

Mipham Gyatso Rinpoche's 'Makeover'
of Hwashang Moheyan

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Abstract

The name ‘Hwashang’ has not always been equated with nihilistic wrong view in Tibetan Buddhism. The way Tibetan scholars and masters have taken Hwashang up into their historical narratives and philosophical systems after Hwashang’s lineage was destroyed corresponds to the overall philosophical and the corresponding historical stance these masters offered to their audiences whereby responding to their polemical and historical context. In the early days, before the formation of a functionally orthodox (Gelukpa) position on ‘Hwashang’ as a nihilistic wrong view which holds that one should abandon all thoughts, the Nyingma masters Nub Sangye Yeshe (gNubs Sangs rgyas Ye shes, 8-9th century) and Longchen Rabjam (kLong chen Rab byams, 1308–1364) displayed appreciation of ‘the master Hwashang’ whose teachings on non-conceptuality as a means to attain enlightenment resonated with theirs. However, those whose systems rejected such practice of non-conceptuality, such as Sakya Paṇḍita (Sa skya Pan di ta Kun dga’i rGyal mtshan, 1182–1251) and Tsongkhapa (rJe Tsong kha pa, 1357–1419), depicted ‘Hwashang’ negatively and rejected his teachings altogether, thereby using the historical narratives which after the ‘dark age’ had been altered to become pro-Indian. With the ascendancy of the orthodox position on Hwashang, Jigme Lingpa (’Jigs med gLing pa, 1730-1798) alternatively displayed respect for ‘the master Hwashang’, but rejected the teachings he was said to have propounded. Mipham (’Jam mgon ‘Ju Mi pham rGya mtsho, 1846–1912) thereafter typically finds common ground between the negative orthodox presentation and the older more positive Nyingma presentations. While Pettit claims Mipham *uses* a caricature of the “Hashang system”¹ and Phuntsho hypothesizes that Mipham *interpreted* Hwashang,² this thesis will show how he moreover *creates* a new Hwashang — a ‘Hwashang makeover’ — by appearing to take on the Gelukpa’s presentation of Hwashang’s system by describing it as nihilistic, while allowing for the importance of non-conceptuality on the path as the Nyingmapa’s propounded.

¹ John W Pettit, *Mipham’s Beacon of Certainty: Illuminating the View of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 83.

² Karma Phuntsho, *Mipham’s Dialectics and the Debates on Emptiness: To Be, Not to Be or Neither* (London: Routledge, 2011), 198.

1. Introduction

The historical narratives of the Samye (bSam yas) debate (792-794 C.E.) and other presentations of the teachings of the debater Hwashang Moheyan³ (late 8th century) vary based on the ways these scholars' and masters' philosophical stance, and the polemical historical dialogue they had to take into account. The references of Hwashang's name are examples of how Tibetan Buddhist masters have interacted with historical narrative as they presented their teachings. They thereby influenced the identity formation of specific philosophical schools as well as the Tibetan people as a whole. While the typical narrative of the Samye Debate nowadays holds that the Chinese Hwashang Moheyan, who propagated an instantaneous approach to enlightenment, was defeated⁴ by the Indian Kamalaśīla who propagated a gradual approach, the way Tibetans over time have referred to the name 'Hwashang' and his teachings vary greatly and even contradict each other.

What stands out when examining the way Hwashang's name has been referred to is how the name came to stand more and more for a nihilistic form of non-thought meditation. Although Tibetan masters tend to agree that 'Hwashang' stands for non-conceptuality and non-doing on the path, they disagree as to the nuances and significance of this view. Nyingmapa (rNying ma pa) thinkers in the early days displayed appreciation of the master 'Hwashang' and his teachings with which their teachings on non-conceptuality on the path resonate. In contrast, in later times when negative (and caricatural) depictions had become orthodox, 'Hwashang' gets to be depicted more negatively and those who rejected non-conceptuality on the path rejected his teachings altogether. Although we generally don't know which sources these masters based themselves on, we do know

³ Hwashang derived from the Chinese word 'ho-shang' (Skt. *upadhyaya*, a professional teacher), and Moheyan being a Chinese derivative of Mahāyāna. Although 'Hwashang' thus refers to a Chinese teacher in general, Tibetan literature and most secondary literature refer to Hwashang Moheyan as 'Hwashang,' so I follow suit here.

⁴ Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism- Conversion, Contestation, and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 214. Kapstein discusses an older version of *The Testament (dBa bzhed)* which accords more closely with the Chinese account.

that there were sources to both support a more positive as well as a more negative take on Hwashang.

Of the different presentations on Hwashang, earlier Nyingma masters such as Nub Sangye Yeshe (gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, 8-9th century) ranked Hwashang's instantaneous system above the gradualists but below Vajrayāna.⁵ Longchen Rabjam (kLong chen Rab byams, 1308–1364) treated certain of Hwashang's statements as almost equal to Dzogchen, stating that when Hwashang said that virtue and sin are like “black and white clouds” in that they both cover the “sun of wisdom,” those of lesser intellects could not comprehend it, but it was actually the truth.⁶ In his *Words of the Omniscient One* (*Kun mkhyen Zhal lung*), Jigme Lingpa ('Jigs med gLing pa, 1730-1798) states that it is undeniable that Hwashang was a teacher of the sharpest faculties.⁷ By contrast, Sarmapa thinkers, such as Sakya Paṇḍita (Sa skya Pan di ta Kun dga'i rGyal mtshan, 1182–1251) and Tsongkhapa (rJe Tsong kha pa, 1357–1419) understood Hwashang to have had a nihilist understanding of reality as he dismissed all conceptual thoughts, including the virtuous ones, as hindrances to enlightenment. The presently leading Nyingma presentation of Hwashang Moheyan and his teachings as formulated by Jamgon Ju Mipham Gyatso Rinpoche ('Jam mgon 'Ju Mi pham rGya mtsho, 1846–1912) is unique as it neither reveres Hwashang as an esteemed master

⁵ gNubs chen Sangs rgyas Ye shes, *rNal 'Byor Mig Gi bSam Gtan or Bsam Gtan Mig Sgron*, ed. Khor gdong Ter sprul 'Chi med Rig 'dzin, vol. 74 (Leh, Ladakh: Sman rtsis Shes rig sPen dzod, 1974).

⁶ /slob dpon chen po ha shang gis gsungs pas de dus blo dman pa'i blur ma shong yang don la de bzhin du gnas so/ kLong chen Rab 'byams pa Dri med 'Od zer, “sDe Gsum Snying Po Don 'grel Gnas Lugs Rin Po Che'i Mdzod,” in *mDzod Bdun*, ed. Yeshe De Project, vol. 7, 7 vols. (India, 1992), 97. Translation in Sam Van Schaik, “The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk: Nyingmapa Defenses of Hashang Mahāyāna,” *Early Tibet*, accessed July 22, 2014, <http://earlytibet.com/about/hashang-mahayana/>.

⁷ ber gyi thu ba gnyis sprugs nas gzung 'dzin gyis lan bya ba'i brda lan ston nus pa sogs dbang po shin tu mnon po'i gang zag yin par bsnyon du med la/ 'Jigs med gLing pa, “rDo Rje'i Tshig Rkang Gi Don 'Grel Kun Mkhyen Zhal Lung,” in *kLong Chen Snying Tig*, ed. Ngawang Sopa, vol. III (hum) (New Delhi, 1973), 527-28. Translation in Van Schaik, “The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk.”

like the presentations of the above mentioned Nyingma masters, nor does it dismiss of Hwashang as a nihilist in the way that Sakya Paṇḍita's and Tsongkhapa's presentations do.⁸

Comparing Mipham's use of the name 'Hwashang' to his Nyingma predecessors' reveals his innovative strategies for presenting Nyingma dialectics in combination with his *yuganaddha* (*zung du 'jug pa* or *zung 'jug*, "unity") style. This style of unity — so characteristic of the Nyingma school — aims to resolve tension between any two extremes through finding a common ground or a level of understanding that transcends both extremes while giving extra emphasis to the importance of reasoning. Putting Mipham's comments on Hwashang in the wider Tibetan Buddhist historical and social context, reveal his greater concerns of bringing the Nyingma view onto the dialectical platform.⁹ In applying this style of unity to his presentation of Hwashang, Mipham finds common ground between the dominant Gelukpa presentation and the presentations of his own Nyingma predecessors, re-making Hwashang as a symbol for nihilistic view in accordance with the Gelukpa's claim, while retaining the aspect of non-conceptuality on the path central to the Nyingma tradition.

1. Identity Formation around 'Hwashang'

Modern scholars have questioned whether a historical Samye debate ever really took place, or whether there was instead a series of discussions and literary exchanges.¹⁰ It is significant to note that Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* (*bsGom rim, Stages of Practice*),¹¹ a work which was supposedly written right after the Samye debate would have taken place, does not mention any great debate, nor

⁸ Karma Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics and the Debates on Emptiness: To Be, Not to Be or Neither* (London: Routledge, 2011), 193.

⁹ The field where both insiders as well as outsiders find each other in debate.

¹⁰ Sam Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 39.

¹¹ Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* was supposedly written right after the Samye debate at the request of king Trisong Detsen. Kamalaśīla deals with the views of instantaneous enlightenment similar to those of Hwashang, but he does not mention Hwashang or any specific debate.

does it mention ‘Hwashang.’ There is furthermore a Chinese version of the debate as well as an early version of the *Testament* (*dBa bzhed*)¹² which conclude with the king Trisong Detsen (Khri srong lDe btsan, 8th century) giving his blessing to the Chinese teachers,¹³ and there are ancient manuscripts which indicate that Hwashang had a more nuanced view of meditation than indicated in the typical narrative of the Samye Debate.¹⁴ While the historical accuracy of the Samye debate thus is first of all questionable, Tibetan sources after the dark age sometimes moreover project a pronouncedly anti-Chinese stance to the reign of Trisong Detsen based on the traditional Tibetan lore of a confrontation between Hwashang and Kamalaśīla and Kamalaśīla’s victory leading to some kind of suppression of Chinese Buddhism during Trisong Detsen reign. But, none of the different versions of the *Testament* specify whether Chinese Buddhism as a whole was banned, or only the tradition propounded by Hwashang.¹⁵ And, moreover, the earliest version of the *Testament* known to us closely resembles Chinese documents in presenting Hwashang as the winner, and both the earlier as well as the later versions present Chinese Buddhist figures positively (with the exception of Hwashang and his cohorts during the Samye debate in the later versions) emphasizing the influence of the Chinese role in the buddhicization of Tibet. The lack of any direct reference in early sources to the Samye debate, sources that indicate a Chinese winner and the anti-Chinese stance projected onto the reign of Trisong Detsen suggest that the Samye debate narrative had taken on a life of its own, driven by factors such as author’s pro-Indian sentiments and the search for identity of Tibetan Buddhist schools and the Tibetans as a whole after the dark age.

¹² Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 214.

¹³ Pelliot 4646 and Stein 2672.

¹⁴ c.f. Gómez “The Direct and Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna.”

¹⁵ The *Testament* does however specify that Chinese Buddhist books, though recalled throughout the country, were not destroyed but concealed in the treasury of Samye. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 34, 35.

With respect to this role that the narratives played in the creation of a new identity for the Tibetans, Sven Bretfeld explains the role of historical narrative in “The ‘Great Debate’ of bSamyas: Construction and Deconstruction of a Tibetan Buddhist Myth”¹⁶ for those who base their identity on such narratives. He discusses how according to the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann, a group’s ‘founding memories’ (“fundierende Erinnerung”), are preserved in oral or literary texts, pictures, rituals etc. and are thereby communicated by expert members to the rest of the group. They are part of the larger cultural memory (“kulturelles Gedächtnis”), a collective memory of a common past, central for every social group and individual building up its cultural identity.¹⁷ This functions to give meaning to the present in communicating and shaping memories. One might ask what the scholars and masters who presented Hwashang — a key player in the ‘founding memory’ of the Samye debate — would have wished to offer their audiences, and what kind of identity they were consequently creating in their constructions of narrative. Kapstein points out that historical sources were written and used for the formation of the Tibetan identity starting as early as the mid-seventh century.¹⁸ With the fall of the empire during the ninth century, Tibetans were faced with political and economic crises and with a crisis of understanding as well. And it was the cosmology and soteriology of Buddhism which provided a way of making sense of the Tibetan world. Kapstein mentions that the *Testament of Ba* was the first full formulation of Tibetan Buddhist historians creating a Tibetan Buddhist narrative.¹⁹

¹⁶ Sven Bretfeld, “The ‘Great Debate’ of bSamyas: Construction and Deconstruction of a Tibetan Buddhist Myth,” *Asiatische Studien: Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Gesellschaft für Asienkunde = Etudes asiatiques: revue de la Société Suisse d’études asiatiques*, 58 (2004), 18.

¹⁷ Jan Assmann, “Das Kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung Und Politische Identität” in *Frühen Hochkulturen. dritte Auflage* (München: C.H.Beck, 1997).

¹⁸ Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 36.

¹⁹ Ibid.

At the end of the dark age Yeshe Ö (Ye shes 'Od, 959-1024) initiated a trend of purification of the tantric tradition that had been brought from India, by going back to the Indian roots for original teachings. After the Bengali master Atiśa (Atiśa Dīpaṃkara, 983?-1054) had been invited to revitalize the Buddhist traditions in Tibet, new schools (*gsar ma*)²⁰ formed which based themselves on new translations of Indian Buddhist materials.²¹ In the subsequent historical narratives — which were created and recreated in the process of establishing the identity of these new schools — the influence of Chinese Buddhism on Tibetan Buddhism was gradually erased as the role of Indian Buddhism was emphasized. Narratives such as the later versions of the *Testament* gave the Tibetan people an identity as the ‘chosen people’ entrusted with the sacred mission of preserving ‘the only true Buddhist tradition view’ (Indian) from any contaminating wrong view (Chinese), just like Kamalaśīla had protected this view from the Hwashang’s wrong view. As a result of this newly created identity the Tibetans learned to consider authentic Buddhism as that which had come from the Land of the Superiors (*'phags yul*), India, and not from China — giving great importance to the source precedence. Consequently, each school made it a point to show how it traced its doctrines back through a period of the transmission of Buddhism from India to Tibet and back further to a lineage of Indian masters. The later versions of the *Testament* dating from the 12th and 14th century which present the Indian master Kamalaśīla as the winner of the debate are examples of narratives that are functional in stressing the importance of looking back to India as the source of ‘the only true Buddhist tradition’. Donald Lopez explains that by the time of Sera Jetsun Chokyi Gyaltsen (Se ra rJe btsun Chos kyi rGyal mTshan (1469-1546)) to evoke the most famous debate in Tibetan history

²⁰ As *opposed to* the old traditions (*rnying ma*) that had formed during the first spread before the dark age (842-978) at the time that Buddhism was established in Tibet. The dark age refers to the time between the onset of civil war in 842 after the Tibetan Empire had collapsed when the Buddhist emperor Lang Darma was assassinated around 840, and the re-introduction of Buddhism into Tibet during the “Second Spread” (*phyi dar*) starting around 978.

²¹ Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 108.

functioned moreover to put down one's opponent by linking him to the defeated Chinese Hwashang.²²

2. Usage of the Hwashang Symbol

Ever since Sakya Paṇḍita used these narratives to compare a popular practice of non-mentation (*yid la mi byed pa*) in the Kagyu tradition to Hwashang's, Hwashang and the debate have become a meaningful symbol for the general debate about the relation between a non-conceptual path and fruition. Although all Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions accept that Buddhahood entails non-conceptual wisdom (*rnam par mi rtogs pa'i ye she*), which implies non-mentation, they disagree as to what role such non-conceptual wisdom plays on the path. For those traditions where non-conceptual wisdom is taken as a path, i.e. Dzogchen (rDzog chen, "The Great Perfection") and Mahāmudrā (Phyag chen, "The Great Seal"), to explain the relation between a non-conceptual path and a non-conceptual fruition — how non-conceptuality could be a path, i.e. how not doing anything could produce any result — has been part of their basic exegesis. According to David Higgins, the early Great Perfection position on this relation was a strong rejection of non-conceptuality as a goal arrived at by conceptual means (Mahāyāna gradualism, such as Kamalaśīla's) or as a *means* to its own end (as Hwashang is believed to have taught). They claim that non-conceptuality cannot be captured within a dualistic framework with means and ends, and that non-conceptuality is instead a fundamental state of being, of awareness.²³ The need to explain the relation between a non-conceptual path and a non-conceptual fruition became more pressing, however, when respected scholars

²² Donald Lopez, "Polemical Literature (dGaglan)," in *Tibetan Literature: Studies in Genre*, ed. Jose Ignacio Cabezón. (Snow Lion Publications, 1996), 219.

²³ David Higgins, "The Philosophical Foundations of Classical rDzogs Chen in Tibet- Investigating the Distinction Between Dualistic Mind (sems) and Primordial Knowing (ye Shes)" (l'Université de Lausanne, 2012), 73.

from outside their traditions attacked non-conceptual paths.²⁴ These critics such as Sakya Paṇḍita in the beginning of the thirteenth century, and Je Tsongkhapa in the fourteenth century in whose tradition the ‘practice’ of non-conceptualization was looked at with suspicion,²⁵ used Hwashang and the Samye debate in their polemical works to point out that a path necessarily needs to involve both the method of virtuous action as well as wisdom and that the method of entering wisdom is wasted when virtuous action is not taken into the path. Sakya Paṇḍita and Je Tsongkhapa's presentations reflect sources on Hwashang and the Samye debate that depicted Hwashang and his system negatively, such as Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* (*bsGom rim, Stages of Practice*) which supported their claim that views similar to Hwashang's were untenable,²⁶ and the later versions of the *Testament of Ba*²⁷ which backed up their depiction of Hwashang as the Chinese master who was silenced by Kamalaśīla's sharp arguments.²⁸ Van Schaik distinguishes two 18th century Nyingma responses to the accusations of the Nyingma teachings on non-conceptual paths resembling Hwashang's system: one doxographic — a hierarchical placement of Hwashang's system above the gradual but below the

²⁴ Although such non-conceptuality is part of Sapaṇ's own teachings, he objected to them being taught on the sūtric level the way Gampopa did; Sapaṇ held that on the sūtric level, the gradual system should be followed.

²⁵ “In his great knowledge of Indian Buddhism, Sakya Pandita had an eye for what he saw as Tibetan aberrations. Naturally conservative, he was suspicious of lamas who promised enlightenment without going through the consecutive stages of Buddhist practices and took a more conservative view.” Sam Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 76-7.

²⁶ Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama* was supposedly written right after the Samye debate at the request of King Trisong Detsen. Kamalaśīla deals with the views of instantaneous enlightenment similar to those of Hwashang, but he does not mention Hwashang or any specific debate.

²⁷ There are three known versions of this text: 1) the dBa' bzhed in Wangdu and Diemberger (Wangdu Pasang and Hildegard Diemberger, *dBa' Bzhed: The Royal Narrative Concerning the Bridging of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet* (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000) (from a manuscript kept in Lhasa), thought to be the earliest, dates back to the eleventh century (Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' Bzhed*, XIV), 2) The sBa bzhed edited and published by Gonpo Gyaltzen is estimated to date to the twelfth century, 3) The sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma (“with addendum”) published by Stein (1961) is dated to the 14th century. These are all considered later copies, and the original one lost (Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' Bzhed*, 1-2). The author of the *Testament* is generally thought to be sBa gSal snang of the influential dBa' clan, though the name sBa Sang shi is mentioned as well. The earlier versions of the Testament seems to be more sympathetic of the Chinese party while the later versions depict Kamalaśīla winning the debate.

²⁸ Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 34. “The decision in favor of the Indian tradition, however, in *The Testament* does not indicate an anti-Chinese stance during the reign of Trhi Songdetsen overall, as other Chinese figures such as the princess of Jincheng play very positive roles.”

tantric path — and the other a treatment of the master Hwashang more as an individual emphasizing his extraordinary realization in the way Longchenpa and Jigme Lingpa do.²⁹

According to David Seyfort Ruegg, in his *Buddha-Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet*, once the ‘Great Debate’ of Samye had become a theme in the later reconstruction of the Tibetan historical narrative, the expression ‘teaching of the Hwashang’ served as the term for a theory that would have ignored the Buddhist principle that method and wisdom have to be cultivated together,³⁰ i.e. focusing right at the onset on the non-conceptual wisdom aspect without clarifying the view through reasoning first, nor any need for virtuous action. Factors that influenced what would commonly be understood by the name ‘Hwashang’ and the narrative of the Samye debate include times when Chinese influences were particularly shunned and even demonized,³¹ and politics that favored explanations of certain schools,³² etc. It is mostly in polemical enterprises that ‘Hwashang’ is mentioned. On this point Bretfeld concludes that,

a comparison or identification of a certain contemporaneous teaching with the doctrine of Hwashang can be understood as a hermeneutical act that intends to execute an act of censorship — even if in most cases this might have been only a virtual one,

²⁹ Sam Van Schaik, “The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk: Nyingmapa Defenses of Hashang Mahāyāna,” *Early Tibet*, accessed July 22, 2014, <http://earlytibet.com/about/hashang-mahayana/>.

³⁰ David Seyfort Ruegg, *Buddha-Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism in a Comparative Perspective: On the Transmission and Reception of Buddhism in India and Tibet*. (School of Oriental and African Studies, 1989), 5-6. Ruegg points out though, that the symbol that Hwashang came to stand for in this way is likely different from the position that the historical Hwashang actually held and taught.

³¹ Demiéville in his *Le Concile de Lhasa* states for example, “. “That a sinophobic party had existed at the court of Tibet, and that it had backed the Buddhists of India, less suspicious of political compromises, nothing [is] more likely, especially since the rapport between China and Tibet was particularly strained at the end of the eighth century. Across all her history, since her origins up to our present day, Tibet has been tossed between China and India; its politics have always tended to safeguard national independence by playing these powers, one against the other and in favoring that which the circumstances of the moment made appear the less dangerous.” Translated and quoted by Joseph F. Roccasalvo in “The Debate at bSam Yas: Religious Contrast and Correspondence,” *Philosophy East and West*, The University of Press of Hawaii, no. 4 (October 1980): 519.

