The origin of the theory of definition and its place in Phya pa Chos kyi seṅ ge's philosophical system[*]

Pascale Hugon

Introduction

Epistemology had already been considered a significant element of the Buddhist corpus at the time of the Early Diffusion (*sṅa dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet, as the first and partial translations of the works of the Indian forefathers – Dignāga (ca. 480–540) and Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–660) – and of their commentators testify.[1] Though we do not know much about the "old epistemology" (*tshad ma rñiṅ ma*) of the early years of the Later Diffusion (*phyi dar*),[2] the relevance of this field for Tibetan scholars was confirmed with the

[1] This is demonstrated notably by the existing translations and translations in progress of epistemological works recorded in the lHan dkar catalogue; cf. Lalou 1953.

[2] The "old epistemology" is associated in the *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sṅon po* 64,1–2, 65,1 and 83,2) with the name of Khyuṅ po Grags se who, according to 'Gos Lo tsā ba gŹon nu dpal, composed several works on the subject, and with the translation of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* and in particular that of Devendrabuddhi's *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā* by rMa Lo tsā ba dGe ba'i blo gros. See also van der Kuijp 1983: 1–3.

rise of the "new epistemology" (*tshad ma gsar ma*) associated with the endeavors of the translator and scholar rṄog Blo ldan śes rab (1059–1109), alias rṄog Lo tsā ba (hereafter: rṄog Lo). Along with his contribution to the translation (or re-translation) of the founding treatises together with their commentaries, rṄog Lo initiated through his exegeses a line of interpretation that prevailed until the 13th century and made the monastery of gSaṅ phu Ne'u thog the leading institution of the period for the study of epistemology. Recent findings, including in particular the material published in the *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, allow us to evaluate anew the contributions of rṄog Lo and his successors, among them the famous Phywa (/Phya) pa Chos kyi seṅ ge (1109–1169; hereafter: Phya pa), who stands as a key figure in the development of a genuine Tibetan epistemology. In the available works one can trace various factors as well as distinct phases that account for the transformation of Indian *pramāṇa* into Tibetan *tshad ma*. The process through which the imported Indian corpus was then appropriated is characterized by a significant amount of "re-formatting" of the source material, both in form and contents, as well as by significant innovations. This paper deals with the early developments of one of these innovations, which came to occupy a significant place in Tibetan epistemology: the theory of definition.

While Dharmakīrti did not offer a methodical discussion on the topic of definition *per se*[3] – as Indian epistemology in general did not – the theory of definition, which deals essentially with the nature of and relation between the elements of a definition and with the rules that warrant a correct definition, figures as a core element

---

[3] Although Dharmakīrti deals with the definition of numerous notions, he does not discuss the terms of definition themselves or their relations. The closest he gets to giving rules of definition is his discussion of the definition of the thesis (*pakṣa*) in *PV* IV.85–86 (=*PVin* III.23–24). There he analyses Dignāga's defining characteristics as ways to rule out non-pervasion (*avyāpti*) and excessive extension (*ativyāpti*). He also mentions theses that are invalid due to the absence of the defining characteristic (*alakṣaṇavṛtti*). This passage is quoted, for instance, by Sa skya Paṇḍita to support his threefold division of the faults pertaining to the definiens (*Rigs gter* 190,15–26).

of Tibetan epistemological treatises since Phya pa at least.[4] Even Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251), an author prompt to denounce "self-fabricated" (*raṅ bzo*) Tibetan theories, adopts it as a *bona fide* part of his epistemological system. The popularity of the theory of definition is noted by gSer mdog paṇ chen Śākya mchog ldan (1428–1507) who reckons that by the 15th century it had become "like milk at the market place."[5] However widespread the theory became, not all Tibetan thinkers shared the same enthusiasm for this innovation, which some saw as a mere sterile proliferation.[6]

Tibetan presentations of the theory of definition are indeed of substantial size – such presentation already occupies one fifth of Phya pa's *Résumé of Epistemology* – and tend to expand over time insofar as subsequent authors add their own contribution after presenting – and if need be, refuting – preceding positions on the subject. While this leads to massive and often complex expositions, this also allows us to trace the evolution of the views on the subject and to fill in some blanks (with due caution) regarding the position of thinkers whose works are not available.

My intention here is not to go through a detailed account of the Tibetan theory of definition and all the subtleties it involves.[7]

---

[4] The earliest occurrence that is currently available of this theory in a fully developed and systematic form is found in the epistemological works of Phya pa (see below). Śākya mchog ldan ascribes to him the very origin of this theory (see *dGa' byed* 18b6–7, cited and translated in van der Kuijp 1983: 77–80) and affirms that it was unknown from rṄog Lo up to rGya dmar pa (see *Pham byed* 135b7, translated in van der Kuijp 1983: 66). There is however, as I will discuss below, evidence of Tibetan contributions prior to Phya pa.

[5] *dGa' byed* 18b7: *phyi ma'i dus 'dir rnam gźag de 'tshoṅ 'dus kyi 'o ma lta bur gyur.* Cited and translated in van der Kuijp 1983: 79–80.

[6] Go rams pa bSod nams seṅ ge (1429–1489) mentions for instance complaints in this regard by dPaṅ Lo tsā ba (probably dPaṅ Lo tsā ba Blo gros brtan pa [1276–1342]). Cf. *Rigs gter gSal byed* 43b3–4, translated in van der Kuijp 1983: 67.

[7] A basic study of the nature of the elements of definition and their relationships based on gTsaṅ nag pa's *bsDus pa* and on the *De kho na*

My goal in this paper is rather to examine possible sources for the elaboration of the specific model involved in the Tibetan theory. Indeed, while a definition commonly involves two elements, what is defined and what defines it – as in "man is a rational animal" or "water is H_2O" – the particularity of the Tibetan model is that it is conceived as involving not two, but three elements: alongside the definiens (Tib. *mtshan ñid*) and the definiendum (Tib. *mtshon bya*), one posits a "definitional basis" (*mtshan gźi*), whose function will be discussed below. This triad – often given in the abbreviated form: *mtshan/mtshon/gźi* – can be illustrated by the stock-example of the definition of cow, which involves: "cow" (the definiendum), "having a hump, a dewlap, etc." (the definiens), and "(a) white calf" as the definitional basis.

What motivated Tibetan thinkers to go from a two-term model – well established in Indian texts with the pair *lakṣaṇa/lakṣya* – to a three-term definition? My point of departure in an attempt to answer this question will be the hints given in the tradition itself that were pointed out by van der Kuijp in his introductory assessment of the emergence of the theory of definition,[8] hints which we are now in a position to better evaluate thanks to newly available material. In particular, I will consider remarks hinting at the role of the translation of the relevant terms and discussions of "*lakṣaṇa*" in the context of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*-related literature. I will then argue that, although it is not explicitly acknowledged by the Tibetans, one can trace a possible influence coming from Indian epistemological works and specifically from Dharmottara's writings. Further, I will reflect on the place and role of the theory of definition in Phya pa's works. Although in his epistemological writings Phya pa ascribes it the role of a prolegomenon to the definition of valid cognition (Tib. *tshad ma*), I will suggest that Phya pa's concern with the theory of definition is not so much linked with

---

ñid bsdus pa can be found in Fukuda 2003. As Phya pa's epistemological works were not available at the time, Fukuda only refers to Phya pa's *sToṅ thun*. Onoda 1984 deals with the question on the basis of later *bsdus grwa* literature.

  [8] Van der Kuijp 1983: 66–67.

defining valid cognition – or for that matter, with defining cows or trees – but rather addresses questions related to specific issues in Madhyamaka philosophy.

A summary of Phya pa's position

Before proceeding to trace the origin of the specifics of the Tibetan model, let me provide a brief overview of Phya pa's position. Phya pa gives a full-fledged presentation of the theory of definition in both his *Epistemology, the Dispeller of the Darkness of Mind* (*Tshad ma yid kyi mun sel*, hereafter: *Mun sel*) – a work also known as his *Résumé of Epistemology* (*Tshad ma'i bsdus pa*) – and in his extensive commentary on Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (hereafter: *'Od zer*).[9] Phya pa's presentation comprises three main sections:

   I. An analysis of the type of distinction existing between the elements of a definition (*Mun sel* 11b6–16b7, *'Od zer* 6b1–10a3)

  II. Their respective definitions (*Mun sel* 16b7–27a8, *'Od zer* 10a4–18b7)

 III. The faults related to each element when stating a definition (*Mun sel* 27a8–32a2, *'Od zer* 18b7–20b3)

What I call "theory of definition" is introduced in these texts in terms of "*mtshan ñid kyis mtshon bya mtshon pa'i tshul*" ("how to apply [lit. to define] a definiendum by means of/due to a definiens"). This formulation veils a significant particularity of the Tibetan model, which is, as I noted in the introduction, the presence of a third element: the definitional basis (*mtshan gźi*). This notion is defined minimally as being the basis for the other two elements. Its role can be better understood in the light of the following contexts:

One can notice first that when discussing specific definitions (the definition of valid cognition, of a correct logical reason, of

---

[9] See respectively *Mun sel* 11a6–32a2 and *'Od zer* 6a8–20b3. Phya pa's presentation of definition in these two texts follows roughly the same outline, but surprisingly one finds few identical passages; although the ideas correspond, examples and arguments are formulated for the most part with different wording.

ultimate truth, etc.), the author strives not only to establish a proper definiens for a given definiendum, but also to identify "what kind of things" are likely to have these definiens and definiendum. For example, when defining "ultimate truth," Phya pa not only aims at identifying the criterion for being "ultimately true," but also at identifying what can be grasped as ultimate truth (is it a simple negation, an implicative negation, both, neither?). In unproblematic cases, this identification amounts to giving an example or an illustration: a pot when defining causal efficiency, a *śiṃśapā* when defining tree, etc.

Next, in the context of the presentation of the theory of definition, the definitional basis appears as a specific case to which a given definiendum applies, or must be shown to apply, owing to the relevant definiens. "Defining" does not refer here to the association of a definiens and a definiendum (although this must be presupposed), but rather to the application of a definiendum to a definitional basis.[10] The definiens is presented as a justification for its application (or applicability). The statement of a definition can thus be seen as an argument that establishes that the definiendum applies to the definitional basis, such as for the definition of "cow:" "[this] white calf is a cow, owing to the hump, dewlap, etc." The definition of "man" according to this model would amount to stating or establishing, for instance, that "John is a man" owing to John's having the definiens of man, "being a rational animal." The relation between this type of formulation and inference will be discussed below.

The definiendum (*mtshon bya*), for its part, is described as a "convention" (*tha sñad*, Skt. *vyavahāra*). What constitutes a "convention" is identified by Phya pa using terms borrowed from the theory of exclusion (*apoha*), which, in Dharmakīrti's system, gov-

---

[10] Phya pa presents a more detailed three-step procedure leading to the application of the definiendum to the definitional basis when he deals with the definition of a logical reason that is a property of the subject (*pakṣadharma*). See *Mun sel* 43b2–6 and *'Od zer* 82a5–7, that repeat rNog Lo's presentation in *dKa' gnas* 214,18–216,3.

erns the formation and application of concepts and words. He thus presents the definiendum as:

> Fit to be determined by a word as unmixed with all that has a property directly contradictory to the definiens, or fit to be determined by a word that is a non-erroneous exclusion of what is other that eliminates all that is mutually contrary with the definiens.[11]

The application of a definiendum hence presupposes a process of exclusion involving two complementary classes generated in function of the definiens. The convention applies to the elements of one class by way of excluding members of the complementary class. It can, but need not, be associated with a word. However, it does not itself have the nature of a "name" (*miṅ*).[12] By defining, i.e., applying a convention to a definitional basis, one situates the element under consideration within a framework of worldly customs that include – but are not limited to – transactional usage and linguistic denominations.[13]

The definiens (*mtshan ñid*) is presented as the "motive for the application of the convention" (*tha sñad kyi rnam 'jog gi rgyu mtshan*); it is also the "motive for eliminating the heterogeneous, i.e., the opposite" (*'gal zla rigs mi mthun gcod pa'i rgyu mtshan*),

---

[11] *Mun sel* 25b7–8: *des na mtshan ñid daṅ dṅos 'gal gyi chos daṅ ldan pa mtha' dag daṅ ma 'dres par sgras źen du ruṅ pa 'am | mtshan ñid daṅ phan tshun spaṅs 'gal mtha' dag sel pa gźan sel phyin ci log* (read: *ma log*) *pa'i sgras źen du ruṅ pa'o ||*

[12] On this point, see the discussion in *Mun sel* 25b6–7.

[13] Knowing the convention "cow" may involve knowing the word that is to be applied to animals which have a hump and a dewlap ("*go*" in India, "*ba laṅ*" in Tibet, etc.), and conversely, knowing what to look for when being asked to bring a "cow." It also involves knowing "what to do" with such things in a specific situation. Note however that defining is not limited to entities (*dṅos po*) endowed with causal capacities; definitions are also applicable in the realm of non-entities (*dṅos med*) (see n. 18) and for second-order properties: conventions themselves can become definitional bases in a definition. For instance, one can apply to "the convention 'cow'" the definiendum "being a definiendum."

i.e., the motive for the above-mentioned division into two classes.[14] One can say that it plays the role of a sufficient and necessary condition for the applicability of the convention.[15] Note that while the theory of definition provides the criteria that allow the "testing" of a putative definiens, it does not give a procedure to identify the definiens involved in an established convention.[16]

The first section of Phya pa's theory of definition is dedicated to an analysis as to how these three elements are distinct (*tha dad*)[17]

---

[14] In *'Od zer* 6a9, Phya pa describes the definiens as "the motive for eliminating the heterogeneous, i.e., the opposite" (*'gal zla rigs myi mthun gcod pa'i rgyu mtshan*) and the definiendum, reciprocally, as "that which is to be determined as specific after having distinguished the heterogeneous" (*rigs myi mthun las phye nas thun moṅ ma yin par źen par bya ba*).

[15] See *Mun sel* 11a7: *yod na...tha sñad 'jug la med na mi 'jug pa...*

[16] That the identification of the definiens for someone learning a convention pertaining to entities such as cows or trees should always be spontaneous is contradicted by the case, which will be discussed below, of the "dimwit" who has not been able to grasp the definiens of tree (or cow) properly.

