for gaining enlightenment on the Sūtra-path): while a person of stamina (*brtson pa khyad pa can*) has to collect the two accumulations (in a long-termed process of) 60 Great Kalpas, a person of extraordinary understanding (*śes rab khyad par can*) is able to acquire the accumulations more efficiently by this marvellous meditation.<sup>89</sup>

Tshe dbaṅ nor bu connects this kind of short-cut path to the idea that an adept can reach the *Mahāmudrā* experience while still at the stage of a ‘worldling’ (*so so skye bo*, skt. *prthagjana*). The meditator, thereby, skips the realization of the first seven bodhisattva-stages (*bhūmi*) and directly attains the state of an ‘irreversible bodhisattva’ (*phyir mi ldog pa*, skt. *avaivartika*) – i.e. the 8th stage.<sup>90</sup> It is important to understand this argument, because here the author reveals that he himself cannot completely escape his own doctrinal presuppositions. To my knowledge *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna’s method is in no other source – Tibetan or Chinese – presented as aiming at anything different from, or below, perfect buddhahood. But Tshe dbaṅ nor bu shares the common Tibetan idea that further progress from the 8th stage onwards cannot occur without resorting to tantric practices, and therefore has to explain how a mere ‘Sūtra-path’ could ever lead to

89 GNHŚ, 435,6-436,2: *de bzin ñes don sñin po'i mdo sde mya nan las 'das pa chen po rgya nag 'gyur las | de bas na śin tu thabs mkhas pas mdo sde 'di la bdcon* [l. *brtson*] *'grus su nan tan byas na skyes bu de ni riṅ por mi thogs par bla na med pa yaṅ dag par rdzogs pa'i byaṅ chub thob par 'gyur ro | źes gsuṅ pas kyaṅ mdo lam raṅ gi bsgom rim khyad par bas dus yun riṅ por mi thogs* [Hs. *thon*] *par saṅs rgyas 'grub pa'i go skabs ni yod par go dgos so || de yaṅ bdcon* [l. *brtson*] *pa khyad par can gyi bskal chen drug cu sogs ñis tshogs bzlum par nus na | śes rab khyad par can bsgom pa rmad du byuṅ bas tshogs lhag par bzlum nus pa yaṅ rgyu mtshan du mas śes par gyur pa 'o ||*.

90 GNHŚ, 435,4 f.: *pha rol tu phyin pa la mñon par bdcon* [l. *brtson*] *pa'i dbaṅ po rab ni źi gnas daṅ lhag mthon bsgom pas so so skye bo'i gnas skabs ñid na phyag rgya chen po daṅ ñes par lhan pa yaṅ dag par rtogs pas phyir mi ldog pa'i rtogs ñid dang |*.



perfect buddhahood.<sup>91</sup> His solution of this dilemma is quite intelligent. The method of the *hva śaṅ*, he argues, is a Sūtra-path only up to the 8th stage; thereafter the *cig car* adept is an irreversible bodhisattva, who *per definitionem* is infallibly bound to buddhahood by the very nature of his attainment.<sup>92</sup> His further progress is unavoidable and therefore he changes to the Mantra-path automatically by his innate Mantric force.<sup>93</sup>

It is clear from the foregoing that Tshe dbaṅ nor bu accepts the 'spontaneous' and the 'gradual' method as two equally valid options of Buddhist practice, and he states that both were proclaimed by the Chinese *hva śaṅ*s under the names of *ton men/tsuṅ men* and *tsi yan men*.<sup>94</sup> The main difference between the