³² Douglas S Duckworth mentions for example that, “Most non-Gelukpa monastic traditions did not fare well during the time of the Geluk supremacy, especially at its height in the seventeenth century, and several monasteries were forcibly converted to Geluk institutions.” Douglas S Duckworth, *Jamgön Mipam: His Life and Teachings* (Boston: Shambhala, 2011), 47.

perhaps rather intended to consolidate the inner identity of the respective author's own tradition than to aim at actual religio-political consequences — by referring to a historical precedent.³³

In other words, by projecting the Hwashang symbol onto other schools, one identifies one's own school as correct or orthodox distinguished from the wrong heterodox schools who are associated with Hwashang. An individual scholar who accuses another of resembling Hwashang would consider his own point of view to be the orthodox view which is in conformity with the ancient guiding principle fixed by King Trisong Detsen, who is commonly held to have out-ruled the instantaneous approach of non-mentation, while his opponent's view does not conform to this.

In the context of investigating Tibetan polemical traditions, Dan Martin explains that polemical enterprises are about one party attempting to undermine the authority of the other by discrediting that party to the extent that no one would have any further interest in it.³⁴ In order to do this, polemicists tend to frame their opponents in unflattering ways and interpret history and historical figures to support the view they propound. According to Joseph F. Roccasalvo,³⁵ Tibetan commentators portrayed Hwashang as the purveyor of false doctrine, and even as 'malicious'. He says that this becomes especially clear in Buton Rinchen Drub's (Bu ston Rin chen Grub, 1290- 1364) account³⁶ of how the Chinese representatives reacted after the king gave the order that the Indian school of Buddhism was to be followed: "[The Chinese proponents] were enraged, armed them-

³³ Bretfeld, "The 'Great Debate' of bSamyas," 37.

³⁴ Dan Martin, "The Polemical Tradition against Gshen-Chen and Bon," in *Unearthing Bon Treasures* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 106.

³⁵ Roccasalvo, "The Debate at bSam Yas: Religious Contrast and Correspondence," 512.

³⁶ Rin chen Grub, "Sa Skya'i Chos 'Byung gCes bsDus," in bDe Bar gShegs Pa'i bsTan Pa'i gSal Byed Chos Kyi 'Byung Gnas gSung Rab Rin Po Che'i mDzod (Pe cin: Krung go'i Bod rig pa dPe skrun Khang, 2009), 10–247.

selves with sharp knives and threatened to kill all the Tsen min pa (the adherents of the Bodhisattva).’’³⁷

3. Modern vs. Traditional Scholarship

Because the creation of historical narrative is an active creative process, there is no reason to expect the Hwashang narratives to perfectly agree. But although contemporary historians understand that there is no absolutely objective standpoint from which to tell a history, one may wonder what the Tibetan tradition thinks of historical narrative, i.e. the Samye debate narrative, getting adjusted according over time. Even though the Tibetan scholastic tradition values free thinking and inquiry within limits, it is generally highly skeptical of departure from the standard norms— novelty — by less revered scholars since the creation of doxographical classification by Indian and Tibetan commentators after the dark age which aimed “to bring order to the jungle of conflicting ideas in the commentarial literature.”³⁸ According to George B. J. Dreyfus, most people within the Tibetan scholastic traditions “are happy enough to be well trained and to hold the positions that they are expected to hold.”³⁹ Dreyfus calls “unshakable conservatism” the dominant characteristic of the scholastic tradition, because of which it rejects any person who deviates from the standard accepted path.⁴⁰

³⁷ Roccasalvo, “The Debate at bSam Yas: Religious Contrast and Correspondence,” 512. .

³⁸ Georges B. J. Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping- The Education of a Tibetan Buddhist Monk* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 192.

³⁹ Ibid., 314. Dreyfus qualifies this point, by pointing out that while *traditionalism* is static rather than dynamic, based on custom rather than reflection, and repetitive rather than creative (7) *tradition* needs to constantly interpret truth; while the severely restrictive doxographical classification of tenet systems denies the tradition more creative interpretations (192), this creativity can be found in debate, as the outcome of debate cannot be controlled. (202)

⁴⁰ Ibid. Cf. The claim of the Sakya (Sa skya) thinker Sakya Chokden (Sa kya mChog ldan, 1428-1509 C.E.) for example, that Chaba's (Phya pa Chos kyi Seng ge, 1182-1251) ideas were without any support in Dharmakīrti's texts was equal to saying that Chaba's ideas are Tibetan inventions (*rang bzo*) and thus not worthy of consideration. (Dreyfus, *The Sound of Two Hands Clapping*, 387) Another example of how innovation was disliked is Gedūn Chöpel (dGe 'dun Chos 'phel, 1904–1951), a gifted scholar from the province of Amdo in Northeastern Tibet. He was disliked by the majority of the monks at Gomang monastery of Dre pung when he started to openly be skeptical of the Geluk orthodoxy, for which on one occasion he was actually beaten up. In sum, in this scholastic tradition, the accusation of being fabricated (*rang bzo*) is in general tantamount to rejection.

Given the description of the tradition's emphasis on compliance to textual precedence, it is surprising that not much objection nor mention has been made from the tradition's side with regard to the contradicting presentations— even within schools— of Hwashang which they must have been aware of. In *Reason and Experience in Tibetan Buddhism*, Thomas Doctor explains that that which is expected from “traditional” scholars, those from whom the tradition is to flow forth, is different from what is expected from those who are followers of the tradition:

[...] for so-called “traditional” scholars there is in these regards in fact less of an emphasis on reliance on predecessors and tradition, for such authors may choose, as it were, themselves to emerge at the center of the entire tradition. From such a position of being the fountainhead, they may then appropriate past authors, verbatim or otherwise, without making any mention of it, and it is as well quite permissible to reshape the views of past scholars dramatically, only to present the emerging ideas as if they were but an orthodox reading of received texts.⁴¹

In contrast to the Tibetologist who is required to acknowledge and reproduce her sources, innovation and creative transformation although frowned upon if originating from those of lesser stature, are far from being opposed to in the traditional Tibetan scholarly tradition. To the contrary, novelty is expected from those of great stature:

Resembling Subhūti's revelation of that which had elsewhere only been indicated, it seems that for scholars of Tsongkhapa's and Mikyö Dorje's stature what mattered most was not simple accord with the textual heritage, but rather the ability to account for the deeper meanings and implications of scripture. Within this hermeneutical process, innovation and creative transformation was to be expected, and such elements were, I suggest, essentially more part of the scholarly tradition than actually opposed to it.⁴²

These Tibetan masters are thus expected to present the teachings freshly and anew, not by just relying on previous sources, but by relying on their own realization. And sources could be adjusted in the process of conveying insights and perception of the true nature of things:

⁴¹ Thomas Doctor, *Reason and Experience in Tibetan Buddhism* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2014), 88.

⁴² Doctor, *Reason and Experience*, 92.

From the perspective of their readers, deeply revered leaders such as Tsongkhapa and Mikyö Dorje ought not to resolve central matters through simple citation. Rather, they were expected to display their superior insights and perception of dharma through a discourse that was free to bend scripture almost in the way that solid rock may be treated as soft clay in the hands of a siddha.⁴³

The primary concern of traditional scholars in other words is the pragmatic goal of guiding their audiences to enlightenment. Many contemporary academic scholars in contrast are more concerned with historical accuracy, i.e the attempt to portray history faithfully according to the evidence available to the author. For a tradition which allows for adjusted presentations of sources in favor of the pragmatic value of teachings, it is a small step not to object to contradiction and differences in the various presentations of Hwashang either.

4. Methodology

Although the Tibetan tradition — for which “innovation” is considered to mean making up one's own explanation — is naturally concerned with its preservation, this thesis looks at such innovation, i.e. what was unique about these masters’ presentations as they responded afresh and creatively to the demands of their times. Ironically, this is exactly what is expected of lineage masters: to stand at the centre of the tradition and present it afresh. The approach in this thesis, as it focuses on how and why Hwashang’s name and the teachings associated with him were mentioned and used by Tibetan masters (with Mipham as the focus of this investigation) and within what context, is unlike previous studies. Previous studies have attempted to distill the ‘true Hwashang and his teachings,’⁴⁴ determined whether there was correlation between these masters’ descriptions with

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Roger Jackson, “Sa-Skya Pandita’s Account of the bSamYas Debate: History as Polemic,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 5 (1982): 90. Jackson lays out the different types of study that have been engaged in, giving Tucci (*Minor Buddhist Texts*) and Demiéville (*Le Concile de Lhasa*), as examples of first-order studies, in which scholars sought to reconstruct the history of the debate by careful looking at many different available historical sources, generally prioritizing the older sources.

some historical Hwashang,⁴⁵ or examined whether the masters taking up the Hwashang theme actually considered their descriptions to be in accord with the teachings of the historical Hwashang.⁴⁶

The type of study that this thesis pursues is the second order study that Roger Jackson describes in his article, “Sa-skya Pandita's Account of the bSamyas Debate: History as Polemic.”⁴⁷ Jackson explains that as the Samye debate is both history and myth, it invites two different sorts of study: first order studies which seek to reconstruct history — like the studies mentioned above — and second-order studies, which “examine extant histories of the debate in order to show how each history reflects not only an actual course of events, but the more contemporary concerns of the historian.”⁴⁸ This thesis which aims to see which truths were useful for certain masters’ presentations and why, accords with Jackson’s second order study as it juxtaposes the different historical narratives about Hwashang, and those of the Nyingma school in particular, to gain insight into the context in which Mipham presented Hwashang.

With respect to this kind of second order study, Matthew Kapstein argues that scholars of Tibetan history need to investigate what truths are useful for whom. Applying this to the concept of ‘canonicity’, he explains that contemporary scholars in the field of Buddhist Studies do not try to make statements about which views are orthodox, or what the ultimate scriptural authority would

⁴⁵ i.e. Luis Gómez, “The Direct and Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna: Fragments of the Teachings of Mo-Ho-Yen,” in *Studies in Ch’an and Hua-Yen*, ed. Robert M Gimello and Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 69–168. Gómez, pieces together fragments of texts, mostly from the Dunhuang caves, attributed to Hwashang to come to a tentative overview of what Hwashang’s teachings would have really looked like.

⁴⁶ i.e. Karma Phuntsho, *Mipham’s Dialectics and the Debates on Emptiness: To Be, Not to Be or Neither* (London: Routledge, 2011), 198. Phuntsho concludes his examination of Mipham’s presentation of Hwashang by stating that he finds it difficult to say whether Mipham really took the historical Hwashang to the master he presents him to be, and hypothesizes that the depiction might a hypothetical one most suitable to both denounce Hwashang, while maintain his theories of Emptiness free from extremes and of the apophatic knowledge of Emptiness which he presented as free from grasping and apprehension.

⁴⁷ Jackson, “Sa-Skya Pandita’s Account of the bSamYas Debate: History as Polemic,” 90.

⁴⁸ Jackson, *Ibid.* Jackson’s own second-order study looks at Sakya Paṇḍita’s concerns in his account of the Samye debate which he deems worthy of attention for the new historical narrative angle it introduces, thus shining a light on the process by which the Samye debate was mythologized.

be, but instead look at what a given Buddhist community considers to be representative of the ultimate scriptural authority to which it adheres.⁴⁹ With respect to the Pāli Canon, for example, the relevant fact is that the Pāli Canon is what is true for Theravāda Buddhists. Similarly, the relevant fact with respect to Hwashang's name in Tibetan narrative and philosophical sources, is for whom these presentations were 'true', and furthermore how and why Hwashang is presented in the way that he is, whom these various portraits served and what pragmatic (i.e., social, polemical, soteriological) value they might have had.

In looking for answers that explain how and why Hwashang is presented the way he is, I examine historical, political, polemical, and cultural conditions of influence on the development of the Hwashang 'theme' across the presentations of the different masters. A presentation of the time and cultural specific patterns of these narratives contrasts with the traditional Tibetan Buddhist presentations, which tend to project a timeless and universally truth onto the teachings. The awareness resulting from investigation into the causes and conditions, namely, that the tradition *is* (just like anything else) formed by causes and conditions, will be helpful in finding our way to present these teachings and narratives 'in our time'.⁵⁰

In sum, my method is historical in the sense outlined by Jackson, and Kapstein: I do not try to distill one true presentation of the Samye debate or of Hwashang's view, but look instead at how these symbols were useful for Tibetan masters by scrutinizing the factors that influenced their

⁴⁹ "When an individual representing a given religious community employs the concept of canonicity, or some analogous concept, he usually does intend the one-term predicate, as when, for instance, a Thera argues for the unique authenticity of the Pali Tipitaka, and the inauthenticity of other Buddhist scriptural collections. He is saying, in effect, that canonicity is a property uniquely exemplified by the Pali Tipitaka. But this is not how contemporary scholars in the field of Buddhist Studies usually employ the concept. We instead intend the two-term relationship "being canonical for," as it is only in this way that we can avoid absurdity in our discussions of the various canons: Pali, Tibetan, Chinese, and so on." Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 122.

⁵⁰ Gaining a clear understanding about the context teachings were given in will help students who struggle with the tradition's style of presenting the teachings as universal and timeless, such as what a modern western woman is to make of ancient asian teachings which depreciate the female body. See Kathryn R. Blackstone, *Women in the Footsteps of the Buddha: Struggle for Liberation in the Therigatha* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 60 for a good discussion of this issue.

teachings, particularly, the specific teaching style of their respective schools as well the historical/polemical context in which they functioned. The tone and descriptions of Hwashang vary greatly even within the Nyingma school as these masters constructed Hwashang in their own individual ways. Masters presented both Hwashang's philosophical position as well the historical narrative in which he plays his role in ways that are innovative and creatively assimilating concepts. This thesis fills a gap in previous research which did not clarified the contextual factors that shaped the way these masters and specifically Mipham presented Hwashang and the patterns that run through these presentation. And while previous authors such as Pettit⁵¹ and Phuntsho⁵² have compared Mipham's stance to masters of other schools, not much light has been shed before on how Mipham's presentation relates to masters within his own school. Although Mipham strongly disapproved of Hwashang's view, he also typically bridges the gap between apparently opposing views by finding a common ground or a level of understanding that transcends both. This approach which has been termed "dialectical monism"⁵³ plays a central role in the Nyingma school overall, as well as in the way Mipham created and recreated the historical narrative about Hwashang. Taking as points of departure the freedom that masters are traditionally granted in order to present the teachings afresh,⁵⁴ I will in the coming pages show how the exegeses of the above mentioned masters skillfully assimilate specific historical and social conditions which influenced their respective audiences into their presentations in general and of Hwashang specifically.

5. Chapter Outline

⁵¹ John W Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty: Illuminating the View of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999).

⁵² Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*.

⁵³ Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-nature*; more below on page 77.

⁵⁴ Doctor, *Reason and Experience*, 88.

In order to contextualize Mipham's references to 'Hwashang' within the history of the development of the scholastic platform on which masters of the various schools have commented and used his name, **chapter 2** first looks into the roles different sources played in the creation of the Samye debate narrative. Kamalasīla's *Stages of Meditation* — which he is believed to have written right after the debate — is one of the sources that challenges the historicity of the debate as it lacks any mention of any great debate or Hwashang specifically. Two Chinese Dunhuang texts furthermore contradict the Tibetan narrative, as they mention the Tibetan king approving Hwashang's doctrine and Hwashang continuing to teach upon returning to Dunhuang. The different versions of the *Testament of Ba* on which the narrative is mainly based, show a development from the earliest version mirroring the Chinese narrative, to the later versions depicting Hwashang as the (sore) loser. What transpires is that, 'Hwashang' is a powerful symbol that shapes and develops along with the creation of the Tibetan (Buddhist) identity.

Chapter 3 then looks at philosophical and polemical presentations of Hwashang prior to Mipham. Nubchen's (8-9th century) *Lamp for the Eyes of Meditative Concentration* (*bSam gtan gMigs gron*)⁵⁵ respectfully lays out Hwashang's teachings at a time before they became a polemical topic, placing Hwashang's system above that of Kamalasīla. Then, in the 12th century the *Heart of the Flower: a Dharma History* (*Chos 'byung me tog snying po*), ascribed to Nyangral Nyima Özer (Nyang ral Nyi ma 'Od zer, 1124-1192) presents Hwashang's teachings as meant for those of the best faculties (*dbang po*), in contrast to later Sarma (New School) depictions of a highly aggressive Hwashang lost for words in the debate with Kamalasīla. While Tibetan historians after the dark period had already started to alter the historical narrative, erasing any visible influences of Ch'an on Tibetan Buddhism in the process of (over)emphasizing the Indian influence, it was Sakya Paṇḍita

⁵⁵ gNubs chen Sangs rgyas *Ye shes, rNal 'Byor Mig Gi bSam Gtan* or *Bsam Gtan Mig Sgron*, ed. Khor gdongTer sprul 'Chi med Rig 'dzin, vol. 74 (Leh, Ladakh: Sman rtsis Shes rig sPen dzod, 1974).

(1182–1251) who, in order to refute the validity of a teaching called “White Single Means” (dKar po gCig thub), posited an orthodoxy of views in conformity with what he presented as the ancient guiding principle fixed by king Trisong Detsen (Khri srong lDe btsan, 8th century), who he took to have out-ruled Hwashang's instantaneous approach of non-mentation.⁵⁶ Later still, Buton Rinchen Drub's (Bu ston Rin chen Grub, 1290- 1364) presents Hwashang as an aggressive sore loser in his *History of Buddhism- Elucidating the Teachings of the Sugata the Treasury of the Source of the Dharma* (*bDe bar gShegs pa'I bsTan pa'I gSal byed Chos kyi 'Byung gnas gSung rab Rin po che'i mDzod*). His contemporary Longchenpa (1308– 1364) however still held Hwashang in high esteem and placed him high up in their hierarchal ranking of philosophical tenet systems. Subsequently, Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), like Sakya Paṇḍita, criticized Hwashang for his quietist practice of non-mentation and nihilistic view, seeing these as a danger to the critical practice of virtue. Although Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798) like Longchenpa held Hwashang in high esteem, he would not anymore show any approval of Hwashang's teachings in the way Nubchen and Longchenpa had done before him, as Hwashang had become more and more a symbol of ‘wrong view’ as the dominant Gelukpa school depicted him. Mipham's presentations of Hwashang where he does not show any approval of Hwashang reflects the increasing need for non-Gelukpas to take into account prevalent Gelukpa presentations.

Chapter 4 looks more closely at Mipham's presentations of Hwashang in his *Beacon of Certainty* (*Nges shes sgron me*),⁵⁷ his *Gyendrel* (*rGyan 'grel*),⁵⁸ as well as in his *Rablen* (*Rab lan*),⁵⁹ where he consistently disapproves of Hwashang. In his typical *yuganaddha* style,

⁵⁶ Sven Bretfeld, “The ‘Great Debate’ of bSamyas,” 33.

⁵⁷ Mipham Gyatsho, “Nges shes Rin po che'i sGron me,” *Collected Works*, Sri, 71–123.

⁵⁸ Mipham Gyatsho. “sPyod 'jug Sher 'grel Ketaka,” *Collected Works*, Nga, 1–358.

⁵⁹ Mipham Gyatsho, “gZhan Gyis brTsad Pa'i Lan mDor Bsdus Pa Rigs Lam Rab Gsal De Nyid sNang Byed,” *Collected Works*, Ca, 191–474..

Mipham's take on Hwashang is to comply to the common presentation of Hwashang as dictated by the prevailing Gelukpa School of his time as a nihilist (thus safeguarding his overall teachings from being rejected on grounds of heterodoxy) to then transform and give deeper meaning to this understanding so as to elucidate the Great Perfection teachings of the Nyingma School.

2. Origins of the Samye Debate Narrative

Mipham's position on Hwashang is located in a dialectical history of masters who have used Hwashang as a symbol they either wanted to completely distance themselves from or to present their own view by contrasting it with Hwashang's. This chapter will look at the original sources of this symbol and will show that this symbol has been so powerful for the Tibetans because of its intimate relationship with the historical roots of the Tibetan Buddhist identity. By looking at Kamalasīla's *Stages of Meditation* which lacks any mention of any debate or name of Hwashang, as well as by presenting Dunhuang sources which contradict the Tibetan narrative that holds that Hwashang lost, and the progressive change in the different versions of *Testament of Ba* from pro-Chinese to anti-, it will become clear how the narrative has transformed over time. This will create the background to show that Mipham's way of taking Hwashang up into his philosophical system is part of a tradition which deploys narrative to present one's philosophical and corresponding historical stance.

1. The Tibetan Narrative of the Samye Debate

The Tibetan narrative of the Samye Debate stems from the time that King Trisong Detsen (Khri song lDe btsan, c. 755-794) was putting his efforts into instituting Buddhism in Tibet. According to Sven Bretfeld, there is a considerable degree of development of the episode of the Great Debate within the Tibetan histories of dharma (chos 'byung), but it appears that the general storyline of the Great Debate is based on or modeled after the presentation in the later versions of the *Testament of Ba*,⁶⁰ which present Kamalaśīla as the victor of the debate. The typical narrative, reflecting the later version of the *Testament* from the twelfth century on, tells the story of a Lhasa noble called Ba Selnang (sBa gSal snang) who volunteered to travel and invite Buddhist teachers to

⁶⁰ Bretfeld, "The 'Great Debate' of bSamyas," 21.

