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THE CRYSTAL MIRROR  
OF PHILOSOPHICAL  
SYSTEMS

*A Tibetan Study  
of Asian Religious Thought*

THUKEN LOSANG CHÖKYI NYIMA

Translated by Geshé Lhundub Sopa

Edited by Roger R. Jackson

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OF PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

*The Library of Tibetan Classics* is a special series being developed by the Institute of Tibetan Classics aimed at making key classical Tibetan texts part of the global literary and intellectual heritage. Eventually comprising thirty-two large volumes, the collection will contain over two hundred distinct texts by more than a hundred of the best-known Tibetan authors. These texts have been selected in consultation with the preeminent lineage holders of all the schools and other senior Tibetan scholars to represent the Tibetan literary tradition as a whole. The works included in the series span more than a millennium and cover the vast expanse of classical Tibetan knowledge—from the core teachings of the specific schools to such diverse fields as ethics, philosophy, psychology, Buddhist teachings and meditative practices, civic and social responsibilities, linguistics, medicine, astronomy and astrology, folklore, and historiography.

*The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems:  
A Tibetan Study of Asian Religious Thought*  
Thuken Chökyi Nyima (1737–1802)

The *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* (*Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*), by Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima (1737–1802), is probably the widest-ranging account of religious philosophies ever written in premodern Tibet. Thuken was a cosmopolitan Buddhist monk from Amdo, Mongol by heritage, Tibetan in education, and equally comfortable in a central Tibetan monastery or at the imperial court in Beijing. Like most texts on philosophical systems, his *Crystal Mirror* covers the major schools of India, both non-Buddhist and Buddhist, but then goes on to discuss in detail the entire range of Tibetan traditions as well, with separate chapters on the Nyingma, Kadam, Kagyü, Shijé, Sakya, Jonang, Geluk, and Bön. Not resting there, Thuken goes on to describe the major traditions of China—Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist—as well as those of Mongolia, Khotan, and Shambhala. The *Crystal Mirror* is unusual, too, in its concern not just to describe and analyze doctrines, but to trace the historical development of the various traditions. In evaluating philosophical systems, Thuken favors his own Geluk school, but he generally treats the views of other traditions with sympathy and respect as well—sometimes even defending them against criticisms from his own tradition. All this makes the *Crystal Mirror* an eloquent, erudite, and informative textbook on the religious history and philosophical systems of an array of Asian cultures—and provides evidence that serious and sympathetic study of the history of religions has not been a monopoly of Western scholarship.

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*Thupten Jinpa, General Editor*

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Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima

Translated by Geshé Lhundub Sopa  
*with E. Ann Chávez and Roger R. Jackson*

Special contributions by Michael Sweet and Leonard Zwilling

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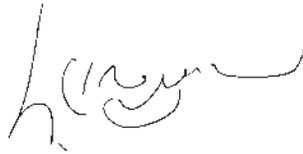


## Message from the Dalai Lama

THE LAST TWO MILLENNIA witnessed a tremendous proliferation of cultural and literary development in Tibet, the “Land of Snows.” Moreover, due to the inestimable contributions made by Tibet’s early spiritual kings, numerous Tibetan translators, and many great Indian *paṇḍitas* over a period of so many centuries, the teachings of the Buddha and the scholastic tradition of ancient India’s Nālandā monastic university became firmly rooted in Tibet. As evidenced from the historical writings, this flowering of Buddhist tradition in the country brought about the fulfillment of the deep spiritual aspirations of countless sentient beings. In particular, it contributed to the inner peace and tranquility of the peoples of Tibet, Outer Mongolia—a country historically suffused with Tibetan Buddhism and its culture—the Tuva and Kalmuk regions in present-day Russia, the outer regions of mainland China, and the entire trans-Himalayan areas on the southern side, including Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh, Kinnaur, and Spiti. Today this tradition of Buddhism has the potential to make significant contributions to the welfare of the entire human family. I have no doubt that, when combined with the methods and insights of modern science, the Tibetan Buddhist cultural heritage and knowledge will help foster a more enlightened and compassionate human society, a humanity that is at peace with itself, with fellow sentient beings, and with the natural world at large.

It is for this reason I am delighted that the Institute of Tibetan Classics in Montreal, Canada, is compiling a thirty-two-volume series containing the works of many great Tibetan teachers, philosophers, scholars, and practitioners representing all major Tibetan schools and traditions. These important writings will be critically edited and annotated and will then be published in modern book format in a reference collection called *The Library of Tibetan Classics*, with their translations into other major languages to be followed later. While expressing my heartfelt commendation for this noble project, I pray and hope that *The Library of Tibetan Classics* will not only make these

important Tibetan treatises accessible to scholars of Tibetan studies, but will create a new opportunity for younger Tibetans to study and take interest in their own rich and profound culture. Through translations into other languages, it is my sincere hope that millions of fellow citizens of the wider human family will also be able to share in the joy of engaging with Tibet's classical literary heritage, textual riches that have been such a great source of joy and inspiration to me personally for so long.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Lama' written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Dalai Lama  
The Buddhist monk Tenzin Gyatso



## Special Acknowledgments

THE INSTITUTE OF TIBETAN CLASSICS expresses its deep gratitude to Sandra Esner for generously providing the entire funding for this translation project. As the sponsor of this volume, Sandra wishes to dedicate the publication of this book to her teacher, Geshé Kalsang Mönlam of Drepung Gomang Monastery, from Geshe la's sangha of students. Geshe la's monastery, Gomang, shares a historical connection with the author of this work, Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima.

We also acknowledge the Hershey Family Foundation for its generous support of the Institute of Tibetan Classics' projects of compiling, editing, translating, and disseminating key classical Tibetan texts through the creation of *The Library of Tibetan Classics*.



## Publisher's Acknowledgments

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## General Editor's Preface

IT IS WITH DEEP SATISFACTION that I rejoice in the publication of *The Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems* in *The Library of Tibetan Classics* series. Completed at the very beginning of the nineteenth century, this acclaimed work by the noted Tibetan scholar Thuken Chökyi Nyima is unique in the annals of Tibetan literature. Beginning with a brief survey of the classical Indian schools, both Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist, the *Crystal Mirror* presents an in-depth treatment of the key schools of Tibetan Buddhism—Nyingma, Kadam, Sakya, Kagyü, Geluk, and Jonang—as well as Bön, covering not only their key philosophical tenets but also providing the reader with an understanding of their historical development. A serious Buddhist practitioner himself, Thuken also endeavors to examine the tenets of the individual Tibetan Buddhist schools in light of their distinctive meditative practices. The final part of the book presents an account of the religions of Tibet's neighbors in the east and north, including China, Khotan, and Mongolia. Thuken's work shows that serious and sympathetic study of comparative religion has not been the sole province of Western scholars.

Two primary objectives have driven the creation and development of *The Library of Tibetan Classics*. The first aim is to help revitalize the appreciation and the study of the Tibetan classical heritage within Tibetan-speaking communities worldwide. The younger generation in particular struggle with the tension between traditional Tibetan culture and the realities of modern consumerism. To this end, efforts have been made to develop a comprehensive yet manageable body of texts, one that features the works of Tibet's best-known authors and covers the gamut of classical Tibetan knowledge. The second objective of *The Library of Tibetan Classics* is to help make these texts part of global literary and intellectual heritage. In this regard, we have tried to make the English translation reader-friendly and, as much as possible, keep the body of the text free of scholarly apparatus, which can intimidate general readers. For specialists who wish to compare the translation with the

Tibetan original, page references of the critical edition of the Tibetan text are provided in brackets.

The texts in this thirty-two-volume series span more than a millennium—from the development of the Tibetan script in the seventh century to the first part of the twentieth century, when Tibetan society and culture first encountered industrial modernity. The volumes are thematically organized and cover many of the categories of classical Tibetan knowledge—from the teachings specific to each Tibetan school to the classical works on philosophy, psychology, and phenomenology. The first category includes teachings of the Kadam, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü, Geluk, and Jonang schools, of miscellaneous Buddhist lineages, and of the Bön school. The texts in these volumes have been selected largely by senior lineage holders of the individual schools. Texts in the other categories have been selected primarily in recognition of the historical reality of the individual disciplines. For example, in the field of epistemology, works from the Sakya and Geluk schools have been selected, while the volume on buddha nature features the writings of Butön Rinchen Drup and various Kagyü masters. Where fields are of more common interest, such as the three codes of conduct or the bodhisattva ideal, efforts have been made to present the perspectives of all four major schools. *The Library of Tibetan Classics* can function as a comprehensive library of the Tibetan literary heritage for libraries, educational and cultural institutions, and interested individuals.

On a personal level, to see this beautiful gem of Tibet's classical world made part of the world literary heritage is a source of genuine happiness. To this day I remember the excitement I felt when my own teacher, the late Kyabjé Zemey Rinpoché, lent me his own personal copy of Thuken's *Crystal Mirror*. This was in the summer of 1980, only two years after I had joined Ganden Monastery to pursue the rigorous geshé degree. It was an old wood-block-print xylograph edition, an edition we later consulted for the creation of a critical Tibetan edition used as the basis for this translation. What was most refreshing about Thuken's writing was its fluidity as well as the gentleness of touch with which he analyzed the central tenets of the various schools. Fortunately, a well-edited modern book edition was published in Tibet in 1984, and the work has since been a core volume in my own Tibetan-language library. To now be part of the endeavor of making this important classic accessible to the English-speaking world brings me particular joy.

I offer my deep gratitude first and foremost to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for always being such a shining exemplar and an advocate of Tibet's great

classical heritage. I thank one of twentieth century's most eminent Geluk scholars and teachers, Geshé Lhundrup Sopa, for his leadership in undertaking the monumental task of translating Thukén's *Crystal Mirror* into English. To the other members of the translation team, principally Ann Chavez, Roger Jackson, Michael Sweet, and Leonard Zwilling, I owe sincere appreciation for their years of efforts in moving this work toward completion. Especially to Roger Jackson, I express my deep thanks for doing such a superb job of editing the entire volume as well as providing a most illuminating introduction. I owe heartfelt thanks to David Kittelstrom of Wisdom Publications for being, as usual, a most incisive editor; to the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarnath, for providing full access to its library to my Tibetan colleagues who created the critical edition of the Tibetan text; and to my wife, Sophie Boyer-Langri, for taking on the numerous administrative chores that are part of such a collaborative project. Finally, I express my heartfelt thanks to Sandra Esner, who most generously provided the funding for this translation project, and to the Hershey Family Foundation for its longstanding support of the Institute of Tibetan Classics, without which *The Library of Tibetan Classics* series simply would not have become a reality.

It is my sincere hope that the publication of this volume will benefit many and that it will provide a valuable resource to help people better understand and appreciate the richness of Tibet's classical intellectual and spiritual heritage. May the efforts of all those who have been part of this endeavor help alleviate the sufferings of all beings; may they especially help us humans become wiser so that we may make this world a more caring and a more peaceful place for all.

Thupten Jinpa  
Montreal, 2008



## Translator's Preface

*Geshé Lhundub Sopa*

AFTER THE TIBETAN GOVERNMENT was overthrown by Chinese forces, I sought and found political asylum in India in 1959. Three years later His Holiness the Dalai Lama asked me to accompany three young recognized incarnate monks to America to begin their studies there. We went to live at the Lamaist Buddhist Monastery of America in Freewood Acres, New Jersey. One of the key people sponsoring us was Professor Kenneth Morgan of Colgate University. One day he showed me his recently published book on world religions. He felt the section on Tibetan Buddhism, especially the numerous Tibetan schools, such as Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya, and Geluk, was too scant, since he had not been able to find enough source materials in English. He then urged me to write a book about the religious history, philosophical views, and differences among the schools of Tibetan Buddhism, since no one had explained these in detail before. It was then I thought, "Oh, *Thuken Drumtha!*"<sup>1</sup> At that time (about 1963), I had no means of fulfilling that promise—I barely spoke English!—but I kept Professor Morgan's request in my mind for many years.

I had been expelled from Tibet by the Communists. I had lost my country and my cultural setting, and the Buddhism I had studied for many years was now completely disappearing. The highest Tibetan culture is the great and rich Buddhist culture. In that country was a history of pure and thorough Buddhist study and learning, with great teachings and teachers available over a very long period of time. In the early 1960s, unlike today, virtually no real, essential Tibetan Buddhist teachings existed outside of Tibet. If you mentioned Buddhism, that meant Zen. Tibet had tried to shut off the influence of foreign countries, so almost no foreigners came to central Tibet.<sup>2</sup> Yet, on the borders of Tibet, there existed a very strange mixture of Bön and exotic Buddhist practice that was not authentic or based on education or good sense. I thought how shameful it would be to lose the authentic Tibetan Buddhist teachings. To make available an exposition of the traditional, real teachings of

each of the four main Tibetan schools would be of great benefit in the world. When you don't know the different schools, sects, and religions, it can be extremely harmful to yourself and others if they are explained improperly. The exposition must be good, solid, and pure. I strongly resolved that in the future, when I had the language and necessary skills, I would bring this about.

Before I escaped from Tibet, my teacher, the venerable Geshé Lhündrup Thapkhé, had told me about Thuken's wonderful text, the *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*, containing important information on all the Tibetan schools. This book is unique, because no one in Tibet other than Thuken had written a book covering all the important schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Only in separate books were you able to study the history and sources of the Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya, and Geluk traditions. A mirror reveals all the beings and things in the world. Similarly, this one book clearly revealed the history and assertions of all these schools, and thus Thuken called it a "mirror." It not only presented the four Tibetan schools, it also presented non-Buddhist religions in India and China, and Buddhism in India, China, and Mongolia. It clearly described how Buddhism came first to India and afterward to Tibet, where, like great rivers, the different philosophical systems flowed into the one ocean of Buddhism. Although Thuken was a great Geluk scholar, he studied all the Tibetan schools—and their history, lineages, and ways of practice—in a very impartial way, which was quite unusual. If certain religious ideas and practices needed criticism, he sharply did so, without regard to school, criticizing even the Gelukpas where necessary. He strove to be completely impartial, and I was very attracted to his style of explanation. He says in the preface to the text:

Many, under the sway of anger, have deprecated  
 The Dharmas and persons of other systems  
 Without even knowing how to properly distinguish among  
 The various philosophical systems in this land.

Many, under the sway of the four negative tendencies,<sup>3</sup>  
 Failing to ascertain any reason  
 For the distinctiveness of their own philosophical system,  
 And driven only by confusion and desire, still hold their system  
 as supreme.

In order to set them in conscientiousness,  
 I will briefly discuss here

The sources and standpoints of the philosophical systems  
That arose in the Holy Land of India and in Tibet and China.<sup>4</sup>

Everywhere, whether in Buddhism or in any other world religion, people without knowledge see their own religion as superior and, failing to see the value and good of other religions, put them down. Therefore, I thought if I could translate this book, what a wonderful service this would be in the world! Otherwise, Tibetan Buddhism would be seen as the superstitious and foolish beliefs of mountain people with blind faith. That is how the Chinese Communists see it. Now, of course, more has been translated, but at that time so little was available. I felt that the books that very great yogis, teachers, buddhas, and bodhisattvas had written should be made available in the world, and translating the *Crystal Mirror* would bring this about.

In composing the *Crystal Mirror*, Thuken was influenced by his teacher Changkya Rolpai Dorjé, who had himself written on the Indian philosophical systems. Before Changkya, Jamyang Shepa wrote the *Great Treatise on Philosophical Systems*, discussing both the non-Buddhists and the four Indian Buddhist schools in great detail. He was a great scholar. Changkya then wrote a more concise text on the four Indian schools, with clear details, in a sharp and pointed way. Thuken came later, beginning briefly with the non-Buddhists as sources, then the four great Indian schools, but then proceeding to explain how Buddhism came to Tibet, and so forth. He did not divide the Tibetan schools by their correlation to the four Indian schools, but rather by lineage of teachers and place of origin.

The *Crystal Mirror* contains the method and the essence of the things you should adopt or abandon if you seek ultimate happiness for yourself and others. Thuken himself says:

Hey, there! Here is what the wise should do, in thought and  
action:  
Seek a way, a means of liberation from samsara, whose nature is  
suffering.  
Those who never ponder that way, content merely with the appear-  
ances of this life,  
Appear to be incarnate humans but ought to be counted as cattle.

Further, there are two schools, the non-Buddhist and the Buddhist,  
who set forth explanations  
Of bondage and freedom in this world;

Whichever one you follow, first analyze  
The distinction between the deceptive and the nondeceptive.

You allow yourself to weigh incessantly,  
In each and every tiny endeavor for this life,  
“Although complete, less benefit,  
Although incomplete, less harm.”

How then could it be right to act so rashly,  
Not analyzing what to adopt or abandon,  
When being right brings eternal satisfaction  
And being wrong brings grave disaster?<sup>5</sup>

Before Thuken, Changkya Rolpai Dorjé wrote that samsara is like an abyss filled throughout with millions of sufferings and hardships. That is the nature of samsara. If samsaric beings are deeply troubled by that, instead of pursuing deceptive pleasures, they need to determine what is the right method of liberation—and what is the wrong method. To investigate this again and again is a very holy thing to do. If we are satisfied with merely filling our stomachs, how are we different from cattle?

Thuken’s work also contains a wonderful quality of examination. In order to present the differences among philosophical systems, Thuken uses the traditional style of Tibetan scholastic literature. This has three parts.<sup>6</sup> First, if others’ positions are not correct, you refute them with logic and with scriptural references. Next, you present your own position with logical and scriptural support. Finally, you subject your own position to potential criticisms based on different citations and arguments, and then you clear all these doubts away completely with a thorough explanation that resolves all critiques. This is what Thuken does here, and it is the system of the masters. He establishes logically what is to be accepted and refuted in others’ positions. He explains what is superior or inferior based on those logical reasons, not on attachment or aversion. For those who want to learn about the different schools, first he establishes the basis—the lineage, sources, and beliefs—and then he lays out the path. Finally, he explains the ultimate goal. In this way, the *Crystal Mirror* demonstrates the proper way to understand and practice, an approach that is not just based on blind faith.

For all these reasons, I felt that it was vital to translate this work. When I came to the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1967, I began to teach

Tibetan language classes. It seemed that the students were not just interested in the Tibetan language but also wanted to learn about Tibetan religious culture, about Tibetan Buddhism. With funding help from the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, I wrote a language book that was designed for this purpose, called *Lectures on Tibetan Religious Culture*. This book showed the highest Tibetan culture of Buddhism in connection with, in part 1, the Tibetan schools and their essence, and in part 2, the stages of the path material. It also built up Tibetan vocabulary.

