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Special Issue: Kamalaśīla and His Place in the Intellectual History of Buddhism: Introduction

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Kamalaśīla (c. 740–795) was a scholar-monk traditionally associated with Śāntarakṣita (c. 725–788)[1] as his disciple and the commentator of his main works. An erudite thinker, well-versed in the doctrines of various Buddhist and non-Buddhist schools of thought, as well as a prolific writer, he is widely recognized as one of the most influential figures in South Asian Buddhism. Moreover, his missionary efforts to establish South Asian Buddhism in Tibet and his alleged triumph in the Great Debate of Samye against the Chinese Chan Buddhism master, Moheyan (fl. second half of eighth c., 摩訶衍), played a significant role in the development of Tibetan Buddhism. His works span several genres and are doctrinally connected with the two major traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism – the Madhyamaka and the Vijñānavāda – as well as the Dignāga-Dharmakīrtian tradition of logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa*).[2]

Studies on Kamalaśīla's ideas have thus far been rather selective and confined to individual works or chapters thereof, notably the *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*, the three *Bhāvanākrama*s, and some of his Madhyamaka writings. His scriptural commentaries have remained largely unexamined, and no wider investigation has been undertaken to link Kamalaśīla's works in terms of their philosophical and soteriological contents and purposes, their style and argumentative strategies, or even their relative chronology. Additionally, research on the Great Debate of Samye (having already been the subject of in-depth studies) could benefit from comparing the ideas of Kamalaśīla and Moheyan within the context of their respective doctrinal backgrounds.

1 On these dates, see Frauwallner 1961: 141.

2 For Kamalaśīla's biographical and bibliographical data with the recent and detailed state of the art, see, *inter alia*, Keira 2004: 1–18; Marks/Eltschinger 2019; McClintock 2022.

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This special issue of the *Asiatische Studien/Études Asiatique* aims to fill some of these gaps by bringing together nine articles on a wide variety of works by Kamalaśīla.[3] The overall purpose is to clarify his place in the intellectual history of Buddhism, which cuts across the geographical boundaries of South Asia and Tibet. The following is a brief introduction to each of the nine articles, which are grouped together based on their source text or the focus of the discussion.

1 Kamalaśīla as a Buddhist Epistemologist

- Hiroko Matsuoka, "What Is the *Tattvasaṅgraha* about? Kamalaśīla on the Fourteen Qualifiers of the *pratītyasamutpāda*"
- Francesco Sferra, "On Verbal Cognition: Śāntarakṣita's and Kamalaśīla's Treatment of *vivakṣā*"
- Chigaku Sato, "On the Omniscience of the Buddha and *aśeṣajñāna* as Discussed in the Final Chapter of the *Tattvasaṃgrahapañjikā*"

These three papers discuss, respectively, the opening, the sixteenth, and the final chapters of the *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*, Kamalaśīla's *magnum opus* in the domain of Buddhist logical-epistemological tradition.

The initial statement of Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṅgraha* (verses 1–6) shows structural similarities with Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, but the number of qualifiers for dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) had not been determined before. **Matsuoka**'s close analysis, based on Kamalaśīla's commentary, identifies a total of fourteen qualifiers for dependent origination. Notably, the eleventh and twelfth qualifiers, "being free from all conceptual proliferation" and "being not understood by others," concisely summarize the content of the first twenty-three and all twenty-six chapters, respectively. These qualifiers can also be traced back to the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. Furthermore, by introducing Dharmakīrti's theory of property-expression (*dharmavāc*) and property-possessor-expression (*dharmivāc*), Matsuoka demonstrates that the qualifiers of the Buddha (*dharmin*) teaching dependent origination in verses 5–6abc can be equated with the thirteenth and fourteenth qualifiers of dependent origination (*dharma*) taught by the Buddha,

3 This special issue is an outcome of the symposium entitled "Kamalaśīla's Significance in the Intellectual History of Buddhism," which took place at the Institute for the Cultural and Intellectual History of Asia at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna from March 4 to 6, 2022. The organization of this symposium was part of the Austrian Science Fund Project "Rationality, Meditation, and Liberation in Indian Buddhism: Kamalaśīla's Scriptural Commentaries in Context" (FWF P 32617), led by Birgit Kellner, with Pei-Lin Chiou (2019–23), Serena Saccone (2019–21) and Hiroko Matsuoka (2021–23), as team members.

corresponding to the sub-topics of chapters 24–25 and chapter 26. This linkage effectively connects all fourteen qualifiers to the entirety of the *Tattvasaṅgraha*, spanning all twenty-six chapters.