Tibet when Trisong Detsen requested somebody to go and find high-ranking Buddhists. One of the teachers Ba Selnang found and summoned to Lhasa was a monk called Hwashang, who had been teaching in Dunhuang. Not all liked Hwashang's Ch'an style of teachings, especially the Indian Buddhist teachers in Lhasa, who disputed the instantaneous path out of *saṃsāra* to the state of enlightenment that Hwashang taught. The Indian Buddhists stressed the need to combine meditation with reflection and moral discipline while Hwashang denied such a need, saying that virtue and sin are like black and white clouds, in that both cover up the sun and that one should not practice anything but simply rest the mind. When the dispute between these factions rose to high levels of tension, King Trisong Detsen decided to put an end to the dispute in the traditional way of a formal debate. Although the Indian representative, the abbot Śāntarakṣita had passed away, he had instructed King Trisong Detsen to invite his student, Kamalaśīla to represent the Indian position. With Hwashang as the Chinese opponent, the debate concluded with the victory awarded to Kamalaśīla and the Indian side, after which the king would only support those who taught the path of gradual practice.

The historical details of the controversy have been exhaustively examined by Paul Demiéville in *Le Concile de Lhasa*⁶¹ and by Giuseppe Tucci in his preface to Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Meditation* and re-examined by scholars such as Sam van Schaik⁶² and Kapstein.⁶³ Of interest here is the fact that there were different versions of the Samye debate narrative and that they seem to have served various purposes. For example, some sources mention that, after the debate, Hwashang was required to leave the country and that all sudden-enlightenment texts were gathered and de-

⁶¹ Paul Demiéville, *Le Concile de Lhasa: Une Controverse Sur Le Quétisme Entre Bouddhistes de l'Inde et de La Chine Au VIIIe Siècle de L'ère Chrétienne* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des hautes études chinoises, 1987).

⁶² Sam Van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, "Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang," *Journal of the American and Oriental Society*, no. 128.3 (2008): 478–87.

⁶³ Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*.

stroyed by royal decree,⁶⁴ while others emphasize that Ch'an continued to be respected in Tibet.⁶⁵ Some ancient manuscripts indicate that Hwashang had a more nuanced view of meditation than he is often presented to have held,⁶⁶ and a Chinese version of the debate — as well as the earliest available version of the *Testament* — concludes with the king giving his blessing to the Chinese teachers.⁶⁷ Indeed, although the Samye debate, or alternatively the 'Council of Lhasa' or 'Council of Samye' is believed by Demiéville to have been a two year debate (c. 792–794 CE), some contemporary scholars have even suggested that the debate might have never taken place, or that it might have instead been a series of discussions and literary exchanges.⁶⁸ Whether or not it was as a result of a debate, there does appear to have been a strong increasing preference of Indian Buddhism after the dark-age, whether it was caused by “the direct instigation of the court [after the death of King Trisong Detsen], anxious to prevent any further Chinese influence”⁶⁹ or “by the growing prestige of the Indians and Indian ācāryas coming to Tibet in greater numbers than before” as Tucci explains,⁷⁰ or whether this was a kind of turning back to the source to restore vows as a kind of “ritual closure” after the dark age as Davidson suggests.⁷¹ With regard to the function of the debate's narrative, Davidson points out that:

⁶⁴ See, for example, John C. Powers, *History as Propaganda: Tibetan Exiles versus the Peoples Republic of China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 38–44.

⁶⁵ Jeffrey Broughton, “Early Ch'an Schools in Tibet,” in *Studies in Ch'an and Hua-Yen*, ed. Robert M Gimello and Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 44.

⁶⁶ Luis Gómez, “The Direct and Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna: Fragments of the Teachings of Mo-Ho-Yen,” in *Studies in Ch'an and Hua-Yen*, ed. Robert M Gimello and Gregory (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 96.

⁶⁷ Sam Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 39.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁶⁹ Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts*, 50.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 120.

[...] the narrative of the debate at Samye became a fundamental part of the consciousness of Tibet's Buddhists. The need for the graduated path, and the preference for India as the source of true Buddhism, came to characterise Tibetan Buddhism more and more over the next centuries, and the debate story justified this position.⁷²

Whatever caused the preference of Indian Buddhism, a narrative of a great debate with an Indian victor would have functioned to justify the Tibetan need for the graduated path and the preference for India as the authoritative source of Buddhism during the movement toward renewed translation after the dark age.

2. Kamalaśīla's Stages of Meditation

Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Meditation* refutes a view similar to the quietist view of non-mentation associated with Hwashang. But because it does not mention any debate nor name any opponent,⁷³ it challenges the narrative of a specific debate with Hwashang. This suggests that while the instantaneous/ gradual debate was a topic at the very start of Buddhism in Tibet, Hwashang as a symbol for the former practice was only a later development.

Nevertheless, Tucci takes the debate to have actually happened and argues that it was the debate that served Kamalaśīla with the opportunity to write three booklets called *Stages of Meditation* (*sgom rim*, Skt. *Bhāvanākrama*) in which he could clarify the main points of view of his school concerning meditation on the Buddhist path.⁷⁴ Whether or not they were written right after the Samye debate at the request of the king as Tucci claims following Tibetan chronicles,⁷⁵ they do

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ David Seyfort Ruegg, *Buddha-Nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism*, 64, 96-97.

⁷⁴ Giuseppe Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts*, 6.

⁷⁵ "The debate gave Kamalaśīla the opportunity to write three booklets called *Bhāvanākrama* in which the main points of view of his school concerning meditation on the Buddhist truth are expounded." Ibid., 5.

seem to represent a manifestation of inter religious tensions existing in Tibet at that time.⁷⁶ But rather than engaging with any specific opponent, they represent a general introduction to Mahāyāna Buddhism and a refutation of heterodox and “instantaneous” doctrines altogether.⁷⁷ According to Kamalaśīla, the latter holds that cessation of the cause of all suffering — mental construction — is liberation:

It is because of the force of good and bad deeds produced through mental construction that sentient beings revolve in the round of existences, experiencing the fruits of deeds such as heaven. Those who on the contrary neither think of nor perform any deed whatever are completely freed from the round of existences. Therefore nothing is to be thought on, nor is salutary conduct consisting in generosity and the like to be practiced. It is only in respect to foolish people that salutary conduct consisting in generosity and the like has been indicated.⁷⁸

Kamalaśīla thus characterizes instantaneous doctrines as dissuasive of any actions, including virtuous ones (salutary conduct), in total contrast to his own approach which teaches the necessity of progressive virtuous action.

3. Dunhuang sources

A Dunhuang fragment attributed to Hwashang, *The Sudden Faith* (Stein 468), resonates with Kamalaśīla’s description of the instantaneous doctrines as teaching the cause of all suffering to be mental construction.⁷⁹ It teaches that the root of samsāra is the discriminating mind, which arises due to habitual tendencies. As one perceives only what is generated by one’s own discriminating mind, from the highest heaven down to the lowest hell, one is to give up all other activities, sit cross

⁷⁶ Martin T. Adam, “Meditation and the Concept of Insight in Kamalaśīla’s Bhāvanākramas” (Faculty of Religious Studies McGill University, 2002), 7.

⁷⁷ Gómez, “The Direct and Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna”.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 107, 124.

⁷⁹ Gómez, *ibid.*, 96.

legged and become aware of one's thoughts.⁸⁰ In the Dunhuang text, *Pelliot 4646* Hwashang is furthermore quoted to say that those who are not capable of practicing his meditation of non-examination can take recourse to the perfection of morality and other such practices: "as long as one is not able to practice non-examination one dedicates his merit to living beings, so that they all may attain Buddhahood."⁸¹

These Dunhuang sources, which were discovered in the sealed library caves of Dunhuang,⁸² are the only Tibetan texts dating back before the eleventh century that deal with historical matters. However, none of the fragments attributed to Hwashang himself or quoting him refer to a debate with Kamalasīla. Gómez analyzed the available fragments thoroughly and suggested that they together comprise at least five works of Hwashang.⁸³ He notes that Hwashang affirms the immediate character of enlightenment and concludes that the total picture of the "Dhyāna Master Hwashang" derived from the fragments does not contradict the generally held view that he espoused a radical sudden enlightenment position. In summary of Hwashang's teachings, Gómez paraphrases:

The state of samsāra is merely the result of deluded thoughts (myi-bden-pa'i 'du-ses). Enlightenment is achieved by not grasping at these thoughts and not dwelling on them (ma-blans ma-chags), by not bringing them to the mind (myi-sems), by not inspecting the mind (myi-rtog), but by merely being aware (tshor-ba) of all thoughts as they arise.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Gómez, "The Direct and Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna," 96.

⁸² Sam Van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, "Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang," 477.

⁸³ Gómez "The Direct and Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna," 151-152 n.40. These works are not, however, similar to the five works of Hwashang that several later Tibetan sources quote, Gómez lists them on 86-87 and translates on 107-132. He says (86) that the fragments: *Stein 468*, *Stein 709*, *P 117*, *P 813* and fragments of *P 116* and *P 812* together comprise a text called *bSam gtan Cig car 'Jug pa'i sGo* (*The Gate to Instantaneous Meditative Concentration (dhyāna)*), of which the title is mentioned in *P 117.5b1* and *S 468.1a1*. Gómez further suggests that *S 706* and part of *S 709* and *P 812* comprise a text called *bSam gtan gyi snying po* (*The Essence of Meditative Concentration*), and *P 21* is a text called *Mi rtog pa'i gzhung* (*Scripture of Non-conceptualization*). Gómez (87) says that fragments of *P 116* and *P 117* could comprise a text on the six and ten perfections and on page 132 he translates "miscellaneous fragments" from *P 116* and *P 167*.

⁸⁴ Gómez, "The Direct and Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna," 89. Paragraphs I.1, X.1 and XI.4

Although these particular fragments don't contradict the generally held view with regard to Hwashang teaching a form of quietism, several Dunhuang sources do contradict the Tibetan narrative with regard to the victor of the debate as well as to the teachings Hwashang actually propounded.

Two Chinese Dunhuang texts (written by the Chinese clerk monk Wang Si in the service of King Trisong Detsen at the end of the 8th century)⁸⁵ relate Hwashang's answers to questions from an unnamed "Brahmin monk."⁸⁶ In these there is a brief mention of the Tibetan king giving approval of Hwashang's doctrine. One of these two, the *Settling the Correct Principle of Sudden Awakening to the Great Vehicle* (*Tun-wu ta-ch'eng cheng-li chueh*), tells us that the Northern Ch'an master Hwashang came to central Tibet from Tibetan-occupied Dunhuang in either 781 or 787 at the "invitation" of the Tibetan emperor and that he returned to Dunhuang in the next decade and continued to teach there.⁸⁷

4. The Testament of Ba

As indicated above, the *Testament of Ba* (*dBa' bzhed*)⁸⁸ is the oldest Tibetan source for the Samye debate narrative. In it we find the accounts of the Great Debate, and its passages are found

⁸⁵ Demiéville in *Le Concile* relates that Wang Si's family had been settled in Dun Huang for many cycles. (195) When Dun Huang fell to the Tibetans, more than 1000 Chinese were taken prisoner (196). They were bound to a piece of wood and so Wang Si was sent to Tibet proper, to the court. As ex-functionary he was valuable to the Tibetans as he could now function as a diplomatic agent for the Tibetan army. (197) At court, he must have been one of Hwashang's companions (19) According to Demiéville, Hwashang nor Wang Si were great writers, nor thinkers and clarity was not their strength (22). In *Le Concile*, Demiéville translates the Chinese dossier on the debate, (Manuscript no 4646 of the Chinese Pelliot Fund of the National Library of Paris) for which Wang Si wrote the foreword, named *Forward to the ratification of the True Principles of Awakening of the Great Vehicle*, signed by him with the titles "Previous associate of the board of inspectors of Dun Huang, Great Honorary Prefect of the Court, Critic of the Imperial House."

⁸⁶ Pelliot 4646 and Stein 2672.

⁸⁷ Jeffrey Broughton, "Early Ch'an Schools in Tibet," 8.

⁸⁸ There are three known versions of the Testament: 1) The *dBa' bzhed* in Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed* (from a manuscript kept in Lhasa), thought to be the earliest, dates back to the eleventh century (Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, XIV), 2) The *sBa' bzhed* edited and published by Gonpo Gyaltzen is estimated to date to the twelfth century, 3) The *sBa bzhed zhabs btags ma* ("with addendum") published by Stein (1961) is dated to the 14th century. These are all considered later copies, and the original one lost (Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, 1-2).

scattered throughout later Tibetan historical works.⁸⁹ With the exception of the earliest version, it depicts Hwashang as the loser of the Samye debate who had propounded wrong view and had been chased from Tibet. Stein characterized the *Testament* as “a relatively ancient, novelized narrative of the events of the 8th century, which had been obviously manipulated, but contains historical elements verified by independent and ancient sources.”⁹⁰ This manipulation is revealed not just through comparison to other historical sources, but even by comparing earlier and later versions of the *Testament*. For example, the earliest version of the Testament tells the tale that when the abbot Śāntarakṣita arrived in Lhasa, King Trisong Detsen was worried that this foreigner might bring black magic or spirits with him. He locked the abbot up in the Jokhang temple, and only after three months of questioning was he trusted enough to be released to begin his task of establishing Buddhism in Tibet.⁹¹

The authorship of the *Testament* has been attributed intermittently to Ba Selnang or Ba Sangshi (sBa Sang shi) of the influential dBa’ clan,⁹² both of whom are mentioned as actors in the Samye debate.⁹³ Van Schaik suggest that the *Testament* was written in the context of an old enmity between Ba and Dro clan, where the Ba’ clan presents itself as advocates of the right view who debated and championed the wrong doctrine of the Chinese Hwashang, whereby marginalizing their rival clans, e.g. the ‘Bro, Nyang and rNgog who are all mentioned in the *Testament* as associates of

⁸⁹ Sam Van Schaik and Kazushi Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang,” *Journal of the American and Oriental Society*, no. 128.3 (2008): 83. And Sam Van Schaik, “The Abbot, or Ironing out History’s Wrinkles,” *Early Tibet*, November 30, 2009, <http://earlytibet.com/2009/11/30/the-abbot/>.

⁹⁰ “C’est un récit romanesque, relativement ancien, des événements du VIII^e siècle. Il a visiblement été manipulé, mais contient des éléments historiques vérifiés par des sources indépendantes et anciennes.” R.A. Stein, “Une Mention Du Manichéisme Dans Le Choix Du Bouddhisme Comme Religion d’État Par Le Roi Khri-Sroṅ Lde-Bstan,” in *Indianisme et Bouddhisme, Mélanges Offerts À Mgr Étienne Lamotte* (Louvain- La- Neuve: l’Institut Orientaliste de Louvain, 1980), 329. and similar in Matthew T. Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 23–68.

⁹¹ Van Schaik and Iwao, “Fragments of the Testament of Ba from Dunhuang,” 6..

⁹² Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa’ Bzhed*, 3-5. The clan name dBa’ is spelled in many ways of which the most common are dBa’, sBa and rBa (others include ‘Ba’, dPa’, dBa’s, dBas).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

Hwashang.⁹⁴ Roccasalvo furthermore suggests that imperial interests might have been served by depicting or even proclaiming the Chinese party as the losers of the debate.⁹⁵ As already noted by Tucci, Tibet has “tended to safeguard national independence by playing Indian and Chinese powers one against the other and in favoring that which the circumstances of the moment made appear the less dangerous.”⁹⁶ Roccasalvo further explains that the relationship between China and Tibet was particularly tense at the end of the eighth century, and pro-Hwashang sentiments might have assumed proportions that were able to stir up latently hostile attitudes toward China among the Sino-phobic party that existed at the court of Tibet, which had backed the Buddhists of India.⁹⁷ Although these explanations seem plausible, the finding of the earliest version of the *Testament* which is “largely sympathetic to the activities of Chinese Buddhists in eighth-century” and “accords more closely with the Chinese account studied in Demiéville 1952”⁹⁸ weaken the suggested motivations for the original writing of the *Testament*. If we take the *Testament* as a product of the clan that according to Van Schaik sided with the Indian side, the motivation of the Ba’ clan to produce documents which in its earliest versions depict their own clan as being on the losing side, seems puzzling. For now I would suggest that if we take into account that the author, whether it be Ba Sel nang or Ba Sangshi, had received elaborate teachings from revered Ch’an masters, and that the earliest version portray Hwashang as winning the debate, the *Testament* might just be considered an early religious account of the arising of the dharma (*chos ‘byung*) telling the story of how Chinese Buddhism was founded in Tibet, and that the later versions of the *Testament* primarily correlate with the

⁹⁴ Ibid., 4-8; Van Schaik’s blog post “Tibetan Chan IV,” Ruegg *Buddha-nature, Mind and the Problem of Gradualism*, 126-127.

⁹⁵ Joseph F. Roccasalvo, “The Debate at bSam Yas: Religious Contrast and Correspondence,” *Philosophy East and West*, The University of Press of Hawaii, no. 4 (October 1980): 506.

⁹⁶ Giuseppe Tucci, *Minor Buddhist Texts*, 182.

⁹⁷ Roccasalvo, “The Debate at bSam Yas,” 506.

⁹⁸ Kapstein, *The Tibetan Assimilation of Buddhism*, 214.

ideology and concerns of other histories of dharma written after the dark age. Bretfeld relates the two main ideological conceptions in the Histories of Dharma which Peter Schwieger discerns in his article “Geschichte als Mythos - Zur Aneignung von Vergangenheit in Der Tibetischen Kultur”: 1) they present the Tibetans as the ‘chosen people’ who are entrusted with the sacred mission of preserving the only true Buddhist tradition and 2) the history of these ‘chosen people’ follows a storyline in which the continuous activity of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas via emanations and incarnations work for the welfare of the living beings of Tibet.⁹⁹ This ‘true Buddhist tradition’ was established by the activity of Buddhist masters Śāntarakṣita, Padmasambhava, and Kamalaśīla. These Indian masters were fostered by the Tibetan religious kings (*chos rgyal*), Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsans Gam po), Trisong Detsen and Ralpachen (Ral pa chen), who were the Tibetan ‘cultural heroes’ considered to be emanations or incarnations of, respectively, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi. The motivation for the writing of the later versions of the *Testament* thus seem quite straightforward: as media for the cultural memory of Hwashang, they were to give the Tibetan people an identity as ‘chosen people’ entrusted with the sacred mission of preserving the only true Buddhist tradition. In order for the later *chos 'byung* narratives and the *Testament* to accord with and generate this cultural memory, the suspicions regarding the abbot Śāntarakṣita are placed in the minds of the ministers, instead of the Trisong Detsen himself, which absolves the king from harboring bad thoughts about the saintly abbot.¹⁰⁰ This shows how the narrative has been altered to accord with and support the Tibetan cultural memory over time.

5. Conclusion

⁹⁹ As cited in Bretfeld, “The ‘Great Debate’ of bSamyas,” 19.

¹⁰⁰ Sam van Schaik, “The Abbot, or Ironing out History’s Wrinkles.”

The power of the Samye debate narrative and its participants clearly does not lie in its historical accuracy: the lack of any mention of the debate or name of Hwashang in Kamalasīla's *Stages of Meditation*, the presentation of Hwashang as the winner of the debate in the Dunhuang sources and the difference between earlier, and later versions of the *Testament of Ba* presenting Hwashang progressively more negatively suggest that the debate is a construct, shaped by the type of history the authors identified with and ratified. Its power lies thus in its function to create and ratify the identity of the Tibetan people after the dark age as the 'chosen people' who are to preserve the true Buddhist tradition which was safeguarded from Hwashang's Chinese wrong view. The creation of a Tibetan cultural memory which scapegoats Hwashang and Chinese Buddhism furthermore emphasized the importance the new school saw in Indian precedence in lineage and of Indian textual sources. As the following chapters will demonstrate, the debate's narrative was subsequently taken up and transformed over time by later Buddhist Tibetan masters before Mipham to serve their dialectical purposes.

3. Hwashang in Tibet before Mipham

The stance Mipham offered his audience on Hwashang takes into account those of previous masters, who just like Mipham depicted Hwashang in correspondence with the philosophical position they assumed in their writings — especially with regard to an instantaneous approach to enlightenment and their respective projects. Various sources, such as Dunhuang manuscripts, Tibetan Ch'an documents as well as Nubchen's *Lamp* show that as Tibetan historical narratives shifted from royal to religious history, Tibetan scholars in the process of placing Tibet in a Buddhist cosmological and historical tradition eliminated all visible influences of Ch'an from Tibetan Buddhism and from the narrative of the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet.¹⁰¹ As we saw in the previous chapter, Tibetan masters, consequently, have had access to varying constructs of Hwashang, his teachings and the Samye debate. Although these masters were generally not explicit about what sources they relied on in the construction of their narratives, we can guess which sources they relied on based on the time that they produced their work and the stance they offered, appreciative or depreciative. While one might expect the historical record to determine the position masters would take with regard to Hwashang, it was the philosophical stance that these masters offered in their writings which determined which sources they relied on in their description Hwashang, such as Kamalaśīla's *Stages of Meditation* (8th century), Nubchen's *Lamp*, (8-9th century), the different versions of the *Testament* (11th 12th and 14th century), the *Heart of the Flower* attributed to Nyangral Nyima Özer's (1124-1192), and Buton Rinchen Drub's (1290- 1364) *History of Buddhism*.

¹⁰¹ Sam van Schaik and Lewis Doney, "The Prayer, the Priest and the Tsenpo: An Early Buddhist Narrative from Dunhuang," *JIAS* 30, no. 1–2 (2009 2007): 204.