[17] Phya pa considers four options as to how two elements (x and y) can be distinct (*tha dad*):

1. *dṅos po tha dad*: x and y are causally efficient entities and mutually empty, such as a pot and a pole.
2. *gcig pa bkag pa'i tha dad*: x and y are distinct insofar as they are not one. One rejects the identity of the two, but as they do not exist conjointly, they are not, properly speaking, "distinct entities," as for example an actual pot and the pot in the preceding moment.
3. *tha dad med pa la rnam graṅs kyis brjod pa*: x and y are distinct only in terms of expression, but there is only one concept (*ldog pa*). In such a case, we are dealing with synonyms, as for example *śiṅ* and *ljon pa* (both meaning "tree").
4. *ṅo bo cig gi ldog pa tha dad*: x and y are distinct concepts for a unique, undifferentiated nature. Their distinctiveness is expressed in terms of being separated (*phye ba*) from distinct *eliminanda*. This echoes the formulation "excluded from different bases of exclusion" that one finds in the *apoha* theory. The classical example is that of "produced" and "impermanent," two properties of the pot, which correspond to two ways of conceiving the pot, namely, as something that is excluded from what is non-produced, and as something that is excluded from what is permanent.

with the conclusion that the definitional basis, definiens and definiendum have an undifferentiated nature (*ṅo bo dbyer med*),[18] but are distinct concepts, or "distinguishers" (*ldog pa tha dad*), as exemplified by the properties "produced" and "impermanent" in the case of a pot. This distinction, in the case of the definiens and the definiendum, is paired with their characterization as being, for the first, "substantially existent" (*rdzas yod*, *dravyasat*) and for the second "nominally existent" (*btags yod*, *prajñaptisat*),[19] and with the characterization of their instances as being, respectively, a state of affairs (*don*, *artha*) and a convention (*tha sñad*, *vyavahāra*).

In the second section, the theory of definition is applied autoreferentially, that is, the definiens and the suitable definitional bases are identified for each of the three elements. This leads to complicated discussions, particularly in the case of "definiens," focusing on the questions: "Does a definiens require a definiens?" and "if it does, would this lead to infinite regress?" Against some of his predecessors, who contend that a definiens does not require a definiens, Phya pa gives as the definiens of a definiens a set of three properties (*chos gsum*) that address its nature and its relation with the two other elements: the definiens must be substantially existent, it must not be "different in meaning" (*don ldog gźan*) from the

———

Cf. *Mun sel* 11b7–8 and 12b9–13a1.

[18] This undifferentiated nature can be either real or unreal, cf. *Mun sel* 12b4–5: *des na gźi dṅos po yin na mtshan ñid daṅ mtshon bya dṅos po cig yin la gźi dṅos med yin na'aṅ de gñis tha dad med pa yin pas mtshan ñid daṅ mtshon bya ṅo bo dbyer med pa la ldog pa tha dad du gnas pa yin no //* Parallel in *'Od zer* 7b1–2.

[19] These notions are defined in terms of the comprehension depending or not depending on the apprehension of another property as being the cause for its establishment. Cf. *Mun sel* 12b5–6: *ldog pa'aṅ gñis te rdzas su yod pa daṅ rtags [=btags] su yod pa'o / rdzas yod ni chos gźan rnam 'jog gi rgyur bzuṅ pa la ma ltos par rtogs par bya ba ste bden pa rtogs pa lasogs pa don gyi chos rnams so // btags yod ni chos gźan rnam 'jog gi rgyur bzuṅ pa la ltos nas rtogs par bya ba ste tshad ma'i tha sñad lasogs pa tha sñad kyi chos rnams sam tha sñad des khyad par du byas pa'i chos rnams so /* Parallel in *'Od zer* 10b3.

definiendum,[20] and it must occur for the definitional basis.[21] This "triple property" amounts to the criterion that warrants a correct definition and serves to delineate the faults of the definition described in the third and last section.

Possible sources for the early developments of the theory of definition

Although the Tibetan theory of definition does not replicate an existing Indian model, one can reflect on the possible influence(s) that led Tibetan thinkers to develop a triadic model of definition involving the particularities mentioned above. As pointed out by van der Kuijp, the Tibetan tradition provides some hints in this regard: dPaṅ Lo tsā ba, whom Go rams pa mentions as a detractor of the theory of definition, claims that all these discussions on definition arose due to inconsistencies in the translation of the Sanskrit terms involved; what were originally different translations of the same term became distinct elements in the definition.[22] According to

---

[20] This criterion has the goal (in addition to the elimination of putative definiens that would be contrary to the definiendum, too broad, or too restricted) of eliminating cases of properties that, although co-extensive with the definiendum, are "different in meaning," a notion that Phya pa clarifies by explaining that they are "not directly contradictory to the heterogeneous class" (*Mun sel* 28(’*og*)a3: *rigs mi mthun daṅ dṅos ’gal ma yin*). Hence, for instance, "causally efficient" is held not to be the definiens of "impermanent" because it is not directly contradictory to "permanent." The proper definiens of "impermanent" is "not remaining for a second moment" (*dus gñis par mi sdod pa*).

[21] *Mun sel* 17a4: *des na mtshan ñid kyi mtshan ñid ni / chos gsum daṅ ldan pa ste / raṅ ldog ṅes pa rnam ’jog gi rgyu mtshan la mi ltos pas rdzas yod yin pa daṅ / mtshon bya las don gyi ldog pa gźan du mi gnas pa daṅ mtshan gźi la ldan pa’o //*

[22] See n. 6 for the reference. As noted by van der Kuijp (1983: 67 and n. 249), the passage quoted by Go rams pa mentions that dPang Lo tsā ba points to the inconsistency in the translation of the term "*lakṣaṇa*," whereas, as will be discussed below, it is rather the term "*lakṣya*" that is inconsistently translated as either *mtshan gźi* or *mtshon bya*. Śākya mchog ldan points out that the expression "*mtshon par bya ba*" (i.e., *lakṣya*) has

Śākya mchog ldan, the theory of definition was well known thanks to commentaries on two verses of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (*AA*), namely *AA* IV.13 and IV.31.[23] Following Śākya mchog ldan's hint to the existence of discussions of definition outside the scope of epistemological treatises, I consider below the relevant passages of the *AA* and a number of Tibetan commentaries thereupon, which additionally will provide a starting point to evaluate dPaṅ Lo tsā ba's claim.

Abhisamayālaṅkāra literature

The two verses mentioned by Śākya mchog ldan occur in the fourth section of the *AA*, which deals with the *lakṣaṇa* (meaning here a specific mark or characteristic feature) of the training of a Bodhisattva.[24] Verse *AA* IV.13 states:

---

two uses – it can indicate either the *mtshon bya* (for instance the verbal convention "cow") or the *mtshan gźi* (e.g., the white calf) – but also mentions the double use of the word "*mtshan ñid*" (*lakṣaṇa*), not however corresponding to *mtshan gźi* and *mtshon bya*, but to "that by which one defines" (*gaṅ gis mtshon par byed pa*) and "the basis on which it is to be defined" (*gaṅ la mtshon par bya ba'i gźi*); that is, it would corespond to the *mtshon byed* and to the *mtshon gźi*. See *Pham byed* 122a7–b6.

[23] Śākya mchog ldan affirms: "Although there is no source for formal applications of definition in the texts of the author of the Seven Treatises, relative to the instances in the commentarial text of the Noble Maitreya in the verses [...(see below)] and to the elaboration in the commentaries on this it was clearly known to all logicians of the Snow Land from the Lord of Logic Phya pa hitherward (*tshun chad*)*." (*Pham byed* 135b5–7; cited in van der Kuijp 1983: 66) *I take "*tshun chad*" to express a time-frame from the point of view of Śākya mchog ldan. While Śākya mchog ldan claims in the passage that follows that the theory of definition was not known between the time of rṄog Lo and that of rGya dmar pa (who was one of Phya pa's teachers), he mentions elsewhere some views on definition by Phya pa's predecessors. Van der Kuijp (1983: 66–67) suggested that the latter could have dealt with definition in the context of *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* commentaries whereas Phya pa was the first to deal with it in the context of epistemology.

[24] This fourth section deals with the Perfection of Wisdom consisting

A mark (*lakṣaṇa*) is to be known as that by which [something] is characterized (*lakṣyate*). And it is threefold: i) the mark of cognition, ii) the distinctive mark, and iii) the mark of the activity. What is characterized is the nature (*svabhāva*) [of the training of a Bodhisattva].[25]

In verse IV.31b–d, the "nature" that is being characterized is presented as constituting itself a fourth kind of characteristic:

The nature has a sixteen-fold disposition; since [it] is characterized as if it had [these sixteen as] a mark, [it] is admitted as a fourth mark.[26]

---

in "enlightenment concerning all the aspects" (*sarvākārābhisambodha*), the so-called aspects being topics in the understanding of entities. After presenting the aspects – divided into three according to the three kinds of omniscience (omniscience *simpliciter* [*sarvajñatā*], knowledge of the path [*mārgajñatā*], and knowledge of all aspects [*sarvākārajñatā*]) – the author deals with the "endeavors" (*prayoga*) or training aimed at obtaining this particular enlightenment. He describes the suitable endeavors, the method of training (listing twenty endeavors), followed by the virtues, faults and features relative to the training. The *lakṣaṇa* are here marks, or characteristic features, of the training, rather than a definiens strictly speaking. "Characterization" differs from "definition" in that the mark that is stated is not specific to the given *lakṣya*. Śākya mchog ldan states this difference in *Pham byed* 122b2–3 in the following terms: the characterization (*mtshon par byed*) can be either specific (*thun moṅ min par*) or non-specific (*thun moṅ du*); for instance, "heat" characterizes "fire" specifically (i.e., it is its definiens), but "impermanence" characterizes the Truth of suffering non-specifically (i.e., although it is a characteristic feature of this Truth, it is not its definiens).

[25] *AA* IV.13, p. 19: *lakṣyate yena taj jñeyaṃ lakṣaṇaṃ trividhaṃ ca tat / jñānaṃ viśeṣaḥ kāritraṃ svabhāvo yaś ca lakṣyate //* (Tib. p. 35: *gaṅ gis* *mtshon de mtshan ñid du // śes bya de yaṅ rnam pa gsum // śes pa khyad par byed pa ste // ṅo bo ñid gaṅ mtshon bya yaṅ //*). *The text edited in the sDe dge edition (7a6) has the faulty reading "*gi.*"

[26] *AA* IV.31, p. 22: [*tathatānupalambhaś ca*] *svabhāvaḥ ṣoḍaśātmakaḥ / lakṣmeva/lakṣīva* *lakṣyate ceti caturthaṃ** *lakṣaṇaṃ matam //* (Tib. p. 40: [*de bźin ñid ni mi dmigs daṅ //*] *ṅo bo ñid bcu drug bdag ñid // mtshon bya lta bur* *mtshon pas na // mtshan ñid bźi par bźed pa yin //*)
*Obermiller and Stcherbatsky emend to "*lakṣmeva*" the reading "*lakṣmīva*" found in the two manuscripts of *AA*. Wogihara likewise adopts this emendation in his edition of Haribhadra's *Abhisamayālaṅkārālokā* (*AAA*)

This passage of the *AA* clearly evokes a two-term model of characterization involving something that characterizes – the *lakṣaṇa* – and something that is characterized by it (*tena lakṣyate*).

---

against the readings "*lakṣmīva*" and "*lakṣīva*" found in the manuscripts. The manuscript of the *Abhisamayālaṅkārakārikāśāstravivṛti* (*AAKŚV*) edited by Amano reads "*lakṣīva*." My translation follows Haribhadra's gloss: "The endeavor regarding the three kinds of omniscience is characterized by these sixteen natures like if it had [them as] a mark; therefore one admits [as] a fourth [mark] the mark of the nature" (*AAKŚV* 67,12–13: *ity evaṃ ṣoḍaśasvabhāvair yathāvat trisarvajñatāprayogo lakṣaṇavān iva lakṣyata ity evaṃ caturthaṃ svabhāvalakṣaṇaṃ matam iti*). This gloss in terms of "*lakṣaṇavān iva*" (Tib. 113a5: *mtshan ñid daṅ ldan pa bźin du*) would support the reading "*lakṣīva*."

Regarding the Tibetan translation of the *AA*, the Tibetan block-prints of Aga monastery consulted by Obermiller and Stcherbatsky read "*mtshon bya lta bur*." So does the Tibetan translation of the *AA* in the sDe dge edition (8a2) and that of the *AAKŚV* in the Peking and Narthang editions (Amano 2000: 66) whereas the sDe dge edition of the latter reads "*mtshon cha lta bur*" (112b6), a reading also found in the Tibetan edition of the *AAA* used by Wogihara. The Tibetan "*mtshon bya*" is attested as a translation of "*lakṣman*," but the latter has the sense of a "mark" rather than of what is being marked. In view of the fact that rṄog Lo is responsible for the translation of *AA* as well as for the revision of both *AAA* and *AAKŚV*, it is possible that his choice of "*mtshon bya*" reflects the identification of "*mtshon bya*" and "*mtshan ñid daṅ ldan pa*."

As an alternative to "*mtshon bya lta bur*," one finds, reflecting explicitly Haribhadra's understanding, "*mtshan ñid can ltar*" in the Tibetan translation of this same verse quoted in a commentary on the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* by Abhayākaragupta (late 11th–early 12th c.) and translated by himself (*Āryāṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāvṛttimarmakaumudī*, Tib. 146b4). As further alternative, *AA* IV.31 is cited with the reading "*mtshan gźi lta bur*" in Ratnākaraśānti's *Āryāṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāpañjikāsārottamā* (Tib. 142a6), a work translated by Subhūti(śrī)śānti and Śākya blo gros around the middle of the 11th century. This translation is reflected also for instance in the commentary by sGros rñiṅ pa (13th c.), who glosses the expression by "*mtshon par bya ba'i mtshan gźi lta bu*" (*mṄon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi rnam par 'byed pa'i 'grel ba* 262,3).

** I follow the reading of this verse in *AAA* and *AAKŚV*. *AA*'s edition alone reads "*caturthalakṣaṇaṃ*."

As no less than ten Tibetan commentaries on the *AA* have recently become available in the first thirty volumes of the *bKa'
gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, we have ample opportunity to evaluate what
Tibetan thinkers made of this discussion.[27]

Commentaries that postdate Phya pa clearly demonstrate the
popularity of the triadic model of definition. For instance, sGros
rñiṅ pa 'Od zer mgon po and gŹon nu rin chen (both writing around
the 13th century or later) analyze this passage of the *AA* using a
model involving *mtshan ñid*, *mtshon bya* and *mtshan gźi*.[28] If these
authors make use of this model, they do not however provide at this
occasion an extensive theoretical presentation of its specifics.[29]

---

[27] I mention here by way of reference the name of the author, a date
when available, and the volume and text number as given in the *dkar
chag*. rṄog Lo (1059–1109) I.13; Ar Byaṅ chub ye śes (11th c.) II.9; Khu
Śes rab brtson 'grus (1075–1143) X.4; 'Jam gsar ba Śes rab 'od zer XIV.5;
sGros rñiṅ pa 'Od zer mgon po (13th c.) XV.4; 'Chus Dar ma brtson 'grus
(1117–1192) XIX.3; gŹon nu rin chen (13–14th c.) XXI.4; Śakya'i dge
sloṅ Chos grags XXIII.7; dGe sloṅ Śes rab grags (early 11th c.) XXVI.4;
bSod sñom pa Rin chen rgyal mtshan XXIX.11.