Sferra addresses the subject of the speaker's desire to speak/intended meaning (*vivakṣā*) as found in the Śabdārthaparīkṣā chapters of the *Tattvasaṅgraha* and the *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*. While providing an overview of the treatment of *vivakṣā* in various authors starting from Dharmakīrti, he investigates the topic in Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla showing the most original aspects of their arguments. Unlike Dharmakīrti, for whom verbal knowledge (*śābdajñāna*) has only a pragmatic value and does not have the characteristics of an inference, our authors, following an interpretation of Dignāga's *Pramāṇasamuccaya* 5.1 (where he introduces the *apoha* theory), attribute an epistemic value to *śābdajñāna*. Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla, "while arguing that *āptavāda* falls under *anumāna*, try to provide its logical formalization." They reinterpret Dignāga's statements on verbal cognition in light of the concept of *vivakṣā*, a notion that did not play a role in Dignāga's explanation of verbal communication and argue that verbal knowledge tantamounts to inferential knowledge when it comes to establishing an intended meaning. The article also investigates some aspects of the linguistic theories of Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist thinkers.

In his paper, **Sato** analyzes the topic of the Buddha's omniscience as well as remainderless cognition (*aśeṣajñāna*) from the perspective of the Atīndriyadarśipuruṣaparīkṣā chapter of Kamalaśīla's *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*. He starts by comparing the idea of the Buddha as *pramāṇa* that is found in the Pramāṇasiddhi of the *Pramāṇavārttika* and that of the omniscient one that is found in the *Pañjikā*. He continues by examining the understanding of truth (tattva), solid (*sthira*) and remainderless (*aśeṣa*) in the *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā* by Devendrabuddhi (c. 630–690) and the *Pramāṇasamuccayaṭīkā* by Jinendrabuddhi (c. 725–785/710–770). Sato shows that Kamalaśīla's understanding of the Buddha's omniscience is related to the concept of remainderless cognition as found in Devendrabuddhi and Jinendrabuddhi. Finally, he aims to demonstrate that the concept of *aśeṣajñāna* can serve as a key when considering Dharmakīrti and his successors' understanding of the omniscient one.

2 Kamalaśīla as a Buddhist Exegete

- Serena Saccone, "The *Vajracchedikā*, the Self, and the Path"
- Pei-Lin Chiou, "Kamalaśīla's "Middle Way" (*madhyamā pratipad*) and His Theory of Spiritual Cultivation: A Study with a Special Focus on the Fourteenth Chapter of the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā*"

Serena Saccone and Pei-Lin Chiou have tackled two little studied but highly important scriptural commentaries in Kamalaśīla's oeuvre, the **Vajracchedikāṭīkā* and the **Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā*. Both papers include excerpts from their critical editions as well as English renderings of the Tibetan translations of the works, which are in themselves worthy of new undertakings.

Saccone focuses on Kamalaśīla's commentary on the passage from the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā* that teaches that Bodhisattvas should not rely on the notions of Self and the like. Kamalaśīla does not simply adopt the traditional hermeneutical interpretation, but rather turns it into a refutation of Self (*ātman*) through some of the arguments that were already used in his *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*. Through careful textual comparison, she shows that the arguments in the **Vajracchedikāṭīkā* are almost literally found in the seventh and ninth chapters of the *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*, the Ātmaparīkṣā chapter, especially the part against the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems, and the Karmaphalasambandhaparīkṣā chapter. She identifies the opponent in the *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*, as well as in the **Vajracchedikāṭīkā*, with Uddyotakara, who argues for the perceptibility of the self through the cognition "I" in the *Nyāyavārttika*. If the adversary is a Naiyāyika, why did Kamalaśīla reuse this argument in a scriptural commentary which, unlike the apologetic *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā*, was not immediately addressed to a non-Buddhist audience? Saccone seeks an answer to this question in the soteriological character of the **Vajracchedikāṭīkā*, which is primarily directed to Buddhist practitioners.

The close connection between Kamalaśīla's ontological views and his standpoint on the Buddhist meditative practice is the subject of **Chiou**'s essay. This article is based on a close reading of the fourteenth chapter of the **Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā*, where Kamalaśīla explains the rationale of engaging in meditative inquiry as the elimination of the two extremes of superimposition (*samāropa*) and denial (*apavāda*), which then leads to the entrance into the middle way. Chiou first clarifies Kamalaśīla's definition of the middle way as being between the two extremes by examining his accounts of ultimate and conventional realities in the **Madhyamakāloka* and the **Madhyamakālaṅkārapañjikā*. She then analyzes Kamalaśīla's commentary on the root text's statements regarding the manner of engaging in meditative inquiry, and elucidates how he interprets those as indicating the means to eliminate two extremes. Her analysis also clarifies that, for Kamalaśīla, the middle way comprises both non-conceptual gnosis (*nirvikalpajñāna*) and the awareness attained after non-conceptual gnosis (*pṛṣṭhalabdhajñāna*), which are the results of meditative inquiry. Through this approach, Chiou sheds light on the difference between Kamalaśīla's view on the practical aspect of the middle way and that of the Yogācārins, according to which the middle way consists merely of non-conceptual gnosis.

