

# Tsoñ kha pa's Doubts about Candrakīrti's Authorship of the *Madhyamakapañcaskandhaka*

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## Introduction

The *\*Madhyamakapañcaskandhaka* (MPSk), preserved only in Tibetan translation, is a concise treatise that expounds the essence of the Sarvāstivāda system of elements (*dharma*s) from the Mādhyamika viewpoint. It has been traditionally ascribed to Candrakīrti. However, due to obvious Sarvāstivāda features in this text, some scholars doubt his authorship.<sup>1)</sup> Tsoñ kha pa (1357–1419), too, also doubted it.<sup>2)</sup> In this paper, I present a translation of the passages concerning Tsoñ kha pa's doubts and clarify his reasons. Then I further investigate their validity on the basis of the results of studies on the MPSk that I have published.<sup>3)</sup>

## Tsoñ kha pa's doubts

In the *Legs bśad gser phreñ*, Tsoñ kha pa shows his hesitation to ascribe the MPSk to Candrakīrti (D 346a6–348a2, P ña 32b5–34a5). The relevant passages belong to the section how to explain a way to eliminate defilements that are abandoned by insight into the four noble truths. Although these passages are quite long, this paper provides complete translations of the relevant passages.<sup>4)</sup> In the translation, I divide the passages into sections on the basis of the structure of the text.

Concerning the second [point], there are two [topics]: establishing the method of explanation and considering whether they are correct or not.

(1. Establishing the method of explanation) In the first [topic], there are two [subtopics]: how [is abandonment] explained from [the point of view of] Abhidharma and how do later teachers explain [it]?

(1.1. How is abandonment explained from the point of view of Abhidharma?) The first [subtopic is as follows]. In the [*Abhidharma*]-*kośa*, [abandonment] is explained through [the following sixteen elements:] the four [kinds of] receptivity [to the knowledge] of the doctrine

(*dharmajñāna*]*kṣānti*) that are the path of immediate succession (*ānantaryamārga*), which eliminates those [defilements] in the realm of desire that are abandoned by insight [into the four noble truths]; the four [kinds of] knowledge of the doctrine (*dharmajñāna*), which are the path of liberation (*vimuktimārga*) of that [receptivity]; the four [kinds of] receptivity [to] subsequent [knowledge] (*anvaya*]*jñāna*]*kṣānti*) that are the path of immediate succession which eliminates those [defilements] in the upper realms that are abandoned by insight; the four [kinds of] subsequent knowledge (*anvaya*]*jñāna*) that are the path of liberation of that [receptivity].

In the system of the [*Abhidharma*]-*Samuccaya*, receptivity [to the knowledge] of the doctrine with regard to suffering (*duḥkhe dharmajñāna*]*kṣānti*) eliminates those [defilements] in all three realms that are abandoned by insight into suffering, after which knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering directly perceives the path of liberation. the other three [pairs of] receptivity [to the knowledge] of the doctrine and knowledge of the doctrine are the same. Receptivity to subsequent knowledge with regard to suffering has as its object receptivity to the knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering and knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering, after which it is understood that they are the cause of the superior qualities of the noble ones. Subsequent knowledge with regard to suffering (*duḥkhe anvaya*]*jñāna*) has receptivity [to] subsequent [knowledge] as its object, after which it is determined that it is understood in the same way as above (i.e., as the cause of the superior qualities of the noble ones). The other three [pairs of] receptivity [to] subsequent [knowledge] and subsequent knowledge are the same. Therefore, [the AS] does not explain receptivity [to] subsequent [knowledge] and subsequent knowledge as antidote to the objects to be abandoned. The AS says:

What is receptivity to the knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering? It is insight (*prajñā*) free from contaminants that directly perceives the essences respectively in terms of the previous investigation. The element that eliminates the defilements that are abandoned by insight into suffering is referred to as receptivity to the knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering. What is knowledge of the doctrine? [It is] the knowledge that directly perceives liberation immediately after the receptivity. What is receptivity to the subsequent knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering? It is insight free from contaminants that perceives directly these two, [i.e.,] receptivity to the knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering and knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering, respectively, as the cause of the superior qualities of the noble ones. What is subsequent knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering? It is firm understanding of that receptivity to subsequent knowledge of the doctrine with regard to suffering. It should be understood that receptivity and knowledge are also applied to other truths as appropriate.<sup>5)</sup>

Thus, the objects of those wisdoms (i.e., receptivity and knowledge) are those things that are perceived when receptivity [to the knowledge] of the doctrine and knowledge of the doctrine have the nature of the truths as their object and those things possessing the objects that are understood by receptivity [to] subsequent [knowledge] and subsequent knowledge when [these two] have that

which possesses the objects, i.e., wisdom, as their object. However, the duration of a moment is [the time that it takes] to complete recognition of their own object. [It is the time it takes] to finish an action, not the shortest possible moment, because that would be illogical in conventional terms. The nature of neither of these wisdoms is connected to the cause of appellation. The AS says:

In that case, receptivity to the knowledge of the doctrine and knowledge of the doctrine recognize a perceived object. Receptivity [to] subsequent [knowledge] and subsequent knowledge recognize a perceiving subject. All receptivity and knowledge also must be understood as a subject of meditation without signs.<sup>6)</sup>

Then [the AS also says:]

A mental moment should be understood as the completion of the arising of knowledge concerning an object to be known.<sup>7)</sup>

(1.2. **How do later teachers explain abandonment?**) The second [subtopic is as follows]. In the [*Madhyamaka*]-*Pañcaskandhaka*, which is said to have been composed by Master Candrakīrti, the number of objects to be abandoned and the method by which antidotes abandon [them] are [explained] in the same way as in the AKBh. This master (Haribhadra), in the section on the Mahāyāna path of insight, explains the number of objects to be abandoned etc., in the same way as in the AS.<sup>8)</sup> In the second chapter of the *Munimatālaṃkāra* (MMA), the number of objects to be abandoned, the way that they are abandoned by antidotes, the way to attain paths of immediate succession and liberation, and the establishment of the path of insight, [which consists of] the first fifteen [moments] and that of cultivation, [which begins with] the sixteenth [moment] are explained in the same way as in the AKBh.<sup>9)</sup> In the third chapter [of the MMA], the number of objects to be abandoned is [explained] in the same way as in the AS, and the way of their abandonment by antidotes and their assignment to the two paths are [explained] in the same way as in the AKBh.<sup>10)</sup> In the [*Madhyamaka*]-*Avatāra-tīkā*, [the author] explains his own opinion in the accordance with the AS.<sup>11)</sup> Then [he] mentions the opinion of others, saying, "Others explain differently."<sup>12)</sup> This seems to have the same meaning as in the third chapter of the MMA.

(2. **Considering whether those method are correct or not**) The second [topic is as follows]. In the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī* (VS) [of the *Yogācārabhūmi*], the antidotes of things to be abandoned by insight in the upper and lower realms are explained separately. [Namely, the VS] determines the truths of upper and lower realms first, or [it] explains at the same time knowledge of the doctrine and subsequent knowledge in terms of the subject that eliminates objects to be abandoned in the upper and lower realms.<sup>13)</sup>

Many learned men, such as the venerable [Hari]Bhadra, follow the teaching that explains receptivity [to the knowledge] of the doctrine as the only antidote of objects to be abandoned by insight in all three realms.<sup>14)</sup> Here, it is careless of Abhayākara Gupta to explain objects to be abandoned in the same way as in the AS and the way of abandonment as in the AKBh, because [the AKBh] contradicts the position of the AS.

In that [treatise] entitled [*Madhyamaka*]-*Pañcaskandhaka*, [the author] gives an explanation

for three topics (i.e., the number of objects to be abandoned, the way of abandonment, and the way to enter two paths), that basically sets forth the opinion of the Vaibhāṣikas. However, Master Candrakīrti refuses even to accept that the assertions of the two [groups] that maintain [the real existence of] objects are valid only at the conventional level. Thus, this [treatise] seems to be something that was not composed by him but was ascribed to him by someone who was familiar with the lower Abhidharma (i.e., the AKBh).<sup>15)</sup>

### Investigation of the validity of his doubts

Although the passages concerning the subject of Tsoñ kha pa's doubts are quite long and complicated, the main reason can be found at the end of the last section, namely, his belief that Candrakīrti should not have adopted the Sarvāstivāda theory of the real existence of elements even at the level of conventional truth. The MPSk expounds the theory of abandonment of the defilements in the section on proclivity (*anuśaya*).<sup>16)</sup> As Tsoñ kha pa says, the theory in the MPSk is surely that of Sarvāstivāda. However, it must be noted that the MPSk consistently denies the intrinsic nature of elements on the basis of the interdependent relationship among them. The MPSk expounds the system of elements because basic knowledge of it is necessary for an understanding of the theory of emptiness.<sup>17)</sup> This aspect of the MPSk illustrates the multiple functions of Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma. Rejecting the ultimate reality of the elements the author of the MPSk adopts the system of elements as a compilation of fundamental conceptions in Buddhism. Tsoñ kha pa's belief is based on his preconception that Sarvāstivāda system of elements is an unqualified theory of real existence.