[28] sGros rñiṅ pa (*mṄon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi rnam par 'byed pa'i
'grel ba* 256ff.) explains the process of defining in terms of: *mtshan gźi
la mtshan ñid kyis mtshon bya mtshon tshul*. The *mtshan gźi* is identified
as the endeavors of the Bodhisattva, and the *mtshon bya* as the cause or
specificity of the three types of omniscience (*śes pa de dag gi rgyu'i tha
sñad*).
gŹon nu rin chen (*mṄon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi 'grel ba bcud kyi
thig* 226ff.) makes roughly the same identification of the three elements
as sGros rñiṅ pa. The fourth mark, the nature, is presented in terms of
mtshon bya lta bu'i mtshan ñid, in opposition to the other three, which are
qualified as *mtshon bya dṅos kyi mtshan ñid*. The three-term definition
is illustrated by the example of smoke being defined as "logical reason"
owing to the definiens "[being a] property of the subject, [having] positive and negative concomitance [with the property to be proved]," in other
words, to its satisfying the triple characteristic (*trairūpya*) for being a
genuine logical reason.

[29] The titles of the subdivisions recall theoretical discussions, for instance "*mtshan gźi la mtshan ñid kyis mtshon bya ji ltar mtshon pa'i
tshul*," or "*mtshan mtshon gźi gsum ṅos gzuṅ pa*." But the contents of

To find out whether it is in this context that the theory of definition originally developed we must turn to earlier commentaries. Of special interest to us is the one composed by rṄog Lo, who also translated the *AA* together with the Pandit Go mi 'chi med and revised earlier translations of Haribhadra's commentaries.

rṄog Lo's commentary on the Abhisamayālaṅkāra

In rṄog Lo's commentary on these verses (27a2ff.), one does not see the application of a three-term model of definition. One notices however that what is being characterized, the "nature of the training," is presented in two ways so as to constitute the following pairs with *lakṣaṇa*:

   i. *mtshan gźi – mtshan ñid (kyi chos)*

   ii. *mtshon bya'i chos – mtshon byed kyi chos*

Thus, while "*lakṣaṇa*" is expressed either by its Tibetan equivalent "*mtshan ñid*" or through its function as "the property that characterizes" (*mtshon byed kyi chos*), one sees the use of two different Tibetan expressions for the counterpart of "*lakṣaṇa*:" one corresponds to the idea of a "basis of characterization," to be understood as "a basis for the defining characteristic;" the other to that of a "property that is to be characterized." These alternatives appear to be a consequence of the way this element is apprehended in relation to the "*lakṣaṇa*." There does not, however, seem to be an essential difference between the two at this stage, as the "property that is to be characterized" is also said to be "the foundation of what characterizes" (*mtshon byed kyi ltos sa*), thus echoing the notion of "basis" (*gźi*) occurring in the first pair.

----

these subdivisions only address the application in the case under consideration. Note however that gŹon nu rin chen, in his "extensive explanation" (*mṄon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi 'grel ba bcud kyi thig* 227ff.), explains the distinction between *mtshan ñid* and *mtshon bya* in terms of the oppositions *don ldog/tha sñad ldog* and *rdzas yod/btags yod*.

Ar Byaṅ chub ye śes's commentary

Another early commentary of interest is that of Ar Byaṅ chub ye śes (11th c.). In his discussion of *AA* IV.13–31, this author uses at some points the terms "*mtshan gźi*" and "*mtshon bya*" together with "*mtshan ñid*" as part of a triad,[30] but he does not provide a theoretical presentation of these notions or an analysis of their nature and relationship. His general outline follows, however, the two-term model suggested in the Sanskrit text, distinguishing between "what characterizes" (*mtshon byed*) and "what is to be characterized" (*mtshon bya*).

A reader of Ar Byaṅ chub ye śes's commentary completed this outline with a marginal note providing an interpretation of the verses of the *AA* according to a three-term model of definition.[31] This note identifies the three elements of the definition – *mtshan gźi*, *mtshon bya* and *mtshan ñid* – and defines *mtshan gźi* as "a basis where the *mtshan ñid* resides" (which is also Phya pa's definition). Moreover, our "scribbler" supplies a citation in support of the triad

---

[30] Cf. *mṄon par rtogs rgyan gyi 'grel ba rnam par 'byed pa* 168('*og*) a6–7: *sbyor pa ñi śu 'am lṅa po mtshan gźir bźag la | 'di rnams saṅs rgyas skyed par byed pa'am | saṅs rgyas la 'jig rten ston par byed pa yin te źes mtshon byar bya'o | de'i mkhyen pa gsum gyi rtogs pa skyed pa yin pa ni mtshan ñid du bya'o //* See sGros rñiṅ pa's mention and criticism of this position in *mṄon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi rnam par 'byed pa'i 'grel ba* 256.

[31] This note can be only partly deciphered due to blurring. See ibid. 168('*og*)a2: *ni rje btsun gyis // saṅs rgyas rnaṃs kyaṅ seṃn [=sems can] la // phan gdags phyir na mtshan gźi daṅ // mtshan ñid daṅ ni mtshan pa ste // źes bśad pas mtshan ñid gnas pa'i rten mtshan gźi daṅ | mtsh[o]n bya daṅ | mtshan ñid do | daṅ [po] ni gźi daṅ ¨¨¨d [rnaṃ?] pas [bsñam?] pa'i chos [thaṃd?] skye pa med par [bsñoṃs?] pa'i gnas pa bkag pa lasogs pa'i sbyar ba ñi shu'o // 2 pa ni sbyor pa de la yod pa'i sbyor ba'i khyad par de bźin gśegs pa skyed bar byed pa'aṃ yaṅ na de bźin gśegs pa la 'jig rten ston par byed 'o // 3 pa mtshan ñid.*
(I transcribe the *bindu* as *ṃ*. Square brackets indicate unclear readings, square brackets with a question mark uncertain readings, and ¨ stands for an illegible character.)

that can be identified as *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (*MSA*) XI.36.[32] This verse mentions three terms: *lakṣya*, *lakṣaṇa* and *lakṣaṇā*, translated in Tibetan respectively as *mtshan gźi*, *mtshan ñid* and *mtshon pa*. The author of the interlinear note seems to want to identify "*mtshon pa*" with "*mtshon bya*" (an alternative occasionally found in Phya pa's works). Are we dealing here with a Sanskrit precedent for the Tibetan triadic model of definition? Such a possibility is not supported by the sense of this passage, as the third term, "*lakṣaṇā*," does not refer to a third element, but to the process through which the indicand (*lakṣya*) and the indice (*lakṣaṇa*) are linked.[33] But although there would thus be no parallelism between the three terms found in *MSA* XI.36 and the three elements of the Tibetan model of definition, the identification performed in this marginal note is found also in Phya pa's commentary on the *MSA*, where Phya pa illustrates *MSA* XI.36 with the definition of cow, involving the three elements "white calf," "hump and dewlap, etc." and "cow."[34]

---

[32] *MSA* XI.36 (Tib. XII.36): *lakṣyaṃ ca lakṣaṇaṃ caiva lakṣaṇā ca prabhedataḥ / anugrahārthaṃ sattvānāṃ sambuddhaiḥ samprakāśitā.* Lévi translates: "L'Indicand, l'Indice, l'Indication ont été expliqués dans leurs sections par les Bouddhas pour rendre service aux créatures." In a more recent publication dealing with Buddhist semiotics, D'Amato formulates the triad in terms of "signified, signifier, and signification" (2003: 91). In the given passage of the *MSA*, *lakṣya* is mind, *lakṣaṇa* the three natures, and *lakṣaṇā* the stages of spiritual discipline.

[33] I follow here Lévi's understanding of the passage (1907: 116 n.36): "Toute expression est directe ou indirecte. Si elle est indirecte, on se sert d'un « indice » (*lakṣaṇa*) pour faire entendre l' « indicand » (*lakṣya*, indicandum), le sens qu'on veut faire entendre ; l' « indication » (*lakṣaṇā*) est la fonction qui met en rapport les deux autres termes." In the classical example "*gaṅgāyāṃ ghoṣaḥ*" ("a stable on the Ganges"), the *lakṣaṇā* is the process of association that allows the understanding of the indicand as "a stable *on the bank of* the Ganges" through the indice (i.e., the statement "a stable on the Ganges").

[34] *Theg chen mdo sde rgyan gyi legs bśad rgyan ñi 'od gsal ba* 473–474. None of the other five commentaries on the *MSA* in the *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum* – including the one composed by rṄog Lo (*mDo sde rgyan bsdus don*, see 16b8ff. on this verse) – hint at a parallel with the theory of defini-

Thus, although the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* and, as we have seen, the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* as well, contain a discussion involving the key terms "*lakṣaṇa*" and "*lakṣya*" (or "*yad lakṣyate*" for the first), this preliminary look into the early Tibetan commentaries did not reveal any theoretical discussions on the nature of the elements of definition (or characterization). It showed nevertheless that the triadic model was known from early on and was applied in this context. Although it is not used by rṄog Lo in his commentary on the *AA*, we find there the suggestion of an early differentiation concerning the counterpart of *lakṣaṇa*: the counterpart is alternately expressed with the terms "*mtshan gźi*" and "*mtshon bya*."

Further evidence concerning the use of these two terms can be gathered from rṄog Lo's epistemological writings.

rṄog Lo's epistemological works

Looking at the epistemological works of rṄog Lo that are actually available – a synopsis of Dharmottara's *Nyāyabinduṭīkā*[35] and a commentary on the difficult points of the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (*dKa' gnas*) – one can see in at least one case a clear echo of the indeterminacy with regard to the formulation, in Tibetan, of the counterpart of *lakṣaṇa* in a two-term definition. Namely, when discussing Dharmakīrti's definition of perception (*pratyakṣa*, Tib. *mṅon sum*), rṄog Lo introduces the views of several Indian commentators (Dharmottara, Kamalaśīla, Śāntabhadra) on the function of the two elements "direct perception" and "devoid of conceptualization and non-erroneous." The question here is how these two, conceived respectively as definiendum and definiens (*lakṣya/lakṣaṇa*), are to be identified with the elements of the pair "what has been posited" (*anuvāda, ...anūdya*) / "what is to be affirmed" (*vidheya*) (Tib. *rjes su brjod pa/sgrub pa*), which one can assimilate to the semantic

---

tion in this context.

[35] This work, whose first page bears the title *mTshan ñid kyi chos*, is erroneously identified as a synopsis of the *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (*rNam ṅes bsdus don*) by the editors of the *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*.

notions of "theme" and "rheme."[36] What interests us here is how rṄog Lo formulates the notions of *lakṣya* and *lakṣaṇa*.[37] In both works, rṄog Lo uses the pair of Tibetan terms "*mtshon bya*" and "*mtshan ñid*" when paraphrasing the positions of Indian commentators as well as when giving his own opinion. If we turn now to his translation of Dharmottara's *Pramāṇaviniścayaṭīkā* (*PVinṬ*), one notices that in the corresponding context the pair *lakṣya/lakṣaṇa* is systematically translated with *mtshan gźi/mtshan ñid*.[38] Thus, in this discussion, rṄog Lo uses "*mtshon bya*" for *lakṣya* in his own works, whereas he uses "*mtshan gźi*" to translate this term in the *PVinṬ*.

Although one finds in the preceding case "*mtshon bya*" and "*mtshan gźi*" as two alternative renderings of "*lakṣya*," rṄog Lo clearly differentiates between the two when he applies a triadic model of definition. He also states explicitly in *dKa' gnas* that *mtshan gźi* and *mtshon bya* are distinct, as exemplified in the case of "smoke" and "logical reason" ("smoke" being the logical

---

[36] See *dKa' gnas* 86,18–90,21. In brief, the "theme" is the topic, what is being talked about, while the "rheme" is what is being said about it, namely, the new information provided in the given statement. In the discussions mentioned here, the question is whether "devoid of conceptualization, etc." is affirmed of a posited "perception," or if "perception" is affirmed of a posited "cognition devoid of conceptualization, etc."

[37] The Sanskrit pair is attested in this context in Kamalaśīla's *TSP* 449,11–12 ad *TS* 1213 and in a parallel discussion in Jinendrabuddhi's *PSṬ* I 37,5. Although absent from *NBṬ* ad *NB* I.4, these expressions can be found in Durvekamiśra's *DhPr* 41,6–15.

[38] This portion of the *PVinṬ* (namely *PVinṬ* I 37a-38a) is not available in Sanskrit. However, a citation in the *DhPr* confirms that the Sanskrit original contained the pair *lakṣya/lakṣaṇa*. Cf. *PVinṬ* I 37b2–3: *mtshan gźi daṅ mtshan ñid grub pa la ni mtshan ñid rjes su brjod nas mtshan gźi ñid śes par byed la / mtshan gźi daṅ mtshan ñid kyi dṅos po ma grub pa'i ṅag la ni mtshan ñid sgrub par byed do //* and *DhPr* 41,10–11: *yataḥ prasiddhe lakṣyalakṣaṇabhāve lakṣaṇānuvādena lakṣyaṃ vidheyam, aprasiddhe tu lakṣaṇavākyena lakṣaṇam eva vidheyam, na lakṣyam iti nyāya iti /*

reason invoked to prove the presence of "fire").[39] It is interest-
ing to note that this remark occurs precisely when rṄog Lo com-
ments on Dharmottara's arguments against Kamalaśīla's position
on the theme/rheme controversy. Kamalaśīla's position is that the
definiendum "direct perception" is affirmed once "devoid of con-
ceptualization and non-erroneous" has been posited as a topic.[40]
Dharmottara contends that in this case, the definiens would have to
be established; he offers two alternatives: it is established without
a basis (*gźi*) – which is impossible – or with a basis, namely, an
instance of perception (*mṅon sum ñid kyi gźi*). In this last case, says
Dharmottara, the *lakṣya* would be established; being already estab-
lished, it would not be what is to be affirmed once the definiens is
posited.[41] What Dharmottara implies here is that "perception" is es-
tablished because a cognition which is a perception is established.
This, according to rṄog Lo amounts to confusing *mtshan gźi* and
mtshon bya. rṄog Lo is here implying that behind the unique
Sanskrit term "*lakṣya*," here referring to "perception," two notions
have to be distinguished: an instance of perception which is estab-
lished insofar as it is experienced, and the definiendum "percep-
tion," a characterization which is to be applied to such an instance.
Note that rṄog Lo's remark would have made little sense if he
had in this text, as in his translation of the *PVinṬ*, previously used
the term *mtshan gźi* rather than *mtshon bya* for the counterpart of
mtshan ñid. I will come back to the issue of translation below.