To prepare a translation of the *Crystal Mirror*, I knew that I would have to learn more about the Tibetan schools. During my university years I received Fulbright fellowships in 1976 and 1987 and was able to go to Tibet, Nepal, and India to do further research on the book. In Tibet, many monasteries had been destroyed by the Chinese Communists, and most of the great scholars and famous lamas had died, although some did get outside to India, Bhutan, and other lands. Texts also were extremely scarce. However, certain things I was able to discuss with my teacher, the great Sera Jé Khensur Rinpoché, Geshé Lhündrup Thapkhé, who had not been able to escape. It was through him and his position as Vice President of the Tibetan Autonomous Region Buddhist Association that I was able to visit Tibet. I spent some time there studying with him. I didn't go to different monastic centers in Tibet because there was nothing available for study and research on Thuken at the time. When I was in Nepal, I scheduled a few meetings with the most famous and highest-ranking leader of the Nyingma tradition, the Ven. Dudjom Rinpoché, and I asked him some questions about the Nyingma section of the text.

In 1978, I was able to teach a seminar related to the *Crystal Mirror*. First, I summarized the contents of the book—the differences among the four Indian Buddhist schools and the Tibetan schools—and then each student in the seminar chose a different chapter of the book to translate. I worked with them to produce basic, rough translations. Further on in my university career and after my retirement, other students helped me to clean up and correct the original translations and to complete the missing chapters. Starting in the mid 1990s, I worked closely with Ann Chávez, who went through the entire text with me, except for the chapters on China. In the late 1990s, Roger Jackson agreed to be general editor for the project. He took the versions Ann had helped me with and worked on smoothing them out. He also generated the notes, bibliographies, and appendixes. The final stages of preparing the translation involved many hours of discussion with Ann and Roger. Now I think it is finally in a form that reflects Thuken's *Crystal Mirror*.

In addition to Roger Jackson and Ann Chávez, I want especially to thank Drs. Michael Sweet and Leonard Zwilling for providing the basic translations and annotations of the chapters on China, and to Dr. Zwilling for providing the same for the section on Mongolia. The two of them also provided valuable critical comments on other aspects of the project at various times. I also would like to thank students from the original seminar who worked on sections of the book: Tony Barber, José Cabezón, Lolly Gewissler, Sharon Hendricks, Roger Jackson, and Jay Weil. Also helpful were the subsequent contributions by Philippe Golden and Lori Cayton.

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Gene Smith encouraged this project at the beginning, and has been supportive throughout. Our editor, David Kittelstrom of Wisdom Publications, has been unfailingly patient and effective in bringing this huge work to publication, providing countless helpful suggestions for improving the style and presentation of the volume. I am very pleased that Thupten Jinpa has chosen to include the translation in the *Library of Tibetan Classics* series, and thank him for his enthusiasm and hard work.

Finally, I am grateful for the assistance that I received over the years from the department of South Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the Fulbright Program, and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare; and for the travel grants, sabbatical releases, and collegial support provided to Roger Jackson by Carleton College.

## Editor's Introduction<sup>7</sup>

Roger R. Jackson

*THE CRYSTAL MIRROR: An Excellent Explanation*<sup>8</sup> *Showing the Sources and Assertions of All Philosophical Systems*<sup>9</sup> was completed in 1802, shortly before the death of its author, the third Thuken<sup>10</sup> *butuqtu*, or incarnate lama, Losang Chökyi Nyima (1737–1802). Ever since its publication it has, in the words of E. Gene Smith, been considered “one of the most important sources for the study of the comparative philosophical schools of India, Tibet, China, and the Mongol world.”<sup>11</sup> In roughly five hundred folio sides, Thuken discusses the development and structure of religious philosophy in India; in the Tibetan traditions of Nyingma, Kadam, Kagyü, Shijé, Sakya, Jonang, several minor traditions, Geluk, and Bön; in Buddhist and non-Buddhist Chinese settings; and in such inner Asian areas as Mongolia, Khotan, and Shambhala. In numerous cases involving Tibetan orders, he also summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the tradition under consideration. Thuken's scope is not just broad but uniquely so among Tibetan treatises.

Among Tibetan scholars, A. I. Vostrikov observes, the *Crystal Mirror* “enjoys great and fully deserved fame...as the first attempt at expounding not only the history but also the system of views of various philosophical and religious streams of Tibet and neighboring countries.”<sup>12</sup> It has been utilized by members of Thuken's Geluk order as a textbook for studying traditions other than their own, but it also seems to have been known, and perhaps even appreciated, by members of other orders, notably the Nyingma.<sup>13</sup> Originally published early in the nineteenth century as part of his collected works by Thuken's home monastery of Gönlung Jampa Ling in Amdo,<sup>14</sup> the *Crystal Mirror* was issued in subsequent editions in Dergé, Ulan Bator (then Urga), and Lhasa, where it forms part of the famous Shöl edition of Thuken's writings.<sup>15</sup> In 1969, through the efforts of E. Gene Smith, the Shöl edition was photocopied and bound in large-book format in Delhi by Nāwang Gelek Demo, making it accessible for the first time to scholars in universities outside the Indo-Tibetan world.<sup>16</sup> In 1984, the Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang

in Lanzhou, in China's Gansu province, published a different edition of the *Crystal Mirror* in standard book format, thereby increasing its availability still further.<sup>17</sup> In 2007, the Institute of Tibetan Classics published a new, heavily annotated, book-format critical edition, prepared in Sarnath, that should serve as the standard text for the foreseeable future.<sup>18</sup>

The *Crystal Mirror* has enjoyed equal or even greater celebrity among non-Tibetan scholars. Its existence was first noted in 1855 by the Russian Tibetanist, V. P. Vasil'ev, and subsequent Russian scholars discussed it as well, including B. Ya. Vladimirov and, in his great *Tibetan Historical Literature*, A. I. Vostrikov.<sup>19</sup> The first attempt at translating any of the *Crystal Mirror* was made in the early 1880s by Sarat Chandra Das, who published, in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, English versions, sometimes partial, sometimes complete, and generally unreliable, of the Nyingma, Bön, China, and Mongolia chapters.<sup>20</sup> In the twentieth century, Western-language translations appeared of the whole or large parts of the chapters on Bön, Jonang, Kadam, India, and China.<sup>21</sup> Chinese and Japanese scholars, such as Li An-che and Tachikawa Musashi employed the *Crystal Mirror* overtly or indirectly for English-language reports on the Nyingma, Kagyü, and Sakya,<sup>22</sup> and they and others have utilized it in scholarship published in their own languages, as well. In 1985, Liu Liqian published a Chinese translation of the entire text.<sup>23</sup>

Why has the *Crystal Mirror* gained such renown? A cynic might point out that as an authoritative text on religious philosophies for the most powerful of the Tibetan orders, the Geluk, the *Crystal Mirror* became a work that members of other Tibetan traditions could ill afford to ignore, and that Geluk lamas could foist on foreign scholars who sought a grand Tibetan summation of a range of Tibetan and other Asian religious systems.<sup>24</sup> There is undoubtedly some truth to this contention, but it overlooks at least two important qualities of the *Crystal Mirror* that do set it apart from much that Tibetans have written about their own and other religious traditions. The first, already suggested in the quote from Vostrikov above, is that the *Crystal Mirror* transcends the usual limits of historical and philosophical literature in Tibet, putting it into a genre of which it is one of the few exemplars, particularly in the age in which it was written. The second is that numerous scholars, Tibetan and non-Tibetan alike, have been impressed, in Matthew Kapstein's words, with Thukun's "relative impartiality...despite the fact that he was no doubt limited with respect to his sources for schools other than the Dge lugs pa."<sup>25</sup> Whether or not this is so, the *Crystal Mirror* does stand

as one of the crowning achievements of premodern Tibetan historical and philosophical scholarship. It tells us much about the world in which it was written, and stands as excellent evidence that it is not only Westerners who have attempted to write with “relative impartiality” on the full range of religious and philosophical traditions found in the world known to them.

### *Thuken's Times, Life, and Works*

It is unsurprising that a work as wide ranging as the *Crystal Mirror* should have been composed by someone like Thuken, for he was as cosmopolitan as an eighteenth-century Tibetan could be: Mongol by heritage, Geluk Tibetan by education, hailing from the cultural and religious melting pot of Amdo, and equally at home in a central Tibetan monastery, on the steppes of Mongolia, or at the Qing court in Beijing.<sup>26</sup>

The central Tibetan world during Thuken's lifetime (1737–1802) saw the end of the reign of the Seventh Dalai Lama (1708–57) and most of that of the Eighth (1758–1804), though much of the real power was wielded by lay nobles or monk-regents, and the Panchen Lamas of Tashi Lhünpo served as an important counterweight. Chinese officials or armies occasionally intervened in Tibetan affairs, most notably to repel a Gurkha invasion from Nepal in 1792, but for the most part central Tibet was self-governing. This, however, was not Thuken's world; rather, as a native of Amdo, he passed most of life under the influence of the Manchu imperium of the great Qianlong emperor, whose lengthy reign (1736–95) coincided almost exactly with Thuken's lifetime. The Qianlong was perhaps the last great emperor of China, exercising either direct power or significant influence over a vast area that, to the west, included inner and outer Mongolia, eastern Turkestan, and much of the Tibetan cultural region. In the northwest, as had been the case for centuries, the greatest threat to imperial Chinese power came from various Mongol tribes. Most of these were affiliated with the dominant Geluk order of Tibetan Buddhism, and many became deeply involved in Tibetan politics. It was concerns about the balance of power among Mongol tribes that led the Chinese to intervene militarily in central Tibet in 1720 and establish a loose protectorate over the region.

The Qianlong emperor strongly supported Tibetan Buddhism, especially of the Geluk variety, and frequently hosted Geluk lamas in Beijing, most prominently the Mongolian incarnate Changkya Rölpai Dorjé (1717–86). No doubt the emperor had genuine spiritual interests, but his support for

Tibetan Buddhism was also motivated by his need to use ethnically Mongolian Geluk lamas as intermediaries between the empire and its Mongol subjects, as well as by the Manchus' desire to receive legitimation for their rule over the Chinese from a non-Han religious ideology (though they did cultivate Confucianism, as well). The crucible for these complex interactions among Manchus, Chinese, Mongols,<sup>27</sup> and Tibetans was Amdo, especially the region around Lake Kokonor, where a number of great Geluk monasteries had been established.<sup>28</sup>

It was in this part of Amdo that Losang Chökyi Nyima was born in 1737, in the Phüntsook Lungpa valley of the Porö Langdru region (now in the Chinese province of Gansu). He was identified at an early age as the third incarnation of the Mongolian Thuken line.<sup>29</sup> His two predecessors—Losang Rapten (d. 1679) and Ngawang Chökyi Gyatso (1680–1736) hailed from villages in Amdo in what is now Qinghai province, and centered their activities at Gönlung Jampa Ling, one of the numerous important Geluk monasteries in the Kokonor region. They maintained close connections with Geluk monasteries in central Tibet and with other northeastern incarnation lineages, including the Jamyang Shepa, Changkya, and Sumpa. The second Thuken, Ngawang Chökyi Gyatso, had spent time at the court of the Kangxi emperor (r. 1661–1722) in Beijing and was the main teacher of Changkya Rölpai Dorjé, who would in turn become the root guru of his successor, Losang Chökyi Nyima.

Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima entered Gönlung Monastery at the age of five and received the second Thuken's novice vows at thirteen from Changkya Rölpai Dorjé, with Sumpa Khenpo Yeshé Paljor (1704–88) also in attendance. He was a star pupil at Gönlung, and in 1755, when he was eighteen, he was sent to Gomang College of Drepung Monastery, near Lhasa, to study with the second Jamyang Shepa incarnate, Könchok Jikmé Wangpo (1728–91), and other accomplished masters, including the Third Panchen Lama, Losang Palden Yeshé (1738–81). At Gomang, as at any major Geluk center, he would have been exposed to the classical monastic curriculum, which focused on study of five basic subjects: Abhidharma (based on Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Higher Knowledge*), valid cognition (based on Dharmakīrti's *Thorough Exposition of Valid Cognition*), Madhyamaka (based on Candrakīrti's *Entering the Middle Way*), the perfection of wisdom (based on Maitreya's *Ornament of Higher Realization*), and vinaya (based on Guṇaprabha's *Vinaya Sutra*). These topics were mastered through immersion in the relevant Indian and Tibetan texts, attendance at discourses by

scholar-monks, debate in the monastic courtyard, and, for the most astute, composition of one's own works. Thuken would have been exposed not just to literature on the basic subjects but also to other important texts in the Geluk canon, including such classics as Tsongkhapa's *Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*, and various works on the worldly sciences, tantric ritual and meditation, history and biography, and the analysis of philosophical systems. Of the last-mentioned genre, the work that undoubtedly influenced Thuken most was the *Great Treatise on the Establishment of Philosophical Systems*, published in 1747 by his main teacher, Changkya Rölpai Dorjé, which is cited multiple times in the *Crystal Mirror* and serves as a bulwark of Thuken's world view.

When he completed his studies at Gomang in 1759, Thuken was made abbot of the famed Shalu Monastery in Tsang, and in 1761 he returned to Amdo to lead his home monastery, Gönlung. Two years later, at the bidding of the Qianlong emperor, he journeyed to Beijing. He visited Changkya Rölpai Dorjé, who was in residence there, and was received with full honors by the emperor, who even, it is said, "presented him his own robes, which contained one hundred and eight dragons worked in gold, together with a hundred thousand crowns of silver."<sup>30</sup> As he found the Beijing climate unhealthy, Thuken received permission in 1768 to return to Gönlung, traveling there by way of Mongolia, but was called back to Beijing in 1771. He traveled widely for the next twelve years, living variously in the Chinese capital, the nearby border region of Jehol, or at Gönlung, where he occasionally acted as abbot. In the last decades of the century, he remained mostly in Amdo, serving as abbot of Jakhyung Monastery from 1789 to 1793, teaching at Kumbum Monastery, and eventually returning to Gönlung, where he died in 1802. By the time of his death, he was acknowledged as perhaps the greatest Amdo lama of his time, visited, celebrated, and rewarded by monks, potentates, and ordinary people, whether Chinese, Mongolian, or Tibetan.

Although he was far from being the most prolific Geluk scholar of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Thuken amassed an impressive list of publications during his peripatetic life. His collected works amount to 5,746 folios,<sup>31</sup> enough to fill ten large volumes in the book-format edition of his opus published in India.<sup>32</sup> He is credited with well over 250 individual texts, many quite short, but some, especially those on history or philosophy, covering dozens or even hundreds of folios. As is typical of most great Tibetan Buddhist masters, Thuken devoted the majority of his works to tantric ritual. He wrote over fifty texts related to Hayagrīva, around twenty

about Vajrayoginī, and lesser numbers on such deities as Tārā, Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, Vajrabhairava, Kālacakra,<sup>33</sup> and a host of wrathful protectors. He also contributed works on tormas, stupas, and astronomy, and on a such practices as Chö meditation, a method to benefit beings at the time of death, and the fasting ritual of Avalokiteśvara.<sup>34</sup> His nontantric works include biographies of his predecessor, the second Thuken incarnate, and of his main teacher, Changkya Rölpa Dorjé; chronicles of Gönlung and other monasteries; listings of monastic ordinances; surveys of temple images; numerous narrative, propitiatory, and panegyric works in ornate poetic style; and last but not least, the *Crystal Mirror of Philosophical Systems*.

### *How the Crystal Mirror Was Composed*

We know just a little of the composition of the *Crystal Mirror*, from Thuken's colophon to the text and the writings of his main disciple, Gungthang Könchok Tenpai Drönmé (1762–1823),<sup>35</sup> who after his master's death would edit Thuken's collected writings and compose many important works of his own. Around 1799, Gungthangpa and a number of Thuken's disciples at Gönlung Monastery requested that he write the work. Thuken mentions that when he was about halfway done, he was urged to complete it by his disciple Ngawang Mipham Dawa. Though in declining health, Thuken pushed through to finish the *Crystal Mirror* because of his disciple's request and the kindness of his lamas. He dates the completion of the text to mid-January 1802, which means that he worked on it for approximately three years, a very fast pace for a work of the *Crystal Mirror's* length and complexity. Thuken admits that the completed text had not been thoroughly edited, noting, "The corrections I made were rough; since I could not make them in detail, it is possible that some mistakes still remain, and they should be amended."<sup>36</sup> Within the year, Thuken was dead, and the corrections, so far as we know, never were made, so that the *Crystal Mirror* as we have it is probably a first draft.<sup>37</sup>

How was it drafted? In the colophon, Thuken specifies that (like countless Tibetan texts), the *Crystal Mirror* was put into manuscript form not by himself, but by scribes, of whom he names three, all monks at Gönlung Monastery. In the manner of many great Tibetan historical and philosophical works, the *Crystal Mirror* reflects its author's considerable erudition and draws freely on a range of sources already at his disposal, both with and without attribution, footnoting in the Western academic style being unknown to premodern Tibetan scholars. A full investigation of Thuken's sources

remains to be undertaken, but it is clear that at least some portions of the text are lifted directly, or in paraphrase, from earlier authors. The portions of the India chapter dealing with Buddhist history, for instance, draw frequently from Butön's *Dharma History* and Changkya Rölpai Dorjé's *Great Treatise on the Establishment of Philosophical Systems*. The chapter on the Nyingma tradition is drawn in part from Gö Lotsāwa's *Blue Annals*. The chapter on Kagyü is partially drawn from treatises on Mahāmudrā by Khedrup Norsang Gyatso and the First Panchen Lama, both Gelukpas. The chapter on Sakya draws in part from a work by the Sakya author Mangthö Ludrup Gyatso,<sup>38</sup> while the Shijé chapter draws largely from the *Blue Annals*. The chapter on Bön draws primarily from a Bön work called the *Ornament of Sunlight in the Breach in the Citadel of Secret Mantra* and from texts critical of Bön by Drigung and Geluk authors.<sup>39</sup> The chapters on China draw in part from the work of his teacher Sumpa Khenpo, and even more so from the account of Chinese religion by the great Mongolian historian, Gönpo Kyap.<sup>40</sup> With or without credit, Thuken did draw on a remarkable range of genres, including Indian sutras, tantras, and treatises; Tibetan histories of China, Mongolia, or Tibet; earlier Tibetan texts on philosophical systems and subjects; polemical treatises; expositions of tantra; biographies; letters; panegyric verses; songs of spiritual experience; and meditation manuals. If the *Crystal Mirror's* mode of composition was like that of other major Tibetan texts, then we can imagine Thuken consulting the works available to him at Gönlung and drawing on others from memory, stitching them into his own grand narrative, which was dictated to his monk-scribes when time and health permitted.