The Ch'an that Hwashang would have presented in Tibet was a unique 'Tibetan' mixture of Northern, Southern and Pao-t'ang Ch'an,¹⁰² which Tibetan Ch'an documents as well as Nubchen's *Lamp* (8-9th century) suggest had not been banned at all but were practiced until its lineage was destroyed before Nubchen wrote his *Lamp*. While Nubchen's overall project seems to have been to preserve the tantras during the dark age and clarify the differences between the systems prevalent during his time, Sakya Paṇḍita's (1182–1251) seemed more concerned with correcting peculiarities of Tibetan Buddhism in eloquent prose. In his *Clarifying the Sage's Intention* (*Thub pa'i dgongs gsal*) he depicts Hwashang as the loser. He uses this image in his *Elucidation of the Three Vows* (*sDom gsum rab dbye*) as he criticized the simultaneous realization of the quietist practice of non-mentation (*yid la mi byed pa*) by equating it with Hwashang's quietist practice appears to be the origin of the polemical charges against the Nyingma School's practice of non-conceptual meditation as resembling the view of Hwashang. Longchenpa (1308–1364) in his works focussed on refining terminology, pointing out relations between esoteric and exoteric works and in systematizing topics *within* the Nyingma tradition, he agrees with Hwashang in that virtuous thoughts chain one in saṃsāra the same way evil thoughts do. According to Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), for whom the cultivation of virtuous action and the incitation to do so was paramount, those who held thinking as the cause of suffering were discarding the method of gaining realization through virtue. Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798) whose work reflect his concern of compiling Nyingma texts and writing histories about their origin,¹⁰³ differentiated the Great Perfection from the Hwashang doctrine basing himself

¹⁰² Hironobu Obata, "The Development of the Sudden School in Ancient Tibet," *Bukkyōshi Gaku Kenyū*, no. 18 (March 1976): 59–80. Summarized in Daishun Ueyama, "The Study of Tibetan Ch'an Manuscripts Recovered from Tun-Huang: A Review of the Field and Its Prospects," in *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, ed. Whalen Lai and Lewis R. Lancaster, *Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series 5* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1983), 338.

¹⁰³ Jigme Lingpa gathered Nyingma texts that had become rare which led to the amassing of the *Collection of Nyingma Tantras*, the *Nyingma Gyübum* (*rNying ma rGyud 'bum*).

on the Instruction Series (mMan ngag sde) of the Great Perfection, while allowing for the possibility that Hwashang might have been a great master.

1. Tibetan Ch'an

Ch'an had reached central Tibet from two areas: Szechwan and the Central Asian holy city Dunhuang, which had fallen to Tibetan occupation during the 780's. The Ba clan — located in central Tibet— was instrumental in the transmission from Szechwan, while the Dro ('Bro) clan — located southeast of Dunhuang — was instrumental in the transmission from Dunhuang.¹⁰⁴ As indicated above, the Ch'an that Hwashang would have presented upon confronting Indian Buddhism at the debate was unique, as it was according to Hironobu Obata “[...] only superficially like the Northern school; it is doctrinally affiliated with the Pao-t'ang school, with borrowings from both the Southern school (in Shen-hui's lineage) and the Dharma school.”¹⁰⁵ This might explain in part how it is possible that a teacher of the Northern School, characterized by its gradual approach to enlightenment, could defend a sudden approach in a debate.¹⁰⁶

Dunhuang's position on the Silk Route and the disappearance of the central Tibetan religious institutions supporting orthodoxy were factors during the so-called 'dark period' for continued cross-cultural interaction of religious practices from different sources. During this time techniques from two distinct traditions, Ch'an and the yogic meditation practices of Indian Mahāyoga, were

¹⁰⁴ Broughton, “Early Ch'an Schools in Tibet,” 4.

¹⁰⁵ Ueyama, “The Study of Tibetan Ch'an Manuscripts Recovered from Tun-Huang,” 338.

¹⁰⁶ “Suddenness of the South, gradualness of the North.” Gary L. Ray, “The Northern Ch'an School And Sudden Versus Gradual Enlightenment Debates In China And Tibet,” The zen site, http://www.thezensite.com/ZenEssays/HistoricalZen/Sudden_vs_Gradual_Ray.html. Shenhui (670-762 C.E.) Ray explains the basic difference between the Northern and Southern School to be that the Northern School employs gradual teachings, while his Southern school employed sudden teachings.

Heinrich Dumoulin furthermore states that “It is ironic that Northern Ch'an would get under attack regarding the issue of sudden or gradual enlightenment in China after Shen-hui claimed that they practiced the "dreaded" gradual enlightenment approach, while in Tibet, it got accused of the "dreaded" sudden enlightenment approach.” Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History. India and China*, trans. James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter, vol. 1, India and China (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988), 107.

combined in complex and innovative ways,¹⁰⁷ with technical terminology revealing, according to Van Schaik, an extensive knowledge of both traditions.¹⁰⁸ After the so called dark age, which according to Kapstein might have just been an overblown retelling of a withdrawal of subsidy for monastic establishment due to a lack of funds rather than anti-Buddhist sentiment, Tibetans turned to India in the reintroduction of authentic monasticism to Western and Central Tibet.¹⁰⁹ Opposing the esoteric forms of tantric practices prevalent in Tibet, Yeshe Ö (Ye shes 'Od, 959-1024) initiated a trend of purification, by going back to the Indian roots looking for original teachings there.¹¹⁰

Tibetan Ch'an documents have revealed that after the time of Atiśa (Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna, 980–1054) the preference for Indian over Chinese Buddhism influenced Tibetan historians to carefully distinguish Indian Mahāyoga and Tibetan Ch'an from each other.¹¹¹ This trend can already be seen in Nubchen's *Lamp*.¹¹² According to Jeffrey Broughton, Nubchen's response to the diversity of teachings by classifying them doxographically, i.e. Hwashang's Ch'an above Kamalaśīla's gradualism but below Vajrayāna and The Great Perfection, constituted the eventual

¹⁰⁷ “There are more examples of enterprises of bringing the instantaneous and gradual approaches together both in vocabularies as well as in doctrine. Dunhuang manuscript *Stein Tibetan 709* shows the utilization of Indian vocabulary, while preserving the Chinese vocabulary from the translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*. It teaches a progression of practices that are indispensable for a novice yogin (*las dang po pa'i rnal 'byor pa*) wishing to specialize in *Tathagātha Ch'an*, which the treatise designates as the highest form of Ch'an.” Broughton, “Early Ch'an Schools in Tibet,” 44.

¹⁰⁸ Sam Van Schaik and Jacob Dalton, “Where Chan and Tantra Meet: Tibetan Syncretism,” in *Dunhuang/The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*, ed. Whitfield, Susan (London: : British Library Press, 2004), 63–71.

¹⁰⁹ “The question of the Tibetans' motivation to seek monastic Buddhism again at this time is difficult to determine. In part it appears to be an act of memory, in part a question of economic and political security, and in part dissatisfaction with the received traditions.” Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

¹¹⁰ The former king of Ngari (mNga' ris) Lha Lama Yeshe Ö, (lHa bLa ma Ye shes 'Od) had his doubts about the prevalent practices of tantra. In an edict, he requested all those engaging in practices of the sexual rite (*shyor*) and the rite of deliverance (*sgrol*), to refrain from these malpractices which were according to him practiced under the name of Dzogchen. He furthermore requested that travels to India were undertaken with the aim to verify the authenticity of the Old Tantras.

¹¹¹ Van Schaik and Dalton, “Where Chan and Tantra Meet: Tibetan Syncretism,” 69.

¹¹² Chapters 4-7 (65-494) of the *Lamp* explain four successive systems of Buddhist practice: the gradual (*rim gyis*), the instantaneous (*ston mun cig car*), Mahāyoga (*rnal 'byor chen po*) and the Great Perfection.

Dzogchen response to Ch'an.¹¹³ But during later times Hwashang's system would be excluded altogether, understood by most Tibetan scholars as an extremist view and thus not even a true Buddhist system. More generally, Tibetan historians more or less eliminated all visible influences of Ch'an from Tibetan Buddhism, expunging the role of Chinese Ch'an from the narrative of the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet.¹¹⁴ Western-language studies of Tibetan religion, heavily influenced by this Tibetan traditional view, also minimize the role of Hwashang's Chinese party, the all-at-once gate (*ston mun*), slighting it as the heterodox view defeated at the so-called debate of the Council of Tibet in the late eighth century and suppressed soon thereafter. Documentary evidence prior to such rewritings are preserved in contemporary Dunhuang manuscripts, which are more reliable accounts of ancient Tibet, as well as in texts such as Nubchen's *Lamp*.¹¹⁵

Based on the later narrative of a Samye debate according to which Hwashang was badly defeated, one would expect Nubchen to express himself negatively with respect to Hwashang's system. But, on the contrary, Nubchen places Hwashang's system even higher than the gradualist teachings taught by Kamalaśīla. The 'Hwashang narrative' with Hwashang as the loser must stem from a time after Nubchen, after the 'dark age' when Ch'an was gradually deleted from the Tibetan Buddhist historical narrative in the process of emphasizing the role of Indian Buddhism. Nubchen states there that the lineage of the transmission of the instantaneous tradition in Tibet, which had started with Kāśyapa, was cut and could only be learned through books:

Now the precepts of the 'vehicle of cause' were imparted to 'Od-srung (Kāśyapa) by the Bhagavān just before he passed away into Nirvāṇa. The lineage of (that teaching) passed from Dharmottara, etc. reaching Hwa-shang Mahāyāna, the last of the seven successions in China. Then in Tibet where a king and monks possessed the lineage of that teaching it came to be destroyed. However (one) can learn the system of that

¹¹³ Broughton, "Early Ch'an Schools in Tibet," 44.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

teaching through the books which exist and (also) learn the gradualist teachings taught by Kamalaśīla. So, now one is obliged to learn them without teachers.¹¹⁶

Nubchen's account of 'a vehicle of cause' leading from Kāśyapa to 'Hva-shang' coincides with the account of the Ch'an school, which holds Kāśyapa as their first patriarch. In holding Hwashang as the 7th Patriarch, the last of seven successions in China, Nubchen must have relied on sources of the instantaneous tradition inside Tibet in which they describe their own lineage differently from the Ch'an school in China, which stopped enumerating successions after a quarrel about the 6th patriarch — which was Hui-neng (638–713) according to the Southern branch and Shen-hsiu (600–706) according to the Northern branch. While Nubchen in the passage above mentions that the instantaneous tradition, the vehicle of cause, ceased to exist, but could still be learned from books lacks any indication of a Samye debate which would have led to the banning of the instantaneous tradition by Trisong Detsen. Indeed, he suggests that those interested can still "learn the system of that teaching through the books". This is evidence that the received account of the debate was likely altered by later generations of scholars shows how Tibetan Ch'an — contrary to the common belief that it disappeared simply by the wave of a hand — was held by 'king and monks' and continued to be practiced even after a Samye debate of some kind might have taken place.¹¹⁷

2. Nubchen (8-9th century)

According to Dudjom's *Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* Nubchen was born into the Nub (gNubs) clan in the Dra (sGrags) region of Ü (dBus). Dudjom relates how the list of the Indian masters whom Nubchen met in Tibet include Śrī Siṃha, Vimalamitra, as well as Kamalaśīla, who

¹¹⁶ Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, 94. A note (in the text but of uncertain origin) clarifies this statement: "During the time of gLang Dar ma, the lineage holder of the cig car ba tradition, the monk Ye-shes dbang-po, was caused to die, so the spiritual lineage of the teachers of philosophy was cut off." (glang dar ma'i ring la btsun pa ye shes dbang po bar chad du gyur bas mtshan nyid kyi slob dpon brgyud pa nub/)

¹¹⁷ Broughton, "Early Ch'an Schools in Tibet," 44.

ordained him.¹¹⁸ After Nubchen established a hermitage for himself and his followers in his birth valley — below Drak Yangdzong (sGrags Yang dzong) — his practice was then interrupted during the reign of Langdarma in the mid-9th century. Dudjom furthermore relates how when the evil king Langdarma attempted to destroy Buddhism in Tibet, Nubchen instilled fear in the king by causing an enormous scorpion, the size of nine yaks, to magically appear by a single gesture of his right hand through from which Langdarma lost the courage to persecute the Vajrayāna Sangha.¹¹⁹ Thus, despite the alleged demise of Buddhism in Tibet following Langdarma's reign and assassination, Nubchen appears to have continued his work.

In the quote above (“Now the precepts of the ‘vehicle of cause’...”), Nubchen alludes to the time that the *Lamp* was written- after the instantaneous lineage that the king and monks possessed was destroyed but when this could still be learned from books- suggesting a time after the event of Langdarma's persecution, and even a considerable time after his assassination (842). While Dudjom estimates Nubchen's birth in February 832 (according to the tradition which asserts Songtsen Gampo's longevity and a late date for Langdarma persecution), other Tibetan historians place his birth in 772, corresponding to the dates used for Kamalaśīla (740-795) and King Trisong Detsen (742-ca. 800, reign 742–797).¹²⁰ Based on the latter dates, Nubchen could have taken ordination from Kamalaśīla, been a direct disciple of Padmasambhava during the life of the king, and would have been around to scare Langdarma with an appearance of an enormous scorpion between 836–842.

¹¹⁸ bDud 'joms 'Jigsbral Yeshe rDorje, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, trans. Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991), 607-614.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., vol. Two: Reference Material, 54. Kapstein, in his translation of bDud 'jom's *Nyingma School*, endeavored to convert Tibetan to western dates according to the calculations of modern historians, based upon the records of Chinese, Dunhuang and Arabic origin. These dates he says are at variance by as much as sixty years with the traditional Tibetan dating for the royal dynasty between the reign of Songtsen Gampo and the restoration of the doctrine.

The dark period played an important role in Nubchen's activities in that he endeavored to preserve a number of tantric lineages, especially those of the Great Perfection,¹²¹ which one sees reflected in his extensive discussion of early Tibetan contemplative systems in the *Lamp*. The effort Nubchen puts in his *Lamp*, also known as *The Yoga which is the Eye of Meditation* (*rNal 'byor mig gi bsam gtan*) and as *The Lamp of the Eye of Meditation which Clearly Reveals the Key Point of Meditation* (*sGom gyi gnad gsal ba phye ba bsam gtan mig sgron*), to organize and present in minute detail the four main contemplative Buddhist approaches to enlightenment of his time reflects his concern of passing on his understanding of the distinctions and hierarchy of the Buddhist traditions propagated in Tibet. The way in which its four main chapters are divided and the way they mirror each other in their structure enables comparison of individual elements of the doctrines of the Gradualists (*Rim gyis pa*) chiefly developed by Kamalaśīla; the Simultaneist (*Cig car ba*) tradition of the Chinese monk Hwashang Mahāyāna; the tantric doctrines, particularly of the Mahāyoga and finally The Great Perfection. Although Nubchen considered the gradualist mahāyāna path and instantaneous Chinese path both as deviations from the perspective of the Great Perfection, he ranked Hwashang's instantaneous system above the gradualists but below Vajrayāna, which, according to David Higgins, reflects the hierarchy of the Buddhist traditions prevalent in Tibet during the late 9th to early 10th century.¹²²

Nubchen sees his work as a treatment of the different perspectives on “non-
imagination” (*rnam par mi rtog pa*, Skt. *avikalpa*) according to each of the four vehicles. According to *The Lamp*, each of the four traditions proposes a different way of arriving at the highest level of

¹²¹ Dalton, Jacob. “A Crisis of Doxography: How Tibetans Organized Tantra during the 8th-12th Centuries.” *Heidelberg OJS-Journals*, 2005, 144.

¹²² David Higgins, “The Philosophical Foundations of Classical rDzogs Chen in Tibet- Investigating the Distinction Between Dualistic Mind (*sems*) and Primordial Knowing (*ye shes*)” (l'Université de Lausanne, 2012), 227.

“non-imagination,”¹²³ of which *The Meditation of the Tathāgatas*, explained as being the unity of “tranquillity” (*zhi gnas*, Skt. *śamatha*) and “insight” (*lhag mthong*, Skt. *vipaśyanā*), is the highest. While the Gradualists propose the gradual method, the Simultaneists start out with simultaneous means, but the goal for them is the same. For the Mahāyoga school, non-imagination equals suchness (*de bzhin nyid*, Skt. *tathatā*) and Dzogchen takes it to be a synonym for spontaneous truth (*lhun rdzogs de bzhin nyid*).¹²⁴ Nubchen explains that these four different understandings of “non-imagination” are like the rungs of a ladder, one higher than the other,¹²⁵ and that both the instantaneous system as well as the Great Perfection teach non-activity and non-searching.

He differentiates Hwashang's instantaneous system or Tibetan Ch'an from Dzogchen by explaining that the former upholds the absolute nature (Skt. *pariniṣpanna*) as an unborn and void truly existent mind, which Nubchen explains “still hankers after the ‘truth’ and works on becoming accustomed to the state of voidness,” such that “Hwashang’s instantaneous system makes use of the theory of the non-duality of the two truths but does not experience it.”¹²⁶ Nubchen deals at length with the teachings of the Hwashang’s instantaneous tradition because of the danger he perceived in conflating it and the Great Perfection: “In (writing) the *rNal 'byor mig gi bsam gtan*, I have given a detailed account (of this tradition) since its close similarity to the doctrine of Dzogchen might mislead one.”¹²⁷ According to him, the confusion arises in particular due to the similarity in terminolo-

¹²³ Nubchen explains these 4 levels to be 1. the dhyana of childish enjoyment (*byis pa nyer spyod kyi bsam gtan*), 2. meditative concentration (*don rab 'byed pa'i bsam gtan*), 3. meditation on suchness (*de bzhin nyid dmigs kyi bsam gtan*), and 4. the meditation of the tathagatas (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i bsam gtan*). gNubs chen, *rNal 'byor Mig gi bSam gtan*, 53–56.

¹²⁴ gNubs chen, *Bsam gtan Mig sgron*, 55, 59–60; translation in Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, 104.

¹²⁵ gNubs chen, 61; translation in Karmay, *ibid*.

¹²⁶ “de la ni brtags na da dung bden pa re mos pa dang/ stong pa'i ngang la 'dris par byed pa dang rtsol ba yod de/ bden pa gnyis med pa la spyod kyang ma myong ste/.” gNubs chen, 490; translation in Karmay, 105.

¹²⁷ “rnal 'byor mig gi bsam gtan gyi skabs 'dir/ ston man dang/ rdzogs chen cha 'dra bas gol du dogs pa'i phyir rgyas par bkod do/.” gNubs chen, 186; translation in Karmay, *ibid*.

gy of the two systems: “The terminology of the Cig car ba [simultaneist] tradition is similar to that of rDzogs chen. It teaches (the doctrines of) non-activity [*bya ba med pa*] and non-searching [*bs-grub pa med pa*].”¹²⁸

Many of the categories Nubchen used, such as the four meditative approaches, the nine views concerning the ground, etc., failed to become normative for the later Nyingma school, and Nubchen’s masterpiece was neglected for centuries, until the publication in 1974 of the late Chimed Rigdzin Rinpoche’s 1974 edition.¹²⁹ The *Lamp* is counted among the great treatises on meditation associated with the Nyingma tradition,¹³⁰ but seems to be the first¹³¹ and last Tibetan work to have included all four doctrines in the framework of a basic text and auto-commentary: his structure of the four meditative approaches had no precedent, nor was its example followed by the later Nyingma school.¹³² In consequence, it is the only work which gives a detailed account of the doctrines of the Gradualist system as presented chiefly by Kamalaśīla, and the instantaneous doctrine propounded by Hwashang.

An important source after Nubchen for those appreciative of Hwashang has been the account of the Samye Debate in the *Heart of the Flower: a Dharma History*. Although the *Heart of the Flower* has been attributed to Nyangral Nyima Özer’s (1124-1192), Daniel Hirshberg suggests that it was composed by Nyangral’s disciples, and that although written within a generation of his

¹²⁸ “ston men ni rdzogs chen dang skad mthun/ bya ba med bsgrub pa med par ston.” gNubs chen, 490. Translation in Karmay, *ibid*.

¹²⁹ *The Lamp* is mentioned only twice in Dudjom’s *Nyingma School*. First in reference to Zhikpo Dütsi (1143- 1199), who studied *The Lamp* at the feet of Yontenzung of Kyilkar Lhakang, among many other texts, and later in reference to Kumaradza, (1266-1343), who went to Shang and also received the aural lineage of the Secret Cycles and the *Lamp* from master Gompa, a spiritual descendant of Chegom Nakpo. bDud ’joms, *The Nyingma School*, 571 & 654.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 654.

¹³¹ Since no works quoted in the *Lamp* seem to date from the eleventh century or later, the *Lamp* may well be ascribed to the late tenth century, as certain Tibetan historians maintain.

¹³² Dylan Esler, “The Exposition of Atiyoga in gNubs-Chen Sangs-Rgyas Ye-Shes’ bSam-Gtan Mig-Sgron,” *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines, Studies in the Sems sde tradition of rDzogs chen*, no. 24 (October 2012), 127, 128-1..

death, it underwent a rapid succession of revisions afterwards.¹³³ Hirshberg explains that Nyangral's disciples used the biography Nyangral had written of Trisong Detsen and Padmasambhava based on oral, textual and mnemonic fragments. The version of *The Flower* Van Schaik discusses in “The Prayer, the Priest and the Tsenpo: An Early BuddhistBuddhist narrative from Dunhuang,” is highly appreciative of Hwashang's path, as he depicts the Tibetan emperor as stating that there is no difference in truth between the two paths, but that for those of the best faculties (*dbang po*), there is the simultaneous method of Hwashang, and for those of medium and lesser faculties there is the graduated path. Van Schaik explains that although Tibetan historians had to rely on a variety of sources in their creation of their narratives, they generally did not specify them, which makes it hard to ascertain which sources the narratives are based on.¹³⁴ ‘Nyangral's’ presentation of Hwashang's system as an instantaneous system meant for persons of the sharpest and highest meditative capacities, however, reflects a passage of the earliest version of the *Testament* dating back to the eleventh century where the King is quoted to say the same, while time wise the creators of the *Heart of the Flower* could have had access to the version of the *Testament* dating to the twelfth century as well.

3. Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251)

Sakya Paṇḍita was very interested in eloquent discourse and focused on doctrine and logic. Having mastered Sanskrit and thus being able to directly access Indian Buddhism, he was mindful of what was seen as peculiarities literature deeply learned in Tibetan Buddhism.¹³⁵ In his *Clarifying the Sage's Intention* (*Thub pa'i dgongs gsal*) Sakya Paṇḍita (Sapaṇ) relates the story of the Samye debate, in which he depicts Hwashang as the loser. Similarly, in his polemical treatise *Elucidation*

¹³³ Daniel A. Hirshberg, “Discerning the Words of a Master: Textual Criticism and Scholarship in the Digital Age” (Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, September 4, 2012), http://www.indiana.edu/~iaunrc/newsevents/past_events/discerning-words-master-textual-criticism-and-scholarship-digital-age.

¹³⁴ Van Schaik, “The Prayer, the Priest and the Tsenpo,” 176.

¹³⁵ Van Schaik, *Tibet: A History*, 77.

of the Three Vows (*sDom gsum rab dbye*), he criticized the simultaneous realization of the quietist practice of non-mentation (*yid la mi byed pa*) and particularly the “White Single Means” (*dkar po gcig thub*) popular in the Kagyu tradition at his time — which he describes as a blank contemplation without any thought and without the requirement of skillful means. He branded it “Neo-Mahāmūdra” (Da lta’i Phyag rgya Chen po) and “The Great Perfection of the Chinese school” (rGya nag Lugs kyi rDzogs chen).¹³⁶ He takes these systems to stand for a complete quietism, a “do-nothing” attitude, and claims further that this is the heresy of Hwashang.¹³⁷ In Sapaṇ’s depiction of the Samye debate, Hwashang loses his confidence as Kamalaśīla makes his refutations. Being pressed to reply, Hwashang answers: “I am like one thunderstruck (*mgor thog brgyab pa*); I do not know (how to) answer.”¹³⁸ Although Sapaṇ time wise could have had access to Nyangral’s *Heart of the Flower* or accounts similar to it, Sapaṇ followed negative descriptions of views similar to Hwashang’s such as presented in Kamalaśīla’s *Bhāvanākrama* and in the twelfth century versions of the *Testament*. In his polemics he thus equates those who follow traditions which he branded Neo-Mahāmūdra and the Great Perfection of the Chinese school with the losers Hwashang and his historical narrative justifies his objection to any system that didn’t teach a graduated path or the necessity of intellectual effort.

Although Sapaṇ’s polemical *Distinguishing the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum Rab dbye*) influenced many subsequent polemical treatises, Ringu Tulku argues that this writing and the overall

¹³⁶ da lta’i phyag rgya chen po dang// rgya nag lugs kyi rdzogs chen la// yas bab dang ni mas ’dzegs gnyis// rim gyis pa dang gcig car bar// ming ’dogs bsgyur ba ma gtogs pa// don la khyad par dbye ba med// .. phyi las rgyal khriims nub pa dang// rgya nag mkhan po’i gzhung lugs kyi// yi ge tsam la rten nas kyang// de yi ming ’dogs gsang nas ni// phyag rgya chen por ming bsgyur nas// de (sic) lta’i phyag rgya chen po ni// phal cher rgya nag chos lugs yin// Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsan, *Sakya Paṇḍita Kun Dga’ rGyal Mtshan Gyi gSung ’bum*, 3 vols. (Lhasa: Bod ljongs Bodyig dPe mnying dPe skrun khang, 1992), 51; translation in Phuntsho, *Mipham’s Dialectics*, 45. Whether this implies the Tibetan Great Perfection per se is debatable.

¹³⁷ Michael Broido, “Sa-Skya Pandita, the White Panacea and the Hva-Shang Doctrine,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, no. 2 (1987): 27–68.

¹³⁸ David Paul Jackson, *Enlightenment by a Single Means: Tibetan Controversies on the “Self-Sufficient White Remedy”* (*dkar Po Chig Thub*) (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1994). 91.

philosophical and the corresponding historical stance Sapaṇ offers in it, too, need to be understood within the polemical and historical context Sapaṇ was operating in,¹³⁹ which according to Ringu Tulku explain why Sapaṇ's criticisms of Mahāmūdra necessary:

Because it was necessary in that context,
In *Differentiating the Three Vows* he refutes
The Dagpo Kagyu, the Mahamudra, and others.
But in his book the *Commentary Praising Selflessness*,
he personally accepts the view of Mahamudra.¹⁴⁰

So while he uses Hwashang in the context of *Distinguishing the Three Vows* to offer a stance which criticizes Mahāmūdra, he personally actually accepts Mahāmūdra in the context of his *Commentary Praising Selflessness*. Although the Nyingma School had already been accused of focusing too much on non- conceptualization before Sakya Paṇḍita's polemics, Sakya Paṇḍita's polemical writings in which he holds the Great Perfection to not be different from Hwashang's system introduce a period of polemical charges against the Nyingma School's central practice of non-conceptual meditation. In contrast to 'Nyangral's' history, Buton Rinchen Drub depicts the Chinese representatives in his *History of Buddhism* as losers who maliciously took their anger out on the Indian party upon hearing the king giving the order that the Indian school of Buddhism was to be followed: "[the adherents of Hwashang] were enraged, armed themselves with sharp knives and threatened to kill all the Tsen min pa [the adherents of Kamalaśīla]."¹⁴¹ Historical sources that depicted Hwashang so negatively were instrumental in further brandishing those traditions that featured non-conceptualization as the mistaken ones, the inheritors of Hwashang.

4. Longchenpa (1308–1364)

¹³⁹ Sam Van Schaik, *Approaching the Great Perfection: Simultaneous and Gradual Approaches to Dzogchen Practice in Jigme Lingpa's Longchen Nyintig* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2004), 15.

¹⁴⁰ Ringu Tulku, *Ri-me philosophy*, 11.

¹⁴¹ Roccasalvo, "The Debate at bSam Yas," 512.

In response to the polemical attacks of these authoritative and powerful scholars, certain Nyingma masters took the opportunity to elucidate their own teachings in relation to Hwashang's system. Rather than simply defending themselves against such accusations by distancing their own teachings from those Hwashang was said to have taught, they used the polemical situation to elucidate their own teachings through engaging in the discussion of the relationship between Hwashang's non-conceptual meditation and that of the Great Perfection. They would express their approval about Hwashang and place Hwashang high up in their doxographical hierarchy, believing that Hwashang had taught a respectable system.

Longchenpa whose central teaching the Great Perfection (rDzog chen) teaches non-conceptualization, was such a masters. Studying with many of the great teachers of his day without regard to sect, he received besides the Nyingma transmissions through his family, the combined Kadam and Sakya teachings of the Sūtrayāna as well.¹⁴² In contrast to the later Mipham who was more concerned with relating the Great Perfection to other traditions, Longchenpa's works reveal, in spite of his non-sectarian stance, his primary concern with refining terminology, pointing out relations between esoteric and exoteric works and systematizing topics *within* the Nyingma tradition¹⁴³ In his discussion of Hwashang's view the focus is on Hwashang's statements of good and bad deeds beings mental constructs and the necessity of ceasing mental and physical action. Longchenpa's teachings on the Great Perfection stress naturalness and simplicity as the Great Perfection holds the ultimate to transcend both positive and negative action. This resonates with Hwashang's statement that both positive as well as negative actions obscure the ultimate truth. In one section of his *Essence of*

¹⁴² Longchen Rabjam and Tulku Thondup, *The Practice of Dzogchen* (Boston: Snow Lion Publications, 1996). 145–188.

¹⁴³ David Francis Germano, "Poetic Thought, the Intelligent Universe, and the Mystery of Self: The Tantric Synthesis of rDzogs Chen in Fourteenth Century Tibet." (The University of Wisconsin, 1992), 3.

Three Sections (sDe gSum sNying po),¹⁴⁴ Longchenpa teaches that in the context of Great Perfection practice, one transcends the consequences of positive and negative actions. He equates this with Hwashang's famous statement that virtue and sin are like black and white clouds, in that both cover up the sun, and agrees with Hwashang in that virtuous thoughts bind one just as much as evil thoughts do, in the same way that golden chains confine us just as much as iron chains do. He then goes on to say: "When the great master Hwashang said this, those of lesser intellects could not comprehend it, but he was in accordance with the [ultimate] truth."¹⁴⁵ Longchenpa thus treated certain of Hwashang's statements equal to the truth of Dzogchen, similar to Nyangral,(or his disciples) who claimed that Hwashang's teachings were meant for persons of the sharpest and highest meditative capacities.

5. Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419)

Je Tsongkhapa, who was like Sapan in opposing the teaching of non-mentation on the path, takes Hwashang's statement to entail a nihilist understanding of reality that urges the discarding of conceptual thoughts, including virtuous ones, because of considering them to be hindrances to enlightenment.¹⁴⁶ According to him, those people who "in the manner of Hwashang" held thinking (grasping of characteristics) itself to be the cause of suffering, were throwing away the means to obtaining the view through virtuous action of mind and behavior.¹⁴⁷

The Geluk tradition which takes Tsongkhapa as its founder, portrays itself as "new Kadampa" stressing monasticism, morality, scholasticism, and gradated paths. This image reflected

¹⁴⁴ kLong chen Rab 'byams pa Dri med 'Od zer, "sDe gSum sNying po Don 'Grel gNas lugs Rin po che'I mDzod," in *mDzod bDun*, ed. Yeshe De Project, vol. VII, 7 vols. (India, 1992), 51–347.

¹⁴⁵ "slob dpon chen po ha shang gis gsungs pas de dus blod man pa'I blor ma shong yang don la de bzhin du gnas so|." kLong chen pa, "sDe gSum sNying po," 97; translation in Sam Van Schaik, "The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk"

¹⁴⁶ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 110.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

the qualities attributed to the famous Indian master Atiśa (980–1054), who came in Tibet during the 11th century. He was portrayed by his Kadampa disciples as a “reformer” who tried to correct behavioral excesses, and was taken as the central character around which the Kadampas built their identity. Tsongkhapa’s preference for a scholastic graduated approach clashed with traditions which seemed to propound the discarding of conceptual thoughts, including the virtuous ones. Seeing the cause of virtuous action as originating in non-conceptualization would render superfluous what Tsongkhapa saw as an essential feature of his graduated path, namely the cultivation of virtuous action.¹⁴⁸ According to him, those people who “in the manner of Hwashang” had taken grasping of characteristics as fetters of samsāra, holding thinking itself to be the cause of suffering, were throwing away the means to obtaining the view through virtuous action of mind and behavior.¹⁴⁹ He consequently presented Hwashang in line with some version of the *Testament of Ba* as well as the Sakya master Buton Rinpoche’s *History of Buddhism*, which both give an overall impression that Hwashang is the purveyor of false doctrine.

One reason why later scholars would engage with Geluk philosophy in general and why Mipham would engage with their depiction of Hwashang in particular is pointed at by Dreyfus who discusses the priority given to debate from the mid-fifteenth to the mid-seventeenth century which correlated with the decline of the Geluk commentarial tradition.¹⁵⁰ The standardization of monastic textbooks in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries furthermore consolidated the Geluk monasticism, strengthening “the status of the three monastic seats in central Tibet, making them premier centers for dialectical training and thereby centralizing and nucleating the field,”¹⁵¹ until after

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 184.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 105.

¹⁵⁰ George Dreyfus, “Where Do Commentarial Schools Come From? Reflections on the History of Tibetan Scholasticism,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 28, no. 2 (2005): 293

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

around 1700, according to José Ignacio Cabezón “Tibetan monastic debate (*rtsod pa*) came to replace commentary as the prevalent form of scholastic exegesis.”¹⁵² The Gelukpa stance taught at the foremost centers for dialectical training would have been relatively stable and uniform in the absence of scholastic exegesis and the presence of standardized textbooks. Up to today, textbook (*yig cha*) formulations are the core curriculum in Geluk colleges and form the material for their debates.¹⁵³ The Gelukpas were furthermore politically strong. When Güshi Khan of the Khoshut Mongols in 1641–42 overthrew the King of Tsang and handed the territory to the 5th Dalai Lama, the Gelukpa power consolidated. Through the power of the government many monasteries were ‘handed over’ to the Gelukpas. One can imagine how the Gelukpa’s dialectical stance, taught at their prestigious centers of learning and backed up with the power of the government, would have to be taken into account by later scholars.

6. Jigme Lingpa (1730-1798)

In his article “The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk: Nyingmapa Defenses of Hashang Mahāyāna,” Van Schaik explains that before statements about Hwashang like those of Sakya Paṇḍita had turned Hwashang into a polemical topic, the Hwashang as described in Tibetan traditional narrative had become a symbol for “a particular kind of erroneous doctrine, the belief in a simultaneous realisation caused by the mere cessation of concepts (*mi rtog pa* or *mi bsam pa*).”¹⁵⁴

After presenting a passage by Tsongkhapa’s lineage holder Khedrupjé (mKhas Grub rje,

¹⁵² José Ignacio Cabezón, *Buddhism and Language: A Study of Indo-Tibetan Scholasticism*. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

¹⁵³ Pettit, *Mipham’s Beacon of Certainty*, 184.

¹⁵⁴ “For Tibetan scholars of later generations, Hashang Mahāyāna came to be an emblem for a particular kind of erroneous doctrine, the belief in an simultaneous realisation caused by the mere cessation of concepts (*mi rtog pa* or *mi bsam pa*), which became a standard object of rebuttal. Later, Hashang’s defeat was put to polemical use against certain Tibetan practice traditions, in particular the Mahāmudrā (*phyag chen*) of the bKa’ brgyud school and the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*) of the Nyingma school.” Sam Van Schaik, “The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk: Nyingmapa Defenses of Hashang Mahāyāna,” *Early Tibet*, accessed July 22, 2014, <http://earlytibet.com/about/hashang-mahayana/>

1385-1438) as an example of the kind of criticisms leveled against Nyingma (*rNying ma*) practitioners, Van Schaik says it might be surprising that Nyingma masters would approve of Hwashang, instead of defending themselves against the accusations of sharing his view on the role of non-conceptualization and virtuous action:

In view of this kind of criticism it is perhaps surprising too that some rNying-ma writers, rather than simply defending themselves against such accusations by distancing their own teachings from those of Hwa-shang Mahāyāna, attempt a balanced judgment of the simultaneist doctrine and sometimes go so far as to express approval. Rather than repeating the standard presentations of Hwa-shang's beliefs as a misguided straying from the true path, as most were content to do, certain rNying-ma scholars continued to engage with the problem of simultaneous versus gradual approaches, and its relationship to their own Great Perfection practices.¹⁵⁵

Later in his article, Van Schaik suggests that Jigme Lingpa's insistence on the distinction between the simultaneist doctrine and the Great Perfection makes a passage in his *Kun mkhyen Zhal lung*¹⁵⁶ where Jigme Lingpa defends Hwashang also quite surprising.¹⁵⁷ When we recognize that not only the problem of simultaneous versus gradual approaches were reconsidered by such masters, but that the very basis for the discussion, the understanding of Hwashang and his teachings, differed, these Nyingma responses seem more reasonable: more than just not agreeing with the projected similarities between their views and Hwashang's, they did not accept the way Hwashang was presented in the first place. One would be surprised along with Van Schaik if one understood Jigme Lingpa to be defending the prevailing position on the teaching of Hwashang as a mere form of quietism. But Jigme Lingpa differentiates between what Hwashang is said to have taught and the master he likely had been. He thereby assumes a different position from the one mainly held by the dominant

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ 'Jigs med gLing pa, *rDo rje'i Tshig rkang gi Don 'grel Kun mkhyen Zhal Lung*, 527-528.

¹⁵⁷ "Jigs med Gling-pa's insistence on this distinction between the simultaneist doctrine and the Great Perfection makes the note he attaches to this passage quite surprising. Stepping outside of the standard model of accusation and rebuttal, he goes on to defend Hwa-shang." Van Schaik, "The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk," 6-7.

Gelukpa school which gained ascendancy with Sakya Paṇḍita and consolidated in the textbooks of the Gelukpas.

In the same article, Van Schaik also mentions Kathog Tsewang Norbu's (Ka' thog Tshe dbang Nor bu, 1698-1755) treatment of Hwashang, and takes Katog Tsewang Norbu and Jigme Lingpa to represent two contrasting Nyingma responses to the teachings of Hwashang. He calls the former's response to Hwashang doxographic following Nubchen's lead. Basing himself on Nubchen's *Lamp*, Katog Tsewan Norbu places Hwashang as "the representative of a Chinese school of Buddhism which he calls simultaneism"¹⁵⁸ above the gradualist path, but below the Vajrayāna and the Great Perfection. He furthermore differentiates the proper contexts for the usage of the terms "simultaneist and gradualist". The term 'simultaneism' according to him is a Chinese phenomenon and can be correctly used in the Chinese tradition, but as an exclusive Chinese phenomenon can not be used to describe the Indo-Tibetan tradition.¹⁵⁹ The other response, according to Van Schaik, is like Jigme Lingpa's who is following Longchenpa's lead, who treats the master Hwashang more as an individual emphasizing his realization.

Although he had many distinguished disciples in all four lineages and presented Madhyamaka (Middle Way view) following Tsongkhapa's system, Jigme Lingpa's work reveals his primary concern with the Nyingma tradition as he collected its texts¹⁶⁰ and writing histories about their ori-

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. Jigme Lingpa nevertheless contends in his *Kun mkhyen zhal lung* that there is a scriptural basis for this in the *Prajñāparamitā* sutras.

¹⁶⁰ Jigme Lingpa gathered Nyingma texts that had become rare which led to the amassing of the *Collection of Nyingma Tantras*, the *Nyingma Gyübum* (*rNying ma rGyud 'bum*)

gin.¹⁶¹ He says in his autobiography (*rnam thar*)¹⁶² that it was only after he awakened to the teachings of the Great Perfection after meeting with the wisdom-body of Longchenpa three times, and through the blessings of various auspicious symbols that he was able to increase his knowledge in a relationship with a teacher. Jigme Lingpa differentiated the Great Perfection and the non-conceptualization held to be taught by Hwashang based on the distinction between *sems*— the samsaric, conceptual mind — and *rig pa* — the nirvanic, non-conceptual mind, a distinction particular to the Instruction Series (Man ngag sde) of the Great Perfection. Jigme Lingpa explains that “if the meditator attempts to stop conceptual activity without distinguishing between *sems* and *rig pa*, the result is a blank indeterminacy (*lung ma bstan*)”.¹⁶³ Mipham points at this in his *Gyendrel* when he calls Hwashang’s concept of not grasping anything a mere suppression of mental discursivity through contemplation on non-thinking.¹⁶⁴ And more poetically, in his *Beacon of Certainty*, Mipham writes that “letting the mind rest blankly without analysis and without the clarity aspect of penetrating insight, one remains ordinary, like a rock in the ocean depths.”¹⁶⁵

Jigme Lingpa’s understanding and explanation of Hwashang resonated with Longchenpa’s as well as with the historical narratives of the Samye debate and Hwashang in the *Testament* (to

¹⁶¹ Jigme also wrote a nine-volume history of the Nyingma Vajrayāna and other works.

¹⁶² dpal gyi bsam yas mchims phur rgyal ba klong chen pa’i ye shes kyi sku dang lan gsum du mjal zhing brda thabs rten ‘brel du mas byin gyis brlabs pa la brten nas kho bo’i las ‘brel rdzogs pa chen po nas sad pa yin no/ ‘Jigs med gLing pa, “Yul Lho rGyud Du ‘Byung Ba’i rDzogs Chen Pa Rang Byung rDo Rje mkhyen Brtse’i Od Zer Gyi rNam Par Thar Pa Legs Byas Yongs ‘du’i sNyem,” in gSung ‘bum, vol. IX, 17; translation in Sam Van Schaik, “Sun and Moon Earrings: Teachings Received by Jigmé Lingpa,” *Tibet Journal*, no. 25.4 (2000): 3–32.

¹⁶³ ‘Jigs med gLing pa, *rDo rje’i tshig rkang gi don ‘grel kun mkhyen zhal lung* (vol.III (hum), 527-528- quoted in Van Schaik, “The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk.”

¹⁶⁴ Phuntsho, *Mipham’s Dialectics*, 125 quoting Mipham [Jamyang Namgyal] Gyatsho, “dBu Ma Rgyan Gi Rnam Bshad ‘jam Dbyang Bla Ma Dgyes Pa’i Zhal Lung,” in *Mi Pham Rgya Mtsho’i Gsung ‘bum* (*Collected Works of Mipham Gyatsho*), ed. H. H. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, vol. Nga, 27 vols. (Kathmandu: Zhechen Monastery, 1987), 57, 58.

¹⁶⁵ ma dpyad ce nar bzhag pa yis// lhag mthong gsal ba’i cha med par// mtsho gting rdo bzhin tha mal gnas// Nges shes sgron me, III/1–3; translation in Pettit, *Mipham’s Beacon of Certainty: Illuminating the View of Dzogchen, the Great Perfection* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1999), 204.

some extent), Nubchen's *Lamp*¹⁶⁶ as well 'Nyangral's' *Heart of the Flower*. Just like Longchenpa, Jigme Lingpa did not reply to polemical accusations that branded Nyingmapas as "Hwashang followers" by defending his school against this projected caricature, but presents Hwashang instead as a master of the sharpest faculties, whereby reflecting the sources that consider Hwashang's system useful for those of the highest faculties. After Jigme Lingpa explained how the teachings of the Great perfection are different from the so called teachings of Hwashang, he is —different from Longchenpa— careful not to explicitly praise the Hwashang who was commonly held to stand for wrong view. But he does take time to suggest that there was a difference between the teachings Hwashang was held to have propounded and the master that Hwashang might actually have been:

During the debate, Kamalaśīla asked what was the cause of saṃsāra by the symbolic action of whirling his staff around his head. [Ha-shang] answered that it was the apprehender and apprehended by the symbolic action of shaking his robe out twice. It is undeniable that such a teacher was of the sharpest faculties.¹⁶⁷

In relating the story similar to that found in the *Testament* about the first meeting of the two opponents before the debate, Jigme Lingpa presents Hwashang as a teacher who must have been of the sharpest faculties. Jigme Lingpa thus gets around any unfavorable interpretation of Hwashang by pointing out that nobody knows what Hwashang's view actually had been and that also according to the commonly accepted lore, Hwashang must have been of the sharpest faculties.