---

[39] *dKa' gnas* 88,18: *mtshon bya daṅ mtshan gźi yaṅ tha dad de | du ba
daṅ gtan tshigs ñid bźin no ||*

[40] *TSP* 449,11 ad *TS* 1213: *tatra jñānasya kalpanāpoḍhatvam abhrānta-
tvaṃ cānūdya pratyakṣatvaṃ vidhīyate*. Hence, according to him, the
definiens is the theme and the definiendum the rheme. Dharmottara, on
the other hand, contends that the definiendum "perception" is the theme
and the definiens the rheme. According to him, "perception" is some-
thing which everyone can acknowledge, and the character of being "de-
void of conceptualization and non-erroneous" is what is affirmed of this
established topic.

[41] See *dKa' gnas* 88,1–8 for a presentation of Dharmottara's refutation
(corresponding to *PVinṬ* I 38a3ff.), and 88,9–19 for rṄog Lo's criticism.

While rṄog Lo uses the triadic model in his epistemological works, he does not provide a systematic presentation of the nature of the three elements or of their relationship – to some extent this can be expected in view of the nature of the available works. Still, a number of "technical remarks" prefiguring what is found in Phya pa's extensive presentation let us guess that some sort of theoretical framework had already been worked out at that time,[42] countering Śākya mchog ldan's claim that the theory of definition was not known until Phya pa.[43] That rṄog Lo may have provided a more systematic account in a work that is as yet unavailable remains a possibility. The same remark holds true for rṄog Lo's successors, whose contributions to the subject can be gleaned for instance from the numerous citations in the *De kho na ñid bsdus pa*, a work probably written in the 12th century.[44] This work, in which the conflicting views concerning definition are nominally identified, testifies to a significant amount of discussion focused on theoretical issues by students of rṄog Lo and contemporaries of Phya pa.[45]

---

[42] These remarks mainly address the nature and relationship between *mtshan ñid* and *mtshon bya*: i) they represent, respectively, the reason of imputation and the property imputed (*btags pa'i chos*) (*dKa' gnas* 166); ii) the first is substantially existent, the second nominally existent (p. 166); iii) they do not deviate from one another, but are distinct properties as objects of thought (p. 303); and iv) the relationship between *mtshan ñid* and *mtshon bya* can be paired with the role of *liṅga* and *liṅgin* (p. 487). In addition, in the context of the definition of a logical reason that is a property of the subject (*pakṣadharma*) (p. 214), rṄog Lo describes the three-step process of "establishing a convention" (see also n. 10 above).

[43] See notes 4 and 23 above.

[44] This work is attributed to Kloṅ chen Rab 'byams pa. However, insofar as its author mentions the positions of thinkers up to Phya pa and those of Phya pa's contemporaries, but does not seem to be aware of any of the innovations brought by Phya pa's student gTsaṅ nag pa, it is more likely to have been written in the 12th century, at a time when gTsaṅ nag pa was not yet active as a teacher. On this text, see van der Kuijp 2003.

[45] The authors identified in the *De kho na ñid bsdus pa* are (with, in parentheses, the number of times their name occurs with regard to the theory of definition): Jo btsun (3), Gaṅs pa (3), rGya (8), Me dig pa (2),

Translation issues

Let us consider the question of translation. As I mentioned above,
dPaṅ Lo tsā ba attributes the emergence of the three-term model of
definition to confusion in the translation. We have seen that rṄog Lo
uses "*mtshan gźi*" and "*mtshon bya*" as alternative Tibetan equiva-
lents for "*lakṣya*" in his epistemological works. One can wonder if
this fluctuation echoes a generalized phenomenon in translations of
the Buddhist corpus. Are the two renderings equivalent? Is one of
them the preferred translation?

A preliminary search through approximately three hundred
works of the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* that have been entered
by the Asian Classics Input Project,[46] although far from exhaus-
tive, yielded results that I deem significant: in this selection, the
term "*mtshan gźi*" occurs 297 times (in 36 texts), in the majority of
cases in conjunction with "*mtshan ñid*" (only five times in conjunc-
tion with "*mtshan*"); one finds also 413 occurrences (but in only
seven of the three hundred texts) of the expression "*mtshan ñid kyi
gźi*," all of them in conjunction with "*mtshan ñid*." In comparison,
"*mtshon bya*" comes up only 38 times (in 19 texts).

Byaṅ chub skyabs (4), Phya pa (10). Regarding their identification, see
van der Kuijp 2003: 415–417. According to Chos kyi rgyal po's *Zhib mo
rdo rje* (translated in Stearns 2001), Me dig pa had been the "assistant
teacher" (*zur chos*) of Khyuṅ Rin chen grags, one of the most important
disciples of rṄog Lo (see Stearns 2001: 134 and 137). The *De kho na
ñid bsdus pa* also refers twice to "Lo tsa ba" (i.e., rṄog Lo), and once to
"some old Tibetans" (*bod bgres po kha cig*). The discussions in which
their names and positions are mentioned are: the nature and relation of
mtshon bya and *mtshan ñid* (Jo bstun, Gaṅs pa, rṄog); *mtshan gźi* (Phya
pa, Byaṅ chub skyabs); *mtshan ñid kyi mtshan ñid* (*bod bgres*, rṄog Lo,
Phya pa, Byaṅ chub skyabs); *mtshon bya'i mtshan ñid* (rGya); *mtshan gźi'i
mtshan ñid* (Gaṅs pa, rGya); the faults of a definition (Me dig pa refuted
by rGya, Gaṅs pa refuted by rGya, Phya pa, Byaṅ chub skyabs); the faults
linked to *mtshan gźi* (Me dig pa refuted by rGya and by Jo btsun, Jo bstun
refuted by rGya).

[46] The e-texts consulted can be accessed on http://www.asianclassics.
org. This search was greatly facilitated by a program developed by my
colleague Horst Lasic, to whom I am most grateful.

To give some examples, one sees the pair *mtshan gźi/mtshan ñid* for *lakṣya/lakṣaṇa* figuring in the translation of certain major works, such as Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (*MMK*; more precisely in the 5th chapter), translated in the early 8th century, as well as in Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa* and °*bhāṣya* translated by Jinamitra (around 800).[47] "*mTshan gźi*" also appears in the translation of Candrakīrti's works,[48] and in Jayānanda's translation of his own *Madhyamakāvatāraṭīkā*.[49]

Extensive discussions involving the pair *mtshan ñid kyi gźi/mtshan ñid* are located in Buddhapālita's *Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti* and in Bhāviveka's *Prajñāpradīpa*, as well as in Avalokitavrata's *Prajñāpradīpaṭīkā*, which were all translated by Jñānagarbha and Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan around 800. As these discussions take place when the authors comment on *MMK* V, where the discussion of *lakṣya* and *lakṣaṇa* occurs, one can surmise, although the Sanskrit is not extant, that in these commentaries "*mtshan ñid kyi gźi*" translates "*lakṣya*," whereas the term is translated as "*mtshan gźi*" when it occurs in the verses of *MMK*.

The occurrences of "*mtshon bya*," much fewer in number in the sample considered, can be roughly grouped into four categories: i) the *AA* verse discussed above and its citation in vari-

---

[47] See *AK* II.50cd (Tib. 6a1) and *AKBh* 83,19–21 (Tib. 86b7). *AKBh* 78,4 ad II.46ab (Tib. 82b1) translates *lakṣaṇa/lakṣya* with *mtshan ñid/mtshan ñid kyi gźi*. In this passage, Vasubandhu provides interesting remarks concerning the fact that the definiens of X is not different from X, taking as an example the definiens of cow:* "The dewlap, the tail, the hump, the hoof, the horns, which are the defining characteristics of cow, do not differ from the cow." (*AKBh* 78,6: *sāsnālāṅgūlakakudaśaphaviṣāṇādīni ca gotvalakṣaṇāni gor nānyāni*; Tib. 82b2–3)

* Xuanzang has, instead, according to de La Vallée Poussin's translation (1971: 230), a zebra.

[48] See note 53.

[49] See *Madhyamakāvatāraṭīkā* 131b5, 151a2, or the statement on 274b2: *mtshan gźi ni mtshan ñid kyi sgo nas mtshon par bya ba'i dṅos po'o | me ni sreg par byed pa'o |* This statement is cited as an example of the identification of *mtshon bya* and *mtshan gźi* by Glo bo mkhan chen in *Rigs gter Ñi ma* 159,21–22.

ous commentaries,[50] ii) *mtshon bya* occurring in conjunction with *mtshan ñid*, iii) *mtshon bya* occurring in conjunction with *mtshon byed*, and iv) rare cases of *mtshon bya* occurring alone. Note that "*mtshon bya*" does not always stand for "*lakṣya*." It can also be a form of the verb "*lakṣ*" (*lakṣyate*, etc.), although "*mtshon par bya ba*" is more frequent for the latter.

With regard to ii), *mtshon bya* occurs in conjunction with *mtshan ñid* in both older translations, like the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāraṭīkā* of Asvabhāva translated by Śākyasiṃha and dPal brtsegs around 800, and later ones such as the *Pramāṇasamuccayaṭīkā* (*PSṬ*) of Jinendrabuddhi translated by dPaṅ Lo tsā ba, hence sometime at the beginning of the 14th century.[51]

As for iii), "*mtshon byed*" appears as an alternative to "*mtshan ñid*" to translate the term "*lakṣaṇa*." Thus for instance, the compound "*mtshon bya mtshon byed kyi dṅos po*" stands for "*lakṣyalakṣaṇabhāva*" in the translation of Prajñākaragupta's *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*.[52] This is maybe not incidental, as this work was translated by rṄog Lo and Bhavyarāja at the end of the 11th c., and we have met already with the pair *mtshon bya'i chos/mtshon byed kyi chos* in rṄog Lo's commentary on the *AA*.

If it is uncommon for both translations of "*lakṣya*" to be found in the same text, the case does however arise, as for instance in the translation of the *Prasannapadā* by Pa tshab Ñi ma grags; there, the pair *lakṣya/lakṣaṇa* is usually translated as "*mtshan gźi/mtshan ñid*," but on one occasion "*mtshon bya*" is found for "*lakṣya*" instead.[53]

---

[50] See n. 26.

[51] See for instance the discussion referred to in note 37 and the passage cited in note 58.

[52] *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra* 211,27; Tib. 196a6.

[53] The Tibetan "*mtshan ñid phyin ci log brjod pas byas pa'i mtshon bya phyin ci log yod par 'gyur na ni*" (20a6) corresponds to the Sanskrit "*yadi... viparītalakṣaṇapraṇayanaṃ kṛtaṃ lakṣyavaiparītyaṃ... syāt*" (59,1–2). Another occurrence of the term "*mtshon bya*" paired with "*mtshan ñid*" in this translation turns out to have no equivalent in the Sanskrit. Cf. 4b3–4: *brjod bya daṅ rjod byed daṅ / mtshan ñid daṅ mtshon bya la sogs*

It would thus appear that the translations "*mtshan gźi*" and "*mtshan ñid kyi gźi*" were preferred for "*lakṣya*." And although the *Mahāvyutpatti* (no. 6975) prescribed "*mtshan gyi gźi*" as the translation for "*lakṣyam*" – a translation actually seldom used[54] – which would rather give support to these renderings, this did not prevent translators from adopting the alternative translation "*mtshon bya*" from early on.

The discussions on the two members of Dharmakīrti's definition of perception already mentioned above in connexion with rṄog Lo provide a pertinent example of how these alternative renderings were used equivalently: Jinamitra's translation of Vinītadeva's commentary on the *Nyāyabindu*, which dates to the 9th c., has *mtshan ñid kyi gźi* associated with *mtshan ñid* in this context.[55] This is also found in Subhūtiśrī and dGe ba'i blo gros's (active in the 11th century) translation of Devendrabuddhi's *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*, while the shorter form *mtshan gźi* is substituted for *mtshan ñid kyi gźi* in their translation of Śākyabuddhi's subcommentary thereon, the *Pramāṇavārttikaṭīkā*.[56] In turn, "*mtshon par bya ba*"

---

pa'i spros pa rnams, whereas the Sanskrit is: *abhidheyādilakṣaṇasya prapañcasya* (11,6).

[54] In the selection of texts considered, I only found the expression "*mtshan gyi gźi*" in the translation of the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* in conjunction with "*mtshan*" and with "*mtshan ñid*" – both pairs corresponding here to the Sanskrit *lakṣya/lakṣaṇa*. See for example "*mtshan daṅ mtshan gyi gźi daṅ // brjod par bya ba daṅ bral ba*" (111b7–112a1) for the Skt. "*lakṣyalakṣaṇābhidheyarahitā*" (19,23), and 115a4 "*mtshan gyi gźi daṅ mtshan ñid med*" for the Skt. "*na lakṣyā na ca lakṣaṇam*" (verse 2.104). "*mTshan gyi gźi*" also occurs on a single occasion in conjunction with "*mtshan ñid*" in a commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā* by Daṃṣṭrasena, the *Āryaśatasāhasrikāpañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñā-pāramitābṛhaṭṭīkā*, translated by Surendrabodhi and Ye śes sde.

[55] *NBT*ᵥ 4a7–b1: *mṅon sum źes bya bas ni mtshan ñid kyi gźi bstan to // rtog pa daṅ bral źiṅ ma 'khrul pa'o źes bya bas ni mtshan ñid bstan te...*

[56] *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā* 168b2: *mṅon sum źes bya ba 'dis ni mtshan ñid kyi gźi bstan to // rtog daṅ bral ba can źes bya ba ni mtshan ñid yin te*; *Pramāṇavārttikaṭīkā* Ñe 180b1–2: *mtshan gźi bstan to źes bya ba ni mṅon sum ni mtshon par bya ba'i gźi ñid yin pa'i phyir ro // rtog pa daṅ*

is the translation adopted for "*lakṣya*" in the Tibetan version of
Kamalaśīla's *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā* (*TSP*) preserved in the *bsTan
'gyur*, dating from around 1100,[57] and "*mtshon bya*" is used, in a
parallel passage, in the translation of the *PSṬ* by dPaṅ Lo tsā ba.[58]
As for rṄog Lo, we saw that he adopts the term "*mtshan gźi*" for
the translation of *PVinṬ*, while using the term "*mtshon bya*" in his
paraphrasing of the same passage in the *dKa' gnas*.

The fact that rṄog Lo does not use exclusively "*mtshan gźi*" in
his translation of the *PVinṬ*[59] suggests, I believe, that while translat-
ing this work, he was not (yet?) concerned with a triadic model of
definition and used the two terms either equivalently, or in view of
the nuances seen in his *AA* commentary, discussed above. It is pos-
sible that he used "*mtshan gźi*" when following an earlier usage such
as found in Jinamitra's translation of Vinītadeva's *Nyāyabinduṭīkā*.
But in the *dKa' gnas*, as rṄog Lo started to analyze definitions
according to a triadic model, discussions originally involving two-
element definitions had to be reformulated in a way compatible

---

bral ba can źes bya ba'i mtshan ñid kyis mṅon sum mtshon par bya ba yin
pa'i phyir ro / The same pair *mtshan gźi/mtshan ñid* occurs in the context
of the definition of *pramāṇa* (*Ñe* 72a3). My thanks to Chizuko Yoshimizu
for this last reference.