Beyond the immediate circle of disciples who requested its composition, Thuken's target audience for the *Crystal Mirror* probably consisted mainly of scholar-monks and literate lay officials in the Tibetan cultural sphere, since, as a Tibetan text, it could be understood by precious few Chinese or Mongolians. That it would eventually be translated into Chinese, not to mention English, Thuken could not have foreseen.

### *Why the Crystal Mirror Was Composed*

Exactly why Thuken's disciples asked him to write the *Crystal Mirror*, and why he agreed, is not spelled out in detail, but at least three possibilities may be considered:

1. *As a study of religious history.* Certainly, as a lama well educated and well traveled within the Tibetan, Mongol, and Chinese worlds of the eighteenth

century, Thuken had a great deal of experience and wisdom to impart, and his disciples might simply have wanted to have available a single, reliable description of the cultural, historical, and religious cosmos in which they lived.

2. *As an attempt to assess religious systems.* Thuken himself suggests in his poetic preface to the book that he will expound the philosophical systems of India, China, and Tibet so as to help beings toward liberation by dispelling the narrow, deluded partiality felt by so many toward their own tradition, whatever it might be.<sup>41</sup> He returns to this theme in his conclusion but there adds that his exposition, if read carefully by an intelligent reader, will lead inevitably to the recognition that the acme of Buddhist systems is that of “Losang the conqueror,” that is the Geluk tradition of Tsongkhapa Losang Drakpa (1357–1419).<sup>42</sup> So, Thuken may have written with the intent to encourage an ecumenical spirit or to promote the Geluk, or both.

3. *As a tool of Chinese imperial policy.* A historically minded outside observer might suggest that as a text concerned not just with Indian and Tibetan traditions, but also those of China and Mongolia, the *Crystal Mirror* may also contain political motives and ramifications. Perhaps Thuken sought not just to justify Geluk dominance in the Tibetan Buddhist world but also to legitimize Chinese hegemony over Tibet.

I now briefly address each of these three suggestions, which, it should be noted, are not mutually exclusive.

1. The suggestion that the *Crystal Mirror* was composed primarily as a source of information about the religious and cultural world in which Thuken and his disciples lived raises the question of just how reliable the text is as a historical source. As we have seen, the text was compiled in some haste near the very end of Thuken’s life and was never significantly revised. Thuken does draw on an impressive variety of sources, and this allows him to paint a broad, fairly well-documented portrait of the various traditions with which he is concerned. Nevertheless, the *Crystal Mirror*’s historical reliability is compromised by at least four considerations.

First, whatever the considerable resources at his disposal, Thuken inevitably had better information about some traditions than others, limited perhaps by the libraries at the Amdo Geluk monasteries he frequented. Not surprisingly, his sections on the Kadam and Geluk are the best documented, for these are the traditions in which a Geluk lama would have the most thorough education. At the other extreme are traditions like Shijé, Bön, and Daoism, for which he had to rely almost entirely on hearsay and the writings of others for his accounts. In describing most other systems, he seems to have

drawn on the material that happened to be available to him, and put together an account as best he could, but he was still handicapped by not having access to all, or even the best, sources on such schools as the Nyingma, Kagyü, and Sakya, or to the full range of Tibetan historical literature.

Second, even in cases where Thukén provides ample documentation, he does not seem overly concerned to investigate critically the sources that he cites. Admittedly, there are a few instances in which he questions a particular writer's account of an event, or the attribution of a text to a particular author. For the most part, however, rather than attempt to arrive at the most plausible historical account of a given event by weighing all possible sources, he seems intent on laying out a coherent narrative by piecing together whatever textual or legendary material will most help him in the process. This is not unusual in Tibetan historical writing, but Thukén seems in general to display a less critical approach to his sources than a number of his predecessors, like Gö Lotsāwa Shönu Pal, the Fifth Dalai Lama, and Pawo Tsuklak Trengwa. Even if the *Crystal Mirror* does not measure up to the standards of modern critical historiography, or even to the best Tibetan historical writing, it still stands as an ambitious, clearly structured, and generally coherent attempt to take in a vast historical panorama in a fairly concise manner.

Third, it is worth recalling that the approach to history favored by Tibetans in general and certainly by Thukén in the *Crystal Mirror* is, in the words of Kurtis Schaeffer, "overwhelmingly biographical, and thus encourages us to look to individual actors as the prime movers of historical change."<sup>43</sup> Like the "great man" view of history often attributed to Thomas Carlyle in a European context, the Tibetan approach involves the construction of historical narrative through a succession of biographies of eminent individuals. Certainly, such an approach is understandable in Tibet, where lineage is an important religious and political marker, but it does skew historical accounts toward the deeds (especially the religious deeds) of great personages, and away from political, economic, social, or psychological considerations; in short, toward individual history and away from institutional history. This approach has its place on the spectrum of approaches to history, but it does have limitations, particularly in a modern historiographic setting.

Fourth, the *Crystal Mirror* was written at a very particular time in history, when Geluk power, supported by the Qing dynasty, was near its apogee, and many other traditions found themselves in relatively straitened circumstances. The early nineteenth century, after Thukén's death, saw the dawning of the trans-sectarian Rimé movement, which dramatically altered the fortunes of many of

the sects on which Thuken commented. The Karma Kagyü, Nyingma, and Sakya, which Thuken viewed as in decline, underwent significant revivals in the nineteenth century that have continued to the present day. Conversely, the nineteenth century was not a particularly vibrant one for Gelukpas, in part no doubt because of the decline of Manchu power. It would be interesting to know how Thuken would have presented the various traditions had he written his history in 1902 rather than 1802.

2. As we have seen, Thuken emphasizes in both the preface and conclusion of the *Crystal Mirror* that he is attempting to provide an impartial and evenhanded account of the various philosophical systems within his purview. On the other hand, we also have seen that he believes that an impartial consideration of the full range of philosophical systems leads inescapably to the conclusion that only the Geluk captures completely the comprehensiveness, profundity, and clarity of the teaching of the Buddha. Is Thuken, then, an ecumenically spirited religious pluralist or an unabashed Geluk triumphalist? Unsurprisingly, there is no simple answer.<sup>44</sup>

If we leave aside his chapters on Indian, Chinese, Mongolian, and other inner Asian traditions (the last two of which are more historical than evaluative) and survey the way Thuken represents the Tibetan traditions that were at the core of his religious world, we find that the overall spectrum of judgments is quite broad. It ranges from the negative extreme of the Jonang, which is roundly condemned and refuted in extraordinary detail, to the positive extreme of the Geluk, which is treated for the most part uncritically and, indeed, explicitly exalted above all other traditions. We may roughly arrange the other Tibetan traditions considered by Thuken between these two poles. Closer to the positive pole, we find the Kadam, which is, of course, seen by Gelukpas as their school's own direct precursor, and the Sakya, which while acknowledged by Thuken to reflect various philosophical strands, including Cittamātra and both Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika Madhyamaka, is presented descriptively and sympathetically, without any attempt to expose philosophical error. Closer to the negative pole, we find Bön, of which Thuken admittedly knows little, and which he presents primarily through verbatim quotations from works on it by its Buddhist critics, who are especially keen to point out the ways in which "transformed Bön" supposedly consists almost entirely of paraphrased Buddhist texts, ideas, and practices. Somewhere in between, we find the Nyingma, Kagyü, and Shijé, which Thuken regards as rooted in pure views and practices but prone in their latter-day forms to errors that their irreproachable founders would not have countenanced. Typical in

this regard is his analysis of earlier and later Shijé: "Because the view that is taught is free of extremes, I think it is coextensive with the Madhyamaka view. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that, in the writings of later generations, there often is an admixture of fish and turnips."<sup>45</sup>

These characterizations are broad and must be qualified by the observation that Thuken's judgments, both positive and negative, are at least partially mitigated in nearly every case. Even the schools most roundly criticized, Jonang and Bön, are acknowledged in passing for, respectively, their transmission of Kālacakra traditions and their appeal to laypeople. Although Thuken does criticize later developments within such "in-between" traditions as Nyingma, Kagyü, and Shijé, he also acknowledges their pure origins and defends their fundamental teachings against attacks, including those by fellow Gelukpas. By the same token, he is careful to note that, having demonstrated the distinctiveness of the Geluk, he does not mean to imply thereby that liberation is impossible through other traditions. If such were the case, he states, it would follow that no philosophy other than Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka and no method besides highest yoga tantra would lead to liberation, and countless masters who did not employ that view or method would not have been truly enlightened. This is a claim that any number of Gelukpas would have made (and some still do), but Thuken rejects it, saying that, apart from the Jonang, "there does not appear to be even a single system fit for consistent denigration, so those who desire their own welfare should see all of them as pervaded by pure appearance."<sup>46</sup>

Where does this leave Thuken? As is so often the case, it probably depends on where you stand. Jonangpas and Bönpos undoubtedly will feel that Thuken has merely caricatured their traditions and shown virtually no understanding of their subtleties. Nyingmapas and Kagyüpas may well consider Thuken's celebration of their founders while he criticizes latter-day practitioners as damning with faint praise, since few adherents of any tradition in any era will admit that their lineage has been corrupted or misinterpreted. Nyingmapas, Kagyüpas, and Sakyapas are likely to take issue with Thuken's implication that their great founders all were Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas. And members of virtually any non-Geluk tradition that was extant in 1800 are likely to find Thuken's account of their decadence during his era misleading and inaccurate.<sup>47</sup> A Geluk triumphalist, on the other hand, may believe that Thuken has conceded far too much spiritual efficacy to other traditions, arguing that such a concession opens the door to a dangerous relativism that threatens to obliterate the great work of Tsongkhapa in presenting Buddhist tradition

with unprecedented and inimitable clarity.<sup>48</sup> On balance, if we consider the range of attitudes toward religions not one's own that has been articulated in the West, it probably is safe to characterize Thuken's outlook as falling neither to the extreme of relativistic pluralism, nor to the opposite extreme of triumphalist exclusivism, but under the rubric of inclusivism, which asserts the ultimate supremacy of one's own tradition but admits that salvation may be achieved through other traditions as well.

3. Summarizing Thuken's place in the world and its relation to his inclusivism, Matthew Kapstein writes:

He was one of a generation of clergymen from Amdo whose spiritual loyalties were unmistakably Gelukpa, but who allied themselves politically with the Qing court. The worldview of these churchmen bore a strange resemblance to that of medieval Latin Christendom, with the Manchus filling the role of Imperial Rome and the Gelukpa hierarchy that of the Catholic Church. These were not the products of a denomination under fire but rather represented the synthesis of a peerless salvific vehicle with a universal temporal order. Not personally threatened by the Central Tibetan feuds, they could afford to regard the situation there only with equanimous compassion. Their intellectual curiosity could be given free rein to explore their own and other traditions impartially.<sup>49</sup>

Quite apart from suggesting a context for Thuken's relative impartiality, this passage raises important questions about the political motivations and implications of his work. As with the question of impartiality, there is a spectrum of possible arguments to be made.

On the one hand, it could be argued that Thuken is fundamentally unconcerned with politics and merely seeks to represent the range of traditions known to him, with an eye cast primarily on questions of philosophical view and religious practice, as they may or may not bear upon spiritual liberation. A modern critical theorist, however, would remind us that there is no nonpolitical writing, especially when it comes to history and religion; only writing that is overt or covert about its political agenda and implications. Furthermore, Thuken gives explicit attention not just to matters of philosophy and religion, but also to the political histories of the various schools, and goes into great detail on Geluk relations with

the Mongol and Chinese empires. Thus, the *Crystal Mirror* was not only written from amid Thuken's political and historical situation, but it also displays knowledge of and interest in that situation. In that sense, it has an explicitly political dimension.

Why does Thuken focus on politics as much as he does? It might be maintained that, to the degree that the text is a Geluk tract, its primary political motivation is to demonstrate to a Tibetan-literate audience that the Geluk has enjoyed the patronage of the greatest East Asian empires of both the past and present, and therefore is distinctive not only in religious terms, but in terms of its patronage and worldly power—always for Buddhists a sign of good institutional karma. Thuken's particular emphasis on Geluk relations with the Qing dynasty, however, leads to the question whether he might have sought not only to legitimize Geluk religious and political supremacy in Tibet on the basis of its endorsement by the Chinese emperor, but perhaps even, consciously or unconsciously, to promote Qing imperialism. In this view, the *Crystal Mirror* and other historical works that deal with Sino-Tibetan relations turn out, whatever their authors' purported aims, to serve the interests of those in the Chinese court who would incorporate Tibet into a greater China, since any text that established the spiritual and political supremacy of the Geluk within Tibet and at the same time acknowledged Geluk dependence on the patronage of the empire could be seen by extension as validating imperial claims over Tibet.

It certainly is possible that this has been an unintended consequence of the *Crystal Mirror* and other Tibetan works that dealt with Tibetan-Qing relations. That Thuken self-consciously intended to promote Qing claims over Tibet to his audience, however, is far from evident. Whatever his private views, he never mentions, let alone justifies, those claims in the text. The likelier conclusion, it appears, is that while the *Crystal Mirror* was written within an imperial context, and may be interpreted as an imperial document, its primary political aim was not the promotion of a Chinese agenda but that of the Geluk, and even there, as we have seen, there is room for qualification.

### *The Genre of the Crystal Mirror*

According to its title, the *Crystal Mirror* is a *drumtha* (*grub mtha'*) text, hence part of the genre of Tibetan literature variously translated as “doxography,” “religious philosophy,” “tenet systems,” “philosophical systems,” “schools of thought,” “philosophical schools,” “philosophical positions,” and

so forth.<sup>50</sup> Even a superficial examination of its contents, however, makes it clear that while the *Crystal Mirror* does present and analyze the views of various schools in a manner suggestive of other drumtha texts, it differs from them in three important respects. First, whereas drumtha texts tend to keep their focus largely on matters of doctrine, each chapter of the *Crystal Mirror* includes not just philosophical and doctrinal material but significant discussions of the historical development of the tradition or traditions to which the chapter is devoted. Second, whereas drumtha texts usually proceed from “lower” to “higher” schools of thought, the *Crystal Mirror*, as Gene Smith notes, “seem[s] to have been arranged more by historical than typological considerations,”<sup>51</sup> moving as it does, like Buddhism itself, from India to Tibet, China, and inner Asia, and generally proceeding within its major sections and individual chapters from earlier to later developments, with the Bön chapter occupying a sort of categorical bardo between Tibetan Buddhist and Chinese traditions. Third, whereas most drumtha texts concern themselves primarily with Indian schools of thought, the *Crystal Mirror* makes a systematic attempt to present and analyze non-Indian traditions, such as those of Tibet, China, and Mongolia. Thus, if the *Crystal Mirror* is a drumtha text, it is a rather unusual one.

Though the question of its actual genre has been little discussed, it is interesting to note the range of views among those who *have* sought to define it as more than mere drumtha. Thus, Vostrikov includes it in his chapter on religious histories (*chos 'byung*), while the website of the Tibetan Buddhist Research Center lists it as both drumtha and logyü (*lo rgyus*), the latter generally being translated as “history,” “chronicle,” or “narrative.” It may simply be a combination of all three, and, indeed, it is in the *combination* of genres that the *Crystal Mirror*’s originality lies. Certainly, Indian traditions had been analyzed both historically and doctrinally by previous Tibetan writers, including two of Thuken’s teachers who were masters of traditional drumtha, Changkya Rölpai Dorjé and Könchok Jikmé Wangpo.<sup>52</sup> Another teacher of his, Sumpa Khenpo, wrote the massive *Excellent Wish-Fulfilling Tree*, an institutional history of Buddhism in India, Tibet, China, and Mongolia, which also includes some strong polemics against the non-Geluk Tibetan schools but does not examine doctrinal matters as systematically as a drumtha text generally does.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the genius of the *Crystal Mirror* lies not so much in its creation of a new genre as in the way it brings together intellectual approaches seldom found in Tibet in the same work. In this sense, Vostrikov was quite right to claim that the *Crystal Mirror* has

“a special place among the Tibetan historical works of analytical type,” and one cannot, in the end, really improve on his plain description of it as a “historico-philosophical work.”<sup>54</sup>

As already noted, the very existence of a text like the *Crystal Mirror* demonstrates that the idea of “comparative religion” is not a solely Western invention. Indeed, it might be argued that the Western notion of what is involved in the study of religion ought to be expanded to include comparative works from outside the West.<sup>55</sup> That notwithstanding, it is worth examining briefly how the *Crystal Mirror* might stand as a study of comparative religion, given prevailing Western assumptions about how to compare. Could it serve as a textbook for learning about the religions of India, Tibet, China, and Inner Asia, or is it simply a historical curiosity, an intriguing and erudite, but ultimately quaint, example of premodern approaches to studying religion?

The *Crystal Mirror* clearly is not a text on comparative religion in the modern secular academic style, since it is at least partially concerned with evaluation of the traditions examined, and does on occasion explicitly promote a sectarian agenda. In that sense, whatever the degree of Thuken's impartiality, his text has too much of a normative element to match the contemporary ideal of a “straightforward” text on comparative religion, which seeks, as neutrally as possible, to describe and explain a range of traditions, leaving aside all attempts at evaluation, or perhaps articulating a respect for all traditions equally.<sup>56</sup>

If we look instead to *religious* literature about religions, that is, “theological” works that seek to describe multiple religions from within one particular tradition, we might initially consider the *Crystal Mirror* as an example of heresiography. This genre, of which many instances were produced (and still are) in the Christian and Muslim worlds, often provides considerable information, some of it accurate, about a range of religious traditions, usually within, but sometimes outside, one's own church or community. It does so, however, in the ultimate service of exposing these traditions as heretical. Heresiography is related, but not identical to, apologetics, the branch of theological writing that seeks to defend the tenets of one's faith against the views and critiques of those outside the tradition. While the *Crystal Mirror* may have its triumphalist sections, it does not appear that its *primary* intent is to expose the faults in other traditions and exalt Thuken's, so it does not quite fit the definition of heresiography or apologetics.

