

# *Tsongkhapa's Guhyasamāja Sādhana and the Ārya Tradition*<sup>1</sup>

Yael Bentor

## *Dedication*

Two publications of Professor Robert A.F. Thurman in the area of Vajrayāna have particularly shaped my own thinking in this field: His translation of Tsong kha pa's long Ārya tradition Guhyasamāja sādhana, *The Glorious Mystic Communion Self-Creation Yoga*, and his paper "Vajra Hermeneutics."<sup>2</sup> I would like to offer this essay—on exactly the same topics—in honor of Professor Thurman, to thank him for his constant encouragement.

## *I. Introduction*

The *Guhyasamāja Sādhana* arranged by Tsong kha pa<sup>3</sup> will be considered here against the background of the Indian Ārya tradition of the Guhyasamāja as well as similar sādhana of Guhyasamāja preceding or contemporaneous with Tsong kha pa. There are three well accepted scriptural authorities for the practice of the creation stage of the Guhyasamāja according to the Ārya tradition: the *Piṇḍīkrama-sādhana*<sup>4</sup> and the *Sūtra-melāpaka*<sup>5</sup> by Ārya Nāgārjuna, as well as the *Samāja-sādhana-*

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<sup>2</sup> See General Bibliography for these works.

<sup>3</sup> *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i bla brgyud gsol 'debs dang bdag bskyed ngag 'don bkra shis lhun po rgyud pa grwa tshang gi 'don rgyud rje thams cad mkhyen pas zhus dag mdzad pa.*

<sup>4</sup> Skt. *Piṇḍīkrama-sādhana* or *Piṇḍīkṛta-sādhana*, Tib. *Sgrub pa'i thabs mdor byas pa*, Tōh. 1796. For Sanskrit editions, see de La Vallée Poussin 1896 and Tripathi, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> *Bskyed pa'i rim pa bsgom pa'i thabs mdo dang bsres pa*, Tōh. 1797. Note that the Sanskrit title of this work, of which the Sanskrit original has not come down to us, is given differently in various editions of the Tibetan canonical collections. In the Sde dge Bstan 'gyur it appears as *Sūtrameśravaka*, while in the Peking edition it appears as *Sūtramevalaka*.

vyavasthōi<sup>6</sup> by Nāgabuddhi. Still, Tibetan masters were aware of the troubling fact that these three basic works for the Ārya tradition's sādhanā do not prescribe one and the same practice. Even the two works by Nāgarjuna himself, the *Pīndītkrama-sādhanā* and the *Sūtra-melāpaka* do not describe identical meditations, hence Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456) devoted a short work to what he calls the “slight differences” between them.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, while Tibetan masters such as Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364)<sup>8</sup> and Tsong kha pa (1357–1419)<sup>9</sup> regard Candrakīrti's sādhanā of the Guhyasamāja<sup>10</sup> as another important source for the meditation according to the Ārya tradition, other Tibetan masters do not share this opinion. Among them are Rin chen dpal the biographer of Sa skya Paṅḍita (1182–1251),<sup>11</sup> Red mda' ba Gzhon nu blo gros (1348–1412),<sup>12</sup> Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po,<sup>13</sup> and A myes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nam

<sup>6</sup> Skt. *Samājī-sādhanā-vyavasthohī*, Tib. *Dus pa'i sgrub pa'i thabs nam gzhag rim pa*, Tōh. 1809. The only extant manuscript of this work calls it clearly the Vyavasthohī. For the use of this name see Wedemeyer 2007: 59.

<sup>7</sup> *Shin tu mal' byor gyi khyad par sgrub thabs kyi yan lag tu bris pa*, 102.1–2.

<sup>8</sup> See his commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Pīndītkrama-sādhanā*, *Dpal gsang ba' dus pa'i sgrub thabs mdoṅ byas kyi rgya cher bshad pa bskyes rim gsal byed*. Bu ston cites Candrakīrti's work throughout.

<sup>9</sup> In his *Miha' gcod rin chen myu gu*, 134.4–5, Tsong kha pa points out to the two commentaries on the *Vajrasattva-sādhanā* were written by Indian authors (Tōh. 1835 written by Tathāgataraksita and Tōh. 1815 by Lalitavajra or Līlavajra). Furthermore Munīśrībhadrā (Thub pa dpal bzang po), maintains that this work was written by Candrakīrti (Zla ba grags pa); see Tōh. 1813, D., 304.3, and Jiang and Tomabechi, *Pañcakrakarmatīppantī*: 11.

<sup>10</sup> Zla ba grags pa, *Vajrasattva-sādhanā*, *Rdo rje sems dpa'i sgrub thabs*, Tōh. 1814. For an edition of the Sanskrit, see Luo Hong and Tomabechi 2009.

<sup>11</sup> In listing the teachings received by Sa skya Paṅḍita, he says that the *Vajrasattva-sādhanā* was written by Shes rab 'byung gnas sba pa (i.e. Fraññākaragupta), see his *Dpal ldan sa skya paṅḍita'i nam thar*, 90.6.

<sup>12</sup> According to Red mda' ba, the *Vajrasattva-sādhanā* was not written by Glorious Zla ba (Candrakīrti), see his *Bla ma bsgrub pa dpal bas gsang ba' dus pa'i bsgrub thabs mdoṅ byas dang bsgrub thabs nam gzhag gi'i ka nam gnyis kyi mi' dra ba va'i khyad par zhus pa'i lan*, TBRC 306b, Kathmandu, 281.4.

<sup>13</sup> Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po maintains that the *Vajrasattva-sādhanā* was written by a second Candrakīrti. See his work *Shin tu mal' byor gyi khyad par sgrub thabs kyi yan lag tu bris pa*, 102.4.3.

(1597–1659/60),<sup>14</sup> who maintain that the author of this sādhana is not *the* Candrakīrti, but some other person also called Candrakīrti. Such differing positions regarding the basic authoritative sources clearly suggest that the task of Tibetan lamas who sought to establish a systematized and reasoned method of this practice—one well supported by scriptural authorities—was not an easy one. It is not surprising then that a variety of solutions were offered, and these were not always in accord with each other.

The aim of this essay is to reflect on how Tsong kha pa arranged his own sādhana of the Guhyasamāja, especially in light of the writing of Red mda' ba Gzhon nu blo gros. It is well known that the Ārya tradition of the Guhyasamāja came down to Tsong kha pa through this teacher, and—specifically in regard to the creation stage—Bu ston's commentary on the *Piṅḍīkrama-sādhana* was transmitted to Tsong kha pa through him.<sup>15</sup> Still it was only recently that the works of Red mda' ba on the creation stage of the Guhyasamāja were made available to me.<sup>16</sup>

## II. The Scriptural Authority of the Samāja-sādhana-vyavastholi

In his commentary on the *Samāja-sādhana-vyavastholi*, Tsong kha pa explains the individual role of the first three authoritative Indian works on the sādhana of the Guhyasamāja: the *Piṅḍīkrama-sādhana* instructs on the actual meditations, the *Sūtra-melāpaka* establishes the scriptural authority for these meditations in the *Root Tantra* of the Guhyasamāja, while the *Vyavastholi* provides the reasons for meditating as described in the sādhana and clarifies numerous points that may cause perplexity.<sup>17</sup> Thus according to Tsong kha pa, the *Vyavastholi* is the key for understanding the working of the sādhana.

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<sup>14</sup> According to A myes zhabs, 35.2–4, those who maintain that the *Vajrasattva-sādhana* was written by Candrakīrti are mistaken, since there are many incompatibilities between this work and the *Sūtra-melāpaka* in locating the scriptural authority for the meditation in the *Root Tantra* of the *Guhyasamāja*.

<sup>15</sup> See Tsong kha pa's *Gsan yig*, 241.1–2, and *Mtha' gcod rin chen myu gu*, 143.4.

