

中華佛學學報第 18 期 (pp.207-272) : (民國 94 年),  
臺北 : 中華佛學研究所, <http://www.chibs.edu.tw>  
Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal, No. 18, (2005)  
Taipei: Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies  
ISSN: 1017-7132

## **A Controversy Unveiled: How Many Sūtra Passages Are Indicated as Requiring Interpretation in Candrakīrti's Madhyamakavatārabhāṣya?**

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### **Abstract**

This paper discusses a controversy within the Ge-luk sect of Tibetan Buddhism concerning a disagreement among prominent Ge-luk scholars over the precise number of Buddhist doctrines indicated as requiring interpretation in Candrakīrti's Autocommentary on the "Introduction to Nāgārjuna's 'Treatise on the Middle Way.'" The controversial passage comes in the sixth chapter of Candrakīrti's famous work on Buddhist philosophy in the context of his refutation of the Mind-Only system. The passage states:

These passages [in the Descent Into Laṅkā Sūtra and so forth]

Show that other sūtras of such type require interpretation.

The controversy surrounds the fact that the founder of the Ge-luk sect, °zong-ka-, a Ío-sang-drak-, a, asserts that Candrakīrti here refers to four types of sūtra passages:

- (1) statements differentiating true establishment and non-true establishment with respect to the three natures;
- (2) statements teaching a mind-basis-of-all;
- (3) statements refuting external objects;
- (4) statements explaining three final vehicles.

Later Ge-luk authors—most notably Kay-drup and Jam-©ang-shay-, a—argue instead that Candrakīrti is referring to five sūtra passages requiring interpretation, these being the four asserted by °zong-ka-, a plus a fifth:

(5)statements in the Tathāgata Essence Sūtra of a permanent, stable essence in the continuums of all sentient beings having the [major and minor] marks of a Buddha.

Candrakīrti's remarks are somewhat ambiguous. Moreover, a surface reading yields doctrinal difficulties for °zong-ka-,a. Therefore, he employs a clever substitutional hermeneutic in treading the fine line between appreciation of Candrakīrti's opinions and outright non-adherence to his views. Kay-drup, on the other hand, rejects his master's conclusions as too limiting, while Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a's hermeneutical maneuvers are an admirable attempt to reconcile the variant positions of his predecessors. Although these later Ge-luk-,a's clearly feel °zong-ka-,a is mistaken, they never claim that he is wrong; they even take steps to smooth over their differences so that they do not appear to be disagreeing with the founder.

Within the course of investigating this disagreement, this paper shows how °zong-ka-,a employs creative interpretation in treading a fine line between appreciation of Candrakīrti's opinions on this point and outright non-adherence to his views. It also demonstrates how later exegetes—in part due to changing priorities within Tibet—are able to work with Sanskrit materials within °zong-ka-,a's doctrinal system, while at the same time circumventing °zong-ka-,a's strictures as needed. Also included is a discussion of the Ge-luk hermeneutical process, the author's translation of a small part of °zong-ka-,a's Illumination of the Thought, Extensive Explanation of (Candrakīrti's) "Introduction to (Nāgārjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle'" dealing with this question of interpretable sūtras, and the author's translation of annotation za of Nga-Üang-,el-den's Annotations for (Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a's) "Great Exposition of Tenets," Freeing the Knots of the Difficult Points, Precious Jewel of Clear Thought.

**Keywords:** 1.Tibetan Buddhism 2.Ge-luk Sect 3. °zong-ka-,a 4.Candrakīrti 5.Hermeneutic 6.Buddha Nature 7.Interpretable and definitive scriptures

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## Introduction

This paper<sup>[1]</sup> will unveil a polite but spirited controversy within the Ge-luk sect of Tibetan Buddhism. The controversy concerns disagreement among prominent Ge-luk scholars over the precise number of Buddhist doctrines indicated as requiring interpretation in Candrakīrti’s<sup>[2]</sup> Autocommentary on the “Introduction to Nāgārjuna’s ‘Treatise on the Middle Way.’”<sup>[3]</sup> The controversial passage comes in the sixth chapter of Candrakīrti’s famous work on Buddhist philosophy in the context of his refutation of the Mind-Only system. The passage states:<sup>[4]</sup>

These passages [in the Descent Into Lañkā Sūtra<sup>[5]</sup> and so forth] Show that other sūtras of such type require interpretation.

In brief, the controversy surrounds the fact that the founder of the Ge-luk sect, °zong-ka-,a Ío-sang-drak-,a,[6] asserts that Candrakīrti here refers to four types of sūtra passages:

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- (1) statements differentiating true establishment and non-true establishment with respect to the three natures;
- (2) statements teaching a mind-basis-of-all;
- (3) statements refuting external objects;
- (4) statements explaining three final vehicles.

Later Ge-luk authors—most notably Kay-drup[7] and Jam-©ang-shay-,a[8]—argue instead that Candrakīrti is referring to five sūtra passages requiring interpretation, these being the four asserted by °zong-ka-,a plus a fifth:

- (5) statements in the Tathāgata Essence Sūtra of a permanent, stable essence in the continuums of all sentient beings having the [major and minor] marks of a Buddha.

Candrakīrti’s remarks are somewhat ambiguous. Moreover, as we shall see, a surface reading yields doctrinal difficulties for °zong-ka-,a. Therefore, this creative scholar employs a clever substitutional hermeneutic in treading the fine line between appreciation of Candrakīrti’s opinions and outright non-adherence to his views. Kay-drup, on the other hand, rejects his master’s conclusions as too limiting, while Jam-©ang-shay-,a’s hermeneutical maneuvers are an admirable attempt to reconcile the variant positions of his predecessors. Although these later Ge-luk-,a’s clearly feel °zong-ka-,a is mistaken, they never claim that he is wrong; they even take steps to smooth over their differences so that they do not appear to be disagreeing with the founder.

Within the course of investigating this disagreement, I hope to show how °zong-ka-,a employs creative interpretation in treading a fine line between

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appreciation of Candrakīrti’s opinions on this point and outright non-adherence to his views. I also hope to show how later exegetes—in part due to changing priorities within Tibet—are able to work with Sanskrit materials within °zong-ka-,a’s doctrinal system, while at the same time circumventing °zong-ka-,a’s strictures as needed. Unveiling this controversy will also prove valuable as a discussion of interpretable and definitive doctrines and as a demonstration of the Ge-luk hermeneutical process, not merely on a theoretical level but as it actually evolves over time.

In order to facilitate understanding of this controversy, I also include two appendices: (1) my translation of a small part of °zong-ka-,a’s Illumination of the Thought, Extensive Explanation of (Candrakīrti’s) “Introduction to (Nāgārjuna’s) ‘Treatise on the Middle’”[9] dealing with this question of interpretable sūtras and (2) my translation of annotation za of Nga-Ūang-,el-den’s[10] Annotations for (Jam-©ang-shay-,a’s) “Great Exposition of Tenets,” Freeing the Knots of the Difficult Points,

Precious Jewel of Clear Thought.[11] Toward that end, let us look briefly at the topic of Ge-luk hermeneutics to discover which sūtra passages are considered definitive and which are held to be of interpretable meaning according to Ge-luk exegetes.

## Ge-luk Hermeneutics

Broadly speaking, hermeneutics is method or strategy employed in interpretation. In discussing the need for hermeneutical strategy, Packer presents Heidegger's proposition to the effect that, "hermeneutic method is the appropriate approach for

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the study of human action".[12] He explains that the hermeneutical approach is essential since, "any act, looked at in isolation from its situation, is likely to be ambiguous to the point of opacity", and that, furthermore, "an observer of a social interaction does not have direct, unproblematic access to the unambiguous 'meaning' of the acts taking place."

This assessment by Packer of the ambiguity of events observed in isolation describes the problem facing Buddhist hermeneuticians confronted with conflicting literal readings found in different sūtras. Although an ambiguity of events may necessitate a hermeneutic, this is not to say, as Carl Bielefeldt seems to think, that Buddhist hermeneutics "is a sign of alienation, of distance from a tradition that Buddhist thinkers felt the need to somehow recover".[13] Rather, the very nature of the Buddha's teaching necessitates a hermeneutic. Buddhist hermeneutics is integral to a system whose Founder spoke different things for the benefit of different people. Since the death of the Buddha, Buddhist scholars have relied upon hermeneutical enquiry to inform their ontological studies. This hermeneutical need is based on the fact that the Buddha spoke both interpretable and definitive teachings, and therefore reliance upon sūtra alone is not possible. To realize the nature of reality in all its profundity, one must rely on "stainless reasoning," and in part this means one must also rely on treatise authors who employ reason to discriminate between interpretable and definitive sūtra passages. This need is ahistorical because Buddhist hermeneutics is a tradition encouraged by the Buddha and therefore is a planned addition to the tradition rather than a sign of alienation or distance from it. Thus, there is no "distance from a tradition that Buddhist thinkers felt the need to somehow recover".

Just prior to his nirvāṇa, the Buddha addressed his community about how to comport itself after his death. Here, in the Mahāparinibbannasutta, the Buddha instructs the community through Ānanda to accept the doctrine as their teacher:[14]

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Then the Bhagavan addressed the venerable Ānanda: "It may be, Ānanda, that some of you will think, 'The word of the Teacher is a thing of the past; we have now no Teacher.' But that, Ānanda, is not the correct view. The Doctrine and the Discipline, Ānanda, which I have taught and enjoined upon you is to be your teacher when I am gone".

The Buddha informs Ānanda that his departure will deprive the community of a living teacher, but will not deprive them of the doctrine: a scriptural authority they should regard as their teacher. Here, the Buddha lays the foundation for a hermeneutic that will be needed after his death: a time that will lack the omniscient authority of the Buddha himself but which will still possess scriptural authority. According to Lopez, this injunction by the Buddha is the basis of Buddhist hermeneutics in that it addresses the dilemma of a congregation subsequent to the death of its Founder, and establishes principles for the retrieval of his meaning.[15]

Like Lopez, Nathan Katz feels that Buddhist hermeneutics is aimed at providing meaningful access to both scriptures and practices. [16] He presents a division of Buddhist hermeneutics into the text-based and the adept-based that is in part defined by hermeneutical flow. He theorizes that the text-based hermeneutician seeks to analyze a teaching, while the adept-based hermeneutician seeks to analyze the practitioner of that teaching, and through this the efficacy of the practice.

Ge-luk-, a hermeneuticians employ interpretation of scripture more in accordance with Katz's first division, the text-based. This is because the Ge-luk method always seeks to analyze a teaching, and emphasizes a logical approach to doctrinal and textual analysis of scriptures. ¼am-©ang-shay-, a states that this enterprise proceeds through determining in three ways which sūtra passages are interpretable and which are definitive:

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- 1.by the four reliances: (1) rely on the teaching, not the teacher, (2) rely on the meaning, not the letter, (3) rely on the definitive, not the interpretable, and (4) rely on wisdom, not [ordinary] consciousness;
- 2.by reasoning and analysis;
- 3.through many scriptural citations in treatises.

Determining the interpretable and the definitive is the specific meaning of hermeneutics in Great Vehicle Buddhism. ¼am-©ang-shay-, a states:

The differentiation of what requires interpretation and what is definitive is devised from the viewpoint of the subject matter [in the passage]. A sutra mainly teaching the ultimate [emptiness] is said to be definitive whereas one mainly teaching conventionalities [phenomena other than emptiness] is said to require interpretation. The Teaching of Akshayamati Sutra says, "What are definitive sutras? Which require interpretation? Sutras setting forth the establishment of conventionalities are called 'requiring interpretation'. Sutras setting forth the establishment of the ultimate are called 'definitive'." [17]

Figuratively speaking, Ricoeur could be describing the Ge-luk situation when he remarks:

It is useful to recall that the hermeneutical problem was first raised within the limits of exegesis, that is, within the framework of a discipline which proposes to

understand a text—to understand it beginning with its intention, on the basis of what it attempts to say.[18]

Thus, Ricoeur and Ge-luk hermeneuticians are alike in that they consider that a hermeneutical framework is employed in order to understand a text, beginning with

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its intention. Ricoeur goes on to say that different philosophical presuppositions and principles result in different interpretations. This was certainly true in Tibet, as well as in other Buddhist countries, where religious scholars disagreed over which sūtra passages were to be taken as being of definitive meaning[19] and which were to be taken as being of interpretable meaning[20] (regarding selflessness). Their purpose was to identify definitive scriptures in order to progress toward a direct realization of the ultimate. Since this realization is necessary for enlightenment, correct knowledge of the ultimate reality taught in scripture is part of the process of enlightenment. Hence, interpretation of scripture can be seen as a crucial step in the soteriological process. The Buddhist search for the “most exalted vision of the Buddha,” the actual “content of his enlightenment”, assures that identification of the Buddha’s intention lies at the heart of the Buddhist hermeneutic.[21] Broido agrees with this assessment when he remarks that the Buddhist hermeneutical enterprise is founded upon “intention-ascription.”[22] As Lopez notes in his essay, “This concern with intention may very well run counter to modern trends in hermeneutics, but its centrality to the Buddhist interpretation of scripture is undeniable.”[23]

However, Ge-luk hermeneutical strategy is more than a search for intention. In fact, the intended meaning is only one of four criteria used in determining the interpretable and the definitive. Let us consider Ge-luk hermeneutical strategies and their sūtra sources.