- 91 GNHŚ, 436,3-437,1: 'on kyaṅ mdo lam 'ba' žig gis rdzogs pa'i saṅs rgyas kyi go 'phaṅ 'grub par gsuṅs pa mtha' dag dgoṅs pa can ste don du ni phal cher 'phags lam sa brgyad pa daṅ mthar thug bcu pa las lhag mdo lam 'ba' žig gis nam yaṅ bsgrod par mi nus la | de nas ṅes par sṅags lam la 'jug dgos kyi mi 'jug pa yaṅ mi srid ste | 'di ni mdo nas gsal bar ma bśad pa sbas don ṅes pa'i grub mtha' tu rdo rje 'dzin pa rnams kyi legs par bkral bžin pa 'o | des na tshul des mdo lam gyi saṅs rgyas thob pa med na saṅs rgyas 'grub par 'gyur zhes gsuṅs pa daṅ ci ltar mi 'gal sṅams na. This problem is quite similar to the one that aroused Sa skya Paṇḍita's criticism when he accused sGam po pa and Žaṅ tshal pa to spread the system of the *hva śaṅ* by giving *Mahāmudrā* instructions on a Sūtra-path (cf. D. JACKSON, 1994:72 ff.).
- 92 An *avaivartika*-bodhisattva is believed to be not yet fully enlightened but to be unable ever to fall back again to the stage of a 'worldling' or to the stage of a Hīnayānist *arhat*.
- 93 GNHŚ, 437,1-5: thog mar tshogs sbyor gyi lam mdo lam 'ba' žig pas bsgrod nas sa daṅ po thob pa'i skabs su sṅags lam la 'dug par śas che žin gal te tshul ston gyi dbaṅ gi sa brgyad pa'i bar du mi 'jug pa dag yod srid kyaṅ sa brgyad pa nas gžan rkyen la ltos pa ma yin par sṅags kyi naṅ tshul raṅ stobs kyi śes bžin du 'jug tu yod pa yin pas des na mdo lam du sṅags la 'jug dgos so žes ma bstan kyaṅ sa brgyad pa yaṅ chad nas naṅ gi śes pa'i dbaṅ gi lam ma tshaṅ ba daṅ chad pa'i go skabs med la | gžan yaṅ thog ma'i 'jug sgo mdo sṅags gaṅ yin kyaṅ ruṅ mthar sṅags la gžol dgos pas yaṅ dag par rdzogs pa'i saṅs rgyas kyi 'bras bu thob tshe mdo sṅags tha dad kyi saṅs rgyas dbye tu med pa'i phyir de ltar dgoṅs te gsuṅs pas skyon med pa 'o |.
- 94 Cf. GNHŚ, 337,6-438,1. Thu'u bkvaṅ blo bzaṅ chos kyi ṅi ma is even more explicit in judging both options as two variant *practical* approaches to buddhahood, not as two entirely distinct *doctrinal* positions because they are promoted by followers of one and the same Chinese school. In his *Grub mtha' śel gyi me lon* (chap. 11, fol. 11v1-4) he states with respect to the canon of meditation methods of the Chinese master Chiṅ li'an ching ku'an kva śī (i.e. the 4th *Hua-yan* patriarch Cheng-guan 澄觀, 738-839 A. D., as can be inferred from the information given in fol. 10v3 ff.): de ṅid kyis rgya che ba'i lam gyi rim pa | skyes bu 'brin daṅ thun mon ba | theg chen la sṅon 'gro | dños gži gñis daṅ | cig car ba daṅ | thod rgal gñis te lam gyi rim pa lñas 'khrid tshul mdzad cin | brgyud pa 'di la še'an še'u lugs žes grags so | 'di daṅ sṅa ma'i tha'n tha'i lugs gñis ka don gcig kyaṅ gdul bya bkri ba'i rim pa

two is that the followers of the latter method remove all misconceptions (*sgro 'dogs*) by a gradual development of discriminative understanding (*śes rab*) through learning, reflection and meditation, while the adepts of the spontaneous method do not attach much significance to learning and reflection, but focus their energies exclusively on meditation.<sup>95</sup> According to Tshe dbaṅ nor bu, most of the Chinese *hva śaṅs* of his own days are followers of the spontaneous method. And, moreover, he maintains that most of the Tibetan teachings that are called 'introduction to the true nature of mind' (*sems khrid nod*) – i.e. *rDzogs chen* and *Mahāmudrā* – are virtually not much different from this method.<sup>96</sup>