3 Kamalaśīla as a Mādhyamika Thinker

- Ryusei Keira, "Kamalaśīla's Interpretation and Philosophy of the Middle Way"
- Vincent Eltschinger, "Kamalaśīla's Views on Dependent Origination"

Ryusei Keira and Vincent Eltschinger meticulously delve into various genres of Kamalaśīla's works, defining his philosophical perspective as a Mādhyamika thinker.

Keira examines Kamalaśīla's view on the middle way in the diachronic context of the interpretation of this concept in Madhyamaka literature. He first considers Kamalaśīla's explanation of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* 24.18 (on the middle way) in his **Madhyamakālaṅkārapañjikā*; he argues that, according to Kamalaśīla, entering the middle way means eliminating the two extremes of superimposition and denial, which consists in the understanding of the ultimate non-arising and conventional arising of dependently originated entities. Then, he carries out a comparative analysis of Kamalaśīla's statements on the elimination of extremes in his **Madhyamakāloka*, **Śālistambasūtraṭīkā*, and *Bhāvanākrama*s with the concept of there being two types of middle way put forward by the Mādhyamika thinker Bhāviveka (sixth cent.). These two are, namely, the conventional type and the ultimate type, and Keira holds that Kamalaśīla integrates both types into his idea of the middle way. He concludes that this idea allows Kamalaśīla to present his Madhyamaka philosophy as a path towards the realization of the middle way.

Eltschinger investigates Kamalaśīla's treatment of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), showing how he contextualizes and harmonizes his views. In the Karmaphalasambandhaparīkṣā and Atīndriyadarśipuruṣaparīkṣā of the *Tattvasaṅgraha* and the *Pañjikā*, Eltschinger identifies specific passages that suggest two modes of dependent origination, one accounting for suffering and the other for liberation. Both align with Dharmakīrti's perspective. Kamalaśīla's interpretation of dependent origination as a Mādhyamika thinker appears more complicated. In the **Madhyamakālaṅkārapañjikā*, he clarifies that the causes for entities' arising are acceptable when left unanalyzed, but upon critical examination, their ultimate emptiness is revealed. In the *Bhāvanākramas*, he underscores that entities are ultimately unarisen. Finally, Eltschinger introduces the **Śālistambhasūtraṭīkā*, which establishes a crucial differentiation between the ultimate and conventional modes of dependent origination. In the ultimate mode, dependent origination and pseudo-*dharma*s are perceived as unarisen, akin to magical illusions. Eltschinger suggests that Kamalaśīla effectively integrates his understanding of the two truths into the **Śālistambhasūtraṭīkā*, and provides deeper insight into Kamalaśīla's intricate philosophical perspectives.

4 Kamalaśīla as a Propagator of Madhyamaka Buddhism in Tibet

- Yi Ding, "The Compatible and the Comparable – Searching for Doctrinal Sharedness between Kamalaśīla and Northern Chan"
- Birgit Kellner, "Where Did Kamalaśīla Compose His Works, and Does It Even Matter? Reflections on the Activities of Indian Scholars in Imperial Tibet"

Yi Ding and Birgit Kellner approach Kamalaśīla's intellectual activities from the perspective of his involvement in the Great Debate of Samye.

Ding provides a pioneering comparison between the teachings of Kamalaśīla and those of Moheyan, whom, he argues, belonged to the Northern Chan movement. He focuses on the identification of their common features. By examining the *sūtra* quotations in Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*s and **Madhyamakāloka,* and in Moheyan's *Dunwu dasheng zhengli jue* 《頓悟大乘正理決》, Ding demonstrates that both Kamalaśīla and Moheyan placed significant emphasis on the *Laṅkāvatarasūtra* as the authoritative support for their respective views. By analyzing Moheyan's interpretation in the *Zhengli jue* as well as Kamalaśīla's explanation in the *Madhyamakāloka of the same quotation from the *Laṅkāvatarasūtra* (on the definition of the vehicle [*yāna*]), Ding shows that both Kamalaśīla and Moheyan held the idea of one vehicle (*ekayāna*), although they interpreted it differently. Moreover, he regards Kamalaśīla's way of synthesizing Yogācāra and Madhyamaka doctrines as involving a change in perspective, and argues that, as such, it is compatible with Moheyan's method of combining the two philosophical systems. He also points out that for both Kamalaśīla and Moheyan, the realization of reality is an extrasensory apprehension. Ding's findings in this essay counterbalance the long-standing one-sided focus in modern scholarship on the doctrinal disagreements between Kamalaśīla and Moheyan.

