**Buchbesprechung:** On a recent work on Tibetan Buddhist epistemology

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# NOTIZ – NOTICE

## ON A RECENT WORK ON TIBETAN BUDDHIST EPISTEMOLOGY

LEONARD W.J. VAN DER KUIJP, *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Epistemology. From the eleventh to the thirteenth century.* Alt- und Neu-Indische Studien, Bd. 26. Wiesbaden, Franz Steiner Verlag, 1983, pp. IX, 330.

This book is a revised version of L. W. J. van der Kuijp's 1979 doctoral dissertation[1] and represents a continuation of his already published researches on the epistemology *(tshad ma = pramāṇa)* of Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109–1169) and Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251).[2] It presents probably the most in depth treatment that we have in a Western language of the Ngog tradition *(lugs)*, Phya pa tradition and Sa skya pa developments in the so-called «New Epistemology» *(tshad ma gsar ma)*, where «new» is to be contrasted with the «Old Epistemology» *(tshad ma rnying ma)* which had been propagated by Dpal brtsegs (ca. 800) and Rma Dge ba'i blo gros (1044–1089).

The period is of particular interest to us in that it was characterized by a wide variety of quite different and philosophically fertile interpretations of the Indian Buddhist epistemological literature. It was a formative time, relatively free from the constraints towards orthodoxy which the later, Dge lugs pa, scholastic would impose. It had not yet, for example, been «decided» as to whether Dharmakīrti had been a follower of the «Mind Only» school *(cittamātra)*, or whether he had followed the «Middle» school *(mādhyamika)* of Nāgārjuna: indeed, the whole question of what it meant to be Cittamātra or Mādhyamika was up for grabs, with various theories of «voidness of self» *(rang stong)* and «voidness of what is other» *(gzhan stong)* vying for the philosophical center stage.[3]

The heart of van der Kuijp's book is a translation of selections from Gser mdog Paṇ chen Śākya mchog ldan's (1428–1507) «History of Buddhist Epistemology», the *Tshad ma'i chos byung* (TMCB). In particular, he has translated the portions of the TMCB dealing with the philosopher-translator Ngog Lo tsā ba Blo ldan shes rab (1054–1109), Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge, the author of the «Epistemological Summaries»

*(tshad ma bsdus pa),* and Sa skya Paṇḍita, who was certainly the dominant intellectual figure of the period. Also, van der Kuijp has written valuable chapters on each of these three philosophers, serving as introductions to their thought and to their historical context. In the chapter on Ngog Lo tsā ba, for example, we are told that this syncretic thinker relied heavily on Prajñākaragupta's commentary to the *Pramāṇavārttika,* the *Pramāṇavārttikālaṃkāra,* and that he argued that in the final analysis Dharmakīrti was a follower of the «Great Mādhyamika» *(dbu ma chen po):* here van der Kuijp gives a particularly interesting discussion as to what kind of Mādhyamika this might be.[4]

The fourth chapter of the book consists of a brief discussion of post Sa skya Paṇḍita developments in Tibetan epistemology, especially the contributions of Go ram pa Bsod nams seng ge (1429–1489), who wrote two commentaries on the *Pramāṇavārttika* and two on Sa skya Paṇḍita's celebrated *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter* (TMRG). The chapter concludes with an annotated, but untranslated, presentation of the «topical outlines» *(sa bcad)* to Go ram pa's *Pramāṇavārttika* commentary, the *Kun tu bzang po'i 'od zer.* Clearly, a project for the future would be to translate these outlines.[5]

Finally, we should also mention that van der Kuijp has provided us with a number of useful appendices: lists of now lost Tibetan works; cross-references from the TMCB to other fifteenth century works; an annotated edition and a verse-index to the eighth chapter of the TMRG. These are mines of information.

