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<i>In Memoriam Professor Akira HIRAKAWA</i> by Kotabo FUJIIA.....	3
Paul M. HARRISON <i>Relying on the Dharma and not the Person: Reflection on authority and Transmission in Buddhism and Buddhist Studies</i> .....	9
Colette CAILLAT <i>Gleanings from a Comparative Reading of Early Canonical Buddhist and Jaina Texts</i> .....	25
Robert H. SHARF <i>Thinking through Shingon Ritual</i> .....	51
Giulio AGOSTINI <i>On the Nikāya Affiliation of the Śrīghanācārasaṅgraha and the Sphuṭārthā Śrīghanācārasaṅgrahaṭīkā</i> .....	97
Mario D'AMATO <i>Can all Beings Potentially Attain Awakening? Gotra-theory in the Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra</i> .....	115
Dan ARNOLD <i>Candrakīrti on Dignāga on Svalakṣaṇas</i> .....	139
Carmen MEINERT <i>Structural Analysis of the bSam gtan mig sgron. A Comparison of the Fourfold Correct Practice in the Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī and the Contents of the four Main Chapters of the bSam gtan mig sgron</i>	175
Notes on the Contributors.....	197

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF THE *BSAM GTAN MIG SGRON*:  
A COMPARISON OF THE FOURFOLD CORRECT PRACTICE  
IN THE *ĀRYĀVIKALPAPRAVEŚANĀMADHĀRAṆĪ* AND  
THE CONTENTS OF THE FOUR MAIN CHAPTERS OF  
THE *BSAM GTAN MIG SGRON*<sup>1</sup>

CARMEN MEINERT

1. *Object of research*

The 9<sup>th</sup> century treatise *bSam gtan mig sgron* [*Torch of the Eye of Meditation*], composed by gNub chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, is the only known work which discusses in detail the four Buddhist approaches prevalent during the early spread of Buddhism in Tibet, namely the discussion of (1) the gradual path, known as Rim gyis pa, (2) the sudden approach of Chinese Meditation Buddhism known as Cig car ba, (3) the Mahāyoga tradition, and (4) the rDzogs chen teachings<sup>2</sup>. The author aims at distinguishing these four schools in the four main chapters of the *bSam gtan mig sgron*

<sup>1</sup> An earlier Chinese draft of this paper was first presented at the Conference of Tibetan Studies held by the Centre for Tibetan Studies in Beijing in the summer of 2001 (that Chinese draft is to be published in the proceedings of the conference). The idea of this paper results from discussions with Master Tam Shek-wing (a disciple of Dudjom Rinpoche) and Henry C. H. Shiu in the summer 2000 in Toronto on the *bSam gtan mig sgron* and the *Āryāvīkalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*. I am thankful to Mr. Tam's pointing out the connection in structure and in content between these two texts. Moreover, I would like to express my thanks to Prof. Schmithausen for recent inspiring comments on the present version of this paper during a colloquium in Hamburg in winter 2002.

<sup>2</sup> gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, *gNubs chen sangs rgyas ye she rin po ches mdzad pa'i sgom gyi ngang gsal bar phye ba bSam gtan mig sgron* [*Torch of the Eye of Meditation Elucidating the Very Heart of Meditation, Composed by gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes Rin po che*], short title: *bSam gtan mig sgron* [*Torch of the Eye of Meditation*], reproduced from a manuscript made presumably from an Eastern Tibetan print by 'Khor gdon gter sprul 'Chi med rig dzin, Leh: Smartsis shesrig spendzod, Vol. 74, 1974 (hereafter in the footnotes abbreviated as *SM*). According to different historical data the dates of gNubs range from 772 as the earliest date of his birth (*cf.* the sources listed in: Herbert V. Guenther, "'Meditation' Trends in Early Tibet", in: Lewis Lancaster/Whalen Lai (ed.), *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983, 352) up to the late 10<sup>th</sup> century (*cf.* the discussion in: Samten Gyaltzen Karmay, *The Great Perfection*

in order to clarify the misunderstandings about some of their apparent similarities<sup>3</sup>. His analysis is undertaken in the light of the soteriological idea of “non-conceptuality” (*rnam par mi rtog pa*). Therefore, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes quotes extensively from canonical scriptures and also from texts which are now only preserved in Dunhuang manuscripts in order to exemplify “non-conceptuality” according to the understanding of each particular school.

The Japanese scholar Ueyama Daishun already pointed out that in the eighth and ninth centuries in the Sino-Tibetan border regions, e.g. in Dunhuang as one geographical junction in the encounter between Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism, the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* [*The Supreme dhāraṇī of Entering into Non-Conceptuality*] has been widely known and was of particular regional importance in the spread of Buddhism from Central Asia to Tibet<sup>4</sup>. This short *sūtra* is a teaching attributed to the historical Buddha on how to give up clinging to discursive thoughts in order to enter into the “non-conceptual sphere” (*rnam par mi rtog pa'i dbyings*).

The *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* and gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes likewise emphasise the importance of the understanding of “non-conceptuality”. In this initial approach the present paper shall open a window to develop our insight into the important but difficult *bSam gtan mig sgron* through a structural analysis which, however, does neither claim to be final nor complete. Thus, in order to analyse the structure of its' four main chapters as a possible soteriological path in itself, that is from Rim gyis pa to Cig car ba, Mahāyoga, and finally to rDzogs chen<sup>5</sup>, this paper

(*rDzogs chen*). *A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching in Tibetan Buddhism*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988, 101f). If we follow the argumentation of H. Guenther (1983: 352), that is placing the birth of gNubs in the late eighth century, gNubs presumably composed the *bSam gtan mig sgron* in an old age in the late 9<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>3</sup> The four main chapters that the *SM* covers: chapter four on Rim gyis pa *SM*: 65-118, chapter five on Cig car ba *SM*: 118-186, chapter six on Mahāyoga *SM*: 186-290 and chapter seven on rDzogs chen *SM*: 290-494.