<sup>16</sup> When I wrote about the position of Tsong kha pa regarding the creation stage, Red mda' ba's works were not available to me, see Bentor, "Identifying the Unnamed Opponents."

<sup>17</sup> *Rnam gzhang rim pa'i rnam bshad*, 286.6–287.2.

The importance of the *Vyavasthohi* was acknowledged in Tibet long before Tsong kha pa. In commenting on the *Pinḍītkrama-sādhana*, Bu ston draws as well on the *Vyavasthohi*. Long before him, already in the 11th century 'Gos Khug pa has btsas relied on this work for explaining the grounds of purification of the creation stage.<sup>18</sup> At the beginning of his own commentary on the *Pratīpoddyotana*, Red mda' ba Gzhon nu blo gros closely follows the explanations of 'Gos in this matter.<sup>19</sup>

In its first chapter, the *Vyavasthohi* portrays a system of correspondences between the *sādhana* and the periodical creation and destruction of the world as well as with birth, death and intermediate state. This implies that each step of the meditation can serve to purify its corresponding macro- and microcosmic processes.<sup>20</sup> However, while the description of the correspondences to the creation and destruction of the world is straightforward—following the depiction of the cosmic event, the meditation corresponding to it is indicated—with regard to the microcosmic cycle the delineation is not as clear, chiefly since the mentions of the actual meditation are scarce and laconic. Much of the difference in opinion among Tibetan scholars will result from this ambiguity.

Furthermore, while the *Vyavasthohi* describes the intermediate being and rebirth in its first chapter on the creation stage, death is explained in the last chapter dedicated to the completion stage. It is not surprising then that both 'Gos Khug pa lhas btsas<sup>21</sup> and Red mda' ba,<sup>22</sup> who follows him, explain that birth is the ground of purification of the creation stage, while death is the ground of purification of the completion stage. Elsewhere I have written on why both Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub rje Dge legs dpal bzang (1385–1438) strongly reject such a position.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Gsang 'dus stong thun*, 13.2–27.4. In his *Rnam gzhag rim pa'i nam bshad*, Tsong kha pa expresses his disagreement with some of these correspondences.

<sup>19</sup> *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i 'grel pa sgron ma gsal ba dang bcas pa'i bshad sbyar yid kyī mun sel*, 232–236, and 12.2–16.6.

<sup>20</sup> This is implied, but is not explained explicitly. In his *Rnam gzhag rim pa'i nam bshad*, 378.2–379.5, Tsong kha pa states: “Arya Nāgārjuna and his Spiritual Sons did not clarify the terms ‘the ground of purification’ and ‘the purifier.’”

<sup>21</sup> *Gsang 'dus stong thun*, 12.5–6.

<sup>22</sup> *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i 'grel pa sgron ma gsal ba dang bcas pa'i bshad sbyar yid kyī mun sel*, 232–33 and 12.3–6.

<sup>23</sup> See Bentor, “Identifying the Unnamed Opponents.”

*III. The Different Positions Held by Red mda' ba and Tsong kha pa Regarding the Purifier of Rebirth during the Creation Stage*

Tsong kha pa differs with Red mda' ba on the demarcation between the steps of the creation stage that purify the intermediate state and rebirth, respectively. We will look closely at this difference of opinion, since it clearly demonstrates Tsong kha pa's method in arranging his *Guhyasamāja Sādhana* in relation to previous compositions. In discussing these meditative steps, both Tsong kha pa and Red mda' ba employ a terminology that refers to stages of the visualization, such as the steps that came to be called the five awakenings into manifestation,<sup>24</sup> though this term is not found in the three basic scriptural authorities for this practice.

Following 'Gos Khug pa lhas btsas,<sup>25</sup> in his *Yid kyi mun sel*,<sup>26</sup> Red mda' ba maintains that the intermediate being is the ground of purification within the meditation on the awakening into manifestation from the moon,<sup>27</sup> and rebirth is the ground of purification of the last three awakenings into manifestation—from the seed syllable, from the emblem, and from the complete body.<sup>28</sup> Birth begins, according to our texts, at conception and ends when the new being appears outside the womb, and this sequence of events is often referred to as “the five phases in the womb.” In his *Replies to Inquiries by Bsgrub pa dpal*, Red mda' ba says:

<sup>24</sup> Skt. *abhisambodhi*, Tib. *mngon par byang chub pa*, or *mngon byang*. According to the Ārya school the sequence of the five awakenings into manifestation is: (1) the awakening [into manifestation] from suchness (*de bzhin nyid las byang chub pa*), (2) the awakening from the moon (*zla ba las byang chub pa*), (3) the awakening from the seed syllable (*sa bon las byang chub pa*), (4) the awakening from the emblem (*phyag mtshan las byang chub pa*), (5) the awakening from the complete body (*sku rdzogs pa las byang chub pa*).

<sup>25</sup> *Gsang 'dus stong thun*, 24.4–5 and 20.2–3.

<sup>26</sup> His commentary on the *Sgron gsal*, 234 and 14.3–4.

<sup>27</sup> According to 'Gos Khug pa lhas btsas, *Gsang 'dus stong thun* (24.5) and Red mda' ba (*ibid.*, 234 and 14.4), the death of the intermediate being just before conception is the ground of purification of the meditation on the mingling together of solar and lunar disks—along with the lotus and the three syllables—to form a single moon.

<sup>28</sup> According to 'Gos (*ibid.*, 25.2–5) and Red mda' ba (*ibid.*, 234–235 and 14.4–15.1), the awakening into manifestation from the seed syllable corresponds to first three phases in the womb (the *nur nur po*, the *mer mer po*, and the *gor gor po*), the awakening into manifestation from the emblem corresponds to the fourth phase, the *'khrang 'gyur*, and the awakening into manifestation from the complete body corresponds to the fifth phase, the *rkang lag 'gyus ba*.

When they apply the purifiers to the grounds of purification of the creation stage, “early lamas” cite the following passage of the *Vyavasthā*...<sup>29</sup> and the passage below that,<sup>30</sup> [on which they based] their explanation that the visualization of the First Lord through the four awakenings into manifestation purifies the intermediate being and the five phases in the womb. “Some later scholars,” however, think that [these “early lamas”] do not relate these passages in the way they should be related, and criticize this. They posit the opinion that the First Lord purifies the intermediate state alone.<sup>31</sup>

The First Lord (*adīnātha*, *dang po mgon po*)—a key term in this debate—is used here to refer to the steps of the *sādhana* in which the meditators visualize themselves as the deity through the five awakenings into manifestation.<sup>32</sup> Red mda’ ba approves the position of these ‘early lamas’ who explain that the meditation on the First Lord purifies both the intermediate being and rebirth, and rejects the standpoint of the ‘later scholars’ that the First Lord purifies the intermediate state alone:

I do not find this acceptable. If the First Lord purifies only the intermediate being, there would be no corresponding

<sup>29</sup> “This teaches that meditators on the creation stage visualize the body of the deity through the stages of ‘yoga’ (*mal’byor*) and ‘subsequent yoga’ (*’rjes su mal’byor*, *anuyoga*).” D. 123b1–2, P. 8.3.6; for the Sanskrit see Tanaka, “How to Restore,” [58]–[59].

<sup>30</sup> “After that, it [the embryo] gradually develops, first in the form of the liquid-cream-like (*mer mer po*)” and so on, up until “urged on by the wind, that turns into the embryo with the limbs slightly protruding. Thus the five phases in the womb are begotten.” D. 124a4–5, P. 8.5.3–4; for the Sanskrit, see Tanaka “How to Restore Sanskrit Text,” [62].

