

## ***sLob dpon gyis bśad pa: Explanation by the Master*** The Teachings on Meditation of an Unknown Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ (IOL Tib J 709, 34a1-36a3)

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**Abstract** In the Dunhuang manuscript IOL Tib J 709, which is a collection of writings concerning meditation, we come across a short text attributed to a Tibetan master called Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ (allegedly eighth-ninth centuries CE). In his work, Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ exposes a method of meditation that seems to be strongly indebted to Indian Mahāyāna scriptural sources. Besides, also a Chinese Chan influence is here detectable. Therefore, the method of meditation taught by Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ seems to represent a commingling of different elements from different contexts. After a general introduction to the manuscript IOL Tib J 709, this study focuses on Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ's text, discussing and analysing the following topics: its author and date, the Indian Mahāyāna possible sources, Chinese Chan elements, the meditational path described. An annotated translation of the text, along with its transliteration and the reproduction of the fac-simile of the corresponding portion of the manuscript, concludes the study.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Manuscript IOL Tib J 709. – 2.1 IOL Tib J 709: General Survey. – 2.2 IOL Tib J 709 as a Collection: the Texts. – 2.3 IOL Tib J 709: the Date. – 3 The Text *Explanation by the ācārya Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ*. – 3.1 Preliminary Remarks. – 3.2 English Annotated Translation. – 3.3 Tibetan Text. – Appendix. Reproduction of the Fac-simile of the Manuscript.

**Keywords** Tibetan Buddhism. Dunhuang manuscript. Meditation.

### **1 Introduction**

In this paper<sup>1</sup> I will provide the edition and translation of a brief Tibetan text on meditation, along with an introductory study of the same and of the manuscript in which it is contained.

Sometimes history preserves for posterity some small things, saving them from the heedlessness of time and waiting that someone simply had

**1** I would like to express here my sincere gratitude to Dan Lusthaus, Dan Martin, Robert Mayer, Kirill Solonin and Sam van Schaik, who have thoroughly read and patiently discussed with me a first draft of the present article, offering insightful suggestions and helpful criticism. I am grateful to Sam van Schaik for having also sent me a copy of his book *Tibetan Zen* before it were available in Europe, and to Marek Mejer, who was kind enough to help me with some Sanskrit and Tibetan sources, unavailable to me.

the right eye to see and valorize them. This is the case, I think, of the work under concern here. It covers only few folios of a Dunhuang manuscript, catalogued as IOL Tib J 709, where nine different works or part of works are collected together, among which our text is the fifth.<sup>2</sup>

Its *incipit* makes it clear that it is a *bśad pa*, namely, an 'explanation' (for the sake of brevity, henceforth I will refer to this text as *Explanation*). According to the first statement, the *Explanation* collects some teaching attributed to a certain master (Tibetan *slob dpon*, Sanskrit *ācārya*), bearing the Tibetan name of Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ. At present nothing certain can be said about his origins and life, since it seems that nowhere else we meet with his name, and exactly this fact caught my attention and aroused my curiosity. Indeed, when I came across the *Explanation* for the first time, I was struck by the fact that, were it not for this manuscript, we would know nothing about Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ's teachings (even if, in any case, they do not express any particular innovative topic). Though the idea has touched me that the *Explanation* could be nothing but a simple collection of notes on meditation, arranged for some reason unknown to us, exactly the aforementioned lack of information on its author made me more and more involved in the study of the text, to the point that I decided to devote a paper to it.

## 2 The manuscript IOL Tib J 709

### 2.1 IOL Tib J 709: General Survey

IOL Tib J 709 is, as said above, a collection of nine texts, all dealing with, or concerning, the topic of meditation. The collection is fragmentary, since begins with page 4, and fols. 5, 6, 24 and 26 are missing.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the last text of the collection ends with page 45 and is incomplete. However, the beginning of the first text is found in IOL Tib J 468, which provides fols. 1 and 2 (see Gómez 1983, pp. 82-83). Consequently, also fol. 3 is to be considered lost. The final part of the last text of IOL Tib J 709 is instead found in IOL Tib J 667 (consisting in only 1 folio), which would correspond to page 46, though no Tibetan numeration does occur on it.

Accordingly, it is quite safe to assume that IOL Tib J 468, IOL Tib J 709 and IOL Tib J 667 are parts of what could have originally been one single manuscript.

2 For a general description of the other texts gathered in IOL Tib J 709, see Dalton, van Schaik (2006, pp. 302-306). More in general, as regards the Dunhuang Buddhist texts on meditation, it is worth mentioning here Ueyama (1981).

3 While referring to the page numbers of IOL Tib J 709, in the present article I will follow the Tibetan numeration of the manuscript.

As far as the lacunae in the manuscript are concerned, we owe to Luis Gómez (1983, pp. 82-83) the suggestion that the contents of the missing fol. 3 can be restored from, or can correspond to, Pelliot Tibétain 812, 813 and 117.

## 2.2 IOL Tib J 709 as a Collection: the Texts

Let us now turn our attention towards the contents of the manuscript. The following is the list of the nine texts gathered in the collection.

### 2.2.1 Text 1

The first work is the *bSam gtan cig car 'jug pa'i sgo* (The Gate of Immediate Entrance into Meditation), a Chan 禪 (translating Sanskrit *dhyāna*) treatise authored by the Chinese master Heshang Moheyan 和尚摩訶衍 (eighth century CE) – Ma-ha-yan according to the Tibetan spelling –, as we are told in IOL Tib J 468, 1a1: *mkhan po ma ha yan gl bsam gtan cig car 'jug pa'I sgo*.<sup>4</sup> The text begins in IOL Tib J 468, 1a1 and ends in IOL Tib J 709, 11a3. Moheyan was a partisan of the so-called 'immediate approach' (Tibetan *cig car 'jug pa*) to meditation and, according to the traditional account, he was defeated by Kamalaśīla, proponent of the 'gradual approach' (Tibetan *rim gyis 'jug pa*), in the formal debate king KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan wanted at bSam-yas, in order to decide which among the two methods should become the official one in Tibet.<sup>5</sup> *The gate of immediate entrance into meditation* deals with the following main topics:

- a. introduction to the immediate approach (IOL Tib J 468, 1a1-2b5?);
- b. the 'no method' (*thabs myed*) approach is the Mahāyāna way of meditation (?- IOL Tib J 709, 4a3);
- c. meditation of the non-Buddhists (4a3-b3)
- d. meditation of the Śrāvakas (4b4-?);
- e. the *pāramitās* and meditation (7a4-b5);
- f. no need for extensive studies (*man du thos pa*) (7b5-8b4);
- g. the immediate access into the 'meditation of the *tathāgata*' (*de bźIn gśegs pa'I bsam gtan cIg car 'jug pa*) (8b4-9b1);<sup>6</sup>

4 This text has recently been translated by van Schaik (2015, pp. 141-145).

5 This well-known traditional account presents some problematic issues, since among the Dunhuang manuscripts we find texts narrating completely different facts, as for example the one discussed in van Schaik (2015, pp. 113-117). See also Meinert (2004, pp. 58-80), (2006).

6 The 'meditation of the *tathāgata*' (Chinese *rulai chan* 如來禪) is the highest of the four kinds of meditation listed in the *Lañkāvatārasūtra*. A particular line of transmission of the *Lañkāvatārasūtra*, according to tradition, was brought to China by Bodhidharma

- h. the non-conceptual meditation (*mI rtog par sgoms sig*) of the Madhyamakās (9b1-11a3).

### 2.2.2 Text 2

The second work covers IOL Tib J 709, 11a4-16a1. Its title is (11a4): *bSam gtan gI skyon rnams bstan pa'* (Teaching on the Mistakes of Meditation). No author is mentioned. The work is divided into five sections, each dealing with some problems that could impede the correct performance of meditation:

- a. the five obstacles (*bgegs rnam pa lña*) (11a4-b2);
- b. the five obstructions (*sgrIb pa lña*) (11b2-4);
- c. the five distractions (*g.yeñ pa rnam pa lña*) (11b4-12b5);
- d. the six defects (*skyon rnam pa drug*) (13a1-14b4);
- e. the four defects of wrong views (*log par lta ba'I skyon bži*), the names of which are provided both in Tibetan and Chinese transliteration (14b4-16a1).

### 2.2.3 Text 3

The third text covers IOL Tib J 709, 16a2-25b4. No author is mentioned and the title occurs at the end (25b4): *TSHaṅs la [=lha] phan sems kyis 'jam dpal la žus rdzogs so'* (Questions to Mañjuśrī by the Charitable God of the Brahmā Realm).<sup>7</sup> The text is in the form of a conversation between

(fifth-sixth centuries CE) and consequently this text became one of the most authoritative *sūtra* sources (together with, and besides, the *prajñāpāramitā* literature) in Chinese Chan Buddhism (see McRae 1986, pp. 15-29 and Adamek 2007, pp. 158-171). In the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* the meditation of the *tathāgata* is defined as follows (Vaidya 1963, p. 41): *tāthāgatabhūmyākārapraveśaṃ pratyātmāryajñānalakṣaṇatrayasukhavihārācintyasattvakṛtyakaraṇatayā tāthāgataṃ dhyānam* (The entrance into the disposition of the stage of the *tathāgata* by effecting the activities of the sentient beings [towards] the inconceivable abode of bliss of the three characteristics of the noble knowledge [originated] by itself, is the meditation of the *tathāgata*). On the interpretation of the term *pratyātma* see Ray (2006, p. 136). The three characteristics of the 'noble knowledge' are explained in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* as (Vaidya 1963, p. 23): *nirābhāsakṣaṇaṃ sarvabuddhasvapraṇidhānādhiṣṭhānalakṣaṇaṃ pratyātmāryajñānagatilakṣaṇaṃ* (The characteristic [of being] without fallacious appearances, the characteristic of resting upon the self-resolutions [made] by all the Buddhas, the characteristic of going into the noble knowledge [originated] by itself).

<sup>7</sup> As far as this title is concerned, I assume that the *la* in *tshaṅs la phan sems* should be intended as an alternative spelling (occurring throughout all the text) for *lha*: *tshaṅs lha phan sems*. To my knowledge – and in support of this conjecture –, the expression *tshaṅs lha phan sems* is attested also in the title of a Mahāyāna *sūtra*, gathered in a bKa'-gyur collection from Batang, preserved in the Newark Museum (New Jersey). The contents of this bKa'-gyur have been examined by Skilling (2001). In the volume THa of the *sūtra* (mDo-bsde)

a god (or some gods) and Mañjuśrī, in which the former poses several questions to the latter. Mañjuśrī's replies focus both on doctrinal aspects and meditative practices. We can identify four main subjects;

- a. the god/s begin/s with a set of ten doubts under the topic *tathāgatabhūmi* (*yañ dag par gśegs pa'I sa'*)<sup>8</sup> (16a3-b5);<sup>9</sup>
- b. the second question introduces the topic of the means of the *tathāgata* (*yañ dag par gśegs pas thabs*) (19b1-3);<sup>10</sup>
- c. the third question concerns the root of birth and death (*skye śI'I rtsa ba*) (20a5);<sup>11</sup>
- d. in the following portion the effects of the practice of meditation, as explained so far by Mañjuśrī, are dealt with (21a5-23b2);<sup>12</sup>

section, the seventeenth text, covering folios 115a-116b, bears indeed the title *TSHAñs lha phan sems kyi zus pa zes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo'* (Skilling 2001, p. 81). In September 2015 I had the opportunity to discuss this matter with Dan Martin, who pointed out that: «if we read *tshañs lha*, I'd suggest it might be a shortened version for 'gods of the pure abode' (*gnas gtsañ ma'i lha, śuddhāvāsakāyikadeva*)».

8 It is worth of note here the use of *yañ dag par gśegs pa*. Griffiths (1994, pp. 209-210, note 4) points out that this is an old Tibetan expression for *tathāgata*, apparently derived from the Chinese *rulai* 如來 (see Stein, 2010, pp. 23-24), which was progressively substituted by *de bzin gśegs pa*, an expression coined on the Sanskrit term, that - along with *yañ dag par gśegs pa* - occurs in this very text. However, it is to be pinpointed here that *rulai* 如來 clearly interprets *tathāgata* as *tathā-agata* ('thus come'; *lai* 來 meaning 'come'), whereas *gśegs pa* means 'gone, departed', so that both the Tibetan expressions *yañ dag par gśegs pa* and *de bzin gśegs pa* render *tathāgata* as *tathā-gata*.

9 IOL Tib J 709, 16a4-b5: *bar bar nI dri ma'I tshosg [=chos] gtsañ mar bśad | | bar bar nI gtsañ ma'I chos drI mar bśad | | [16b1] bar bar nI sañs rgyas 'jig rten du 'byuñ ño zes bśad | | bar bar nI myI 'byuñ ño zes bśad | | bar bar nI sañ [=sañs] rgyas kyIs chos bśad do | | bar bar nI sañs rgyas kyis chos ma bśad do | | bar bar nI mye [=mya] ñan las 'das pa yod par bśad | | bar bar nI mye [=mya] ñan las 'das ma myed par bśad | | bar bar nI sems can yod ces bśad | | bar bar ni sems can myed ces bśad na | | 'dI'i don jI ltar 'tshal bar bgyi' | |* (Sometimes the impure *dharmas* are explained as pure; sometimes the pure *dharmas* are explained as impure; sometimes it is explained: 'the Buddha appeared in the world'; sometimes it is explained: 'he did not appear [in the world]'; sometimes the *dharma* is explained by the Buddha; sometimes the *dharma* is not explained by the Buddha; sometimes the *nirvāṇa* is explained as existent; sometimes the *nirvāṇa* is explained as non-existent; sometimes it is explained: 'sentient beings do exist'; sometimes it is explained: 'sentient beings do not exist'. Examine what is it the meaning of these [questions]). Mañjuśrī's explanations follows in 16b5-19b1.

10 IOL Tib J 709, 19b2-3: *pha rol tu phyin pa drug ñes pa'I don lags sam ma lags | |* (Is there or not an ultimate meaning of the six *pāramitās*?). Mañjuśrī's reply follows in 19b3-20a4.

11 IOL Tib J 709, 20a5: '*dod chags ze sdañ gtI mug gI rañ bzin don du jI ltar blta'* | | (Let us consider what, in reality, the nature of attachment, aversion and delusion is). Mañjuśrī's explanation follows in 16b5-19b1.

12 IOL Tib J 709, 21a5-b1: *ji lta bur spyad na | dge sloñ gis de bzin gśegs [21b1] pa'I bstan pa 'phel rgyas par byas te myi žig par nus | | mñam sñoms pa dañ ma gal na | | chos ñId kyi ño bo ñId ma žig pa ste | | des bstan pa 'phel žIn rgyas par byas pa yin no | |* (If he practices in this way, the *bhikṣu*, by progressing in the *tathāgata*'s teaching, is capable of [being] imperishable; if he is equanimous and non-compulsive, the nature of the *dharmatā* does

- e. at this point it is Mañjuśrī that addresses himself directly to the Buddha, asking about the need to not being attached to awakening.<sup>13</sup>

Since fol. 24 is lost, we cannot know whether or not in the missing part there originally were some other topic discussed, though at a first sight it seems that in fol. 25 the discussion continues on the same subject interrupted in fol. 23, namely, the meditative practice leading to awakening (*byañ chub*).