Be all this as it may, the negative side to van der Kuijp's book is that it suffers from a large number of rather stunning errors, many of which are probably due to an unfortunate carelessness, but others – and these are more serious – undermine the comprehensibility and reliability of his translations. First of all, the English is often far from what it should be.[6] Secondly, there are some questionable translations of some important technical terms: *yid dpyod,* for example, becomes the unwieldy «reflection-as-an-ego-act»,[7] while *gzhan sel (anyāpoha)* is rendered by «concept formation» or sometimes «conceptualization».[8] Of course it is true that concepts are formed by means of *anyāpoha* – at least if one takes the Buddhist perspective. But the problem is that van der Kuijp's translation of this term would in no way inform us about the peculiarly *Buddhist* theory as to *how* concepts are formed, whereas a more literal translation, such as «exclusion of what is other», would at least convey that information.

Here are some of the more important errors which I noted.

P. 14, lines 5–7: «[His theories] were for the most part consistent with the philosophical position of the Jo-nang-pa». This has no equivalent in the Tibetan text found under note 33.

P. 29, 6: Van der Kuijp has written *bshad nyan,* but the Tibetan to note 70 has *nyan bshad.*

P. 51, 21–23: The paragraph, in the Tibetan text, *« rang stong gi tshul la ni . . . yod pa yin no / /»* has been misplaced and should rather be at the end of the text on p. 53. This sort of thing drives a reader mad.

P. 52, 10–11: The translation of *phyi rol gyi don dang don snang gi shes pa thams cad*[9] by «all external objects as well as the congitions *[sic]* having the appearance of objects» blurs the argument at stake. We would do better to translate this phrase by something like, «all external objects as well as the cognitions *of* the appearances of [these] objects», the point of the passage being that both the objects and the cognitions of these objects are ascertained to be without true existence *(bden med).* Besides «congitions» for «cognitions», we also find, in this same long sentence, «Dharmattara» for «Dharmottara», and *gzig du bral* for *gcig du bral.*

P. 55, 15–16: The entire Tibetan sentence *dbu ma che 'bring . . . 'di ltar byung ste,* should be on p. 51, 21–22, instead of the sentence which we find there, i.e. *rang stong gi tshul . . . yod pa yin no.*

P. 68, 8–12: Van der Kuijp has translated *tshad ma'i mtshan nyid mi bslu ba'i shes pa gsungs pa des mtshan gzhi mngon rjes gang rung re re mtshon mi nus pa'i phyir ro*[10] as:

«. . . because the statement: «The definition of the valid means of cognition is an infallible cognition», cannot in every instance indicate either immediate perception or inference as an exemplification which satisfies the definition.»

But the point is rather that «stating the definition of a valid means of cognition, i.e. an infallible awareness, cannot indicate *each (re re)* of its exemplifications, direct perception or inference». The argument here is that definienda *(mtshon bya)* and exemplifications *(mtshan gzhi)* are not identical, because while a definition *(mtshan nyid) does* indicate its definiendum, it does *not* indicate the particular or individual cases which satisfy this definition. To put it in other terms, understanding the definition «rational animal» enables us to understand what Man is, but it does not bring us much closer to identifying Frank, Franz, and Fritz. Finally, I might remark that I cannot see why, in van der Kuijp's system for transliterating Tibetan, we should use dashes when a Tibetan text is cited in the notes, but no dashes in the transcription of the text of the TMCB.

P. 68, 26: Van der Kuijp translates *tshogs don* by «various topics», but in Tibetan texts on epistemology this is a technical term meaning «the composite proposition», i.e. the proposition to be proved *(bsgrub bya; sādhya)* composed of the subject *(chos can; dharmin)* and the predicate *(bsgrub bya'i chos; sādhya-dharma)*.[11] Thus van der Kuijp's translation, «various topics *(tshogs-don)* [that fall under the subject *(chos-can, dharmin)* and predicate *(chos, dharma)*] of sound and impermanence», could be amended to read simply, «the proposition composed of [the subject] sound and [the predicate] impermanence».