[57] See *TSP Ye* 25a6–7: *'dir mṅon sum ni tshon (*read: *mtshon) par bya
ba yin te / de'i mtshan ñid bstan pa'i skabs yin pa'i phyir ro* / Skt. 449,11–
12: *lakṣyam atra pratyakṣam, tallakṣaṇasyaiva prastutatvāt*. An earlier
"translation in progress" of this text is already mentioned in the lHan
dkar catalogue; cf. Lalou 1953: 337.

[58] *PSṬ* I 18a3: *'di ni* {i.e., *mṅon sum*} *mtshon bya'o // rtog pa daṅ bral
ba źes pa mtshan ñyid do* / Skt. 37,5: *etal lakṣyam / kalpanāpoḍham iti
lakṣaṇam /*

[59] One finds another occurrence of the pair *mtshan ñid/mtshan gźi* in
a passage in the third chapter (*PVinṬ* III 48b6). The term "*mtshon bya*"
occurs elsewhere in rṄog Lo's translation of the *PVinṬ*, but unfortunately
we cannot establish the Sanskrit reading of these passages. See notably
the opposition between *mtshon byed kyi tshul* and *mtshon bya'i tshul*
in *PVinṬ* II 237b7, and the statement "*mtshan ñid la gnod par byas na
mtshon bya mtshon par mi nus te*" in *PVinṬ* II 277b1.

with it. The distinction between *mtshan gźi* and *mtshon bya* being established at that point, it possibly influenced later translations.

There was thus indeed, as dPaṅ Lo tsā ba claimed, some kind of "inconsistency" at work in Tibetan translations. It remains to be substantiated whether the adoption of the triadic model of definition was influenced by these distinct translations. One could suggest that the triadic model was inspired, more than by the translations themselves, by the nuances in expressing the counterpart of *lakṣaṇa* attested in Tibetan commentaries (the choice of translation itself can naturally also be seen as expressing such nuance). In the corpus considered above, the pair *lakṣaṇa*/*lakṣya* is mostly treated according to the subject-property model, a model made explicit by the translators and commentators who adopt the rendering "*mtshan gźi*" for *lakṣya*. One can see the definitional basis in the Tibetan model as an echo of the presentation of the *lakṣya* as "the basis of the *lakṣaṇa*" (*mtshan ñid kyi gźi*), or of expressions such as used by Śākyabuddhi, who glosses "*mtshan gźi*" in terms of "the basis which is to be defined [owing to the *definiens*]" (*mtshon par bya ba'i gźi*).[60] In the Tibetan model, the definitional basis is *a basis* of the *lakṣaṇa*.

If the Tibetan model goes beyond the dual structure with the introduction of the definitional basis as a distinct member, its specificity also resides in the nature ascribed to the definiendum, which comes to be understood as a "convention." Considering this, one can, I would suggest, identify a stronger source of influence accounting for the adoption of the three-term model, which can be located in Dharmottara's works.

Dharmottara on definition

While Dharmakīrti does not deal with definition in any remarkable way, Dharmottara for his part devotes a few passages to the question in his commentary on the *PVin* as well as in some parallel passages in the *NBṬ*, in particular in discussions related to the

---

[60] See the passage cited in note 56. Unfortunately, no Sanskrit is available for this portion of the commentary.

topic of "non-perception" (*anupalabdhi*). Commenting on the first reference to non-perception in *PVin* I (3,9ff.), Dharmottara devotes a long excursus to the demonstration that proofs relying on the non-perception of an object establish a "convention" (*vyavahāra*, Tib. *tha sñad*), namely, the convention of the absence of the non-perceived object. At the beginning of his argumentation, Dharmottara distinguishes between two kinds of logical reasons:

- "definitional" logical reasons (*mtshan ñid kyi gtan tshigs / mtshan ñid pa'i gtan tshigs*)

- "factual" logical reasons (*dṅos po'i [gtan tshigs]*).[61]

The first has as its object a convention (*tha sñad*) – or the fitness for the [application of a] convention (*tha sñad du ruṅ*) – whereas the second proves a real property. This distinction is a quite likely source for the division, common in Tibetan works, between the "proof of a convention" (*tha sñad sgrub*) and the "proof of a state of affairs" (*don sgrub*).[62]

In the first case, Dharmottara describes the logical reason as a definiens (*mtshan ñid*), which is the "motive for the convention" (*tha sñad kyi rgyu mtshan*, Skt. *vyavahārasya nimittam*). Definiens and convention (Dharmottara does not describe the second as a definiendum) are linked by a relation that is purely a matter of custom: to ascertain this relation, it is enough to record a single application of the convention in the presence of the said definiens.

---

[61] *PVinṬ* I 23b4–6: *gtan tshigs ni rnam pa gñis te | tha sñad kyi yul can mtshan ñid kyi gtan tshigs de ni lan cig tha sñad źugs pa ñid las tha sñad daṅ 'brel par śes par 'gyur ba yin te | dper na ba laṅ gi tha sñad kyi rgyu mtshan lkog śal la sogs pa daṅ ldan pa'i mtshan ñid kyi yul la lan cig tha sñad źugs pa las kyaṅ 'brel bas śes par 'gyur ba lta bu ste | 'di ni mtshan ñid pa'i gtan tshigs so || gźan ni dṅos po'i ste | gaṅ źig dṅos po'i chos sgrub par byed pa'o ||* (My thanks to Birgit Kellner for pointing out this passage to me.) Regarding the first kind of reason, Dharmottara also speaks of a "definitional inference" (*mtshan ñid pa'i rjes su dpag pa* [26b1]).

[62] The distinction is made already in *dKa' gnas* 414,6–7; see also *Mun sel* 72a5, *Rigs gter* 297.

All proofs establishing conventions are to be understood according to this model: proofs such as "the convention 'cow' can be applied to this white calf, because it has a hump and a dewlap;" proofs relying on the non-apprehension of X, which establish the convention "there is no X;" but also proofs such as "this is a tree because it is a *śiṃśapā*," with which Dharmakīrti illustrates an inference based on an essential property (*svabhāvahetu*).[63]

A question that arises in this regard is: why would one ever need to *prove* a convention? Dharmakīrti states: "the convention is established for the dimwit."[64] Elaborating on this statement, Dharmottara presents various cases involving a dimwit (*mūḍha*, *jaḍa*) who is in need of a proof concerning a convention.[65] The dimwit indeed turns out to be unable to re-apply a previously learned convention. His inability is attributed alternatively to forgetfulness, or to the fact that he did not grasp the motive (*nimitta*) of application properly in the first place: he would thus imagine, for instance, that the size of the cow present at the time of learning the convention matters, whereas it is just the presence of a hump and a dewlap that is the motive; hence he subsequently fails to apply the convention "cow" to a cow of a different size.[66] In such cases, an inference is necessary for the dimwit to grasp the convention.

This discussion sheds light on Dharmottara's understanding of "convention." Dharmakīrti presents the application of a convention as an event subsequent to the establishment of an agreement (*brda*, Skt. *saṅketa*).[67] In Dharmottara's writings, this agreement is specifically associated with the determination of a word (*sgra*).[68]

---

[63] See *PVinṬ* II 198aff. ad *PVin* II 50,8.

[64] *PVin* I 3,14: *vyavahāraḥ sādhyate mūḍhaṃ prati*.

[65] The case of the "dimwit" has been discussed in Kellner 2004: 32–35.

[66] Examples involving a cow or a tree are found in *PVinṬ* I 26a1, *PVinṬ* II 198a, 202a, 202b, *NBṬ* 106,11–107,2 ad *NB* II.16, *PVSVṬ* 33,17–21 (ref. Kellner 2004: 32–33), as well as in *PVinṬ* III ad III.86b.

[67] See for instance *PVSV* 59,20–60,1: *saṅketakāle tathādṛṣṭam evāyam arthaṃ tatsambandhinaṃ vā vyavahāre 'pi pratipadyata...*

[68] *PVinṬ* I 55a5: *brda ni sgra ṅes par sbyor ba ste / skabs kyis 'dir khyad par daṅ khyad par can brjod pa'i yul can yin par gzuṅ ṅo //* This seems

However, the discussion involving the dimwit's inability to apply the convention hints to the fact that proving a convention is not so much a matter of reminding someone of the *word* that is to be applied, but rather, of the *criterion* for the application of that word. Knowing a convention consists in knowing which distinctive features are relevant for the circumscription of a notion; it implies that one can thereby identify an individual as part of a class, to which a word may or may not have been associated yet at the time of an agreement.

Dharmottara's excursus, and in particular the notion of "definitional logical reason," provides a plausible source for several integral constituents of the Tibetan model of definition:

First, Dharmottara relates "definiens" with "convention:" the definiens is the logical reason that establishes the convention; it is also the motive for the convention (*vyavahārasya nimittam*) – a function that finds a clear echo in the Tibetan model (*tha sñad kyi rnam 'jog gi rgyu mtshan*). Although Dharmottara does not speak of definiendum, or identify explicitly the convention as being the definiendum corresponding to the definiens presented as logical reason, the identification would make sense in view of the Indian dual model of definition.

Further, as Dharmottara posits the definiens as a logical reason, he integrates it into the structure of an inference. And an inference, in Indian logic, involves three terms: a subject, a logical reason and a property to be proved. It is very possible that the "definitional basis" found its place in the definitional model in analogy with the inferential model in general, and in particular with the model of "definitional inference" involving the triad subject, definiens and convention. Thus, although the definitional basis can have the function of an illustration, in view of the parallel with the inferential model the definitional basis has a role analogical to the subject of inference rather than to the example.

---

also to be rṄog Lo's position; he describes the establishment of a convention as the understanding that "this kind of thing must be designated by this kind of word." See *dKa' gnas* 70,15–18.

One should note here that the notion of a "definitional logical reason" (Skt. *lakṣaṇahetu*) already figures in Dignāga's *Pramāṇa-samuccayavṛtti* (*PSV*), where it qualifies the logical reason of the inference "substance is substance because it has substantiality" (*dravyaṃ dravyatvavattvād dravyam*).[69] According to Jinendra-buddhi's commentary on the given passage, such a *lakṣaṇahetu* is a definiens posited as a logical reason, which brings forth (*hinoti*) a definiendum via the exclusion of other meanings. As an example, Jinendrabuddhi gives the case of rigidity (*kāṭhinya*), the definiens of earth (*pṛthivī*). The logical reason under discussion, namely "possessing substantiality" (*dravyatvayoga*), is to be understood similarly as being the definiens of substance. The definitional logical reason is here opposed to a "probative logical reason" (lit. "a logical reason that makes one know" [*jñāpakahetu*]), left unexplained by Jinendrabuddhi, which, in view of the context, can presumably be identified with Dharmottara's "factual logical reason."[70]

It is probable, however, that the influence of the notion of "definitional inference" on the adoption of a triadic model of definition

---

[69] *PSV* ad *PS* III.17, K 130a4–5 (*mtshan ñid pa'i gtan tshigs*), V 44b7 (*mtshan ñid kyi gtan tshigs*). My thanks to Shōryu Katsura, who gave me access to his Sanskrit reconstruction of this passage.

[70] *PSṬ* III D161b2–4, P185a6–8 (B124b3–5). Katsura's provisional edition of this passage reads: *lakṣaṇahetau hīti / arthāntaravyāvṛttena rū-peṇa lakṣyaṃ* (ms: *lakṣaṃ*, Tib. *mtshon cha*) *hinotīti pratyāyatīti lakṣa-ṇam eva hetur ihābhipretaḥ, pṛthivyāḥ kāṭhinyavat / dravyatvayogena ca dravyaṃ lakṣyata ity asau lakṣaṇahetuḥ / sa ca dravyād anyatrāpi vartata iti guṇeṣu prasaṅga uktaḥ, na tu jñāpakahetoḥ, anaikāntikatvāt /* Jinendrabuddhi also mentions this type of reason when commenting on the logical reason "*jagacchasanād*" in *PSV* ad *PS* I.1, cf. *PSṬ* I 10,1, also with the example "*kāṭhinyāt pṛthivī.*" On his definition of *lakṣaṇa*, see the parallel passage in *PSṬ* I 104,6: *lakṣaṇam hi nāma yad arthāntara-vyāvṛttena rūpeṇa lakṣyaṃ gamayati /*
Dignāga himself does not oppose "*lakṣaṇahetu*" to "*jñāpakahetu.*" One only finds in his *Nyāyamukha* a distinction between "*jñāpakahetu*" (the cause for making something known) and "*utpādaka°*" or "*kāraṇahetu*" (the generative cause). See Katsura 1977: 122–124 (my thanks to Toshi-kazu Watanabe for this reference).

would have come from Dharmottara, whose works rṄog Lo, as translator and exegete, was most familiar with, rather than from Jinendrabuddhi, whose commentary was translated only at the beginning of the 14th century, or directly from Dignāga, given the laconism of the relevant passage in *PSV*.

Such influence is not explicitly acknowledged by the Tibetans. Phya pa, in his systematic presentation of the theory of definition, does not even attempt to ground this theory in Indian sources. One can note, however, that Phya pa does make a connection between the topic of definition and that of logical reasons that consist in a definiens. Dharmottara's definitional inference finds its way into Phya pa's system within the opposition between the proof of a state of affairs and the proof of a convention (*don sgrub/tha sñad sgrub*), but also reappears in the discussion concerning logical reasons and inferences regarding "what is commonly recognized" (*prasiddha*, Tib. *grags pa*). When dealing with the criterion "not opposed by what is commonly recognized" (*anirākṛtaḥ prasiddhena*) occurring in Dignāga's definition of the thesis and Dharmakīrti's discussion thereof, Phya pa identifies "what is commonly recognized" as a type of logical reason and of inference where the logical reason makes understood a property based on linguistic usage (*sgra la ltos pa'i chos*).[71] What is inferred here is the fitness to express or determine (*brjod ruṅ/źen ruṅ*) by a word. Such inferences are further differentiated according to whether the word relies on a "correct exclusion of what is other" (*gźan sel phyin ci ma log pa*) or not.[72] The first type is illustrated by the inference of the convention

---

[71] This type of reason is opposed to objectively grounded (*dṅos po stobs źugs*, Skt. *vastubalapravṛtta*) logical reasons and inferences. See *Mun sel* 79b9.