### Conclusion

Tsoñ kha pa's doubts about Candrakīrti's authorship of the MPSk are based on his understanding that the Sarvāstivāda system of elements can be completely identified with its theory of real existence. Such a view seems to derive from the doxographical tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, which tried very hard to understand Indian Buddhist thought systematically. That tradition also has considerably influenced modern scholars' understanding of Indian Buddhist thought. Here, it must be emphasized that the Sarvāstivāda system of elements has multiple functions. It is not only an explanation of their ontological principle, but also a compilation of fundamental Buddhist conceptions. Their system has been established through Abhidharma, which comprehensively includes

diverse intellectual activities such as the classification, systemization, and investigation of the teachings of early sutras. As I have demonstrated in previous papers, the author of the MPSk finds that the system of elements is useful in its function as a compendium of basic Buddhist ideas, while he denies its ontological aspect. When one takes the textual characteristics of the MPSk into consideration, there seems to be no reason to hesitate in ascribing it to Candrakīrti, and this does not contradict the traditional understanding of his authorship. His attitude in the MPSk can be compared with Vasubandhu's in the AKBh, which presents Vaibhāṣika theories including severe criticisms in some places. In order to understand precisely the roles of the Sarvāstivāda system of elements in the Indian Buddhist tradition, scholars must be aware of its multiple functions. The theory of the real existence of elements must be understood as a significant result, but only one of many, of the intellectual project known as Abhidharma.

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#### Notes

- 1) See Ikeda (1985) and Kishine (2001, 18–19, 39–41). These studies present the possibility that only the section on insight should be ascribed to Candrakīrti. However, in my previous papers, I demonstrated that the evidence in those studies is not plausible enough to prove his partial authorship (see Yokoyama [2016b]). I also provide some evidence to support his authorship of the whole text (see Yokoyama [2021b], [2022]). 2) Matsumoto (1981, 153, note 16) and Ikeda (1985, 40) briefly mention Tsoñ kha pa's doubts without investigating the details. Tsoñ kha pa's reasons for doubting Candrakīrti's authorship and those of modern scholars are totally different. 3) I would like to express my thanks to Mr. Shōjirō Nomura (chief of Monjushiri Daijōbukkū Kai), who offered me helpful suggestions and information, when I gave a presentation at the 73rd conference of the Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies (September 3, 2022, online). 4) The English translation by G. Sparham also includes the translation of this part: see pp. 66–69 in the second volume. 5) AS, D 93a6–b2, P 110b8–111a5. 6) AS, D 93b2–3, P 111a5–6. The partial Sanskrit manuscript of the AS does not include these passages. 7) AS, D 93b4, P 111a7. The partial Sanskrit manuscript of the AS does not include these passages. 8) AAA, 170.3–30. 9) MMA, D 154b5–155a3, P 193b1–194a2. 10) MMA, D 196a1–2, P 254a8–b2; D 198b1–199a2, P 257b6–258b4. 11) MAṬ, D 31b1–32b1, P 37b4–38b8. 12) MAṬ, D 32b2–5, P 38b8–39a5. 13) VS, D 258a6–b3, P 272a4–b1. 14) See note 8 in this paper. 15) In contrast to “the lower Abhidharma” (AKBh), the AS is referred to as “the upper Abhidharma” (*mñion pa goñ ma*). These appellations convey the hierarchy of Abhidharma texts in Tibetan Buddhism. 16) MPSk D 260b7–261a1, P 298a5–299a5. In my previous paper, I pointed out that the style of explaining the theory of abandonment of the defilements in the MPSk is similar to style in which the theory of the Sarvāstivāda masters is presented as the opponent's theory in verses 3–5ab, Chapter 24, *Prasannapadā* (see Yokoyama [2022]). 17) For the textual characteristics of the MPSk, see Yokoyama (2015), (2016a) and (2021a, 20–23).

## Abbreviations and Primary Sources

- AAA *Abhisamayālaṃkāṛāloka. Abhisamayālaṃkāṛāloka Prajñāpāramitāvyākhyā*. Ed. Wogihara Unrai. Tokyo: The Toyo Bunko, 1932–35.
- AS *Abhidharmasamuccaya*. D no. 4049 *ri* 44b1–120a7, P no. 5550 *li* 51a2–141b2.  
*Legs bśad gser phreñ*. D no. 5412 *tsa* 1b1–405a4, P no. 6150 *ja* 1b1–ña 354a1.
- MAT *Madhyamakāvatāraṭīkā*. D no. 3870 *ra* 1b1–365a7, P no. 5271 *ra* 1b1–443a6.
- MPSk *Phuñ po lia'i rab tu byed pa (Pañcaskandhaprakaraṇa)*. D no. 3866 *ya* 239b1–266b7, P no. 5267 *ya* 273b6–305b5.
- VS *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī*. D no. 4038 *ḥi* 1b1–'i 22a7, P no. 5539 *zi* 1b1–'i 172b8.

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