P. 74, 5–6: «. . . since it would need to be cognized by means of a logical argument *(rtags)*» is nowhere to be found in the Tibetan text on p. 73. Furthermore, van der Kuijp has mistranslated *de mngon sum la snang rung ma dmigs pa'i phyir* (p. 73, 2) as, «inasmuch as it is not perceived as being capable of appearing in immediate perception» (p. 74, 3). The point is rather that it, i.e. the external object, *would be fitting to appear* to direct perception, but is not, in fact, apprehended. We are dealing with the *dṛśyānupalabdhi (snang rung ma dmigs pa)* of which *pramāṇa* texts speak. (A better translation would be something like, «because of the fact that something fitting to appear to direct perception is not [in fact] apprehended».) Indeed, it should be pointed out that the whole passage is turning on the use of the two principal Tibetan (?) classifications of the *anupalabdhihetu: snang rung ma dmigs pa* and *mi snang ba ma dmigs pa* («non-apprehension of what [exists but] does not appear»). The latter is alluded to in the TMCB by the expression *yod na yang lkog tu gyur pa,* and by the example of the meat-eating spirit *(sha-za; piśāca),* which is the classic exemplification used in Tibetan *rtags rigs* texts' presentation of *mi snang ba ma dmigs pa'i rtags yang dag.*[12]

P. 78, 1–10: Here we are provided with Phya pa's three properties of a valid means of cognition *(tshad ma; pramāṇa),* but it seems that van der Kuijp has in effect added a fourth. The second and third properties are actually included under what he numbers as (2). The ironic thing is that in his note 342 he correctly lists the three properties, basing his explanation on *Tshad ma rigs pa'i gter rang 'grel,* fol. 91a. But then in this very same note he refers us to the garbled passage on pp. 77–78 of his book where the three are incorrectly listed. Van der Kuijp seems to have taken the lines *de'i tshe na rjes dpag . . . 'jug yul rtogs pa* as part of the *exposition* of the three properties. But it seems to me much more likely that *de'i tshe na . . .* is showing a consequence of what preceeded (i.e. Phya pa's three properties of a *pramāṇa),* thus providing the reason for the TMCB's later assertion that Phya pa's definition of *pramāṇa* is in conflict with the Indian texts.

P. 84, 4–6: Van der Kuijp speaks of three ways of replying to an invalid refutation *(sun 'byin ltar snang):* «[what about] the argument *(rtags),* the implication is not established *(khyab-pa ma-grub-pa),* and [one's own] claim is exceeded *('dod-thog)* etc.» This is nonsense. The Tibetan on p. 83, 2–4 has: *sun 'byin ltar snang la lan 'debs tshul la rtags dang khyab pa ma grub pa dang 'dod thog ste gsum du grangs nges pa sogs.* («His threefold enumeration with regard to the ways of replying to an invalid refutation, i.e. (1) [saying] that the reason is not established, (2) [saying] that the implication is not established, and also (3) [saying] that one agrees . . .») One has to take *ma grub pa* with both *rtags* and *khyab pa.* As for *thog,* it just means «in addition to», «as well as», or «and also». In fact, it is abundantly clear in the *bsdus grwa* literature – which incidentally, was heavily influenced by Phya pa's thought – that *rtags ma grub, khyab pa ma grub* (or *khyab pa ma byung),* and *'dod* are the three ways by which one can deflect an opponent's refutation *(sun 'byin)* or consequence *(thal gyur; prasaṅga).*[13]

Let me end this list of problems and complaints here. Fortunately, the translations of the TMCB sections on Sa skya Paṇḍita and Ngog are generally much better than those of the Phya pa section. The latter should probably not have been published at this time: there are no notes, and the translations are unreliable. In sum, there is no doubt that van der Kuijp has read widely in Tibetan literature and is competent in the language. Moreover, given the pioneering nature of this field of study, some mistakes were indeed inevitable. But it is regrettable that so many essentially avoidable errors were left to mar this otherwise weighty book.