[72] In the first case, what is commonly recognized is a "convention" (*tha sñad kyi grags pa*), in the second, an "agreement" (*brda'i grags pa*). The second type refers to the unlimited applicability of words (for instance, that of the word "moon" to any entity, or to any mental aspect), whereas in the first type, this applicability is limited in the framework of a definite convention (cf. *'Od zer* 170b5–7).
See a similar distinction in gTsaṅ nag pa's *bsDus pa* (185b2–5) and mTshur ston's *sGron ma* (60b5–7). Sa skya Paṇḍita criticizes this distinc-

"cow" from the collection of hump, dewlap etc., i.e., the inference of a definiendum from a definiens, and by the inference of the convention "tree" from the logical reason "*śiṃśapā*" (here, one infers a definiendum on the basis of what is included in the definiens).[73] Those are identical to two of the "definitional inferences" discussed by Dharmottara. It must be noted that the identification of the nature of the property to be proved in such a proof is precisely that which was given for the notion of convention in the context of the theory of definition, and Phya pa even refers to this previous context explicitly.[74] Thus, in Phya pa's works, definition and inference proving a convention are connected, but the theory of definition is not presented within the context of the latter: it already has a place of its own.

Keeping in mind this connection, and the possible influence of definitional inference on the building up of the model of definition, it is necessary to take a closer look at the parallels between the definitional model and the inferential model.

Defining and inferring

The definitional model offers a striking parallelism with inference. Additionally, as noted above, the formulation of a definition, with the definiens stated as the motive of application of the definiendum, hardly differs from that of a proof. Regarding the formal structure, in addition to the obvious parallelism between the respective triad of elements – subject, logical reason and property to be proved on

tion between *brda* and *tha sñad* in *Rigs gter* 329.

[73] See *Mun sel* 80a3–4: *dṅos 'gal las tha dad du byed pa'i gźan sel phyin ci ma log pas źen nas brjod du ruṅ pa dpog pa ni tha sñad kyi grags pa te / lkog śal lasogs pa 'dus pa las ba laṅ du dpog pa ltar mtshan ñid kyis mtshon bya dpog pa'am / śa pas śiṅ du dpog pa ltar mtshan ñid kyi khyab byas mtshon bya dpog pa lasogs pa yin no /* and 80a4–5: *des na gźan sel phyin ci ma log pa'i sgras źen ruṅ dpog pa la phyogs chos daṅ khyab pa tshaṅ pa tha sñad kyi grags pa yin la /*

[74] *Mun sel* 81a7–8: *mtshan ñid daṅ dṅos 'gal sel pa gźan sel pa phyin ci ma log pa'i sgras źen ruṅ źes sṅar mtshon bya'i raṅ bźin du bśad pa de bsgrub bya'i chos yin no /* See note 11.

one side, and definitional basis, definiens and definiendum on the other – the definiens of the definiens given by Phya pa in terms of a "triple property" (*chos gsum*) appears to be a clear echo of the definiens of the logical reason in terms of a "triple characteristic" (*tshul gsum*).

This correspondence however turns out to be limited; closer examination reveals that the elements of each structure do not share the same properties and that the parallelism of the "three properties" and the "three characteristics" is merely superficial. Thus for instance, the definiendum differs from the property to be proved insofar as it is not necessarily inferred: it is only in the case of "dimwits" that an inference is required; learned persons know it via perception.[75] Also, of the three properties of a correct definiens, if "being possessed by the definitional instance" corresponds to "being a property of the subject" in the case of the logical reason, the property of being substantially existent (*rdzas yod*) on the other hand does not find an equivalent in the triple characteristic. The criterion pertaining to the relation of the definiens to the definiendum (i.e., "not being of a different meaning") differs as well from the characteristics of positive and negative concomitance. Further mismatches ensue when comparing the faults relative to the logical reason and to the definiens.

This is to say: although for any definition there can be a corresponding definitional inference (for instance for the benefit of a dimwit), definition and inference remain two different processes; the elements of definition, when used in a definition, do not have the same properties as the elements of an inference, and the criteria for a "correct definition" differ from those for a "correct inference."

The theory of inference may have inspired the elaboration of the model of definition – plausible specific influences being the notions of "definitional logical reason" and "inference proving a convention" – but once the three-term model was adopted, definition got "a life of its own:" it developed independently of the theory of in-

---

[75] Another difference pointed out by Phya pa is that the thesis requires the criterion of "not being opposed," whereas the definiendum does not. See *Mun sel* 22a4–6.

ference and dealt with its own web of issues. In later texts, such as gTsaṅ nag pa's, one can notice a converse influence of the theory of definition on that of inference insofar as innovations made by the author in the context of definition generate parallel developments in the context of inference.[76]

The place of the theory of definition in Phya pa's works

Finally, I would like to reflect on the place of the theory of definition in Phya pa's works. In both *Mun sel* and *'Od zer*, the systematic presentation of the theory of definition is introduced as a theoretical framework presupposed for the definition of the fundamental notion of "valid cognition" (*tshad ma*). However, if one looks at the actual definition of valid cognition and of other epistemological notions, one finds that little practical use is made of the theory of definition. For the most part, it plays a role in evaluating putative definientia. In the theory of definition itself, the definition of valid cognition is hardly dealt with, and appears relatively unproblematic in comparison with the other complicated cases discussed in this context. The presentation of the theoretical framework of definition is indeed not conducted in a straightforward way, but, as is the case with most topics in Phya pa's writings, through a game of objections and responses involving problematic cases. A closer look at these discussions gives us an indication of what may have been more pressing concerns in Phya pa's development of the theory of definition.

A particularly extensive discussion occurs with regard to the claim that the three elements of a definition share an undifferentiated nature; in some definitions this contention turns out to be in need of a proof, namely those definitions in which the definitional basis is a negation with a positive implication (*ma yin dgag*) and the definiens (or definiendum) a simple negation (*med dgag*), or vice-versa.

---

[76] One such innovation of gTsaṅ nag pa regarding the "modes of definition" (*mtshon pa'i tshul*) and the "modes of proof" (*sgrub pa'i tshul*) is studied in Hugon 2008a: 316ff.

The illustration for the first configuration is:

  a) applying the convention "empty" to the definitional basis "cau-
     sally efficient" (alternatively, "entity") on account of the definiens
     "empty of causal efficiency that withstands analysis."[77]

The reverse case is illustrated by two examples:

  bi) applying the convention "[correct] logical reason" to the definitio-
      nal basis "neither one nor many" on account of the definiens "being
      a property of the subject and pervasion [by the property to be pro-
      ved]."

  bii) applying the convention "knowable" to the definitional basis "emp-
       tiness" on account of the definiens "fit to be posited as an object of
       thought."[78]

Phya pa's proof of undifferentiability (*dbyer med du bsgrub pa*) is
conducted solely on the basis of a series of reductio ad absurdum
arguments, which can be summarized as follows: if A and B were
not undifferentiated, then A could/would be non-B; the latter is ei-
ther absurd, or leads to an absurdity.

    A number of objections are raised against the above cases.[79]
They concern on the one hand the notion of "undifferentiation"
(*dbye ba med*) in comparison with that of identity (*bdag gcig*), and
on the other hand, the conflict between properties of the definitional

---

[77] *Mun sel* 13b2–3: *mtshan gźi ma yin dgag la mtshan ñid med dgag
bkod pa ni don byed nus pa gźir byas te dpyad bzod pa'i don byed nus pas
stoṅ pas stoṅ pa ñid kyi tha sñad du mtshon pa lta bu'o /*

[78] *Mun sel* 16a5: *med dgag mtshan gźir byas pa la ma yin dgag mtshan
ñid du bkod pa ni yaṅ dag pa'i cig daṅ du bral la phyogs kyi chos daṅ
khyab pa mtshan ñid du bkod nas rtags su mtshon pa 'am stoṅ pa ñid blo'i
yul du byar ruṅ pas śes byar mtshon pa lta bu'o //* These examples and the
discussion that follows in *Mun sel* address the case of mismatching defi-
nitional basis and definiens (*Mun sel* 13b1–16b7: *mtshan gźi dang mtshan
ñid dbyer med du sgrub pa*). According to Phya pa (*Mun sel* 16b7), the
case of mismatching definitional basis and definiendum is to be treated
similarly. A parallel discussion is found in *'Od zer* 7b5–10a3.

[79] See respectively *Mun sel* 14b4ff. and 16a7ff. Parallel in *'Od zer* 8b3–
10a3.

basis and properties of the definiens, as well as between properties of the definitional basis and properties of the definiendum. Namely, if A and B are undifferentiated, is what is true of B also true of A?

For instance concerning a), the "emptiness of causal efficiency that withstands analysis," being emptiness, withstands analysis.[80] If the definitional basis "entity" is undifferentiated from "empty of causal efficiency that withstands analysis," does it also withstand analysis? This would contradict the claim that an entity does not withstand analysis. Further, an entity is not ultimately true, but emptiness is. If both are undifferentiated, would an entity be ultimately true?

Similar objections are raised for bii): the definiendum "knowable" has the property of not withstanding analysis (*dpyad mi bzod*); if emptiness is undifferentiated from "knowable," would it then also not withstand analysis? Further, "knowable" is a definitional basis of "relative truth," and "emptiness" is a definitional basis of "ultimate truth;" if both are undifferentiated, does it imply that "emptiness" is also a definitional basis of "relative truth;" isn't this contradictory with its being a definitional basis of "ultimate truth?"

I will not enter here into the details of how Phya pa solves these questions – which he handles mainly through the technique of "argumentation by parallels."[81] What is to be noted here is that these discussions have nothing to do with the definition of valid cognition, but are all related to issues in Madhyamaka philosophy.

One can then wonder what is to be found pertaining to definition in Phya pa's works specifically dedicated to Madhyamaka. Phya pa's treatise on the ideas of the "three Mādhyamikas from

---

[80] The pervasion of "emptiness" (*stoṅ ñid*), alternatively of "non-implicative negation" (*med dgag*), by "withstanding analysis" (*dpyad bzod*) which is postulated in the objection is affirmed by Phya pa, for instance in *sToṅ thun* 25,19–26,2 when he identifies the respective definitional bases of relative and ultimate truth. My thanks to Kevin Vose for this reference.

[81] On this argumentative technique, see Hugon 2008b. One of Phya pa's favorite parallels in the present context is the case of the appearance of two moons, which, although erroneous with regard to the grasped object, is non-erroneous qua reflexive cognition.

the East" (*dBu ma śar gsum gyi stoṅ thun*; hereafter: *sToṅ thun*), sometimes identified as his *Résumé of Madhyamaka* (*dBu ma'i bsdus pa*), provides some pertinent material. The first and longest section of this work (40 folios out of 46)[82] dealing with "what is knowable" (*śes bya*) addresses two main issues: 1) the distinction between the two truths and 2) the definitions of the two truths. The latter involves the identification of the definiens and definitional basis of each truth, followed by the establishment that the given definiens indeed applies to the definitional basis. When defining the two truths, Phya pa does not engage in a theoretical presentation of the notions of definiens, definiendum and definitional basis, or of the triple property (*chos gsum*) of the definiens, which are all presupposed. The definitions of the two truths, however, provide interesting parallels with the above-mentioned discussions of *Mun sel* and *'Od zer*. First, a differentiation of the definitional basis in terms of implicative and non-implicative negation also occurs in the *sToṅ thun*: according to Phya pa, everything can be defined as ultimately true or as relatively true depending on the type of cognition that analyzes it (i.e., a cognition that takes it as the object of final analysis [*mthar thug 'jal*] or not); however, at the level of conceptual identification (*ldog pa*) all non-implicative negations (*med dgag*) are instances to which the convention "absolute truth" can be applied, and all implicative negations (*ma yin dgag*) are definitional bases for the convention "relative truth."[83]

---

[82] The work is divided into three main sections: i) what is knowable (*śes bya*), ii) the practice of the Great Vehicle (*theg pa chen po'i spyod pa mñams su len pa'i thabs*), iii) the result: the *buddhabhūmi* (*spyod pa rjes su bsgrubs pa las 'bras bu rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i saṅs rgyas kyi sa thob pa'i tshul*). A translation of the topical outline is provided in Tauscher 2003: 239–243.

[83] See *sToṅ thun* 24,10–26,14. Phya pa speaks in the first case of "defining as a substance" (*rdzas su mtshon pa*), in the second of "defining as a convention" (*ldog pa de la... tha sñyad rten par mtshon*). That is to say, implicative and non-implicative negations, *per se*, can be characterized either as relatively or absolutely true according to the cognition that apprehends them, but as an implicative negation or as a non-implicative negation, they will conventionally be designated as one or the other. Note,

Phya pa has to defend his position against a number of objections which need not be detailed here. Two of them deserve our attention, however:[84] the first addresses the application of the definiendum "empty of a true nature" to the definitional basis "entity" (*dṅos po bden pa'i ṅo bos stoṅ bar mtshon pa*), the second the application of the definiendum "knowable" to "emptiness" (*stoṅ ñid gźal byar mtshon pa*). These cases are none other than the ones that are dealt with in Phya pa's theory of definition, namely a) and bii) discussed above. Although in the *sToṅ thun* the problem is not identified in terms of an implicative and a non-implicative negation being undifferentiated elements, one recognizes among the objections the questions raised in *Mun sel* and *'Od zer.*

Further analysis of Phya pa's other works might reveal other corresponding passages. I did not discover any such parallels, however, in my preliminary look at Phya pa's commentary on Jñānagarbha's *Satyadvayavibhaṅga*,[85] which is one of the three treatises constituting the basis for the *sToṅ thun*. This commentary reveals a good deal of structural similarity with the *sToṅ thun* (for instance, in both works, the section on the distinction between the two truths follows the same outline).[86] But the extensive discussion on the two truths closely follows Jñānagarbha's verses and commentary, and applies a hierarchical organization that does not echo

---

in the first case, Phya pa's use of the analogy of the appearance of two moons (cf. note 81).

[84] See, respectively, sections 123.4 and 123.5, specifically 123.42 (*sToṅ thun* 51,19–54,22) and 123.52 (*sToṅ thun* 55,17–56,21).

[85] Note that *dBu ma bden gñis kyi 'grel ba* is the title adopted in the *dkar chag*. No title is given on the first folio. The colophon identifies the text as "*dbu ma bden pa gñis rnam par bśad pa yi ge ñuṅ ṅus gźuṅ gsal bar byed pa.*"

[86] See *bDen gñis 'grel* 5b3ff. The definitional basis of relative truth is identified as an "implicative negation" (*ma yin dgag*), whereas that of ultimate truth is presented in this text in terms of "devoid of proliferations" (*spros pa daṅ bral ba*, Skt. *niṣprapañca*) rather than as a "non-implicative negation" (*med dgag*). Cf. *bDen gñis 'grel* 7a7ff.

the rest of the presentation in the *sToṅ thun*.[87] In particular, I did not find a specific section on the problems relevant to the definitional basis. Although issues arise that correspond to the questions that we examined above,[88] they are not articulated in the framework of the undifferentiability of the definitional basis, the definiens and the definiendum.