<sup>4</sup> Ueyama, Daishun/Kenneth W. Eastman/Jeffrey L. Broughton, “The *Avikalpapraveśa-dhāraṇī*: The Dharani of Entering Non-Discrimination”, in: *BBK* (1983), 35.

<sup>5</sup> In his unusual doxographical description ranging from Rim gyis pa to rDzogs chen gNubs seems to omit Anuyoga as a link between Mahāyoga and rDzogs chen intentionally even though he briefly distinguishes the essence of Anuyoga in regard to the other traditions in his concluding remarks (*cf. SM*: 490.6-491.3, 492.4-6, 493.5-6).

proposes to understand it through the fourfold correct practice as it is also taught in the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*. There, this fourfold practice is described in terms of: (1) “perception” (*dmigs pa*), (2) “non-perception” (*mi dmigs pa*), (3) “non-perception of perception” (*dmigs pa mi dmigs pa*) and (4) “perception of non-perception” (*mi dmigs pa dmigs pa*). Even though the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* is not the first and only place where a fourfold correct practice is discussed<sup>6</sup>, this paper claims that gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes was familiar with such a fourfold structure in arranging his treatise. Therefore, in the present paper the fourfold correct practice as it is also exemplified in the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* is used as such an example of that practice and as a bridge to demonstrate how to enter into the “non-conceptual sphere”. Having analysed the insight into “non-conceptuality” according to this fourfold practice, we shall compare it to the understanding of “non-conceptuality” in the four different schools as described in the *bSam gtan mig sgron*. This structural analysis of the *bSam gtan mig sgron* may shed new light on distinguishing the traditions of Rim gyis pa, Cig car ba, Mahāyoga and rDzogs chen as distinct approaches on the Buddhist path. It will furthermore highlight some philosophical differences between the apparently similar foundations of Chinese Meditation Buddhism (Cig car ba) and Tibetan rDzogs chen.

## 2. The *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*

### 2.1 Dunhuang manuscripts and canonical versions

The *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* played an important role in the spread of Buddhism from Central Asia to Tibet. D. Ueyama even argues

<sup>6</sup> A detailed and comprehensive analysis of the fourfold correct practice in the Buddhist literature awaits further research. Yael Bentor is the first to have investigated different fourfold meditation systems in Tibet and proposes in her closing remarks of her article even a kind of prototype for most of the systems she discussed (cf. Yael Bentor, “Fourfold Meditation: Outer, Inner, Secret, and Suchness”, in: *Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet. Tibetan Studies II*, Leiden: Brill, PIATS 2000, vol. 2, 41-58). On this topic cf. also Tam Shek-wing 譚錫永 (ed./transl.), *Bianfa faxing lun. Shiqin shi lun 辨法法性論。世親釋論 [Dharmadharmaṭāvibhāga. The Commentary of Vasubandhu]*, Hongkong: Vajrayana Buddhism Association Limited, 1999, 159-160.

that the knowledge of Sanskrit originals and the philosophical discussions on how to enter into a “non-conceptual” state may have even motivated further translations of the text in the Sino-Tibetan border regions such as in Dunhuang<sup>7</sup>. Within the corpus of Dunhuang manuscripts we find one Chinese and two Tibetan translations<sup>8</sup>. The Dunhuang Chinese translation is entitled the *Ru wu fenbie zongchi jing* 入無分別總持經 [*The dhāraṇī of Entering into Non-Conceptuality*] (*jiang* 薑 23) preserved in the Beijing National Library, and S. tib. 51 and S. tib. 52 preserved in the British Library in London<sup>9</sup>. Moreover, the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* was translated around the same time, that is the 9<sup>th</sup> century, into Tibetan by the prominent translators Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and dKa’ ba dpal brtsegs. Their translation *’Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par ’jug pa zhes bya ba’i gzungs* was then included in the *tripiṭaka*<sup>10</sup>. In Central China, however, the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* did not have the same lasting impact. The text was only translated in the eleventh century by Dānapāla (施護, active in Kaifeng from 982 to roughly 1017) under the title *Foshuo ru wu fenbie famen jing* 佛說入無分別法門經 [*The sūtra of Entering into the Dharma Gate of Non-Conceptuality taught by the*

<sup>7</sup> Ueyama/Eastman/Broughton 1983: 35.

<sup>8</sup> Kazunobu Matsuda 松田和信 has also published two Sanskrit fragments of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*, one found among the Gilgit manuscripts (cf. “Nirvikalpa-praveśa-dhāraṇī ni tsuite [On the Nirvikalpa-praveśa-dhāraṇī]”, in: *Buddhist Seminar* 34 (1981, 40-49) and one in the St. Petersburg manuscript collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences of Russia (cf. “Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī. Sanskrit Text and Japanese Translation”, reprint from *Bulletin of the Research Institute of Bukkyo University* (3/1996), 89-113).

<sup>9</sup> Ueyama/Eastman/Broughton 1983: 32-33. D. Ueyama (*loc. cit.*: 38-40) first published *jiang* 23; I am preparing an English translation of *jiang* 23 and a structural analysis of the text. The *Catalogue of the Tibetan Manuscripts from Tun-Huang in the India Office Library* by Louis de la Vallée Poussin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962, 24-25) gives for the Tibetan versions S. tib 51 and 52 the title *rNam par mi rtog pa ’jug pa zhes bya ba’i gzungs*. D. Ueyama noted that he did not yet identify S. tib. 52. I was not able to look at the Tibetan originals myself so far.

<sup>10</sup> “’Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par ’jug pa zhes bya ba’i gzungs [The Supreme *dhāraṇī* of Entering into Non-Conceptuality]”, translated by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla and dKa’ ba dpal brtsegs, in: *TT*. 32, no. 810, 1a-6b. Furthermore, the ninth century catalogue *lDan dkar ma* lists under no. 196 also the title *’Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par ’jug pa’i gzungs* [*The Supreme dhāraṇī of Entering into Non-Conceptuality*] (cf. Yoshimura, Shyuki, *The Denkar ma. An Oldest Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons with Introductory Notes*, Kyōto: Ryūkyō University, 1950).