## Two Hermeneutical Sūtra Sources

The hermeneutical enterprise seeks the intention of the Buddha, but how is that to be determined? In Tibet, °zong-ka-,a’s Treatise Differentiating the Interpretable and the Definitive: The Essence of Eloquence[24] is a model for later Ge-luk scholars

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acceptance that Proponents of Mind-Only rely on the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought[25] for their scriptural-based hermeneutic of the three wheels. Middle Way exegetes following the principals set forth in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought employed a number of hermeneutical tools based on this Mind-Only sūtra to establish the Buddha’s intention in terms of four criteria: [26]

- 1.the intended meaning;[27]
- 2.the basis in the Buddha’s thought;[28]

3.the purpose;[29]

4.the damage to the literal teaching.[30]

The intended meaning is that which the Buddha is attempting to convey. In an interpretable scripture, this meaning is different from the Buddha's own understanding of the ultimate. The Buddha's understanding of the ultimate is termed the basis in the Buddha's thought. This is always emptiness, the ontological ultimate, the mode of subsistence of phenomena. The purpose is the reason or motivation that caused the Buddha to speak interpretably. This motivation is based on his omniscient understanding of the needs of his listeners. For instance, a possible motivation for discussing ethics is to provide a means for connecting causes to effects for those who cannot understand the Middle Way presentation of causality. A motivation for discussing mind-only is to help trainees overcome attachment to forms, and so forth. The damage to the literal teaching refers to the

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contradictions (by reason and scripture) that would follow if the interpretable reading were allowed to stand without interpretation. For example, if one accepted the literal teaching of the five aggregates as definitive that would contradict reasonings proving emptiness to be the definitive ultimate (and not some conventional phenomena). Hopkins remarks that a passage is said to require interpretation due to having the latter three of the above four factors.[31]

Within Great Vehicle tenet systems, both Proponents of Mind-Only and, to a lesser extent, Proponents of the Middle Way make use of the explanation in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought and other sūtras for a hermeneutical grid of three wheels of scripture. The Sūtra Unraveling the Thought makes its division into three wheels by way of subject matter; specifically, by way of how selflessness is presented.[32] Hopkins states that:

The first turning is comprised of doctrines that set forth the selflessness of persons but do not refute that phenomena are established by way of their own character as bases of names and conceptions. The second is comprised of those that on the literal level set forth the non-true existence of all phenomena, without distinguishing that some do and others do not truly exist. The third is comprised of those that clearly discriminate the true existence of emptinesses and impermanent phenomena and the non-true existence of imaginary phenomena.[33]

The three wheels are shown to be different by nature of the very different presentations of selflessness contained within them. Thus, the differentiation into three wheels is not made according to some other criterion, such as time or place. Kay-drup makes this very point:

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The three wheels [of doctrine] mentioned in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought are not posited by way of the assemblies of [the Buddha's] retinue, or by way of periods in the Teacher's life, and so forth, but by way of expressed topics. Furthermore, those are in terms of the [three] mode of settling the meaning of selflessness: (1) an explanation that mostly does not refute true existence, (2) an explanation that all phenomena are without true existence, and (3) a good differentiation of true existence with respect to the three natures. [This differentiation of] three wheels is done in terms of the fact that they respectively teach such.[34]

Thurman, on the other hand, states that the hermeneutics of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought and Zhiyi's five period hermeneutic are similar in being "historical in using the Buddha's biography as framework".[35] Adherents to this 'historical' theory might agree with Packer when he says that hermeneutics is "not a search for timeless and ahistorical laws and formal structures." [36] However, these theories are not those held by °zong-ka-,a, for whom reasoning might well be said to constitute "a search for timeless and ahistorical laws". °zong-ka-,a further states:

The differentiation of interpretable and definitive scriptures set forth stemming from the ultimate derives from whether there is or is not damage by reasoning to the literal reading.[37]

°zong-ka-,a again mentions reasoning as the prime means of eliciting the definitive,  
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thereby identifying the ultimate through hermeneutical interpretation. This also contradicts Thurman, who does not hold that the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought differentiates the interpretable and the definitive by reason, but by periods in the Buddha's life.[38]

Proponents of the Middle Way and Proponents of Mind-Only interpret the sūtras of these three wheels of doctrine differently. From the Ge-luk perspective, at least, Proponents of Mind-Only following the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought employ literal acceptability as the criterion for definitive sūtras.[39]

Proponents of the Middle Way assert that the second wheel is of definitive meaning, while the other two wheels are interpretable. Proponents of Mind-Only hold the final wheel to be of definitive meaning and the first two to be of interpretable meaning. How is this differentiation to be made? °zong-ka-,a says in The Essence of the Good Explanations:

the differentiation [between the interpretable and the definitive] must be made just by stainless reasoning ... because the suchness of things also has reasoned proofs which are establishments by way of [logical] correctness.[40]

°zong-ka-,a comes down on the side of reasoning as the final criterion of the interpretable and the definitive. This criterion applies equally to both schools of the Great Vehicle. In essence, °zong-ka-,a is saying that all practitioners should employ reasoning in the hermeneutical process to determine for themselves which statements are definitive. Thus, it is the Ge-luk position that differentiation into three wheels is

made by way of topics expressed, these topics being three different presentations of selflessness.

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Proponents of the Middle Way School rely for their hermeneutic on the Teaching of Aksayamati Sūtra.<sup>[41]</sup> This sūtra specifies that the differentiation between scriptures of definitive and interpretable meaning is made by way of the subject discussed. This means that those scriptures teaching emptiness are definitive, whereas those teaching conventional truths are interpretable. ¼am-©ang-shay-,a quotes the Teaching of Aksayamati Sūtra to this effect:<sup>[42]</sup>

The Teaching of Akshayamati Sūtra says:

Those sutras teaching [about various objects] by way of various words and letters are said to require interpretation. Those teaching the profound, the difficult to view, and the difficult to realize are called definitive. Those teaching, for instance, [the inherent existence of] an owner when there is no [inherently existent] owner and teaching those objects indicated by various words [such as] self, sentient being, life, nourishment, being, person, progeny of Manu, son of Manu, agent, and experiencer are said to require interpretation. Those sutras teaching the doors of liberation, the emptiness of phenomena, no [inherently existent] signs, no [inherently existent] wishes, no [inherently existent] products, no [inherently existent] production, no [inherently existent] sentient being, no [inherently existent] living being, no [inherently existent] person, and no [inherently existent] controller are called the definitive. This is called reliance on definitive sutras and non-reliance on those requiring interpretation.

The teachings of conventional phenomena in the first wheel of the teaching and in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought require interpretation. For, it is necessary to search out the mode of existence [of the phenomena mentioned in these texts] apart from what was explicitly taught there. The King of Meditative Stabilizations Sūtra, the One Hundred Thousand Stanza Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra, and so forth are definitive because the mode of existence of the phenomena [discussed in those texts] is definite as just the meaning of their explicit teaching.

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Ge-luk hermeneuticians traditionally rely on the The Teachings of Aksayamati Sūtra for a radical ontological hermeneutic that ignores such questions as “authorial intention, contextual circumstance, expediency, and literal acceptability.” <sup>[43]</sup> Instead, the The Teachings of Aksayamati Sūtra defines the interpretable and the definitive strictly in terms of the ontological status of the subject matter. Sūtras teaching conventional truths are interpretable, sūtras referring to the ultimate are definitive. Candrakīrti clearly restates this position in his Autocommentary (VI.97):

Interpretation is undertaken upon knowing the application of scripture

And understanding that sūtras which teach what is not reality

Are said to require interpretation.

Know [that sūtras] having the meaning of emptiness are definitive.[44]

Lopez suggests that the radical ontological hermeneutic of The Teachings of Aksayamati Sūtra “provides an element of distancing which the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought lacks, because it provides a disinterested approach in the determination of the interpretable and the definitive. Since the only hermeneutical criteria for definitiveness is emptiness, the hermeneutical enterprise is accessible to anyone capable of following Nāgārjuna’s analyses. Candrakīrti points out that providing access to the hermeneutic was the very purpose for which Nāgārjuna wrote his Treatise:

Some have the doubt: “what is the teaching that has the meaning of reality? Which are intentional?” Some, because of their feeble minds, think that teachings that are of interpretable meaning are of definitive meaning. In order to clear away doubt and mistaken ideas of both of these through reasoning and scripture, the master composed this [Treatise].[45]

Thus, Nāgārjuna composed his treatise to dispel wrong ideas regarding the

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interpretable and the definitive. It is interesting to note that, for Consequentialists, definitive scriptures teaching emptiness need not do so on the literal level of what the words actually say. The criterion in that school is that a sūtra’s actual subject of discussion[46] and explicit teaching[47] be that phenomena are empty of inherent existence.[48] Such a sūtra is the Heart of Wisdom Sūtra,[49] that says on the literal reading that forms do not exist.

The radical ontological hermeneutic of the The Teachings of Aksayamati Sūtra is the rationale for verifying that sūtras teaching Middle Way Consequence emptiness are definitive. As Lopez remarks, “the interpreter, ironically, participates in a hermeneutics of suspicion, in the case of interpretable scriptures, allowing the Buddha’s statement its illocutionary function but denying its perlocutionary effect; acknowledging his words but being unpersuaded by them.”[50] It is Lopez’ contention that, in response to this situation, fraught with suspicion and the tension of disregarding the word of the Buddha, the “commentary becomes the endless search for a meaning that can be discerned once and for all, free from sectarian concerns.”[51] This is because “there is no escape from the text,” since even the authority of the treatise authors circles back to their being prophesied in sūtra.

In a sense there is circularity in the Ge-luk hermeneutic: sūtra pronouncements are employed to determine the interpretable and the definitive of sūtras. However, reliance on scripture is only part of the process of determining the interpretable and the definitive. The “stainless reasoning” mentioned by °zong-ka-,a is also an integral part of the Ge-luk hermeneutic because emptiness has reasoned proofs that establish it by way of logical correctness. Even if modern scholars doubt the

autonomy of reasoning in Buddhism, or the ultimate validity of inferential realizations, it seems clear that Middle Way exegetes do not. For them, syllogistic analysis breaks the circularity and releases them from the text. The analysis itself bestows freedom from the text through empirically validating—with cognitions arisen from inferential understandings—the emptiness that is at the core of definitive sūtras. Lopez may be discounting the possibility of inferential realization when he asserts of the Ge-luk hermeneutic, “there is no escape from the text.”

It is certainly true, however, that the Buddhist hermeneutical tradition is fairly fixed after two thousand years of exegesis. There are no surprises in Buddhist hermeneutics. Because of this, the Ge-luk exploration of the interpretable and the definitive is unlike Gadamer’s notion of an exegete’s project, “which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning.”<sup>[52]</sup> The Buddhist exegete may misunderstand the profound meaning, but there will not be a constant revision of what is definitive and what requires interpretation.

Lopez also speaks of the Ge-luk hermeneutic involving an endless search for meaning. As we have seen, the syllogistic reasoning of treatise analysis is the conscious structure of the Middle Way Consequence hermeneutic. Since the Ge-luk hermeneutic is based on the syllogism, it seems to me to be a finite—not an endless—search for meaning; a search confined within the boundaries of Buddhist logic, wherein a statement can be proven correct by relating a thesis with the three modes of a correct sign.<sup>[53]</sup>

## The Controversy

I first became aware of the controversy through Nga-Ūang-,el-den’s Annotations note za (see Appendix B). There, Nga-Ūang-,el-den comments upon a controversial position held by Jam-᠘ang-shay-,a that is a significant diversion from the position held by °zong-ka-,a. As stated above, the basic controversy involves a dispute over the number of doctrines that are proved to require interpretation according to a passage in Candrakīrti’s Autocommentary. The difference in positions appears minor,

but is not: °zong-ka-,a holds that Candrakīrti is speaking of four types of sūtra passages (describing four different Mind-only doctrines), all from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought and all considered definitive by Proponents of Mind-Only, these being:

- (1) statements differentiating true establishment and non-true establishment with respect to the three natures,
- (2) statements teaching a mind-basis-of-all,
- (3) statements refuting external objects,

(4)statements explaining three final vehicles.

Jam-ang-shay-,a, on the other hand, argues instead that Candrakīrti is referring to five types of sūtra passages requiring interpretation, the four given above plus another:

(5)statements in the Tathāgata Essence Sūtra of a permanent, stable essence in the continuums of all sentient beings that has the [major and minor] marks of a Buddha.

Jam-ang-shay-,a includes this extra category of sūtra passage even though he does not hold that this category is accepted as definitive by Proponents of Mind-Only. Thus, he appears to be abandoning one of 'ong-ka-,a's criteria for inclusion in this list: that such sūtra passages are necessarily held to be definitive in the Mind-Only School.

Before we examine the maneuvers employed on both sides of this controversy, it might be helpful to look at the entire passage in question from Candrakīrti's Autocommentary [194]:[\[54\]](#)

Qualm: Indeed, you have explained the meaning of the Sūtra [on the Ten Grounds] in this way, but even so, also in another scripture, mind-only [is said to] definitely exist. This is because the [Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra]

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states:

[Objects] do not exist as external objects as perceived.

The mind appears as various [objects through the power of predispositions].