7. Conclusion

When Hwashang was apparently still a neutral name, Nubchen merely describes his view and accords it a doxographical status. With the shift from royal to religious history in Tibet, along

¹⁶⁶ gLong chen pa records in his *Lo rgyus Rin po che'i phreng ba*, that his master Rig 'dzin Kumārarāja listened to the exposition of the *Lamp* in the presence of sLlob dpons Gom pa- gLong Chen pa, "Lo rGyus Rin Po che'i Phreng Ba," in *bLa Ma Yang Tig*, vol. Kha (Derge). -Quoted in Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, 102.

¹⁶⁷ kā ma la shi las sgra rtsod dris pa'i tshe phyags shing klad la bskor ba'i brdas 'khor ba'i rgyu dris pa na| ber gyi thu ba gnyis sprugs nas gzung 'dzin gyis lan bya ba'i brda lan ston nus pa sogs dbang po shin tu rnon po'i gang zag yin par bsnyon du med la| 'Jigs med gLing pa, *Kun mkhyen zhal lung*, 527-528; translation in Sam Van Schaik, "The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk: Nyingmapa Defenses of Hashang Mahāyāna," *Early Tibet*, accessed July 22, 2014, <http://earlytibet.com/about/hashang-mahayana/>

with the trend of the New Schools looking to authenticate their lineage by tracing their origins to India, the Samye debate narrative with the roles of the Indian and Chinese side start to change during the ‘dark age’. While earlier sources indicate that the Chinese side had won, later sources point at the Indian side as the undisputed victor. Sakya Paṇḍita likely used altered sources like this when he equated Hwashang with heterodox views, presenting the name in ways resembling the negative descriptions of views similar to Hwashang’s in Kamalaśīla’s *Bhāvanākrama* as well as those found in the accounts of Hwashang in the *Testament*. After Sakya Paṇḍita, the term starts to be used in polemics more often. The Nyingma masters Longchenpa and Jigme Lingpa, who in contrast to the Sarma masters feel less urged to trace their roots back to India, have no problem with the practice of non-mentation Hwashang stands for. They explain however that such non-mentation which features in their own teachings as well needs to be accompanied by clear seeing. Their understanding and explanation of Hwashang resonated with the historical narratives of the Samye debate in Nubchen’s *Lamp* as well in ‘Nyangral’s’ *Heart of the Flower* as well as their depictions of Hwashang’s view. As Tsongkhapa points at the danger of giving up thought and action he dismisses Hwashang’s view as a nihilistic wrong view, which distracts one from the true path of virtuous action. His presentation of Hwashang resonates with Sakya Paṇḍita’s which suggest that Hwashang teaches false doctrine, as well as with Buton’s presentation of Hwashang in his *History of Buddhism*.

The meaning of ‘Hwashang’ and his system in sum, has been constructed differently reflecting the different historical narratives of the Samye debate, based on different identities of the schools and their different understandings of Buddhist soteriology and the related views on the value of ethical practices — relative practices of meditation designed to arrive at ultimate reality. Those adhering to gradualist intellectual systems claimed as orthodox a history of the Samye debate that justified their own system, i.e. a Samye debate with Hwashang as the loser, and censored the

history put forth by proponents of instantaneous non-mentation methods dismissing it as a heterodox deviation from the accepted orthodox history they propounded. Those who saw value in a more nuanced version of history, one whose narrative included the merit of both approaches, were marginalized by the more predominant view. Their view that the instantaneous approach was for those with the highest faculties, and presentation of a framework that explained how the different approaches could function side by side was likewise marginalized. For those holding the latter position, Hwashang didn't need to be presented as the loser of the Samye debate, nor as an outsider from whom one ought to strongly distance oneself. We see furthermore that while the earlier Ny-ingma masters such as Nubchen and Longchenpa showed a more open approval of the master Hwashang, the later masters like Jigme Lingpa would do so more covertly as the Hwashang symbol became more and more loaded with meaning of 'wrong view'. This would culminate with Mipham not showing any approval and even demonizing Hwashang.

4. Mipham on Hwashang

While Nubchen accepted Hwashang's teachings and placed them in a philosophical hierarchy, Longchenpa acknowledged that the meaning of some of Hwashang's core teachings accorded with the intent of the Great Perfection. When we arrive at Jigme Lingpa and later at Mipham's ('Jam mgon 'Ju Mi pham rGya mtsho, 1846–1912) time however, "Hwashang and his teachings" had featured for centuries in polemical debates and had taken on the negative projections of the dominant Gelukpas. Jigme Lingpa, whose engagement with Hwashang had been motivated by his wish to engage with the unique features of the Nyingma doctrines,¹⁶⁸ nevertheless suggested that Hwashang was a master of the sharpest faculties. In his writings, Mipham's mention of Hwashang's name is without exception accompanied by his strong disapproval of Hwashang without making any attempt to defend or praise him or his teachings. In his *Beacon* (*Nges shes sgron me*),¹⁶⁹ he comments on how Hwashang's practice lacks a rational foundation and philosophical certainty, and that its contemplation is based on a belief, arrived at without any analysis, that there is nothing to grasp.¹⁷⁰ In his *Gyendrel* (*rgyan 'grel*),¹⁷¹ Mipham calls Hwashang's concept of not grasping anything a mere suppression of mental discursiveness through contemplating non-thinking. In his *Rablen* (*Rab lan*)¹⁷² moreover, Mipham presents Hwashang as a teacher of blank contemplation, thinking about non-thinking.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Van Schaik, "The Great Perfection and the Chinese Monk," 10.

¹⁶⁹ Mipham Gyatsho, "Nges shes Rin po che'i sGron me," *Collected Works*, 71–123.

¹⁷⁰ Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 204.

¹⁷¹ Mipham Gyatsho. "sPyod 'jug Sher 'grel Ketaka," *Collected Works*, Nga, 1–358.

¹⁷² Mipham Gyatsho, "gZhan Gyis brTsad Pa'i Lan mDor Bsdus Pa Rigs Lam Rab Gsal De Nyid sNang Byed," *Collected Works*, vol. Ca, 191–474..

¹⁷³ With regard to thinking about non-thinking he says: "grasping the thought of non-thought, entertaining the thought 'I shall not think', which is a reference point itself, and can thus not be the uncorrupted non-conceptuality, which discerns the ultimate Emptiness." Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 194–196.

Mipham was first of all motivated to give the Nyingmapas a standpoint of their own and would have to, for outsiders but also for the Nyingmapas who had had to revert to Geluk presentations, take into account the prevalent notion of Hwashang for his presentations to be functional. Phuntsho says that Mipham's view on Hwashang differed from both the Gelukpas and his Nyingma predecessors in that "unlike the Gelukpas, he does not contemptuously dismiss Hwashang as a contemplative nihilist nor does he anywhere in his works attribute to Hwashang an eminent place in the Mahāyāna tradition, as do some of the Nyingma masters."¹⁷⁴ The skillfulness and conceptual unity of Mipham's stance on Hwashang becomes clear when we take notice of the balancing act that he performed rejecting Hwashang as nihilist in order to conform to the conventions of the dialogue dominated by the scholastically highly developed Gelukpa School, while also forwarding the essential Great Perfection teachings of the Nyingma School. While Mipham's understanding of Madhyamaka is rooted in the tradition of the Old translations, accommodating the prāsaṅgika approach current in Tibet after the translation of Candrakīrti's works, without departing from its original allegiance to the teachings of Śāntarakṣita, he pioneered as a Nyingma master in bringing the Nyingma view onto the scholarly platform. To give the Nyingmapas a standpoint of their own Mipham took into account influences inside as well as outside the Nyingma tradition that conditioned his audience.

1. Mipham's Life (1846–1912) and Style

According to *Mipham's Essential Hagiography* (*Jam mgon Mi pham rGya mtsho'i rNam Thar sNying po bsDus pa*)¹⁷⁵ by Khenchen Kunzang Palden (mKhan chen Kun bzang dPal ldan, 1862-1944), Mipham was born to a Derge (sDe dge) family of high status. As a strategy for secur-

¹⁷⁴ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 193.

¹⁷⁵ mKhan chen Kun bzang dPal ldan, "Gangs Ri'i Khrod Kyi sMra Ba'i Seng Ge gCig Pu Jam Mgon Mi Pham rGya Mtsho'i rNam Thar sNying Po bsDus Pa Dang gSung Rab Kyi dKar Chag sNga Gyur bsTan Pa 'I mDzes Rgyan (Mipham's Essential Hagiography)," *Collected Works*, 621–665.

ing rule in the 19th century kingdom of Derge in eastern Tibet (Kham), the king would not maintain an exclusive relationship with one tradition, but would form close ties with monasteries of different traditions. The tensions between the powerful Geluk (dGe lugs) government in Central Tibet and the aristocratic powers of Kham incited scholars of the Sakya (Sa skya), Kagyu (bKa' brgyud), and Nyingma (rNying ma) schools along with some Bön scholars to side together in search for strength. Around the time of the Nyarong (Nyag rong) war (c. 1863), during which old scores against non-Geluk traditions were settled, an attitude of nonsectarianism emerged called *Rime* (*Ris med*), a mutual, if unspoken commitment to a nonsectarian approach, among a core group of closely affiliated teachers. Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo (Jam dbyang mKhyen brtse'i dBang po, 1820–1892) and Jamgon Kongtrul ('Jam mgon Kong sprul bLo gros mTha' yas, 1813–1899), two of Mipham's main teachers, were considered core proponents. While it has been argued that *Rime* cannot be described properly as a purposefully launched organized movement,¹⁷⁶ certainly a new wave of dharmic activity arose and quickly spread in Derge reshaping the landscape of Tibetan Buddhist study and practice — whether it was a response to political intrigue and sectarian disputes or as a result of the harmonious and unbiased attitude of the King of Derge.

In 1861, due to the onset of the Nyarong wars, Mipham went to Lhasa on pilgrimage, and studied at the Geluk monastery of Ganden (dGa' ldan) for about a month.¹⁷⁷ Through his engagement in dialogue with “adherents of Tibet's quintessential scholastic tradition, the Geluk (*dge lugs*),”¹⁷⁸ Mipham was inspired to develop the philosophical traditions of the Nyingma school to a unique level of refinement. As Duckworth, notes, his style of engagement with his opponents can

¹⁷⁶ Sarah Harding, introduction to Jamgon Kongtrul's *The Treasury of Knowledge, Book Eight, Part Four: Esoteric Instructions* (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion Publications, 2007), 42.

¹⁷⁷ Kun bzang dPal ldan, *Mipham's Essential Hagiography*, 629.6–630.4.

¹⁷⁸ Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 2.

also be seen as a unique form of non-sectarianism:¹⁷⁹ while he selectively appropriates certain aspects of Geluk thought, such as the notion that Hwashang's view is nihilistic, he argues against what he finds to be problematic with his opponents' systems of interpretation, i.e. the reasons why they called Hwashang's view nihilistic. Mipham does not agree with Tsongkhapa's view that any emptiness meditation which does not focus on emptiness as absolute negation (*med dgag*), is *by definition* nihilistic like Hwashang's meditation.¹⁸⁰ Mipham had no problem with a notion of not apprehending anything, and moreover doubted that Hwashang's system was even near such a realization. Phuntsho explains this in the following way:

While the Gelukpas took Hwashang as a nihilist for denying existence, non-existence, is, is not, both, etc. and for the corresponding meditation, Mipham doubts that Hwashang was even close to realizing such freedom from extremes and being without apprehension and grasping.¹⁸¹

Although Mipham agrees with the Gelukpas that Hwashang's system was nihilistic, he does not agree that this is so because of Hwashang's teaching on non-thought and the corresponding meditation. Mipham instead argues that Hwashang's system is nihilistic because of ignoring the aspects of skillful means.

Because of the philosophical *Rime* attitude apparent in his own writings manifesting as “attention to a broad range of interpretations,”¹⁸² as well the supportive attitudes of *Rime* from the politicians around him, i.e. the aristocracy of Derge who supported the different schools equally, Mipham is commonly held to not have been influenced by politics favoring one school over the other in his presentations of his philosophies. Khenchen Kunzang Palden explains that Mipham was instead motivated to write treatises because of his wish to obey the command of his teacher

¹⁷⁹ Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-Nature*, xxii.

¹⁸⁰ Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 135.

¹⁸¹ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 196.

¹⁸² Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-Nature*, xxii.

Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo to write “textbooks for our tradition” (*rang lugs kyi yig cha*), as well as by his own observation that the Nyingma teachings had faded to the extent that besides from imitations (paintings) of other systems, the teachings (lamp) were neither pondered nor asked about, so that they merely resembled ‘a painting of a butter lamp’.¹⁸³ Observing that Nyingmapas had to turn to the dialectics of other schools for the study of philosophy,¹⁸⁴ Mipham aimed to invigorate the school’s dialectics and gave Nyingmapas a standpoint of their own with respect to critical debates in both exoteric and esoteric Buddhist doctrine, including a stance on Hwashang. Although Nyingma scholars before Mipham studied the sūtras and śāstras, seldom would a scholar write commentaries that centered on exoteric texts. The textbooks Mipham set out to write for the Nyingma tradition on exoteric texts “incorporated a Nyingma esoteric view,”¹⁸⁵ and the textbooks on esoteric texts incorporated epistemology and Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka. Through Mipham’s legacy the Nyingma now had a rigorous intellectual tradition commenting on central Buddhist esoteric philosophy, the Great Perfection, besides a tradition of tantric exegesis and ritual practice.¹⁸⁶

According to Wangchuk, Mipham’s greatest contribution to the Nyingma School is his setting the entire spectrum of Buddhist doctrines into this *yuganaddha* framework, where two provisionally opposed factors, such as non-conceptuality as well as reasoning on the path, are resolved in a synthesis.¹⁸⁷ Wangchuk remarks that Mipham because of his focused consistency and wide application of the *yuganaddha* framework stands out as the *Yuganaddhavādin* par excellence, even when compared to his two main mentors from the Nyingma School, Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and

¹⁸³ Pettit. *Mipham’s Beacon of Certainty*, 26.

¹⁸⁴ “By the nineteenth century, in eastern Tibet, many Nyingma monasteries used Geluk scholastic textbooks in their curricula,” *ibid.*, 99.

¹⁸⁵ Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-Nature*, xviii.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹⁸⁷ Dorji Wangchuk, “Was Mi-Pham a Dialectical Monist? On a Recent Study of Mi-Pham’s Interpretation of the Buddha-Nature Theory,” *Indo-Iranian Journal*, no. 55 (2012): 31.

Jamgon Kongtrul, or with Longchenpa.¹⁸⁸ Phuntsho depicts Mipham as a unique master, whose approach of equalizing and combining analytical methods with meditative insight was a uncommon feature both outside as well as inside Mipham's school.¹⁸⁹ While Mipham is known for his brilliance and his coverage of every important aspect of the theories and practices of Tibetan Buddhism, Mipham's works (even those teachings that do not treat the Great Perfection explicitly) can be seen as elucidations of The Great Perfection, the pinnacle and essence of the Nyingma teachings.

Mipham's primary project was to give the Nyingmapas their own dialectical stance, by forwarding a reasoning style in line with the Great Perfection. He finds such reasoning in Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, but presents it differently from the Gelukpas. If Mipham would only aim to address the Nyingmapa meditators who had not encountered Geluk presentations, there would be little reason to bring up the name Hwashang at all at a time that Hwashang's lineage was no longer alive. But he is functioning in an environment which had been dominated by the Gelukpas, as the prevalence of Gelukpa textbooks even within Nyingma colleges clearly indicates,¹⁹⁰ and consequently had to address this pertinent symbol which the Nyingma philosophy had been accused of resembling. He does so in a way typical of his overall style: adopting part of his opponent's view, while also reinterpreting and transcending it.¹⁹¹ Pointing at differences between the Gelukpa and Nyingma understanding, Pettit explains that the Gelukpas consider Prāsaṅgika to be the definitive expression of the philosophical view for both sūtra and tantra, a view that is established through reasoning and is an absolute negation (*med dgag*) of inherent existence (*rang bzhin*). For Nyingma philosophers, the subjective aspect of experience is constitutive of the definitive view. Duckworth explains that

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 32.

¹⁸⁹ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 110.

¹⁹⁰ Pettit. *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 99.

¹⁹¹ Mipham's alternative response to Geluk dominance, taking in certain features of the Geluk tradition while refuting others is what came to be followed by non-Geluk monastic colleges. Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-nature*, xxiii.

for the Nyingmapas, the definitive ultimate is primordial wisdom (*ye shes*) and is inseparable from the expanse of reality (*chos dbyings*), while the view is understood in terms of the inseparability of primordial wisdom and its object.¹⁹² So while the Gelukpas focus on the non-establishment of inherent existence (emptiness) arrived at through absolute negation, the Nyingmapas focus on the *unity* of the clarity aspects of experience and its object emptiness. The Nyingmapas, who trace their ontological exposition of emptiness to the Great Perfection, when having arrived at the utter unfindability of anything through Prāsaṅgika reasoning, still posit a quality of clarity. The Gelukpas consequently criticize the Nyingma presentations for being full of paradoxes and contradictions, transcending the rules of logic, and being based on a naive literalism and anti-rational quietism. The Nyingmapas, in return, disapprove of the Gelukpas for excessive intellectualism and irrelevant reasoning, especially the Gelukpas logic that allows for true relative existence. The Nyingmapas are critical of refutations of merely the inherent existence of an object, and not the object itself, where the true existence of an object is negated leaving the object thereby unharmed, as exemplified in the phrase “The ultimate truth is posited as solely the negation of truth [that is, inherent existence] upon a subject that is a basis of negation....”¹⁹³ The Nyingmapas argue that the resulting understanding

¹⁹² Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-nature*, 126.

¹⁹³ *don dam bden pa ni dgag gzhi chos can la bden pa bkag pa tsam la 'jog pa'i phyir*. Tsongkhapa, “The Lesser Exposition of the Stages of the Path (Lam Rim Chung Ba),” in *Collected Works*, vol. 21 (New Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 1979), 396.6. Quoted in Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-nature*, 194, note 12. According to Tsongkhapa, “If a pot were empty of pot, a pot would have to be nonexistent in itself, and if it were nonexistent in itself, it would be nonexistent everywhere else, too; therefore, a pot would [absurdly] be utterly nonexistent.” Tsongkhapa, *Thoroughly Illuminating the Viewpoint (dGongs Pa Rab Gsal)* (Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1998).

of the absence of such inherent existence would not relieve one's attachment to reality, just as the fear upon the sight of a snake is not relieved by the thought 'there is no elephant there.'¹⁹⁴

According to Phuntsho, the root of these discrepancies between Nyingma and Geluk "are no doubt due to the religious education and the general religious orientation in the two traditions: the intensity of sūtra studies among the Gelukpas and the dominance of Vajrayāna and Dzogchen teachings in the Nyingma tradition,"¹⁹⁵ meaning that the source of the disparity between the two schools lies in their differing religious orientation and education. Jamgon Kongtrul in his *Informal Discussion of the View* equally agrees that the Gelukpa's understanding is no different from that of the Nyingmapas, and that Tsongkhapa's presentation moreover does not negate the Dzogchen view.¹⁹⁶ While Phuntsho focuses in on the differences between Tsongkhapa and Mipham, Pettit focuses on the common philosophical understanding (*dgongs pa gcig*) Tsongkhapa and Mipham might have had, saying that in spite of the traditions' numerous philosophical differences, Mipham and his Geluk opponents both emphasize the necessity of rational determination (*nges pa*), the rational conviction gained through exhaustive philosophical analysis of the ultimate and rational-experiential certainty (*nges shes*), the elimination of conceptual elaborations through the ascertained view in meditation practice.¹⁹⁷ No Nyingma master before Mipham had emphasized the role of reasoning as

¹⁹⁴ Mipham quotes Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra* to this extent in his *Commentary on Candrakīrti, Madhyamakāvatāra* (*Jug 'grel*) (Mipham [Jamyang Namgyal] Gyatsho. "dBu Ma 'Jug Pa'i 'Grel Pa zLa Ba'i Zhal Lung Dri Med Shel Phreng." In *Mi Pham Rya Mtsho'i gSung 'bum* (Collected Works of Mipham Gyatsho), Om: 543). Candrakīrti, *Madhyamakāvatāra*, VI/141: rang khyim rtsig phug sbrul gnas mthong bzhin du// 'di na glang chen med ces dogs bsal te// sbrul gyi 'jigs pa'ang spong bar byed pa ni// kye ma gzhan gyi gnam por 'gyur nyid do// Quoted and translated in Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 89: "Seeing the snake remain in the hole in the wall of one's house/ If one proceeds to dispel even the fear of the snake/By ascertaining that 'there is no elephant there',/Alas! [how] bizarre would it be to others."

¹⁹⁵ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 210.

¹⁹⁶ Ringu Tulku, "The Ri-Me Philosophy of Jamgön Kongtrul the Great," 11.

¹⁹⁷ Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 17.

Mipham did, which hints at why he would be so rejective about the name ‘Hwashang’, the commonly held symbol of his time for the futility of reasoning.