*Buddha*]<sup>11</sup>. Apparently, the Buddhist traditions in Central China were not aware of the regional importance of this text in the Sino-Tibetan border areas and Tibet. Furthermore, the Chinese translation in the Dunhuang manuscript *jiang* 23 is very close to the Tibetan canonical version, whereas in the later Chinese translation Dānapāla either provided a rather free translation or used a different Sanskrit original. In our discussion we shall therefore pay attention to *jiang* 23 and the Tibetan canonical version likewise.

## 2.2 Influence of the Text in Tibet

In the literary history of Buddhism in Tibet the contents of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* is a reoccurring theme. Shortly after the translation of the text into Tibetan, none other than the Indian scholar Kamalaśīla wrote a commentary to the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*, namely the *'Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs kyi rgya cher 'grel pa* [*Extensive Commentary to The Supreme dhāraṇī of Entering into Non-Conceptuality*]<sup>12</sup>. Kamalaśīla is said to have been the advocate of a gradual path towards awakening in the great debate of bSam yas that apparently took place in the late eighth century<sup>13</sup>. Unlike his

<sup>11</sup> “Foshuo ru wu fenbie famen jing 佛說入無分別法門經 [The *sūtra* of Entering into the *Dharma* Gate of Non-Conceptuality taught by the Buddha]”, translated by Dānapāla 施護, in: *T.* 15, no. 654, 805-806.

<sup>12</sup> “'Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs kyi rgya cher 'grel pa [Extensive Commentary to *The Supreme dhāraṇī of Entering into Non-Conceptuality*]”, by Kamalaśīla, in: *TT.* 105, no. 5501, f. 146b.6-174b.1.

<sup>13</sup> A lot of recent research has been done concerning the reliability of historical material about the great debate of bSam yas and thus concerning the question whether the debate can be regarded as an actual historical event at all. D. Seyfort Ruegg also provides a comprehensive bibliography in this field in his footnotes (cf. *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989). For earlier research concerning the debate cf. also Paul Demiéville, *Le concile de Lhasa*, reprint, 1<sup>st</sup> edition 1952, Paris: Collège de France Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1987; Giuseppe Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts II*, Rome: Is. M. E. O., 1958; Ueyama, Daishun, “The Study of Tibetan Ch'an Manuscripts Recovered from Tunhuang: A Review of the Field and its Prospects”, in: L. Lancaster/W. Lai (ed.), *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983, 327-350 and L. Gómez, “The Direct and Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna: Fragments of the Teachings of Mo-ho-yen”, in: M. Gimello/P. N. Gregory (ed.), *Studies in Ch'an and Hua-yen*, Studies in East Asian Buddhism No. 1, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983[a], 69-168. Despite the uncertainties surrounding the question of whether the

opponents in the Chinese School of Meditation Buddhism who are said to have quoted the text to emphasise their subitist outlook<sup>14</sup>, Kamalaśīla interpreted the text to support his view of a gradual path.

Apart from this immediate historical connection, the contents of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* is a central theme in a scholastic treatise of the *yogacāra* school, namely in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* [*Discrimination of dharma and dharmatā*]<sup>15</sup>. A later commentary of Mi pham Rin po che to this *yogacāra* text explicitly states that the passage in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* on “non-conceptual wisdom” (*rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes*) summarises systematically the essence of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*<sup>16</sup>. The *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* as a scholastic work

debate ever actually took place, a symbolic meaning was attached to it in the course of Tibetan history that gave rise to discussions up to the present. Concerning the arguments of Heshang Moheyan and of Kamalaśīla cf. *Dunwu dacheng zhenglijue* 頓悟大乘政理決 [*Ratification of the True Principle of the Mahāyāna Teachings of Sudden Awakening*], P. chin. 4646 (copy edited by Rao Zongyi (Jao Tsung-I) 饒宗頤 in: “Wangxi Dunwu dacheng zhengli jue xushuo bing jiaoji 王錫頤悟大乘政理決序說并校記 [Preface and Notes to Wang Xi's *Dunwu dacheng zhengli jue* (*Ratification of the True principle of the Mahāyāna Teachings of Sudden Awakening*)]”, in *Chongji xuebao* 崇基學報 *Chung Chi Journal*] 9/2 (1970), 127-148) and “sGom pa'i rim pa [Stages of Meditation (Third *Bhāvanākrama*)]”, by Kamalaśīla, translated by Prajñāvarma and Ye shes sde, in: *TT*. 102, no; 5312; 60b.8-74b.4.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. e.g. the Tibetan manuscript on Chinese Meditation Buddhism P. tib. 116: VIa, 153.2-3 and Vimalamitra's *Cig car 'jug pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i bsgom don* [*The Meaning of 'Non-Conceptual' Meditation in the School of Simultaneous Entry*] (in: *TT*. 102, no. 5306, 11b.3).

<sup>15</sup> “Chos dang chos nyid rnam par 'byed pa'i gzhung [Discrimination of *dharma* and *dharmatā*]”, attributed to Maitreya, in: *TT*. 108, no. 5523, f. 48b.1-51b.6. Cf. also Henry C. H. Shiu 邵頌雄, *Bianfa faxing lu. Bubai shi lun* 辨法法性論。不散釋論 [*Dharmadharmatāvibhāga. The Commentary of Mi pham Rin po che*], ed. by Tam Shek-wing 談錫永, Hongkong: Vajrayana Buddhism Association Limited, 2000, 67-77 and preface by Tam Shek-wing, 1-10.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Klaus-Dieter Mathes, *Unterscheidung der Gegebenheiten von ihrem wahren Wesen (Dharmadharmatāvibhāga)*, Swisttal-Odendorf: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1996, 215. The commentary of Mi pham Rin po che consulted by K. Mathes was prepared on the basis of the block prints from Kathmandu and Rumtek. K. Mathes provides the facsimile in the annex. For the passage in question compare this facsimile: “Chos dang chos nyid mams par 'byed pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa'i 'grel pa ye shes snang ba mam 'byed [Commentary to the Verses of the *Discrimination of dharma and dharmatā*. Discrimination of Primordial Wisdom and Appearances]”, by Mi pham Rin po che (1846-1912), in: Mathes 1996, annex, f. 16a.1. Moreover, K. Mathes (1996: 83-84 and 138-139) also provides a transliteration and translation of Vasubandhu's commentary to the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* that in some cases even uses the same vocabulary on the two main topics of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*, that is on “abandoning marks” (*mtshan ma spong ba*)

is more systematic and also offers a more affording vocabulary than the *sūtric* text. Therefore, we shall also pay attention to the relevant passages of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* in our discussion of the fourfold correct practice as it is taught in the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*.