[Because the mind is generated] in the likeness of bodies, [senses], enjoyments, and abodes [physical sense organs and environments],

I have explained [that all phenomena are] mind-only. [\[55\]](#)

Here “bodies” are the sense spheres, eye and so forth; “enjoyments” are the objects, forms and so forth; “abodes” are the world of the environment.

Because there are no external objects aside from mind, only mere consciousness is generated appearing as bodies, enjoyments, and abodes, at which time bodies, etc. — that abide as things that are objects—manifest as different from consciousness as if they are externalities. Therefore, “These three realms are mind-only.”

Answer: In order to describe this sūtra also as having a thought behind it, [the root text] says:

These sūtras teaching no external objects of perception, Teaching that the mind appears as the variety of objects... [\[56\]](#)

The thought behind these [sūtra passages teaching no external objects is that they]:

Turn away from forms those extremely attracted to forms. These also require interpretation.[57]

[195] Regarding those [sūtra passages teaching no external objects], they require interpretation. It should be known that:

To those people having great hope in forms, who become involved powerlessly by way of the attachment, anger, pride, and so forth that are  
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caused by that [hope] and who commit great sins through adhering to such [attachment and so forth], and who fall from the collections of merit and wisdom, the Supramundane Victor—for the sake of their overcoming the afflictive emotions causally compelled by forms—teaches mind-only as if it were so, though it is not so, similar to his teaching of [meditation on] skeletons to desirous persons to overcome their desire for external objects.

Qualm: How is it ascertained that this scripture requires interpretation and is not definitive?

Answer: [It is established] from scripture and reasoning. To indicate this [the root text says]:

This was said by the Teacher just to require interpretation, And that this requires interpretation is [also] proven by reasoning.[58]

Not only is this sūtra one that requires interpretation, but others also [require interpretation]:

These passages [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, etc.,] show That other Sūtras of such type require interpretation. [59]

What are the “[other] such passages [that require interpretation?” The teaching of the non-true] existence of imputational natures and the [true] existence of other-powered natures that occurs in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought when explaining the three natures: imputational natures, other-powered natures, and thoroughly established natures. [196] Similarly, [the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought teaches]:

There is a deep and subtle consciousness, the taker [of rebirth],

Having all the seeds and flowing like the continuum of a river.

If it were understood as a self, it would not be proper,

Thus I do not teach it to children. [60]

And so forth.[61] [The Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra] says:

Just as a doctor distributes

Medicines to the ill,

So the Buddha teaches

Mind-only to sentient beings. [62]

Through this passage [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra the teaching of mind-only] is clarified as requiring interpretation. Similarly, [the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra says]:

[Mahāmati said,] “The Tathāgatagarbha that was taught in the Supramundane Victor’s sūtras was said by the Supramundane Victor to be naturally radiant, pure, and hence beginninglessly pure, possessing the thirty-two characteristics [of a Buddha], and existing in the bodies of all sentient-beings.

“The Supramundane Victor said that like a precious gem wrapped in a dirty cloth, the Tathāgatagarbha is wrapped in the cloth of the aggregates, constituents, and sense spheres, overwhelmed by the force of desire, hatred, and ignorance, and sullied with the defilements of conceptuality. [197]

“If so, Supramundane Victor, how is this propounding of a Tathāgatagarbha not like the Forders’[63] propounding of a self? Supramundane Victor, the Forders teach and propound a self that is permanent, a non-agent, without the qualities, pervasive and non-perishing.”

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The Supramundane Victor said, “Mahāmati, this teaching of a Tathāgatagarbha is not like the Forders’ propounding of a self. O Mahāmati, the completely perfect Buddhas, Tathāgata Foe Destroyers, teach a Tathāgatagarbha meaning emptiness, the final reality, nirvāṇa, no [inherently existent] production, signlessness, wishlessness, and so forth. So that children might avoid the fear of selflessness, they teach through the means of a Tathāgatagarbha the state of non-conceptuality, the object [of the wisdom] free from appearances.

“Mahāmati, future and present Bodhisattvas—the great beings—should not adhere to this as a self. Mahāmati, for example, a potter makes a variety of vessels out of one mass of clay particles with his hands, manual skill, a rod, water, thread, and mental dexterity. Mahāmati, similarly, whether the Tathāgatas—through their various [techniques] having wisdom and skill in means—teach the selflessness of phenomena that overcomes all entities of conceptuality, [198] as the Tathāgatagarbha or as selflessness, they, like a potter, teach with various formats of words and letters. Hence, it is in that way, Mahāmati, that I teach the Tathāgatagarbha. How could those who fall into a view conceiving of a real self come to be endowed with thought dwelling

on the objects of activity of the three liberations[64] and become manifestly and completely purified in complete perfect enlightenment?”[65]

Also, in the same sūtra this is taught:

Mahāmati, I teach that the characteristics of emptiness, non-production, non-duality, and no inherent nature are contained in the sūtras of all the Buddhas.[66]

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Therefore, in that way, all Sūtras of such type that are asserted to be of definitive meaning by Proponents of Mind-Only are clarified as requiring interpretation through these passages [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra].

In this passage from Candrakīrti’s Autocommentary a number of sūtra passages have been indicated to require interpretation by the passages cited from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra.[67] Before discussing Jam-ᠴang-shay-,a’s opinion regarding this passage in the Autocommentary, let us look at the specific passages indicated by Candrakīrti’s verse and commentary, along with °zong-ka-,a’s opinion on which sūtra passages are implied by Candrakīrti but not explicitly mentioned. Nga-Ūang-,el-den’s discussion of the controversy will also be noted.

## °zong-ka-,a’s Interpretation of Candrakīrti

The context of the controversy is Candrakīrti’s refutation, in chapter six of the Autocommentary, of Mind-Only teachings of no external objects. Candrakīrti states the Middle Way Consequence School position on the interpretable nature of these Mind-Only teachings of no external objects in his root verse VI.94:

These sūtras teaching no external objects of perception,

Teaching that the mind appears as the variety of objects,

Turn away from forms those extremely attracted to forms.

These also require interpretation.[68]

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Candrakīrti uses scripture and reasoning to show that the teaching of mind-only requires interpretation. The scripture passage that he cites is from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra:

To those people having great hope in forms, who become involved powerlessly by way of the attachment, anger, pride, and so forth that are caused by that [hope] and who commit great sins through adhering to such [attachment and so forth], and who fall from the collections of merit and wisdom, the Supramundane Victor, for the sake of their overcoming the afflictive emotions causally compelled by forms, teaches mind-only as if it were so, though it is not so, similar to his teaching of [meditation on] skeletons to desirous persons to overcome their desire for external objects.[69]

By citing this quote from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, Candrakīrti is explaining the Middle Way Consequence position that Mind-Only sūtras refuting external forms are interpretable and were spoken for the benefit of persons having extreme attachment to forms, and hence are not definitive.[70] Candrakīrti then remarks that scripture and reasoning also show that “other Sūtras of such type,” taken by Proponents of Mind-Only to be definitive, require interpretation:[71]

These passages [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, etc.] show That other Sūtras of such type require interpretation.

“Sūtras of such type” refers to passages that:

- (1)are spoken for a purpose in order to lead certain trainees and
- (2)are considered to require interpretation by the Middle Way Consequence School and to be definitive by Proponents of Mind-Only.

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Having shown that mind-only requires interpretation, Candrakīrti employs a practical but poorly structured method of showing that other sūtras require interpretation. He explicitly mentions that two teachings require interpretation, and then quotes three passages from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra indicating that these passages demonstrate that those teachings require interpretation. The argument, made somewhat confusing by Candrakīrti’s separating its parts, may be restructured into the following four demonstrations of interpretability:

### **First Demonstration of Interpretability**

Candrakīrti states that the teaching of the non-true existence of imputational natures and the true existence of other-powered natures that occurs in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought when explaining the three natures[72] requires interpretation. He shows this by quoting the following passage from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra:

Mahāmāti, I teach that the characteristics of emptiness, non-production, non-duality, and no inherent nature are contained in the sūtras of all the Buddhas.[73]

Nga-Ūang-,el-den explains the relevance of this passage:

[The fact that the sūtras of all the Buddhas teach these characteristics of emptiness, non-production, non-duality, and non-inherent nature] entails [that statements in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought as to the particulars of true establishment and non-true establishment with respect to the three natures are not literal] because the realization of emptiness which is the absence of inherent existence is said to be the intended meaning of all the sūtras. Because of that, all the Buddha's pronouncements are said to be only flowing and descending into emptiness. This is because all [the Buddha's] pronouncements are methods for the full purification of a person.[74]

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Once the emptiness of inherent existence is said to be “the intended meaning of all the sūtras”, the teaching in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought that some phenomena truly exist and some do not is shown to require interpretation.

## Second Demonstration of Interpretability

Candrakīrti then shows that teachings in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought of a mind-basis-of-all require interpretation. He does not, however, give a passage explicitly refuting the mind-basis-of-all; instead, at least according to °zong-ka-,a, he gives a passage from the Descent into Lañkā Sūtra that indicates that a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha (in other words, a Buddha Nature) adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha is a teaching that requires interpretation:

[Mahāmati said,] “The Tathāgatagarbha that was taught in the Supramundane Victor's Sūtras was said by the Supramundane Victor to be naturally radiant, pure, and hence beginninglessly pure, possessing the thirty-two characteristics [of a Buddha], and existing in the bodies of all sentient-beings.

“The Supramundane Victor said that like a precious gem wrapped in a dirty cloth, the Tathāgatagarbha is wrapped in the cloth of the aggregates, constituents, and sense spheres, overwhelmed by the force of desire, hatred, and ignorance, and sullied with the defilements of conceptuality. [197.1]

“If so, Supramundane Victor, how is this propounding of a Tathāgatagarbha not like the Forders' propounding of a self? Supramundane Victor, the Forders teach and propound a self that is permanent, a non-agent, without the qualities, pervasive and non-perishing.”

The Supramundane Victor said, “Mahāmati, this teaching of a Tathāgatagarbha is not like the Forders' propounding of a self. Mahāmati, the completely perfect Buddhas, Tathāgata Foe Destroyers, teach a Tathāgatagarbha meaning emptiness, the final reality, nirvāna, no [inherently existent] production, signlessness, wishlessness, and so forth. So that children might avoid the fear of selflessness, they teach through the means of a Tathāgatagarbha the state of non-conceptuality, the object [of the wisdom] free from appearances.

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“Mahāmati, future and present Bodhisattvas—the great beings—should not adhere to this as a self. Mahāmati, for example, a potter makes a variety of vessels out of one mass of clay particles with his hands, manual skill, a rod, water, thread, and mental dexterity. Mahāmati, similarly, whether the Tathāgatas, through their various [techniques] having wisdom and skill in means teach the selflessness of phenomena that overcomes all entities of conceptuality, [198.1] as the Tathāgatagarbha or as selflessness, they, like a potter, teach with various formats of words and letters. In that way, therefore, Mahāmati, I teach the Tathāgatagarbha. How could those who fall into a view conceiving of a real self come to be endowed with thought dwelling on the objects of activity of the three liberations and become manifestly and completely purified in complete perfect enlightenment?”[75]

In this passage from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra Mahāmati asks the Buddha about an earlier sūtra in which the Buddha spoke of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha. The Buddha then explains that this statement was spoken for the sake of those fearing emptiness and holding

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to a view of a permanent, functioning self so that they could gradually be led to the profound view of emptiness. It is clear that Candrakīrti cites this scriptural statement in order to show that the literal teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha is interpretable, but insofar as Candrakīrti appears to be saying that the teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha is definitive for Mind-Only, it presents an enormous problem for °zong-ka-,a.

According to °zong-ka-,a, Proponents of Mind-Only as well as Proponents of the Middle Way hold that the teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha requires interpretation. If °zong-ka-,a were to accept that Candrakīrti is referring to a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha, then that teaching would be definitive for Proponents of Mind-Only. This is because, as Candrakīrti states:

all Sūtras of such type that are asserted to be of definitive meaning by Proponents of Mind-Only are clarified as requiring interpretation through these passages [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra]. [76]

It certainly appears that Candrakīrti is saying that all sūtra passages of such type (including the teaching of a Tathāgatagarbha) are definitive in the Mind-Only School. However, if such were the case, then Candrakīrti would be holding a view in common with the influential fourteenth-century Tibetan scholar, Döl-,o-,a Áhay-rap-gyel-tsen,[77] and this would be unacceptable to °zong-ka-,a, who opposes the Jo-nang-,a position on just about everything. In fact, it is central to °zong-ka-,a’s mission in the Essence of Eloquence to show that Candrakīrti is not saying that the teaching of a Tathāgatagarbha is definitive in the Mind-Only School.

In order to understand why it is so important for °zong-ka-,a to explain that Candrakīrti is not saying that the teaching of a Tathāgatagarbha is definitive in the

Mind-Only School, let us digress briefly to discuss the “other-emptiness” doctrines of Döl-,o-,a Áhay-rap-gyel-tsen.