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Notes:

1 *Contributions to the Development of Tibetan Buddhist Logic – from the eleventh to the fifteenth century.* Submitted to the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Hamburg, 1979.

2 «Phya-pa Chos-kyi seng-ge's Impact on Tibetan Epistemological Theory». *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 5 (1978) pp. 355–369. «Tibetan Contributions to the *'Apoha'* Theory: The 4th Chapter of the *Tshad-ma rigs-pa'i-gter*». *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 99,3 (1979) pp. 408–422. Let me mention that in what follows I have used van der Kuijp's method of transcribing Tibetan, except for his use of inter-syllabic dashes, which seemed to me somewhat inconsistent: for some reason he did not use these dashes in his transcription of the *Tshad ma'i chos byung.*

3 Cf. chapter 1 of van der Kuijp's book.

4 Cf. pp. 37–45.

5 Another project – which van der Kuijp mentions but deliberately refrained from tackling because it would have been too vast – is to explore the philosophical interaction between the Dge lugs pa and the Sa skya pa schools on questions of *pramāṇa*. Let me mention a few points concerning their differences on *apoha*. The Dge lugs pa hold the rather peculiar view that although the *notions (cha)* of «universal» *(spyi; sāmānya),* subject *(chos can; dharmin),* predicate *(chos; dharma),* difference *(tha dad; bheda),* etc. are not real entities *(dngos med;* i.e. what is not causally efficacious), if *x* is a universal (etc.), it does not necessarily follow that *x* is not real *(dngos med).* To use the formula which one finds on p. 103b5 of Se ra Rje btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan's commentary on *Pramāṇavārttika* I *(svārthānumāna):* «Universal» and «real entity» have common bases *(... spyi dang dngos po'i gzhi mthun yod par bstan). (Rgyas pa'i bstan chos tshad ma rnam 'grel gyi don 'grel rgyal tshab dgongs pa rab gsal zhes bya ba le'u dang po'i dka' ba'i gnas la dogs pa gcod pa* of Se ra Rje btsun Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1469–1546). Also sometimes known by the title *Rnam 'grel spyi don.* Blockprint, monastic textbook *(yig cha)* of Se ra byes, Bylakuppe, Mysore, India. Date unknown.)

The basic point is that there *are* things which are both universals and which are real entities. One finds this view reiterated again and again in volume 1 of Rgyal tshab Dar ma rin chen's *Rnam 'grel thar lam gsal byed.* Sarnath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1974. The Indian source for this view, according to Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (op.cit. p. 103b) is a passage from Śaṃkarānanda's *ṭīkā* ad *Pramāṇavārttika* I, *kārikā* 40. Chos kyi rgyal mtshan as well as the *Sde dge bstan 'gyur*'s reading of this passage from Śaṃkarānanda is as follows: *gang phyir dngos kun te / gsal ba 'ba' zhig tu ni ma zad de / spyi yang yin no zhes bya ba'i don to /* (p. 152b6 *Pramāṇavārttikaṭīkā.* No. 4223 in *Sde dge Tibetan Tripiṭaka Bstan ḥgyur Tshad ma* 9, Tokyo 1982). [Instead of *'ba' zhig tu,* the Peking edition (p. 181b5–6, vol. 134) has *'ga' zhig tu* which is most likely an error.]

Translation: «'Thus all entities' means not just the instantiations, but also the universals». We should however mention that Rgyal tshab and Chos kyi rgyal mtshan insist that the Hindu version of universal, which is being *completely* refuted in the *Pramāṇavārttika,* is not the same as the one which is said to have common bases with «real entity».