### 2.3 Fourfold correct practice

In demonstrating how to enter into the “non-conceptual sphere,” the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* focuses on two corresponding methods, namely the method of “abandoning marks” (*mtshan ma yongs su spong ba*) of the conceptual framework and the method of “correct practice” (*yang dag par sbyor ba*)<sup>17</sup>. The approach of “abandoning marks” is described in a fourfold way, namely as the abandoning of marks of (1) “own nature” (*rang bzhin*), (2) “antidotes” (*gnyen po*), (3) “thusness” (*de kho na nyid*), and (4) of “realisation” (*thob pa*)<sup>18</sup>. However, in the context of the present research we shall only focus on the method of

and on “correct practice” (*yang dag pa'i sbyor ba*). These equivalents will also be proved in my English translation of the Tibetan text of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*. It will soon be published together with my translations of Kamalaśīla's commentary and Vimalamitra's *Cig car 'jug pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i bsgom don* in the anthology *Studies on the Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* in the Sino-Tibetan Series of Wisdom Publications in cooperation with Tam Chek-wing, Henry Shiu and Shen Weirong.

<sup>17</sup> For the Tibetan cf. “Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs”, in: *TT*. 32, f. 2b.3-3b.1 (abandoning marks) and f. 5a.3-6b.2 (correct practice); for the Chinese cf. *jiang* 23, l. 17-25 (abandoning marks) and l. 83-125 (correct practice) (hereafter the Tibetan version is referred to as *TT*. 32, p. x and the Chinese version is referred to as *jiang* 23, l. x). In Kamalaśīla's commentary to the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* the discussion on “abandoning marks” and on “correct practice” (*mtshan ma yongs su spong bar yang dag par sbyor ba*) is the most relevant (Luis O. Gómez, “Indian Materials on the Doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment”, in: Lewis Lancaster/Whalen Lai (ed.), *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1983[b], 408). Cf. “Phags pa rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs kyi rgya cher 'grel pa”, in: *TT*. 105, f. 156a.5-163b.8. My above mentioned translation of the Tibetan text will also provide a structural analysis of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*.

<sup>18</sup> The abandoning of these four marks in the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* corresponds to a similar passage in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* on abandoning the marks of (1) “non-conductive” (*mi thun pa'i phyogs*), (2) “antidote” (*gnyen po*), (3) “suchness” (*de bzhin nyid*), and (4) “realisation” (*rtogs pa*). Cf. “Chos dang chos nyid rnam par 'byed pa'i gzhung”, in: *TT*. 108, f. 49b. Thanks to Henry C. H. Shiu for the discussions on this point.



“correct practice”. If we apply the vocabulary of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* it is described as the following fourfold practice: (1) “perception” (*dmigs pa*), (2) “non-perception” (*mi dmigs pa*), (3) “non-perception of perception” (*dmigs pa mi dmigs pa*), and (4) “perception of non-perception” (*mi dmigs pa dmigs pa*)<sup>19</sup>. The *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* applies such a fourfold correct practice to the practice about form and to the practice about omniscience, which respectively pertain to the “marks of own nature” in the case of form and to the “marks of realisation” in the case of omniscience<sup>20</sup>. In order to demonstrate this gradual path of cognition we shall, however, merely look at the practice about form as one example of this structural process.

Generally speaking, conceptual thinking — which is itself cause for the appearance of duality — arises when thusness is not cognised. Thus, the manifestations of cause and effect appear, yet they are not inherently existent. Only when those manifestations do not appear anymore as seemly inherently existent then the nature of all *dharmas* comes to light and “non-conceptual wisdom” may be cognised. Concerning the above-mentioned fourfold correct practice, the four steps in this process of entering into the “non-conceptual sphere” are described as follows:

- (1) In the first step of “perception” one cognises all *dharmas* as the manifestation of “mere cognition” (*rig pa tsam*), that is, all *dharmas* are an expression of one’s own mind. Even though conceptual thinking still arises, one does not mistake it for existent, but rather takes it as “mere cognition”<sup>21</sup>. The *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*

<sup>19</sup> Cf. “Chos dang chos nyid nam par ’byed pa’i gzhung”, in: *TT*. 108, f. 50a.6. The equivalent passages in the Tibetan and Chinese version of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* are in *TT*. 32, f. 5a.3-6b.2 and in *jiang* 23, l. 83-125. However, in these translations the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* does not use those pithy designations of the fourfold practice, as the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* itself is of rather denotative character and instead gives lengthy explanations of how to give up different kinds of concepts — which, nonetheless, correspond to the essence of the four correct practices.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *TT*. 32, f. 5a.3-5b.4 (practice about form) and f. 5b.6-6b.2 (practice about omniscience) and *jiang* 23, l. 83-101 (practice about form) and l. 106-121 (practice about omniscience).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *TT*. 32, f. 5a.3-5 and *jiang* 23, l. 83-88. For the term “practice of perception” (*dmigs pa’i sbyor ba*) in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* cf. “Chos dang chos nyid nam par

describes this first step as follows: If one takes form as existent, then one is still practising in the conceptual sphere<sup>22</sup>.