What is it, then? Perhaps the closest Western parallel may be found in Christian texts, first written as early as the sixteenth century, and appearing

with ever-greater frequency since, that attempt to give accounts of a range of what came to be called “world religions.” These texts often claim to be dispassionate in their approach to the various religions, but their descriptions usually are colored by a strong concern for establishing points of comparison with Christianity, and by an assumption, either implicit or explicit, that the world religions, while containing much that is of value, probably fall short of Christianity as fully adequate responses to the human condition.<sup>57</sup> There is actually a significant range within this literature, from works that overtly place other traditions on a par with Christianity but then describe elements common to all traditions that turn out to have their roots in some form of Christianity, to works that analyze the world religions as covert forms of Christianity, practiced by “anonymous Christians” who reflect core Christian values—and may in fact be inspired by God—but express those values through cultural forms that are not obviously Christian.<sup>58</sup> In any case, Thuken’s theologically inclusivist account of the traditions of his day, in which relatively impartial description and analysis is conducted with the framework of the assumed distinctiveness of the Geluk, would seem to qualify the *Crystal Mirror* as an Asian example of a sectarian world religions text.

### *A General Outline of the Text*

On the most general level, Thuken divides the *Crystal Mirror* into five sections, on: I. Indian schools, II. Tibetan schools, III. Chinese schools, IV. schools in “other lands” (the central Asian areas of Mongolia, Khotan, and Shambhala), and V. a conclusion. The sections on India and “other lands,” as well as the conclusion, consist of a single chapter each. The section on Tibet is subdivided into chapters on: Nyingma, Kadam, Kagyü, Shijé, Sakya, Jonang and minor traditions, Geluk, and Bön. The section on China is divided into chapters on non-Buddhist traditions and Buddhist traditions. Within each individual chapter, Thuken generally proceeds in the following order: (1) the historical origins of the tradition, including major lineages and important persons; (2) the major doctrines and practices of the tradition, with a particular emphasis on philosophical views and meditative practices; (3) a critical analysis of issues raised by the tradition’s views and practices; and (4) a poetic summary of Thuken’s views of the tradition.<sup>59</sup> Though roughly accurate, this characterization of Thuken’s chapters belies the considerable range of approaches that he actually takes in relation to both presenting and analyzing the doctrinal positions of the different traditions.

For example, it appears that only three of the chapters, those on Nyingma, Kagyü, and Jonang, are explicitly organized in the manner just outlined, though this does not mean that the concerns we have emphasized do not find their way into most of Thuken's chapters. Moreover, whatever his rubrics, Thuken does not subject every tradition's doctrines to the same degree of critical scrutiny. His judgments—pro, con, or mixed—are presented quite clearly (though in varying detail) in the cases of the Indian, Nyingma, Kagyü, Shijé, Jonang, and Geluk traditions, but rather less obviously when it comes to Kadam, Sakya, and Bön, as well as Chinese and central Asian schools. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that Thuken generally approaches each tradition by presenting history, doctrines and practices, some analysis, and a poetic conclusion. In the remainder of this introduction, I briefly summarize the contents of each of Thuken's chapters.

### *Summary of the Chapters*

Thuken's preface (not numbered by Thuken; chapter 1 of the translation) is a poetic celebration of the Buddha; various bodhisattvas; Indian masters of sutra and tantra; great Tibetan kings, translators, and masters; and, most especially, Atiśa, Tsongkhapa, the Dalai and Panchen Lamas, and Thuken's own gurus. It also expresses Thuken's wish to compose the text so as to clear away the blind partiality with which so many Tibetans cling to their traditions as the only true one.

The lengthy discussion of Indian schools (Thuken's section I; our chapter 2) is structured along the lines of a traditional Tibetan text on philosophical systems. It is divided into a brief section on non-Buddhist traditions—which includes discussions of the materialist, Jain, and various Hindu schools, as well as an explanation of why we must study these systems—and a much longer section on Buddhist schools. This begins with a discussion of the historical development of the four major philosophical schools—Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Cittamātra, and Madhyamaka—followed by a summary of the positions of each of the four schools. In summarizing these positions, Thuken spends little time on matters of cosmology, valid cognition, or path theory, focusing primarily on the ways in which each school defines the coarse and subtle selflessness that must be realized by practitioners, and, like any good Buddhist, avoids extreme positions. He also spends considerable time establishing the subtle, but important, differences between Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka. In this sense, Thuken's treatment

of Indian philosophical systems, especially the Buddhist, touches on some vital ontological issues but is far from a complete account and must be read in conjunction with fuller discussions by scholars of earlier generations, like Jamyang Shepa, Könchok Jikmé Wangpo, and especially his main teacher, Changkya Rölpai Dorjé.<sup>60</sup>

Thuken begins his section on Tibetan traditions with a brief overview of the history of Buddhism in Tibet (his section IIA, our chapter 3). This includes summaries of the “early spread of the Dharma” in Tibet during the imperial period (seventh–ninth centuries) and of the early years of the “later spread of the Dharma,” sometimes referred to as the “Tibetan renaissance” (tenth–eleventh centuries).

The first of Thuken’s chapters on specific Tibetan traditions (his section IIB1, our chapter 4) covers the “old” tradition, the Nyingma. He summarizes the major differences between “old” (*nying ma*) and “new” (*gsar ma*) translation traditions, then discusses the early history of Nyingma, beginning with the career of Padmasambhava, and detailing both the nine-vehicle system for organizing Buddhism and the lineages of oral tradition, treasure texts, and pure vision. In his discussion of Nyingma doctrines and practices, he focuses mostly on the philosophical view and meditative practices of the Dzokchen lineage. He then investigates criticisms by new-translation authors that Nyingma is “impure” and concludes that while some more recent practitioners may have lost the tradition, the earlier Nyingmapas and their teachings were pure. He ends the chapter with a summary of political problems faced by the Nyingmapas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and laments their current decadence.

Thuken next turns (his section IIB2, our chapter 5) to the Kadam tradition. He spends most of the earlier part of the chapter extolling the greatness of Atiśa—summarizing his activity in helping restore pure Dharma to central Tibet—and the deeds of his disciples and grand-disciples, including Dromtönpa and the various “Kadam geshés,” such as Potowa and Chekawa. He goes on to give a general explanation of the Kadam teaching—their central texts and the lineages of instruction and special instruction—which deals primarily with the establishment of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka philosophical view and the quintessential Kadam practice of mind training (*blo sbyong*). He does not subject these teachings to critical scrutiny other than to praise them. He concludes by summarizing the great qualities of the Kadam masters.

At over fifty folios, the chapter on the Kagyü tradition (Thuken’s sec-

tion IIB<sub>3</sub>, our chapter 6) is the longest on any Tibetan school other than the Geluk. Thuken begins by discussing the etymology of the name and the general history of the order, then gives historical accounts of the two major Kagyü lineages as he understood them: the Shangpa and the Dakpo. He describes the development of each of the subschools of the Dakpo: the Karma, Phakdru, Shangtsal, Drigung, Drukpa, Taklung, Barom, Yasang, and Trophu. His section on doctrine focuses on analyzing the philosophical view of the earliest Kagyü masters (concluding that it is Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka), discussing critically later Kagyü meditations on “seeking the mind,” and describing early Kagyü analyses of Mahāmudrā. In the overtly analytical section, Thuken defends Kagyü Mahāmudrā traditions against charges that they distort Indian tradition and entail quietism, investigates the philosophical view involved in the *four yogas* of Mahāmudrā meditation, and considers whether Geluk and Kagyü come down to the same point (he argues that they do).

The considerably briefer discussion of the Shijé tradition (Thuken's section IIB<sub>4</sub>, our chapter 7) investigates the meaning of the term *shijé* (*zhi byed*), then describes the major figures in the school's development (especially Phadampa Sangyé and Machik Lapdrön) and the divisions and subdivisions of the major Shijé instruction lineages. Thuken then describes the way in which the Shijé lineage is rooted in the Indian perfection of wisdom literature and helps instill the Madhyamaka view, though he notes that this pure tradition was lost in later generations. He concludes the chapter with a brief discussion of the lineage, view, and practice traditions of the Chö (*gcod*) subschool of Shijé.

Thuken's chapter on Sakya (his section IIB<sub>5</sub>, our chapter 8) gives a general history of the Sakya order, with special focus on the great masters of the Khön family line, from Khön Könchok Gyalpo through Sakya Pandita and Phakpa. He summarizes the tradition of sutra exposition then turns to the tantric exposition lineages of Ngor, Dzong, and Tsar. After a brief review of current conditions among the Sakyapa (only relatively healthy, he finds), Thuken discusses the history of the “principal Sakya Dharma,” the Lamdré (“path and fruit”), and defends it against charges of nihilism. He then presents, in some detail, the viewpoint of the Sakya tradition, including esoteric sutra-vehicle instructions for achieving right view according to lineages rooted in Nāgārjuna and Maitreya, and mantra-vehicle instructions on “identifying the mind,” then meditating on how appearances are mind, mind is illusory, and illusions are not inherently existent. As with

the Kadam tradition, Thuken has virtually nothing critical to say about the Sakyapas, though he does note the presence of a mixture of Cittamātra and Madhyamaka in certain expositions of their philosophical views and meditative practices.

The chapter on the Jonang school (Thuken's IIB6, our chapter 9) summarizes the history of the tradition, with a special focus on Yumo Mikyö Dorjé and Dölpopa. Thuken explains how the former misconstrued certain meditative experiences and distilled them into the confused philosophical view known as "extrinsic emptiness" (*gzhan stong*). That view then is refuted in remarkable detail, as Thuken argues, in turn, that Jonang descriptions of ultimate reality are virtually indistinguishable from those of Hindus, and that Jonang interpretations of such Indian Buddhist classics as the *Descent to Lañka Sutra* and the works of Nāgārjuna are sorely mistaken. Thuken goes on to summarize some Tibetan criticisms of the Jonangpas and gives a brief cautionary biography of Shākya Chokden, a latter-day proponent of extrinsic emptiness who, Thuken claims, repented his views on his deathbed. There follows a brief chapter (Thuken's section IIB7, but folded into our chapter 9) on some minor or syncretic Tibetan philosophical systems, including the Bodong, the Shalu system of Butön Rinchen Drup, and the Lhodrak system of Namkha Gyaltzen.

By far the longest chapter in the *Crystal Mirror* is that on Thuken's own tradition, the Geluk (his section IIB8, our chapters 10–12), which covers nearly one third of the text. The first part of the chapter (our chapter 10) is an extensive (sixty-plus folios) biography of the founder of the Geluk tradition, Tsongkhapa. It includes detailed discussions of his studies of sutra-based and tantric ethics, philosophy, and meditation with a multitude of masters; his inner realizations and visionary encounters with the wisdom bodhisattva Mañjuḥṣa; his teaching through oral exposition, debate, and composing texts; and his uniquely exalted status among Tibetan masters.

The second part of the Geluk chapter (our chapter 11) focuses on Tsongkhapa's successors in the order. It enumerates his direct disciples then focuses on the history of the great sutra-based Geluk monastic centers. These include the major monasteries near Lhasa, namely, Ganden, Drepung, and Sera; the seat of the Panchen Lamas, Tashi Lhünpo, in Tsang; centers in the far west; and major sites in Kham and Thuken's home region of Amdo. Thuken then turns to tantra-centered traditions, detailing the life of Tsongkhapa's disciple Sherap Sengé, the development of the Sé and Mé lineages, and the founding of the two great tantric monasteries, Gyütö and Gyümé. He also discusses the

Ensa ear-whispered lineage—a special transmission within the Geluk that includes teachings on guru yoga and Mahāmudrā—and the history of the Dalai and Panchen Lamas.

The third part of the Geluk chapter (our chapter 12) is an argument for the Geluk's status as the greatest of Tibetan traditions. Thuken attempts to show the Geluk's distinctiveness on the basis of its uniquely harmonious synthesis of all the Buddha's teachings; its uniquely lucid and subtle presentation of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka view; its balanced appreciation for the place of meditation on the path and the balance within meditation between tranquility and insight; its scrupulous insistence on maintaining pure vows, whether of a monk, bodhisattva, or tantric yogin; and its sophisticated interpretation of tantric texts and the theories and practices expounded in them. Thuken concludes the chapter by noting that the Geluk not only comprises the entirety of Indian Buddhism but also contains the best of the other Tibetan schools. Of these, he concedes at the very end, all (except the Jonang) contain the basis for achieving enlightenment.

In his short chapter on Bön (his section IID, our chapter 13), Thuken summarizes the history of the three major traditions of Bön: emergent Bön, deviant Bön, and transformed Bön, then discusses the cosmology, metaphysics, rituals, and meditative practices found in the tradition, noting as well some aspects of its monastic organization. He links Bön views and meditations with those of the Nyingma Dzokchen tradition, and makes a point of showing how Bön “transformed,” or imitated Buddhist texts and ideas. In his verse conclusion, Thuken observes that despite their apparent contradiction, Buddhism and Bön have to some degree intermingled, and he observes the irony that many Buddhists seek out Bön specialists for help with worldly problems.

Thuken's third major section (covering around fifty folios) discusses Chinese philosophical systems in two separate chapters. That on non-Buddhist traditions (his sections IIIA–B, our chapter 14) focuses primarily on Confucianism (“the Ru system”) and Daoism (“the Bön system”), with considerably more attention given to the former. The discussion of Confucianism mentions the great figures and texts in the tradition, devotes some attention to divination practices related to the *Yijing* (*Classic of Changes*), and expounds in considerable detail Confucian cosmogony, cosmology, metaphysics, soteriology, and ethics. He compares Confucianism to Buddhism, and though he finds Confucian ethics admirable, he faults the tradition, especially in its later, anti-Buddhist phase, for excessive worldliness. The discussion of Daoism, of which Thuken

confesses great ignorance, briefly covers the legend of Laozi (a.k.a. Lao tzu or Lao Tse), who he identifies with Shenrap Miwo, the founder of Bön, and whose views he likens to those of certain Hindu schools. The section also surveys Daoist metaphysics, rituals, institutions, and meditative practices and concludes that it is unlikely that Daoist practices lead to enlightenment. In the last section of the chapter, Thuken briefly discusses minor systems, such as a short-lived Brahmanical school and the Islamic tradition of the Uyghurs; he also makes an oblique reference to Christianity.<sup>61</sup>

The second chapter on China (Thuken's section IIIC, our chapter 15) covers Buddhist traditions. It discusses how Buddhism came to China from India and focuses on the exemplary figures, ideas, and practices of what Thuken considers the major Chinese lineages: the vinaya lineage (or Lu school), the secret mantra lineage (Chenyen), the lineage of extensive practice (the Yogācāra tradition of Xuanzang), the lineage of profound view (Tiantai and Huayan), and the lineage of essential meaning (Chan). Interestingly, the Pure Land school receives no mention. Chan is discussed in considerable detail, with a special focus on the life of Bodhidharma; in the end, Thuken likens Chan to the Mahāmudrā traditions of the Kagyü school and suggests that the eighth-century Chan master Heshang Mahāyāna,<sup>62</sup> so notorious in Tibetan lore, did not understand his own tradition. Near the end of the chapter, Thuken briefly discusses the influence of Tibetan traditions in China, touching briefly on Sakya relations with the Yuan dynasty and quite extensively on Geluk relations with various Qing emperors, emphasizing the honors bestowed upon various Geluk masters by their imperial patrons.

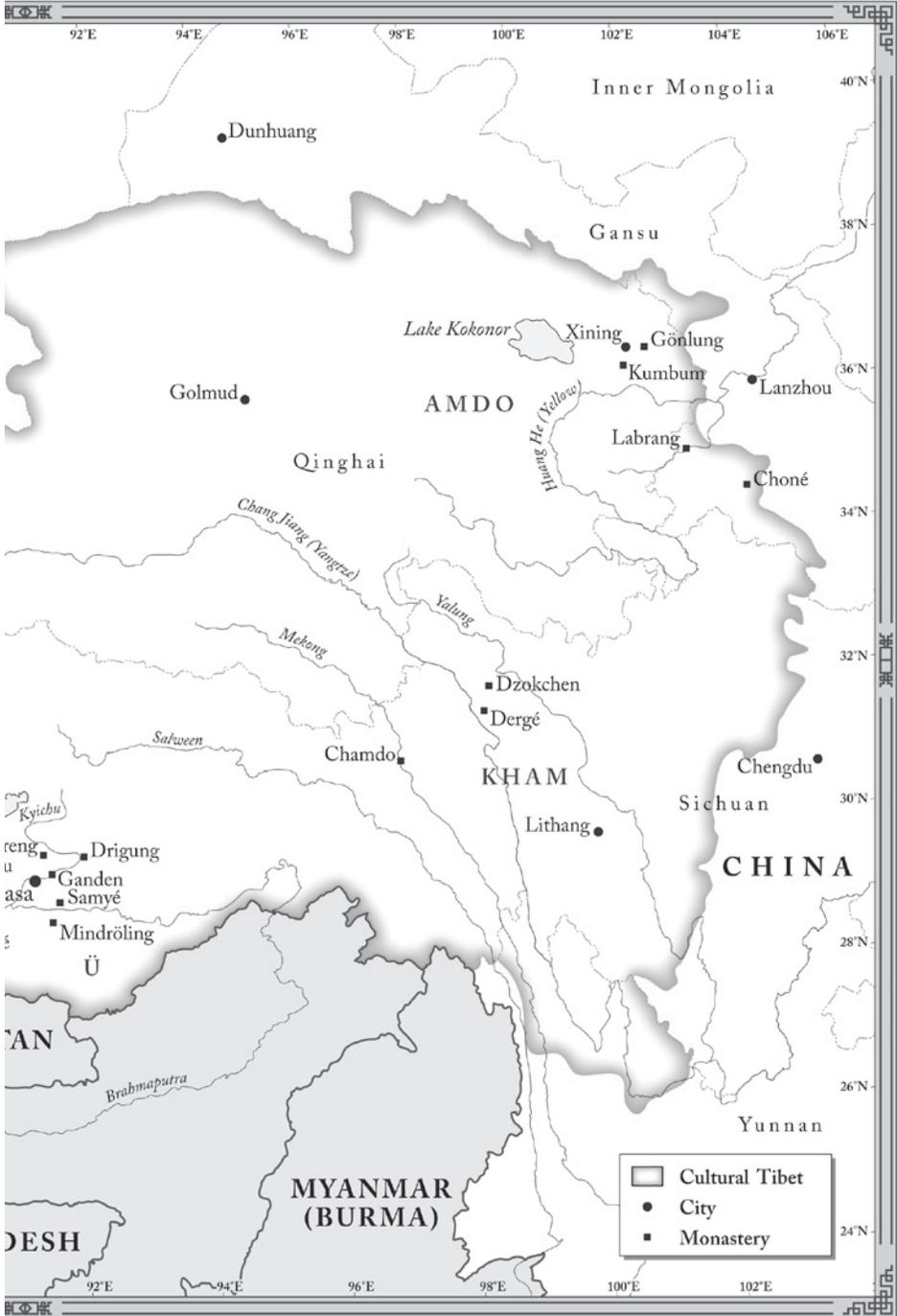
The chapter on "philosophical systems in other lands" (Thuken's section IV, our chapter 16) focuses on three parts of central Asia: Mongolia, Khotan, and Shambhala. The section on Mongolia is almost entirely historical, dealing in turn with the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, when Tibetans (especially such Sakya luminaries as Sakya Pandita and Phakpa) first established preceptor-patron relations with Mongols and the Yuan dynasty and began to influence Mongol culture, and with the later period (sixteenth–eighteenth centuries), in which the Gelukpas spread Buddhism far and wide among the Mongols and received Mongol patronage and military assistance—it was a Mongol prince who invented the title "Dalai Lama," and it was Mongol armies that assured the Fifth Dalai Lama's control of central Tibet. An extremely brief section on Buddhism in Khotan is followed by a somewhat longer discussion of the Dharma's spread to Shambhala. Though the existence of Shambhala is given little credence by modern historians,

Thuken treats it as a real, if vaguely located, place, and discusses the geography, royal line, and Buddhist history of the kingdom (especially as related to the Kālacakra tantra) as well as prophecies regarding Shambhala's role in a future war in defense of the Dharma against Muslim "barbarians."