#### 2.2.4 Text 4

The fourth text with all probability begins in the missing fol. 26 and ends in IOL Tib J 709, 33b1. For this reason we do not know if its title and/or the name of its author were mentioned in the *incipit*. Also in this case, as for the preceding one, the text is in form of a dialogue, between a querier (*'dri ba*) and a teacher (*ston pa*). The subject matters discussed here are advanced aspects of meditation, concerning the development of the *tathāgatagarbha* and of the comprehension of the *dharmatā*, as it can be argued by taking into consideration the querier's questions. Besides fol. 26, about which we can say nothing, the remaining questions deal with the following topics:

- a. the way to calm down conceptual constructions (*rtog pa*) in order to reach the elimination of sorrow (27b1-3);<sup>14</sup>
- b. the obstructions to the realization of the *tathāgatagarbha* (28a4-b1);<sup>15</sup>

not perish [in him] and he develops and expands the teaching). The discussion proceeds by considering other aspects and stages of the meditative training.

**13** IOL Tib J 709, 23b3: *de'i tshe chos kyi rgyal bu 'jams dpal kyis sañs rgyas la gsol pa' | |*. The discussion starts as follows (IOL Tib J 709, 23b3-4): *myI la la žig byañ chub don du gñer ba'I phyir | | smon lam 'debs pa nI rab du nor pa lags te | | yon po la spyod pa lags[ s]o | |* (Since certain men actually aspire to the awakening, [there are those] who cultivate the wish [for awakening], [but] being [such a wish] a complete error, there is unright practice).

**14** IOL Tib J 709, 27b1-3: *snod dan bcud kyi 'jIg rten nI | | thabs de ltar gnas pa' lags na' | | sems can rnams 'khrul pa'I dbañ gIs rtog pas 'khor na | | sañs rgyas kyi chos ji lta bu žig thugs su chud nas | | mye [=mya] ñan las 'das te | | sañs rgyas kyI che ba'I yon dan ldan | |* (When the container world and the inhabitants are established in such a method, if conceptual constructions [still] spin by means of the power of deception of the sentient beings, after having kept in mind what kind of Buddha's *dharma* does one possess the transcendence of sorrow and the great virtue of the Buddha?). The answer of the teacher follows in 27b4-28a3.

**15** IOL Tib J 709, 28a4-b1: *rtog pas ni khams gsum du 'khor | | myI rtog pas mye [=mya] ñan 'da' na | | sems can thams cad la yañ | | de bžin [28b1] gšegs pa'I sñiñ po rnam par dag pa mchIs pa lta na | | cI žig gis bsgrIbs te ma mthoñ | |* (If by means of conceptual constructions [there is not awakening, but] circulation in the three realms [of rebirth, whereas] by means of non-conceptuality there is passing into *nirvāṇa*, if there is the utterly pure *tathāgatagarbha* also

- c. the eternal marks of the *tathāgatagarbha* (29a4-b1);<sup>16</sup>
- d. the self emergence and inexpressibility of the *tathāgatagarbha* (29b4-30a2);<sup>17</sup>
- e. the gradual approach of the ten *pāramitās* and the ten *bhūmis* is delusional (30b5-31a2);<sup>18</sup>
- f. the explanation of the teaching concerning the attainment of the awakening by practicing sinful deeds (31b3-4);<sup>19</sup>
- g. the development of the comprehension of the *dharmatā* (32a2-3).<sup>20</sup>

## 2.2.5 Text 5

The fifth one is our text, covering IOL Tib J 709, 34a1-36a3, on which see section 3 below.

in all the sentient beings [and not only in the liberated ones, being] obstructed by means of what, does one not perceive [thus?]. The teacher's reply follows in 28b2-29a3.

**16** IOL Tib J 709, 29a4-b1: *de bZIn gSégs pa'I sñiñ po mtshan dan dpe' byad du ldan ba* | | *ye nas bdag la rdzogs* [29b1] *par mchIs na* | | *de bstan cIn luñ dbog par gsol* | | (The *tathāgatagarbha* possesses major and minor marks; if [these marks] exist completely in [the *tathāgatagarbha*] itself since ever, I ask about the instruction and the teaching of this). The teacher's reply follows in 29b1-3.

**17** IOL Tib J 709, 29b4-30a2: *de ltar khams sum 'khrul pas mthoñ ste* | | *dmyigs su myed pa lags na* | | *de bZIn gSégs pa'I sñiñ po* | | [30a1] *so so rañ gis rig pa ste bśad du ma mchis na'* | | *de bZin gSégs pas chos kyI sgo mo brgyad khrl bZl stoñ gsuñs pa jI'i slad du bka' stsal* | | (When one perceives in this way the deception of the three realms and there is non-apprehension, if the *tathāgatagarbha* is known by itself and therefore there is no explanation [by means of words, this state] is said [to be] the *tathāgata's* eighty-four thousand gates of *dharmā*: I ask which is the reason [of this]). The answer of the teacher follows in 30a2-b5. The expression *so so rañ gis rig pa* generally translates the Sanskrit *pratyātmavedanīya*.

**18** IOL Tib J 709, 30b5-31a2: *'o na bcom ldan 'das kyis* | | [31a1] *byañ cub sems dpa' rnam la* | | *theg pa chen po'i chos* | | *pha rol du phyin pa bcu dan* | | *sa bcu'I rim pa bka' stsal pa yan* | | *'khrul pa lags sam* | | (In that case, I ask also [about] the *dharmā* of the Mahāyāna [pro-pounded] by the Buddha and the *bodhisattvas*, the gradual [approach] of the ten *pāramitās* and of the ten *bhūmis*: are they delusional?). The teacher's reply follows in 31a2-b2.

**19** IOL Tib J 709, 31b3-4: *bcom ldan 'das kyis gsuñs pa'I mdo dag las* | | *mtshams myed pa lña spyad na* | | *byañ cub du mñon bar 'tshañ rgya 'o śes gsuñs pa de don ji lta bu* | | (In the *sūtras* taught by the Buddha it is said: indulging in the five inexpiable transgressions manifests the enlightenment of the *bodhi*. What is the meaning of that?). The teacher's answer covers fols. 31b4-32a2. The teaching concerning the attainment of the awakening by committing serious transgressions, such as murder and so on, occurs for instance in the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* § 7.4: *pañcānantaryapṛāptaḥ śakto bodhicittam utpādayitum* (The one who is capable of accomplishing the five inexpiable transgressions can produce the mind of awakening).

**20** IOL Tib J 709, 32a2-3: *chos ñId kyañ spar bar bya na'* | | *chos ma yin pa lta ci smos śes ji lta bu* | | (If also the *dharmatā* is to be enhanced, how could one say that there is no *dharmā*? How is it?). The teacher's reply begins in 32a3 and continues till the end of the text.

## 2.2.6 Text 6

The sixth writing covers IOL Tib J 709, 36b1-41b1. It neither has a title, nor the author is mentioned. The text contains several instructions related to *śamatha* (*ží gnas*) and *vipaśyana* (*lhag mthon*) that can be summarized as follows:

- a. examples of the beginner practitioner's quivering of the mind (36b1-4);
- b. necessity to find a *kalyāṇamitra* (*bśes gñen*) (36b4-37a2);
- c. discussion of the methods for entering the 'meditation of the *tathāgata*' (*de bzin gśegs pas tIn ñe 'dzin*) (37a2-4);
- d. the cause (*rgyu*), the fruit (*'bral bu*), the actions (*las*), the obstacles (*bgegs*), the obstructions (*sgrib*), the ways (*lam*), the distractions (*sems kyl g.yeñ ba*) of/to *śamatha* and *vipaśyana* (37a4-39a4);<sup>21</sup>
- e. discussion of *śamatha* and *vipaśyana* in relation to the ten *bhūmis* (39a4-40b5);
- f. discussion on whether *śamatha* and *vipaśyana* are to be considered as one (*gcIg*) practice or as two separated (*tha dad pa*) practices (40b5-41b1).

## 2.2.7 Text 7

The seventh text covers IOL Tib J 709, 41b2-42a5 and is a very brief treatise on the non-duality (*gñIs su myed pa*) of method/means (*thabs*) and wisdom (*śes rab*). The opening sentence (*THabs dañ śes rab du ldan ba nI*) is probably the title. I provide the full translation here:<sup>22</sup>

The conjunction of method (*upāya*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).

Since [these] conceptions (*saṃjñā*) are unconceivable (*acintya*), [they are] inseparable: method and wisdom are related [to each other]. The method is to practice the *prajñāpāramitā* and so on, for the benefit of sentient beings. Not abiding in that very [practice] is wisdom. The

21 These subjects are respectively dealt with as follows: *rgyu* (37a4-5), *'bras bu* (37a5-b2), *las* (37b2-3), *bgegs* (37b3-38a1), *sgrib pa* (38a1-3), *lam* (38a4-b1), *sems kyl g.yeñ ba* (38b1-39a4).

22 IOL Tib J 709, 41b2-42a5: *thabs dañ śes rab du ldan ba nI || 'du śes bsam du myed pa la dbyer myed pa nI || thabs dañ śes rab zuñ du 'brel pa 'o || pha rol du phyin pa las stsogs pa | sems can gI don du spyod pa nI thabs so || pha rol du phyin pa las stsogs pa | sems can gI don du spyod pa nI thabs so || [42a1] de ñId la myi gnas pa ni śes rab bo || sems can yod par lta ba nI thabs so || sems can myi dmyigs pa nI śes rab bo || sems can yod pa dañ med par nyI lta ba nI || thabs dañ śes rab du ldan žiñ 'brel pa 'o || rnam par dag pa'I dge ba' spyod pa nI thabs so || de'I 'bras bu la myi lta žiñ lan myi re ba nI śes rab ro || chos ñId kyis spyod pa dañ | myI spyod pa la || gñIs su myed par śes na' || thabs dañ śes rab zuñ du 'brel pa 'o ||.*



viewpoint of the existence of the sentient beings is the method. Non-apprehending the sentient beings [as existent] is wisdom. The viewpoint of both existence and non-existence of the sentient beings is [therefore] the connective relation of method and wisdom. To practice the perfectly pure virtue is the method. Not being concerned with the fruit of that [practice] and not hoping for [karmic] retribution is wisdom. When you know the non-duality of practicing and non-practicing by means of the *dharmatā*, [then] method and wisdom are related [to each other].

### 2.2.8 Text 8

Also the eighth text is very short, covering only IOL Tib J 709, 42b1-5. This is an explanation (*bśad pa*) containing the teachings of the master 'Gal-na-ya, as we are told in 42b1: *mkhan po 'gal na yas bsa[m] g{ta}n gl sñiñ po bśad pa'* (*Explanation of the essence of meditation by the teacher 'Gal-na-ya*).<sup>23</sup> The subject matter here is the 'immediate approach' to the meditation of the Madhyamaka (*dbu ma la cig car 'jug pa*). The complete translation of this short treatise is provided by van Schaik (2012, p. 7), to whom we owe also the identification of 'Gal-na-ya with the Indian master Haklenayaśas, who according to tradition would have been the twenty-third patriarch of Chan Buddhism and of whom we know almost nothing (see van Schaik 2012, p. 7, note 9). What is worth noting in this text, underscores van Schaik, is the presence of the Tibetan term *tshor*, which in the Chan context translates the Chinese *jue* 覺, meaning 'awareness'. This term occurs also in our text 1 – authored by Moheyan – and, as van Schaik remarks, its use with the meaning 'awareness' is typical of Chan, since: «*tshor ba* frequently appears in Tibetan Buddhist literature as a translation of a completely different term, *vedanā*» (2012, p. 8).<sup>24</sup>

23 As far as the Tibetan wording is concerned, I have corrected the phoneme *bas* in *bsam* (the square brackets indicate the addition of the *ma*); moreover, in the manuscript, the letter *ta* of the phoneme *gtan* is underwritten (to indicate this, I have used braces).

24 Dan Lusthaus, in a communication dated September 24th, 2015, explains: «*jue* 覺 is one of the Chinese terms used to translate *bodhi* when the transliteration *puti* 菩提 is not used. Its Chinese meaning is 'awaken, awakening, awakened', but due to Buddhist usage and the implications of *bodhi/buddhi*, it came to mean 'awareness' in the sense of knowing something. 'Awareness' is more typically rendered in Buddhist Chinese as *zhi* 知 or the related 智 (also pronounced *zhi*). The latter *zhi* is also used for *prajñā* and *jñāna*, and occasionally for *bodhi* as well. The first *zhi* 知 is sometimes used for *prajānāti*, *jñāna*; *mkhyen pa*, *rab tu śes pa*, etc.»

## 2.2.9 Text 9

The ninth text begins in IOL Tib J 709, 43a1 and ends in IOL Tib J 667, a5. We find its title in IOL Tib J 709, 43a1: *bSam gtan gl yI ge* (Meditation Document). Interestingly enough, the sentence we find immediately after the title sheds light on the epoch and the occasion of the compilation of this document: *lha brtsan po khri sron lde brtsan gl mgur gi phyag rgya 'og nas 'byun ba' ||* (The neck-seal of the divine king KHri-sron-lde-brtsan appears below).<sup>25</sup> KHri-sron-lde-brtsan reigned on Tibet during the second half of the eighth century CE and, accordingly, this text might have seen the light in the same period. Although there is no agreement among scholars on whether also the section beginning in IOL Tib J 709, 45a2 and ending in IOL Tib J 667, a5 should be taken as a part of the same text or not,<sup>26</sup> the recent translation provided by Sam van Schaik (2015, pp. 159-161) shows undoubtedly that this is a single text. Considered the homogeneity and consistency of the discussion in IOL Tib J 709, 43a1-45a1, and considered also that in 45a2 a completely different topic is introduced, the text seems to be divided into two main parts. In its first section, hence, the *Meditation Document* deals mainly with the meditation of the *tathāgata* (*de bZIn gSégs pa'I bSam gtan*) and takes into consideration:

- a. the approaches (*sgo mo*) (43a2);
- b. the deep states (*mtha'*) (43a5);
- c. its excellence (*dge*) (43b3);
- d. the precepts/instructions (*luñ*) (43b4);
- e. and the full immersion into it (*rjes su 'jug pa*) (44b4).