- (2) In the second step one cognises the “non-perception” of objects, to which the ordinary apprehension generally adheres. External *dharmas* are non-existent because in the first step of “perception” the “mere cognition” already emerged as an object. Therefore, to speak with the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*, form is also non-existent. And if one takes non-form for true, one is again practising in the conceptual sphere<sup>23</sup>.
- (3) In the following step of “non-perception of perception” one trains oneself in the non-perception of the perception that “mere cognition” is non-existent. Since cognition is not possible without an object, cognition itself is also impossible<sup>24</sup>. In the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* it is explained: If the *bodhisattva* engages in the notion that form is mere-cognition, he engages in conceptualization. If he just as he engages in the non-existence of form similarly engages in the non-existence of cognition manifesting in form, he engages in conceptualization<sup>25</sup>.
- (4) In the final step of “perception of non-perception” one perceives neither an apprehending subject nor an apprehensible object. As subject and object are not of separate natures, non-duality may be realised<sup>26</sup>. This is said to be non-dual thusness, the nature of reality beyond any designations. Again, in the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* this final step in this perceptual process is expressed as follows: In regard to not perceiving any *dharma* apart from cognition, the *bodhisattva* neither completely sees the absence of phenomena in

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *TT*. 32, f. 5a.3-4 and *jiang* 23, l. 85-86.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *TT*. 32, f. 5a.5-6 and *jiang* 23, l. 88. For the term “practice of non-perception” (*mi dmigs pa'i sbyor ba*) in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* cf. “Chos dang chos nyid nam par 'byed pa'i gzhung”, f. 50a.6.

<sup>24</sup> For the term “practice of non-perception of perception” (*dmigs pa mi dmigs pa'i sbyor ba*) in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* cf. “Chos dang chos nyid nam par 'byed pa'i gzhung”, f. 50a.6.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *TT*. 32, f. 5a.6-7 and *jiang* 23, l. 91-92.

<sup>26</sup> For the term “practice of perception of non-perception” (*mi dmigs pa dmigs pa'i sbyor ba*) in the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* cf. “Chos dang chos nyid nam par 'byed pa'i gzhung”, f. 50a.6.

regard to that cognition nor apart from cognition. In regard to the non-existence of cognition manifesting in form and to that cognition he neither completely sees them as same nor as different<sup>27</sup>. Just this very non-perception of an apprehending subject and an apprehensible object, or of mere cognition and form, is “non-conceptual wisdom”.

In this fourfold investigative practice phenomena are simply a feature of this very perceptual process itself. And to summarise again, this process to non-conceptual wisdom leads through the fourfold cognition that (1) all *dharmas* are manifestation of one’s own mind, (2) that the external world is inherently non-existent, (3) that “mere cognition” is non-existent and (4) that cognisable objects and cognition are non-dual. Now, we shall look at the understanding of “non-conceptuality” according to the system of Rim gyis pa, Cig car ba, Mahāyoga and rDzogs chen in the four main chapters of the *bSam gtan mig sgron* in order to compare it to the four steps of entering into the “non-conceptual sphere” as they were just described according to the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*.

### 3. *The bSam gtan mig sgron*

#### 3.1 The Topic of ‘Non-conceptuality’

The composition of the *bSam gtan mig sgron* by gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes is to be understood in the broader historical context of the eighth and ninth centuries. The debate of bSam yas that is said to have taken place in the late eighth century between Kamalaśīla, the Indian advocate of a gradual path, and Heshang Moheyan, a Chinese Meditation master rather favouring the subitist approach, is according to the historical data one of the major events giving evidence for the development of Chinese Meditation Buddhism in Tibet during those early times<sup>28</sup>. Moreover, from other Dunhuang manuscripts we also know about the spread of the Mahāyoga tradition<sup>29</sup>. gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes’ treatise

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *jiang* 23, l. 96-97 and *TT*. 32, f. 5b.1-2.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. footnote 13 above and the two text *Dunwu dacheng zhenglijue* and *sGom pa’i rim pa*.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. K. W. Eastman, “Mahāyoga Texts at Tun-huang”, in: *Bulletin of Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies* 22, Kyōto: Ryūkoku University, 1983, 42-60.

*bSam gtan mig sgron* is the only known work which discusses in detail the differences between the four prevalent traditions in the eighth and ninth centuries, namely Rim gyis pa, Cig car ba, Mahāyoga and his own tradition of rDzogs chen. He clearly saw the potential that the teachings of these different schools may be intermingled, and thus states:

In [writing] the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, I gave a detailed description [of the Cig car ba tradition], because I fear that one mistakes [the meaning of the] Cig car ba to be similar to rDzogs chen<sup>30</sup>.

Furthermore, he may have had an actual syncretistic movement in mind which fused elements of both traditions alike, namely those of Cig car ba and rDzogs chen<sup>31</sup>. In the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, he clearly refers to contemporaries who neither understood the meaning of Cig car ba nor of rDzogs chen, yet simply mistook their own erroneous view to be rDzogs chen<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes was concerned to distinguish the doctrinal differences of the four above-mentioned schools. He undertook his analysis in the light of the soteriological idea of “non-conceptuality” (*rnam par mi rtog pa*) and said:

[...] in regard to the benefit of myself and others to thoroughly comprehend the authoritative scriptures about ‘non-conceptuality’ in each vehicle (of Rim gyis pa, Cig car ba, Mahāyoga and Atiyoga) [...]<sup>33</sup>

However, how does gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes analyse the view of “non-conceptuality” according to each of the four schools? The title of this treatise, *Torch of the Eye of Meditation (bSam gtan mig sgron)*,

<sup>30</sup> SM: 186.1-3: *rnal 'byor mig gi bsam gtan gyi skabs 'dir/ ston mun dang rdzogs chen cha 'dra bas gol du dogs pa'i phyir rgyas par bkod dol*. Cf. Samten Gyaltzen Karmay, *The Great Perfection (rDzogs chen). A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching in Tibetan Buddhism*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988, 105.

<sup>31</sup> For a discussion of such a syncretistic outlook in P. tib. 699, a commentary to a manuscript on Chinese Meditation Buddhism (S. tib 689) cf. my article: “Chinese Chan and Tibetan Rdzogs Chen: Preliminary Remarks on Two Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts”, in: *Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet. Tibetan Studies II*, Leiden: Brill, PIATS 2000, vol. 2, 2002, 289-307 and my revised and extended article on this topic “Conjunction of Chinese Chan and Tibetan rDzogs chen Thought: Reflections on the Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts S. tib. 689-1 and P. tib. 699”, forthcoming, in: *SCEAR*.