Thuken's conclusion (his section V, our chapter 17) is largely written in ornate metered verse. With great metaphorical élan, he celebrates the founding of Buddhism in India, its spread to Tibet and other lands, and the importance of understanding the systems of all cultures, both non-Buddhist and Buddhist, so as to overcome narrow partisanship. This will lead, he says, to recognizing the supremacy of Tsongkhapa's tradition and the practice of his unique synthesis of the path. Finally, Thuken dedicates whatever merit there may be in his work and pronounces benediction on the world, practitioners of Buddhism, and the Geluk tradition. The final section is the colophon, explaining briefly how the text came to be written.

Whatever its historical reliability, whatever its degree of impartiality, whatever its political agenda and implications, and whatever its genre in either a Tibetan or a Western setting, Thuken's *Crystal Mirror* stands as an impressive testament to its author's deep curiosity and breadth of interest about the religious world in which he lived. Even if imperfectly, it succeeds in its titular claim to hold up a mirror: to the ideas and practices of a range of Asian religions, to the values of the time and place in which it was written, and to a way of thinking about religion and philosophy that, while not quite modern, is far from out of date.









## Technical Note

IN PREPARING OUR TRANSLATION, the edition of the *Crystal Mirror* that served as our primary source was the book edition published in Lanzhou by the Kansu'u mi rigs dpe skran khang in 1984, which we refer to as K. We checked problematic readings in the Kansu'u edition against the woodblock print photocopy of the Lhasa Shöl (*zhöl*) edition published in 1969 by Nawang Gelek Demo as volume II of Thuken's collected works; we refer to this as Z. At the very end of the translation process, the edition prepared in Sarnath and published in Delhi under the aegis of the Institute of Tibetan Classics (which we refer to as S, and for which the default edition is Z) became available. For the most part, our final translation reflects this edition, but we have not been able to check all of its readings against our own, and there are some places (indicated in footnotes), where we may depart from it, preferring readings found in K or suggested by other sources. The bracketed page references included in the text refer to the Sarnath edition. The appendix, which is a detailed outline of Thuken's text, includes page references keyed to each of the three editions we have consulted. Our paragraph divisions often follow those in S or K but in many cases, for ease of reading, we have broken up the sometimes exceedingly long paragraphs in those editions into shorter units. We also have introduced additional text divisions so that the structure of Thuken's work may be as clear as possible; our interpolations are not explicit in the text itself but are clearly set off by brackets in the outline in the appendix.

The conventions for phonetic transcription of Tibetan words are those developed by the Institute of Tibetan Classics and Wisdom Publications. These reflect approximately the pronunciation of words by a modern central Tibetan; Tibetan speakers from Ladakh, Kham, or Amdo (where Thuken was born), not to mention Mongolians, might pronounce the words quite differently. Transliterations of the phoneticized Tibetan terms and names used in the text can be found under the appropriate entry in the index. Sanskrit

diacritics are used throughout except for Sanskrit terms that have been naturalized into English, such as *samsara*, *nirvana*, *sutra*, and *mandala*.

*Pronunciation of Tibetan phonetics*

*ph* and *th* are aspirated *p* and *t*, as in *pet* and *tip*.

*ö* is similar to the *eu* in the French *seul*.

*ü* is similar to the *ü* in the German *füllen*.

*ai* is similar to the *e* in *bet*.

*é* is similar to the *e* in *prey*.

*Pronunciation of Sanskrit*

Palatal *ś* and retroflex *ṣ* are similar to the English unvoiced *sh*.

*c* is an unaspirated *ch* similar to the *ch* in *chill*.

The vowel *r̄* is similar to the American *r* in *pretty*.

*ñ* is somewhat similar to the nasalized *ny* in *canyon*.

*ṅ* is similar to the *ng* in *sing* or *anger*.

*A note on brackets*

In our translation, we have minimized the use of brackets to demarcate implied material, allowing that material to become part of our rendition. That material includes (1) the nouns referred to by pronouns, (2) the word(s) implied by the Tibetan *la sogs pa* (“etc.”), (3) the full versions of persons, places, texts, terms, or lists that are given in abbreviated form, and (4) the authors of texts mentioned by Thukun. We beg the indulgence of Tibetologists for this decision, but they will know by looking at the Tibetan what has been added to clarify the original, while readers who do not read Tibetan will, presumably, be able to approach Thukun’s text that much more easily for not having to negotiate through countless bracketed expressions. We have utilized standard parentheses for lifespan dates, Western equivalents of Tibetan dates, setting off items in numerical lists, and Tibetan or Sanskrit words that need to be noted in the translation proper, as when Thukun explains etymologies.

*A note on dates*

In the text itself, we have provided parenthetical dates only for figures who are given significant attention, or whose dates will clarify chronology. We

have otherwise supplied the dates for individuals, where these are known or estimated, in the index. In general, greater confidence may be assigned to the dates of later persons than of earlier ones, and Chinese and Tibetan datings are usually more reliable than those for Indians. We have attempted to consult the most recent scholarship on these matters, but our datings should not be taken as the final word. In certain instances, we have cited regnal dates of rulers (prefaced by “r.”) rather than birth and death dates, including regnal dates that are speculative at best, as with the earliest emperors of China or the rulers of Shambhala.

### *A note on notes*

In the notes to the translation, we have tried to (1) note our points of departure from the Sarnath edition, (2) explain terms or phrases not spelled out in the text, and (3) provide a sampling of important Western-language sources relevant to the most important traditions, persons, texts, practices, and places mentioned by Thukun. His scope in the *Crystal Mirror* is so wide, however, that we could not possibly provide exhaustive references to the relevant Western-language sources, let alone to the Indic and Tibetan primary sources from which modern scholars have drawn. Fuller references will be found in a number of the works of scholarship noted, and we ask the reader to consult them for further information. In the notes, a single parenthetical italicized term will be Tibetan, unless otherwise identified; where two terms are listed, separated by a comma, the Tibetan is first, the Sanskrit second.

### *A note on the index*

The index to this volume is intended to be a useful reference tool and provides more than just the relevant page numbers for its entries. For historical figures, it also includes their dates when known and sometimes page references to other historical works, such as the *Blue Annals*, where readers can learn more about them. Geographical locales often have brief explanations of their relative location. All Tibetan names and terms in the index are followed by the Wylie transliterated spelling, and readers should therefore consult the index to find the original rendering.

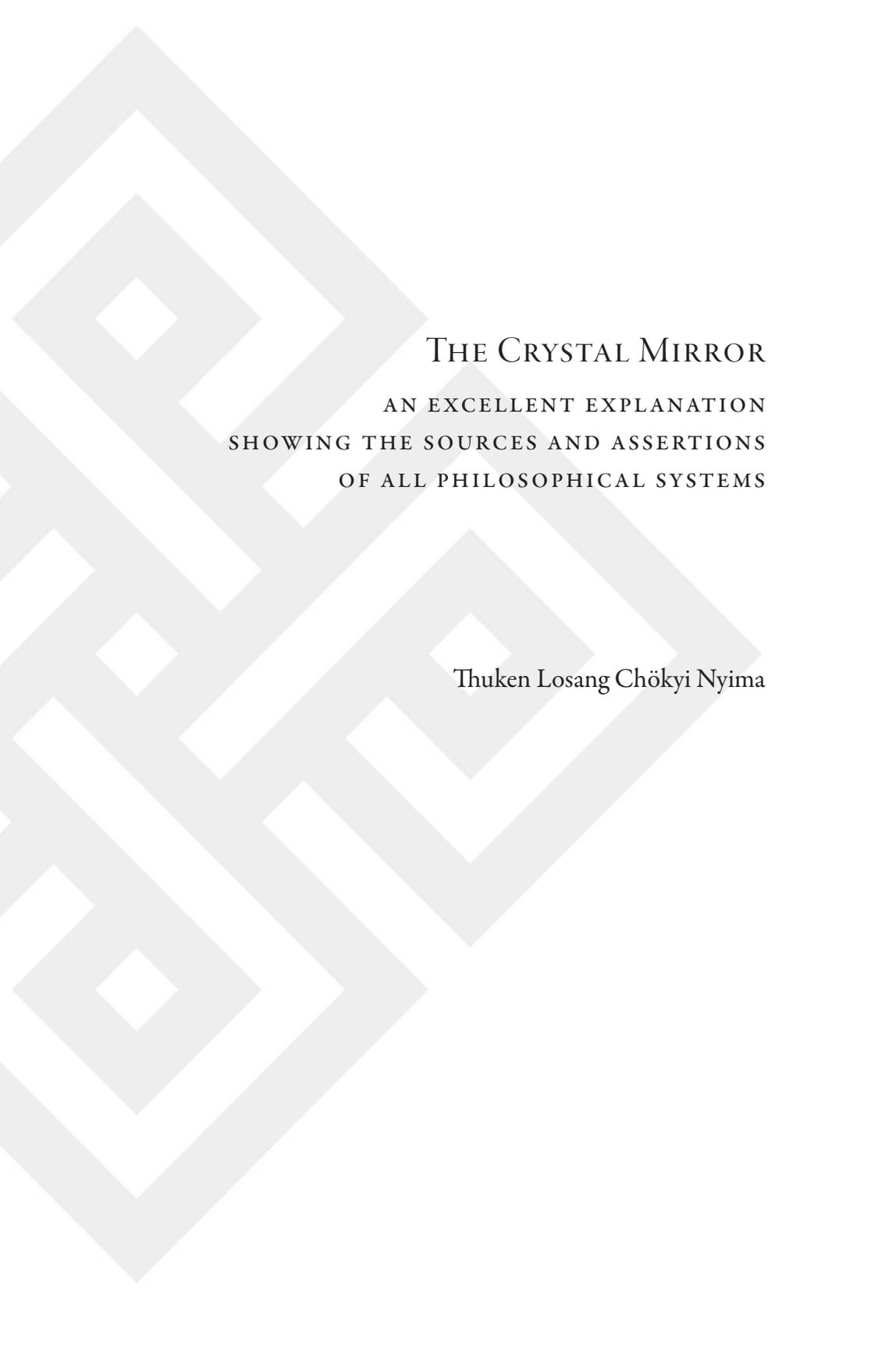
*A note on texts*

Titles of Indian and Tibetan (as well as Chinese) texts are nearly always rendered in English within the translation and the notes. Texts mentioned but not quoted by Thuken do not appear in the bibliography—their sheer number makes that prohibitive—but they can all be found in the index, along with their Indian and Tibetan titles and, where appropriate, their Tōhoku catalogue number. Works that Thuken quotes, however, do appear in the bibliography as well.

*Abbreviations used in the notes*

See bibliography for full publication details on the works listed here:

- BA: Gö Lotsāwa Shōnu Pal. *The Blue Annals*. Translated by George N. Roerich.
- Ch: Chinese
- GT: Tsong-kha-pa. *The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment*. Translated by the Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee.
- K: *Thu'u bkwan grub mtha'*. Lanzhou: Kan su'u mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1984.
- NS: Dudjom Rinpoche. *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*. Translated and edited by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein.
- S: *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*. Delhi: Institute of Tibetan Classics, 2007.
- Skt.: Sanskrit
- TBRC: Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center website, [tbrc.org](http://tbrc.org).
- Tib.: Tibetan
- Toh: Tōhoku catalogue number, Dergé edition of the Tibetan Tripiṭaka
- TPS: Giuseppe Tucci. *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*.
- TR: Ronald M. Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture and the Rise of Sakya*.
- TRP: *Taking the Result as the Path: Core Teachings of the Sakya Lamdré Tradition*. Translated by Cyrus R. Stearns.
- Z: *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*. Edited and reproduced by Nāwang Gelek Demo. Delhi, 1969.



# THE CRYSTAL MIRROR

AN EXCELLENT EXPLANATION  
SHOWING THE SOURCES AND ASSERTIONS  
OF ALL PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

Thuken Losang Chökyi Nyima





## 1. Preface

### [3] *An Expression of Worship and Promise to Compose*

I prostrate to the mighty Muni,<sup>63</sup> the lord of philosophical systems,  
Who saw everything in the untold billions of philosophical systems,  
Refuted the positions of ill-spoken philosophical systems,  
And gave teachings on the principles of pure philosophical systems.

I prostrate respectfully to the Unconquerable and to Mañjughoṣa,<sup>64</sup>  
Who possessed the entire secret treasury of the Conqueror's speech  
And ordained the banquet of profound and extensive Dharma  
With various emanations in countless fields.

May victory come to the two eyes of the world known as Nāgārjuna  
and Aśaṅga, who,  
Distinguishing well between definitive and provisional scrip-  
tures, illuminated the great chariot-paths of Madhyamaka and  
Cittamātra  
Exactly as prophesied by the Conqueror himself when he said, "There  
will rise a conjunct sun and moon  
Who will open well, respectively, the hundred-petaled lotus and  
night-lily gardens of the two ways."<sup>65</sup>

I bow respectfully to the ornaments that beautify Jambudvīpa:<sup>66</sup>  
Āryadeva, Aśvaghōṣa, Bhāvaviveka, Buddhapālita,  
Candrakīrti, Śāntideva, Vasubandhu, Haribhadra,  
Sthiramati, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Guṇaprabha, and Śākyaprabhā.

I make prostrations as well to the assembly of mighty yogins who,  
Drunk on the beer of bliss and emptiness, join with their great  
secret songs

In the banquet of fortunate supreme adepts  
 In the palace of the supreme vehicle, highest yoga tantra.

I bow down, remembering the kindness of the translators, pandits,  
 and Dharma kings,  
 Who, with the strength of the green horse of their arousal of the  
 awakening mind,  
 Drew the great light of the sun of the holy Dharma to this land,  
 Which, though surrounded by snow mountains, was covered with the  
 darkness of confusion.<sup>67</sup>

I bow to all the supreme beings who, appearing different yet sharing a  
 single nature,  
 Spread in this Land of Snows the ways of many different philosophi-  
 cal systems,  
 Which, though differently elucidated, come down to a single ultimate  
 intention,  
 Like rivers and streams descending separately but mingling in a single  
 ocean. [4]

I bow from my heart to the great lord Dīpaṃkara, who lovingly and  
 unstintingly bestowed on his Tibetan disciples  
 The mighty king of teachings on the awakening mind, brought from  
 Suvarṇadvīpa after many hardships.  
 And I bow as well to the second conqueror and his spiritual sons;<sup>68</sup> he  
 took as his own the complete teaching of the Muni, and through  
 his excellent explanations  
 And the marvel of a life lived purely, he opened the way of the  
 Gandenpa,<sup>69</sup> the greatest way of all.

I prostrate to the upholders of the Ganden teaching,  
 Who set atop the victory banner of explanation and practice  
 The wish-granting jewel of the unstained tradition of the protector<sup>70</sup>  
 And sent down the inexhaustible rain of all that is virtuous, good,<sup>71</sup>  
 and desirable.

I exalt at my crown Amitābha and Lokeśvara,  
 The mighty conquerors, father and son,<sup>72</sup>

Who, performing in saffron robes, cause the unremitting increase  
Of the highest essence of the teaching of the Muni until samsara ends.

Until enlightenment, may there remain at the center of my heart the  
incomparably kind three-aspected gurus,<sup>73</sup>

Who, empowered by love for beings as if they were their own chil-  
dren, open the door to the inexhaustible Dharma treasury of the  
secret mind,

The mentors who freely bestow the essence of the wealth of excellent  
explanation, and in particular

The actualization of all buddhas, Rölpai Dorjé, and those named  
Maitripāda and Ratna.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, with words of praise

And with flowers held in the folded hands of faith,

I have worshipped the great lord of the teaching,

The Muni, along with his spiritual sons and their students.

Many, under the sway of anger, have deprecated

The Dharmas and persons of other systems

Without even knowing how to properly distinguish among

The various philosophical systems in this land.

Many, under the sway of the four negative tendencies,

Failing to ascertain any reason

For the special distinctiveness of their own philosophical system,

And driven only by confusion and desire, still hold their system as  
supreme.

In order to set them in conscientiousness,

I will briefly discuss here

The sources and standpoints of the philosophical systems

That arose in the Holy Land<sup>75</sup> of India and in Tibet and China.

If any there are with honest eyes,

Free of the cataracts of partiality,

They should view the many wondrous forms that appear

In this white crystal mirror of excellent explanation. [5]

*A General Explanation of the Project*

Now, countless are the ways in which logicians have conceived and established philosophical systems amid the world systems as measureless as space, and likewise the very pure philosophical systems that arose from the awakening mind and deeds of the Muni, the Buddha, the Blessed One<sup>76</sup> are beyond number, so who could discuss the countless ways in which they arose? Here, I will discuss just briefly how different philosophical systems arose in particular lands in Jambudvīpa and the unique standpoints of each system.

This text, then, is fivefold: I. The history of philosophical systems in the Holy Land of India; II. Their history in Tibet, the Land of Snows; III. Their history in the land of Great China; IV. Their history in some other places; and V. The conclusion, which explains the outcome. Part I is twofold: A. The history of the non-Buddhist extremists and B. The history of the Buddhists.<sup>77</sup> Section A is threefold: 1. The story of how the extremists arose; 2. A brief explanation of their standpoints; and 3. The purpose of explaining those.