Mention is made also of *sems tsam*, *cittamātra* in Sanskrit (44b1), and, besides that, the occurrence here of the expression *rnal 'byor chen po / rnal 'byor chen po ba*, corresponding to Sanskrit *mahāyoga/mahāyogin*, is particularly worth of note (see IOL Tib J 709, 43a1-2, 43b4,5). The presence of such a term could suggest that this text is melting elements from Chan and from the tantric rDzogs-chen tradition, in which *mahāyoga* refers to a particular meditative practice, distinct from *anuyoga* and *atiyoga*. I am however of the opinion that this is not the case and that, instead, we are here in presence of a non-tantric treatise on meditation. The principal point I can offer to corroborate this perspective is the explicit reference to the *Lañkāvatārasūtra* in 43a3 (*'PHags pa lañ kar gSégs pa'I luñ*), together with the occurrence of the term *sems tsam* in 44b1, which points at the

25 On *mgur gi phyag rgya* see Stein (1983, p. 153, note 13). The expression somehow indicates that the text was compiled with the approval of KHri-sron-lde-brtsan.

26 According to Dalton, van Schaik (2006, p. 306) this is one single text. On the contrary, de la Vallée Poussin (1962, entry 709, section 7) accepts the text beginning in IOL Tib J 709, 45a2 as a different work. Interestingly enough, later on van Schaik (2008, p. 28, note 119) recognized the possibility that de la Vallée Poussin's opinion could be plausible.

'mind-only' theory. This fact leads us to assume that the *Meditation Document* is, at least partially, based on, or inspired by, the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* teachings (that were so central in the constitution of the Chinese Chan). In the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* we meet with few occurrences of *mahāyoga/mahāyogin*, which in this context convey however the simple meaning of 'great practice/practitioner of *yoga*', without any particular tantric nuance.<sup>27</sup> These observations, I suggest, concur to support the hypothesis that also in the *Meditation Document* the terms *mahāyoga/mahāyogin* may have been employed having in mind the semantic framework they have in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. The second section of the *Meditation Document* begins in IOL Tib J 709, 45a2 and ends in IOL Tib J 667, a5. It opens with the following question: *dam tshIg ji ltar blañ ze na* || (How will one receive the commitments?). The commitments (*dam tshIg*), *samaya* in Sanskrit, are a practice strongly related to the tantric Vajrayāna Buddhism, so apparently in this section there could be a commingling of teachings on meditation (maybe Chan) and tantric influence. However, to substantiate such a perspective, we have no stronger evidence than the simple presence of the word *dam tshIg*, which is in itself not entirely decisive. Indeed, the answer to the opening question seems to consist in two points: a. one should rely upon the Buddha (45a2-3);<sup>28</sup> b. and one should not investigate the ordinary misconceptions (45a4),<sup>29</sup> which are both quite common

27 At this same conclusion arrived also van Schaik (2015, pp. 62-63, 152-153), who suggests that the *mahāyoga* here should be intended as a teaching on *tathāgata* meditation. Seven occurrences of *mahāyoga/mahāyogin* can be detected in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. In most cases we find the compound *mahāyogayogin*, 'the great *yogin*/practitioner of *yoga*'. The 'great *yogin*/practitioner', tells us the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, is endowed with four characteristics (Vaidya 1963, p. 34): *caturbhir mahāmate dharmaiḥ samanvāgatā bodhisattvā mahāyogayogino bhavanti | katamais̄ caturbhiḥ yad uta svacittadr̥syavibhāvanatayā ca utpādasthitibhaṅgadṛṣṭivivarjanatayā ca bāhyabhāvābhāvopalaḥṣaṇatayā ca svapratyātmārya-jñānādhiḡamābhilakṣaṇatayā ca* | (O Mahāmati, provided with four *dharma*s the *bodhisattvas* become great *yogins* of *yoga*. Which four? In this way: [provided] with the discrimination of what is experienced by one's own mind, with the abandonment of the view of origination, permanence and destruction, with the observation of the non-existence of the external events, with the aim to accomplishing the noble knowledge [originated] by itself).

28 IOL Tib J 709, 45a2: *sn̄on sañs rgyas mañ po la | mchod bkur pa dañ* || *bsam ba yoñs su dag pa'I rñams kyis* || *slob dpon sañs rgyas la rten gyi* || *gžan la myi brten par bya 'o* || (Those who have firstly provided offerings to the many Buddhas and have immaculate intention [should] rely upon the *ācārya*-Buddha [or: the *ācārya* and the Buddha ?], they should not rely upon others). As underlined by van Schaik (2008, p. 28): «In the answer we may detect a similarity to the first root vow of the Mahāyoga *samaya*, which enjoins the veneration of the guru». On the *samaya* vow in *mahāyoga* see van Schaik (2010).

29 IOL Tib J 709, 45a4: *chos myi skye myi 'gog pa'I don chud par blo bya 'I* || *'khrul las | sgro btags pa'I tha sñad sna tshogs myi bslab bo* || (You should make the mind penetrate the meaning of the non-arising and non-perishing of the *dharma*, and not learn the various conventional fabrications, [which originate] out of deception). Concerning this passage, van Schaik (2008, p. 28) argues that it «enjoins the trainee to avoid any conventional practices

arguments in almost all the Buddhist traditions and are not peculiar to Vajrayāna. Moreover, it is worth of note that the term *samaya* occasionally occurs also in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* and in the *prajñāpāramitā* texts (which played a fundamental role in Chan Buddhism).<sup>30</sup> However, in the first case the term seems to be used mainly with the meaning of ' [right] time, occasion' or, more rarely, of 'clear understanding' (as an abbreviated form of *abhisamaya*), whereas in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature it occurs in the expression *samayapratipanna*, conveying the sense of *sāmīcī*, 'agreement', thus corresponding to the Tibetan term *mthun pa* (the translation of *samayapratipanna*, which is a *bahuvrīhi* compound, could then be something like: 'one who is arrived at the agreement [with the *dharmā*]').<sup>31</sup> The matter therefore remains unclear and further studies are needed in order to clarify the meaning and the function according to which *dam tshig* is used in this text.<sup>32</sup>

based on intellectual analysis, which may be loosely linked to the theme of practice in the second of the Mahāyāna root *samaya*».

**30** On the influence of the *prajñāpāramitā* scriptures on Chinese Chan see, among others, Adamek (2007, pp. 166-167, 200-201).

**31** As far as this topic is concerned, it is worth noting that in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* the relevant passages involving *samaya* are verse 6.16 (=10.827): *sthitayaḥ prāptidharmās ca buddhānāṃ jñānasamṣpadah | bhikṣutvaṃ samayaprāptir dṛṣṭā vai kṣaṇikā katham ||* (Abiding are the *dharmas*-obtaining and [what is] furnished with the knowledge of the Buddhas; obtaining in the right moment the condition of a *bhikṣu* is certainly manifested, how could [it] be momentary?); and 10.320cd: *ekānupūrvasamayaṃ siddhāntam ekam eva ca ||* (The clear understanding is either immediate or gradual, [but] the final purpose is only one). On the *prāptidharmas* see, for instance, Vasubandhu's (fourth century CE) *Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa*, in Anaker (1998, p. 70). Moreover, *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Kimura 1986-2009, 5, p. 1): *sa taṃ dharmam śrutvā tasya dharmasyārtham ājanāti dharmānudharmapratipanno viharati samayapratipanno'nudharmacārī |* (He, having heard this *dharma*, understands the meaning of the *dharma*, abides [as one who is] arrived at the true method of the *dharma*, [who is] arrived at the agreement [with the *dharma*], a practitioner of the true method). This is the only occurrence of the compound *samayapratipanna* I was able to identify in the Sanskrit versions of the *prajñāpāramitā* texts at my disposal. The following is the corresponding Tibetan version (Lhasa bKa'-gyur, Ņi-khri, Ga, 21b3-4): *des chos de thos nas | chos de'i don śes par bya'o źes chos dañ | gñer ba'i chos la źugs śiñ gnas pa dañ | mthun par źugs te gñer ba'i thos la spyod pa mthoñ na |*. Compare this sentence with a similar one occurring in the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Conze 1962-1974, 1, p. 3): *sa taṃ dharmam śrutvā tasya dharmasya artham ājñāsyāmi iti iti dharmānudharmapratipanno viharati sāmīcīpratipanno'nudharmacārī*. On *dharmānudharma* see Edgerton (1998, p. 27).

**32** Interestingly enough, as noticed by Dalton, van Schaik (2006, p. 306), the passage corresponding to IOL Tib J 709, 38b2-5, IOL Tib J 667, a1-4, occurs also in IOL Tib J 710, 5a1-b4. In this latter manuscript mention is made of *rnal 'byor chen po pa*, that is, *mahāyogin* (Dalton, van Schaik 2006, p. 307). On the basis of our discussion of text 9, could it perhaps be the case that also in IOL Tib J 710 the *mahāyogin* is to be assumed with the same sense it has in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*?

### 2.3 IOL Tib J 709: the Date

In order to shed light on the possible date of our manuscript, let us begin by the following preliminary consideration. All the Dunhuang manuscripts have been written between the Tibetan conquest of Dunhuang, in the second half of the eighth century CE,<sup>33</sup> and the moment the caves were walled up, at the beginning of the eleventh century. Such a span of three centuries can be in its turn divided into two main periods: the so-called imperial (from mid-eighth to mid-ninth century) and the post-imperial (after mid-ninth century).

As regards the date of IOL Tib J 709, moreover, two different approaches must be undertaken: a. on the one hand, the one concerning the dates of the single texts collected in the manuscript, b. on the other hand, the one concerning the date of the compilation of the manuscript itself.

- a. At least two of the texts gathered in IOL Tib J 709 can receive a proper collocation in time. These are, as we have seen, the work of Heshang Moheyan (text 1) and the text in which «the neck-seal of the divine king KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan» is said to appear (text 9). These two writings were originally compiled in the second half of the eighth century CE, since both Moheyan and KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan flourished in that epoch. We cannot be sure whether also the other texts saw the light in the same period or not, however their inclusion in a manuscript that contains works of the eighth century, and the fact that they mainly deal with topics related to meditation (some of them clearly of Chan origins), without any definitive and certain clue pointing at more sophisticated doctrinal developments, could testify that, they too, belong to an early stage of Tibetan history. This dating could perhaps be confirmed also for the *Questions to Mañjuśrī by the Charitable God of the Brahmā Realm* (text 3), where it occurs the expression *yañ dag par gśeḡs pa*, the ancient Tibetan rendering for *tathāgata*, which was in later times superseded by *de bzin gśeḡs pa*.
- b. In order to date the manuscript, on the other hand, we shall have recourse to a palaeographic approach. The calligraphic style mainly used in IOL Tib J 709 is a headed one (*dbu can*) typical of the Buddhist manuscripts. As remarked by van Schaik, the manuscripts written in this calligraphy «are among the most difficult to date on stylistic grounds» (2014, p. 320). Our IOL Tib J 709 contains, however, the important characteristic of the post-imperial headed styles, namely, the so-called 'wave shape': the descending strokes

33 The date for the Tibetan conquest of Dunhuang traditionally accepted is 786/787 CE. However, on the basis of more recent research, Horlemann (2002) argued that the conquest should have taken place between 755 and 777 CE.

of letters such as *ga*, *na*, *za* and the *śad* are written with a sort of wave towards the right (see van Schaik 2013, pp. 122-123). Also the few lines written in a headless (*dbu med*)<sup>34</sup> style that we meet with, confirm that the epoch of compilation of IOL Tib J 709 is the post-imperial period (see van Schaik 2014, pp. 321-323). Consequently, the manuscript, though it contains texts dating from the second half of the eighth century CE, may have been written down between the mid-ninth and the beginning of the eleventh century, and perhaps it saw the light in the tenth century (see van Schaik 2014, pp. 327-28).

### 3 The Text *Explanation by the ācārya Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ*

#### 3.1 Preliminary Remarks

##### 3.1.1 The Author and His Possible *floruit*

The *Explanation*, as said above, is the fifth text of the collection of writings on meditation IOL Tib J 709, of which it covers the fols. 34a1-36a3 (according to the Tibetan numeration). It contains the teachings of a master (*slob dpon*), whom we know only by name: Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ. Though at present we know nothing more than his name, in what follows I will try to put forward some reflections concerning Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ's origins and the period he flourished. Of course, only further scriptural findings will confirm (or refute) these considerations that, therefore, have for the moment the nature of simple conjectures.

Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ probably was of Tibetan or, less probably, of Indian origins. In the latter case, his original Sanskrit name could have been either \*Bodhināgendra, \*Bodhināgeśvara or also \*Bodhināgeśa, and the like. At first glance, however, such renderings sound quite odd, since Indian compounded names containing the word *nāga* generally have it as first part of the compound, as we can notice from, for instance, the (partially identical) name of Nāgabodhi. Nāgārjuna, Nāgasena, Nāgadatta and so on follow the same rule. A more 'natural' form of our author's possible Sanskrit name would then be \*Nāgēndrabodhi, or \*Nāgeśvarabodhi and the like. On the basis of this premise, hence, we should conjecture that in the present case it took place an inversion of the name elements in the Tibetan translation of the same, which is of course not impossible to have happened but seems at least quite unusual. To my knowledge such an inversion never occurs

<sup>34</sup> In IOL Tib J 709 the headless calligraphy is used in: a. fol. 19b2, underwritten insertion of *yañ dag pa'i*; b. fol. 44, the entire line 5 is in headless style: *cl'i phyr ze na || nañ du thub pa la 'jug du 'dra ba las || theg pa gžan gyI bsam gtan tsam gyis | sems can gyI don chen po myI nus kyis | |*.

for other similar Sanskrit names. Indeed, and by way of example, let us consider for instance Nāgabodhi, whose Tibetan equivalent is kLu'i-byañ-chub, which is never rendered as Byañ-chub-klu. The same with Nāgārjuna, always translated as kLu-grub in Tibetan and never as Grub-klu, and so on. This observation, though not decisive in itself, raises in any case the suspect that our author may not have been Indian.

It is also quite improbable for Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ to be the Tibetan rendering of a Chinese name, if we assume that Tibetan Dunhuang sources generally tend to transcribe, rather than to translate, the names of Chinese masters (as in the case of Tibetan Ma-ha-yan < Chinese Moheyan). Moreover, a Chinese equivalent of Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ would sound, as it were, quaint for a Chinese, if we conjecture a possible original Jue Longwang 覺龍王 or Puti Longwang 菩提龍王. Besides the fact that Longwang 龍王 or also Dalongwang 大龍王 seem to have more the shape of honorific titles than of personal names – consequently, in this case the personal name would be 覺/菩提-, it remains that the entire appellation appears to be more suitable for a divinity or spiritual entity, than for a human being or a teacher.<sup>35</sup> This observation too, though not entirely decisive, as the previous one, leads us to doubt also of a possible Chinese origin of Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ.