<sup>31</sup> *Bla ma bsrub pa dpal ba*, “*Gsang ba ’dus pa’i bsrub thabs ndor byas dang bsrub thabs rnam gzhag gi’i ka rnam gnyis kyi mi ’dra ba’i khyad par zhus pa’i lan*,” TBRC W1CZ1871, 302b, Kathmandu 273.5–274.2, reading *gzhung gi’i ’bral tshul la ma ’bral bar* for *gzhung gi’i ’gral pa ma ’gral pa ma* in the Kathmandu version. It was E. Gene Smith who made the first version of this work available to me. I would like to thank Penpa Dorje and Dan Martin for their important help in reading this manuscript, and also Carola Roloff for sending me a copy of the second version.

<sup>32</sup> The term “the First Lord” is found in the *Piṅḍīkrāma-sādhana*, L. 52, D. 4a1. We will return to it below.

purifiers for the five phases in the womb. This is because other than the First Lord, there is no corresponding purifier for these [five phases in the womb]. If you suppose so, there would be no meditation that accords with the stage of rebirth, since there would not be purifiers corresponding to the five phases in the womb. Furthermore such a way of relating passages is not an explanation displeasing to the ear.<sup>33</sup>

Red mda' ba's aim is to establish a system for the sādhana that would be coherent, rational and based on the authoritative texts, hence he is looking for steps of meditation that can purify the process of rebirth with its five phases of the fetus in the womb. Since Red mda' ba believes that there is no other purifier for rebirth other than the meditation on the First Lord, he does not accept the position that the First Lord purifies only the intermediate being.

Red mda' ba's opponents do find a meditation that can purify birth; but first we will try to understand how Red mda' ba came to his conclusion. In outlining the steps of the sādhana and their grounds of purification, 'Gos and Red mda' ba follow the *Vyavastholi*, that instructs the yogin to visualize himself only as Mahāvajradhara (Rdo rje 'chang chen po). It is not surprising then that Red mda' ba maintains that this deity has to be the purifier of both the intermediate state and rebirth, as otherwise there would be no meditation to purify rebirth. Red mda' ba concludes his discussion by providing an example and justification for reading passages in an order other than that in which they appear.<sup>34</sup>

Now we can ask which meditation can serve for purifying rebirth according to Red mda' ba's opponents. While the *Vyavastholi* teaches meditation on a single deity—Mahāvajradhara<sup>35</sup>—according to the *Pinḍī-krama-sādhana*, the yogin first visualizes himself as a white First Lord,

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, TBRC 302b–303a, Kathmandu 274.2–4, reading *dang po'i mgon po bar srid* for *dang po ni mgon po'i bar srid* in the Kathmandu version.

<sup>34</sup> Red mda' ba stated (see above) that the “some later scholars” criticized the “early lamas” for relating the relevant passages of the *Vyavastholi* in a way they should not be related. Here Red mda' ba defends their way of interpretation.

<sup>35</sup> D. 121b3, P. 7.4.3; for the Sanskrit see Tanaka, “How to Restore Sanskrit Text,” [48].

and only then as a blue Vajrasattva (Rdo rje sems dpa'),<sup>36</sup> Not only is the meditation here not on Vajradhara but on Vajrasattva—there is also an additional step of visualizing the First Lord before the yogin turns into Vajrasattva.

In his commentary on the *Pinḍīkrāma-sādhana*,<sup>37</sup> Bu ston Rin chen grub explains that according to the *Vyavasthohi*,<sup>38</sup> while the meditation on the First Lord<sup>39</sup> purifies the intermediate state, the meditation on Vajrasattva purifies rebirth; and with respect to the fruit of the practice, the meditation on the First Lord corresponds to the resources body (*sambhogā-kāya*).<sup>40</sup> Thus the First Lord is so called as it is the first deity visualized in the main part of the sādhana, but soon afterwards he is transformed into Vajrasattva.

Apparently, Red mda' ba was familiar with Bu ston's positions, since he studied the Guhyasamāja according to the Ārya tradition with him,<sup>41</sup> though Red mda' ba was only sixteen years old when Bu ston passed away. It was through Red mda' ba that Tsong kha pa received teachings on Bu ston's commentary on the *Pinḍīkrāma-sādhana*.<sup>42</sup> It seems that Red mda' ba chose to follow 'Gos Khug pa lhas btasas rather than Bu ston in this matter.

Tsong kha pa as well aspires to a coherent, rational system based on the authoritative texts, but this leads him to agree with the reasoning

<sup>36</sup> L. 51–54, D. 3b7–4a1–3. There are some very slight differences between the Tibetan and the Sanskrit here.

<sup>37</sup> *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i sgrub thabs mdor byas kyi rgya cher bshad pa bskyes rim gsal byed*, 753.7–755.2 and 758.3–760.4. Bu ston also states here his disagreement with positions such as that of 'Gos concerning the grounds of purification of the meditation on the deity, a position adopted by Red mda' ba as well.

<sup>38</sup> Bu ston refers here to the *Vyavasthohi*, which as was noted already is quite vague on this point, see D. 123a4–123b2, P. 8.3.1–6; for the Sanskrit, see Tanaka "How to Restore Sanskrit Text," [57–59].

<sup>39</sup> Called here "the stages of yoga and anyoga."  
<sup>40</sup> The scriptural authorities Bu ston relies upon here is the *Vajrasattva-sādhana*, see D. 398.2, P. 213.1; for the Sanskrit, see Hong and Tomabechi *Vajrasattvanīṣpādānastūtra*, 16.8.

<sup>41</sup> See Roloff, *Red mda' ba*, 99 and 213. I would like to thank Carola Roloff for providing me with a copy of her wonderful book.

<sup>42</sup> See Tsong kha pa, *Gsan yig*, 241.1–2, and *Mitha' gcod rin chen myu gu*, 143.4.

of Bu ston, rather than that of his immediate teacher, Red mda' ba. On the basis of the same lines of the *Vyavasthōi*, he says in his commentary:

Some lamas are uncomfortable with the fact that this passage of the *Vyavasthōi*<sup>43</sup> teaches the visualization of the deity in correspondence with the intermediate being. Therefore, by citing the passage below that:<sup>44</sup> “That turns into the embryo with the limbs slightly protruding (*rkang lag 'gyu*), thus the five phases in the womb are begotten,” they explain that the visualization of the First Lord is applied to the phases in the womb. Such an explanation by diverting the words of the master into another point is very inappropriate.<sup>45</sup>

Tsong kha pa then explains how he sees the correspondences between the meditation here and both the grounds and the fruits of purification. In building on Bu ston's exposition, he presents a coherent and comprehensive system that can be summarized as follows:<sup>46</sup>

- The meditation on gathering the specially visualized deities (*lhag mos*) into clear light is the purifier of death and its fruit is the dharmā body.
- The visualization of the First Lord is the purifier of the intermediate state, and its fruit is the resources body.
- The transformation into the emanation body is the purifier of rebirth, and its fruit is the emanation body.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See the citation from Red mda' ba, above.

<sup>44</sup> The *Vyavasthōi*, D. 12445, P. 8,5,4, for the Sanskrit see Tanaka “How to Restore Sanskrit Text,” [62].

<sup>45</sup> *Rnam gzhaḡ rim pa'i nam bshad*, 330.2–4.

<sup>46</sup> *Rnam gzhaḡ rim pa'i nam bshad*, 330.6–331.6.

<sup>47</sup> The gathering of the specially visualized deities into clear light consists of the first part of “yoga,” and the awakening into manifestation from suchness. The visualization of the First Lord consists of the second part of “yoga” and the “subsequent yoga” (*anyoga, rjes su nal 'byor*); these are the four remaining awakenings into manifestation. The transformation into the emanation body consists of the two remaining yogas—*atīyoga* (*shin in nal 'byor*) and *mahāyoga* (*nal 'byor chen po*).

Both Bu ston and Tsong kha pa base themselves also on the *Vajrasattva-sādhana*, that explicitly relates these three steps of the *sādhana*—gather-  
ing the specially visualized deities into clear light, the visualization of the  
First Lord, and his transformation into the emanation body—to the three  
bodies of the Buddha.