## 2. Indian Schools<sup>78</sup>

### *I. The History of Philosophical Systems in the Holy Land of India<sup>79</sup>*

#### *A. The history of the non-Buddhist extremists<sup>80</sup>*

##### *1. The story of how the extremists arose*

FOR A LONG TIME after this world had come into being, humans here in Jambudvīpa enjoyed uncultivated crops, but then lazy people began hoarding food, so farming became necessary. Then greedy people took what had not been given to them, and because of the discord that resulted, it became necessary to appoint a leader who could pass judgment. The first [6] leader was called King Saṃmāta (“Honored by Many”).<sup>81</sup>

Seeing the king punish some evildoers at that time saddened certain beings, who then went to solitary places in the forest and remained there; thus arose the brahmins. Some of these hermits reduced their desires and achieved satisfaction; sitting alone, they isolated mind and body and so attained tranquil abiding. When they then gained supernormal and magical powers, they were called “seers.”<sup>82</sup> Of those, many who had attained supernormal powers and trained in logic analyzed their own minds, set forth a path for attaining liberation and higher rebirth, and wrote texts that laid out the logical reasons proving that path. It was through this that the philosophical systems of the extremists spread.

The first to arise was the Sāṃkhya. During the period of measureless lifespans there lived a seer called Kapila (“Yellow-White”), who had long yellow-white hair and possessed the five supernormal powers. Relying on his innate wisdom, he composed many texts. His followers were known as Sāṃkhyas (“Enumerators”) or Kāpilyas. When the human lifespan was twenty thousand years, there lived a seer named Vyāsa (“Spreader”).<sup>83</sup> His followers were called Vaiyasins or Nirgranthas (“Naked Ones”). There was also a seer named Lokākṣī (“Eyes of the World”) who was quite skilled in logic. He fornicated with his own daughter, denied past and future lives, and composed manifold texts ascribing no benefits to virtue or disadvantages to

vice. His followers, the Lokāyatas, were the worst of the extremists. Then came the seer called Handsome One. Mahādeva had made him the protector of his consort, Umā, and Umā lusted after the seer Handsome One. Sitting before him, she displayed many alluring manifestations, but the seer lowered his eyes to his feet. Because he guarded his own austerity, Mahādeva was pleased and permitted him to compose texts. The seer was known as Akṣapāda (“Eyes to Feet”), and his followers were known as Akṣapādins or Naiyāyikas (“Those with Knowledge”). The followers of two later seers, Ulūka (“The Owl One”), who mistook an owl for a god and took pride in attaining knowledge of the six categories, and Kaṇāda (“Grain Eater”), who undertook the austerity of eating the grains [7] thrown out by others,<sup>84</sup> were called Vaiśeṣikas (“Differentiators”).

## 2. *A brief explanation of the standpoints of the extremists*<sup>85</sup>

It is explained in the sutras that there are ninety-six strange views, fourteen indeterminate views, sixty-two debased<sup>86</sup> views, twenty-eight unholy views, twenty debased views, and so forth.<sup>87</sup> There are explanations in Bhāvaviveka’s *Blaze of Logic* how there are one hundred and ten categories of views, and in his *Precious Lamp of Madhyamaka* how there are three hundred categories of views.<sup>88</sup> However, as the mighty Lord of Knowledge says, “wrong paths are limitless,”<sup>89</sup> so it is difficult to determine all the debased views of those lacking the intelligence to distinguish the path from the nonpath and say: “This one is and this one isn’t.” Thus the number of philosophical systems with debased views is not held to be definite. I will just explain in brief the standpoints of some of the more famous ones. I divide the views of the philosophical systems of non-Buddhists into two: proponents of eternalism (Śāsvatavādins) and proponents of nihilism (Uccedavādins). It is said that the proponents of nihilism are the Lokāyatas, while the proponents of eternalism are eight: Sāṃkhyas, Brahmavādins, Vaiṣṇavas, Mimāṃsakas, Śaivas, Vaiśeṣikas, Naiyāyikas, and Nirgranthas.<sup>90</sup>

### a. *Lokāyatas*

The Lokāyatas are twofold: contemplatives and logicians. Each of those is twofold: proponents of a nihilism in which past and future lives are asserted but cause and effect are not asserted, and proponents of a nihilism that absolutely denies past and future lives and cause and effect.

The way the logicians misstate things: They assert that even with effort no one is able to see the force that causes the sun to rise, the downward flow of water, the roundness of peas, the sharpness of thorns, or the multi-colored splendor of the peacock, so these things must arise from their own self-nature; since they say that such things have no causes, they completely deny cause and effect. Furthermore, they illustrate the mind's dependence on the body through three similes: it has the same nature as the body, as in the example of liquor and its capacity to intoxicate; it is an effect of the body, as in the example of a butter lamp and its light; and it is a quality of the body, as in the example of a wall [8] and the mural on it. Therefore, just as an accidental lamp produces light accidentally, likewise, the accidental body produces the mind accidentally;<sup>91</sup> thus, there is no coming into this life from a past life. At the time of death, the body dissolves into the four great elements, and the sense faculties dissolve into space; they are destroyed. Since body and mind are one substance, when the body is destroyed the mind is also destroyed, just as when the wall is destroyed its mural is also destroyed, and there is no transition from this life to a future life. Thus they deny both past and future lives, and so also completely deny liberation. Since there is no habituation to the path over many lives, there is no omniscience, and since there is no cause of suffering and other ills, there is neither a path that brings freedom from that suffering nor any freedom.

The contemplatives<sup>92</sup> say that when you attain the mental absorptions and formless realms, and so forth, you have the perception of yourself as an arhat; but at the time of death, when your concentration degenerates, you foresee rebirth in a lower realm, and because of that, there is no arhatship in the world. Some, having investigated with their clairvoyance and seen someone who had performed charity in this life becoming poor in a future life, say there is no cause and effect and completely deny that which is not seen by their own supernormal powers. Maintaining that perception is the only type of valid cognition—and not asserting generally characterized phenomena, inference, and so forth—this school completely denies past and future lives, cause and effect, liberation, and omniscience. Therefore, among non-Buddhists, they are the worst.

### *b. Sāṃkhyas*

The Sāṃkhyas, or Kāpīliyas, say that effects exist at the time of the cause and then become manifest through conditions. They also are twofold:

the atheistic Sāṃkhyas assert that cause and effect arise only from the principal,<sup>93</sup> while the theistic Sāṃkhyas assert that even though causes and effects have the same nature, they transform into different manifestations through empowerment by the great god, Īśvara.

Sāṃkhyas assert definitively that all objects of knowledge are enumerated into twenty-five: (1) the principal, (2) the great, (3) the I-principle, (4–8) the five sense objects,<sup>94</sup> (9–13) the five elements, (14–24) the eleven sense faculties, and (25) the person, which is self, consciousness, and the knower. Of those, the person [9] is asserted as conscious, while the remaining twenty-four—as aggregate composites—are insentient matter. *Fundamental nature, the general, and the principal* are asserted to be synonymous; they refer to an object of knowledge possessing six attributes.<sup>95</sup> *Person, self, consciousness, and the knower* are synonyms. *Intellect* and *the great* are counted as a single term, which is asserted as something like the two-sided mirror on which appear reflections both of objects from the outside and of the person from the inside. Sāṃkhyas say that the intellect is necessarily material, while consciousness must be the self.

The way they assert bondage and freedom: Whenever the person generates the desire to enjoy an object, the fundamental nature emanates manifestations such as sound and so forth. Accordingly, from the principal comes the intellect, and from that arise the three I-principles. The *darkness-possessing I-principle* urges forth the other two I-principles. From the *manifesting I-principle* arise the five sense objects, namely, forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles; and from the *essential-powered I-principle* arise the eleven sense faculties, namely, the five faculties of intellect, the five faculties of the body, and the faculty of mind. In addition, they assert that the fundamental nature, which is like a blind person with legs, and the person, which is like a cripple with eyes, are conflated; and we circle in samsara because we do not understand how manifestations are emanated by the fundamental nature. When, by listening to the instruction directly imparted by a guru, we gain the distinctive ascertainment that “these manifestations are mere emanations of the fundamental nature,” at that time we gradually become free from attachment to that object, and through the mental absorptions, we generate the supernormal power of the divine eye. When we regard the principal with that power, the principal is like another’s wife, who blushes with shame upon being seen; the manifestations are gathered in, and the fundamental nature abides alone. Then, on the surface of the yogin’s intellect, all conventional appearances are turned away, and we abide without using objects and without activity: then, they assert, we have attained liberation.

### c. *Brahmavādins*

The Brahmavādins say that their teacher is Brahmā. They are subdivided into Vaiyākaraṇikas (“Grammarians”), Vedāntins, and Guhyavādins (“Esoterists”). They assert that all the world’s environs and inhabitants are created [10] by Brahmā and that the only source of valid cognition is the Vedas. They also state that, since the words of the Vedas are sounds not produced by a person, the Vedas show only true objects. They assert that the method for achieving higher rebirths and the state of Brahmā is the horse sacrifice explained in the Vedic texts.

The Vaiyākaraṇikas state that Brahmā, in the form of the syllable *om*, is the basis for the arising of the world’s various environs and inhabitants and is their self-nature. Since it is without birth or death, it is permanent, spatially and temporally partless, truly pervades inner and outer objects, and is of a single nature, abiding absolutely. They state that subjects and objects appear as dual to those who are polluted by ignorance. The standpoint of the Tibetan Jonangpas appears to be close to this. Vaiyākaraṇikas assert that the path effecting the attainment of liberation is, externally, making the fire offering of animal sacrifice, and internally, making the fire offering of dripping the male semen element into the hearth of the woman’s vagina; liberation is asserted as the clear emptiness and the bliss that then occur.<sup>96</sup>

The Vedāntins, or Highest Brahmans, assert an entity called the *person*. This is the “person” explained in the Vedas, which are the source of valid cognition; it is single; it is permanent because it is never destroyed; it is pure because it transcends suffering;<sup>97</sup> it pervades all the manifold beings; it is undying because it has no beginning or end; it has the color of the sun; it has transcended the circle of darkness; it has become the great; and it is other than sleep.<sup>98</sup> That person is the self-nature of the gods and also the nature of Maheśvara. From that person alone are produced all the three worlds, happiness and suffering, and bondage and freedom. However, the nature of the person itself is unchanging and inexhaustible. When, based on the mental absorptions, we view the person with the divine eye and see that person as golden colored, then, having equalized virtue and vice, samsara and nirvana, we become free.

The Guhyavādins are mostly like the Vedāntins; based on the Vedas, they assert a self that is conscious, knowing, permanent, partless, and single.<sup>99</sup>

*d. Vaiṣṇavas*

The Vaiṣṇavas take Viṣṇu as their teacher and say that Viṣṇu has two natures, tranquil and active. Of these, the tranquil nature has: the nature of divine substance, a self-nature that neither exists nor does not exist, and a nature that is immortal; by meditating on that you attain liberation. The active nature they explain as the ten avatars of Viṣṇu—[11] the fish and the others. They maintain that the self is permanent and partless, and explain that there is an end to samsara and that the path to freedom is meditation on the syllable *om*, the vase-breath meditation,<sup>100</sup> and so forth. This system also asserts that samsara has an end; Vedāntins and a multitude of others are explained to be followers of this system.<sup>101</sup>

*e. Mīmāṃsakas*

The Mīmāṃsakas are followers of Jaiminī, so they are also called Jaiminīyas. They assert that (1) the self is the nature of intellect, is sentient, and is immaterial; (2) that the intrinsic nature of consciousness and the knower is a permanent nature; (3) that self is a discrete substantial existent; and (4) that it is partless. Their viewpoint on the Vedas as a source of valid cognition is like that of the previous schools. They assert that there is attainment of higher rebirths, like the level of Brahmā, solely by sacrificial offerings and other practices. They say that because that liberation is freedom from lower realms, it is a limited liberation; there is no liberation that is the complete pacification of suffering. Also, because of the stains abiding in the intrinsic nature of mind, there can be no omniscience. And, because objects of knowledge are countless, there is no true speech.<sup>102</sup>

Most Mīmāṃsakas assert six sources of valid cognition, while the Cāraḱīya Jaiminīyas assert eleven sources of valid cognition and also teach a division into forty-eight functional forces, which are not set forth here.

*f. Śaivas, Vaiśeṣikas, Naiyāyikas*

The trio of the Aiśvaras—or Śaivas—Vaiśeṣikas, and Naiyāyikas take Īsvara as their teacher. Both the Vaiśeṣikas and Naiyāyikas may also include those who have made Brahmā and Viṣṇu their teachers, so members of those two groups may also be designated as Brahmavādins and Vaiṣṇavas.

The Vaiśeṣikas, as previously noted, are followers of a seer who mistook an owl for a god (Ulūka) and a seer who ate grain (Kaṇāda), so they are

also called “Owlers” (Ālūkīyas) and “Grain Eaters” (Kaṇādiyas). Also, the Naiyāyikas are followers of the aforementioned seer Akṣapāda, so they are also called Akṣapādins.

They all assert Īśvara to be omniscient and state that all the world’s environs and inhabitants proceed from Īśvara’s intellect. They say that the path is the blisses arising from the vase-breath meditation, from the bestowal of initiation from the tip of Īśvara’s liṅgam, and from the emission of semen<sup>103</sup> during sex with [12] a woman. They assert that liberation is the gnosis of the bliss of intercourse, which arises from the bliss of emitting semen.

The Vaiśeṣikas and Naiyāyikas: the former say that there are many distinctions of the general and the particular to be made via the six categories, so they are known as “Particularizers” (Vaiśeṣikas); the latter, because they are followers of the knowledge system created by the seer Akṣapāda, are known as “Knowledge Possessors” (Naiyāyikas). The Vaiśeṣikas admit three sources of valid cognition: perception, inference, and scripture; the Naiyāyikas admit those three and also admit comparison as a source of valid cognition, making four. Also, both schools assert three types of inference, three aspects of perfect logical reasons that are the basis of those inferences, and three fallacies that subvert a reason. I will not address here their standpoints on the sixteen or eight categories of logic.<sup>104</sup>

The practices for attaining liberation are ablution, receiving initiation, fasting, celibacy when residing in the guru’s home, dwelling in the forest, sacrificial offering, charity, and so forth. In time, by cultivating a yoga learned through the guru’s instruction, we come to understand that the self is a different entity from the sense faculties, and so forth, and to see the real nature of the self. And, when we fully comprehend the nature of the six categories, then we understand that the self is pervasive in nature but without activity, and we no longer accumulate any wholesome or unwholesome karma. Since no new karma is accumulated, when the old karma is exhausted, the body that has already been taken—the faculties, the intellect, pleasures, pains, attachments, hatreds, and so forth—separates from the self; and since a new body and faculties are not taken, the continuum of rebirths is severed, as with a fire that has exhausted its firewood. When the self abides alone, that is liberation. So say the Naiyāyikas and Vaiśeṣikas.

### *g. Nirgranthas*

The Nirgranthas are followers of the holy Jina and others,<sup>105</sup> so they are known as Jainas. They classify all objects of knowledge into nine categories;

they say that trees and such possess mind; and they assert logical reasons proving that our teacher, the Buddha, is not omniscient. With regard to liberation, they state that based on austerities such as nakedness, silence, exposure to the five fires,<sup>106</sup> and so forth, we exhaust all previously created karma, and by not accumulating any new karma, we go to a place located above the whole world, the so-called *composite world*. This world is shaped like an open upside-down umbrella, white like yogurt or [13] a water lily, and measures 4.5 million leagues<sup>107</sup> across. Because it contains souls, that realm is material; because it is free from samsara, it also is nonmaterial. That abode is called *liberation*. So say the Nirgranthas.

### *h. Summary*

The logical reasons that negate those extremist standpoints are taught extensively in Candrakīrti's *Entering the Middle Way*, the root text and commentary of Bhāvaviveka's *Heart of Madhyamaka* and *Blaze of Logic*, Dharmakīrti's *Thorough Exposition of Valid Cognition* and *Ascertainment of Valid Cognition*, and other texts. Among the extremist philosophical systems, the standpoints of three schools, the Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, and Naiyāyika, are a little more developed, so many more logical reasons negating them are taught in Dharmakīrti's seven treatises on valid cognition<sup>108</sup> and other texts. Were I to lay out those negations here, I'm afraid it would be too much, so I have not written about them.

### *3. The purpose of explaining the extremists' views*

If you understand these other schools' ways of propounding eternalism and nihilism well, along with the logical reasons negating them that occur frequently in the texts of the great charioteers,<sup>109</sup> you will, induced by the path of reasoning, gain an irreversible faith in the faultless teaching and teacher of our own Geluk system. Thus, as Udbhaṭasiddhasvāmin's *Special Praise of the Holy* says,

However much I contemplate the aspects  
Of the textual systems of the extremists,  
By that much more, O Protector,  
My mind becomes faithful to you.<sup>110</sup>

Moreover, misconceptions will be stopped—holding that suffering is without cause and that it arises from inappropriate causes, maintaining as the path what is not the path, holding as liberation what is not liberation, and so forth. The seeds of those imprints established in past lives through studying the major texts of debased philosophical systems such as the Lokāyata and others are thereby decreased; and in subsequent lives you will turn away from all wrong views, and the imprints allowing the correct view to arise quickly in your mental continuum will be established. Not only that, since among the various philosophical systems that spread in Tibet, the standpoints of some appear to be similar to those of the extremist systems, it is most necessary that, understanding well the distinctions [14] among them, you arouse such a strong conviction in Buddhist teachings that your own view cannot stray toward some other view, and so forth. Thus, those who desire liberation should not think, “these studies are for countering objections in a debate but are not useful for practice.” Instead they should assiduously study and reflect upon the texts of those great charioteers and the excellent explanations of the father, Jé Lama Tsongkhapa, and his spiritual sons. It is crucial that you understand this.

I say:

For anyone here with intelligence,  
The principal thing to do in mind and body  
Is to find a way to free yourself from samsaric existence;  
Otherwise, how are you different from an animal?

Many in this world claim to be teachers,  
And though many say they’ve presented bondage and freedom,  
All they’ve done is show, as the path to peace,  
A method that strengthens the root of cyclic existence.

Whose teaching, for those desiring liberation,  
Is the supreme and nondeceptive entryway?  
Only the Sugata’s teaching,  
So the Buddha alone is an authority.<sup>111</sup>

If you don’t understand even partially the standpoints of other schools,  
Then no matter how much you say your own teacher and teaching

Are faultless, your words are like a parrot's:  
Mere words, incapable of inducing certainty.