Kellner addresses the challenging question of the chronology of Kamalaśīla's works and its implications for Kamalaśīla's intellectual biography. She argues that during his stay in Tibet he composed at least the following seven writings: the three *Bhāvanākrama*s, the **Madhyamakāloka,* the **Vajracchedikāṭīkā,* the **Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā,* and the **Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayaṭīkā.* She makes use of Tibetan historical documents, but primarily bases her argument on a consideration of both external and internal factors. She analyzes the environment Kamalaśīla encountered in Tibet, particularly the meditative practice advocated by Moheyan and his followers as well as the character, style, and content of those works. Her analysis of the composition of these writings as being Kamalaśīla's response to the environment in Tibet leads to the conclusion that Kamalaśīla's intellectual activities

in Tibet were multifaceted. While residing in Tibet, Kamalaśīla continued to develop proofs for his Madhyamaka philosophy, engaged in an extended critical interaction with the views of Moheyan and his supporters, and served the didactic needs of an emerging monastic culture.

5 Towards New Horizons in the Studies on Kamalaśīla's Thought

As the general result of this special issue, we can point to two new hypotheses: one regarding the features of the *Tattvasaṅgraha(-pañjikā)* and one concerning the hitherto unsettled chronological issues related to Kamalaśīla's scriptural commentaries.

In their papers, both Matsuoka and Eltschinger discuss dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which is mentioned just once in Śāntarakṣita's *Tattvasaṅgraha* (verse 6). **Matsuoka** introduces the sūtra commentarial method in the **Vajracchedikāṭīkā*, which is derived from the *Vyākhyāyukti*. This method starts with the purpose (*prayojana*) and topic (*abhidheya*), and ends with the refutation of objections (*codyaparihāra*), each supporting the preceding elements. She argues that for Kamalaśīla the refutations of objections, often considered the distinctive feature of the *Tattvasaṅgraha(-pañjikā)*, are merely an indirect way to understand the main theme of the work, i.e., dependent origination. **Eltschinger** suggests that this dependent origination in the *Tattvasaṅgraha(-pañjikā)* pertains to the true conventional reality in the Madhyamaka ontology. This stands in contrast to the ultimate mode of dependent origination – non-origination (*anutpāda*) – which characterizes the ultimate reality. Eltschinger elucidates the role of the *Tattvasaṅgraha(-pañjikā)* as "a philosophical and polemical propedeutic to a Mādhyamika understanding of reality." His interpretation makes an argument for the implicit Madhyamaka character of those two works.

Kellner puts forth the hypothesis that Kamalaśīla's hermeneutic works were written during his last period in imperial Tibet, after the Great Debate of Samye.[4] She identifies shared traits in the three scriptures on which Kamalaśīla commented, namely the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, the *Vajracchedikā*, and the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya*. All these scriptures caution Buddhist practitioners against reifying their practice, thus developing attachment to the path. She also highlights the influence of the Samye Debate in these writings. In this regard, **Saccone** points out that

4 Based on the *sBa bzhed*'s account of the spread of the *Śālistambhasūtra* in Tibet through Chinese Buddhism, Ueyama (1990: 214) suggests that Kamalaśīla may have written the **Śālistambhasūtraṭīkā* at the behest of King Trisong Detsen.

Kamalaśīla's adaptation of the arguments, as being applied to the spiritual path of Buddhist practitioners in the **Vajracchedikāṭīkā*, may be specifically intended for the debate with the Chinese faction.

These nine papers, with the several ideas and hypotheses, all converge on the definition of the intellectual contribution of Kamalaśīla to the history of Buddhist thought. By organically connecting the views that are found in various works of Kamalaśīla (which have long been seen as having different doctrinal orientations) an original portrait of this central figure in South Asian Buddhism will emerge more clearly. Thus, we advocate for the deliberate use of this type of methodology, which involves not just focusing on a particular section of one of Kamalaśīla's works but examining his oeuvre across different genres. To this end, conducting primary research on his lesser-known writings, such as certain chapters of the **Madhyamakāloka* and scriptural commentaries is of utmost importance. This, along with the approach taken by **Ding** and **Saccone**, i.e., the investigation of Kamalaśīla's adversaries in their respective contexts, should be adopted as a foundational method for future research on Kamalaśīla's philosophy.

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