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Döl-,o-,a Áhay-rap-gyel-tsen drew upon sūtra sources to assert a permanent stable tathāgatagarbha that is a Buddha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha, that exists in the continuums of all beings. He asserted this permanent stable tathāgatagarbha to be the true meaning of emptiness. According to Ge-luk sources, some features of the Jo-nang-,a ultimate are that it is: (1) an Other Emptiness (so-called because it is empty of being any conventional phenomena) that is a permanent stable tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha, (2) existing as a Buddha’s Form Body in all beings, (3) truly established, (4) a positive—as opposed to a negative—phenomena, and (5) held to be definitive in the Mind-Only School.

Ruegg translates Kay-drup as saying of the Jo-nang-,a view:

According to him [the Jo-nang-,a], these sūtras teach ... that the tathāgatagarbha is identical with the svābhāvikakāya of the Sambuddha ... that it is permanent (nitya), stable (dhruvya) and eternal (śāśvata); that it is adorned with the uncomposed (asaṃskṛta) Marks (lakṣana) and Signs (anuvyañjana) ... . This school also considers that the first and middle Cycles are of indirect meaning.[78]

Hopkins reports on the Ge-luk author Gung-tan,[79] who elaborates on these assertions by the Jo-nang-,as:

Gung-tang reports that the Jo-nang-,as assert this primordial wisdom to have an essence of the Form Bodies of the five lineages of Conquerors because they hold that when conventionalities are ceased with respect to that primordial wisdom, not only does the primordial wisdom, which is called “pure self,” become the object of the mode of apprehension of the mind, but also bodies of empty form adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha do.[80]

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Gung-tang’s explanation of the Jo-nang-,a assertion of a “pure self” is that it is a Buddha’s Form Body, also called the permanent stable tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha. The Jo-nang-,as also assert for this phenomenon the transcendent ontological status of Other Emptiness, called such because an Other Emptiness is empty of being any conventional phenomena. As Ruegg remarks about this Other Emptiness:

Their fundamental doctrine was the Void-of-the-other (gzan stov), that is, an absolute that is established in reality and is Void of all heterogeneous relative and phenomenal factors, as against the Void-of-own-being (rav stov; svabhāvashūnya) of the

Mādhyamika, that the Jo nang pas considered to be merely a preliminary or lower doctrine bearing on the relative... [81]

In Ruegg's (and °zong-ka-'a's) opinion, the Jo-nang-,a Other Emptiness differs radically from the 'Self Emptiness' (that I will refer to as emptiness) taught in the major works of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti. As Ruegg admits, he is basing his understanding of emptiness primarily on Ge-luk-,a sources, but according to these sources, the final emptiness is propounded by the Middle Way Consequence School. There it is described as an emptiness of own-being[82] that is each phenomenon's emptiness of inherent existence.

Although the Jo-nang-,as considered themselves to be true Proponents of the Middle Way, they relegated the emptiness asserted by the mainstream Proponents of the Middle Way to the status of a preliminary doctrine.[83] They asserted that statements in the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras teaching that all phenomena lack own-being were said in consideration that all conventional phenomena lacked any being at all. Because of this assertion, the emptiness of the Jo-nang-,as comes to be an annihilatory emptiness, such that all conventional phenomena are utterly non-existent. Nga-wang-,el-den states this when he remarks:

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Also, they [the Jo-nang-,as] make the differentiation that except for reality [i.e., the Other Emptiness of the Buddha Essence], all substrata [i.e., all phenomena] —aside from being fancied by a mistaken awareness—do not have entities that are established in the slightest, whereas reality is truly established.[84]

Thus, the Jo-nang-,as reinterpret the Mind-Only teaching of three natures to assert that the thoroughly established nature is the Other Emptiness, and the other natures are empty of themselves. Furthermore, they assert that just this differentiation of no true establishment and true establishment is the meaning of the differentiation of the natures by the final wheel of doctrine.

The Ge-luk-,as, however, deny that these sūtra sources teach such a permanent stable tathāgatagarbha at all. Since the Mind-Only School[85] identifies the basis in the Buddha's thought when he spoke of a permanent stable essence as being the mind-basis-of-all,[86] Ge-luk-,as assert that neither of the two major branches of Indian Mahāyānists accept a permanent stable essence, endowed with all the marks of a Buddha, as of definitive meaning. Instead, they assert that such sūtras teach emptiness

°zong-ka-,a argues strenuously that the Tathāgatagarbha is not held to be definitive in the Mind-Only School. He states in The Essence of the Good Explanations:

[Candrakīrti] is not indicating that sūtras which teach a Tathāgatagarbha [and which are actually of] interpretable meaning are asserted as being of definitive meaning by Proponents of Mind Only. Neither Proponents of Mind-Only nor Proponents of the Middle Way disagree about this.[87]

Thus, °zong-ka-,a clearly feels that it cannot be the case that Candrakīrti

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holds that sūtras teaching a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha could be definitive for Proponents of Mind-Only. Indeed, if it turned out that Candrakīrti—°zong-ka-,a’s main source among Indian scholars—thought that such teachings were accepted as definitive in Mind-Only, it would undo °zong-ka-,a’s entire presentation of Mind-Only emptiness in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, as well as the foundation for his criticism of the Jo-nang-,as in general. This is because here in the The Essence of the Good Explanations, as elsewhere in his works, °zong-ka-,a’s implicit purpose is to refute the Jo-nang-,a presentation of a substantially existent Other Emptiness that is a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha. °zong-ka-,a is seeking to show that the Jo-nang-,as are self-contradictory in two respects:

- (1)in taking the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought to be definitive, and
- (2)in taking the sūtras setting forth a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha as being also definitive.

This is because the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought clearly explains the thoroughly established nature as being a mere selflessness of phenomena in phenomena. It does not express anything about the thoroughly established nature that is not a negative. It is °zong-ka-,a’s thought that if one understood well what the thoroughly established nature is in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, then one would know that a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha talked about in the other sūtras has to be of interpretable meaning.

°zong-ka-,a’s solution is to creatively interpret the meaning of Candrakīrti’s inclusion of this teaching that all sūtra passages of such type (including the teaching of a Tathāgatagarbha) are definitive in the Mind-Only School. °zong-ka-,a employs a substitutional hermeneutic to uncover Candrakīrti’s meaning. He explains that the teaching in the Descent into Lañkā Sūtra that a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is interpretable is also a teaching that indicates that the mind-basis-of-all is interpretable.

°zong-ka-,a gives his reason for saying this in the Illumination of the Thought:

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That which teaches the mind-basis-of-all as being of interpretable meaning is a passage teaching the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha as being of interpretable meaning.

Question: How does the fact that the teaching of the existence of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha as being of interpretable meaning establish the mind-basis-of-all as being of interpretable meaning?

Reply: There are many statements explaining that these two are synonymous. The Sūtra on the Heavily Adorned says:

[Just as] lands [are the basis of] the varieties [of all things grown],

So the basis-of-all [is the basis for cyclic existence and nirvāṇa].

The virtuous Tathāgatagarbha is also this [basis-of-all],

Tathāgatas teach the garbha with the term ‘basis-of-all’.

Though the garbha is proclaimed as the basis-of-all,

Those of weak intellect do not understand.

Also, the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra says:

The Tathāgatagarbha, which is proclaimed as the mind-basis-of-all, together with the seven consciousnesses... [\[88\]](#)

Since it is explained with respect to those two that the one is permanent and the other is impermanent, it is not indicated that the two meanings on the literal level are the same. However, since the mind-basis-of-all was taught in consideration of just that meaning [i.e., emptiness] thinking of which he taught the garbha, therefore, in relation to the thought behind [his teaching], they are synonymous and hence mutually inclusive. In that way, just this teaching of the earlier [the Tathāgatagarbha] as being of interpretable meaning establishes the latter [the mind-basis-of-all] also as being of interpretable meaning.

In this quotation, °zong-ka-,a states that both teachings of (1) a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha and (2) the mind-basis-of-all are synonymous in relation to the thought of the Buddha that was behind them, i.e., emptiness. The hermeneutical convergence of a permanent stable

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Tathāgatagarbha and the mind-basis-of-all is such that whatever is the basis in the Buddha’s thought behind the one entails being the basis in the Buddha’s thought behind the other.

°zong-ka-,a sees Candrakīrti equating these two—permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha and the mind-basis-of-all—via their basis in the Buddha’s thought, emptiness. Based on this, °zong-ka-,a makes the further point that when Candrakīrti brings up the topic of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha, he is actually talking about the mind-basis-of-all. Through this stroke of creative interpretation, °zong-ka-,a has managed to defuse the potentially embarrassing problems raised by Candrakīrti’s inclusion of this teaching that all sūtra passages of such type (including the teaching of a Tathāgatagarbha) are definitive in the Mind-Only School.

### Third Demonstration of Interpretability

We have seen that, in general, Candrakīrti's Autocommentary demonstrates that mind-only teachings require interpretation. It is strange, but probably not meaningful, that Candrakīrti cited mind-only itself, in the sense of no external objects, as the first of the series of teachings that require interpretation, but here he inserts his source for this (from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra) between the sūtra passages teaching mind-basis-of-all and the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha that were just quoted above. The passage from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra that shows that the passage teaching mind-only requires interpretation is:

Just as a doctor distributes

Medicines to the ill,

So the Buddha teaches

Mind-only to sentient beings.[89]

Here, the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra speaks of the Buddha as a physician, dispensing teachings such as mind-only according to need, the suggestion being that mind-only

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does not represent the Buddha's final thought. Candrakīrti's Autocommentary remarks:

Through this passage [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra the teaching of mind-only is] clarified as requiring interpretation.[90]

### Fourth Demonstration of Interpretability

Candrakīrti also indicates other types of sūtra passages that are shown to require interpretation with the words, "and so forth." Although he does not indicate which sūtra passages he means, °zong-ka-,a states that "and so forth" refers to two types of passages requiring interpretation:

The collection [of sūtra passages indicated] by the term 'and so forth' is the two explanations in this sūtra [the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] of the refutation of external objects and the explanation of three final vehicles. Thus, there are four [sūtra passages] that must be commented upon here as being of interpretable meaning.[91]

According to °zong-ka-,a, Candrakīrti is referring to four types of interpretable passages:

- (1) statements differentiating true establishment and non-true establishment with respect to the three natures
- (2) statements teaching a mind-basis-of-all

- (3) statements refuting external objects (and proposing mind-only)
- (4) statements explaining three final vehicles.

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These four types of passages are all found in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought. °zong-ka-,a does not include another type of interpretable sūtra passage, i.e., those passages teaching a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha, even though Candrakīrti used this type of teaching as an example to show that other Sūtras of such type are interpretable. °zong-ka-,a's Extensive Explanation of (Candrakīrti's) "Introduction to (Nāgārjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle'" makes this clear:

“Sūtras of such type” are not the two passages of the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra just cited, since neither of these is asserted by Proponents of Mind Only to be of definitive meaning and because earlier, in Candrakīrti's Autocommentary he clearly describes them as [from] the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought.[92]

This statement shows that °zong-ka-,a holds that “Sūtras of such type” are not the two that Candrakīrti has cited from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, because “Sūtras of such type” need to be held to be definitive in Mind-Only and must also be from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought. Also, Nga-Ūang-,el-den quotes °zong-ka-,a's The Essence of the Good Explanations:

“Sūtras of such type” are those as described earlier to be from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought... [93]

Therefore, according to °zong-ka-,a, only four sets of sūtra passages (those listed above) are shown to be interpretable on this occasion, these being taken to be definitive by Proponents of Mind-Only. °zong-ka-,a does not include the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha that was mentioned by Mahāmati in Candrakīrti's citation of the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra.

It is interesting that Candrakīrti does not include a sūtra passages demonstrating that teachings of three final vehicles require interpretation. Nga-Ūang-,el-den gives the reason when he states:

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With respect to statements that there are three final vehicles [in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, chapter VII], since one is able to understand the establishment of one final vehicle in Nāgārjuna's Compendium of Sūtra, such is not presented in Candrakīrti's Autocommentary.[94]

Therefore, we have seen that in his Autocommentary, Candrakīrti explicitly mentions the two teachings shown to require interpretation that (1) differentiate true existence and non-true existence with respect to the three natures and (2) indicate a mind-basis-of-all. Then he says “and so forth.” In °zong-ka-,a’s opinion, these words indicate two further teachings that require interpretation, that are (1) from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, and are (2) definitive in the Mind-Only School. These are the teachings refuting external objects and explaining three final vehicles. Thus, as we have seen, °zong-ka-,a states that there are four types of sūtra passages indicated by Candrakīrti to require interpretation.

### **Kay-drup and Jam-᠘ang-shay-,a on Candrakīrti**

We have seen °zong-ka-,a’s position that just four categories of sūtra passages are shown to be interpretable by Candrakīrti’s Commentary, all from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought and all considered definitive by Proponents of Mind-Only:

- (1) statements differentiating true establishment and non-true establishment with respect to the three natures;
- (2) statements teaching a mind-basis-of-all;
- (3) statements refuting external objects (and presenting mind-only);
- (4) statements explaining three final vehicles.

Nevertheless, Kay-drup is evidently in disagreement with °zong-ka-,a in his Thousand Intervals when he says:[\[95\]](#)

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There are five sūtra passages which are necessarily established as interpretable on this occasion: (1) statements in the Descent into Lañkā Sūtra of mind-only lacking external objects, as well as scriptural passages from other sūtras (2) teaching a truly established Buddha complete with the major and minor marks existing in everyone’s continuum, (3) teaching the mind-basis-of-all, (4) teaching the true existence or non-true existence of the three natures, and (5) teaching three final vehicles.