To these considerations, furthermore, we should add that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ has the form of a typical Tibetan 'religious' name, that is, a name given in consequence of religious ordination, and such an assumption can go in support of the hypothesis of his Tibetan origins. Yet, the presence of the klu-dbañ element, which is quite uncommon for Tibetan names, complicates a bit the matter. However, it is here worth noting that it occurs in the name of kLu'i-dbañ-po from 'KHon, who is listed – even if not unanimously – by several sources among the 'seven men to be tested' (*sad mi mi bdun*), that is, the first seven Tibetan Buddhist monks, ordained in the Sarvāstivāda *vinaya* by Śāntarakṣita during the reign of king KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan, in the second half of the eighth century CE. What is relevant to pinpoint, here, is the fact that by certain Indian and Tibetan traditions we are told that the preceptor, during the ordination, used to give part of his own name to the ordinands. This seems to have happened also in the case of Śāntarakṣita and kLu'i-dbañ-po, since the latter was ordained as kLu'i-dbañ-po-sruñ-ba, sruñ-ba being the Tibetan for rakṣita. On the basis of such considerations, there is hence a weak (and unconfirmed) possibility

35 I am grateful to Dan Lusthaus for having clarified to me several aspects concerning the possible Chinese name of Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ. For the sake of completeness, it is worth mentioning here an excerpt from a communication dated September 24th, 2015, where he writes: «no such name appears anywhere in the Chinese canon or Dunhuang Chinese sources available to me. [...] If one is looking for a Chan allusion in the name, perhaps it is attempting to connote a connection to Bodhidharma, replacing -dharma with 'Naga king', possibly under the impression that a Bodhi-X brought Chan to China and so a different Bodhi-X would be affiliated with that teaching».

that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ could be the name of one of kLu'i-dbañ-po-sruñ-ba's ordinands.<sup>36</sup> If this is admitted, he should have flourished straddling the eighth and the ninth centuries, which is in itself a date not so implausible, considered the assumptions put forward above, on account of the date of the manuscript.

### 3.1.2 The Title

As far as the text is concerned, its first sentence (*slob dpon byañ cub klu dbañ gis bśad pa'*) may be taken as a title. Its structure reminds us, indeed, of the *incipit* of another work contained in IOL Tib J 709, namely, text 8 (*mkhan po 'gal na yas bsa[m] g{ta}n gl sñiñ po bśad pa'*), which is, as we have seen, an explanation or exposition of some Haklenayaśas' teachings. Unlike the text attributed to Haklenayaśas, which is all in prose, however, our *Explanation* seems to mix up parts in verses and parts in prose. It may be also observed that it is impossible to know with certainty whether these two works have been written directly by the two teachers, of whom they contain the respective instructions, or by some other person, such as a pupil or the like.

### 3.1.3 The Contents

Regarding the teachings collected in the *Explanation*, the discussion is organized as follows:

1. 34a1: introduction;
2. 34a1-2: definition of the true speech (*satyavacana*) of a *bodhisattva*;
3. 34a3-4: reference to the practice of equality (*samatā*) and satisfaction (*āsvāda*);
4. 34a4: reference to the practice of keeping under control both senses and breath;
5. 34a4-5: reference to the meditation that leads to the state without support for attention;
6. 34a5-b2: definition of the *bodhisattva*'s mind;

<sup>36</sup> I had the occasion to discuss this topic with Dan Martin, to whom I owe the hypothesis – which remains of course nothing more than a hypothesis, until some more decisive proof comes to substantiate it – of the bond between Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ and kLu'i-dbañ-po-sruñ-ba, and who provided me also with some interesting bibliographic material. As far as the inclusion of kLu'i-dbañ-po-sruñ-ba among the 'seven men to be tested' (*sad mi mi bdun*) is concerned, it is to be remarked that there are still problems on the matter, since some sources do not record his name in the list. On this particular subject I refer here the reader to van der Kuijp (2013). On the habit of conferring part of the ordinator's name to the ordinand(s), see van der Kuijp (2013, pp. 185-189), Martin (2013, p. 241, note 5).



7. 34b2-3: definition of inexpressibility;
8. 34b3-4: definition of the mindfulness of the *dharmatā*;
9. 34b4: definition of what is inexpressible;
10. 34b5-28a1: description of the practice that leads to the non-forgetfulness of mindfulness;
11. 35a1-2: definition of skillfulness in means concerning wisdom;
12. 35a2: reference to the practice that leads to equality;
13. 35a2-4: description of the method for obtaining the pure sight on reality;
14. 35a4-5: instructions for attaining wisdom through meditation;
15. 35a5-b1: reference to a passage taken from a *sūtra* (this could be the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*);
16. 35b1-3: reference to an instruction on the noble self-knowing knowledge (*svapratyātmāryajñāna*), derived from the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*;
17. 35b3-5: definition of what distracts from meditation and mental concentration;
18. 35b5-36a1: identification of the preceding distractions with what is not *prajñāpāramitā*;
19. 36a1-3: definition of the four perfect deportments (*īryāpatha*) in apophatic terms, as the state of suppression of all mental fabrications; end.

### 3.1.4 The Mahāyāna Background

From this sketch it emerges that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ outlined his perspective under a strong influence of the *prajñāpāramitā* viewpoint. The analysis of the *Explanation* reveals also its indebtedness to the *Lañkāvatārasūtra* (and its Yogācāra related developments). This latter text, as said above, is a central work for the Chinese Chan tradition, traces of which, as we will see in a while, can possibly be found also in the *Explanation*. This leads us to suggest that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ with all probability upheld a sort of – as it were – heterogeneous perspective on meditation, melting together concepts from different contexts.

Some among the relevant ideas he may have borrowed from the *Lañkāvatārasūtra* tradition are the metaphor of the mind as a mirror and the self-originated knowledge revealing the *tathāgatagarbha* (though in the *Explanation* this last concept is said to be derived from the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, which is indeed mentioned as textual source). From the *prajñāpāramitā* tradition, on the other hand, he could have assumed both the idea of true speech as prerequisite to meditation and the concept of a non-rooted mind. He could perhaps have been inspired by the *prajñāpāramitā* tradition also for the meditative methods

of equality and satisfaction, though traces of these are present in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* as well.

Other textual clues allow us to suppose that Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ could have been acquainted with doctrinal traditions referring to the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the *Rāṣṭrapālāparipṛcchāsūtra* and so on.

Moreover, there is also a (remote) possibility that the author of the *Explanation* had made recourse to the concept of *paramātman*, which he might have met with in teachings on meditation originally contained in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* and related traditions.

The scriptural and doctrinal framework, which the *Explanation* relies upon, seems hence to be highly indebted to the Sanskrit sources of the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism. Besides this, as we will see in the next sections, the text most likely contains also several Chinese Chan elements.

### 3.1.5 Possible Clues for the Chan ‘immediate Approach’

Interestingly enough, in the *Explanation* there are textual clues – not much strong, to say the truth – that could point to the so-called ‘immediate approach’ of Chan Buddhism. We may particularly notice that the grasping of the *dharmatā* is here compared to a state, in which one «is mindful without being mindful or conceives without conceiving» (34b3-4: *dran ba myed ciñ dran ba’am* | | *dmyigs pa myed ciñ dmyigs pa’o* | |). This kind of expressions, of the ‘doing by non-doing’ type, even though already detectable for instance in the *prajñāpāramitā* texts, are quite typical of the ‘immediate’ Chinese Chan method of meditation, as it is witnessed by the following passage, which I quote here by way of example. It is taken from the *Xuemo lun* 血脈論 (*Treatise on the blood-vessel*), a text traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma (sixth century CE), but with all probability authored by a later Chan writer – perhaps affiliated either to the Hongzhou 洪州 or to the Niutou 牛頭 schools –, allegedly in the ninth century CE: «Moving, yet without having moved; all day he goes away, but he is never gone; all day he sees, but is never seen; all day he hears, but is never heard; all day he knows, but is never known; all day he delights, but is never delighted; all day he acts, but is never active; all day he abides, but has never abided».<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> The translation was kindly provided to me by Dan Lusthaus. The following is the Chinese text, as edited in Xuzangjing, vol. 63, no. 1218, 5a15-18: 動而無所動，終日去來而未曾去，終日見而未曾見，終日笑而未曾笑，終日聞而未曾聞，終日知而未曾知，終日喜而未曾喜，終日行而未曾行，終日住而未曾住。For a general survey of the *Treatise on the blood-vessel* see Buswell, Lopez (2014, p. 1016).

## 3.1.6 Mind or No Mind?

The method, which the *Explanation* hints at in order to reach the mental absorption into the profound awareness leading to a – so to speak – ‘knowledge without knowledge’ state, seems to involve a process that points at the absence of any frame of mind (34a4: *bag myed*) and of whatever support for attention (34a4-5: *bag bya gnas myed*). Even if it may be not an identical concept, what Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ expresses with *bag myed* – if I understand it well – reminds us of the so-called ‘no thought’ (Chinese *wunian* 無念) or ‘no mind’ (Chinese *wuxin* 無心) practice of early Chinese Chan,<sup>38</sup> which served as a basis for what I have called the ‘doing by non-doing’ method. To outline the fundamental ideas lying behind this kind of meditation, we can here refer in brief to the following three excerpts from two texts belonging to the Niutou school. The first passage is taken from the *Wuxin lun* 無心論 (Treatise on No Mind) traditionally attributed to Bodhidharma, but undoubtedly authored by a later scholar: «‘No mind’ itself is practice. There is no other practice».<sup>39</sup> And the other two passages are both from the *Jueguan lun* 絕觀論 (Treatise on Cutting Off Discernment), composed in the eighth century CE: «If there is no contemplation there is no mind, and no mind is the true Way»;<sup>40</sup> and: «If you fully understand no mind, there is no positing of comprehension».<sup>41</sup> In particular, this last sentence is worth of note, since it expresses the idea of a knowledge that ends up in a non-knowledge, a concept that recalls closely the practice of being mindful without being mindful or conceiving without conceiving, which the *Explanation* speaks of.

Be it as it may, what is relevant here to stress is, however, the fact that the perspective put forward in the *Explanation* seems not to be so radical in affirming a definitive ‘no mind’ theory. Indeed, the aforementioned ideas of *bag myed* and *bag bya gnas myed* do not fall eventually within an absolute ‘no mind’ framework, rather they are dealt with as necessary steps towards the development of a luminous mind (34b1: *sems kyi 'od*), which is positively described as pure and radiant (34b1: *dag cin spro ba'I sems*).

38 On this particular topic, see, among others, Scharf (2014, pp. 945-950).

39 無心即是修行。更不別有修行。Chinese text and translation in Scharf (2014, pp. 946-947).

40 無念即無心。無心即真道。Chinese text and translation in Scharf (2014, p. 947).

41 若了無心。設思惟亦無。Chinese text and translation in Scharf (2014, p. 948). I owe to the kindness of Dan Lusthaus the following alternative English rendering: «If you discern no mind [lit. ‘absence of mind’], then speculative thought is also absent».

### 3.1.7 Different Methods of Meditation

It seems that the *Explanation* upholds the idea, according to which the meditational practice upheld here can be undertaken by means of different methods (*thabs*), since the text admits at least the meditation pointing at equality (Sanskrit *samatā*) and the one pointing at satisfaction (Sanskrit *āsvāda*) (34a3-4). This viewpoint seems to be in line with what we can read in text 4 of IOL Tib J 709, where the same concept is explained by way of the example of the physician, who relies upon only one science for the exercise of his work, even though he can use different remedies in order to heal the different diseases of his patients.<sup>42</sup> The admittance of different methods in the 'immediate approach' leads us to suppose, moreover, that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ did not share the perspective of, for instance, both Haklenayaśas – that we know from text 8 of IOL Tib J 709, and according to which: *cIḡ car 'jug pa la nI thabs myed de ||* (The immediate approach has no method) – and Moheyan, who was, as is well-known, a propounder of the 'no method' (*thabs myed*) in meditation.<sup>43</sup>

### 3.1.8 Is There a Reference to Kim Heshang's Chan Teachings Embedded in the *Explanation*?

In the light of the conclusion just drawn in the preceding section, it is interesting to remark now that in the *Explanation* we come across three particular expressions that remind us very closely of the teachings of a Chan monk of Korean origins. He was known either by the Chinese name Wuxiang 無相, or by his Korean name, Kim (Jin 金 in Chinese), to which the appellation Heshang 和尚 is generally added. Kim Heshang 金和尚 (684-762 CE) is reputed to have been the founder of the Jingzhong 淨冢 school of Chan, based in the Chengdu area. He is mentioned in some Dunhuang and extra-Dunhuang manuscripts (variably, as Kim-hun/-hu, Gyim Hwa-śañ, etc.) and in particular his name occurs in the *dBa'/sBa bžed* (*Testament of dBa'/sBa*), a chronicle of the entrance of Buddhism in Tibet attributed to a certain dBa'/sBa gSal-snañ, reputedly a member of king KHri-sroñ-ldebrtsan's retinue. Interestingly enough, the *Testament of dBa'/sBa* narrates that Tibetans first received the Chinese Chan teachings from Kim Heshang

<sup>42</sup> The passage containing this particular example is translated in Dalton, van Schaik (2006, p. 304).

<sup>43</sup> For Haklenayaśas see van Schaik (2012, p. 7 and note 10). Moreover, as we have seen, Moheyan devoted part of his writing that opens IOL Tib J 709 to the topic of 'no method'.

in person.<sup>44</sup> Even though we cannot know whether this witness is actually reliable or not, it remains the fact that both Chinese and Tibetan sources more or less agree in telling us that the gist of Kim Heshang's instructions on meditation is contained in his so-called 'three phrases': 'no-recollection' (Chinese *wuyi* 無憶), 'no-thought' (Chinese *wunian* 無念) and 'not forgetting' (Chinese *mowang* 莫忘).<sup>45</sup> As we have seen, such kinds of negative concepts are quite typical of Chinese Chan doctrines. However, what is worth of note here – and it might very well not be a mere coincidence – is that in the *Explanation* there occur three expressions, which seem to be an actual calque of Kim Heshang's 'three phrases'. These are: *dran ba myed* (34b3), *dmyIgs pa myed* (34b4) and [*dran ba*] *myI brjed pa* (34b4-5), meaning respectively 'without being mindful', 'without conceiving/thinking' and 'non-forgetfulness [of being mindful]'. Such a terminological parallelism could represent a concrete textual witness of a Chinese Chan influence on the *Explanation* and, in particular, of an early version of Chan, dating back to the eighth century CE. If we admit this suggestion, since, on the one hand, Kim Heshang flourished during KHri-sroñ-lde-brtsan's epoch and, on the other hand, his presence in Tibetan texts seems to have faded away in a short time, this could corroborate the aforementioned hypothesis, according to which Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ flourished not later than the first half of the ninth century CE.

### 3.1.9 The *Bodhisattva* Path

Drawing from such a diversified doctrinal background, the *Explanation* sketches a clear *bodhisattva* path, in which we can detect some clues pointing at practices or features that are specific of particular *bhūmis* or stages of meditation as they are described in the Indian Mahāyāna literature. In what follows I summarize the fundamental steps of this path. When possible, in order to help the reader find the – as it were – meditational moment that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ might have had in mind, I have also indicated in brief the corresponding *bhūmi*, on the basis mainly of the treatment in the *Śatasahārikaprajñāpāramitā* (a text explicitly mentioned in the *Explanation*) and the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* (which is, as is well-known, a reference text as far as this topic is concerned).