As for the Sa skya pas, they do not seem to accept this type of discrimination between acceptable and unacceptable universals. Go ram pa Bsod nams seng ge, for ex-

ample, specifically rejects the view that there is a common basis between «universal» and «real entity». Cf. p. 17a5–6 of his *Sde bdun mdo dang bcas pa'i dgongs pa phyin ci ma log par 'grel pa tshad ma rigs pa'i gter gyi don gsal bar byed pa* Vol. 11 in *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, Sde dge edition, comp. Bsod nams rgya mtsho, 15 volumes, Tokyo 1968–69. It appears that Go ram pa's position was a fairly straightforward one, where *all* universals are mind-created, and come about by «exclusion of what is other» *(gzhan sel)*. In his definitions of the three types of universals, «kind-universals» *(rigs spyi)*, «object-universals» *(don spyi)* and «collection-universals» *(tshogs spyi)*, he characterizes them all as *sgro btags* («projected entities»; *samāropa*): in Dge lugs *bsdus grwa* texts it is only the *don spyi* which is so characterized. Cf. Go ram pa op.cit. p. 12b5–13a. Finally, let me mention that Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (op.cit. p. 103b5) alludes to a polemical correspondance *(rtsod yig)* between Rgyal tshab rje (1364–1432) and a certain Chos rje g.yag pa concerning these points. The latter thinker was possibly the Sa skya pa, G.yag ston Sangs rgyas dpal (1348–1414), the author of commentaries on *Pramāṇavārttika* and *Rigs gter*.

6 It is especially in the translations that the problems arise. We find murky sentences such as the following example: «He claimed that the various ways of negating and affirming the concrete thing *(rdzas-[chos])* and the conceptual abstraction *(ldog-[chos])* and the *sapakṣa* and the *asapakṣa* to be direct contraries [of one another].» (p. 115).

7 The best and simplest translation which I know of for *yid dpyod* is due to A. Berzin: «presumption». And that is basically what *yid dpyod* is, as can be seen from the definition found on p. 518 of A kya yongs 'dzin Dbyangs can dga' ba'i blo gros' (18th c.) *Blo rigs kyi sdom tshig blang dor gsal ba'i me long (The Collected Works of A-kya Yoṅs-hdzin*, Vol. 1, New Delhi: Lama Gurudeva, 1971). The definition is: «a mind which is not a valid means of cognition, [and] which newly grasps its real object» */(/ de yang rang yul bden pa la / / gsar du zhen pa'i tshad min blo / / yid dpyod kyi ni mtshan nyid yin /)*. To put it another way, it is a kind of «unjustified true belief»; sometimes it is not based on any reason at all, just hearsay; sometimes it is based on unascertained reasons *(gtan la ma phabs pa'i rgyu mtshan)*, or even on contradictory reasons *(rgyu mtshan 'gal ba)*. Cf. A kya yongs 'dzin, op.cit. pp. 518–519.

8 Cf. p. 111, 21–22.

9 p. 51, 6–7.

10 Pp. 298–299, n. 254.

11 Cf. e.g. the definition of «fallacious thesis» *(phyogs ltar snang; pakṣābhāsa)* to be found in Tsong kha pa's short work on epistemology, the *Sde bdun la 'jug pa'i sgo don gnyer yid kyi mun sel:* «A composite proposition which is accepted by the proponent, but which does not satisfy the five properties, i.e. 'nature', 'object', etc.» *snga rgol gyis dam bcas pa'i tshogs don gang zhig / ngo bo don sogs chos lnga ma tshang ba /*. P. 75 of the 1972 reprint from the Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, Sarnath, India. (Incidentally, this should be the 'Treasure of Elegant Sayings' and not the 'Pleasure', as it is has been oft-mistermed – *legs bshad gter mdzod par khang!*) Cf. p. 22b5 volume *tsha* of the *Khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po'i gsung 'bum*, ed. Nawang Gelek Demo. New Delhi: Geden Sungrab Minyam Gyunphel Series, 1975–79. This work is not found in the supplement to the Peking *Bstan 'gyur*.