We can see from Kay-drup’s list that he includes sūtras teaching a truly established Buddha complete with the major and minor marks existing in everyone’s continuum. Thus, it seems that he has ignored both of °zong-ka-,a’s criteria for exclusion from the list by including the teaching of such a Tathāgatagarbha not from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought.

Like Kay-drup, Jam-᠘ang-shay-,a gives a presentation that differs from °zong-ka-,a. This is evident in his discussion of definitive and interpretable sūtras that occurs within the Middle Way Consequence tenets section of the Great Exposition of Tenets. Jam-᠘ang-shay-,a states:[\[96\]](#)

If [non-literal passages requiring] interpretation...are described individually, on this occasion five types of sūtras are mentioned:

- (1) mind-only and no external objects;
- (2) the teaching in the Tathāgata Essence Sūtra of a permanent, stable essence in the continuums of all sentient beings that has the [major and minor] marks of a Buddha;[\[97\]](#)
- (3) the description of a [mind] basis-of-all;
- (4) the description of the true existence of other-powered phenomena and thoroughly established phenomena;
- (5) the teaching of three final vehicles.

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Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a enumerates five, not four as in °zong-ka-,a's list. Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a includes as an extra category the statements teaching a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha even though this category is not held to be definitive by Proponents of Mind-Only. He thereby abandons one of °zong-ka-,a's criteria for inclusion in this list: that such sūtra passages are necessarily held to be definitive in the Mind-Only School.

Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a does not reject °zong-ka-,a's commentary associating the Mahāmatī section of the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra with the mind-basis-of-all, but he clearly holds that it also shows that the teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and a Buddha requires interpretation. Hence, he includes this teaching in the list of sūtra passages shown by Candrakīrti to require interpretation, even though °zong-ka-,a's interpretive maneuver was designed to exclude it.

In his Great Exposition of the Middle, Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a defends his position regarding Kay-drup's list by citing a hypothetical objection and answering it:

Regarding this statement [Kay-drup's assertion of five "Sūtras of such type"], someone says:

Qualm: It follows that sūtra passages teaching truly established, vivid and complete, major and minor marks existing in all sentient beings are asserted by Proponents of Mind-Only as sūtra passages having definitive meaning because of being sūtra passages that are held to be interpretable on this occasion [of Kay-drup's statement].[\[98\]](#)

Here, Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a is bringing up the qualm that Kay-drup's (as well as Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a's own) acceptance of the passage cited in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra teaching a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and

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minor marks of a Buddha as one of the “Sūtras of such type” would absurdly entail that it be taken as definitive in Mind-Only. Jam-ṅang-shay-,a disagrees with this:

Reply: There is no entailment at all! If you say there is entailment because [Candrakīrti’s] Autocommentary states:

These scriptures show that all these that are asserted to be definitive [by the Proponents of Mind-Only] are to be interpreted.

There is even more so no entailment! It is like the coarse reasoning [one expects] of old worldly persons. Is it that [Candrakīrti] is not saying that all such [passages] asserted by Proponents of Mind-Only to be definitive are explained as interpretable, but is saying that all [sūtras] asserted to be interpretable by these passages are asserted as definitive by proponents of Mind-Only? Is there no difference between these two? If you say there is not, then saying that Devadatta is a man would amount to propounding that man is Devadatta.[\[99\]](#)

This complex argument can best be expressed in terms of two statements of entailment. For Jam-ṅang-shay-,a, the following statement is unacceptable, although it would be accepted by °zong-ka-,a and other Ge-luk-,as:

Whatever is a sūtra explained (on this occasion of Candrakīrti’s Autocommentary) to require interpretation by these statements in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra is necessarily held to be definitive in Mind-Only.

Jam-ṅang-shay-,a instead holds:

Whatever from among these five teachings is held to be definitive by Mind-Only is necessarily explained as being of interpretable meaning by Proponents of the Middle Way Consequence School.

With this interpretation, Jam-ṅang-shay-,a is able to include the permanent stable

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Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha in his list of interpretable sūtra passages while still avoiding having to hold that according to Candrakīrti the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is definitive for Proponents of Mind-Only.

Clearly, Jam-ṅang-shay-,a is not attempting—by introducing his extra category—to assert that Candrakīrti holds that teachings of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha are definitive in Mind-Only. If he were, it would be in conflict with a major aspect of the system laid out by °zong-ka-,a in which statements teaching a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha are said to be held by Proponents of Mind-Only to be interpretable. This, in turn, would entail the fault that the Mind-Only School asserts a positive ultimate, whereas the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought speaks of an ultimate non-entityness—a negative, not a positive ultimate. Therefore, although

indeed Jam-[Cang-shay](#),<sup>a</sup> is asserting a controversial position different from [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup>'s, he is not differing in a fundamental way, such that [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup>'s basic system is brought into question. Instead, he wants to take into account Candrakīrti's citation of this teaching of the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha among the other four, without disrupting [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup>'s presentation of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought.

Since in this section of his text Candrakīrti is refuting Mind-Only tenets, it is reasonable to hold—as [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup> does—that on this occasion only passages that are held to be definitive by Proponents of Mind-Only are under discussion. Nevertheless, Candrakīrti himself quotes the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra regarding Mahāmati's question to the Buddha about a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha adorned with the major and minor marks of a Buddha. Candrakīrti also quotes the Buddha's explanation that such teachings were spoken in conformity with thoughts of sentient beings—in other words, in order to lead certain trainees. Nevertheless, [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup> specifically excludes this teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha from his list. Jam-[Cang-shay](#),<sup>a</sup>, however, adds the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha to his list, even though he must ignore [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup>'s reasons for excluding it. Jam-[Cang-shay](#),<sup>a</sup> justifies his inclusion of the extra sūtra category by quoting the passage from Kay-drup's Thousand Intervals shown above.

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## Conclusion

Now that the controversy has been unveiled, I suspect there are those who regard it as scholastic quibbling over an insignificant point of doctrine. After all, the actual passage by Candrakīrti under discussion is only four words! However, there is far more substance here than meets the eye. At stake is the entire edifice of [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup>'s refutation of the Other Emptiness of [Döl](#),<sup>o</sup>,<sup>a</sup> [Áhay-rap-gyel-tsen](#). For, if [Döl](#),<sup>o</sup>,<sup>a</sup> [Áhay-rap-gyel-tsen](#) is correct in asserting that the teaching of the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is definitive in the Mind-Only School, then [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup>'s assertion that the Jo-nang view is heterodox cannot be upheld. Although [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup> never explicitly makes this point, we can understand its central importance to him when he paraphrases the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra:

[The Buddha] said that present and future Bodhisattvas are not to adhere to this permanent stable [tathāgata]garbha as a self. If one holds to the literal reading, it is similar to the Forders conception of self; hence, one should not adhere [to the teaching of a permanent stable tathāgatagarbha] as literal.[\[100\]](#)

For [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup>, the Other Emptiness view of [Döl](#),<sup>o</sup>,<sup>a</sup> [Áhay-rap-gyel-tsen](#) is not a possible Buddhist view: it is a positive phenomena, not a negative. Since [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup> proves in the Essence of Eloquence and elsewhere that the ultimate in both the Mind-Only School and the Middle Way School is a negative phenomenon, it is therefore quite impossible (from his point of view) that the teaching of a positive—the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha—could be definitive in any Great Vehicle school

Not only is this controversy important for [°zong-ka](#),<sup>a</sup>'s presentation of emptiness, it is also highly instructive insofar as it demonstrates Ge-luk hermeneutics in action. For

instance, for me the fireworks of Ge-luk thought sparkle entertainingly when °zong-ka-,a asserts that when Candrakīrti brings up the topic of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha he is actually talking about the mind-basis-of-all and is not speaking of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha at all! As we have

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seen, °zong-ka-,a resorts to this exegetical maneuver due to his overriding concern for the doctrinal integrity of his system. Here, Candrakīrti's apparent meaning yields to °zong-ka-,a's determination to refute the Jo-nang-,a assertion that a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is definitive for Proponents of Mind-Only.

Kay-drup and Jam-°ang-shay-,a do not display the same anxious concern for thoroughly excluding teachings of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha from the list of sūtras shown to be interpretable on this occasion in Candrakīrti's text, even though such teachings do not follow °zong-ka-,a's criterion of being definitive for Mind-Only. More intellectual fireworks are forthcoming, however when—instead of employing °zong-ka-,a's creative substitution by turning Candrakīrti's citation of the teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha into a citation concerned with the mind-basis-of-all—Jam-°ang-shay-,a follows Candrakīrti's own explanation and includes the teaching of such a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha among those shown to require interpretation. He then employs creative logic to claim that Candrakīrti did not hold that in the Mind-Only School such a teaching was accepted literally despite Candrakīrti's seeming to say so. He does this by claiming that it is not Candrakīrti's intention to say that all these five are held to be definitive by Mind-Only, but that whichever are so held are necessarily interpretable for Proponents of the Middle Way. In this way Jam-°ang-shay-,a is able to disagree with °zong-ka-,a's reading of Candrakīrti's text while veiling his disagreement behind a creative hermeneutic.

This controversy also illustrates well the workings of exegetical politics within Ge-luk by showing eminent Ge-luk scholars enfolding foundational Sanskrit philosophical materials into °zong-ka-,a's doctrinal system, while circumventing °zong-ka-,a's strictures as needed. It is characteristic of these scholars that they never fail to confine their disagreements within doctrinal parameters set forth in Candrakīrti's text. If such confinement requires creative and often innovative interpretation to ensure the coherence and consistency of the Ge-luk-,a system, the Ge-luk authors we have consulted are not afraid to proceed creatively.

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## Appendix A: Translation of the Illumination of the Thought

[The following is my translation of the section of 'zong-ka-,a's Illumination of the Thought, Extensive Explanation of (Candrakīrti's) "Introduction to (Nāgājuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle'"[101] commenting on Candrakīrti's Autocommentary, verses VI.94-95 and commentary.]

**Indicating through scripture [that statements of mind-only without external objects] require interpretation} [321]**

This has two parts: (1) indicating the actual meaning and (2) indicating that other similar sūtras also require interpretation.

Indicating the actual meaning

Qualm: Indeed, you have explained the meaning of the Sūtra on the Ten Grounds in this way, but even so, in another scripture [the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, mind-only is said definitely to exist.] This is because the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra states:[102]

[Objects] do not exist as external objects as perceived.

The mind appears as various [objects through the power of predispositions].

[Because the mind is generated] in the likeness of bodies [senses],

enjoyments [objects of senses], and abodes [environments],

I have explained [that all phenomena are] mind-only.[103]

Here "bodies" are the physical sense spheres of the eye and so forth; "enjoyments" are the five objects—forms, sounds, and so forth; "abodes" are the world of the environment. Because there are no external objects aside from mind, only mere

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consciousness is generated appearing as bodies, enjoyments, and abodes, at which time bodies, etc. —that abide as things that are objects—manifest as different from consciousness as if they are externalities. Therefore, "These three realms are mind-only."

Answer: In order to describe this sūtra also as having a thought behind it,[104] [the root text] says:

These sūtras teaching no external objects of perception, Teaching that the mind appears as the variety of objects... .

The thought behind these [sūtra passages teaching no external objects is] is that for those who have become involved powerlessly by way of attachment, anger, pride, and so forth that are caused by extreme attachment to forms and have become manifestly attached to forms, due to which they commit great sins and fall from the accumulated collections of merit and wisdom [322], the Supramundane Victor, for the sake of their overcoming the afflictive emotions causally compelled by forms, teaches just mind-only as if it were so, though it is not so, similar to his [teaching of meditation on] skeletons to desirous persons to overcome their desire for external objects.

Qualm: How is it ascertained that this scripture requires interpretation and is not definitive?

Answer: Since the Teacher said that the statement, “there is mind-only without external objects,” requires interpretation. This sūtra is also proven, i.e., established by reasoning. This master [Candrakīrti] does not explain such statements as “[objects] do not exist as external objects as perceived” similar to his explanation of the Sūtra on the Ten Grounds where the term “only” that indicates mind-only does not refute external objects but “refutes another creator [than the mind],” but he does comment that, “Although the term ‘only’ in that [Descent into Lañkā Sūtra] does refute external objects, it is a sūtra requiring interpretation.”

The great master, Bhāvaviveka, explains that even this sūtra is saying that the mind is generated into being transformed by likenesses, i.e. aspects, of bodies,

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enjoyments, and abodes that are like a shadow. Also, he explains [that the phrase] “No external objects exist,” refutes that the mind sees that awarenesses perceive without [being generated] in the aspect [of external objects]. Hence, he explains the term “only” does not refute external objects.