Hence Tsong kha pa understands those passages of the *Vyavasthōli*  
—those that Red mda' ba prefers to rearrange—in a straightforward way.  
And this is how Mkhas grub rje summarizes his view:

After first explaining the characteristics of the intermedi-  
ate being, the *Vyavasthōli* teaches to visualize the deity  
by means of “yoga” and “subsequent yoga,” in corre-  
spondence with that [intermediate being]. Hence it is  
clearly explained here to meditate on the First Lord in  
correspondence with the intermediate being. After that  
[the *Vyavasthōli*] describes how the intermediate being  
takes rebirth in the womb, and then explains that you  
need to meditate on the transformation into the Emana-  
tion Body and so on in correspondence with that [taking  
rebirth], by means of the remaining yogas.<sup>48</sup> Thus [the  
*Vyavasthōli*] very clearly applies the transformation into  
the Emanation Body to taking rebirth in the womb.<sup>49</sup>

Tsong kha pa then concludes:

The quintessence of making correspondences with the  
cycles of death and rebirth is that by meditating on the  
three bodies of the path [gathering into clear light, the  
visualization of First Lord and his transformation into  
the emanation body Vajradhara] in correspondence with  
birth, death and the intermediate state—since they corre-  
spond also to the three fruitional bodies—one takes in  
the path aspects of the fruit. Apart from a few differ-  
ences in the method of meditating on the three bodies—  
the purifiers, in general during the two stages (creation  
and completion) the meditation on the three bodies in

<sup>48</sup> *Arīyoga, shin tu nal 'byor, and mahāyoga, nal 'byor chen po.*  
<sup>49</sup> *Dngos grub rgya mtsho, 204.5–6.*

correspondence with the three phenomena of the ground and the fruit is similar.

Therefore, if one is mistaken in recognizing the individual correspondences of birth, death and the intermediate state during the first stage, one will certainly be mistaken also in understanding the crucial points which are taught over and over in the Tantra and in its commentaries—the principle according to which, after the mind isolation and the clear light [respectively], the resources body arises as the illusory body and as the body of union, and then transforms into the emanation body. Therefore this is extremely important.<sup>50</sup>

Next, Tsong kha pa<sup>51</sup> explains how both 'Gos Khug pa lhas btsas<sup>52</sup> and Red mda' ba Gzhon nu blo gros<sup>53</sup> individually describe the grounds of purification of the meditation here—without naming names, but describing their delineations with enough details to make them easily identifiable.<sup>54</sup> Tsong kha pa does not agree with them:

This is not pleasing to the ear. While ignoring the special correspondences applied between the intermediate being and the resources body by the eminent teachers such as Glorious Nāgabuddhi, they establish their arguments with great insistence by relying on false proofs of shapes such as *om*, which are refuted<sup>55</sup> by the non-observation of that which is suitable to appear.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> *Rnam gzhag rim pa'i rnam bshad*, 332.5–333.2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 333.2–6.

<sup>52</sup> *Gsang 'dus stong thun*, 24.3–5 and 20.2–3.

<sup>53</sup> *Yid kyi mun sel*, 234–235 and 14.3–6.

<sup>54</sup> 'Gos and Red mda' ba maintain, as we saw, that the meditation on the awakening into manifestation from the moon serves to purify also the intermediate being, while the last three awakenings into manifestation purify birth.

<sup>55</sup> Reading *khegs pa* for *legs pa* in the New Delhi edition, as Bkra shis lhun po blockprint has it.

<sup>56</sup> *Snang rung ma dmigs pa, drśyānupalabdhi*, meaning one should observe what is there, and if one does not see it, it is not there. *Rnam gzhag rim pa'i rnam bshad*, 333.5–334.2.

Tsong kha pa is saying here that not only does the position of these opponents contest the *Vyavasthāhi*, it also contradicts the empiricist observation.<sup>57</sup>

In his own commentary on the *Pratīpoddhoyāna*, Kong ston Sheś bya kun ri<sup>58</sup> (1367–1450?) often follows Red mda' ba. In this context as well he reproduces the words of Red mda' ba on the grounds of purification referred to above, but he then rejects this opinion on the same grounds as Bu ston and Tsong kha pa. Kong ston belonged to the Sa skya camp that took over the line of Red mda' ba in the Sa skya school.<sup>59</sup>

We will conclude this section by posing some questions. Tsong kha pa says here: "This is not pleasing to the ear." Was it in response to this statement that Red mda' ba wrote: "[This] is not an explanation dis-pleasing to the ear"? In other words, did Red mda' ba compose his *Replies to Inquiries by Bsgrub pa dpal* in response to the *Knam gzhaḡ rim pa'i nam bshad*, in which Tsong kha pa does not follow his method? Or was the *Replies to Inquiries by Bsgrub pa dpal* written to counter Bu ston Rin chen grub? Moreover, in the case Red mda' ba aimed at Tsong kha pa, was this the reason Mkhas grub rje included in his *Bskyed rim dangos grub rgya msho* refutations of most of the positions Red mda' ba presents in his *Replies to Inquiries by Bsgrub pa dpal*?

#### IV. *The transformation into the Emanation Body Vajrasattva During the Creation Stage*

### Differences Among the Three Scriptural Authorities

It is on the subject of the transformation into the emanation body Vajrasattva that Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po wrote his work entitled *Shin tu rnal 'byor gyi khyad par sgrub thabs kyi yan lag tu bris pa*.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> According to Gos (*Gsang 'dus stong thun*, 25.2–3) and Red mda' ba (*Yid kyi mun sel*, 234–35, 246 and 14.4–6, 28.4) the awakening into manifestation from the seed syllable has to purifying the first three phases in the womb, because during these phases the embryo has intrinsically the shapes of the seed syllables *om*, *āh*, and *hūm*.

<sup>58</sup> Rong ston, *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i nam bshad byin rlabs kyi bdud rtsi nam par rol pa'i gter*, 11.3–13.4.

<sup>59</sup> Roloff, *Red mda' ba*, 301.

<sup>60</sup> Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po takes up this issue in his short work on the third yoga (*antiyoga*, *shin tu rnal 'byor*) of the sādhanā of the Guhyasamāja according to the Ārya

(*cont'd*)

This meditation is included in the *atiyoga* (*shin tu rnal 'byor*), the third of the four yogas that build the creation stage, hence the title of his work. Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po points out that the two works by Nāgārjuna, the *Piṇḍīkrama-sādhana* and the *Sūtra-melāpaka*, describe two slightly different methods (*tshul cung zad mi 'dra ba gnyis*) for the transformation into the emanation body Vajrasattva. After discussing these differences, Ngor chen concludes:

Therefore it seems that those later lamas (*phyis kyi bla ma rnams*) who wrote many inadequate explanations by only taking into account one method of the *atiyoga*, did not investigate this matter in detail.<sup>61</sup>

No doubt Tsong kha pa is one of these “later lamas.” Rather than looking for discrepancies among the authoritative texts, Tsong kha pa sought to establish a single coherent and symmetrical system for the sādhana, and he did so by finding suitable citations in these various scriptures. As we saw, Tsong kha pa assigns a role to each of the basic works on the creation stage of the Guhyasamāja. For him the basic scriptural authority is Nāgārjuna's sādhana, the *Piṇḍīkrama-sādhana*, while in the *Sūtra-melāpaka* he finds passages from the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* in support of his sādhana.

What are the differences between the *Piṇḍīkrama-sādhana* and the *Sūtra-melāpaka*? Unlike in the *Piṇḍīkrama-sādhana*,<sup>62</sup> the First Lord<sup>63</sup> and its transformation into the emanation body, as well as the entry of/into Akṣobhya do not occur in the *Sūtra-melāpaka*, instead the wisdom body

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tradition, *Shin tu rnal 'byor gyi khyad par sgrub thabs kyi yan lag tu bris pa*, which is appended to his sādhana of the Guhyasamāja, *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi sgrub pa'i thabs dngos grub gyia msho*. This work was written in 1423, after the death of both Red mda' ba in 1412 and Tsong kha pa in 1419.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.4.5.