Is Phya pa's theory of definition intended to help solve a question that is specific to the two truths, or are the two truths brought into his epistemological works as an example of a problem inherent in the theory of definition? It looks as if, for Phya pa, the theory and its practical applications are not strictly distinguished from one another. The discussion occurring in *Mun sel* and *'Od zer* about the mode of distinction of the elements of a definition, although it is presented in generic terms – solving cases where one element is an implicative negation, the other a non-implicative negation – deals exclusively with cases belonging to the key issue of the definition of the two truths, which, we have seen, are also dealt with in the *sToṅ thun*. Actually, the solution brought to the problem of definitions whose elements are respectively implicative and non-implicative negations only makes sense in the context of the discussion of the two truths.

The issue of the distinction between the two truths and that of the distinction between the elements of definition were unquestionably linked for Phya pa; these were also linked, one can add, with the question of the status of implicative or non-implicative negation of the elements of inference.[89] A passage of the *De kho na ñid bsdus*

---

[87] *bDen gñis 'grel* 8a6ff. (*rgyas par bśad pa*).

[88] See for example *bDen gñis 'grel* 6b4ff., where Phya pa explains how "entity" can be substantially identical with "emptiness" without implying an "ultimate entity." Here again, the analogy of the appearance of two moons is mentioned.

[89] In the context of the inference proving emptiness in the *sToṅ thun*, Phya pa defines implicative and non-implicative negation (*sToṅ thun* 85,14–87,12), and spells out the difficulties of combining in an inference a logical reason and a property to be proved that would be of different types (*sToṅ thun* 87,13–90,15). The first paragraph finds a close parallel

pa tends to confirm that the two themes, namely definition and the two truths, were merged in discussions around Phya pa's time. In this passage, the author summarizes the problem of the undifferentiability of the elements of definition and Phya pa's solution in the following terms: the one element that is a non-implicative negation is absolutely true, and the one element that is an implicative negation is relatively true; admitting that these two are undifferentiated amounts to accepting that the two truths are "one nature" (*ṅo bo gcig pa*), and that the differentiation comes from a distinction relative to the cognizing mind.[90] The author further mentions a thinker by the name of Byaṅ chub skyabs (hitherto unidentified),[91] who holds for his part that although the non-implicative negation (e.g., empty of causal efficiency that withstands analysis) and the implicative negation (e.g., pot) are undifferentiated, it is not the case that the two truths have a single nature. The argument attributed to Byaṅ chub skyabs invokes in particular a half-verse of the *Satyadvayavibhaṅga* (9ab) in support of the claim that the "empti-

---

in *Mun sel* 61b9–62a8 and a more approximate one in *'Od zer* 104b3ff. Note that the status of the subject is not discussed in this context. Phya pa deals extensively in his epistemological works with the status of the property to be proved (see *Mun sel* 4a8–6a2, parallel in *'Od zer* 27a7–28b2). The question of the combination of elements of inference that represent different types of negation comes up for instance when discussing logical reasons that establish a convention (*Mun sel* 40b9ff., see also *'Od zer* 104a2–3 in the discussion on *anupalabdhi*).

[90] See *De kho na ñid bsdus pa* 71–73, and in particular 72,18–73,4: *des na phya pa na re dpyad bzod pa'i don byed nus pas stoṅ pa ni don dam pa'i bden pa yin la / mtshan gźi bum pa ni kun rdzob kyi bden pa yin pas bden pa gñis ṅo bo gcig pa yin te / dpyad bzod pa'i don byed pas stoṅ pa gñis gcig yin kyaṅ śes ṅo gñis la ltos nas sṅon po mṅon gyurd daṅ skad cig ma lkog gyur yin pa mi 'gal ba ltar / 'dir yaṅ mthar thug dpyod pa'i rigs śes la ltos nas don dam pa'i bden pa daṅ / ma brtags ma dpyad pa'i blo la ltos nas tha sñad kun rdzob kyi bden pa yin pa mi 'gal lo źes zer ro //*

[91] This thinker is frequently mentioned in the section on definition (see n. 43). It remains to be studied whether he is identical with the Byaṅ chub skyabs who authored an outline and explanation of the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* and a commentary on the last chapter of the *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, three works published in the *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. XXV.

ness of causal efficiency that withstands analysis" is in fact not an instance of ultimate truth but, insofar as it is an object of mind, of relative truth.[92]

The situation appears to have changed with Phya pa's student gTsaṅ nag pa. Looking in comparison at the latter's presentation of the theory of definition in his *bsDus pa*, one notices that the above discussion, which covered more than four folios (recto-verso) in Phya pa's epistemological work, is reduced here to three lines![93] One recognizes in the objection the problematic case involving "emptiness of causal efficiency that withstands analysis," but gTsaṅ nag pa's answer stays on a general, theoretical level, and does not mention the two truths or related notions. This is not to say that gTsaṅ nag pa is not concerned about the two truths;[94] rather, it would seem to go along with a general tendency in his epistemological writings: indeed, gTaṅ nag pa hardly ever introduces Madhyamaka concerns into the *bsDus pa*. To give a simple illustration, whereas Phya pa's very first example in the theory of definition already involves the "emptiness of causal efficiency," it is the cow and its hump that figure as gTsaṅ nag pa's first and main example. As the same is the case for authors following gTsaṅ nag pa, such as mTshur ston gŹon nu seṅ ge or Chu mig pa Seṅ ge dpal,[95] it could also be a sign that

---

[92] *De kho na ñid bsdus pa* 73,4–14, and in particular lines 6–11: *dpyad bzod pa'i don byed pas stoṅ pa blo'i yul du byas pa de'aṅ kun rdzob kyi bden pa yin te | skye la sogs pa bkag pa yaṅ || yaṅ dag pa daṅ mthun phyir 'dod || ces dbu ma bden gñis su bśad pa'i tshul gyis spros pa phyogs re tsam bkag pa de ni mthun pa'i don dam źes pa'am rnam graṅs kyi don dam pa źes miṅ de ltar btags par zad kyi de ni kun rdzob kyi bye brag yin no ||*

[93] See *bsDus pa* 14a4–7 (*chos de dag ṅo bo mi gcig pa dgag pa*).

[94] gTsaṅ nag pa deals with the definition of the two truths, albeit concisely, in his commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*; see *sPyod 'jug* 36a3–b5 (*śes par bya ba bden pa gñis kyi raṅ bźin*) (my thanks to Kevin Vose for this reference).

[95] Concerning the latter, if he does not, so far as I know, include in his presentation of the theory of definition discussions involving the two truths, or the distinction between implicative and non-implicative negation, he does on the other hand include a whole section on the two truths

once the theory of definition was incorporated into the framework of epistemological treatises, the discussions relative to specific applications were reduced in favor of a more theoretical presentation.

Conclusion

This tentative sketch of the early development of the Tibetan theory of definition remains incomplete. In particular, it remains unclear to what extent and in which context Phya pa's predecessors discussed issues related to definition. Although a number of passages in rṄog Lo's works and the citations attributed to his disciples in later works substantiate their knowledge of some definitional model, we have as yet no available evidence of a systematic presentation prior to Phya pa, either in a work on epistemology or as an excursus. rGya dmar pa's works on epistemology are not extant, and his commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* does not involve a discussion of definition.[96] As for rṄog Lo's student Gro luṅ pa, in his voluminous *bsTan rim* he makes occasional mention of the pairs *mtshan ñid/mtshan gźi*, *mtshan ñid/mtshon bya*, and *mtshon bya/mtshon byed* (but never, as far as I know, of a triad), but does not offer a discussion of these notions.

The numerous Indian Buddhist works containing the terms "*lakṣaṇa*" and "*lakṣya*" are likely to have promoted discussions about these notions and their translation. Our as yet limited look in this direction, starting with the commentaries on the *AA*, has revealed that if passages involving the notions of "*lakṣaṇa*" and "*lakṣya*" provided the occasion for the application of a definitional model, they do not appear to have prompted theoretical digressions (the possibility remains that Śākya mchog ldan, when mentioning

---

from the point of view of the idealist school (*sems tsam pa*) when discussing the ontological status of phenomenal objects (*gzuṅ yul*). See *rNam rgyal* 6a7ff.

[96] The only context in which rGya dmar pa uses definition-related terminology is his discussion of the definitions of the two truths (*Byaṅ chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i tshig don gsal bar bśad pa* 60a2ff.). The model presupposed there is a two-term model, and no mention is made of a "definitional basis."

the extensive developments on definition in the commentarial liter-
ature on the *AA*, might be referring to sources that are not available
to us). One might have expected such an excursus from rṄog Lo;
his commentary on the *AA* shows, however, a state in which *mtshan
gźi* and *mtshon bya* have not yet become distinct elements in a tri-
adic model of definition, but stand as nuances in the expression of
the counterpart of *lakṣaṇa*. It is possible that this commentary is
earlier than rṄog Lo's *dKa' gnas*, where an (at least rudimentary)
triadic model is presupposed and applied.

   Although the Tibetan tradition does not point to Indian
precedents,[97] I have suggested that a plausible source for this
basic model and several of its particularities can be found in
Dharmottara's discussion of the "definitional logical reason" (a
notion already present in Dignāga's works, but absent in those of
Dharmakīrti), and that, in general, the parallelism with inference
might have played a role in the development of the theory of defi-
nition.[98]

   This possible source of influence does not in the least rule out
that the motivation for elaborating the theory of definition exceed-
ed the scope of the theory of inference. If the context of discussions
of definition prior to Phya pa remains unclear, for Phya pa himself,
although the systematization of the theory of definition occurs in
the context of his epistemological treatises, an important motiva-
tion in its development appears to be the need to define the two

---

[97] As mentioned earlier, Phya pa does not try to legitimize his theory
by invoking Indian sources. But the fact that he assimilates the triad in
MSA XI.36 to the definitional triad could be a sign that he nevertheless
considered that this theory had an Indian background.

[98] A passage defining *mtshan ñid* and *mtshon bya* attributed to
Śaṅkaranandana by Glo bo mkhan chen could also, if it is indeed a cita-
tion and not a paraphrase in which Tibetan terminology left its mark, hint
at another source of influence from the side of the Indian *pramāṇa* tradi-
tion. Cf. *Rigs gter Ñi ma* 160,8–11: *kha che'i rtog ge pa chen po bde byed
dga' ba na re chos gcig ñid don gyi rnam par śar ba'i blos yul du byas pa'i
cha nas mtshan ñid daṅ | tha sñad sgra'i rnam pa śar ba'i blos yul du byas
pa'i cha nas mtshon bya ñid du bźed do |.* I could not find any equivalent
in the works of Śaṅkaranandana available in Tibetan in the *bsTan 'gyur.*

truths. While Phya pa's Madhyamaka works abound with epistemological terminology, his epistemological works convey the converse impression: not only in the context of the "innovative" topic of definition, but also when dealing with universals, with relations or inference, one sees his discussion turning towards the questions of emptiness, of ultimate truth and the connected proofs thereof. This is not to say that, from Phya pa's perspective, Madhyamaka and epistemology, *dbu ma* and *tshad ma*, are undifferentiated: the works of Phya pa represent different facets of Buddhist scholastics in their respective orientation, but reveal a system in which they are not compartmentalized.

Bibliography

-. *Āryalaṅkāvatārasūtra*. P.L. Vaidya (ed.). Darbhanga, 1963: The Mithila Institute (Buddhist Sanskrit Texts 3). Tib. in D107, *Ca* 56a1–191b7.

-. *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum phyogs bsgrigs theṅs daṅ po/gñis pa*. Ed. dPal brtsegs bod yig dpe rñiṅ źib 'jug khaṅ. Vols. I-XXX, Chengdu, 2006; vols. XXXI-LX, Chengdu, 2007: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khaṅ.

-. *Mahāvyutpatti*. In *Bon-zō-kan-wa Shiyaku-taikō Honyaku Myōgi Taishū {Mahāvyutpatti*, Skt. Tib. Chin. Jap. juxtaposed}, Sakaki R. (ed.), 2 vols., Kyoto, 1916–25 (reprint Tokyo, 1965).

-. *sDe dge Tibetan Tripiṭaka bsTan 'gyur – preserved at the Faculty of Letters, University of Tokyo* (**D**). J. Takasaki, Z. Yamaguchi, Y. Ejima (eds.), Tokyo, 1981–1984.

-. *The Tibetan Tripiṭaka*, *Peking edition* (**P**). D.T. Suzuki (ed.), Tokyo-Kyoto, 1955–1961.

Abhayākaragupta. *Āryāṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāvṛttimarmakaumudī*. Tib. in D3805, *Da* 1b1–228a4.

Anonymous (attributed to Kloṅ chen rab 'byams pa). *Tshad ma'i de kho na ñid bsdus pa* (**De kho na ñid bsdus pa**), Padma tshul khrims (ed.). Chengdu, 2000: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khaṅ.

Ar Byaṅ chub ye śes. *mṄon par rtogs rgyan gyi 'grel ba rnam par 'byed pa*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. II, 91–447.

Asvabhāva. *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāraṭīkā*. Tib. in D4029, *Bi* 38b6–174a7.

Avalokitavrata. *Prajñāpradīpaṭīkā*. Tib. in D3859, *Wa* 1b1–287a7, *Źa* 1b1–338a7, *Za* 1b1–341a7.

Bhāviveka. *Prajñāpradīpa*. Tib. in D3853, *Tsha* 45b4–259b3.

Buddhapālita. *Mūlamadhyamakavṛtti*. Tib. in D3842, *Tsha* 158b1–281a4.

Candrakīrti. *Prasannapadā*. For the Skt. see Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā*. Tib. in D3860, *’A* 1b1–200a7.

Chu mig pa Seṅ ge dpal. *gŹan gyi phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba* (*rNam rgyal*). In *bKa’ gdams gsuṅ ’bum*, vol. XLV, 11–163.

D’Amato, Mario. 2003. “The Semiotics of Signlessness: A Buddhist Doctrine of Signs.” *Semiotica* 147.1/4: 185–207.

Daṃṣṭrasena. *Āryaśatasāhasrikāpañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāṣṭādaśasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitābṛhaṭṭīkā*. Tib. in D3808, *Pha* 1b1–292b3.

Devendrabuddhi. *Pramāṇavārttikapañjikā*. Tib. in D4217, *Che* 1b1–326b4.

Dharmakīrti. *Nyāyabindu* (**NB**). In *Nyāyabindu with Dharmottara’s Nyāya-binduṭīkā and Durveka Miśra’s Dharmottarapradīpa*, Dalsukh Bhai Malvania (ed.). Patna, 1955: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute [Second ed. 1971].

——. *Pramāṇavārttika* (**PV**) and *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛtti* (**PVSV**). In *The Pramāṇavārttikam of Dharmakīrti: The First Chapter with the Auto-commentary*, R. Gnoli (ed.). Rome, 1960: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente (Serie Orientale Roma XXIII).