### **Indicating that other similar sūtras also require interpretation [322.16]**

Not only does the teaching by the statement, “[Objects] do not exist as external objects as perceived,” and so forth—[indicating] that mind-only exists without external objects—require interpretation but also [some] other aforementioned sūtra passages of such type that Proponents of Mind-Only assert to be definitive are clarified by these passages to be set forth to require interpretation. [323] It says in [Candrakīrti’s] Autocommentary:

Furthermore, what are the “[other] such passages [that require interpretation?” The teaching of] the non[-true] existence of imputational natures and the [true] existence of other-powered natures that occurs in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought when explaining the three natures. Similarly, [the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought teaches]:

There is a deep and subtle consciousness, the taker [of rebirth], Having all the seeds and flowing like the continuum of a river. If it were understood as a self, it would not be proper, Thus, I do not teach it to children.[105]

And so forth. In that sūtra there is a differentiation of existence and non-existence such that there is no existence by way of own character of imputational natures and there is existence by way of own character of other-powered natures. Imputational natures that are the two selves, for instance—and that factors imputed to phenomena in the manner of entity and attribute are established by way of own character—do not occur among objects of knowledge in this system, but many factors imputed in the manner of entity and attribute are established bases, i.e., existent.

In this sūtra both other-powered natures and thoroughly established natures are  
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said to exist by way of their own character, but, in [Candrakīrti's] Autocommentary, nothing except for just other-powered natures are mentioned. This is due to the fact that the main basis of controversy regarding the Middle Way School and the Mind-Only School regarding true existence and the absence of true existence is other-powered natures, for other-powered natures are the bases of imputation of imputational natures, and also thoroughly established natures must be posited in dependence on other-powered natures. Such differentiation is explained to require interpretation by this system.

Also, the explanation in this sūtra [the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought], “There is a deep and subtle consciousness, the taker [of rebirth],” and so forth, that there is of a mind-basis-of-all that is a different entity from the six consciousnesses, is an explanation that there are eight collections of consciousness is described here as requiring interpretation. Without a mind-basis-of-all the afflicted mind also would not be positable.

With respect to what is included within the term ‘and so forth’, there are the two explanations in this sūtra [the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] of the refutation of external objects and the explanation of three final vehicles. Thus, there are four [sūtra passages] that must be commented upon here as being of interpretable meaning. [324] If one does not form decisive understanding concerning these, one will not know the Middle Way and Mind-Only schools in general and the uncommon essentials of this system in particular. Seeing this, I have explained [these points] in detail in the Differentiation of the Definitive and the Interpretable.

The passages in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought teaching no external objects are, for instance, those cited in Asavga's Compendium of the Great Vehicle:

“Supramundane Victor, is it said that the image that is the object of activity of meditative stabilization is different from that mind or not different?” The Supramundane Victor replied, “Maitreya, it is said that it is not different. Why? I explain that consciousness is distinguished by [being] the object of mere cognition.”

This system [of the Consequence School] comments on all four meaning-sets that were described above as being of interpretable meaning, but does not do it in

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accordance with those who comment on some of those as being of interpretable meaning and some as being of definitive meaning. Moreover, also the explanation of three final vehicles is not mentioned in [Candrakīrti's Autocommentary] in consideration of the fact that such can be understood [to require interpretation] from the proof by the Superior [Nāgājuna] himself in the Compendium of All Sūtras that there is one final vehicle.

Regarding the remaining three, the scripture that clarifies the teaching of inherently established mind-only without external objects as requiring interpretation is the statement in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra:

Just as a doctor distributes

Medicines to the ill,

So the Buddha teaches

Mind-only to sentient beings.

It is said that just as a doctor's giving medicines to individual sick persons is not in the doctor's own power, but is relative to the patient's mode of illness, so the Teacher's teaching Mind-Only is not done through the force of that being his own system, but is spoken through the force of the thought of trainees. Thereby it is known that the earlier scripture [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra] requires interpretation. [325]

After the statement, "Just as a doctor distributes ..." in the Autocommentary, he cites a passage from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, ranging from where it says, "Similarly, [Mahāmati said,] 'the tathāgatagarbha that was taught in the Supramundane Victor's sūtras...,'" through to the passage stating, "manifestly and completely purified in complete perfect enlightenment," are passages that teach that the mind-basis-of-all asserted to be of definitive meaning by Proponents of Mind-Only [actually] requires interpretation. Jāyānanda's Explanation of (Candrakīrti's) "Autocommentary" on this is an incorrect statement:

The term "similarly" means that just as the permanent stable [tathāgata]garbha is interpretable, so also the statements regarding mind-only are indicated to require interpretation.

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Here this is incorrect because Candrakīrti's Autocommentary explains clearly that it means, "just as statements of mind-only require interpretation, so..."

Just as expressions of mind-only are explained to require interpretation by the verse, "Just as a doctor distributes..." and so forth, so also the statement that a permanent stable [tathāgata]garbha requires interpretation establishes that statements of a mind-basis-of-all in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, and so forth, are not literal. For that, initially, one must know that this teaching of a garbha is not literal. Therefore, the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra says:

Sūtras teaching in conformity with the thoughts of sentient beings have meaning that is mistaken; they are not discourses on suchness. Just as a deer is deceived by a waterless mirage into apprehending water, so doctrine that is taught [in conformity with the thoughts of beings] pleases children but is not discourse causing the wisdom of Superiors. Therefore, you should follow the meaning and not be enamored of the expression.[106]

Also, the [Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra] asks the following question:

[Mahāmati said,] ‘The tathāgatagarbha that was taught in the Supramundane Victor’s sūtras was said by the Supramundane Victor to be naturally radiant, pure, and hence beginninglessly pure, possessing the thirty-two characteristics [of a Buddha], and existing in the bodies of all sentient-beings.’ The Supramundane Victor said that like a precious gem wrapped in a dirty cloth, the tathāgatagarbha is wrapped in the cloth of the aggregates, constituents, and sense spheres, overwhelmed by the force of desire, hatred, and ignorance, and sullied with the defilements of conceptuality. [326] ‘If so, Supramundane Victor, how is this propounding of a tathāgatagarbha not like the Forders’ propounding of a self? Supramundane Victor, the Forders teach and propound a self that is permanent, a non-agent, without the qualities, pervasive and non-perishing.’

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When he explains, in answer to that, that since such a teaching is not literal, it is not like the Forders propounding of a self, the basis [in the Buddha’s] thought that is what he was thinking when he said that was emptiness, signlessness, wishlessness, i.e., the selflessness of phenomena. The purpose of his speaking that way, within his thinking of that, was [so that] childish beings [might] abandon their fear of selflessness and so that Forders adhering to the propounding of self and those accustomed to bad views in the past could be led gradually to suchness. [Due to that,] he taught the existence of a permanent stable everlasting [tathāgata]garbha. Hence, [the Buddha] said that present and future Bodhisattvas are not to adhere to this permanent stable [tathāgata]garbha as a self. If one holds to the literal reading, it is similar to the Forders conception of self; hence, one should not adhere [to the teaching of a permanent stable tathāgatagarbha] as literal. That is the meaning. The harm to the actual [words, i.e.,] the literal reading, is that if one asserts the literal reading, it comes to be not differentiable from the Forders’ self. Since these matters have already been extensively explained elsewhere,[107] I will not elaborate on them here.

Also, Candrakīrti’s Autocommentary quotes the following from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra:

Mahāmati, I teach that the characteristics of emptiness, non-production, non-duality, and no inherent nature are contained in the sūtras of all the Buddhas.[108]

After quoting that, he states:

Therefore, in that way, all Sūtras of such type that are asserted to be of definitive meaning by Proponents of Mind-Only are clarified as requiring interpretation through these passages [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra].

“Sūtras of such type” are not the two passages of the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra just cited, since neither of these is asserted by Proponents of Mind-Only to be of definitive meaning, and because earlier, in Candrakīrti’s Autocommentary, he clearly describes them as [from] the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought. [327]

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Jāyānanda’s Explanation of (Candrakīrti’s) ‘Autocommentary’ that states that the words “these passages” refers to the refutation of a creator on the occasion of examining dependent-arising in the Sūtra on the Ten Grounds is very incorrect, since [Candrakīrti] speaks of the refutation of another creator [than the mind] as a source for the fact that in the [Sūtra on the Ten Grounds] the term “only” in the phrase “mind-only” does not refute external objects. It is not a source showing that the refutation of external objects requires interpretation. Therefore, with respect to the passage referred to in [Candrakīrti’s] root text where he says, “These passages [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, etc., show that other Sūtras of such type] require interpretation,” these are three. From among those, that which shows mind-only refuting external objects to require interpretation is the four [lines, “Just as doctor...”, and so forth.] That which teaches the mind-basis-of-all as being of interpretable meaning is a passage teaching the permanent stable [tathāgata]garbha as being of interpretable meaning.

Question: How does the fact that the teaching of the existence of a permanent stable [tathāgata]garbha as being of interpretable meaning establish the mind-basis-of-all as being of interpretable meaning?

Reply: There are many statements explaining that these two are synonymous. The Sūtra on the Heavily Adorned says:

[Just as] lands [are the basis of] the varieties [of all things grown],

So the basis-of-all [is the basis for cyclic existence and nirvana].

The virtuous tathāgatagarbha is also this [basis-of-all],

Tathāgatas teach the garbha with the term ‘basis-of-all’.

Though the garbha is proclaimed as the basis of all,

Those of weak intellect do not understand.

Also, the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra says:

The tathāgatagarbha, which is proclaimed as the mind-basis-of-all, together with the seven consciousnesses ... .[109]

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Since it is explained with respect to those two that the one is permanent and the other is impermanent, it is not indicated that the two meanings on the literal level are the same. However, since the mind-basis-of-all was taught in consideration of just that meaning [i.e., emptiness] thinking of which he taught the garbha, therefore, in relation to the thought behind [his teaching], they are synonymous and hence mutually inclusive. [328] In that way, just this teaching of the earlier [the tathāgatagarbha] as being of interpretable meaning establishes the latter [the mind-basis-of-all] also as being of interpretable meaning.

[Candrakīrti's] Autocommentary says:

It should be known that because it abides as the nature of all phenomena, only emptiness is indicated by the term mind-basis-of-all.[110]

One must put together well these two—this statement and the teaching that a permanent stable tathāgatagarbha require interpretation—and thereupon realize that the passage [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra] indicates that the mind-basis-of-all requires interpretation.

Mahāmāti, I teach that the characteristics of emptiness, non-production, non-duality, and no inherent nature are contained in the sūtras of all the Buddhas.[111]

After that passage the sūtra itself says, “In any sūtra whatsoever, just this meaning is to be understood.” This statement is the scripture that shows that a differentiation between the first two natures as to whether or not they exist by way of their own-character requires interpretation.

## Appendix B: Translation of Nga-wang-bel-den's Annotations

[The following is my translation of annotation za from the Consequence section of Nga-Ūang-,el-den's Annotations.]

Annotation Za—Other Sūtras of Such Type Require Interpretation

Thus, Candrakīrti's Introduction [VI.95] says:

These passages [in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra and so forth]

Show that other sūtras of such type require interpretation.[112]

Whatever is a sūtra [i.e., passage of scripture] to be commented upon as of interpretable meaning that is explicitly indicated in [Candrakīrti's text where it says] “other sūtras of such type”, is necessarily asserted by Proponents of Mind Only to be of definitive meaning and is necessarily a passage in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought. This is because such is stated very clearly in °zong-ka-,a's Extensive Explanation of (Candrakīrti's) “Introduction to (Nāgārjuna's) ‘Treatise on the Middle,’ ”[113] which says:

“Sūtras of such type” are not the two passages of the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra just cited, since neither of these are asserted by Proponents of Mind Only to be of definitive meaning, and because earlier, in Candrakīrti's Commentary he clearly describes them as [from] the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought.

Also [such is stated in] °zong-ka-,a's The Essence of the Good Explanations which says:

“Sūtras of such type” are those as described earlier to be from the Sūtra

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Unraveling the Thought; [Candrakīrti] is not indicating that sūtras which teach a Tathāgatagarbha [and which are actually of] interpretable meaning are asserted as being of definitive meaning by Proponents of Mind Only. Neither Proponents of Mind-Only nor Proponents of the Middle Way disagree about this.

Therefore, the four sets of sūtra passages to be commented upon on this occasion as being of interpretable meaning are the four sets of sūtra passages in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, these being the explanations (1) differentiating the three natures as to whether they are truly existent or not (2) teaching the existence of a mind-basis-of-all (3) refuting external objects (4) and setting forth three final vehicles. [125]

Objection: [What you have just said] contradicts [Jam-᠙ang-shay-,a's] earlier explanation that the statement that the sūtras to be commented upon on as of interpretable meaning on this occasion are four-fold is a condensation into four by

way of topics, and that if they are divided by way of the words that are the means of expression there are a great many.

Reply: [Jam-᳚ang-shay-,a's] earlier explanation of such was in consideration [of the fact] that when the four sets of passages from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought are explained as being of interpretable meaning, passages in the Sūtra on the Heavily Adorned, the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, the Sūtra on the Myrabolan Fruit, and the Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras which accord with them in terms of how the topics are taught also implicitly can be understood to be non-literal. Hence there is no contradiction.

Objection: If it is said that whatever is

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a sūtra to be commented upon on this occasion as being of interpretable meaning must be any of the four sets of sūtra passages from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, then that is incorrect. For, sūtras which teach a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha are explained in Kay-drup's Thousand Intervals, Jam-᳚ang-shay-,a's Great Exposition of Tenets (root text and commentary), and Jam-᳚ang-shay-,a's Decisive Analysis of (Candrakīrti's) "Introduction to (Nāgārjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle'" as being sūtras commented upon on this occasion as being of interpretable meaning.