<sup>62</sup> As we saw the *Piṇḍīkrama-sādhana* instructs the yogin to visualize himself as the First Lord by means of *yoga* and *anuyoga*, and then at the commence of *atiyoga*, with the entry of/into Akṣobhya, he meditates on himself as Vajrasattva, and then sets the body maṇḍala (L. 51–54, D. 3b7–4a1–3).

<sup>63</sup> Still the term First Lord found in the *Piṇḍīkrama-sādhana* is used by Tibetan lamas to refer also to Mahāvajradhara in his wisdom body before he becomes visible to his disciples in both the *Sūtra-melāpaka* and the *Vyavasthali*.

Vajradhara transforms into his form body.<sup>64</sup> Likewise also in the *Vyavasthohi*, the First Lord and the entry of/into Akṣobhya are not found, hence these distinctions between these two works by Nāgārjuna are parallel to the dissimilarities between the *Pīndīkrāma-sādhana* and the *Vyavasthohi*. These differences among the three scriptural authorities can serve to support Red mda' ba's position. As we saw above, Tsong kha pa criticizes those who are mistaken about the crucial points of the grounds of purification and the fruits of the meditation on the sādhana, especially those who ignore the special correspondences applied between the intermediate being and the resources body. In his *Replies to Inquiries by Bsgrub pa dpal*, Red mda' ba responds to such a position by saying that it is not that according to him there is no meditation on the resources body, rather what is absent in his method is only the meditation on Akṣobhya that does not occur in the *Vyavasthohi* and the *Sūtra-melāpaka*:

Therefore, the yogins visualize themselves as both the resources body and the emanation body in their respective forms. One should know this in all the deity yogas of the Vajra Vehicle, otherwise, you are mistaken about the crucial points of the path. Therefore, invoking Akṣobhya from his natural abode, and transforming him into an emanation body, and citing the “*samādhi* of *vajra-overpowering*” for making this understood are irrelevant.<sup>65</sup>

We will return to the topics of “invoking Akṣobhya from his natural abode,” and “citing the ‘*samādhi* of *vajra-overpowering*’ for making this understood,” below.

### Differences in Interpreting the Atiyoga in the Pīndīkrāma-sādhana

Still even those who followed the *Pīndīkrāma-sādhana* regarding the transformation of the First Lord into the emanation body disagreed

<sup>64</sup> According to the *Sūtra-melāpaka*, during the *anyoga*, the yogin visualizes himself as Mahāvajradhara, and during the *atyoga*, by setting the body maṇḍala, he meditates on himself in the form of the deity with three faces (D. 12a7–13a2, P. 273.4.8–274.1.4). The *Sūtra-melāpaka* explains that since in his wisdom body Vajradhara cannot act for the sake of sentient beings, he has to appear in a visible form.

<sup>65</sup> Bla ma bsgrub pa dpal ba gsang ba 'dus pa'i, TBRC 304a and Kathmandu, 277.2.

on the interpretation of the line: “with the entry of/into Akṣobhya, [the yogin] meditates on Vajrasattva” (*akṣobhyānupraveśena...vajrasattvaṃ vibhāvayet*).<sup>66</sup> The controversy here is whether it is Akṣobhya who enters into the First Lord or it is the First Lord who enters Akṣobhya. Soon we will see why much ink was spilled on this question.

The Tibetan translations of this line read *mi bskyod pa ni rjes zhugs pas*<sup>67</sup> and *mi bskyod pas ni rjes zhugs pas*.<sup>68</sup> While the first version could be considered somewhat ambiguous, in the second case it is clear that it is Akṣobhya who enters. None of the Tibetan translations of this work available to me has *mi bskyod pa la* here.<sup>69</sup> Some of the commentators on the *Piṅḍīkrama-sādhana* as well understand that Akṣobhya is the one doing the entering. In his commentary on this passage, Dam tshig rdo rje,<sup>70</sup> who was one of the teachers of 'Gos Khug pa lhas btsas,<sup>71</sup> has *mi bskyod pa yi rjes zhugs pas*, ‘through the entry of Akṣobhya.’ However Bu ston does not agree:

This position does not conform with the ground of purification, because the intermediate being does not produce its own body by its own semen.<sup>72</sup>

How does the entry of Akṣobhya contradict the correspondences between the ground of purification and its purifier? For Bu ston (and Tsong kha pa), the meditation on the First Lord serves to eventually purify the yogin's intermediate state. Just as during rebirth the intermediate being enters in the midst of the semen and blood and is reborn in the womb, so also

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<sup>66</sup> L. 53, T. 52.

<sup>67</sup> D. 4a2, C. 4a2, and P4788 5a5. I would like to thank Roger Wright for informing me about this additional version of the *Piṅḍīkrama-sādhana* in the Peking, and for providing me with a copy.

<sup>68</sup> G. 5a6, N. 5a6, and P2661 4b2.

<sup>69</sup> Paṅ chen Bsod nams grags pa (1478–1554) explains that the Tibetan translation here is mistaken, and the actual import of this line of the *Piṅḍīkrama-sādhana* is: *mi bskyod pa la rjes zhugs pa*, that is to say, “entry into Akṣobhya.” See his *Rgyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i bskyed rim gyi rnam gzhag mkhas pa'i yid 'phrog*, 116.5–6.

<sup>70</sup> *Pañcakramapañjikā, Rim pa lnga'i dka' 'grel*, Tōh. 1841, D. 320.4–6.

<sup>71</sup> See 'Gos, *Blue Annals*, 360.

<sup>72</sup> *Mdor byas 'grel chen*, 759.4–5.

during the sādhanā the yogin, as the First Lord, has to enter and thereby transform into the emanation body Vajrasattva. Akṣobhya, consequently, has to correspond to the drop in which the intermediate being takes birth. The scriptural authority Bu ston relies on here is the *Vyavasthohi*,<sup>73</sup> that relates this meditation to the “*samādhi* called *vajra-overpowering*” found in the first chapter of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*.<sup>74</sup>

Once more Tsong kha pa follows Bu ston:

The First Lord is like the intermediate being.... Akṣobhya is like the drop in which the intermediate being takes rebirth. The entry of the First Lord into Akṣobhya is similar to the entry of the intermediate being into the drop in the secret place. The transformation into the emanation body following this entry is like taking rebirth following the entry of the intermediate being.<sup>75</sup>

Hence in his sādhanā of the Guhyasamāja, Tsong kha pa has: “I enter into Akṣobhya...and become a blue Emanation Body Vajrasattva;”<sup>76</sup> and A khu ching describes how to visualize this:<sup>77</sup> The yogin as the First Lord who is seated on the throne elevates himself in space, and Akṣobhya takes his place on this throne. Then the yogin as the First Lord descends and enters through the crown of Akṣobhya. Tsong kha pa as well explains that the scripture that relates the meditation on the transformation into the emanation body to the “*samādhi* of *vajra-overpowering*” in the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* is the *Vyavasthohi*.<sup>78</sup>

Mkhas grub rje sums up this discussion with this ascerbic comment:

<sup>73</sup> D. 124a2, P. 8.4.8; for the Sanskrit see Tanaka “How to Restore Sanskrit Text,” [61].

<sup>74</sup> Sarva-tathāgātabhāvāna-vajra, *de bzhin gshes pa thams cad zil gyis gnon pa rdo rje*, see Fremantle, *Critical Study*, 178; Matsunaga *Guhyasamājantra*, 5; Zhol 3a5–3b1; Tog Palace 7.6–7 [only partly here]; D. 181.3–5; P. 175.1.1–4. Bu ston refers here to the explanation of these lines in the hidden level of interpretation in the *Pratīpoddhoyāna*.