12 Cf. pp. 32–36 of *The Yoṅs 'dzin rtags rigs, A Manual for Tibetan Logic*, edited with an introduction by Shunzo Onoda. Nagoya University: Studia Asiatica 5, 1981. This is a critical edition of Yongs 'dzin Phur bu lcog byams pa tshul khrims rgya mtsho

(1825–1901), *Tshad ma'i gzhung don 'byed pa'i bsdus grwa'i rnam par bshad pa rigs lam 'phrul gyi lde'u mig las rigs lam che ba rtags rigs kyi skor.*

Tsong kha pa's definition of *mi snang ba ma dmigs pa'i rtags yang dag,* in op.cit. p. 47 (Sarnath ed.) and p. 15a1–2 of *Gsung 'bum* vol. *tsha,* is as follows: *de sgrub kyi dgag bya'i chos kyi yul de yod kyang / de phyogs chos can gyi gang zag la bltar mi rung ba / dper na / mdun gyi gzhi 'dir sha za bskal don du song ba'i skyes bus sha za yod nges kyi tha snyad don mthun mi 'jug par sgrub pa la sha za bskal don du song ba'i gang zag gis sha za ma dmigs pa bkod pa lta bu /.* Translation: «Although the object of the property to be negated does exist, it is not accessible to perception for the person who receives the *pakṣadharma.* An example: Suppose that one [wishes to] prove that a person for whom meat-eating spirits here in front are obscure entities [can] not truthfully apply the notion that such spirits definitely exist. To prove this one presents [a reason] like 'a person for whom a meat-eating spirit is an obscure entity does not apprehend such spirits'». Note that *bskal don = lkog gyur (parokṣa).*

*Yongs 'dzin rtags rigs* makes it clear that this type of *anupalabdhihetu* is considered to be implicitly referred to in *Pramāṇavārttika* I k. 3ab: *tshad ma rnams ni mi 'jug pa / / med la mi 'jug 'bras du can.* Yongs 'dzin cites this verse on p. 33. As for Go ram pa, on p. 101a1–2 op.cit., he states: *gnyis pa [ma dmigs pa'i rtags yang dag gi] dbye ba la / mi snang ba ma dmigs pa'i dgag rtags yang dag dang / snang rung ma dmigs pa'i dgag rtags yang dag gnyis /.* For Go ram pa's definitions of these two kinds of *anupalabdhihetu,* his citing of *Pramāṇavārttika* I k.3b, and his use of the spirit *(sha za)* example, cf. pp. 101a2–101b6. These notions are not just confined to the Dge lugs.

13  A consequence or refutation, such as 'Sound is not produced, because it is permanent' *(sgra chos can ma byas pa yin par thal rtag pa yin pa'i phyir),* should, to be valid, leave the opponent stymied. He cannot say that the reason, 'Sound is permanent', and the implication, 'Whatever is permanent is not produced' are not established *(ma grub pa),* because in his philosophy he accepts these two propositions. But nor can he agree *('dod)* that sound is indeed unproduced, because that runs counter to his views. An invalid refutation, however, is one where the opponent can reply *rtags ma grub,* etc. but remain consistent with regard to his own position. Finally, we should note that Sa skya Paṇḍita himself, in the TMRG *rang 'grel* pp. 194a–b *(Sa skya bka' 'bum,* vol. 5) considers and then rejects the view that there are only the three types of reply to a consequence: *bod rnams thal 'gyur gyi lan la gtan tshigs ma grub / khyab pa ma grub / 'dod thog ces gsum las mi srid do / / zhes zer ro / / 'di mi 'thad de /* p. 194a1–2). He argues for four kinds of reply, dividing unestablished implications *(khyab pa ma grub)* into two sorts, contradictoriness *('gal ba)* and uncertainty *(ma nges pa),* thus transferring to the theory of consequences some of the terms more usually associated with the classification of fallacious reasons *(gtan tshigs ltar snang; hetvābhāsa).* Cf. p. 194b1–2: *des na mkhas pas thal 'gyur lan / rnam par thar pa'i sgo bzhis gdab / / thal ba'i lan ni / 'gal / ma nges / ma grub / 'dod pa grub pa ste sgo bzhi'o /.*