Reply: [That they said this] does not entail [that it is incorrect that whatever is a sūtra to be commented upon on this occasion as being of interpretable meaning must be any of the four sets of sūtra passages from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought], because such statements, taking the passage from the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra that explains that the teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is of interpretable meaning as their source, are made in consideration that sūtras teaching a mind-basis-of-all are to be commented upon as requiring interpretation. However, teachings of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha are not teachings that are commented upon on this occasion as being of interpretable meaning. This is because Proponents of Mind Only do not assert such as being of definitive meaning.

This is because the entailment [that whatever is a sūtra to be commented upon on this occasion as being of interpretable meaning must be any of the four sets of sūtra passages from the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] is established by the earlier citation of the passage in 'ong-ka-,a's Illumination of the Thought,[\[114\]](#) and the purpose of commenting upon these sūtras on this occasion as being of interpretable meaning is for the purpose of refuting the Mind Only system.

Moreover, sūtras [teaching] a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha are not posited as being sūtras to be commented upon on as being of interpretable meaning on this occasion [of Candrakīrti's text]. This is because 'ong-ka-,a's Illumination of the Thought says:

This system [of the Consequence School] comments on all four meaning-sets, which were explained earlier, as being of interpretable meaning, but does not do it in

accordance with those who comment on some of those as being of interpretable meaning and some as being of definitive meaning.

This is a statement that there are four sūtras to be commented upon as interpretable on this occasion. Also, even a corner of a statement that there are five sūtra passages does not exist in either the Illumination of the Thought or The Essence of Good Explanations.

Moreover, all four sūtra sets, such as those, are commented upon as being of interpretable meaning and are stated not in a context of differentiating some into

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interpretable and some into definitive in accordance with the father, Śāntaraksita, and his spiritual son [Kamalaśīla].[\[115\]](#) [\[126\]](#)

Therefore, with respect to the meaning of the words of this passage from Candrakīrti's Autocommentary:

The other sūtras of such type that are asserted by Proponents of Mind-Only to be of definitive meaning are the four sūtra passages in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought that (1) speak within differentiating true existence and the absence of true existence with respect to the three characters, (2) teach a mind-basis-of-all, which is “an appropriating consciousness, profound and subtle...”[\[116\]](#), (3) refute external objects, and (4) speak of three final vehicles. From among those four sūtra passages [of the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought], the first three are shown to be of interpretable meaning respectively by these three passages in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra: (1) the teaching that the character of an absence of inherent existence is contained in the sūtras of all the Buddhas, (2) the statement in this sūtra that sūtras teaching a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha are of interpretable meaning, and (3) the statement in just this sūtra which says:

Just as a doctor distributes

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Medicines to the ill,

So the Buddha Teaches

Mind-Only to sentient beings.

With respect to statements that there are three final vehicles [in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought, chapter VII], since one is able to understand the establishment of one final vehicle in Nāgārjuna's Compendium of Sūtra, such is not presented in Candrakīrti's Autocommentary. [\[117\]](#)

The mode of commenting upon the teaching of a mind-basis-of-all [in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought] as being of interpretable meaning by the passage in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra which indicates that a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is of interpretable meaning is as follows:

The teaching of the existence of a mind-basis-of-all is not literal because it is said in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra that the teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is not literal. [That it is said in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra that the teaching of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is not literal] entails [that the teaching of the existence of a mind-basis-of-all is not literal] because it is explained in both the Sūtra on the Heavily Adorned and the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra that the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha is synonymous with mind-basis-of-all. This is because the Sūtra on the Heavily Adorned says:

[Just as] lands [are the basis of] the varieties [of all things grown],

So the basis-of-all [is the basis for cyclic existence and nirvāṇa].

The virtuous tathāgatagarbha is also this [basis-of-all]... [\[118\]](#)

Therefore, just the teaching that the former [tathāgatagarbha] is of interpretable meaning establishes that the latter [mind-basis-of-all] also is of interpretable meaning. This is because for whatever is synonymous there is

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no difference as to whether they exist or not.

Although the two meanings of the terms on the literal level are not synonymous, when the two meanings in his thought which are behind his speaking of those two are synonymous, then both sūtra passages effortlessly come to be non-literal. This is because both sūtra passages [which teach the mind-basis-of-all and a tathāgatagarbha] were spoken within [the Buddha's] thinking of something else behind them. [127] This is so because °zong-ka-,a's Illumination of the Thought says:

That which teaches the mind-basis-of-all as being of interpretable meaning is a passage teaching the permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha as being of interpretable meaning.

Question: How does the fact that the teaching of the existence of a permanent stable Tathāgatagarbha as being of interpretable meaning establish the mind-basis-of-all as being of interpretable meaning?

Reply: There are many statements explaining that these two are synonymous. The Sūtra on the Heavily Adorned says:

[Just as] lands [are the basis of] the varieties [of all things grown],

So the basis-of-all [is the basis for cyclic existence and nirvāṇa].

The virtuous tathāgatagarbha is also this [basis-of-all],

Tathāgatas teach the garbha with the term 'basis-of-all.'

Though the garbha is proclaimed as the basis of all,

Those of weak intellect do not understand.

Also, the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra says:

The tathāgatagarbha, which is proclaimed as the mind-basis-of-all, together with the seven consciousnesses... .[\[119\]](#)

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Since it is explained with respect to those two that the one is permanent and the other is impermanent, it is not indicated that the two meanings on the literal level are the same. However, since the mind-basis-of-all was taught in consideration of just that meaning [i.e., emptiness] thinking of which he taught the garbha, therefore, in relation to the thought behind [his teaching], they are synonymous and hence mutually inclusive. In that way, just this teaching of the earlier [the tathāgatagarbha] as being of interpretable meaning establishes the latter [the mind-basis-of-all] also as being of interpretable meaning.

The mode of commenting upon the differentiation of the three natures into truly existent and non-truly existent as being of interpretable meaning by a passage in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra is as follows:

Statements in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought as to a difference among the three natures with respect to whether they are truly established or not are not literal, because the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra says: “Mahāmati, I teach that the characteristics of emptiness, non-production, non-duality, and non-inherent nature are contained in the sūtras of all the Buddhas.”[\[120\]](#)

[The fact that the sūtras of all the Buddhas teach these characteristics of emptiness, non-production, non-duality, and non-inherent nature] entails [that statements in the Sūtra Unraveling the Thought as to the particulars of true establishment and non-true establishment with respect to the three natures are not literal] because the realization of emptiness which is the absence of inherent existence is said to be the intended meaning of all the sūtras. Because of that, all the Buddha’s pronouncements are said to be only flowing and descending into emptiness. This is because all [the Buddha’s] pronouncements are methods for the full purification of the person.

The meaning of the words of the verse:

Just as a doctor distributes

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Medicines to the ill... .

has already been explained in the chapter on the Mind-Only school. How that [passage] comments upon the refutation of external objects as being of interpretable meaning is easy to understand.

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# 爭議之揭示： 月稱《入中論自釋》中有幾種 不了義之經教？

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## 提要

本論文之目的在於討論西藏佛教格魯派中幾位重要論師間之爭議，這些格魯派論師之爭議的問題在於：根據月稱(Candrakīrti)《入中論自釋》中之敘述，共有幾種經為不了義之教義。這段引起爭議之文句出現於月稱此陳述佛教思想之著作的第六章，月稱於此章中駁斥唯識之思想。此段落之內容為：

這幾段經文（出自楞伽等經中）顯示：其他如這類的經是需要加以詮釋的。

本文在於探討因格魯派之創始人宗喀巴(°zong-ka-, a)的主張而引來之爭議，宗喀巴認為月稱在上述段落中意指這類的經文有四種，即：

- (1)經文就三性而分別真實成立與非真實成立者
- (2)經文教授唯識之教義者
- (3)經文駁斥外在之客體者
- (4)經文解釋究竟三乘者

後來的格魯派論師們——最引人注意的是克主(Kay-drup)和蔣央協巴(Jam-°ang-shay-, a)—則主張月稱意指有五種不了義之經教，即宗喀巴所說之四種再加上下列所述之第五種：

(5)《如來藏經》經文所示，存在於一切眾生中，一種恆常安定之體，此體具備佛之相好。

月稱原本的語句有些含糊，而且，其字面之意義對於宗喀巴而言，也造成了教理解釋的困難。因此，宗喀巴使用了取代替換的注釋方法，行於讚賞和反對月稱的評論之間。但是，克主則不採用其上師宗喀巴之結論，因為其結論太過於狹隘。

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後來，蔣央協巴試圖調和前人不同之意見。很明顯地，雖然這兩位格魯派後代論師都認為宗喀巴有錯，但卻從來不說宗喀巴是錯的；他們甚至更進一步消弭與宗喀巴之間的歧見，所以他們不顯現出與宗派創始人不同的看法。

在探討這個爭議的過程中，本文呈現出宗喀巴如何運用很有創造力的詮釋，行於讚賞和反對月稱的評論之間。本文亦顯示出後期注疏家可以同時連用梵文文獻和宗喀巴之義理體系，此外，並在必要之時避開宗喀巴的限制。再者，本文亦包含了三部分：格魯派注釋書發展過程之討論、作者所譯宗喀巴之《入中論善顯密意疏》部分內容（此疏談論不了義經教的問題），以及作者所譯注昂旺奔登(Nga-Üang-el-den)之《大宗義注》。

**關鍵詞：** 1.西藏佛教 2.格魯派 3.宗喀巴 4.月稱 5.詮釋學 6.佛性 7.不了義與了義經

（中文提要由黃繹勳譯）

[1] This paper was presented to the Chung-hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies Faculty Conference, November, 2004. Thanks are due to Su-Jei Own and Eric Goodell for comments and suggestions.

[2] zla ba grags pa, seventh century.

[3] madhaymakāvatārabhāsyā, dbu ma la'jug pa'i bshad pa / dbu ma la'jug pa'i rang'grel. P5263, vol. 98. Also: Dharmasala, India: Council of Religious and Cultural Affairs, 1968. Herein "Auto" will be affixed to the English title of the madhyamikāvatārabasya, primarily to specify that Candrakīrti wrote both the Commentary and the root text. The root text itself will be referred to as the Introduction. See below for citation.

[4] Candrakīrti's Introduction, VI.95cd; P5262, vol. 98, 103.3.3.

[5] lang kar gzhegs pa'i mdo, laṅkavatārasūtra. P775, Vol.29. Sanskrit editions: Saddharma Laṅkāvatārasūtram, Ed. P.L. Vaidya (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1963). Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No.3. Also: Trans. by D.T. Suzuki, The Lankavatara Sūtra (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1968).

[6] tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357-1419).

[7] mkhas grub dge legs dpal bzang po (1385-1438) was one of 'zong-ka-'a's two main students, the other being Gyel-tsap (rgyal tshab dar ma rin chen, 1364-1432).

[8] 'jam dbyangs bzhad pa (1648-1722). Jam-yang-shay-,a was abbot of Go-mang Monastic College of Tibet's Dre-pung Monastery and founder of Dra-Ōhi-kyil monastery in Am-do in 1710. His numerous textbooks are invaluable as elucidations of 'zong-ka-'a's profound thought and as encyclopedic repositories of Indian scriptural sources.

[9] dbu ma la' jug pa'i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal. P6143, vol. 154. Also: Sarnath, India: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1973.

[10] ngag dbang dpal ldan; also known as Ōel-den-chö-jay (dpal ldan chos rje). Nga-Ūang-,el-den was a Mongolian scholar of Tibetan Buddhism who flourished in the early nineteenth century. Lokesh Chandra reports that Nga-Ūang-,el-den was born in Urga (presently Ulaanbaatar) in Outer Mongolia in the Fire-Serpent year of 1797, and that he received his monastic training in 'ra-Ōhi-chö-pel Monastic College. At the age of forty, Nga-Ūang-,el-den occupied the seat of Doctrine Master (chos rje) of Urga.

[11] grub mtha' chen mo'i mchan'grel dka' gnad mdud grol blo gsal gces nor. Sarnath: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Printing Press, 1964.

[12] Martin J. Packer, "Hermeneutic Inquiry in the Study of Human Conduct", American Psychologist, vol.40 (Oct. 1985), 1081.

[13] Lopez records this observation by Bielefeldt in his *Introduction to Buddhist Hermeneutics*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 9.

[14] Quoted by Lopez in *Buddhist Hermeneutics* 1. Lopez remarks that this raises two hermeneutical dilemmas: (1) what, exactly, was his teaching, and (2) what does it mean for the teaching to be the teacher?

[15] See Donald Lopez, *Buddhist Hermeneutics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 1.

[16] Nathan Katz, “Prasanga and Deconstruction: Tibetan Hermeneutics and the yāna Controversy”, *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 34, April (1984), p. 186.

[17] Taipei edition of *Great Exposition of Tenets*, 531.11.

[18] Paul Ricoeur, “Existence and Hermeneutics,” *The Conflict of Interpretations*, ed. Don Idhe (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974), 3.

[19] nges don, nītārtha.

[20] drang don, neyārtha.

[21] Lopez, *Hermeneutics*, 7.

[22] From a remark by Lopez in *Hermeneutics*, 7.