Why, then, was the teaching of the *hva śaṅ* prohibited by Khri sroṅ lde btsan at all? Tshe dbaṅ nor bu, again, offers quite a clever, though fanciful, answer to this question. Actually, Khri sroṅ lde btsan did not consider the *hva śaṅ*'s teaching to be entirely erroneous, but he had foreseen that errors and uncertainty would arise concerning this meditation method in the future. For the same reason he did not allow the ordination of monks in a tradition different from the *Mūla-Sarvāstivāda* and the translation of the 'Inner Tantras'.<sup>97</sup> In other

*sña mas 'jug sgo brgyad daṅ | 'dis rim pa lñas 'khrid tshul tsam gyis brgyud pa so sor 'dren par snaṅ no | des na bod gyi chos 'byuṅ 'ga' žig tu tun men daṅ tsi'an men žes grub mtha' so so ba lta bur nos bzuṅ ba yaṅ nor ba ste | tun men daṅ | tsi'an men ni cig car daṅ rim gyis 'jug pa ste slob ma 'khrid tshul gyi rnam graṅs tsam du snaṅ bas so |* "He created a system of guidance (of the adepts) consisting of five stages of the path: (1.) the (stage of) ordinary and middling persons [i.e. Śrāvakas and Pratyeka-Buddhas], (2.) in the Mahāyāna the preliminary, and (3.) the main stage; (4.) *cig car* and (5.) *thod rgal*. This tradition became known as the 'Še'an še'u-system'. It appears that this and the older *Tian-tai* tradition are virtually identical, but that their transmission lineages have separated because the older one used the system of 'Eight Gates' [cf. above p. 43 with note 82], while this (later) one distinguished only five stages. This being the case, some of the Tibetan *Chos 'byuṅs* are mistaken to identify *tun men* and *tsi'an men* as two distinct doctrinal standpoints. *Tun men* and *tsi'an men* are a simultaneous and a gradual approach (to buddhahood) and merely two different methods of guiding the disciples."

95 Cf. GNHŚ, 438,1-5.

96 GNHŚ, 438,2-4: *da lta yaṅ rgya nag tu bstan mkhan hva śaṅ tsuṅ men rnams tshul de kho na yin 'dug la | bod 'dir yaṅ btsun pa daṅ khyim pa ris su med par sems khrid nod de žes thog ma nas zab mo naṅ don la gžol bar 'dod pa phal cher 'di rnams kyaṅ de daṅ cha mthun pa las gžan du ma dmigs so ||.*

97 This last point, however, is presented to be true only with respect to official translations, whereas Tshe dbaṅ nor bu believes the king to have allowed the secret practice of the Inner Tantras: *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi tshul*, 439,6-440,2: *sñon lha btsad po'i skabs su ma 'oṅs bdcod [l. rtsod] pa 'byuṅ bar dgoṅs nas ṅan thos kyaṅ gzhi thams cad yod par smra ba las gžan 'jug par ma gnaṅ žiṅ sñags naṅ rgyud thun min rnams kyaṅ śin tu gsaṅ ba chen po'i*

words, the act of censorship carried out by Khri sroñ lde btsan was, according to Tshe dbaṅ nor bu, not the suppression of a false teaching but an exhibition of a bodhisattva's 'skillful means' – an intentional regulation of diversity for the sake of the unity and stability of the Buddhist society in Tibet, now and in the future.