2. The Role of Reasoning in Mipham’s Work

Besides Mipham, there have been many Buddhist masters before and after Śāntarakṣita who have taken different stances on the function of meditative experience (experiential certainty) versus the role of reasoning (rational determination) on the path of dharma. For Candrakīrti (and Buddhapaṇita (c.500) before him) reasoning was a method to get beyond reasoning, a way to mark the limits of discursive inquiry.¹⁹⁸ They specified the use of reasoning, arguing that consequential arguments were appropriate for Mādhyamikas, while they heavily criticized the use of autonomous inferences (especially with respect to Bhavya’s usage in his *Lamp of Wisdom* (*Shes rab sGron me’i Phreng ba*; *Skt. Prajñāpradīpa*), Bhāvaviveka’s commentary on Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* following Dignāga’s tradition) which he considered incompatible with the fundamental insight of Madhyamaka. Candrakīrti regarded the logico-epistemological tradition of Dignāga as a misguided attempt to find “philosophical completeness” and a sense of intellectual security that is antithetical to the fundamental insight of Madhyamaka.¹⁹⁹ Atīśa (982-1054) considered logic and epistemology unnecessary for a genuine understanding and practice of the Dharma. He refused to teach logic and epistemology, saying that the doctrines of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti were elaborated in order to defend Buddhism against its Hindu opponents, and since there was no Hindu opposition in Tibet, he didn’t teach logic and epistemology.²⁰⁰ Dreyfus points out that although many Tibetan thinkers have engaged in logic and epistemology despite Atīśa’s view, they have been cautious

¹⁹⁸ For Mipham “Analysis functions first to induce certainty in the falsity of inherent existence, and then to gradually eliminate all apprehensions of truth and untruth, existence and nonexistence, form as well as emptiness.” Pettit, *Mipham’s Beacon of Certainty*, 177.

¹⁹⁹ Pettit, *Mipham’s Beacon of Certainty*, 54.

²⁰⁰ Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality*, 440.

about the "soteriological relevance of the logico-epistemological tradition."²⁰¹ He furthermore points out that there have also been many Tibetan thinkers who have stressed the importance of it religiously, most of whom from the Geluk tradition which gives great importance to epistemology and as part of the path.²⁰²

Mipham considers reasoning important because just like Longchenpa and Jigme Lingpa before him, he considers the ultimate realization, which is beyond the intellect, difficult to realize for ordinary people. As Pettit explains,

The fundamental space beyond intellect where the elaborations of the four extremes are eliminated instantly is difficult to see all at once at the level of an ordinary person. The system of study and reflection is for eliminating the elaborations of the four extremes in stages.²⁰³

Phuntsho alerts his reader, though, that Mipham besides being committed to reasoning as a component of the path, is selective and cautious about its limitations: "While using reasoning to prove the mystic experiences of Dzogchen, he nevertheless was careful with rationality as he realized the limits of it."²⁰⁴

Mipham claimed to have based his style of using the logic of sūtra to establish the mantric view on Rongzom's (Rong zom Cho kyi bZang po, 1012–1088) exegesis on Madhyamaka.²⁰⁵ After warning that the Nyingma tradition is not homogeneous — as even within the Nyingma tradition scholars hold different views — Heidi Köppl explains that Rongzom was part of a tradition that used exoteric reasoning to expound on esoteric teachings, applying dialectical tools to resolve the

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Dreyfus, *Recognizing Reality*, 441

²⁰³ Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 207.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 210.

²⁰⁵ Heidi I. Köppl and Rongzom Chos kyi Zangpo, *Establishing Appearances as Divine: Rongzom Chözang on Reasoning, Madhyamaka, and Purity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2008), 90. The exact dates for Rongzom's life are still to be determined. Rongzom is said to have met Atīśa (982–1054) upon the latter's arrival in Tibet- Köppl, 17.

purity and equality of all phenomena.²⁰⁶ Thus, despite the rhetoric around the non-conceptuality of the Great Perfection, using reason to expound esoteric teachings has not been alien to the Nyingma lineage. But unlike Mipham, Rongzom did not attempt to harmonize the view of mantra or the Great Perfection with Madhyamaka. Rongzom held the view of mantra to be superior to sūtra, and demonstrates a deep ambivalence toward the capacity and relevance of reasoning itself.²⁰⁷

Longchenpa as well as Jigme Lingpa stress the importance for beginning practitioners of working in stages and that working with selflessness as a concept is a useful step between grasping and cutting through grasping.²⁰⁸

For the Gelukpas who dominated the dialectical scene during Mipham's time, not only the relative truth but also the ultimate truth of emptiness must remain intelligible in logical terms, as for Tsongkhapa, the principles of logical discourse apply to the investigation of the nature of phenomena as well as to the resulting findings of such an investigation.²⁰⁹ According to Pettit, "His emphasis on conventionalities seems to have resulted from his conviction that most Tibetan commentators took their Prāsaṅgika interpretation of conventionalities to agnostic or nihilistic extremes."²¹⁰ Mipham's understanding of emptiness and the ultimate and the logical, epistemological, and linguistic approaches it entails is different from the Gelukpas. While according to the Gelukpas, the

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 29.

²⁰⁷ Köppl, *Establishing Appearances as Divine*, 91.

²⁰⁸ Anyen Rinpoche, *Journey to Certainty- The Quintessence Of the Dzogchen View; An Exploration of Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, trans. Allison Choying Zangmo (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2012), 103.

²⁰⁹ Sonam Thakchoe, *The Two Truths Debate: Tsongkhapa and Gorampa on the Middle Way* (Sommerville: Wisdom Publication, 2007), 2.

²¹⁰ Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 130.

nature of existence, the ultimate, is an existent phenomenon,²¹¹ to Mipham the ultimate is not a mere absence of true establishment, but reality free from all elaborations, unknowable and ineffable.

Phuntsho explains that epistemologically, emptiness to the Gelukpas is a knowable object and linguistically effable. Logically, the Gelukpas accept the ultimate to be dialectically a non-implicative absolute negation (*med dgag*).²¹² Phuntsho continues: “[the Gelukpas] also assert the viability of the rules of logic such as the non-contradiction, the excluded middle and the logical bivalence in delineating Emptiness.”²¹³ Mipham rejects the viability of the rules of profane reasoning on the level of the ultimate, arguing that it would be irrational to maintain that the ultimate is one-sidedly existent or non-existent.²¹⁴ Although he readily agrees with the Gelukpas that the ultimate qua absence of “hypostatic existence” (*bden par grub pa*) is knowable and effable, to Mipham, the ultimate is not a mere absence of true establishment, but reality free from all elaborations, unknowable and ineffable.²¹⁵ He does however support the Gelukpas by insisting on the necessity of arriving at certainty through gradual Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka, as he states that

Without endeavoring to investigate
With a hundred methods of reasoning, it is difficult
To achieve realization.²¹⁶

In the face of these common dominant Geluk assumptions, Mipham needed to defend his approach, which limited the use of reasoning. By stating the importance of reasoning, furthermore,

²¹¹ “In his *dGongs pa rab gsal* Tsongkhapa emphatically points out that the basis of classification of the two truths is knowable things. That is to say, knowable things are classified into conventional and ultimate truths. The denial of the ultimate truth to be knowable, he mentions, is not the intention of Candrakīrti and Śāntideva.” Phuntsho, *Mipham’s Dialectics*, 163. Quoting from Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa, *dBu Ma Dgongs Pa Rab Gsal* (Bylakuppe: Sera-mey Computer Centre, 1973), 168–9 = f. 97a.

²¹² Phuntsho, *Mipham’s Dialectics*, 209

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., 211.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 208.

²¹⁶ Pettit, *Mipham’s Beacon of Certainty*, 209.

he challenged those practitioners in his own school whom he described as considering themselves Great Perfection practitioners while holding Hwashang wrong view. Pettit explains that to Mipham,

[...] in the context of the gradualist (*rim gyis pa*) path, which is the main context of discussion in the *Beacon*, discursive contemplation or “reflection” is what primarily induces certainty, while meditative equipoise (*mnyam bzhaḡ, samtīpattī*) combined with certainty is what induces realization (*abhisamaya, mngon rtogs*) and enlightenment.²¹⁷

Reflection or discursive thought is thus needed for all but prodigies like “Garab rDorjé, Self-arisen Padmasambhava and Indrabhūti”²¹⁸ who might have appeared to be ordinary students, but were actually spontaneously liberated.²¹⁹ Contemporary practitioners cannot reach enlightenment without reflection or discursive way and thus need apply further effort to arrive at the realization beyond which rational discourse has no place. Only then is one to cultivate the direct experience of the state beyond conception through the settling of the mind in meditative equipoise. According to Phuntsho, Mipham is unique in that he is both a committed rationalist as well as a committed exponent of the theories of emptiness “with a mystical flavor”.²²⁰ While for Mipham analysis is merely “facilitative,” and not “constitutive” of wisdom (*ye shes*), for Tsongkhapa the ultimate is knowable and effable and not beyond the domain of analysis.²²¹ Pettit claims that Mipham's affirmation of reason reflects the influence of Geluk thought²²² and summarizes that “Mipham inherited the major concern of Tsongkhapa's Madhyamaka, namely, the importance of conventions and the conventional valid cognitions that ascertain them, but attempted to resolve those questions

²¹⁷ Ibid., 191.

²¹⁸ 'Jigs med gLing pa, “rDo Rje Theg Pa sMin Grol Lam Gyi Rim Pa Las 'Phros Pa'i Man Ngag Gi rGyab Brten Pad Ma dKar Po,” in *kLong Chen Snying Tig*, ed. Ngawang Sopa, vol. III (hum), 3 vols. (New Delhi, 1973), 478.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 210.

²²¹ Ibid., 177.

²²² Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 17.

from the point of view of enlightened gnosis and coalescence.”²²³ Mipham in other words agreed with Tsongkhapa on the importance of the conventional in contrast to the Hwashang, as presented by Sakya Pandita and Tsongkhapa, who taught his disciples to give up the conventional — any mental constructs to allow in order for the ultimate to shine through. He clarified conventional distinctions from the point of the coalescence of the two truths (*zung jug*, Skt. *yuganaddha*), which for Mipham is synonymous with the uncategorized ultimate (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*, Skt. *aparyāyaparamārtha*), the meditative equipoise of Noble beings (*'phags pa'i mnyam bzhas*, Skt. *āryasamāpatti*).²²⁴

3. Mipham's Beacon of Certainty

In his introduction to his translation of the *Beacon*, Pettit informs us that Mipham's mention of Hwashang in the context of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka reasoning, is related to Tsongkhapa's polemical statements that most Tibetan Madhyamaka philosophers and meditators had views that were not much different from, if not identical to Hwashang's view.²²⁵ Pettit furthermore explains that Mipham's polemical arguments are not to be taken as rejections of other views but as occasions for clarifying the Great Perfection.²²⁶ According to Pettit, “The *Beacon* should not be read simply as an attempt at rational demonstration of the viability of the Great Perfection against the objections of its critics. It is also an affirmation of the necessity to leave rational affirmations and negations aside once critical philosophical certitude has been attained.”²²⁷ The *Beacon's* dialectics including its usage of ‘Hwashang’ are thus, according to Pettit, not just to prove the reasonability of the teaching of

²²³ Ibid., 130.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., 102.

²²⁶ Ibid., 6.

²²⁷ Ibid., 5.

the Great Perfection but are teachings of the Great Perfection itself which show the necessity to leave conceptuality once certainty in the view has been attained. Reasoning should be understood to have the capacity to point one in the direction of realization, but as that very realization is one beyond language, as even the fabric of language is emptiness, it needs to be left aside once the meaning of it is understood. The refutation of mistaken notions about The Great Perfection, correct both opponents as well as practitioners' views. As Phuntsho explains, the main theme in the *Beacon* is to show that reason as the path in scholarship, and meditation as the path of the Great Perfection converge in the same final understanding and should both be used on the path.²²⁸ Mipham considered philosophical analysis to be an essential tool for the paths of both sūtra and tantra, including the Great Perfection.²²⁹ And while earlier in the *Beacon* he would point at the difficulty of achieving realization without investigation, he later states that in order to practice the ‘cutting through’ of the Great Perfection, one would need to perfect the Prāsaṅgika view²³⁰ and that the aspect of non-elaboration of both systems are said to be no different.²³¹ The *Beacon* specifies the ways in which rational analysis and experiential cultivation are used to facilitate realization of the nature of ultimate reality beyond concepts by relying predominantly on Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka reasoning and Pramāṇa.²³² Pettit claims that the *Beacon* “clearly demonstrates that Mipham considered philosophical analysis to be an essential tool for the paths of both Sūtra and Tantra, including the Great Perfection, and that without it, one risks falling into one or another of these stereotypical extremes.”²³³

²²⁸ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 210.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17.

²³⁰ “In cutting through to primordial purity, One needs to perfect the Prāsaṅgika view.” Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 209.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² *Ibid.* 186.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 17.

Mipham wrote the *Beacon* at a time during which the meaning of ‘Hwashang’ had already developed through years of polemical debates, dominated by Gelukpas, who denounced non-conceptualization as a possible path. ‘Abiding by the rules’ of the dialectical field of his time, Mipham uses the rhetorical opportunity to defend the Great Perfection from misunderstanding from without and within Nyingma by explaining the term ‘Hwashang’ to denote a quietist misinterpretation of the Great Perfection where “one abides in a dark mindless state of non-conceptuality, without apprehending anything”.²³⁴ In the context of establishing the view of the Great Perfection Mipham explains in his *Beacon* that the meaning of “not apprehending anything” can be understood well or wrongly. For sublime beings, there is no elaboration, no object of an intentional apprehension to begin with, so there is no need to destroy intentional apprehension on purpose.²³⁵ Realizing that there is nothing to begin with, modal apprehension naturally subsides:

The first [way of understanding]
Is free of the elaborations of the four extremes.
For the gnosis of sublime beings,
Nothing is seen to remain,
So modal apprehension automatically subsides;
It is like looking at the empty, luminous sky.²³⁶

The wrong way according to Mipham is Hwashang’s mindless system, where one lets the mind rest blankly:

The second is the mindless system of Hwashang:
Letting the mind rest blankly without analysis and
Without the clarity aspect of penetrating insight,
One remains ordinary, like a rock in the ocean depths.²³⁷

Mipham himself explains that he never intended to insult other systems or write polemics, but that as his explanations emphasized his own tradition and refuted other systems, scholars of other

²³⁴ Ibid., 292.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Pettit, *Mipham’s Beacon of Certainty*, 203.

²³⁷ Ibid., 204.

schools did take it that way.²³⁸ In response to Tsongkapa, Mipham replies by stating that the authentic view of The Great Perfection is not like Hwashang's as it is fully compatible with the Madhyamaka philosophical view. According to Mipham, the perceived incompatibility of the critical philosophical approach of Madhyamaka and The Great Perfection reflects a limited and incorrect understanding of the Madhyamaka philosophical view, namely, that the different philosophical views and methods of the instantaneous approach of The Great Perfection and the gradualist approach of Madhyamaka cannot both be valid.²³⁹ This response can be seen to respect the principle of coalescence (*yuganaddhavāda*) that Mipham weaves through his teachings: he skillfully points out that the view of The Great Perfection and the view of the Gelukpa's Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka reasoning are not different.

4. Mipham Commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Ornament of the Middle Way*

Some time after the *Beacon*, which is astonishingly held to have been written when Mipham was only seven years of age,²⁴⁰ Mipham wrote in his famous commentary on Śāntarakṣita's *Ornament of the Middle Way* (*dBu ma rGyan*, Skt. *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*), *Words to Delight My Teacher Manjughosha* (*dBu ma rGyan gyi rNam bshad 'Jam dbyangs bLa ma dGyes pa'i Zhal lung*) in 1877 when he was thirty. The system that Śāntarakṣita presents in his *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* reflects the last great development of Buddhist philosophy in India, where the ultimate truth is presented in terms of Madhyamaka, while the conventional is understood in terms of the Cittamātra or "Mind

²³⁸ Ibid., 5. According to Pettit, the narrative style of the *Beacon* suggests that Mipham wrote the treatise in order to inspire his personal intuition of The Great Perfection.

²³⁹ Ibid., 4.

²⁴⁰ As cited in Pettit, (*Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 462, note 8) 'Jigs med Phun tshogs in his *Victorious Battle Drum*, (*Kun Mkyen Mi pham Rgya mtsho Ia gSol ba debbs Tshul Gyul las rNam par Rgyal ba'i rNga sgra*) and Khro shul 'Jam rdor (in *Nges shes Rin po che sGron me'i rNam bshad 'Od zer Dri med* (Bylakuppe, Mysor: Ngagyur Nyingma Institute (Higher Buddhist Studies & Research Centre), n.d.), 414)) write that the *Beacon* was composed when Mipham was seven years old. Pettit (*Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 468, note 66) furthermore quotes Khenpo 'Jigs med Phun tshogs story, which is common in current oral tradition, that the *Beacon* was dictated by Mipham when he was seven years old to one 'Ju blama Rin chen mGon po (Khenpo 'Jigme, *Victorious Battle Drum*, 9a.6).

Only" school. Śāntarakṣita's specialty is his addition of the logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa*) tradition of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti to this synthesis, the teachers whose teachings Atīśa upon coming to Tibet refused to teach and Candrakīrti regarded as antithetical to the fundamental insight of Madhyamaka. In his commentary on the *Ornament*, Mipham urges his audience to:

Give rise to certainty in the path of reasoning of the unity of the two truths, which is the method of reaching unerringly at the crucial point of this tradition [give rise to certainty in the path of reasoning of the unity of the two truths, which is the method of reaching unerringly at the crucial point of this tradition [of Śāntarakṣita]].²⁴¹

The crucial point of Śāntarakṣita's system to which Mipham is referring, is the teaching of the freedom from all extremes, which is the uncategorized ultimate.²⁴²

In his *Ornament*, Mipham sets forth “a progressive way of cultivating the understanding of coalescence, Emptiness coalescent with appearance, and approaching the non-conceptual gnosis,”²⁴³ which encompasses four stages of Madhyamaka experience (*dbu ma'i 'char rim bzhi*), one giving rise to the next. Of these stages, the first stage is to understand that entities lack true reality, when appearance arises as emptiness (*snang ba stong par 'char ba*). Through this understanding, practitioners' habituation of holding phenomena as real since beginning-less time diminishes as they arrive at the understanding of the categorized ultimate truth, the absolute negation (*med dgag*) of emptiness (which the Gelukpas take as the final ultimate). Mipham considers this a suitable way to arrive at and conceptualize the ultimate for beginners, but because it is still a conceptual formula,

²⁴¹ tshul 'di'i gnad la mi 'phyugs par reg pa'i thabs [/]bden gnyis zung du 'jug pa'i rigs lam la [/]nges pa bskyed par byaste/ Thomas H. Doctor, trans., *Speech of Delight, Mipham's Commentary on Śāntarakṣita's Ornament of the Middle Way* (Ithaca, N.Y., USA: Snow Lion Publications, 2004), 112.

²⁴² “The uncategorized ultimate is explained to be the indivisibility of appearance and emptiness, which cannot in any way be described and is the object of individual reflexive awareness, different from the approximate ultimate, which is a non-affirming negation.” Doctor, *Speech of Delight*, 113.

²⁴³ In the second stage one proves that while being utterly empty, things still appear (the experience of Emptiness as coalescence (*stong pa zung 'jug tu 'char ba*)) followed by the third stage where an experience of lack of elaborations will arise (the experience of coalescence as free from elaborations (*zung 'jug spros bral du 'char ba*)). Finally in the fourth stage, one gains conviction in the equality (*mnyam pa nyid*) of all things (the experience of lack of elaborations as equality (*spros bral mnyam nyid du 'char ba*)). Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 150

it is not the uncategorized ultimate.²⁴⁴ In his commentary on the *Ornament*, Mipham explains that after absolute negation (*med dgag*) destroys the extreme of clinging to the view ‘phenomena are real,’ and one has arrived at the approximate truth (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*) there is still the risk of becoming attached to emptiness if one becomes attached to the idea that this non-existence is the ultimate reality and clings to such “emptiness,” either considering it a thing (*ngos po*) or an absence (*dngos med*).²⁴⁵ Mipham explains that once one clings to such ‘emptiness’, one’s view becomes incurable, as the panacea for all suffering, the definitive understanding of emptiness, is grasped wrongly “thinking that any mental doing is unacceptable. [...] In such a case it will be hard to look toward, see, understand, and experience this profound dharma.”²⁴⁶

Mipham then goes on to quote the *Root Verses on the Middle way* (*dBu ma rTsa ba'i Tshig le'u Byas pa Shes rab Ches bya ba*, Skt. *Mūlamadhyamakakārikāśhāstra*) to show the danger of misunderstanding emptiness:

When Viewing emptiness wrongly,
Those of little knowledge will be ruined,
As when catching a snake wrongly,
Or practicing a knowledge mantra wrongly.²⁴⁷

Mipham continues to explain that the un-categorized ultimate truth (*rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*), will prevent attachment one may develop to such a view of the non-existence of entities.²⁴⁸

Mipham mentions that some might object that this ‘uncategorized ultimate’ where the four ontological extremes are refuted — ‘existence’ through the approximate ultimate, non-existence through the uncategorized ultimate, both and neither through having refuted the first two — is not

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 197.

²⁴⁵ Doctor, *Speech of Delight*, 103

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

different from the absence of mental activity that typifies Hwashang.²⁴⁹ However, Mipham explains that the absence of mental fabrication, stopping all grasping at phenomena, so that no reference points are experienced in Hwashang is different from the uncategorized ultimate that he's talking about. Hwashang's mental non-doing, he says, cannot even clear the extreme of existence, let alone all four extremes.²⁵⁰ Mipham explains that his non-doing is what is referred to in *Distinguishing Phenomena from Their Intrinsic Nature* (*Chos dang Chos nyid rNam par dByed pa*) as clinging to the feature (*mngon rtog 'dzin pa*) of 'not thinking.' He calls it "a mere suppression of mental discursivity through contemplation on non-thinking,"²⁵¹ or in other words the entertaining of the thought 'I shall not think.' Mipham says that to take Hwashang's advice to meditate with certainty and clarity on the thought 'I shall not think', which Hwashang explains to be mental non-doing, is a reference point itself, and can thus not be the uncorrupted non-conceptuality, which holds no reference point at all.²⁵² In describing Hwashang's meditation as the absence of mental fabrication induced by stopping all grasping at phenomena so that no reference points are experienced, Mipham defines Hwashang's system as the antithesis of Śāntarakṣita's, which advocated the path of reasoning to arrive at the uncategorized ultimate. With respect to the fruition as well, he describes Hwashang's fruition as mental oblivion whereas Śāntarakṣita's fruition is the freedom from all extremes, "the abiding way within the dissolving of all dualistic appearances."²⁵³ According to Mipham, without the step of logical investigation in the system of Śāntarakṣita it is difficult for ordinary beings on the path to arrive at certainty. He says:

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 105.