<sup>32</sup> SM: 311.1-6 and my article (2002: 304). Cf. also Karmay 1988: 112.

<sup>33</sup> SM: 12.5-6: *l de nas bdag gzhan gyi don du gnas der las brtsam pa 'ang theg pa so so'i mi rtog pa'i gzhung gzhi [= bzhi] legs par khong du chud pas/ [...]*. A later interpolation (SM: 12.1-2) lists the four vehicles (*theg pa bzhi*) as [s]ton/ tsen/ mahā/ a ni [= ti].

may give a hint as it is also understood in the broader context of “non-conceptuality.” At the very beginning of the book, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes makes reference to this title as follows:

Even though nature did not vacillate from the condition  
Of primordial spontaneous presence,  
If it is not seen, nature manifests [as if] dual;  
I pay homage to what has become this very condition [of primordial spontaneous presence].

Thence, this meditation called the “eye of the *yogi*”, and which is the king of direct transmission making one definitively understand the spontaneously *Great Perfection* (*rdzogs chen*), [namely] the ground-of-all, the awakened mind<sup>34</sup>.

The “eye” (*mig*) of the “*yogi*” (*rnal 'byor pa*) who practices “meditation” (*bsam gtan*) recognizes the direct transmission of rDzogs chen. Its very essence is the “condition of primordial spontaneous presence” (*gdod nas lhun gyis grub pa'i ngang*). This condition is twofold: it is empty in nature, nonetheless it is also luminous in nature and is the ground of all which has the potential to allow phenomenal world arise effortlessly. Therefore, within this process of cognition “meditation” (*bsam gtan*) is of primary importance. However, *bsam gtan* is here not to be misunderstood in its ordinary meaning of being a specific meditation about something, but rather is to be understood in a much broader sense: *bsam gtan* is here — as Herbert Guenther has already put it — part of the process of “spiritual maturity”. In this process, the human being is cured of the feeling of being separated from the world — a feeling that originates in believing in the “conceptual aspect” (*rtog pa*) of experience<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, in this process of convalescence the understanding of the “conceptual aspect” is especially important as it leads to the understanding of “non-conceptuality” (*mi rtog pa*).

Moreover, H. Guenther also brought attention to the term *bsam gtan* in a similar context dealing with rDzogs chen teachings and gave the following definition:

<sup>34</sup> *SM*: 2.1-3: / *gdod nas lhun gyis grub pa'i ngang/ rang bzhin ngang las ma g.yos kyang/ ma mthong rang bzhin gnyis su snang/ de nyid ngang gyur bdag phyag 'tshal/ de la kun gzhi byang chub kyi sems lhun gyis rdzogs pa chen po gtan la dbab pa'i man ngag gi rgyal po/ rnal 'byor pa'i mig zhes bya ba'i bsam gtan 'di [...].*

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Guenther 1983: 353.

The term *bsam-gtan* applies to this ‘setting’ of an as yet preconscious intending, which gradually becomes frozen into the customary subject-object division, on any level where the noetic-noematic [‘mind’ (*sems*)] correlation is in its formation. [...]

To be more precise, *bsam-gtan* characterizes the moment of transition when the latent discriminating determinations, that become an explicating and concentrating attention, begin stirring and are going to move freely in the context of explicit themes such as subject and object, whereby they harden into ‘mind’ (*sems*). This particular transitional moment within experience is termed the ‘spontaneous’ [*lhun grub*] or ‘self-present’ [*rang snang*] or ‘natural’ [*rang bzhin*] setting<sup>36</sup>.

According to this definition, *bsam gtan* is the crucial moment when the “conceptual aspect” of reality arises and thus can also be cut through. This “conceptual aspect” of experience already means a limitation of the openness of being. In regard to perception, this openness means “intrinsic awareness” (*rig pa*) and is identical with the aspect of “non-conceptuality”. Thus in “meditation” (*bsam gtan*) one is able to see through the limiting factor of perception of reality. Or in the words of the *bSam gtan mig sgron* itself: in meditation “the condition of primordial spontaneous presence” is illuminated. Finally, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes distinguishes this meaning of “non-conceptuality” in rDzogs chen meditation in comparing it to the understanding of “non-conceptuality” according to the other three schools. We shall now look at the contents of the four main chapters of the *bSam gtan mig sgron*.

### 3.2 “Non-Conceptuality” According To The Four Schools

The four main chapters of the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, that is chapter four to seven, demonstrate in great detail the respective understanding of “non-conceptuality” of the four above-mentioned schools. In the context of the present research, however, which is merely interested in the fundamental differences and not in particular details, we shall look at the summary in the third chapter of the *bSam gtan mig sgron* which provides a general

<sup>36</sup> Herbert Guenther, *Kindly Bent to Ease Us*, Emeryville: Dharma Publishing, vol. 2, 1976, 4.

idea of the basic differences in the understanding of “non-conceptuality” of these schools<sup>37</sup>.

gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes states that there are different degrees of insight into “non-conceptuality.” He makes the following comparison:

The differences [of insight into non-conceptuality] are like the steps of a ladder. Just as there are high and low steps of the ladder, there are differences [according to] these four [schools of Rim gyis pa, Cig car ba, Mahāyoga, and rDzogs chen in regard to their respective understanding of] non-conceptuality<sup>38</sup>.

Then, how does gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes grade these different steps of the ladder? We shall look at his explanations one by one.