Therefore, understanding well the presentations of non-Buddhist  
systems—  
Perilous footholds on the edge of debased extremist views—  
And then rejecting them is the stairway for entry  
Into the citadel of liberation. So say the wise.

This has been a brief interlude in verse.

### *B. The history of the Buddhists*<sup>112</sup>

The history of the Buddhists is twofold: 1. The history of proponents of the four philosophical systems; and 2. A brief explanation of the points of view of those philosophical systems.

#### *1. The history of proponents of the four philosophical systems*<sup>113</sup>

According to the Mahayana, a thousand buddhas will appear in this eon; according to the Hinayana, there will be [15] five hundred. When the lifespan of the humans of Jambudvīpa degenerated from a measureless lifespan and reached forty thousand years, the Buddha Krakucchanda came. When the lifespan was at thirty thousand years, the Buddha Kanakamuni came; at twenty thousand years, the Buddha Kāśyapa came; and when the lifespan was at a hundred years, and the five impurities were on the rise, our teacher Śākyamuni came to the world and turned the wheel of Dharma in three stages. Following the first pronouncement, the Dharma wheel of the four noble truths, there arose the two śrāvaka schools, propounding Hinayana philosophy; and following the middle and last turning arose Madhyamaka and Cittamātra, the two schools propounding Mahayana philosophy.<sup>114</sup>

#### *a. The history of the śrāvaka philosophical systems*<sup>115</sup>

##### *1) Vaibhāṣika*

Of the two śrāvaka schools, the Vaibhāṣikas are known as Vaibhāṣikas (“Detailers”) because they follow the text called *Ocean of Detailed Explana-*

tion or *Great Detailed Explanation (Mahāvibhāṣā)* and because they argue in detail that the three times are substantially existent. They are divided into four basic schools and eighteen sects.

The four basic schools are: (1) the lineage<sup>116</sup> from the preceptor-arhat Kāśyapa, the Mahāsāṃghika school; (2) the lineage from Rāhula, the Sarvāstivāda; (3) the lineage from Kātyāyana, the Sthavira school; and (4) the lineage from Upāli, the Saṃmatīya school.<sup>117</sup>

The eighteen sects: There are five Mahāsāṃghika sects. Master Vinītadeva (eighth century) says:

The Pūrvaśaila, Aparāśaila, and Haimavata;  
The Lokottaravāda  
And Prajñaptivāda: these schools  
Are the five Mahāsāṃghika factions.<sup>118</sup>

There are seven Sarvāstivādin sects. Vinītadeva says:

The Mūlasarvāstivāda and the Kāśyapīya school,  
The Mahīśāsaka school and the Dharmaguptaka school,  
The Bahuśrutiya and Tāmraśāṭīya, along with their disciples,  
And the Vibhajjavāda: these schools  
Are the Sarvāstivāda.<sup>119</sup>

There are three Sthavira sects. Vinītadeva says:

The Jaitavaniya, the Abhayagirivāsīya,  
And the Mahāvihāravāsīya: these are the Sthavira.<sup>120</sup>

There are three Saṃmatīya<sup>121</sup> sects. Vinītadeva says:

The Kurukullaka, the Avantaka,  
And the Vātsīputriya: these are the schools  
Of the Saṃmatīya.<sup>122</sup>

Those eighteen sects also were delineated according to the master of whom there were followers, the country of residence, or the standpoint of the philosophical system. Vinītadeva says:

By distinctions of region, topic, and master,  
There are eighteen different [16] schools.<sup>123</sup>

That is another, different explanation of the way the schools split into eighteen.<sup>124</sup>

One hundred and sixteen years after the Teacher's nirvana, in the city called Vaiśālī, four elders of the sangha recited the scriptures in four different languages; because of that, the students fell into disagreement and split into the four basic schools. Through divisions in those, there came to be eighteen sects, which quarreled among themselves. In time, they obtained the *Sutra on the Prophetic Dream of King Krikri*. When they looked into it, they saw its statement that although there would be eighteen sects, the fruit of freedom would not decay, so they came to mutual agreement. This is still another way of explaining the division.

Masters who were well-known proponents of Vaibhāṣika were: Vasumitra, Dharmatrāta, Buddhadeva, Saṅghabhadra,<sup>125</sup> and others.

## 2) *Sautrāntika*

The Sautrāntikas ("Sutra Followers") or Dārṣṭāntikas ("Exemplifiers") posit their philosophical system by following the sutras and teaching about all dharmas by means of examples: thus are they known by the wise.<sup>126</sup> Their divisions are two: the followers of scripture, who propound their philosophical system only through accepting literally whatever appears in the sutras; and the followers of reasoning, who follow reasoning as explained in Dharmakīrti's seven treatises. Their renowned masters included Kumārarata, Śrīrāta, Bhadantarata,<sup>127</sup> and others.

### *b. The history of the Mahayana philosophical systems*<sup>128</sup>

After the Teacher's nirvana, the Mahayana teaching was widespread in the regions of the gods and nāgas;<sup>129</sup> it is said to have existed in other worlds as well. Here in Jambudvīpa, many bodhisattvas were abiding on the various bodhisattva stages, and secret mantra yogins were maintaining secret austerities. They themselves practiced, and they explained the practices to a few fortunate people, so the Mahayana teaching was maintained and expanded a little, but overall, because the śrāvaka schools were [17] so widespread, the Mahayana teaching was in decline; in this way a long time passed. By the

time the great brahman Saraha<sup>130</sup> came, the Mahayana secret mantra teachings were the main ones propagated. Then, as prophesied by the Conqueror himself, there came the pair of the second Buddha, Nāgārjuna, along with Asaṅga.<sup>131</sup> Based on the words of the Blessed One himself,<sup>132</sup> they divided the scriptures into definitive and provisional. Since, like the sun, they clearly illuminated the complete way of practicing the profound and extensive paths of the Mahayana,<sup>133</sup> they were known as the two great charioteers. From that point on, the teaching of the Mahayana became widespread and extensive.

### 1) *The history of the Madhyamaka philosophical system*<sup>134</sup>

#### a) *Nāgārjuna*

The protector Nāgārjuna (ca. 150 A.D.)<sup>135</sup> is also the charioteer who opened the way of the Mahayana in general. According to the *Descent to Lañka Sutra*:

In the southern region of Vedālī<sup>136</sup>  
 Will arise an illustrious and famous monk  
 By the name of Nāga  
 Who will destroy the positions of existence and nonexistence.  
 Having clearly explained my vehicle  
 In this world, the unsurpassed vehicle,  
 He will achieve the stage of the Joyous<sup>137</sup>  
 And will go at death to Sukhāvātī.<sup>138</sup>

In addition, Nāgārjuna was clearly prophesied by the Conqueror in many other texts, such as the *Mañjuśrī Root Tantra*,<sup>139</sup> the *Great Drum Sutra*,<sup>140</sup> and others.

Nāgārjuna was born into a brahman family four hundred years after the Buddha's nirvana, in Vidarbha,<sup>141</sup> in the south. The great brahman Saraha took care of him, ordained him, and prolonged his life—which was not to have exceeded seven days—and then bestowed upon him many instructions on secret mantra. He was fully ordained by Rāhula, the abbot of Nālandā,<sup>142</sup> and was known as Bhikṣu Śrīmata. He was put in charge of provisions for the Nālandā sangha; he provided food for the monks by practicing alchemy. After a śrāvaka partisan named Bhikṣu Ānandakāra wrote a 1,200,000-verse text called the *Ornament of Reasoning*,<sup>143</sup> Nāgārjuna thrice uttered the great Dharma proclamation, annihilating the refutations of the Mahayana made

by this master. Arriving in the nāga realm, he taught the Dharma to many nāgas, and he brought back to the human world much nāga mud<sup>144</sup> as well as the *Perfection of Wisdom in a Hundred Thousand Verses* and other sutras that had disappeared from Jambudvīpa; it is for this reason he is known as Nāgārjuna.<sup>145</sup>

Nāgārjuna worked for the benefit of beings in many places, such as Puṇḍaravardhana, Śaṭāveṣa,<sup>146</sup> and others. He went to the northern continent of Uttarakuru and other places, performing countless deeds for the benefit of sentient beings through his magical powers, teaching Dharma, and so forth. [18] He erected many stupas and temples. In Bodhgayā he enclosed the Buddha's enlightenment spot with a stone-lattice fence, and he designed and built the stupa of Śrī Dhānyakaṭaka.<sup>147</sup> Doing this and other deeds, he left his legacy and brought limitless benefit to the teaching.

In particular, he established the path of the ultimate definitive meaning, that of the profound Madhyamaka, by means of scripture in the *Compendium of Sutras* and by means of reasoning in the six collections of reasoning, such as the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*.<sup>148</sup> Moreover, he wrote collections of praises, such as the *Praise of the Dharmadhātu* and others; texts concerned with secret mantra, such as the *Five Stages*<sup>149</sup> and the *Commentary on the Awakening Mind*; and many sutra and tantra commentaries. And, with logical reasoning, he annihilated the proponents of debased views. He revived from the ground up the teaching of the Mahayana, which had disappeared, and with a kindness like that of the Conqueror himself, spread the Conqueror's teaching throughout the land.

Nāgārjuna stayed in the human realm for six hundred years. At the end of this period, the son of King Sātavāhana, named Śaktimāna, begged for Nāgārjuna's head, and Nāgārjuna offered it, but the boy could not cut it off with a sword. Nāgārjuna told the boy that, since he himself had a karmic seed from killing an insect with a blade of kuśa grass, his head could be severed with kuśa grass; thus, the boy severed Nāgārjuna's head. He left carrying the head, but a yakṣī stole it and threw it one league away. Neither Nāgārjuna's head nor his body have decomposed, and it is related that, after coming closer every year, they will reunite, and Nāgārjuna will again work for the benefit of the teaching and of beings.

The *Great Drum Sutra* explains that this master is on the seventh bodhi-sattva stage;<sup>150</sup> the *Bright Lamp* of Candrakīrti explains that he attained the supreme yogic achievement in this life.<sup>151</sup> Numerous incomparable sages became his disciples, such as Āryadeva, Aśvagoṣa, Bhāvaviveka,

Buddhapālita, and Candrakīrti.<sup>152</sup> Because he reopened the chariot-path of Madhyamaka by way of the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way* (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*) the followers of Nāgārjuna were called Mādhyamikas and Niḥsvabhāvavādins (“Proponents of Essencelessness”).

### b) *Madhyamaka after Nāgārjuna*

Āryadeva (second–third century) was taken by Nāgārjuna’s other students to be as authoritative as the master himself. He wrote the *Four Hundred Stanzas*, on the practice of yoga.<sup>153</sup> Although the ultimate meaning of these two, father and son, resides in the Prāsaṅgika system, on the surface their texts do not clearly establish [19] their presentation as uniquely Prāsaṅgika. Rather they dwell more generally on positions common to both Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika, and so their texts are said to belong to “general Madhyamaka.”

Master Buddhapālita (470–540?), in his commentary on Nāgārjuna’s *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*, set forth multiple consequential arguments (*prasaṅga*) as the meaning of the logical reasons presented in the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*; he did not explain those reasons with independent (*svatantra*) syllogisms. In his *Lamp of Wisdom*, however, master Bhāvaviveka (500–570?) noted many faults in Buddhapālita’s logic, and giving various reasons why it is necessary to set forth independent syllogisms, he founded the Svātantrika. Later, master Candrakīrti (600–650?) wrote a treatise, *Entering the Middle Way*, and a commentary on the *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*, the *Clear Words*.<sup>154</sup> Showing in various ways that the faults attributed to Buddhapālita did not apply, criticizing the admission of independent syllogisms, and proving that independent syllogisms should not be admitted, he made it clear that the intention of Ārya Nāgārjuna was Prāsaṅgika. There are two positions on the identity of the founder of the Prāsaṅgika: some claim it was Buddhapālita and some claim it was Candrakīrti.<sup>155</sup>

Commentators who explain the intention of Ārya Nāgārjuna as solely either Prāsaṅgika or Svātantrika became known as “one-sided Mādhyamikas.” Master Śāntarakṣita (705–62) wrote the *Ornament of Madhyamaka*, master Jñānagarbha (eighth century) wrote *Distinguishing the Two Truths*,<sup>156</sup> and Kamalaśīla (740–95?) wrote the *Light of Madhyamaka*. These three texts are known as the eastern trio of the Svātantrika Madhyamaka. If one divides the Svātantrikas, there are the Yogācāra Svātantrika Mādhyamikas, who maintain a basic presentation in agreement with that of Cittamātra; and the Sautrāntrika Svātantrika Mādhyamikas, who, like the Sautrāntrikas, admit

external objects that are composites of the minutest particles; these are the two types of Svātantrika Mādhyamikas. The Yogācāra Svātantrikas also are twofold: Mādhyamikas who reject appearances (false aspectarians) and those who accept appearances (true aspectarians).<sup>157</sup> Masters such as Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, and Ārya Vimuktisena accept appearances; Haribhadra, Jetāri, and Kambala<sup>158</sup> reject appearances. The false aspectarians also are twofold: tainted and untainted.<sup>159</sup>

The meaning of *Mādhyamikas* or *Niḥsvabhāvavādins*: Mādhyamikas (“Middleists”) are so called because they admit a middle that is free from the two extremes; they are called Niḥsvabhāvavādins (“Proponents of Essencelessness”) because they propound the idea that dharmas [20] have no truly established essence.

And, as for the meaning of *Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas* and *Svātantrika Mādhyamikas*: Svātantrikas are denoted as Svātantrikas (“Independents”) because they negate true existence based on correct, three-pronged logical reasons that are established independently; Prāsaṅgikas are denoted as Prāsaṅgikas (“Consequentialists”) because they assert that the inferential knowledge in the mind of an opponent that realizes a thesis arises merely through a logical consequence.<sup>160</sup>

## 2) *The history of the Cittamātra philosophical system*<sup>161</sup>

### a) *Asaṅga*

As for the history of the Cittamātrin philosophical system: Ārya Asaṅga (fourth/fifth century) founded this system. In the *Mañjuśrī Root Tantra*, the Buddha says of this very master:

Nine hundred years  
After my final nirvana,  
A monk named Asaṅga,  
Expert in the meanings of treatises,  
Will clearly distinguish in many ways  
The definitive sutras from the provisional.<sup>162</sup>

And:

In order for the teaching to long remain,  
Asaṅga will summarize the actual meaning of the sutras;  
He will live one hundred and fifty years.<sup>163</sup>

In these and other statements, Asaṅga was clearly prophesied; it is variously asserted that he came nine hundred years after the Teacher had passed or six hundred years after. In any case, after the enemies of abhidharma had thrice emerged in India, the teaching declined.<sup>164</sup> Unable to endure this, a brahman woman named Prakāśaśīlā thought: “I will bear sons, and they will cause the teaching to be spread.” From her union with a kṣatriya came Asaṅga; from her union with a brahman came Vasubandhu. After their birth, their mother had an intelligence-sharpening ritual performed for the two, and when they were older, the two boys asked what work their fathers did. Their mother said, “I did not bear you for following your father’s profession but for the purpose of spreading the teaching. Therefore, train your minds and spread the teaching.” Thus, the younger, Vasubandhu, went to the Kashmiri master Saṅghabhadra. The elder, Asaṅga, thought, “I will spread the teaching after obtaining a vision of Maitreya.”

Asaṅga went to a cave on Kukkuṭapāda Mountain.<sup>165</sup> After completing three years of retreat, he had not seen even the slightest sign of Maitreya, so he became depressed. He went outside the cave and saw an old man whittling an iron post down to a needle by rubbing it with a cotton pad. He inquired about this, and the old man replied:

A person with mental fortitude,  
Can, with practice, do anything, no matter how hard.  
If you do not abandon earnest efforts,  
Then even mountains can be reduced to dust.<sup>166</sup>

Through [21] this statement, certain conditions were fulfilled, and Asaṅga returned to the cave. When he went out after completing three more years, he saw a rock being eroded by drops of water, so it occurred to him to persevere, and he returned to the cave. When he went out after completing three more years, he saw a rock being worn away by the feather of a bird, and, as before, he was inspired and returned to the cave. He completed three more years of retreat and again was depressed that no sign had arisen. When he went out, he saw a she-dog whose rump was infested with worms and whose torso was chewed up by mange, so great compassion arose in him. Thinking to clear away the worms by cutting flesh from his own body, he took a golden razor and cut some flesh from his body. Worrying that the worms would die if they were removed by hand, he thought, “I will shut my eyes and take them off with my tongue.” At that moment, he saw it was indeed no dog, but

Holy Lord Maitreya, resplendent. Irritated, Asaṅga said, “No matter how much I practiced, not the slightest sign occurred; Holy Lord, you have little kindness.” The Holy Lord said, “I was there from the beginning; you did not see me because of your obstacles. Now, since great compassion has arisen, the obstacles are purified, and you can see me.” Asaṅga then beseeched Maitreya, “Please spread the Mahayana.” Maitreya said, “Grab hold of my robe!” and off they went to Tuṣita heaven. It is said that Asaṅga stayed there one god-realm<sup>167</sup> moment, or fifty-three human years. There, he received from Maitreya the *Mother Sutra*,<sup>168</sup> the five treatises of Maitreya,<sup>169</sup> and other texts, then returned to the human realm. Asaṅga wrote the five treatises on the stages,<sup>170</sup> the two compendiums,<sup>171</sup> and other texts, and founded the way of the Cittamātrins.

It is explained in the *Exposition of Praises of the Stages* that Master Asaṅga attained the concentration of continuous Dharma.<sup>172</sup> It says in the *Clear Words* of Dharmamitra that even though master Asaṅga reached the third stage—the Luminous—he taught Cittamātra in order to convert Vasubandhu.<sup>173</sup> The lord Asvabhāva explains that Asaṅga abides on the stage of the supreme mundane attainment.<sup>174</sup> Some state that he lived a hundred years, but it is certain he remained for a hundred and fifty.

### *b) Cittamātra after Asaṅga*

Initially a Vaibhāṣika, Vasubandhu (fourth/fifth century), Asaṅga’s younger brother, disliked the Mahayana. He made fun of his older brother, saying, for instance:

Alas, for twelve years in the forest  
Asaṅga tried to gain concentration;  
He didn’t gain concentration, but he did write  
An elephant load of works on philosophical systems.<sup>175</sup>

Later, however, after gaining faith in the Mahayana, he received the five treatises of Maitreya and other works from his elder brother. He then wrote the eight [22] dissertations.<sup>176</sup> Thus, the five treatises of Maitreya, the five treatises on the stages, the two compendiums, and the eight dissertations came to be known as the twenty Dharma treatises related to Maitreya.