²⁵⁰ Doctor, *Speech of Delight*, 103.

²⁵¹ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 195.

²⁵² Doctor, *Speech of Delight*, 111.

²⁵³ Ibid., 113.

The teaching of the Great Perfection is an extremely profound-indeed the ultimate-teaching. Consequently, it is difficult to realize. If one fails to rid oneself of all misunderstanding concerning ultimate reality by receiving and reflecting on the teachings.²⁵⁴

and

Therefore, with my palms joined in supplication, I declare to all who dwell in every direction: Your meditation must never stir from certain knowledge (*nges shes*)! Achieve this certainty, I pray. Free yourselves from doubt! Without this certainty, it is difficult to realize the ultimate truth.²⁵⁵

In order to arrive at certainty about the uncategorized ultimate, ordinary beings cannot skip the step of investigation. To not first arrive at logical conclusions, but to straight away try to practice mental non-doing, arguing that this is some sort of short cut practicing the fruition, is what according to Mipham would lead one to ‘Hwashang’s’ mental oblivion.

5. Mipham’s Influence on the Nyingma Identity

According to Dorji Wangchug, one of Mipham’s “major lifelong concerns seems to have been to provide a new identity to his school.”²⁵⁶ Mipham appears to have reinterpreted sources in order to do so. Mipham’s Svātantrika/ Prāsangika distinction which Mipham explains to have taken from Rongzom’s work, for example, are Mipham’s own distillations and interpretations: during Rongzom’s time this distinction was not known and no such discussion can consequently be found in Rongzom’s extant works. We will see that that besides these Nyingma sources Mipham has similarly reinterpreted sources on Hwashang as well. Phuntsho furthermore emphasizes how Mipham’s inclusivism was typical of style. Even with respect to Hwashang he specifies the context that also Hwashang’s meditation is useful:

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 369.

²⁵⁵ Padmakara, *The Adornment of the Middle Way*, 324.

²⁵⁶ Dorji Wangchuk, “Was Mi-Pham a Dialectical Monist? On a Recent Study of Mi-Pham’s Interpretation of the Buddha-Nature Theory,” *Indo-Iranian Journal*, no. 55 (2012), 32.

Unlike other critics of Hwashang, Mipham does not dismiss Hwashang's quietism as nihilism. He reasons that Hwashang's practice of non-mentation is not nihilistic, instead, it is an expedient way of calming the mind and through it some persons of sharp faculty can easily give birth to proper insight when inspired by the instruction of a skillful teacher.²⁵⁷

This inclusivistic approach of bringing together different apparently opposing views by pointing out the common philosophical understanding is part of Mipham's work overall. Duckworth calls this "dialectical monism," where Mipham takes

[...] a twofold schema, with an ultimately false dichotomy of two opposed factors and a unified ground that emerges from their dissolution -- two provisionally opposed factors, such as the two truths, samsāra and nirvāṇa, self and other, appearance and emptiness, and so on, are resolved in a synthesis, in which each of the two distinctions is ultimately untrue, because they are actually indivisible from the beginning.²⁵⁸

Mipham resolves tension between any two extremes through finding a common ground or a level of understanding that transcends both. This dialectical monism according to Duckworth is a common theme in Mipham's exegesis.

With regard to the way Mipham did or did not bring together the teachings of previous masters, in his article "Was Mipham a Dialectical Monist? On a Recent Study of Mipham's Interpretation of the Buddha-Nature Theory"²⁵⁹ Dorji Wangchug describes "Mipham's understanding of Buddhist doctrines, his concerns, and his priorities to be neither identical with nor diametrically opposed to those of the earlier Nyingma lineage masters Rong-zom-pa and Klong-chen-pa." According to Wangchug,

Rong-zom-pa inclines more towards the 'negative-intellectualist' trend, Klong-chen-pa more towards the 'positive-mystical' one, and Mi-pham towards reconciliation

²⁵⁷ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 211.

²⁵⁸ Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-Nature*, xxxii.

²⁵⁹ Wangchuk, "Was Mi-Pham a Dialectical Monist?", 15–38.

and harmonisation by striving to balance not only the two trends found in Indian Buddhist literature but also the views of Rong-zom-pa and Klong-chen-pa.²⁶⁰

Wangchug furthermore points at how the most important point of convergence amongst these three scholars, philosophically speaking, seems to be their understanding of the “groundless-cum- root-less (*gzhi med rtsa bral*) ontology,”²⁶¹ the understanding that when analyzed neither phenomena nor a cause for these phenomena can be found, and secondly “the understanding that the two truths of appearance and existence are indivisible (*bden pa gnyis dbyer med pa*),”²⁶² the unity of the two extremes of appearance and existence. What these masters share in sum is what Douglas S. Duckworth calls “dialectical monism” in his *Mipam on Buddha-Nature, the Ground of the Nyingma Tradition*²⁶³ or what Wangchug’s calls²⁶⁴ “a *yuganaddha* framework.” But although Mipham shares his *yuganaddha* framework with Rongzom and Longchenpa, his focus and consistency therein make him outstanding:

Considering his overall approach of viewing and dealing with a wide range of Buddhist doctrines from within a *yuganaddha* framework, with a remarkable degree of focus and consistency Mi-pham stands out as the *Yuganaddhavādin* par excellence, even when compared with his two main mentors from the rNying-ma school, Rong-zom-pa and Klong-chen pa.”²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 32.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Ibid., 32-33.

²⁶³ Douglas S Duckworth, *Mipam on Buddha-Nature, the Ground of the Nyingma Tradition* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

²⁶⁴ Wangchuk, besides reviewing Duckworth’s book in his article “Was Mipham a Dialectical Monist?” elaborates on Duckworth’s project of trying to define Mipham’s work. While Wangchuk agrees with Duckworth’s identification of Mipham, he himself prefers to use a neo-Sanskritism, namely, *Yuganaddhavāda* (*zung ’jug tu smra ba*) with *yuganaddha* meaning “unity” (*zung du ’jug pa or zung ’jug*). This term, he says, shouldn’t be burdened with Western philosophical connotations.

²⁶⁵ Wangchuk, “Was Mi-Pham a Dialectical Monist?”, 32.

Wangchug even calls Mipham's "setting the entire spectrum of Buddhist doctrines into a *yuganaddha* framework [his] greatest contribution to the rNying-ma school."²⁶⁶ That Mipham brought about change is in accordance with the traditional notion that masters are expected to present the teachings in a fresh and approachable way, suitable for audiences of their time. With respect to Hwashang, Mipham *yuganaddha* approach consists of bringing together the two extremes of negative and positive sentiment with regard to this Chinese master, assuming a negative stance in line with the Gelukpas in agreeing that the teachings he has come to represent are nihilistic, but allows for the positive sentiment with regard to non-thought by explaining that Hwashang was nihilistic for leaving out skillful means on the path and not, as the Gelukpas explained, for the non-thought he taught.

6. Mipham's Unique Stance on Hwashang

Mipham could have just described what he considered wrong view, without using such a loaded a symbol. For the Gelukpas the name had become very potent symbol for any nihilistic view, and Nyingmapas had put much effort into disentangling their identity from Hwashang and his teachings. But Mipham brings up the sensitive topic of Hwashang to let the common Tibetan narrative about the Samye debate fuel the intensity of his teachings. Mipham skillfully employs the name by associating it with the *misunderstanding* of The Great Perfection, where others had used it to discredit it.

In the *Beacon*, Mipham uses Hwashang as a symbol to point out how for ordinary practitioners certainty (*nges shes*) — the convergence between critical philosophy and experience — is a necessity, a certainty which Hwashang's meditation of mere 'halting of thoughts' is missing. Ordinary practitioners are instead to use thoughts to arrive at certainty and only then rest one's mind in

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 31.

luminosity.²⁶⁷ Phuntsho looks at the greater context in which Mipham set down his arguments on Hwashang, hypothesizing about how Mipham's presentation could be understood:

It is difficult to say whether Mipham really took the historical Hwashang Mohoyan to be such a master. His depiction could as well be hypothetical but it is the most suitable interpretation of Hwashang he could provide to both denounce Hwashang, who emblemized quietist contemplation and simultaneist approach among the circles of Tibetan scholars, and at the same time maintain his theories of Emptiness free from the four extremes that conceptual thought falls into, the extremes of existence, non-existence, both and neither. Mipham's stance on Hwashang being a nihilist for discarding method, and not -- as the Gelukpas held -- for advocating non-mentation, allowed him to maintain his theories of Emptiness free from grasping and apprehension.²⁶⁸

Mipham must have had access to the sources in which both Longchenpa and Jigme Lingpa express more positive sentiments about Hwashang and he must have consequently been aware of his own divergent presentation. Contrary to Nubchen's time when the Hwashang's lineage had only recently been destroyed, at Mipham's time the name Hwashang functions as a mere symbol, separated from the historical figure Hwashang might have been. This process of separation we see already happen with Jigme Lingpa who differentiates between the symbol Hwashang and the actual master Hwashang might have been. According to Phuntsho, however, it is difficult to say whether Mipham ever believed that the Hwashang he talked about coincided with the historical Hwashang. He proposes instead that Mipham depicted Hwashang in a way to fit the rest of his system. This accords with Pettit's conclusion that Mipham's stance on Hwashang allowed him to reject Hwashang while preserving a space for the part of non-conceptual gnosis that Hwashang also advocated. Starting out with the common understanding of 'Hwashang' as a teacher of quietist meditation, the way he was described by the dominating Gelukpa school, Mipham uses this symbol to engage both Nyingmapas as well as outsiders, urging them to reconsider their understanding of Hwashang and the

²⁶⁷ Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 292

²⁶⁸ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 198.

Great Perfection. Mipham's description involves the traditional description of one who advocates "letting the mind rest blankly," a meditation of not thinking in order to eliminate all thoughts, and "without analysis," describing how such a meditation would be engaged in by the non-informed, preceded merely by the dropping of discursiveness, instead of a gradual path of cultivation and development.²⁶⁹ He then adds "without the clarity aspect of penetrating insight,"²⁷⁰ thus cleverly giving new meaning to the 'Hwashang symbol,' by elucidating right and wrong understandings of The Great Perfection. So more than just repeating the prevalent understanding, which had started to take shape with Sakya Paṇḍita and was furthered by the Gelukpas, and more than just taking a particular stance on it, Mipham leaves the outer appearance of Hwashang as a 'nihilist', while giving new meaning to the symbol by explaining his own reasons for calling Hwashang a nihilist. Mipham's approach thus amounts to a "Hwashang Makeover."

7. Conclusion

Phuntsho points out that that Mipham's view on Hwashang is neither like the Gelukpas as he does not reject "Hwashang as a contemplative nihilist" nor is it like the Nyingma masters as he does not "attribute to Hwashang an eminent place in the Mahayāna tradition."²⁷¹ The Gelukpas accused Hwashang of being a nihilist based on denying the extremes of existence, non-existence, both and neither, but Mipham actually doubted that Hwashang was even close to realizing such freedom from extremes. He did ascribe Hwashang's meditation the value of being a method of stilling the mind which could lead to the proper meditation. But as Hwashang's meditation lacked the clarity aspect, he did not ascribe it high value.

²⁶⁹ Pettit, *Mipham's Beacon of Certainty*, 292

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 204.

²⁷¹ Phuntsho, *Mipham's Dialectics*, 193.

While Phuntsho focused on differences between teachers, namely Tsongkhapa and Mipham, and Pettit focused on how the philosophical understanding of these masters was similar, I have aimed to show how philosophical and historical and social factors have influenced the way Mipham presented the name ‘Hwashang’. I have shown how Mipham’s presentation of and response to Hwashang’s teachings, which runs as a thread through Mipham’s work, is typical of how he revived the then scholastically weak Nyingma tradition by bringing together prominent philosophical views of his days—namely Geluk-- with his *yuganaddha* style. Using the principle of coalescence (*yuganaddhavāda*) he transcends the understanding of both older Nyingma masters’ and Gelukpa masters’ presentations of Hwashang by presenting the unity of the two views as a new understanding. He skillfully gives both sides an opportunity to transcend their own views, without having to abandon their previous positions. Mipham gets around the difficulties that would be associated with affirming a view that no one at his time could take seriously. By denouncing Hwashang, who was understood among the circles of Tibetan scholars and by the dominant Gelukpas to stand for quietist contemplation and a simultaneist approach, while maintaining his theories of emptiness free from the four extremes, and of the apophatic knowledge of emptiness which is free from grasping and apprehension.²⁷² Through not rejecting Hwashang’s instantaneous non-conceptualization, he supports the Nyingma camp, who had been attacked for teaching non-conceptuality as a path teaching the instantaneous Great Perfection practice of naturalness. While Mipham rejected Hwashang according to the dialectic conventions of his time, he did so because of Hwashang’s ignoring of the aspects of skillful means. He didn’t reject Hwashang’s teaching on non-thought, as the Gelukpas did. Mipham held that Hwashang had actually not at all discarded apprehension. He held that Hwashang’s practice consisted of practicing non-thinking while ironically being lost in the appre-

²⁷² Ibid., 198.

hension of non-thinking, in the thought “I will not think.”²⁷³ Through taking up Hwashang as a symbol for quietist non-conceptualism that Dzogchen practitioners are accused of resembling, and transforming it into a symbol of mistaken meditation that all can agree on, Mipham allowed the Nyingmapas to side with the dominating Gelukpas in rejecting Hwashang’s nihilistic meditation, while clarifying the Dzogchen mediation. Mipham’s treatment of Hwashang could thus be understood as an apologetical defense of the Nyingma School’s Great Perfection teaching in the context of elucidating the Dzogchen view through Prāsaṅgika reasoning.

²⁷³ Ibid.

5. Conclusion

When one is primarily accustomed to traditions that value fact — both historical facts as well as facts of ownership of thought where a clear differentiation is made between original thought and thought taken from others — one might project this set of values onto other traditions. A modern academic might expect her traditional Tibetan counterparts to go through the same painstaking enterprise of trying to present a plagiarism free narrative based on historically verifiable data. However, the first priority of the traditional Tibetan scholars and masters generally seems to lie with guiding their audience on the path. The variety of accounts on Hwashang is interesting as the inquiry into the motivations for these writings — which has resulted in a great diversity of presentations of Hwashang and his view — gives us valuable information about the context the author was functioning in. This variety as it happens reflects the genius of these masters who as the “fountainhead of the tradition”²⁷⁴ present the teachings in cultural and temporal specific ways to suit their audiences.

Developments of the accounts of Hwashang and his view reveal how this symbol is a conditioned product. Investigating the conditions of these masters who discuss Hwashang mainly in terms of their larger projects and temporal situatedness reveal how and why their narratives have taken the shape they have. Nubchen’s audience was not influenced by any polemical statements about Hwashang, nor Sarma polemics, but was to benefit from clear guidelines on how to differentiate the different Buddhist traditions at the time. Longchenpa’s audience would have been looking for a stance against polemical accusations similar to Sakya Paṇḍita’s which accused the Nyingma teachings of resembling Hwashang’s. Any teaching that denied the importance of virtuous action clashed with Tsongkhapa’s audience which emphasized a strong monastic Sangha and consequently the study of Vinaya. Jigme Lingpa’s audience had to take into account the strong uniform Geluk

²⁷⁴ Doctor, *Reason and Experience*, 88.

stance on Hwashang as it functioned during a time of Gelukpa dominance, but Jigme Lingpa whose major works are compilations of Nyingma texts and his historical writing about the origin of those tantras differently from Mipham did not attempt to formulate a stance which could accommodate the Gelukpa dialectics. Work from a master like Mipham is just like the above mentioned masters to be understood as a result of his larger project of giving the Nyingmapas their own dialectical stance. It is also a product of its time as his works are shaped by both historical as well as social factors. Mipham's audience was conditioned by centuries of history from the very foundation of Buddhism in Tibet, through the phase of the disappearance of monastic institutions during the dark age, with the appearance of the new schools and its polemics up to the time that Mipham is asked by his master to write commentaries to strengthen the Nyingma tradition's dialectical position. Mipham's audience was furthermore highly influenced by the Gelukpa's dialectics and was in need of commentaries of their own on central philosophical points in sūtras and tantras that would take into account the Gelukpa's stance as well.

The occurrence of this one single name 'Hwashang' in the works of many Tibetan masters might suggest that the meaning is the same as well — yet no singular Hwashang can be found as masters have loaded different meaning onto the name 'Hwashang', giving birth to Hwashang every time they use his name. Mipham, not being an exception in being responsive to the conditions of his time, is using the name Hwashang differently from predecessors both inside as well as outside his school. Nubchen at the onset of the dark age — besides not speaking of a Samye debate nor of a banning of Hwashang's teachings — presents Hwashang as a master of a valid Buddhist tradition, whose teaching he allots even higher status than Kamalaśīla's gradual system. Sapaṇ uses the way Hwashang has been depicted in the *Testament* to draw parallels between Hwashang and what he calls "The Great Perfection of the Chinese school." According to Michael Broido in his article "Sa-

Skya Pandita, the White Panacea and the Hva-Shang Doctrine,” Sapaṅ in his *Elucidation of the Three Vows* (*sDom gsum Rab dbye*) ignores what the bKa’ brgyud pas themselves say about their doctrine and explains the doctrine to be a complete quietism no different from Hwashang’s.²⁷⁵

Sapaṅ here is not interested in presenting Hwashang’s views but in recreating this symbol to support his claim of the inauthenticity of the White Single Means (dKar po Chig thub) which he criticizes saying that this teaching resembles those of Hwashang. Longchenpa didn’t defend himself against polemical accusations that branded the Nyingmapas “Hwashang followers”: during his time, the symbol had not yet come to be commonly held to be a nihilistic view that one needed to denounce. Longchenpa, concerned with clarifying terminology and organizing topics of the Nyingma tradition, highlights those passages understood to have been propounded by Hwashang that resonated with his own teachings, acknowledges the truth of these passages and even accords them the highest status. Yet Tsongkhapa, for whom the cultivation of virtue stood central on the path, would go to great length to negate any suggestion that the cultivation of virtue could be dispensed with. To him Hwashang was a symbol of the denial of the need of the cultivation of merit and therefore antithetical to the path.

It becomes clear that those criticizing Hwashang are more concerned with using his name and recreating the symbol to support their case against certain practices that would advocate non-mentation, than with presenting his teachings accurately. While the earlier Nyingma masters that were discussed express themselves more positively (Nubchen and Longchenpa are still openly appreciative of Hwashang) the later masters separate the teachings Hwashang is commonly held to have propounded from the historical master he might have been. Jigme Lingpa seems to be already in the position where he cannot simply without any caveat praise the teacher Hwashang and the

²⁷⁵ Michael Broido, “Sa-Skya Pandita, the White Panacea and the Hva-Shang Doctrine,” *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, no. 2 (1987): 27.

teachings he was purported to have taught as the dominant understanding of Hwashang is too different from that. He praises the Hwashang who he describes, in line with the *Testament*, as having answered during the debate that the cause of saṃsāra was the apprehender and apprehended by the symbolically shaking his robe out twice. He agrees however that the teachings Hwashang is said to have taught are untenable, but then goes on to doubt that Hwashang actually taught such teachings. He resolves this by saying that Hwashang had been a teacher of the sharpest faculties but that if one would attempt to stop conceptual activity, as Hwashang is accused of having taught, then without distinguishing between the conceptual mind *sems* and the non-conceptual *rig pa* the result would be a blank indeterminacy. We see this tendency to separate the master from his teachings taken one step further in Mipham's presentation of Hwashang who uses the symbol to denote an invalid teaching without differentiating the 'teacher Hwashang' from the meaning of the symbol that it had come to embody and moreover that he himself gave it. While Jigme Lingpa's formulation engages the Gelukpa position on Hwashang, it does not attempt to find a common stance.

Mipham about half a century later endeavors to devise a position which could take in the Gelukpa rationale to some extent. Although, as Pettit points out, it is highly unlikely that Mipham's work was influenced by contextual factors such as politics favoring one school over the other, it has become clear that the topic of Hwashang is deeply socially and historically embedded so that one does need to look at the contextual factors that shaped Mipham's audience in order to see why Mipham presents Hwashang the way he does. Mipham as a master of the scholastic traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, who had studied and debated with Gelukpas and who had practiced his understanding during numerous meditation retreats, denounces Hwashang's teachings as those belonging to 'idiots,' in contrast to the earlier Nyingma masters who express themselves in appreciation of Hwashang. This thesis has made clear that by presenting Hwashang the way he does, Mipham man-

ages to create an image in his dialectics which strengthens his overall innovative stance, and is therein unique both among his fellow Nyingmapas as well as among the other schools. Emphasizing the role of reason as no previous Nyingma master had done before him, Mipham elucidated the teachings of The Great Perfection with his version of Hwashang, similar to the way Jigme Lingpa had done before him. By doing so, Mipham elucidated a pertinent point that influenced the Tibetan Buddhist community of his time, as Phuntsho suggested, by interpreting Hwashang in a way that allowed him to side with both the Gelukpa stance which prevailed among the circles of Tibetan scholars as well as the Nyingma theories of Emptiness beyond constructs and the knowledge of Emptiness obtained through negation — which when rested in is a state of non-thought. It has furthermore become clear that Mipham not only interprets but actually re-creates Hwashang, by first taking his Gelukpa opponents' stance of Hwashang being a nihilist, and by then transforming it by suggesting Hwashang had been a nihilist for discarding method and not for advocating non-mentation as the Gelukpas suggest. He thus brings together the opposite understandings of Hwashang view and path as right or wrong by showing with this typical *yuganaddha* approach how these understandings coincide in the understanding that the path is nihilistic for having discarded skillful means.

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