[23] Lopez, *Hermeneutics*, 7.

[24] drang ba dang nges pa’i don rnam par phye ba’i bstan bcos legs bshad snying po. P6142, vol. 153.

[25] mdo sde dgongs’grel, samdhinirmocanasūtra, P774; Toh 106, Dharma vol.18. Also: edited Tibetan text and French translation by Etienne Lamotte, *Samdhinirmocanasūtra: l’explication des mystères*, Louvain, Paris, 1935.

[26] Lopez, *Hermeneutics*, 55. Lopez informs us that this list is from Pan-chen bSod-nam-grags-pa’s (1478-1554) drang nges utpala’i’phreng pa, his commentary on °zong-ka-,a’s drang-nges legs bshad snying po. Earlier scholars speak only of the last three criteria.

[27] dgongs pa.

[28] dgongs gzhi.

[29] dgos pa.

[30] dngos la gnod byed.

[31] Jeffrey Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1983), 867.

[32] Meditation on Emptiness, 426.

[33] Meditation on Emptiness, 426. His information comes from  $\frac{1}{4}$ ang»ya (Icang skya 1717-1780), Presentation of Tenets, (Varanasi: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Printing Press, 1970), 162.6-163.11.

[34] Thousand Dosages/Opening the Eyes of the Fortunate, Treatise Brilliantly Clarifying the Profound Emptiness (stong thun chen mo/zab mo stong pa nyid rab tu gsal bar byed pa'i bstan bcos skal bzang mig'byed), The Collected Works of the Lord Mkhas-grub rje dge-legs-dpal-bzan-po, Vol.1, 179-702 (New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Gurudeva, 1980 I-Tib 886).

[35] Robert Thurman, Tsong Khapa's Speech of Gold in the Essence of the True Eloquene (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 126.

[36] Packer, "Hermeneutic Inquiry," 1088.

[37] °zong-ka-, a, Essence. Tib. 87; Eng. 162. This statement is from the point of view of the Mind-Only School.

[38] A distinction should be made between periods of the Buddha's life and wheels of doctrine. For instance, Tibetan scholars assert that first wheel statements were uttered by the Buddha during all periods of his teaching career.

[39] Elizabeth Napper, Dependent-Arising and Emptiness (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1989), 53.

[40] Jeffrey Hopkins, trans., °zong-ka-, a's The Essence of the Good Explanations, (unpublished manuscript, 1986), Tib. 3.10; Eng. 9.

[41] blo gros mi zad pas bstan pa'i mdo, aksayamatirdeśasūtra. Peking 842, Vol.34.

[42] Meditation on Emptiness, 598-99. P842, Vol. 34 64.4.2. Brackets are from  $\frac{1}{4}$ ang-gya, 315.17.

[43] Lopez, Hermeneutics, 62-63.

[44] Lopez's translation. See Hermeneutics, 64.

[45] Lopez's translation. See Hermeneutics, 64.

[46] brjod bya.

[47] dngos bstan.

[48] Napper, Dependent-arising, 61.

[49] shes rap snying po, prajñāhṛdaya. P160, Vol. 6. Translated by E. Conze in Buddhist Texts Through the Ages (Oxford: Cassirer, 1954), pp. 152-153, by Geshe

Rapten in *Echoes of Voidness* (London: Wisdom, 1983), pp. 18-19, and by Donald Lopez (New York: SUNY Press, 1993).

[50] Lopez. *Hermeneutics*, 65.

[51] Lopez. *Hermeneutics*, 67.

[52] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 236.

[53] For a discussion of the three modes of a correct sign, see Daniel Perdue, *Debate in Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1989).

[54] Bracketed numbers refer to pages in the Tibetan text edited by Poussin. See Louis de la Vallée Poussin, ed., *Madhyamakāvātāra par Candrakīrti Bibliotheca Buddhica IX* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1970). My own translation.

[55] P775, Vol. 29 53.4.2, Chapter 3. Suzuki's translation in *Lankavatara* is 133. Bracketed material drawn from *Meditation on Emptiness*, 613.

[56] VI.94ab.

[57] VI.94cd.

[58] VI.95ab.

[59] rnam pa de lta bu'i mdo sde gzhan yang ni / drang don nyid du lung 'dis gsal bar byed. P5262, Vol. 98 103.3.3, VI. 95cd; Poussin's French translation is *Muséon*, n.s. v. 12, p. 250.

[60] P774, Vol. 29 8.2.2, chapter 5.

[61] Dzong-ka-ba explains that "And so forth" refers to the refutation of external objects and the teaching of three final vehicles. See the *Illumination of the Thought*, Varanasi edition, 323.19.

[62] P5263, Vol. 98 136.1.1ff. See Poussin's French translation, p. 250. See *Meditation on Emptiness*, 611. See Suzuki, *Lankavatara*, 44.

[63] mu stegs pa, tīrthika.

[64] Most likely the three doors of liberation: emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness.

[65] Lamotte identifies the quoted passage as being from the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*. See Lamotte, *L'enseignement de Vimalakīrti* (Louvain, 1962), 55. However, Ruegg asserts that such is not taught in the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*. See Ruegg, *Le Traité sur le Tathāgatagarbha du Bu ston* (Paris: École Française D'Extreme Orient).

[66] See Poussin's French translation, 252. Also see Suzuki, *Lankavatara*, 68.

[67] It is important to understand that the word sūtra in this context does not refer to entire books of sūtra, but rather to specific passages contained within books of sūtra. Thus, when Candrakīrti speaks of “other sūtras of such type” he is not referring to entire books but to sections of books that require interpretation. Louis de la Vallée Poussin confirms this when he states, “Le contexte montre ce qu’il faut entendre ici par Sūtra; non pas tel ou tel livre, mais des fragments, paragraphes ou stances....” See Poussin, ed., *Madhyamakāvātāra* par Chandrakīrti, 198.10. See also the French translation by Poussin in *Muséon* 8 (1907), 253. Also see Suzuki, 68.

[68] VI.94cd.

[69] Poussin, *Madhyamakāvātārā*, 195.1.

[70] As Jam-ᠴang-shay-,a says, “all passages taught merely in conformity with the thoughts of sentient beings require interpretation.” See *Meditation on Emptiness*, 611.

[71] VI.95cd.

[72] Imputational natures, other-powered natures, and thoroughly established natures.

[73] See Poussin, *Madhyamakāvātārā*, 252. Also see Suzuki, *Lankavatara*, 68.

[74] Annotations, 128.4.

[75] My translation of Poussin’s text, 198. Following is Suzuki’s translation of a portion of this passage:

The Blessed One makes mention of the Tathāgata-garbha in the sūtras, and verily it is described by you as by nature bright and pure, as primarily unspotted, endowed with the thirty-two marks of excellence, hidden in the body of every being like a gem of great value, that is enwrapped in a dirty garment, enveloped in the garment of the Skandhas, Dhātus, andāyatanas, and soiled with the dirt of greed, anger, folly, and false imagination, while it is described by the Blessed One to be eternal, permanent, auspicious, and unchangeable. ... Is not this Tathāgatagarbha taught by the Blessed One the same as the ego-substance taught by the philosophers? ...

The Blessed One replied: No, Mahāmati, my Tathāgatagarbha is not the same as the ego-substance taught by the philosophers; for what the Tathāgataa teach is the Tathāgata-garbha in the sense, Mahāmati, that it is emptiness, reality-limit, Nirvāṇa, being unborn, unqualified, and devoid of will-effort; the reason why the Tathāgatas ... teach the doctrine pointing to the Tathāgata-garbha is to make the ignorant cast aside their fear when they listen to the teaching of egolessness... .

See Suzuki, *Lankavatara*, 69.

[76] Poussin’s text, 198.13-15.

[77] *dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan* (1292-1361).

[78] David. S. Ruegg, ‘On the Dge Lugs Pa Theory of the tathāgatagarbha.’ In *Pratidānam*. Ed. J.C. Heesterman. The Hague: Mouton, 1968, 503.

[79] *gung thang dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me* (1762-1823).

[80] Jeffrey Hopkins, unpublished manuscript (1988).

[81] David S. Ruegg, ‘The Jo nav pas: a School of Buddhist Ontologists According to the Grub Mtha’ Sel Gyi Me Lon.’ *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (January, 1963), 74.

[82] *svabhāvaśunyatā*.

[83] Ruegg, ‘The Jo nav pas’, 74.

[84] Annotations, Ch. 4 (dngos), 9-10.

[85] *sems tsam pa, cittamātra*.

[86] *kun gzhi, ālayavijñāna*. See Hopkins, 382.

[87] Quoted in the Annotations, 124.

[88] The Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, LXXXII. See Suzuki, 190.

[89] Poussin, *Madhyamakāvatara*, 250. *Meditation on Emptiness*, 611. Suzuki, *Lankavatara*, 44.

[90] Poussin, 196.

[91] *Illumination of the Thought, Extensive Explanation of (Candrakīrti) “Introduction to (Nāgārjuna’s) ‘Treatise on the Middle’”, dbu ma la ’jug pa’i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal*. P6143, Vol. 154 (Sarnath, India: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1973), 323.18.

[92] P6143, Vol. 154 74.5.2.

[93] Quoted in the Annotations, 124.

[94] Annotations, 126. Candrakīrti’s later statement in his Autocommentary on X.38—“Also, this teaching of one vehicle is to be ascertained from Nāgārjuna’s *Compendium of Sūtra*” — is proof that Candrakīrti was aware of Nāgārjuna’s refutation.

[95] From *The Collected Works of the Lord Mkhas-grub rje, dge-legs-dpal-bzan-po*, Vol. 1, 179-702.

[96] *Meditation on Emptiness*, 611.

[97] Ruegg also has not found this teaching in the Tathagatagarbha Sūtra. The reference, however, is to the passage cited in the Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra when Mahāmāti questions Buddha. See Ruegg, *Traité*, 32.

[98] Great Exposition of the Middle / Analysis of (Candrakīrti's) "Introduction to (Nāgārjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle'", *Treasury of Scripture and Reasoning, Thoroughly Illuminating the Profound Meaning [of Emptiness], Entrance for the Fortunate* (dbu ma chen mo/dbu ma 'jug pa'i mtha' dpyod lung rigs gter mdzod zab don kun gsal skal bzang 'jug ngogs), (Buxaduor: Gomang, 1967), 62b.6-63a.1.

[99] Great Exposition of the Middle, 63a.1-4.

[100] See Appendix A.

[101] 'jug pa'i rnam bshad / dbu ma la'jug pa'i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal; also known simply as the Illumination of the Thought. P6143, Vol. 154. (Sarnath, India: Pleasure of Elegant Sayings Press, 1973), 321.2-328.2.

[102] Bracketed material drawn from Candrakīrti. Poussins's text, p. 194.2.

[103] P775, Vol. 29 53.4.2, chapter 3. Suzuki's translation is *Lankavatara*, 133. Bracketed material drawn from Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, 613.

[104] dgongs gzhi.

[105] P774, Vol. 29 8.2.2.

[106] See Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, 611.

[107] In the Sūtra *Unravelling the Thought*.

[108] See Poussin, 252. Also see Suzuki, 68.

[109] The Descent into Laṅkā Sūtra, LXXXII. See Suzuki, 190.

[110] See Hopkins, *Meditation on Emptiness*, 617.

[111] See Poussin's French translation, p. 252. Also see Suzuki, *Lankavatara*, p. 68.

[112] Boldfaced matter is from Jam-ang-shay-'a's Great Exposition of Tenets. Taipei edition, 533.9. Jam-ang-shay-'a is quoting from Candrakīrti's Introduction, VI.95cd; P5262, vol. 98, 103.3.3.

[113] 'jug pa'i rnam bshad / dbu ma la'jug pa'i rgya cher bshad pa dgongs pa rab gsal; also known as the Illumination of the Thought.

[114] Jam-ang-shay-'a clearly disagrees.

[115] ¼ang-ya's Presentation of Tenets quotes Śāntaraksita (see Lopez, *The Svātantrika-Mādhyamika School of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 346):

What is the definitive meaning? It is that which has validity and is explained in terms of the ultimate because it cannot be interpreted otherwise by another.

Therefore, it must be assumed on this occasion that Nga-Ūang-,el-den means literal when he says definitive. For, in accordance with the stricter meaning of definitive cited here, all of the above sūtra passages otherwise would be of interpretable meaning for Śāntaraksita since they do not set forth the ultimate. In this way it can be said that Śāntaraksita holds one of these passages in the Sūtra Unravelling the Thought to be definitive, since he does hold the refutation of external objects to be literally acceptable, although not “explained in terms of the ultimate.” The remaining three are both interpretable and non-literal for Śāntaraksita.

[116] “...an appropriating consciousness, profound and subtle...” is found in the verses at the back of the Sūtra Unravelling the Thought, chapter V.

[117] Candrakīrti’s later statement in his Autocommentary on X.38— “Also, this teaching of one vehicle is to be ascertained from Nāgārjuna’s Compendium of Sūtra” — is proof that Candrakīrti was aware of Nāgārjuna’s refutation.

[118] Bracketed material taken from Meditation on Emptiness, 617.

[119] The Descent into Lañkā Sūtra, LXXXII. See Suzuki, 190.

[120] See Poussin, 198.10. See also the French translation by Poussin in Muséon 8 (1907), 252. Also see Suzuki, 68.