Tshe dbaṅ nor bu goes on to show that the *cig car* method is erroneous only with respect to a tiny little point.<sup>98</sup> All in all, however, the Chinese methods are quite similar to the *sems sde*-teachings of *rDzogs chen*<sup>99</sup> and the *Mahāmudrā* of Sarāha.<sup>100</sup> After this comparison Tshe dbaṅ nor bu gives a last general judgement on the *hva śaṅ*'s teaching:

With regard to (the system) of the *hva śaṅ*, it does not deviate from the Buddhist point of view of the Buddha (himself). Most of the other (Chinese Buddhist systems), however, are partly similar to non-Buddhist points of view like the *Sāṃkhya*. Some of them have even been contaminated by barbarian standpoints.<sup>101</sup>

The *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuñ tshul*, then, ends with an enumeration of the author's main sources and a lengthy metrical admonition addressed to so-called scholars who precipitately slander parts of the Buddhist tradition and give themselves up to intellectual hair-splitting and bigotry instead of devoting their lives to solitary meditation on the profound meaning.

## 5. Conclusion

Our analysis of the narrations of *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna contained in Tibetan *Chos 'byuñ* texts has presented this figure as a mythical anti-hero. His religious activi-

*sgo nas spyod pa las thungs bsgyur bar ma gnañ ba dañ | de bzin rgya nag hva śaṅ gi lta bsgom la de skabs ñid du skyon gyi cha shes rab yod par gzigs pa dañ |.*

98 This has been dealt with by MALA 1985 and need not be repeated here.

99 Cf. GNHŚ, 441,2-6. He quotes from a certain *Nañ don 'jug bsgom gyi gzhun* that contains a statement similar to what has been said about the meditation technique of the *hva śaṅ*: *yid la mi byed pa dañ mi mno mi bsam mi dpyad mi bsgom mi yeñs rnam par mi rtog pa'i nañ la bžag źes* (441,3 f.). I am not sure if actually any specific text is quoted here or if this phrase is meant to represent a general statement of the 'texts on meditation on the entrance to the inner meaning'.

100 Cf. GNHŚ, 441,6-?. The missing folio occurs within this passage.

101 GNHŚ, 445,2 f.: *ha śaṅ ni nañ pa sañs rgyas kyi grub mtha' bslad med dañ | gžan phal che ba phyi rol grañs can gyi grub mtha' sogs dañ cha mthun žing | kha cig ni kla klo'i grub mtha' dañ 'dres par yañ snañ no ||.*

ties are remembered by tradition as having endangered the unity of the Tibetan Buddhist Saṃgha, which was still in its infancy when this Chinese master promulgated his ‘false teaching’ throughout the country. The climax of this story consists in the resolution of this crisis by an official royal proclamation that we have called an act of canonization and censorship. The canon of prescribed religious principles which was fixed by this act remained connected to the name of the *hva śaṅ* as a mythical opposite pair of the Tibetan Cultural Memory. We have seen only a few of many instances where this myth is referred to by Buddhist polemicists, who accuse opponent Buddhist traditions of contravening that canon in one way or another, thereby repeating the ‘old heresy of the *hva śaṅ*’.

When myths are subjected to historic-critical investigation they may end up being deconstructed. This is obviously what Tshe dbaṅ nor bu had in mind when he wrote his *rGya nag hva śaṅ gi byuṅ tshul*. And we have seen that he had a vital interest in questioning the historical accuracy of the *hva śaṅ* myth, which was often used as a polemical weapon against his own tradition and beliefs. All the more, can we admire how freely he admits that the main thrust of this accusation – namely the close resemblance of the *hva śaṅ*’s teaching and meditation method to *rDzogs chen* and *Mahāmudrā* – is actually justified. But to him this is not a proof of the defectiveness of these traditions. On the contrary, this case is taken by him as a perfect example that the defectiveness is rather on the side of intellectual scholastics who sacrifice vivid religious experience for the sake of bloodless philosophy and dogmatism. This shows that Tshe dbaṅ nor bu’s reconsideration of *hva śaṅ* Mahāyāna mainly aims at a change in the symbolical meaning of this figure, and is a de-construction as much as it is a re-construction of myth: the prototypical heretic turns into a tragic figure, whose misunderstood story reminds of the misapprehensions that are unavoidable when language and logic are misused as instruments to capture the ineffable.

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