- (1) Concerning Rim gyis pa, it is said that “self-nature” (*rang bzhin*) is recognized in a step by step meditation. The four kinds of conceptual thinking, namely about signs of “own nature”, “antidotes”, “thusness” and “realisation” are abandoned successively. Therefore, it is said to be a gradual meditation on the “three gates of liberation,” namely on those of “emptiness” (*stong pa nyid*), “marklessness” (*mtshan ma med pa*), and “aspirationlessness” (*smon pa med pa*)<sup>39</sup>.
- (2) The Cig car ba teaches from the very beginning “instantaneously” (*cig car*) the “unborn absolute” (*don dam pa ma sykes pa*) — beyond any expectation and striving. This means that one shall learn from the beginning that all phenomena are “without a fixed frame of reference” (*dmigs su med pa*)<sup>40</sup>.
- (3) gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes describes the insight gained through the method of Mahāyoga as “non-dual non-conceptuality” (*gnyis su med pa'i mi rtog pa*)<sup>41</sup>. According to Mahāyoga texts, “non-dual thusness” (*gnyis su med pa'i de bzhin nyid*) means that “sphere” (*dbyings*) and “primordial wisdom” (*ye shes*) are non-dual. Therefore,

<sup>37</sup> H. Guenther already translated this important passage of the *SM* into English. Cf. Guenther 1983: 351-366.

<sup>38</sup> *SM*: 60.6-61.1: /de dag gi khyad par skad [= skas] kyi gdang bu bzhin te/ dper na skad [= skas] gdang la mtho dman yod par dang 'dra ste/ mi rtog pa 'di bzhi yang khyad par yod/. Cf. Guenther 1983: 360.

<sup>39</sup> *SM*: 55.6-56.1, 56.6-57.1. Cf. Guenther 1983: 354-355.

<sup>40</sup> *SM*: 57.1-4. Cf. Guenther 1983: 357.

<sup>41</sup> *SM*: 55.5. Cf. for a translation of this passage cf. also Guenther 1983: 355.

“primordial wisdom” does not even take “sphere” as a “referential object” (*dmigs par mi byed pa*)<sup>42</sup>.

- (4) Finally, the result of rDzogs chen meditation is described as “spontaneously present supreme non-conceptuality” (*lhun gyis grub pa'i mi rtog pa chen po*)<sup>43</sup>. In “spontaneously present thusness” the whole phenomenal world is inherently and, perfectly from primordial times, naturally luminous in the completely pure expanse of “intrinsic primordial wisdom” (*rang byung gi ye shes*). It is the “supreme primordial non-conceptuality” (*ye mi rtog pa chen po*) in which manifestations are not blocked<sup>44</sup>. Therefore, we may label it as the insight into ‘dynamic emptiness,’ which is in its empty aspect “non-existence” (*med pa*) beyond duality and at the same time in its luminous aspect “intrinsic awareness” (*rang rig pa*) allowing the kaleidoscope of manifestations arise. Therefore, in rDzogs chen meditation the real issue is not simply a non-referential (*mi dmigs pa*) situation, but innate and luminous awareness itself.

#### 4. *Comparison of the Four Practices in the*

*Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* and the Contents of the Four Main Chapters in the bSam gtan mig sgron

In the fourfold perceptual process, as it is described above according to the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*, insight into “non-conceptuality” is gained gradually through the steps of (1) “perception,” (2) “non-perception,” (3) “non-perception of perception,” and (4) “perception of non-perception.” In order to apply these four stages of understanding of “non-conceptuality” to the above illustrated account of four schools Rim gyis pa, Cig car ba, Mahāyoga and rDzogs chen and to clearly demonstrate how they correspond to each other, we shall look again at gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes’ analysis.

gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes criticises each single school respectively from one step above on the ladder, that is, he disapprove Rim gyis pa from the perspective of Cig car ba, disapprove Cig car ba from the view of

<sup>42</sup> *SM*: 59.4, 6. Cf. Guenther 1983: 359.

<sup>43</sup> *SM*: 55.6. Cf. Guenther 1983: 355.

<sup>44</sup> *SM*: 60.2-3, 5. For a translation of this passage cf. also Guenther 1983: 360.



Mahāyoga, and finally disapprove Mahāyoga from the angle of rDzogs chen. Accordingly, (1) the fault of Rim gyis pa is that it is merely occupied with “perception” (*dmigs pa*) in order to let the experience of “non-perception” (*ma dmigs pa*) arise<sup>45</sup>. (2) Cig car ba seeks for the unborn absolute, yet it simply corrupts mind<sup>46</sup> as it still has a concept of the unborn. As already mentioned above, the Cig car ba adept learns from the beginning the “non-perception” (*dmigs su med pa*) in regard to all phenomena<sup>47</sup>. (3) Even though Mahāyoga talks about “non-duality” (*gyis su med pa*), it does not realise “spontaneously present supreme non-conceptuality” of rDzogs chen. This is so because Mahāyoga gets accustomed to thusness by virtue of “examining reality” (*dnegos po gzhal ba*) and “different means” (*thabs mang po*). Therefore, even though Mahāyoga comes close to the rDzogs chen realisation of “spontaneous presence”, it still takes it as an “object of perception” (*dmigs pa yod pa*)<sup>48</sup> and thus regards it as something supreme or real. (4) According to gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, the supreme realisation of non-duality is only accomplished in rDzogs chen meditation. It refers to the supreme equality of all manifestations of both *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. At the end of his treatise he summarises it again as follows:

Since the *Great Perfection* (*rdzogs chen*) is spontaneously perfected and ultimate thusness, supreme non-duality is without divisions; thus [the *Great Perfection*] is the stage of unexcelled primordial wisdom. [...]<sup>49</sup>

Now, we shall investigate step by step how gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes’ classification corresponds to the fourfold correct practice of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*. (1) Regarding Rim gyis pa, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes himself describes it in terms of “perception” (*dmigs*

<sup>45</sup> SM: 61.2: *tsen man rim gyis 'jug pa nil sngar bshad pa ltar dmigs pa la sha thang bar 'bad nas ma dmigs pa skye ba dang/ [...]*.

<sup>46</sup> SM: 61.3. Cf. Guenther 1983: 358.

<sup>47</sup> SM: 57.3-4: *yang de nyid las/ las dang po pas sems dang po bskyed pa nas nye bar brtams tel chos thams cad dmigs su med pa lal bslab par bya'ol*. Cf. Guenther 1983: 357.