44 For the 'episode' of Kim Heshang in the *Testament of dBa'/sBa* (where his name is written Gyim Hwa-saṅ) see Wangdu, Diemberger (2000, pp. 47-52). In Pelliot Tibétain 116, moreover, his name occurs as Kim-hun; see Horlemann (2012, pp. 118-119).

45 On the 'three phrases' and their interpretation see Adamek (2007, pp. 205-207, 246, 338). These 'three phrases' occur also in Pelliot Tibétain 699, a manuscript allegedly written in the tenth century CE, where they are functional to a discussion in which Chan and tantric elements are melted together; see van Schaik, Dalton (2004, p. 67).

1. First, the practitioner should pay attention to moral behaviour and, particularly, s/he should control her/his speech, which must become the truthful expression of the recollections of what s/he has seen/known (34a2). According to the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā*, in the first *bhūmi* one has to practice the *satyavacana*, the true speech, and the *parikarmmavacana*, which in this case indicates the speech in accordance with one's actions (Ghoṣa 1911, p. 1455); also the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* upholds that this practice is related to the first *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 9): *yathāvāditathākāritayā satatasamitaṃ satyavacanānurakṣaṇatayā* (By behaving as he speaks and by guarding the true speech constantly and continually), but adds that it is in the second *bhūmi* that the would-be *bodhisattva* becomes (Vaidya 1967, p. 15): *satyavādī bhūtavādī kālavādī yathāvādī tathākārī* | (A speaker of the truth, speaker of facts, speaker in [the right] time, one who speaks as he behaves). In general, underscores the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, it is in the second *bhūmi* that the practitioner cultivates a good moral attitude.
2. Then, s/he should train her-/himself in the practice of meditation, and this can be done by following different methods, such as the meditation pointing at the equality of all the *dharma*s or the meditation developing mental satisfaction (34a3-4).
3. In consequence of, and in support to, these methods of meditation, s/he is able to calm both mind and body by way of a controlled breath (34a4), approaching consequently the state in which her/his mind is devoid of attachment to objects or concepts (34a5).
4. Such a condition is strictly related to the elimination of all the obstructions that prevent the practitioner to proceed further in the meditative path (34b1). In the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* the mental withdrawal from objectivation and conceptualization of the conditioned things of ordinary experience is said to begin in the third *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 18): [...] *bhūyasyā mātrayā sarvasaṃskārebhyaś cittam uccālayati* [...] | *sa evaṃ nirvidanugataś ca sarvasaṃskāragatyā* [...] further on, he moves [his] mind away from all the conditioning factors [...]. He thus acquires disgust towards the course of all the conditioning factors), though it is fully attained in the sixth, as we will see in a while. The third *bhūmi* is also where the cessation of the obstructions takes place, by way of the practice of meditation (Vaidya 1967, p. 21): *cittena* [...] °*anāvaraṇena*°. We find the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā* differing on this point and stating that both the elimination of the attachment towards the objects/concepts of ordinary life and the cessation of the obstructions are typical outcomes only of the sixth *bhūmi* (Ghoṣa 1911, p. 1456): *sarvvavastuni parityajya durmanaskatā parivarjayitavyāḥ* | (Having abandoned every object, the bad mental dispositions are to be avoided).

5. It is in this moment that s/he realizes a non-linguistic contemplation, which is also non-conceptual, and here, by means of a – so to say – self-contradictory process leading to the observation of concepts without conceptualizing them, the nature of the *dharmas*, that is, the *dharmatā* begins to disclose itself directly to the practitioner's eyes (34b2-4). This kind of apparently self-contradictory approach could hint at some Chinese Chan meditational practice, as pointed out above.
6. In so doing, s/he attains the so-called non-forgetfulness of mindfulness (*smṛtyasaṃpramoṣatā*), namely, a state in which s/he is ever-mindful, in both the senses of never forgetting and not losing focus in meditation (34b4). The *Daśabhūmikasūtra* explains that such a state is developed in the fifth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 28): *sa bhūyasyā mātrayā asyāṃ pañcamyāṃ sudurjayāyāṃ bodhisattvabhūmau sthito bodhisattvaḥ smṛtimāṃś ca bhavati asaṃpramoṣadharmatayā* (The *bodhisattva*, who remains still more in this fifth stage of the *bodhisattva* [path, called] 'difficult to be conquered', becomes mindful by means of [being] non-forgetful).
7. The non-forgetfulness of mindfulness is said to take place after having relaxed the body, becalmed the senses and kept the mind attentive: all this leads to the elimination of whatever conditioning factor (34b5-35a1) that can distract from being concentrated in the meditational practice. This account reminds us of the so-called *bodhipakṣya dharmas*, namely, the practices helpful to enlightenment. In particular, the reference here to body, senses, mind and conditioned/conditioning elements seems to point, among the *bodhipakṣya dharmas*, to the four *smṛtyupasthānas*, 'applications of mindfulness' (*kāya-*, *vedanā-*, *citta-* and *dharmasmṛtyupasthāna*). According to the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, the *smṛtyupasthānas* should be cultivated in the fourth *bhūmi*, since they are a prerequisite to the arising, in the fifth *bhūmi*, of the 'non-forgetfulness of mindfulness' (Vaidya 1967, p. 80, verse 10): *so eṣu dharmu samupetu hitānukampī bhāveti kāyam api vedanacittadharmān | adhyātmabhāyubhayathā vidu bhāvayāti smṛtyopasthānabhāvāna nīketavarjitā ||* (He, provided with these qualities, [being] beneficial and compassionate, cultivates also [the meditation on] the body, sensations, mind and *dharmas*; the wise one [that performs] the meditation on the applications of mindfulness considers both the internal and external [events] as without distinctive marks [namely, equal]). Moreover, if on the one hand the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā* tells us that the elimination of the idea of cause and/or condition takes place in the seventh *bhūmi* (Ghoṣa 1911, p. 1457): *nimittasaṃjñā na kartavya |* (The recognition of cause is not to be accomplished), according to the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, on the other hand, the detachment from what-

- ever is a conditioned thing and a conditioning factor occurs instead in the sixth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 34): *na ca saṃskṛtasamvāsena samvasati | svabhāvopasāmaṃ ca saṃskārāṇāṃ pratyavekṣate |* (And [the *bodhisattva*'s mind] is not associated with what is in connection with conditioned [entities; rather, s/he] examines the interruption of [the idea of] the own-nature of the conditioning factors).
8. The practitioner develops in this way the skillfulness in means of/ and wisdom that should gradually become permanent during all the possible situations (*īryāpatha*) of her/his life (35a1-2). The ability to know both the right means for attaining the final emancipation and wisdom is, in the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, said to be a characteristic related to the sixth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 34): *samprayuktaś ca bhavaty upāyaprajñāvicāraiḥ |* (And he is intent in thoughtful examinations on [skillfulness in] means and wisdom). This is due, as said above, to the practice of the *bodhipakṣya dharmas* that, when well consolidated, leads the would-be *bodhisattva* to the seventh *bhūmi*, which in its turn presents, among its special features, the capacity to experience continually the results of the *bodhipakṣya dharmas* throughout every moment of the practitioner's life (Vaidya 1967, p. 37): *tiṣṭhann api niṣaṅṅo'pi śayāno'pi svapnāntaragato'py apagatanīvaraṇaḥ sarveryāpathe sthito [...] bodhisattvasya sarvabodhyaṅgāni kṣaṇe kṣaṇe paripūryante tadatirekeṇa punar asyām eva saptamyām bodhisattvabhūmau |* (Having [every] hindrance gone while standing, sitting, lying down and also in the middle of a dream, [thus] he abides in all the deportments [...], all the practices helpful to enlightenment are completely fulfilled in every moment [of the meditational path], however only in this seventh *bodhisattva* stage [he experiences] abundantly that).
  9. This is made possible by previously and primarily diminishing the sense-based 'reifying' activity, which allows the practitioner's mind to observe things as they really are, that is, 'equal' or empty of intrinsic nature (35a2-3). In the *Śatasahāsrīkaprajñāpāramitā* such results are said to be experienced in the seventh *bhūmi* (Ghoṣa 1911, p. 1457): *sarvadharmasamatādarśanaṃ |* (The vision of the equality of all the *dharmas*); according to the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* the awareness of the 'equality' of everything is instead attained in the sixth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 31): *sa daśabhir dharmasamatābhir avatarati |* (He arrives at [this stage] by virtue of the ten equalities of the *dharmas* [the text proceeds with the explanation of which ten]).
  10. To reach such an awareness, the practitioner's mind should first become 'only-reflecting' as a mirror, namely, without any interference of conceptual constructions over the 'simple' observation of the *dharma*tā of the *dharmas*; s/he achieves such a condition by virtue of the so-called antidotes (*pratipakṣa*) to the deficiencies of meditation,



so that s/he can cultivate the root of mindfulness and attain wisdom (35a3-5), which is a self-knowing knowledge that originates spontaneously (35b3). The splendor of wisdom, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* tells us, manifests itself in the sixth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 34): [a]saṅgajñānābhimukho nāma prajñāpāramitāvihāro'bhimukhī bhavaty avabhāsayogena | sa evaṃ jñānasamanvāgataḥ prajñāpāramitāvihārāvabhāsito [...] supraṭiṣṭhitaś ca bhavati bodhisattvajñānālokatāyām | (The *prajñāpāramitā* abode called 'facing the unobstructed knowledge' is [the sixth stage, named] 'facing', since it is connected with bright. Thus, he, provided with knowledge, is bright [since he dwells] in the abode of the *prajñāpāramitā* [...]. And he is well established in the condition of resplendent *bodhisattva*'s knowledge), but the complete attainment of the *dharmatā*, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* specifies, is fully experienced only in the eighth *bhūmi* (Vaidya 1967, p. 43): eṣā sarvadharmāṇāṃ dharmatā | (This [*bhūmi*] is the *dharmatā* of all *dharmas*).

11. In conclusion, the meditative path should lead the would-be *bodhisattva* to uproot greed, conceptual constructions and mental distractions in order to attain internal peace and wisdom (35b3-36a1).

To sum up, the comparison just drawn helps us to notice how the *Explanation* describes a meditational path that can be roughly equated to the practices and attainments of the *bhūmis* 1-8 of the *Daśabhūmikasūtra*, a text whose contents seem therefore to have significantly inspired Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ's approach.

### 3.2 English Annotated Translation

While I was analysing the text, it was my primary concern to try to find out the possible Mahāyāna sources that could have inspired Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ, such as passages from writings belonging to the *prajñāpāramitā* literature, the *Laṅkāvataraśūtra* and so on, which I have referred to in the notes.

The usual Sanskrit equivalents of Tibetan key terms have been inserted into brackets. Tibetan words corresponding to expressions of common use in Buddhist writings have been rendered into Sanskrit: *dharmas*, *dharmatā*, *bodhisattva*, *yoga*, *vipaśyana*, *śamatha*, *sūtra*/s.

## Translation

Explanation by the *ācārya* Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ

What is the *bodhisattva*'s true speech (*satyavacana*)? It is as follows:

He [*scil.* the *bodhisattva*] is one who speaks as he behaves and behaves as he speaks (*yathāvādī tathākārī yathākārī tathāvādī*).<sup>46</sup> Also, having being mindful he speaks, and having spoken he is mindful.

Because of [his] senses still more vigilant (*apramatta*), he is equanimous: for example, [he follows] the method of equal[ity]<sup>47</sup>

46 The exhortation to speak in conformity with what one does and to behave in conformity with what one says occurs several times in the Pāli Canon, where we are told that this is one of the characteristics of the *tathāgata*'s conduct. This is clearly stated in the following recurring sentence (*Aṅguttaranikāya* 2.24, *Dīghanikāya* 3.135, *Itivuttaka* p. 122, etc.): *yathāvādī bhikkhave tathāgato tathākārī yathākārī tathāvādī | iti yathāvādī tathākārī yathākārī tathāvādī | tasmā tathāgato ti vuccati*. See also *Dīghanikāya* 3.224, 229. In the *prajñāpāramitā* literature the same idea is stressed, but in this case it represents the good conduct the *bodhisattva* should embrace as far as the truthful speech is concerned. In the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* we can indeed read (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.2, p. 92): *tatra katamad bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya satyavacanaparikarma yad uta yathāvādītathākāritā idam bodhisattvasya mahāsattvasya satyavacanaparikarma* (There, what is the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*'s purification of the true speech? It is the state of speaking as he behaves. This is the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*'s purification of the true speech). Consider also the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Vaidya 1960, p. 222): *aparābhyām subhūte dvābhyām dharmābhyām samanvāgato bodhisattvo mahāsattvo durgharṣo bhavati mārāiḥ pāpīyobhir mārakāyikābhir vā devatābhiḥ | katamābhyām dvābhyām yad uta yathāvādī tathākārī ca bhavati buddhais ca bhagavadbhiḥ samanvāhriyate |*; translation in Conze (1958, pp. 183-184).