<sup>75</sup> Sgron gsal mchan, Zhol 39b3; New Delhi, 126.1–2.

<sup>76</sup> Dpal gsang ba ‘dus pa ‘i bla brgyud gsol ‘debs dang bskyed ngag ‘don, 95.4.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Dus pa ‘phags lugs lha so gnyis pa ‘i lam rim pa dang po ‘i khrid dmigs kyi brjed byang mi bskyod mgon po ‘i zhal lung, 153.3–4.

<sup>78</sup> Rnam gzhag rim pa ‘i nam bshad, 364.1–5. Tsong kha pa acknowledges, however, that this work is not clear on how to apply this meditation to the ground of purification.

Some early and later Tibetan lamas (*bod kyi bla ma nga pnyi kha cig*) maintain so [that it is Akṣobhya who dissolves into the yogin] as well, but this is extremely inappropriate: (1) Because it is the intermediate being that enters into the midst of the coarse constituents of the semen and blood; it is not the semen and blood that enter into the intermediate being. And (2) because the semen and blood are the semen and blood of the parents, the intermediate being does not enter into semen and blood produced from its own body. And (3) because this would entail that the instruction of the *Vyavasthohi* to visualize here according to the “*samādhi* of *vajra*-overpowering” taught in the *Root Tantra* would be irrelevant.<sup>79</sup>

We can surmise that the last point here is related to the words of Red mda’ ba quoted above, that it is irrelevant to cite the *samādhi* of *vajra*-overpowering as the scriptural authority for the meditation on Akṣobhya and his transformation into Emanation Body.

The meditation prescribed by Ngor chen Kun dga’ bzang po in his *sādhana* is exactly what Bu ston and Tsong kha pa disapprove of. It should be noted that, just like Bu ston and Tsong kha pa, Ngor chen follows the method of the *atīyoga* as the *Piñḍīkrāma-sādhana* describes it, and not that of the *Sūtra-melāpaka* or the *Vyavasthohi*. In his own *sādhana*, Ngor chen has:

I visualize Akṣobhya emanating from the heart of the First Lord, and [multiplying to] pervade the entire space realm, purifying the obscuration of hatred of sentient beings possessing hatred. Then [the Akṣobhyas] gather together, and enter into me, and thereby I am Emanation Body Vajrasattva blue colored with three faces blue, white and red and with six arms, the right ones hold *vajra*, wheel and lotus and the left bell, jewel and sword, abiding sitting crossed-legged. This is the transformation into the Emanation Body.<sup>80</sup>

<sup>79</sup> Bskyed rim dngos grub rgya msho, 223.6–224.2.

<sup>80</sup> Dpal gsang ba ‘dus pa ‘i dkyil ‘khor gyi sgrub pa ‘i thabs dngos grub rgya msho, 96.2.1–3.

A myes zhabs tells us that, in his own sādhanā also the Sa skya Master 'Phags pa Chos kyi rgyal po (1235–1280) followed the *Pindātkrama-sādhanā* in a way similar to Kun dga' bzang po, however he does not elaborate.<sup>81</sup> Unfortunately at present no sādhanā written by Chos rgyal 'Phags pa on the Ārya tradition of the Guhyasamāja is available to me.

In the following table we can compare Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po's instruction to the meditation described by Tsong kha pa in his own sādhanā:

<b>Tsong kha pa's Sādhanā (95.1–6)</b>	From <sup>82</sup> their natural abode, the Father-Mother Tathāgatas are absorbed in union for the sake of taming sentient beings.
	Akṣobhya[s] formed from their <i>bodhicitta</i> s pervade the entire space realm.
	I visualize Akṣobhya emanating from the heart of the First Lord, and [multiplying to] pervade the entire space realm.
	They [Akṣobhyas] bless all sentient beings who then attain pure bliss and mental rapture.
	All the Akṣobhyas merge together in the celestial mansion.
	I [the First Lord] enter, and thereby become the Emanation Body Vajrasattva.
<b>Ngor chen's Sādhanā (96.2.1–3)</b>	and enter into me, and thereby I am Emanation Body Vajrasattva.

In both cases the Akṣobhyas pervade the entire space realm, act for the benefit of sentient beings, gather together, and finally the meditator becomes blue emanation body Vajrasattva with three faces and six arms.

<sup>81</sup> Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i dkyil 'khor lo sgrub pa'i thabs nam par bshad pa nges don phrin las rgya mtsho'i 'byung gnas, 439.5–6.

<sup>82</sup> The Sgron gsal mchan has na for nas in this Sādhanā, 95.1.

However, in the *sādhana* of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzung po, there are no Father-Mother Tathāgatas in union, no *bodhicitta*, and no bliss—in other words, this *sādhana* does not allude to rebirth, the ground of purification. Furthermore—while according to Tsong kha pa, “I,” the meditator, enters into the Akṣobhyas in correspondence with the intermediate being who enters into the drop of semen and blood—according to Kun dga' bzung po, the Akṣobhyas enter into the meditator and this cannot correspond to rebirth.

### **Where Does Akṣobhya Come From?**

Another difference between the *sādhana*s of Tsong kha pa and Ngor chen Kun dga' bzung po is the question of the place of origin of the Akṣobhya or Akṣobhyas that play a role in the transformation into the emanation body Vajrasattva. This became another point of controversy. While according to Bu ston<sup>83</sup> and Tsong kha pa, Akṣobhyas are formed from the *bodhicitta*s of Father-Mother Tathāgatas, who (have arrived) from their natural abode, and are absorbed in union, in Ngor chen Kun dga' bzung po's *sādhana*, Akṣobhyas emanate from the heart of the meditator visualized as the First Lord.

For Bu ston and Tsong kha pa, this makes a difference when this meditation is applied to rebirth. As we saw, both of them draw correspondences between the First Lord and the intermediate being as its ground of purification on the one hand, and between Akṣobhyas and the drops of semen and blood into which the intermediate enters at conception on the other. If Akṣobhya emanates from the heart of the yogin visualized as the First Lord, as Kun dga' bzung po has it in his *sādhana*, in so far as these correspondences are concerned, this would entail that the intermediate being would produce its new body by its own semen.

Conversely Red mda' ba does not agree that the origin of Akṣobhya is his natural abode as Tsong kha pa has it in his *sādhana*; rather, he explains:

Invoking Akṣobhya from his natural abode and thereby transforming into the emanation body is inappropriate.... If you invoke Akṣobhya from his natural abode,

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<sup>83</sup> *Mdor byas 'grel chen*, 758.5.

and thereby transform into the emanation body, then the meditations on issuing forth the Supreme Mandala King and so on would be enlightened activities of someone else who has been already awakened, and therefore these would not be steps for perfecting the yogin's own accumulations.<sup>84</sup>

According to Red mda' ba, if the yogins invoke Akṣobhya from his natural abode, and thereby transforming into the emanation body, then from this point of the sādhana on, the identity of the yogin would be that of Akṣobhya who has already attained buddhahood. Therefore all the steps of the sādhana that follow, including the meditations for the sake of all sentient beings during the Supreme Mandala King, would not be the yogin's own deeds.

In what seems to be a response to these words, Mkhlas grub rje objects to such an opinion:

Some later lamas (*phyis kyi bla ma kha cig*) say that it is not appropriate that [the yogin] would enter into Akṣobhya—formed from the *bodhicitta* of the Father-Mother Victorious Ones, who from their own natural abode are absorbed in union, and transform into the emanation body. Because in this case the meditations during the Supreme Mandala King on emanating, performing the deeds, and so on, would be enlightened activities of someone else who has been already awakened in the past, and not steps for perfecting the yogin's own accumulations. Such a position is extremely unreasonable.<sup>85</sup>

Mkhlas grub rje then provides arguments why he thinks this position is flawed. My purpose here is not to go into the many details of this dispute, but rather to show that in his *Bskyed rim dngos grub rgya mtsho*, Mkhlas grub rje is clearly responding to Red mda' ba's *Replies to Inquiries by*

<sup>84</sup> *Bla ma bsgrub pa dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i*, TBRC. 303b–304a, Kathmandu, 276.4–5. Reading *bkuṅ nas sprul skur sgyur ba for skyo ba kun sprul skur 'gyur ba*, in the Kathmandu version.