<sup>48</sup> SM: 63.2-4; 64.4-5: *rnal 'byor chen po nang pas mtshan ma'i ting nge 'dzin las su rung nas rtags thon yang/ lhun grub la dmigs pa yod pa'i phyir/ ma mthong ba nil dper na nyi ma'i snying po bltas nal slar mi mthong gi mig ljir 'gyur ba bzhin nol*.

<sup>49</sup> SM: 491.4-5: *rdzogs chen ni lhun rdzogs de bzhin nyid mthar thug nyid pas/ lgnysis med chen po dbye ba med pas/ lye shes bla ma'i sa yin pas [...]*.

*pa*). This corresponds to the first stage of insight as it is explained in the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*. (2) For Cig car ba gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes demonstrates that this tradition is occupied with the “unborn absolute,” the inconceivable or — to speak in terms of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* — with “non-perception” (*mi dmigs pa*). It is the realisation of the non-existence of the external world. (3) According to the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, Mahāyoga talks about “spontaneous presence” (*lhun grub*), the supreme realisation of “non-conceptuality” in rDzogs chen, however, still takes it as an “object of perception” (*dmigs pa yod pa*). It comes close to the realm of “spontaneous presence”, and thus frees from the attachment to the subject-object dichotomy. However, it still regards it as real or supreme. In terms of the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* this would match the third step of “non-perception of perception,” that is a non-perception of the perception of the subject-object dichotomy. (4) Finally, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes argues that only in rDzogs chen “spontaneous presence” is perfected which is “supreme non-conceptuality.” It is the realisation of the empty but luminous nature, or in other words the union of “intrinsic awareness and emptiness” (*rig stong*). It refers to the equality of all manifestations of both *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* — not regarding anything as supreme. In regard to the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī* this kind of insight is explained as “perception of non-perception,” non-duality of cognisable objects and cognition. Only in realising this final stage one is able to enter into “non-conceptual sphere.” When Mahāyoga talks about “spontaneous presence”, it is the coming into contact of such a realm, whereas rDzogs chen is the realization of such.

By analysing the contents of the four main chapters of the *bSam gtan mig sgron* — that is the understanding of “non-conceptuality” in Rim gyis pa, Cig car ba, Mahāyoga and rDzogs chen — in the light of the fourfold correct practice as it is explained in the *Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*, the structure of the *bSam gtan mig sgron* becomes transparent. In the eyes of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes these four traditions clearly describe a soteriological path in itself, that is a path on which one gradually increases insight into “non-conceptuality.” In this kind of interpretation the four traditions may be seen as separate parts of a broader picture, or to use the analogy of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes: they are different steps of one ladder.

### 5. Critique of Cig car ba according to the bSam gtan mig sgron

In conclusion, we shall summarise again gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes' view of the differences between Cig car ba (i.e., Chinese Meditation Buddhism) and rDzogs chen as gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes himself explained in the beginning that one reason for writing the *bSam gtan mig sgron* was the apparent similarity of both traditions. In this own concluding remarks he says:

Regarding the Cig car ba [tradition] its terminology is similar to rDzogs chen. Although it teaches non-activity and non-practice, it speaks of ultimate truth as the ground which is unborn and empty — having in mind the ground which is not arising and is the *perfect reality*. However, if one investigates this [view], there is [still] effort getting accustomed to the condition of emptiness; it [has the notion of dealing with the two] truths alternately<sup>50</sup>. [The Cig car bas] never practically engage in the non-duality of [the two] truths. Veiled by the own [erroneous] view, the [Cig car bas] need yet to have to enter into non-duality<sup>51</sup>.

According to this criticism Cig car ba does not understand the absolute truth, thusness, but perceives it as the object “empty nature.” gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes therefore classifies it as the understanding of the absolute according to “three essential categories” (*ngo bo nyid gsum*) in the Yogacāra school as “perfect reality” (*yongs su grub pa, pariniṣpanna*). In an earlier classification of the different understanding of “non-conceptuality” according to the various philosophical schools he described that “non-conceptuality which manifests as empty nature is the meditation on the perfect [reality] of the Yogacāra school”<sup>52</sup>. It is not clear how gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes comes to the conclusion to bring the understanding of the absolute in the Cig car ba tradition together with

<sup>50</sup> I am not sure about my translation of this sentence. S. Karmay (1988: 105) choose the following translation which seems to avoid the problem (...*bden pa re mos pa* ...): “[...] If we examine this view, it still hankers after the “truth” and works on becoming accustomed to the state of voidness. [...]”.

<sup>51</sup> SM: 490.3-5: / *ston mun ni rdzogs chen dang skad mthun/ bya ba med bsgrub pa med par ston yang/ /gzhi mi 'byung ba yongs su grub pa la dgongs nas/ don dam pa'i bden pa ma skyes stong pa'i gzhi la smra ste/ de la ni brtags na da dung bden pa re mos pa dang/ stong pa'i ngang la 'dris par byed pa dang/ rtsol ba yod de/ bden pa gnyis med pa la spyod kyang ma myong ste/ rang gi lta bas bsgribs te gnyis med la bzod 'jug dgos sol/ Cf. also Karmay 1988: 105.*

<sup>52</sup> SM: 55.3-4: /*stong pa'i ngo bor snang la mi rtog pa ni/ rnal 'byor spyod pa'i yongs su grub pa bsgom pa'ol/ Cf. Karmay 1988: 105.*

Yogacāra philosophy. He does not give further evidence to confirm his view. However, as we have seen in the above structural analysis of the contents of the four main chapters of the *bSam gtan mig sgron*, it makes perfect sense to place Cig car ba within the broader picture of Buddhist soteriology. Yet, in my view, an assertion like the final one of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes about Cig car ba would call for a more elaborate verification.

### Abbreviations

- BBK = Bukkyō bunka kenkyūsho kiyō 佛教文化研究紀要 [Bulletin of the Research in Buddhist Culture],  
 SCEAR = Studies in Central and East Asian Religion  
 SM = bSam gtan mig sgron; cf. gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes  
 T. = Taishō shinshō daizōkyō 大正新脩大藏經 [[Chinese] Buddhist Canon from the Taishō Era], Taibei Reprint  
 TT. = Tibetan Tripitaka

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