47 The concept of 'equality' (Tibetan *mñam ñid*, Sanskrit *amatā*) and the related practice of equanimity, as is well-known, play a fundamental role in the *prajñāpāramitā* context, where 'equality' consists in the realization that there is no difference between things, since they share one and the same nature, that is, voidness (Tibetan *ston pa ñid*, Sanskrit *sūnyatā*), lack of real substance. In the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, for instance, we are told that equality arises in a particular meditative state (Kimura 1986-2009, vol. 1.2, p. 70): *tatra katamaḥ sarvadharmasamatā nāma samādhiḥ | yatra samādhou sthitvā na kañcid dharmam samatānirmuktaḥ samanupaśyati tenocyate sarvadharmasamatā nāma samādhiḥ |* (There, what is the *samādhi* called equality of all the *dharma*s? Where, having he abided in the *samādhi*, he does not observe any *dharma* as deprived of equality, by this it is said *samādhi* called equality of all the *dharma*s). In such a state, the meditator attains the insight that everything does neither change nor remain unchanged (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.2, p. 50): *iha subhūte bodhisattvo mahāsattvaḥ sarvadharmāṇām samatāyām sthitvā na kasyacid dharmasya vikṣepam vā avikṣepam vā samanupaśyati | evaḥ hi subhūte bodhisattvo mahāsattvo dhyānapāramitāyām sthito bhavati* (Here, O Subhūti, the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*, having abided in [the state of] equality of all the *dharma*s, does not observe either scattering or non-scattering of whatever *dharma*. Thus indeed, O Subhūti, a *bodhisattva mahāsattva* is abiding in the perfection of meditation). This is a condition of abstraction from whatever reification, a condition in which the meditator understands that every distinction is only apparent, and consequently nothing is grasped as something real, as the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* explains well (Vaidya 1960, p. 102): *asamasamatāpāramiteyaḥ bhagavan sarvadharmānupalabdhitam upādāya*; translation in Conze (1958, p. 71). If there is

or of satisfaction<sup>48</sup> and also diminishes [the rhythm of] the breath and

nothing actually real, if everything is non-existent in itself, it follows that everything whatsoever is void of intrinsic nature. We find the Buddha explaining this very concept in, for instance, the *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Conze 1962-1974, 2, p. 39): *adyātmasūnyatā subhūte bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām samatā bahirdhāsūnyatā subhūte bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām samatā adhyātmabahirdhāsūnyatā subhūte bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām samatā* | *yāvad abhāvasvabhāvasūnyatā subhūte bodhisattvānām mahāsattvānām samatā* (O Subhūti, the equality of the *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* is internal voidness, O Subhūti, the equality of the *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* is external voidness, O Subhūti, the equality of the *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* is internal and external voidness [only] when, O Subhūti, the equality of the *bodhisattvas mahāsattvas* is voidness of intrinsic nature of the non-existent). Moreover, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* underlines how the comprehension of the equality of everything derives from the state of equanimity and should spur the *bodhisattva* to lead the other sentient beings to realize that very same equality (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.1, p. 103): *sarvasattvānām antike samacittatām utpādyā sarvadharmasamatām pratilabhate* | *sarvadharmasamatām pratilabhya sarvasattvān sarvadharmasamatāyām pratiṣṭhāpayati* (Having produced equanimity in the presence of all the sentient beings, he obtains the equality of all the *dharmas*. Having obtained the equality of all the *dharmas*, he introduces all the sentient beings into the equality of all the *dharmas*). It is to be remarked, moreover, that also in the *Lañkāvatārasūtra* we find the idea of 'equality' applied to the practice of *yoga* as, for instance, the following two verses witness. *Lañkāvatārasūtra* 3.28 (Vaidya 1963, p. 62): *caturvidhā vai samatā lakṣaṇam hetubhāvajam* | *nairātmyasamatā caiva caturtham yogayoginām* || (The equality of the *yogins* that practice *yoga* is indeed fourfold: [the equality concerning] characteristics, causes, coming into existence and also the equality concerning non-self as fourth); 3.56a-d (Vaidya 1963, p. 69): *nirābhāso hi bhāvānām abhāve nāsti yoginām* | *bhāvābhāvasamatvena āryānām jāyate phalam* | (In the *yogins*' [mental state of] absence of existence, surely there is not [even the comprehension] without fallacious appearance of the events; by means of the equality of events and non-events, the fruit [*scil.* awareness] of the nobles is born). Under the influence of these sources, the concept of 'equality' became one of the central topics also of the Chinese Chan tradition.

48 The Tibetan term *gza' ba* presents some difficulty, since its etymology is still not fully clear. In the present context, I suggest to assume it with the meaning of 'rejoicing', 'gratification', 'satisfaction' and the like. In the Tibetan Canon it occurs very rarely, at least as far as I can say: I was able, indeed, to find only four occurrences of *gza' ba*, all contained in one single text belonging to the bKa'-gyur, the *Saṅs rgyas kyi mdzod kyi chos kyi yi ge* (\**Buddhadharmakośakāra*), corresponding to Lhasa bKa'-gyur, mDo-sde, Ņa, 226b5-321b6. The contexts in which we meet with *gza' ba* can be summarized as follows: 1. (232a2-3) The *dharma*, characterized as right truth (*yañ dag pa'i bden pa'i mtshan ma'i chos*), has, among other qualities, also the characteristics of being ultimately joyless (*dga' ba'an med*) and without satisfaction (*gza' ba'an med*). 2. (272b2-3) Having well sized the words of the *dharma* (*chos kyi yi ge gzuñs su bzuñ ste*), when one desires to read and recite them (*klog cin kha ton la sred pa*) and to hear their explanations (*bśad pa thos na*), s/he develops a happy and satisfied mind even if (*sems dga' gza' ba de lta bu'an*) s/he does not look happy (*mthoñ du mi dga'o*). 3. (275a4-5) When somebody hears the *dharma* of non-existence - according to which whatever there is, is empty of intrinsic nature - contained in the excellent writings dealing with the words of the *dharma* (*la la žig gis 'di lta bu chos kyi yi ge'i mchog gi gzuñ stoñ pa ci'an med pa'i chos thos na*), if he has a happy and satisfied mind (*sems dga' gza' ba žig yod*), a man like this, it is evident that he is an authentic disciple of the Buddha (*de lta bu'i mi ni* | *yañ dag pa'i na'i slob ma yin par mion*). 4. (361b5-6) One who relies upon, and prays, a *bhikṣu* who has broken his vows (*tshul khriims žig pa'i dge sloñ gis yid ches śiñ kha ton*) and, having read the *dharma*, teaches to others even though he is not capable (*bklags la mi la bstan pa'an mi nus na*), in that case what need is there to openly speak of his obvi-

is [mentally] vigilant.

Having performed what is without [any] frame of mind, [in him] there is absence of whatever support for attention.<sup>49</sup>

ous incapability of having a happy and satisfied mind (*de la sems dga' gza' ba mi nus pa lta smos kyañ ci dgos*)?

For the sake of completeness it is noteworthy that in this text we find also occurrences of *gza'* alone (namely, without the appended nominalizing particle *ba*) and in every occasion but one the term is related to *dga'* or *kun dga'* ('joy', 'happiness', etc.): (262b5) *sems śin tu dga' zñ gza'*; (294a3-4) *sems la śin tu dga' zñ gza'*; (298b2) *dge sloñ phal mañ po rnam kun dga' gza'*; (302b5) *sems dga' gza'*; (321b5) *kun śin tu dga' gza'*. The remaining occurrence of *gza'* is in a *pāda* of a section in verses, where reference is made to the importance of being free from the sovereignty of the great illusionary satisfaction (*gza' ru 'phrul chen rje dañ bral*) due to maintaining and professing the theory of self as self (*bdag bdag brjod ciñ bśad pa*). What precedes allows us to point out that the term *gza' ba* is somehow related to a serene state of mind that follows the hearing, studying, teaching and reflecting upon the *dharma*, which consists in the doctrine of non-self, that is, of emptiness. Although it cannot be said with certainty whether or not this is the sense according to which *gza ba* is used in the *Explanation*, nonetheless it seems beyond doubt that the expression *gza' ba'i thabs* suggests some practical exercise or training of a meditative nature. As is well known, indeed, it is since the time of the Pāli Canon that the experience of psycho-physical satisfaction (Pāli *assāda*, Sanskrit *āsvāda*) has played a relevant place in Buddhist meditation. See for instance the long description of the satisfaction of feelings (*vedanānaṃ assādaṃ*) in *Majjhimanikāya* 13, *Mahādukkhakkhandhasutta* (§ 173; MN 1.89-90). This and other similar Canonical excerpts may have represented the scriptural background of those passages in the *prajñāpāramitā* texts, in which the concept of 'satisfaction' is likewise involved in the mastery of meditation. In the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* we can for instance read (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.2, p. 170): *sa maitrīkaruṇāmuditopekṣāṃ bhāvayati dhyānasamāpattiḥ samāpadyate vyuttiṣṭhate ca tā āsvādayati* | (He [*scil.* the *bodhisattva*] produces benevolence, compassion, joy and equanimity, he enters and leaves the meditations through cultivation and is satisfied with them).

49 This sentence opens a section devoted to some important concepts concerning the practice of meditation. In particular, the idea is stressed here that meditation should be performed by abandoning whatever support for attention. A similar approach can be detected in some *prajñāpāramitā* texts, such as, for instance, the *Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā*, where we can indeed read (Vaidya 1961, p. 78): [...] *bodhisattvena mahāsattvena evam apratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam yan na kvacit pratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam | na rūpapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam na śabdagandharasaspraṣṭavyadharmapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam* | [...] by the *bodhisattva mahāsattva* a non-rooted mind should be thus produced; he should never produce a rooted mind; he should neither produce a mind rooted in forms, nor should he produce a mind rooted in sounds, smells, tastes, tangible [things] and *dharmas*). And a few lines later, we meet with the following similar passage (Vaidya 1961, p. 81): [...] *bodhisattvena mahāsattvena sarvasaṃjñā vivarjayitvā anuttarāyāṃ samyaksambodhau cittam utpādayitavyam | na rūpapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam na śabdagandharasaspraṣṭavyadharmapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam na dharmapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam nādharmapratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam na kvacit pratiṣṭhitam cittam utpādayitavyam | tat kasya hetoḥ yat pratiṣṭhitam tad evāpratiṣṭhitam* | [...] by the *bodhisattva mahāsattva*, having [he] shunned all the conceptions, a mind should be produced [rooted] in the uttermost complete awakening; he should neither produce a mind rooted in forms, nor should he produce a mind rooted in sounds, smells, tastes and tangible [things], nor should he produce a mind rooted in *dharmas*, nor should he ever produce a rooted mind. What is the reason of that? [The reason is that] what is rooted, that is indeed non-rooted). The method described here, we can observe, involves the abstention from relying upon the

Accordingly, he stares by himself totally<sup>50</sup> at what is without a support for attention.

He should stare without staring:<sup>51</sup> in that moment, also the splendor

sense-objects (*rūpa*, *śabda*, etc.), from objectifying them, as well as from every mental result of the perceptual activity (*saṃjñā*).

50 I interpret the Tibetan expression *śIn du bdag gis* as equivalent to the Sanskrit *atīva/atyantam ātmanā* and the like. There is, however, the possibility that here *śIn du bdag* conveys the meaning of *atyantātman* ('the entire self') and similar terms, or even of *paramātman* ('the supreme self') since occasionally, though very rarely, *śin tu* translates the Sanskrit preverbal particle *param/parama*; see Negi (2004), *s.v. śin tu sīñ por gyur pa < paramaḥṛdayaprāpta, śin tu phra ba'i rdul < paramāṅuraja, śin tu mi dga' ba < paramasandīpta/paramasaṃvigna, śin tu mya ñan < paramaśoka*, etc. The entire sentence would consequently sound as follows: 'Accordingly, he stares with the entire/supreme self at what is without a support for attention'. This may suggest some non-Buddhist concept pointing at the existence of the self, but it is not the case. On the contrary, in those Mahāyāna scriptures, in which for instance the term *paramātman* occurs, it is made clear that the 'supreme self', rather, indicates the higher state of consciousness, where the mind is purified from the conceptions of both self and non-self, where there is freedom from conceptual constructions and where the *dharmatā* shines forth. Even though it occurs only twice there, the term *paramātman* seems to have played an important doctrinal role in one of the foundational writings of the *tathāgatagarbha* tradition, namely, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. As is well known, the root verses of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* are attributed to Maitreyañātha (third-fourth centuries CE) according to the Tibetan tradition, whereas the part in prose is to be ascribed to a certain Sāramati (fifth century CE). See Takasaki (1966, pp. 61-62). However, according to Chinese tradition, both the verses and the prose are attributed to Sāramati. In the Sanskrit version of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* that has reached us, the first occurrence of *paramātman* we meet with is in the following sentence in prose (Prasad 1991, p. 31): [...] *prajñāpāramitābhāvanāyāḥ paramātmapāramitādhiḡamaḥ phalaṃ draṣṭavyam* | ([...] the attainment of the perfection of the supreme self should be considered as the fruit [derived] from the cultivation of the *prajñāpāramitā*); whereas the second occurrence is in verse 37 and runs thus (Prasad 1991, p. 34): *sa hi prakṛtisuddhatvād vāsanāpagamāc chuciḥ | paramātmānairātmyaprapañcakṣayaśāntitaḥ* || (Indeed, it [scil. the *dharmakāya*] is radiant because of [its] natural purity and of the removal of latent tendencies; it is the supreme self, appeased [because of] the removal of the conceptual proliferations of self and non-self). See also Takasaki (1966, pp. 211-212, note 96), who refers to similar passages in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* of Asaṅga (fourth century CE). Interestingly enough, the sentence in the *Explanation* that immediately follows the present one seems to expose a perspective quite similar to that expressed in *Ratnagotravibhāga* 37. Besides all this, while discussing with me the possibility of interpreting *śIn du bdag* as *paramātman*, Kirill Solonin was kind enough to draw my attention towards the concept of 'true I' (Chinese *zhenwo* 真我), which is one of the fundamental notions of the Huayan 華嚴 school of Chinese Buddhism, whose teachings were inspired to the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*. Since this school was particularly active during the eighth-tenth centuries CE and since the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra* seems to be one of the scriptural sources directly known to Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ (indeed, with all probability an excerpt from this *sūtra* is quoted in the *Explanation*), Solonin suggests that the Huayan idea of 'true I' could represent one of the notions that lie behind the expression *śIn du bdag*, if this is to be intended as conveying the meaning of *paramātman*. In this case we would accordingly have here another possible evidence of the influence of Chinese Buddhism on Byaṅ-cub-klu-dbañ's approach to meditation.

51 The idea of 'seeing without seeing' is a *locus communis* in many meditational Buddhist traditions. Interestingly enough, this idea must be quite ancient, since we find it in

of the mind shines forth.<sup>52</sup> By means of a pure and radiant mind, he also gets rid of the obstructions (*āvāraṇa*).<sup>53</sup>

If you ask: what is [the state of] a *bodhisattva*? [The answer is:] the inexpressibility of all the *dharmas*.<sup>54</sup>

nuce also in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, where it is related to the realization of the equality and voidness of all *dharmas*, which in its turn corresponds to the attainment of the *dharmakāya*. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra*, indeed, explains (Vaidya 1960, p. 93): *so'vabudhya traidhātukaṃ daśasu dikṣu śūnyam [...] | ya evaṃ gambhīrān dharmān paśyati sa paśyati apaśyanāyā [...] (He, having realized [the final wisdom, sees] the triple world as void in the ten directions [...]. The one who thus sees the profound dharmas, that one sees by non-seeing [...]. In another passage, namely Saddharmapuṇḍarikasūtra 5.81-82ab, we are also told that (Vaidya 1960, p. 96): sarvadharmān samān śūnyān nirnānākaraṇātmakān | na caitān prekṣate nāpi kiṃcid dharmāṃ vipaśyati || sa paśyati mahāprajñō dharmakāyam aśeṣataḥ | ([The one who] neither observes all these dharmas, [which are] equal, void, without diversity and individuality, nor even perceives any dharma whatsoever, he, [who] has the great wisdom, sees completely the dharmakāya).*

52 The Tibetan expression *sems kyi 'od* corresponds to the Sanskrit compound *prabhāsvaracitta*, the 'translucent mind' (*'od gsal sems* or *sems kyi 'od gsal* in its extended Tibetan form), a concept quite common in Buddhism since the Pāli Canon (*pabhassaracitta*). It identifies the state of mind, in which all the impurities have been eliminated. For a general survey of the Pāli treatment of *pabhassaracitta*, see Tan (2005). In the context of the *Explanation*, however, Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ may have intended the term according to a Mahāyāna perspective – perhaps with some Yagācāra nuance – that generally refers the 'translucent mind' to the emergence of the *tathāgatagarbha*, the grasping of the *dharmatā*, and so on. On the Yogācāra interpretation of *prabhāsvaracitta* see, among others, the recent Berger (2015, pp. 105-114). Moreover, for a comparative study of Indian and Tibetan approaches, see Skorupski (unpublished).