<sup>85</sup> *Bskyed rim dngos grub rgya mtsho*, 230.3–5.

*Bsgrub pa dpal*. I will present here only the last among Mkhas grub rje's arguments, one that emphasizes the correspondence to the ground of purification:

Even though the semen and blood of the father and mother, at first upon arrival at the secret place, are parts of the body of the parents, after the consciousness of the intermediate being enters there, mingles, develops, and is reborn as a person, whatever this person does would not be the activity of his parents, but of the son himself. Likewise, at first oneself meditates on Akṣobhya invoked from his own natural abode, but later oneself enters and mingles with him. From then on oneself abides in the divine pride of Vajrasattva; hence the fault, that from then on it is not oneself who carries out the deeds, does not occur here.<sup>86</sup>

There are several other clear cases in the *Bskyed rim dngos grub rgya msho* where Mkhas grub rje is paraphrasing Red mda' ba's *Replies to Inquiries by Bsgrub pa dpal*, and arguing against his position.

By the year 1390, Red mda' ba had probably already written his commentary on the *Pradīpoddoyotana*, entitled *Yid kyi mun sel*, which he taught to various disciples, including Tsong kha pa and Mkhas grub rje.<sup>87</sup> In the winter of 1401–02 Tsong kha pa taught the *Pradīpoddoyotana* to Red mda' ba. Then in 1404, while Red mda' ba was in a strict retreat in western Tibet, Tsong kha pa wrote his commentary on the *Vyavasthohi*, the *Rnam gzhag rim pa'i rnam bshad*,<sup>88</sup> in which he criticized (among others) Red mda' ba, as we saw above: At present I don't know when Red mda' ba wrote his *Replies to Inquiries by Bsgrub pa dpal*, but clearly Mkhas grub rje responded to this work throughout his *Bskyed rim dngos grub rgya msho*. Both Bu ston Rin chen grub and Red mda' ba Gzhon nu blo gros are among the main opponents addressed by Mkhas grub rje as he argues in defense of the system of his teacher Tsong kha pa regarding the creation stage of the Guhyasamāja.

<sup>86</sup> *Bskyed rim dngos grub rgya msho*, 231.3–5.

<sup>87</sup> For this and the following dates, see Roloff, *Red mda' ba*, 289–96.

<sup>88</sup> See Tse tan zhab's drung, *Bstan rtsis*, 211.

Thus, Mikhas grub rje admired the system put forward by Tsong kha pa for the working of the Guhyasamāja sādhana, and indeed Tsong kha pa's sādhana is nothing but brilliant. No doubt Tsong kha pa was inspired by Bu ston as well, still his presentation is exceptionally lucid. Its vigor arises from its coherence, each and every small detail contributes to the perfect whole, and all of these minute particulars are matched together in great harmony. It is because it works in this way that it has to be genuine. Thanks to his vision of the entire scope, Tsong kha pa could present such an all-inclusive configuration.

Tsong kha pa links here all the aspects of the ground, the path, and the fruit of both the creation and completion stages. The ordinary birth, death and intermediate state of the yogin (the *grounds* of purification) are transformed by the *path* of the two stages (the purifiers) and accord not only with the grounds of purification, but with the *fruit* of the three bodies of the Buddha as well. In this system the yogin's ordinary birth, death, and intermediate state correspond to certain meditations along each of the two stages that lead in turn to the realization of the three bodies of the Buddha, hence the entire complex functions as a whole.

#### V. Expanding the Scope

The coherent system established by Tsong kha pa is not limited to the Vajrayāna alone, but covers the entire Great Vehicle. It is important for Tsong kha pa that the sādhana of the Guhyasamāja would accord with the tradition of the Middle Way as well. For one example of this we will return to the awakening into manifestation from the moon.

Closely following the *Piṅḍīkrāma-sādhana*<sup>89</sup> in his sādhana, Tsong kha pa explains the awakening into manifestation from the moon:

From the *Hūm* upon the central seat a solar disk arises.  
 From the *Om* at its center a lunar disk arises.  
 From the *Aḥ* upon that an eight-petaled red lotus arises.  
 At its navel the three syllables *Om Aḥ Hūm* are stacked up.  
 All these mingle and become a moon orb,<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> L. 47–50, D. 3b5–7.

completely perfect in all its aspects.

Light rays emanating from it gather the entire animate and inanimate realms, and dissolve them into the moon.

*Om dharmadhātusvabhāvātmaḥam.*<sup>91</sup>

In the previous step, the awakening into manifestation from suchness, the entire visualization was dissolved into suchness—clear light—Dharma Body—emptiness—ultimate truth. And according to the *Piṅḍīkrāmasādhana*, this should be followed by re-arising from clear light.<sup>92</sup> However the awakening into manifestation from the moon described here does not read as a straight forward process of arising. If we expect a creation from suchness into a moon or a lunar disk upon which the deity will be sitting, this is not what we find here. On the contrary the visualization here ends with mingling, gathering, and dissolution. First, everything created here, the solar and lunar disks, and the lotus, as well as the three seed syllables upon the lotus mingle together into the moon, and more-over the entire animate and inanimate realms dissolve into the moon.

The gathering once more of the entire animate and inanimate world soon after everything was dissolved into clear light in the previous meditation seem somewhat redundant, but the sphere into which everything dissolves is different. We are more familiar with dissolution into clear light—emptiness—but why does everything here dissolve into the moon orb? We know that according to Nāgārjuna the philosopher, emptiness is that which makes change possible; and according to the Tantrika Nāgārjuna, emptiness is the ground or potential for all phenomena. But what is the meaning of the moon orb?

According to the *Piṅḍīkrāmasādhana*, the yogin should visualize the completely perfect moon as *bodhicitta* (*byang chub sems*), the seed of rebirth:

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occurrence only, and *candra-maṅḍala* for the second. Since these two terms have different meanings here, I translate the first as lunar disk and the second as moon orb.

<sup>91</sup> *Dpal gsang ba 'dus pa'i bla brgyud gsol 'debs dang bdag bskyes ngag 'don*, 93.4–94.2.

<sup>92</sup> L. 46ab, D. 3b5.

*Candra-maṅḍalam apūṛṇam bodhicittaṃ vibhāyate.*  
*Zla ba 'i dkyil 'khor kun rdzogs 'gyur, byang chub sems su*  
*rnam par btag.*<sup>93</sup>

The Candrakīrti who composed the *Vajrasattva-sādhana* explains that the yogin should meditate on the full moon orb—completely perfect in all its aspects, not as *bodhicitta*, but as mind-only (*cittamātra*, *sems tsam*):

*Paripūrṇa-candra-maṅḍalākāra-pariṇātam citta-mātram*  
*dhyātvā,*

*Zla ba 'i dkyil 'khor yongs su rdzogs par gyur te, sems*  
*tsam tu bsams nas.*<sup>94</sup>

We may recall that both Bu ston and Tsong kha pa did recognize the scriptural authority of the *Vajrasattva-sādhana*. It was Red mda' ba who doubted its authenticity. Similar explanations are found also in commentaries on the *Pīṇḍīkrama-sādhana*. For example, Munīśīrībhadrā in his *Pañcakaramāṛtha-ṭippaṇī* instructs the yogin to meditate on the full moon orb as mind-only, in the nature of very radiant wisdom light:

*Paripūrṇaṅ candra-maṅḍalaṅ citta-mātram sphuṇītarām*  
*prajñāloka-svabhāvaṃ bhāvayet,*

*Zla ba 'i dkyil 'khor yongs su rdzogs pa sems tsam mchog*  
*tu gsal ba shes rab snang bar rang bzhiṅ bsgom par*  
*bya ste.*<sup>95</sup>

And Bhavyakīrti in his *Pañcakaramapāñjīkā*, also instructs to meditate on the moon of mind-only:

*Rang gi sems tsam kyi zla ba bsams pa.*<sup>96</sup>

<sup>93</sup> L 49cd, D. 3b6-7.