——. *Pramāṇaviniścaya* (**PVin**). Chap. I and II in *Dharmakīrti’s Pramāṇa-viniścayaḥ, Chapters 1 and 2*, E. Steinkellner (ed.), Beijing/Vienna, 2007: China Tibetology Publishing House/Austrian Academy of Sciences Press (Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region No. 2). Chap. III Tib. in D4211, *Ce* 152b1–230a7.

Dharmottara. *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* (**NBṬ**). See Dharmakīrti, *Nyāyabindu*.

——. *Pramāṇaviniścayaṭīkā* (**PVinṬ**). Tib. in D4229, *Dze* 1b1–289a7 and D4227, *Tshe* 1b1–178a3.

Dignāga. *Pramāṇasamuccaya* (**PS**) and *Pramāṇasamuccayavṛtti* (**PSV**). Tib. by Vasudhararakṣita (V) in D4203, *Ce* 1b1–13a7 and D4204, *Ce* 14b1–85b7, by Kanakavarman (K) in P5700, *Ce* 1a1–13a3 and P5702, *Ce* 93b1–177a5.

Durvekamiśra. *Dharmottarapradīpa (DhPr)*. See Dharmakīrti, *Nyāyabindu*.

Fukuda, Yoichi. 2003. “Shoki chibetto ronrigaku ni okeru mtshan mtshon gzhi gsum o meguru giron ni tsuite.” *Journal of the Japanese Association for Tibetan Studies* 49: 13–25.

’Gos Lo tsā ba gŹon nu dpal. *Deb ther sṅon po*. In *The Blue Annals*, repro-duced by Lokesh Chandra. New Delhi, 1974: International Academy of Indian Culture (Śata-piṭaka Series, vol. CCXII).

Glo bo mkhan chen bSod nams lhun grub. s*De bdun mdo daṅ bcas pa’i dgoṅs ’grel tshad ma rigs pa’i gter gyi ’grel pa’i rnam bśad rigs lam gsal ba’i ñi ma* (***Rigs gter Ñi ma***). In *Tshad ma rigs gter gyi ’grel pa*, rDo rje rgyal po

(ed.), dByaṅs can seṅ ge (gen. ed.), 1–262. Qinghai, 1991: Kruṅ go'i bod kyi śes rig dpe skrun khaṅ.

Go rams pa bSod nams seṅ ge. *sDe bdun mdo daṅ bcas pa'i dgoṅs pa phyin ci ma log par 'grel pa tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi don gsal bar byed pa (**Rigs gter gSal byed**). In Sa skya bka' 'bum: The Complete Works of the Great Masters of the Sa skya Sect of the Tibetan Buddhism (sDe dge edition)*, compiled by bSod nams rgya mtsho, vol. XI, *Kha* 1a1–148a2. Tokyo, 1969: The Toyo Bunko.

Gro luṅ pa Blo gros 'byuṅ gnas. *bsTan rim chen mo'i stod cha/smad cha*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. IV, 35–735 and vol. V, 3–242.

gSer mdog paṇ chen Śākya mchog ldan. *Tshad ma'i mdo daṅ bstan bcos kyi śiṅ rta'i srol rnams ji ltar byuṅ ba'i tshul gtam bya ba ñin mor byed pa'i snaṅ bas dpyod ldan mtha' dag dga' bar byed pa (**dGa' byed**). In The Complete Works (gSuṅ 'bum) of gSer mdog paṇ chen Śākya mchog ldan*, Kunzang Tobgey (ed.), vol. XIX, *Dza* 1a1–69a6. Timphu, 1975 [Reprint: Nagwang Topgyal, Delhi, 1988].

——. *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi dgoṅs rgyan rigs pa'i 'khor los lugs ṅan pham byed (**Pham byed**). In The Complete Works (gSuṅ 'bum) of gSer mdog paṇ chen Śākya mchog ldan*, Kunzang Tobgey (ed.), vol. X, *Tha* 1a1–294a4. Timphu, 1975 [Reprint: Nagwang Topgyal, Delhi, 1988].

gTsaṅ nag pa brTson 'grus seṅ ge. *Tshad ma rnam par ṅes pa'i ṭi ka legs bśad bsdus pa (**bsDus pa**).* Kyoto, 1989: Rinsen Book Co (Otani University Tibetan Works Series, Volume II).

——. *sPyod 'jug gi rnam bśad (**sPyod 'jug**). In bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. XIII, 487–579.

gŹon nu rin chen. *mṄon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi 'grel ba bcud kyi thig*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. XXI, 15–303.

Haribhadra. *Abhisamayālaṅkārakārikāśāstravivṛti* (**AAKŚV**). In *Abhisama-yālaṃkāra-kārikā-śāstra-vivṛti. Haribhadra's commentary on the Abhi-samayālaṃkāra-kārikā-śāstra edited for the first time from a Sanskrit manuscript*, Koei H. Amano (ed.). Kyoto, 2000: Heirakuji-Shoten. Tib. in D3793, *Ja* 78b1–140a7.

——. *Abhisamayālaṅkārālokā* (**AAA**). In *Abhisamayālaṃkārālokā Prajñā-pāramitāvyākhyā (Commentary on Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā) by Haribhadra together with the text commented on*, Unrai Wogihara (ed.). Tokyo 1932–1935: The Toyo Bunko. Tib. in D3791, *Cha* 1b1–341a7.

Hugon, Pascale. 2008a. *Trésors du raisonnement. Sa skya Paṇḍita et ses prédécesseurs tibétains sur les modes de fonctionnement de la pensée et le fondement de l'inférence. Edition et traduction annotée du quatrième chapitre et d'une section du dixième chapitre du* Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 69.1 and 69.2).

——. 2008b. "Arguments by Parallels in the Epistemological Works of Phya pa Chos kyi seṅ ge." *Argumentation* 22: 93–114. (DOI 10.1007/s10503–007–9074–7)

Jayānanda. *Madhyamakāvatāraṭīkā*. Tib. in D3870, *Ra* 1b1–365a7.

Jinendrabuddhi. *Pramāṇasamuccayaṭīkā* (**PSṬ**). Chap. I Skt. in *Jinendra-buddhi's Viśālāmalavatī Pramāṇasamuccayaṭīkā*, E. Steinkellner, H. Krasser and H. Lasic (eds.). Beijing/Vienna, 2005: China Tibetology Publishing House/Austrian Academy of Sciences Press (Sanskrit Texts from the Tibetan Autonomous Region No.1). Tib. in D4268, *Ye* 1b1–314a7, P5755 *Re* 1–355a8.

Jñānagarbha. *Satyadvayavibhaṅga*. In *Jñānagarbha's Commentary on the Distinction Between the Two Truths: An Eighth Century Handbook of Madhyamaka Philosophy*, M.D. Eckel (ed. and transl.). Albany, New York, 1987: State University of New York Press.

Kamalaśīla. *Tattvasaṅgrahapañjikā* (**TSP**). See Śāntarakṣita, *Tattvasaṅgraha*. Tib. in P5765, *'E* 159b2–*Ye* 404b6.

Karṇakagomin. *Pramāṇavārttikasvavṛttiṭīkā* (**PVSVṬ**). In *Karṇakagomin's Commentary on the Pramāṇavārttikavṛtti of Dharmakīrti*, Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana (ed.). Kyoto, 1982: Rinsen Book Co. (RBTS 1).

Katsura, Shōryu. 1977. "因明正理門論研究 [一] {"A Study of the Nyayāmukha I"}. *The Hiroshima University Studies (Literature Department)* 37: 106–126.

Kellner, Birgit. 2004. "Why Infer and not just Look? Dharmakīrti on the Psychology of Inferential Process." In *The Role of the Example (dṛṣṭānta) in Classical Indian Logic*, Sh. Katsura and E. Steinkellner (eds.), 1–51. Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 58).

La Vallée Poussin, Louis de. 1971. *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu : traduction et annotations*, 6 volumes, nouvelle édition préparée par E. Lamotte. Bruxelles: Institut belge des hautes études chinoises (Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques, vol. XVI) [original edition: Paris, 1923–1931: Geuthner; Louvain: J.-B. Istas].

Lalou, Marcelle. 1953. "Les textes bouddhiques au temps du roi Khri-srong-lde-btsan." *Journal Asiatique* 241: 313–353.

Maitreyanātha/Asaṅga. *Abhisamayālaṅkāra* (**AA**). In *Abhisamayālaṅkāra-Prajñāpāramitā-Upadeśa-Śāstra: The Work of Bodhisattva Maitreya*, E. Obermiller and T. Stcherbatsky (eds.). Delhi, 1992: Motilal Banarsidass [First Indian edition; original edition: Leningrad, 1929]. Tib. in D3786, *Ka* 1b1–13a7.

——. *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (**MSA**). In *Mahāyāna-Sūtrālaṃkāra : exposé de la doctrine du Grand Véhicule selon le système Yogācāra*, 2 vols., Sylvain Lévi (ed. and trans.). Paris, 1907–1911: H. Champion (Bibliothèque

de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes. Section 4, Sciences historiques et philologiques 159 and 190). Tib. in D4020, *Phi* 1b1–39a4.

mTshur ston gŹon nu seṅ ge. *Tshad ma śes rab sgron ma* (***sGron ma***). In *mTshur ston gŹon nu seṅ ge*, Tshad ma śes rab sgron ma, P. Hugon (ed.). Vienna, 2004: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 60).

Nāgārjuna. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*. In *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās (Mādhyamikasūtras) de Nāgārjuna avec la Prasannapadā, Commentaire de Candrakīrti*, Louis de la Vallée Poussin (ed.). St. Petersburg, 1903–1913: Russian Academy of Sciences (Bibliotheca Buddhica 4) [Reprint: Delhi, 1992: Motilal Banarsidass]. Tib. in D3824, *Tsa* 1b1–19a6.

Onoda, Shunzō. 1984. "mtshan nyid to mtshon bya ni tsuite." *Indogaku bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 33.1: 92–95.

Phywa pa Chos kyi seṅ ge. *Theg chen mdo sde rgyan gyi legs bśad rgyan ñi 'od gsal ba*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. VII, 352–537.

——. *dBu ma bden gñis kyi 'grel ba* (***bDen gñis 'grel***). In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. VI, 185–250.

——. *dBu ma śar gsum gyi stoṅ thun* (***sToṅ thun***). In *Phya pa Chos kyi seṅ ge*, dBu ma śar gsum gyi stoṅ thun, H. Tauscher (ed.). Vienna: Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien (Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde 43).

——. *Tshad ma rnam par ṅes pa'i 'grel bśad yi ge daṅ rigs pa'i gnad la 'jug pa'i śes rab kyi 'od zer* (***'Od zer***). In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. VIII, 35–427.

——. *Tshad ma yid kyi mun pa sel pa* (***Mun sel***). In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. VIII, 434–626.

Prajñākāragupta. *Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra*. In *Pramāṇavārtikabhāshyam or Vārtikālaṅkāraḥ of Prajñākaragupta*, R. Sāṅkṛtyāyana (ed.). Patna, 1953: Kashi Prasad Jayaswal Research Institute. Tib. in D4221, *Te* 1b1–308a7.

Ratnākaraśānti. *Āryāṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāpañjikāsārottamā*. Tib. in D3803, *Ta* 204a3–270a7.

rGya dmar pa Byaṅ chub grags. *Byaṅ chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa'i tshig don gsal bar bśad pa*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. VI, 11–174.

rṄog Blo ldan śes rab. *mṄon par rtogs pa'i rgyan 'grel rin chen sgron me*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. I, 125–201.

——. *mDo sde rgyan gyi don bsdus*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. I, 207–253.

——. *Tshad ma rnam ṅes kyi dka' ba'i gnas rnam par bśad pa* (***dKa' gnas***). Sun Wenjing (ed.), Qinghai, 1994: Kruṅ go'i bod kyi śes rig dpe skrun khaṅ.

——. *mTshan ñid kyi chos*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. I, 369–409.

Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan. *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter* (***Rigs gter***). In *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi raṅ gi 'grel pa*, Nor braṅ o rgyan (ed.). Lhasa, 1989: Bod ljoṅs mi dmaṅs dpe skrun khaṅ.

Śākyabuddhi. *Pramāṇavārttikaṭīkā* (***PVṬ***). Tib. in D4220, *Je* 1b1–328a7 and
    Ñe 1b1–282a7.

Śāntarakṣita. *Tattvasaṅgraha* (***TS***). In *Tattvasaṅgraha of Ācārya Śāntarakṣita
    with the Commentary Pañjikā of Śrī Kamalaśīla*, 2 vols., Svāmī Dvārikā-
    dās Śāstrī (ed.). Varanasi, 1981: Bauddha Bharati.

sGros rñiṅ pa 'Od zer mgon po. *mṄon par rtogs pa'i rgyan gyi rnam par
    'byed pa'i 'grel ba*. In *bKa' gdams gsuṅ 'bum*, vol. XV, 27–322.

Stearns, Cyrus. 2001. *Luminous Lives: The Story of the Early Masters of the
    Lam 'bras Tradition in Tibet.* Boston: Wisdom Publications (Studies in
    Indian and Tibetan Buddhism).

Tauscher, Helmut. 1999. "Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge's Opinion on Prasaṅga
    in His *Dbu ma'i shar gsum gyi stong thun.*" In *Dharmakīrti's Thought
    and Its Impact on Indian and Tibetan Philosophy. Proceedings of the
    Third International Dharmakīrti Conference. Hiroshima, November 4–6,
    1997*, Sh. Katsura (ed.), 387–393. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen
    Akademie der Wissenschaften.

—. 2003. "Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge As a Svātantrika." In *The Svātantrika-
    Prāsaṅgika Distinction. What difference does a difference make?* G.
    Dreyfus and S. McClintock (eds.), 207–255. Boston: Wisdom Publications
    (Studies in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism).

van der Kuijp, Leonard W.J. 1983. *Contributions to the Development
    of Tibetan Buddhist Epistemology from the Eleventh Century to the
    Thirteenth Century.* Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

—. 2003. "A Treatise on Buddhist Epistemology and Logic Attributed to
    Kloṅ chen rab 'byams pa (1308–1364) and Its Place in Indo-Tibetan
    Intellectual History." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 31: 381–437.

Vasubandhu. *Abhidharmakośa* (***AK***) and *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (***AKBh***).
    In *Abhidharmakoshabhāṣya of Vasubandhu*, Pradhan (ed.). Patna, 1967
    [Reedition 1975]. Tib. in D4089, *Ku* 1b1–25a7 and D4090, *Ku* 26b1–
    258a7 and *Khu* 1b1–95a7.

Vinītadeva. *Nyāyabinduṭīkā* (***NBṬ**v*). Tib. in D4230, *We* 1b1–36b2.