53 The 'obstructions' (Sanskrit *āvāraṇa*) are factors that impede the meditative equipoise. They are generally grouped in two main categories: *kleśāvāraṇa* ('obstructions of the afflictions') and *jñeyāvāraṇa* ('obstructions of the knowable [object]'). Some texts speak also of other obstructions such as *samāpattiyāvāraṇa* ('obstructions of the mental absorption'), *vipākāvāraṇa* ('obstructions of karmic ripening'), *sarāgāvāraṇa* ('obstructions of attachment'), and so forth. The Tibetan term for 'obstruction', namely, *sgrib pa*, can convey also the meaning of the Sanskrit *nīvaraṇa*, 'hindrances', as it happens for instance in the *Teaching on the mistakes of meditation* (text 2 of IOL Tib J 709), where as a matter of fact *sgrib pa* is used to refer to the well-known five hindrances (*pañca nīvaraṇa*) to meditation, which are listed as follows (IOL Tib J 709, 11b2-4): *dgod pa dañ 'gyod pa nI ži gnas kyl sgrib pa yIn no | | rmugs pa dañ gñI dāñ the tshom nI lhag mthoñ gi sgrib pa yIn no | | 'dod pa la 'dun pa dañ gnod sems nI | | gñI ga'I sgrib pa yIn no | | (Laugh and regret are the hindrances of śamatha. Laziness, indolence and doubt are the hindrances of vipaśyana. Sense desire and ill-will are the hindrances of both). The same account occurs also in text 6 of the manuscript, at IOL Tib J 709, 38a2-3.*

54 The inexpressibility (Tibetan *mi brjod pa [ñid]*, Sanskrit *anabhilāpya[tā]/nirabhilāpya[tā]*) of all the *dharmas* is a key concept occurring throughout the *prajñāpāramitā* literature. It is recurrent in the descriptions of the comprehension of the intrinsic voidness of things that consists with the elimination of all the false imaginations and the consequent attainment of the *dharmatā*, which is in itself ineffable. By way of example, let us consider the following few passages. One from the *Aṣṭasahasrikaprajñāpāramitā* (Vaidya 1960, p. 173): *sarvadharmā api subhūte anabhilāpyāḥ | tatkasya hetoḥ yā ca subhūte sarvadharmāṇām śūnyatā na sā śakyā abhilāpitum | (O Subhūti, all the dharmas are surely inexpressible. Why is this [so]? O Subhūti, that voidness of all the dharmas cannot be expressed). Compare with Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikaprajñāpāramitā (Kimura 1986-2009, 4, p. 173). Another from the Pa-*

If you ask: what is the inexpressibility? [It is] the mindfulness of the *dharmatā* of the *dharmas*. The mindfulness of the *dharmatā* of the *dharmas* is to be mindful without being mindful or to conceive without conceiving.<sup>55</sup>

Inexpressible means without conceiving, and it is the non-forgetfulness of mindfulness.<sup>56</sup>

*ñcaviṣṭatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Kimura 1986-2009, 2-3, p. 97): *yat sarvadharmānām prakṛtisūnyatātvam anupalambho yāvad yā sarvadharmānām nirabhilāpyatā apravyāhārātā iyaṃ ucyate asaṃskṛtadharmatā* | (Until [there is] that state of natural voidness and non-apprehension of all the *dharmas*, [there is] that inexpressibility and unspeakability of all the *dharmas*; this [state] is called uncompounded *dharmatā*), and (Kimura 1986-2009, 6-8, p. 168): *na cāgrāhyānām dharmānām agrāhyatā śaktābhilāpitum* (The ungraspability of the ungraspable *dharmas* cannot be expressed). Besides, we meet with this very concept also in the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* (Vaidya 1963, p. 32): *sarvadharmānirabhilāpyasūnyatā punar mahāmate katamā | yad uta parikalpitasvabhāvānirabhilāpyatvān nirabhilāpyasūnyāḥ sarvadharmāḥ |* (Again, O Mahāmati, what is the voidness of the inexpressibility of all the *dharmas*? It is like this: out of the inexpressibility of the imagined nature [of the *dharmas*, it follows that] all the *dharmas* are inexpressible and void). Interestingly enough, in text 4 of IOL Tib J 709 one of the topics discussed is the inexpressibility of the *tathāgatagarbha*.

55 The idea that the meditation should or should not proceed by means of a non-mentation (Sanskrit *amanasikāra*) and non-recollection (Sanskrit *asmṛti*) method, represents a well-known matter of dispute between the two main Buddhist traditions of meditation, namely, the so-called 'immediate' and the 'gradual' approaches. According to the traditional accounts, these two perspectives in Tibet were represented respectively by the Chinese Heshang Moheyang – propounder of the 'immediate' approach – and the Indian Kamalaśīla – propounder of the 'gradual' approach –, during the formal debate, instituted by king KHrisron-lde-brtsan, that reportedly took place at the bSam-yas monastery in the eighth century CE. For a clear outlook of the discussion concerning *amanasikāra* see Higgins (2006, pp. 255-262). It is worth noting, here, that in the *prajñāpāramitā* literature we meet with passages that convey the idea that the highest understanding should be attained by non-apprehension, which eventually means that the highest knowledge is a sort of non-knowledge. See for instance the *Pañcaviṣṭatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Kimura 1986-2009, 1.1, p. 35): *sarvadharmaprajñānānupalambhayogena prajñāpāramitā paripūrītā bhavati* (The *prajñāpāramitā* is accomplished through non-apprehension [by the one who] discerns all the *dharmas*), and (Kimura, vols. 2-3, p. 147): [...] *sarvākārajñānānupalabdhyā prajñāpāramitā pratyarpitā bhavati* | ([...] the *prajñāpāramitā* is fixed by means of the non-apprehension of the knowledge of all the appearances). A similar concept, pointing at attaining a certain meditative condition by avoiding that very condition, is meant by the expression *susthito'sthānayogena* (standing firmly, in consequence of not taking his stand anywhere), which occurs for instance in the *Pañcaviṣṭatisāhasrikā-* and *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*.

56 The 'non-forgetfulness of mindfulness' (Sanskrit *smṛtyasaṃpramoṣatā*) is a central concept in Buddhist meditation. In the Mahāyāna context, it occurs for instance in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, attributed to Asaṅga. In the final chapter of the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, Asaṅga gives a particular interpretation of it, as follows (Dutt 1996, p. 279): *tatra tathāgatasyānuṣṭeyaṃ yac ca bhavati <yatra ca bhavati> yathā ca bhavati yadā ca bhavati tatra tasya tathā tadā samyaganuṣṭhānād iyaṃ tathāgatasyāsaṃmoṣadharmatety ucyate | iti yā ca tatra tathāgatasya sarvākṛtyeṣu sarvadeśeṣu sarvākṛtyopāyeṣu sarvakāleṣu smṛtyasaṃpramoṣatā sadopasthitasmṛtitā | iyaṃ atrāsaṃmoṣadharmatā draṣṭavyā* | (There, what is to be [kept mentally] present of the *tathāgata* is who [he is], <in which occasion,> in which manner, at what time [did he do this or that thing]; this is said the non-forgetful *dharmatā* of the *tathāgata*, [which is obtained] out of the proper [mental] presence [concerning] that [particular] occasion, his [actions], that manner, that time. And there, that

Non-forgetfulness of mindfulness, that is: [after having] extensively relaxed the body and smoothed the senses by means of a mindful mind, he [*scil.* the *bodhisattva*] should also greatly diminish the [rhythm of] breath, [insofar as any] occasion for [whatever] conditioning factor is no [more] ascertained. He [then] practices with equanimity the fourfold deportment (*īryāpatha*):<sup>57</sup> that is the skillfulness in means (*upayakauśalyatā*) of wisdom (*prajñā*).<sup>58</sup>

To smooth the six senses is the method of equality. After having cleansed well the mirror [of the mind],<sup>59</sup> placed at the crossing of the

non-forgetfulness of mindfulness, [that] state of abiding always in the mindfulness of all the actions, all the places, all the means for the actions, all the times of the *tathāgata*, this, then, is to be regarded as the non-forgetful *dharmatā*). To compare with *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* (Kimura 1986-2009, 6-8, p. 61): *sarvakṛtyeṣu sarvadeṣeṣu sarvopāyeṣu sarvakāleṣu sadopasthitasmṛitā iyam ucyate asaṃmoṣadharmatā* |. Furthermore, in the present passage the *Explanation* seems to expound a doctrine strongly indebted to Kim Heshang's 'three phrases'. It is worth of note, on this regard, that Byañ-cub-klu-dbañ mentions [*dran ba*] *myī brjed pa*, namely, 'non-forgetfulness [of mindfulness]', which conceptually corresponds to Kim Heshang's third sentence: 'not forgetting' (Chinese *mowang* 莫忘). As is well-known, there is on this particular phrase a disagreement in the Chinese tradition, since also the homophonic variant *mowang* 莫妄, meaning 'do not be deluded', is attested. However, it seems that this latter variant is to be attributed to Wuzhu 无住, disciple of Kim Heshang. On this particular matter, see Adamek (2007, pp. 206, 295). Contrary to what happens in the *Explanation*, we find other Dunhuang Tibetan sources dealing or mentioning the 'three phrases' according to Wuzhu's interpretation. For instance, in Pelliot Tibétain 699 the 'three phrases' are rendered into Tibetan as follows: *mi sems* (no-mind), *mi dran* (no-mindfulness) and *sgyu ma* (illusion), which stands for *sgyu ma'i sems mi 'byuñ ba* ('non-emerging of illusory mind'). See van Schaik, Dalton (2004, pp. 67, 71, note 29). Another text related to Wuzhu is contained in Pelliot Tibétain 121, on which see van Schaik (2015, p. 101).

57 The so-called 'four deportments' are the four positions of the body, namely, standing upright, walking, sitting and lying down. Such deportments are the subject of a particular practice of mindfulness, consisting in being always aware of the position of one's own body. Let us by way of example quote the following passage taken from the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*, in which - as it happens in the *Explanation* - mental attention, breath control and the four deportments are related to each other (Kimura 1986-2009, 4, p. 155): *sa khalu punaḥ subhūte'vinivartaniyo bodhisattvo mahāsattva ane imena ca manasikāreṇa samanvāgataś caturbhiś ceryāpathair abhikrāmati na pratikrāmati na bhrāntacitto āgacchati na bhrāntacitta gacchati [...]* (Again, indeed, O Subhūti, this *bodhisattva mahāsattva* that will never regress, provided with [mental] attention in [his] breath, advances by, and does not abstain [himself] from, [performing] the four deportments, he comes without a confused mind, he goes without a confused mind [...]).

58 Wisdom and skillful means are mutually related, to the point that for instance the text 7 of IOL Tib J 709 states that they are non-dual (*gñls su myed pa*) and inseparable or undifferentiated (*dbyer myed pa*).

59 The mirror as a symbol of the mind, which should be cleansed from all mental impurities, is a typical image of the Yogācāra school (and of its tantric derivations as well), whereas it does not occur in the Madhyamaka literature, where the simile of the mirror conveys other meanings. To Alex Wayman we owe two thorough studies (1971, 1974) on this subject, hence I refer the reader to them for further details, particularly on the so-called 'mirror-like knowledge' (*ādarśajñāna*). Here it is however of some interest to



four paths,<sup>60</sup> everything shines forth and becomes [actually] visible.

Because it is purified, [also] the sight shines forth in the same manner. By practicing *yoga*, in this way he will meditate: all the conditions and antidotes<sup>61</sup> of an all-knowing and non-forgetful application of mindful-

quote the following three passages from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, which Wayman does not refer to explicitly: 1. (Vaidya 1963, p. 18) *yathā mahāmate darpaṇasya rūpagrahaṇam evam khyātivijñānasyākhyāsyati* | (O Mahāmati, as there is seizing of the form by the mirror, so [the objects] will appear to the appearance-consciousness); 2. (Vaidya 1963, p. 25): *tad yathā mahāmate darpaṇāntargatāḥ sarvarūpāvabhāsāḥ samdṛśyante nirvikalpā yugapat evam eva mahāmate svacittadrśyadhārām yugapat tathāgataḥ sarvasattvānām viśodhayati nirvikalpām nirābhāsagocarām* | (O Mahāmati, it is like all the forms and appearances [that] are seen together in a mirror, non-conceptual and immediately; exactly so, O Mahāmati, the *tathāgata* purifies immediately the stream of visible objects [appearing] in the own minds of all beings, [so that those minds then become] non-conceptual and [become] domains of non-appearance); 3. (Vaidya 1963, p. 39): *tad yathā mahāmate darpaṇāntargatāni sarvarūpapratiimbakāni khyāyante yathāpratyaayatāḥ svavikalpanāc ca na tāni bimbāni nābimbāni bimbābimbadarśanataḥ | atha ca te mahāmate svacittadrśyavikalpāḥ khyāyante bālānām bimbākṛtayaḥ | evam eva mahāmate svacittapratibimbāni khyāyante ekatvānyatvobhayānubhayadr̥ṣṭyākāreṇa* | (O Mahāmati, it is like the reflections of all the forms [that] appear in a mirror out of the [object's] own distinction, in accordance to the [object's causal] conditions; and [they are] neither reflections nor non-reflections, being seen as [both] reflections and non-reflections; and then, O Mahāmati, these distinctions of visible objects [that] appear in the own minds of simpletons are deceitful reflections [or: reflection-configurations]. Exactly so, O Mahāmati, the reflections in one's own mind appear in the form of views of oneness, otherness, both, neither of the two).

In this regard, the following observation of Wayman is particularly worth of note: he explains that the mirror simile «was transferred to China, where one branch of the Ch'an school, following the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, applied the mirror metaphor to the mind; while another Ch'an school, turning to the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptural position, rejected this metaphor for the mind» (1974, p. 253). On this matter see also Démieville (1947, pp. 112-127). This confirms the heterogeneous approach, on matters of meditation, of the *Explanation*, which is strongly indebted to the *prajñāpāramitā* culture, while takes essential inspiration from the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*.

**60** The four paths here could allude to the stream-enterer (Pāli *sotāpanna*, Sanskrit *srotāpanna*), the once-returned (Pāli *sakadāgāmin*, Sanskrit *sakṛdāgāmin*), the never-returned (*anāgāmin*) and the *arahant*, which are however typical of the Hinayāna tradition. Interestingly enough, in the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra* we meet with the following passage, where the expression *lam bži po* occurs and refers to the fundamental elements/practices of the Mahāyāna *bodhisattva* path (Braarvig 1993a, p. 124): *lam bži po 'di dag ni byaṅ chub sems dpa' rnam kyī ye śes kyī tshogs sogs par 'gyur te | bži gaṅ ze na | 'di lta ste pha rol tu phyin pa'i lam dan | sa'i lam dan | byaṅ chub kyī phyogs kyī lam dan | thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye śes kyī lam ste* | (I have uniformed Braarvig's transliteration of the Tibetan text to the way of citation used in the present article); translation in Braarvig (1993b, p. 477). Unfortunately, in the lack of further textual evidence, we cannot establish whether or not the *Explanation* makes use of *lam gl bži* according to the same sense conveyed by *lam bži po* in the *Akṣayamatīnirdeśasūtra*.