<sup>94</sup> D. 397.5, P. 21.2.4-5, for the Sanskrit see Hong and Tomabechi *Vajrasattvanīṣpādana-sūtra*, 15.7-8.

<sup>95</sup> Thub pa dpal in Tōh. 1813, D. 311.4-5, for the Sanskrit see, Jiang and Tomabechi *Pañcakaramaṭṭippaṇī*, 17.1.

<sup>96</sup> *Pañcakaramapāñjīkā*, *Rim pa lnga 'i dka' 'gral*, Tōh. 1838, D. 4.2-3.

All these works are commentaries on the *Piṅḍīkrāma-sādhana*, and thus considered to belong to the tradition called in Tibet the Ārya tradition of Nāgārjuna.

It is not surprising, then, that in his own commentary on the *Piṅḍīkrāma-sādhana*, Bu ston as well explains the meditation here in terms of mind-only.<sup>97</sup> Bu ston glosses the line “visualize the completely perfect moon as *bodhicitta*” with: “visualize the essence of *bodhicitta* as mind-only.” Regarding the following line in the *Piṅḍīkrāma-sādhana*: “meditate on the entire animate and inanimate realms in that [moon] itself.” Bu ston explains: “this is so that you will understand everything as mind-only, and realize the indivisibility of the two truths.” Thirdly, Bu ston explains the mantra recited here, *Oṃ dharmadhātusvabhāvātma ko ’ham*, to mean: “everything animate and inanimate, subsumed as one’s mind-only, endowed with the nature of *dharmadhātu*, free of arising, perishing, and remaining, is me.”<sup>98</sup> Thus Bu ston is not much troubled by the occurrence of concepts of Mind Only in the Ārya tradition of the Guhyasamāja. He is willing to accept this.

On the other hand, in his own sādhana, Tsong kha pa glosses this mantra with:

The root of all the phenomena, animate and inanimate,  
appearing as moon, mere wind and mind (*rlung sems*  
*tsam*), is me.<sup>99</sup>

In his *Bskyed rim zin bris*, Tsong kha pa (or ‘Ba’ ser Dka’ bcu pa, who took these notes) glosses this mantra with: “all the animate and inanimate do not exist but from the moon, the moon itself is mere wind and mind, and that is me.”<sup>100</sup> He then continues:

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<sup>97</sup> *Mdor byas ’grel chen*, 749.4–750.1. Translated in Yoshimizu “Theoretical Basis,” 27. See also Ngor chen Kun dga’ bzang po’s sādhana, 96.1.3–4.

<sup>98</sup> These lines are translated also by Yoshimizu (“Theoretical Basis,” 27) together with the root verses on which Bu ston comments (*ibid.*, 23).

<sup>99</sup> *Dpal gsang ba ’dus pa’i bla brgyud gsol ’debs dang bdag bskyed ngag ’don*, 95.2.

<sup>100</sup> *Gsang ’dus bskyed rim gyi zin bris*, 198.5, see also his *Dpal gsang ba ’dus pa’i bskyed rim blo gsal bung ba’i re skong gnad don gsal ba*, 375.3.

This is the ground of the intermediate being, the cause from which it evolves, mere wind and mind. Although in the Perfection Vehicle are found teachings explaining that the root of all phenomena is mind, the system of this Vehicle [the Mantra Vehicle] teaches that the wind that serves as its [the mind's] mount is the root of all the animate and inanimate worlds. These are extremely sublime key-points of the path, therefore you should thoroughly understand this.<sup>101</sup>

For Tsong kha pa, the root of all phenomena here is not mind-only, but mere wind-and-mind. This applies to the ground of purification of the meditation here which is the intermediate being, who after the former coarse physical body is left behind, is made of mere wind-and-mind. Similarly, the first deity visualized here, the First Lord, has a most subtle wisdom body arising from pure wind-and-mind. On the physical level, when the coarser wind is set in motion during the periodic creation of the world, the physical elements arise one by one, and thereby the world is formed.<sup>102</sup> Thus the root of the inanimate world is the wind element. Neither Tsong kha pa nor Mkhas grub rje refer to the term mind-only in the works of the Ārya tradition of the Guhyasamāja such as the *Vajrasattva-sādhana*. However Mkhas grub rje seems to refer to a position similar to that of Bu ston about understanding everything as mind-only, and realizing the indivisibility of the two truths:

Some lamas say that this is so that you will understand all [phenomena] as mind-only, and realize the two truths as indivisible. They do not understand that the author of the *Pratīpoddhyotana* accepts external things as conventional designations, and that this is also the view of Ārya Na-garjuna. Both (1) the animate and inanimate realms that are gathered and (2) the wind and mind that gather them — which arise in the appearance of the moon — as well as anything that accords with the conventional designations

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.6–199.2.

<sup>102</sup> See the *Knam gzhag rim pa*, D. 121b5–122a1, and Tsong kha pa's commentary on this, the *Knam gzhag rim pa'i rnam bsad*, 298.1–2.

of the Mantra and Perfection Vehicles, are only conventional truth. Hence this does not signify the two truths as indivisible, and [your statement] is just pointless.<sup>103</sup>

In the previous sections we have seen some occasions when Tsong kha pa did not agree with Red mda' ba, but still followed Bu ston. In the present context however, Tsong kha pa disagrees with Bu ston as well, and there are quite a few more such examples.<sup>104</sup>

For Tsong kha pa and his followers, the Ārya tradition of the Guhyasamāja has to be the tradition of the Mādhyamaka School, even if certain views that are not Mādhyamika found their way into the scriptures of the Ārya tradition. There can be no doubt that Tsong kha pa encountered the notion of mind-only in the commentaries on the *Pinḍīkrma-sādhana*, which he cites in his own works. Yet he deliberately chose to overlook them for the sake of a perfectly harmonious system whereby the Ārya tradition fully concurs with the views of the Mādhyamaka School. Moreover the solution he finds for understanding these commentaries on the *Pinḍīkrma-sādhana* in Mādhyamaka terms is astounding, as taking *sems tsam* to mean *rlung sems tsam* is in complete agreement with all the other parts of the puzzle.

### Conclusion

In the end, all the small differences covered in this paper make a big difference, since they provide some insight into Tsong kha pa's mode of operation. In compiling his sādhana of the Guhyasamāja, Tsong kha pa created a remarkably reasonable system, soundly based on selected passages in the authoritative scriptures. The meditation he prescribed is more coherent and well-reasoned in comparison to that of his predecessors. But in presenting such a method, Tsong kha pa had to differ from the teachings

<sup>103</sup> *Bskyes rim dngos grub rgya mtsho*, 209.2–4, partly cited also in Bentor "Convergence of Theoretical and Practical," 96.

<sup>104</sup> See Bentor, "Identifying the Unnamed Opponents," "Do The Tantras," and "Convergence of Theoretical and Practical." Note that Red mda' ba as well is considered to be of the opinion that Tantras such as the *Hevajratāntra* hold the view of Mind Only; see van der Kuip "Text-Historical Note," 87.

of his immediate and more distant teachers, such as Red mda' ba Gzhon nu blo gros and Bu ston Rin chen grub. Was Tsong kha pa an innovator? In my opinion, as someone writing within the tradition, certainly Tsong kha pa had original contributions to offer.

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