**61** The Tibetan term *gñen po* here probably refers to the so-called antidotes (Sanskrit *pratipakṣa*) to the disadvantages (Tibetan *ñes dmigs*, Sanskrit *ādīnava*) or deficiencies of meditation, which according to the Mahāyāna tradition are five: indolence (Tibetan *le lo*, Sanskrit *kausīdya*), being confused about the instructions (Tibetan *gdams ñag brjed pa*, Sanskrit *avavādasamhoṣa*), restlessness (Tibetan *rgod pa*, Sanskrit *auddhatya*) and dullness (Tibetan *byiñ ba*, Sanskrit *laya*), non-application (Tibetan *'du mi byed pa / mi rtsol*

ness (*smṛtyupasthāna*) encourage the root of mindfulness, which is the source of wisdom (*prajñā*).

This is why from [one] among the *sūtras* we are told thus: «Therefore, wisdom is a sword, mindfulness is a beautiful bow [and] sharp senses are an arrow».<sup>62</sup>

*ba*, Sanskrit *anabhisamkāra/anābhoga*), [over-]application (Tibetan *'du byed pa / rtsol ba*, Sanskrit *abhisamkāra/ābhoga*). See for instance *Madhyāntavibhāgakārikā* 4.4: *kausīdyam avavādasya sammoṣo laya uddhavaḥ | asaṃskāro'tha saṃskāraḥ pañca doṣā ime matāḥ ||*. The antidotes to these disadvantages are eight, as follows: trust (Tibetan *dad pa*, Sanskrit *śraddhā*), aspiration (Tibetan *'dun pa*, Sanskrit *chanda*), exertion (Tibetan *rtsol ba*, Sanskrit *vyāyāma*), pliancy (Tibetan *śin tu sbyaṅs pa*, Sanskrit *praśrabdhi*) are the remedies to indolence, mindfulness (Tibetan *dran pa*, Sanskrit *smṛti*) is the remedy to confusion about the instruction, full consciousness (Tibetan *śes bžin*, Sanskrit *samprajanya*) is the remedy to restlessness and dullness, application is the remedy to non-application and equanimity (Tibetan *btañ sñoms*, Sanskrit *upekṣā*) is the remedy to over-application. See for instance the explanation of Kamalaśīla in his *Bhāvanākrama* I (Namdol 1997, pp. 43-44, extant in Tibetan) and *Bhāvanākrama* III (Namdol 1997, p. 259, identical passage extant in Sanskrit), where however he speaks of six deficiencies. For an outlook of the treatment of the disadvantages and antidotes in the Tibetan context, see Hopkins (1983, pp. 71-80).

**62** Such a kind of metaphors occurs in several Buddhist Mahāyāna texts. The closest parallel to our text can be found in the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra*, where we read indeed (Lhasa bKa'-gyur, PHal-cen, Ca 23a7): *śes rab ral gri yin te dran pa gzu mdzes dbaṅ po rno ba mda' yaṅ yin ||* (Wisdom is a sword, mindfulness is a beautiful bow and sharp senses are an arrow). On the basis of this excerpt, I have emended our Tibetan text *dbaṅ po rnon po ma yin no to dbaṅ po rnon po mda' yin no*. Another similar passage occurs in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchāsūtra* 35ab (Vaidya 1961, p. 123): *maitra varma smṛti khaḍgam uttamaṃ śīla cāpam iṣu prajñupāyataḥ |* (Loving kindness an armour, mindfulness a sword, proper conduct an excellent bow, wisdom and [skillful] means an arrow). Furthermore, of particular interest here is the fifth section (on the *sudurjayābhūmi*) of the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* - a text that is gathered, as is well-known, in the *\*Buddhāvataṃsakasūtra* -, whose stanza 12 makes recourse to the same kind of simile while describing at which stage of the *bodhisattva* meditation these 'weapons' are useful (Vaidya 1967, p. 83): *smṛti cāpa indriya iṣu anivartitāś ca samyakprahāṇa haya vāhana ṛddhipādāḥ | pañca balāḥ kavaca sarvapipūabhebyāḥ [=sarvaripūabhedyāḥ] sūrāṇivarti vidu pañcamī ākramanti ||*; translation in Honda (1968, p. 181). In the light of this last passage - in which explicit reference to the *bodhipakṣya dharmas* (practices helpful to enlightenment) is made - we are perhaps allowed to suspect, when not to suggest, that also the *Explanation* is here describing the moment of passing from the fourth to the fifth *bhūmi*. Besides, among other sources see also *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* 10.8 (Wayman 1999, p. 109).

In conclusion, according to the *Śatasahāsrikāprajñā[pāramitā]*, having constantly gazed and constantly meditated, the noble self-knowing knowledge (*svapratyātmāryajñāna*)<sup>63</sup> occurs by itself.<sup>64</sup>

Hence, when, longing for sight, longing for knowledge, longing for what is beyond, one has constructed all sorts of perfected mental fabrications, [one's] mind is inclined to delusion or distraction because of the absence of peace, and thereafter [such a state is] different from *samatha* and *vipaśyana*. [This] is not [what is] called the perfection of wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*).

[When, on the contrary,] one does not fabricate the body, does not fabricate the mind, does not fabricate [any] thought, does not fabricate [any] speech, does not fabricate [any] way of activity, and is not distressed by the nature (*prakṛti*) of the *dharmatā*, one will faultlessly perform the suitable fourfold deportment (*īryāpatha*).

The end.

### 3.3 Tibetan Text

The text, like the most part of the Tibetan manuscripts found in Dunhuang, presents many characteristics of the old Tibetan orthography, such as the *gi gu rlog* (reversed *i*), the *ma ya btags* (the *ya* attached to the *ma*) and the *'a rten* (the supporting *'a*). Even though there is no occurrence of the *da drag* (the strong *da*) in the *Explanation*, it occurs in other texts collected in IOL Tib J 709. Moreover, some terms occur with a different orthography than the usual classical one as, for instance, *byañ cub* instead of *byañ chub*, and so on.

63 To my knowledge, this concept never occurs in the portions of the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* at my disposal (see Bibliography). However, it is recurrent in the *Lañkāvatārasūtra*, in which it is assimilated to the *tathāgatagarbha* and *nirvāṇa*. See (Vaidya 1963, p. 9): *tathāgatagarbhasvapratyātmāryajñānagocarasyaitat praveśo yat samādhiḥ paramo jāyata iti ||* (This [is the] entrance into the domain of the noble knowledge [originated] by itself of the *tathāgatagarbha*, [in] which the highest *samādhi* is generated), and (Vaidya 1963, p. 81): *tathāgatāsvapratyātmāryajñānādihigamaṃ nirvāṇam iti vadāmi ||* (The acquisition of the *tathāgata*'s noble knowledge [originated] by itself, I call [it] *nirvāṇa*). Also in the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* 17ab we meet with a similar statement (Prasad 1991, p. 16): *ity evaṃ yo'vabodhas tat pratyātmajñānadarśanam |* (Thus, this understanding in such a way [namely, of things as they are,] is the vision [due to] the knowledge [originated] by itself). On the centrality of the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* in the Dunhuang cultural area see the recent Dotson (2013-2014).

64 The self-emergence of the knowledge of the *dharmatā* (= *tathāgatagarbha*) is one of the topics discussed also in text 4 of IOL Tib J 709.

## Editorial Conventions

I	<i>gi gu rlog</i>
‡	page ornamental sign head <i>mgo yig</i>
	<i>śad</i>
	double <i>śad</i>
●	string-hole area
[xx]	folios and/or line numbers
<xx>	emendation suggested
{xx}	original spelling

## Transliteration

[34a1] ‡ slob dpon byañ cub klu dbañ gis bśad pa' ||  
 byañ cub sems dpa'I bden pa'I tshig gañ že na || [2] 'dI lta ste ||  
 de ni gañ smra ba de byed || gañ byed pa de ● smra ba'o || yañ dran  
 bas brjod || brjod pas dran no ||  
 [3] śIn du yañ nI bag ldan ba ||  
 dbañ po rnams kyI phyir ● źIn mñam ||  
 dper na mñam ba'am gza' ba'I [4] thabs ||  
 dbugs kyañ bskyuñ žiñ bag dañ ldan ||  
 ● ci la yañ bag myed byas nas nI ||  
 gañ la yañ bag [5] bya gnas myed do ||  
 de ltar bag bya gnas myed la ||  
 de la śIn du bdag gis blta' ||  
 blta ba myed ciñ blta' [34b1] bar bya' ||  
 de tshe sems kyI 'od kyañ gsal ||  
 dag ciñ spro ba'I sems kyis nI ||  
 sgrIb pa rnams kyañ sel par [2] 'gyur ||  
 byañ chub sems dpa' gañ že na ||  
 chos ● rnams thams cad myi brjod pa'o ||  
 myI brjod pa ni [3] gañ že na ||  
 chos kyI chos ñId dran ba'o ||  
 chos kyI ● chos ñid dran ba nI ||  
 dran ba myed ciñ dran ba'am ||  
 [4] dmyIgs pa myed ciñ dmyigs pa'o ||  
 dmyigs pa ● myed ciñ brjod myed tshig ||  
 de nI dran ba myI brjed pa'o ||  
 [5] dran ba myI brjed de yañ nI ||  
 yañs śiñ lus khlod dbañ po phye ||  
 bag dañ ldan ba'I sems kyis ni ||  
 dbugs kyañ [35a1] ‡ śIn du bskyuñ bar bya ||  
 rkyen gI go skabs myI dbye bar ||

spyod lam rnam bZIr sñoms par spyad | |  
 de ni [2] śes rab thabs mkhas pa'o | |  
 dbaṅ po drug phye ● mñam ba'I thabs | |  
 mye loṅ śin du phyis nas su | |  
 [3] lam gI bZi mdor bZag pa la | |  
 thams cad gsa ● l žin snaṅ ba ste | |  
 dag pas mthoṅ ba gsal ba [4] ltar | |  
 rnal 'byor spyod pas de ltar bsgom | |  
 thams ● cad mkhyen pa myI brjed pa'I | |  
 dran ba ñe bar bZag pa'i | |  
 [5] rkyen daṅ gñen po thams cad nI | |  
 skul ma dran bar byed pa'I | |  
 gZi ni 'byuṅ gnas śes rab bo | |  
 de bas śes [35b1] rab ral gyI ste | |  
 dran ba gZu ru mdzes pa yin | |  
 dbaṅ po rnon po <mda'> {ma} yin no

žes mdo sde dag gi naṅ nas | | de skad [2] 'byuṅ bas na | | mdor na śes rab  
 stoṅ phrag brgya pa las 'byuṅ ba bZIn du | | yaṅ nas yaṅ du bltas | | yaṅ nas  
 [3] yaṅ du bsgoms na' | | 'phags pa raṅ gis rig ● pa'I ye śes raṅ 'byuṅ ṅo | |  
 de las mthoṅ 'dod | [4] śes 'dod | lhag 'dod de | sems bcos legs ● maṅ  
 po byas na | | sems 'khrul pa'am | | g.yeṅ [5] ba ma žI ba las spyogs te | |  
 žI gnas daṅ lhag mthoṅ cha ma mñam slan cad | | śes rab kyI pha rol du  
 phyin pa žes [36a1] † myI bya'o | |  
 lus myI bcos sems myi bcos | | bSam ba myi bcos | | smra ba myI bcos |  
 | spyod lam myi bcos te | | [2] chos ṅId kyI raṅ bZin myI 'khrugs pa' | | cI  
 bZin ● par spyod lam rnam bZIr myI ṅams par bgyI'o | | [3] || || || ● || || ||  
 rdzogs so' ||

**Appendix**  
**Reproduction of the Fac-simile**  
**of the Manuscript**

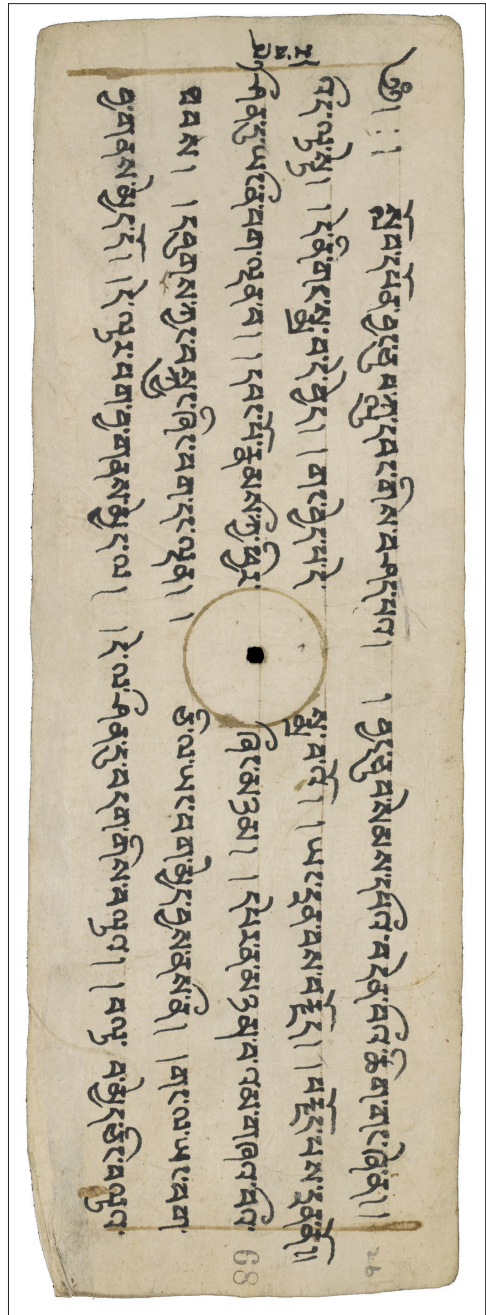
IOL Tib J 709

BL location Volume 14, folios 42-79 (the present work folios 68-70, corresponding to folios 34-36 of the Tibetan numeration)

Stein site number Ch.2.a.A

Dimensions 9 × 26 cm (Pothi)

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IOL Tib J 709, fol. 34a



རལ་ཡལ་ལྷོ་མེད། རྩོམ་པ་གཞུགས་པ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་རྩེ་ཐལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད།  
 རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད།  
 རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད།  
 རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད།

རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད།  
 རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད།  
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 རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད། རལ་པལ་ལོ་མེད།

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