Vasubandhu had four disciples who were more expert than he: Master Dignāga was more expert in valid cognition; Guṇaprabha was more expert

in vinaya; Ārya Vimuktisena was more expert in the perfection of wisdom; and Sthiramati was more expert in abhidharma.<sup>177</sup>

It is said that those who followed in maintaining the way founded by Asaṅga are called Cittamātrins (“Idealists”)<sup>178</sup> or Vijñaptivādins (“Representationalists”); they are known thus because they propound that all dharmas are merely the self-nature of mind. There are two divisions: those who assert that the appearance of objects to the sense consciousnesses as gross objects is accurate, and those who assert that appearance as gross objects is inaccurate; these are, respectively, the true-aspectarian and the false-aspectarian Cittamātrins. The true aspectarians are threefold: proponents of an equal number of subjects and objects, split-eggs, and nonpluralists. Because the explanations of scholars regarding the particulars of these three are in disagreement, I will not set them forth here.<sup>179</sup> The false aspectarians are twofold: tainted false aspectarians, who assert that the nature of mind is polluted by the taints of the predispositions of ignorance, and nontainted false aspectarians, who assert that the nature of mind is not polluted. Cittamātrins are also twofold in another way: those following scripture, and those following logical reasoning. Respectively, these are those who follow Asaṅga’s five treatises on the stages and those who follow Dharmakīrti’s seven treatises on valid cognition.

### 3) *Summary of Mahayana*

Accordingly, through the Madhyamaka and Cittamātra ways founded by Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, the Mahayana teachings grew and spread like rivers in summertime, and with the successive arrival of countless tens of millions of mighty lords who were scholars and adepts, the Buddha’s teaching was made to shine like the sun.

### 2. *A brief demonstration of the points of view of the four philosophical systems*

Many different standpoints exist regarding the layout of the basis, path, and result of the philosophical systems of Buddhist schools, but I will not elaborate here. For were I to set all those out in detail, this book would be too wordy, and besides, they are already [23] extensively explained in other treatises on philosophical systems. Since the philosophical systems are differentiated by way of view, here I must briefly explain each school’s

standpoint. This is twofold: a. Each system's standpoint on the object of negation, and b. Each system's position on coarse and subtle selflessness.

*a. The standpoint of each of the four philosophical systems regarding the object of negation*

There is no difference in any of our schools regarding the admission of dependent arising. Nevertheless, although proponents of philosophical systems from the Svātantrika Madhyamaka on down do not assert, as non-Buddhists do, a self that is established as a different entity from the physical and mental aggregates, they do posit the aggregates themselves as the self. Among the Vaibhāṣikas, some Saṃmatīyas posit the collection of the aggregates as the self. Both the Kashmiri Vaibhāṣikas and the Sautrāntikas posit the continuity of consciousness as an example of the person. The Cittamātrins posit the mind-basis-of-all (Skt. *ālayavijñāna*) as the person. The Svātantrika Mādhyamikas posit the subtle mental consciousness as the person. The Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas disclaim all those positions. Also, the way in which everyone from Vaibhāṣikas to Svātantrika Mādhyamikas posits a self that is the basis for action and its result is through asserting that the person or other entity is established conventionally from its own side. Not satisfied merely to impute "I" or "person" on the basis of the aggregates, they inquire: "How is the person established?<sup>180</sup> As the individual aggregates? As their collection? As something other than those?" And, thinking that some suitable example of the person should be found in relation to the aggregates, they posit a conventional self. Apprehending thusly is designated as "apprehending that which is established from its own side," and the object of that as "that which is established from its own side." These schools think: "If, after seeking through that mode of inquiry, you find no person, then that person cannot be established, and the flaw ensues that the person is annihilated."

By the same token, you should also know the particulars of the realists<sup>181</sup> claims that what is conventionally established is truly established, [24.] perfectly established, ultimately established, established in reality, established by its own characteristic, inherently established, essentially established, substantially established, and so forth.<sup>182</sup>

### 1) *Vaibhāṣika*

The Vaibhāṣikas hold that, in the final analysis, form, consciousness, and other dharmas are necessarily found. They hold also that, in the final analysis, the minutest partless particles and a continuum's briefest partless moments necessarily exist. Thus Vaibhāṣikas maintain that partless particles are the compositional basis of gross physical forms and partless moments are the components of temporal continuity. Since, even upon being broken or destroyed, the partless particle and moment, space, and so forth, are not lost to the mind that apprehends them, they are substantially existent, ultimately true, and ultimately existent; phenomena that are lost to the mind apprehending them by being broken or destroyed are imputed existents, conventional existents, and conventional truths. The Vaibhāṣikas assert that all entities included in the two truths are able to perform a function, and so are substantially established.

### 2) *Sautrāntika*

The Sautrāntikas assert that dharmas ultimately able to produce a result are specifically characterized, ultimately true, and established by their own characteristics; dharmas ultimately unable to perform a function are generally characterized, not established by their own characteristics, and conventionally true. They also assert that, if both generally and specifically characterized phenomena are not established from their own side, they must be nonexistent. Because they, like the Vaibhāṣikas, admit the minutest partless particles, and so forth, my omniscient guru, Changkya Rölpai Dorjé (1717–86), says in his *Songs on Correct View*, “Matter is a many-colored tiger with stripes.”<sup>183</sup>

### 3) *Cittamātra*

The Cittamātrins assert that dharmas established from their own side, without being merely imputed by thought, are specifically characterized, established by their own characteristics, and truly established; while dharmas established as mere imputations by thought are the reverse. They assert both the dependent nature and the thoroughly established nature as truly established, and the imaginary nature as non-truly established.<sup>184</sup> Therefore, for the Cittamātrins, as for our own Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka system, dharmas pertaining to the imaginary nature are asserted as “not established by

their own characteristics.” However, because they assert that anything not established from its own side must be nonexistent, they do accept the *meaning* of “specifically characterized” according to the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas, even with respect to the imaginary nature. As it says in Tsongkhapa’s *Essence of Excellent Explanation*, “Although they do not hold some imaginary bases to exist according to the former sense, as established by their own characteristics, they do hold them according to the latter sense, as established from their own side.”<sup>185</sup> [25]

Cittamātrins do not, as the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas do, maintain that gross phenomena are composed of partless particles. Rather, they assert that composite dharmas of form and so forth arise from the substance of inner consciousness, and also that noncomposites have the same self-nature as the valid cognitions apprehending them, and so assert that apprehended and apprehender are empty of being substantially different, and that there is no independent external object. Because it is the potential within the preceding consciousness that allows the subsequent consciousness to arise in the aspect of the object, object and subject arise simultaneously as a single substance; that potential is asserted as the objective condition of consciousness. Although the objective condition will induce a consciousness having the aspect of the object, its apprehension by the thought thinking, “It is that object,” depends on applying a sign. Thus Cittamātrins assert that dharmas are not established by their own characteristics as the referent objects of the thoughts that apprehend them. Compared to the objectivists,<sup>186</sup> they are very close to the Madhyamaka system. By establishing the nonexistence of the external object in accord with their own assertions, the Cittamātrins will negate the external objects asserted by the two śrāvaka objectivist schools, but a mere negation of the external objects of the two objectivist schools does not establish those objects as only mental. You must understand these differences among the upper and lower philosophical systems in every context.

#### 4) *Madhyamaka*

##### a) *Svātantrika Madhyamaka*

Although the Svātantrika Mādhyamikas claim dharmas as conventionally established in three ways, namely, established by their own characteristics, inherently established, and essentially established, they do not claim, even conventionally, their establishment in five other ways: truly established, perfectly established, ultimately established, established in reality, established

by their own entity. Schools from the Svātantrika Madhyamaka on down assert that *coarse* apprehension of a self of persons means apprehending a permanent, partless, independent self, like that asserted by non-Buddhists; *subtle* apprehension of a self of persons, on the other hand, means apprehending the person as a self-sufficient, substantially existent entity. The former apprehension is an imputation that only extremists superimpose. The latter apprehension has two types: (1) the *imputed*, wherein one thinks that a self-sufficient, substantially existent entity is entailed by fallacious logical reasons, such as those that lead the Vātsīputrīyas to apprehend a self by virtue of their philosophical system, and (2) the *innate*, which occurs naturally, without relying on philosophical superimposition. Neither the Vaibhāṣikas nor the Sautrāntikas recognize a selflessness more subtle than that which results from negating the object of this innate apprehension.

Thus the person and aggregates appear as self-sufficient entities with dissimilar characteristics, like a king and his subjects. Apprehending them as being established as they appear is the mode of apprehension that apprehends the person as a self-sufficient, substantially existent [26] entity. Having negated the object of that apprehension—that self-sufficient person that is independent of the aggregates—schools from the Svātantrika Madhyamaka on down, with the exception of the Saṃmatīyas, are alike in claiming that the person is a mere imputation based on the aggregates.

The word *mere* in “mere imputation based on the aggregates”: Having negated a self that is a different entity from the aggregates, these schools are in agreement in claiming that the person exists as a mere imputation.

The mode of imputation based on the aggregates: These schools claim variously that the person is imputed on the basis of the mental consciousness, the mind-basis-of-all, or the continuum of consciousness. They also say that the person is imputed on the basis of claiming that the individual aggregates are the self, while some Saṃmatīyas say that all five aggregates are the self. Although schools from the Svātantrikas on down claim that the person is a mere imputation based on the aggregates, they think that if the aggregates are the basis of the imputation of a person, the aggregates necessarily *are* the person; and they believe that the aggregates are imputed as being the person. And, after searching for the object on the basis of which one imputes a person, they believe it is findable; so even though they explain that this means imputed existence, their explanation is clearly incomplete.<sup>187</sup>

*b) Svātantrika vis à vis Prāsaṅgika*

The Prāsaṅgikas say that the basic object of the innate egoistic view is the self that is imputed on the basis of the aggregates; and not only are the aggregates not the self, they claim, not even a single dharma is findable after searching for the imputed object. Schools from the Svātantrikas on down claim that if such a standpoint were true, admission of dependent arising would be undermined; this is a very important point, but I will not elaborate in detail here.

Both Prāsaṅgikas and Svātantrikas agree that the person established is unable to withstand rational analysis, but they disagree both on the boundary between withstanding and not withstanding rational analysis, and on whether, and to what extent, that analysis constitutes ultimate analysis, and so forth. Unsatisfied with the merely imputed conventional I in such sayings as, “*I* accumulate this karma; *I* experience this result,” the Prāsaṅgikas search for the meaning of the imputed conventionality, asking, “Where is it established? In the aggregates individually? In their collection? In something apart from them?” They claim that this constitutes an ultimate analysis and that, after you have searched by that mode of inquiry, if you happen to find the basis of analysis, then it is established as able [27] to withstand rational analysis.

The Svātantrikas claim that that kind of reasoning is a source of conventional valid cognition but is not reasoning analyzing the ultimate, and that even if you find something after searching with that mode of inquiry, it still is not established as able to bear rational analysis. When Svātantrikas search by that mode of inquiry, they find the mental consciousness to be the person, so for them, mental consciousness is posited as the person.

Thus, the Svātantrikas claim that, without dharmas being established “over there” through their appearance to a nondefective mind, when you have analyzed whether or not the object is established from the point of view of its own mode of subsistence, that constitutes an ultimate analysis. If, after searching via that mode of inquiry, you find the basis of analysis, it is established as able to bear rational analysis. The realists do not assert that just that mode of inquiry constitutes an ultimate analysis, or that the object sought is able to withstand rational analysis; they do assert, with respect to searching through logical reasoning, that any dharmas that are found—such as noncomposites, the minutest partless particle, or the shortest partless moment—are established as able to bear rational analysis. Thus, when we analyze a dharma’s own

way of existing in any system of philosophy, it is very important to know the boundary between a conventional and an ultimate analysis.

The Svātantrikas claim that, without dharmas being established “over there” by virtue of their appearance to a nondefective mind, the apprehension of an object as established from its own side is the subtle apprehension of true existence. That is twofold: the thoroughly imputed, such as apprehension through philosophical systems like those of the Cittamātrins; and the innate, which is independent of philosophical systems. Any referent object of both of these is called truly established, perfectly established, ultimately established, and established in reality; any object established as any of those four does not exist even conventionally. They do claim that any object established by its own characteristics, inherently established, and essentially established is established conventionally; they assert that if objects were not established in that way, you would fall into a nihilistic view. I have explained above the differences among the realists on whether to assert those eight terms as validly established.

The Mādhyamikas claim that when we see that dharmas have no mode of subsistence aside from that posited on the basis of their appearance to the mind, that is the negation of the object of negation. The [28] Prāsaṅgika and Svātantrika systems assert in common that the apprehension of true existence is the cognition that apprehends such an object of negation. The logical analyses are condensed into two: the most important reasoning negating that object of negation is the *sevenfold analysis*;<sup>188</sup> abridging that produces the *analysis free of apprehending the one and the many*.<sup>189</sup> The latter mode of analysis is better known. There are no differences between Prāsaṅgikas and Svātantrikas with respect to negating any existent that is not established through analysis in a mind in meditative equipoise. However, with respect to post-meditation,<sup>190</sup> the Svātantrikas assert that dharmas established by their own characteristics are illusion-like, while the Prāsaṅgikas claim that, after negating such qualities as true existence in meditative equipoise, when we later look for anything remaining, we find only a mere name; this is the unique distinction between Svātantrikas and Mādhyamikas.

Accordingly, the schools from the Svātantrikas on down assert that we are freed from samsara through refuting both the innate apprehension of the person as a self-sufficient, substantially existent entity as well as the object of that apprehension.

The Svātantrikas claim that apprehending both dharmas and persons as objects established by their own mode of subsistence, as opposed to their

being established through their appearance to the mind, is the subtle apprehension of a self of dharmas and is the knowledge obstacle. They also claim that we attain omniscience through abandoning the eleven knowledge obstacles—the nine subtle, medium, and coarse obstacles, with the first and last of those nine having two divisions, thus adding two more—through the eleven stages of the path of meditation, from the first bodhisattva stage up to the final continuum.<sup>191</sup>

### *c) Special features of Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*

The view of the object of negation and the way of negation, which are special features of the Prāsaṅgikas: Apprehending an existent that is not merely established through a conventional designation is the subtle apprehension of true existence. Apprehending as existent the referent object of that—the person not propounded by way of designation and convention—is apprehension of a self of persons. Apprehending dharmas as existent is the apprehension of a self of dharmas. It is claimed that both innate apprehensions—of a self of persons and dharmas—are the ignorance that is the root of samsara and are the delusion obstacles. It is said that recognizing these kinds of innate apprehensions depends on ascertaining well how persons and dharmas are posited conventionally, how they are imputed by thought. This is a very important point.

The way this system establishes the person: The person is imputed on the basis of the collected aggregates; [29] the phenomenon imputed by that imputation is the person; and the thought that posits the person is the thought that conventionally thinks “I”: this must be understood definitely to be the case. That mere “I” that is the object of the mind thinking “I” on the basis of the collected aggregates is called “self” or “person”; that exists conventionally and is called “the self that is the basis of action and result.”

The threshold for analyzing the ultimate: Prāsaṅgikas claim that, unsatisfied with merely establishing the I, or self, of our own mental continuum through conventional imputation, we search, asking “How is it established?” This is where the analysis begins. The method of ultimate analysis is observing, for instance, “I sit here. I see. I experience. I remember.” We should be satisfied by these conventional sayings; if, however, we are not satisfied, we analyze and discover that “the I is not my own eyes, ears, and so forth, neither individually nor collectively; nor is the I something other than that. *That* is how I am not existent: I don’t exist inherently.”

Schools from the Svāntrikas on down take the notion of “not inherently existent” to mean entirely nonexistent, and insist that seeing things in that way is nihilistic. For the Prāsaṅgikas, inherent nonexistence does not mean nonexistence. Conventional existence serves the function of existence, and the phrase “dependent arising” removes the two extremes. For while all dharmas are nonexistent inherently, things established by convention are nevertheless admissible.<sup>192</sup> That is the unique feature of this Prāsaṅgika system.

Thus, the two schools, Prāsaṅgika and Svāntrika, have two distinct ways of identifying the object of negation and, because of that, two different demarcations of ultimate analysis. If you do not clearly ascertain this demarcation, you will have difficulty distinguishing the subtle differences between the Prāsaṅgikas and Svāntrikas.

The standpoint on knowledge obstacles: Prāsaṅgikas claim knowledge obstacles are predispositions to delusion that can no longer produce delusions even when conditions are met, as well as the result of those predispositions, namely, the mere illusion of true existence in deceptive dualistic appearances.<sup>193</sup> They claim that one attains the gnosis of complete omniscience through abandoning, on the three pure stages, the three types of knowledge obstacles—subtle, medium, and coarse—or the four types of knowledge obstacles that result when the coarse is made twofold.

Although the assertion in this system—that the apprehension of a self-sufficient substantially existent person [30] is the coarse apprehension of the self of persons—is similar to the standpoint of the Svāntrikas and others, nevertheless that innate apprehension of substantial existence that the Svāntrikas and others assert as subtle apprehension of a self, the Prāsaṅgikas claim as imputed. In the *Essence of Excellent Explanation*, Tsongkhapa states, “That substantially existent self is the object apprehended by non-Buddhists as an existent person, the inner doer imputed as a separate entity from the aggregates.”<sup>194</sup> Thus, in this Prāsaṅgika system, the innate apprehension of substantial existence is not apprehension of the self as having characteristics distinct from those of the aggregates. Rather, just as a head merchant is not separate from other merchants yet controls them, so the self, not separate from the aggregates, controls the aggregates by having the same nature as the aggregates. Even though the aggregates are established as dependent on the self, the self is not dependent on the aggregates, as a head merchant is not dependent on merchants; it is taught that this is posited as an innate apprehension of self.<sup>195</sup>

*b. Each system's way of establishing coarse and subtle selflessness*

*1) Vaibhāṣika*

The Vaibhāṣikas assert that any established base is necessarily a self of phenomena or *dharmas*, so they admit no distinction between the coarse and subtle selflessness of dharmas. They do posit a coarse selflessness of persons—the person's emptiness of being permanent, partless, and independent—and a subtle selflessness of persons—the person's emptiness of being self-sufficient and substantially existent. They equate *subtle selflessness* and *subtle selflessness of persons*.

Among the eighteen schools of the Vaibhāṣikas, the five schools of the Saṃmatīya<sup>196</sup> admit a self that is self-sufficient and substantially existent, so they do not consider emptiness to be the subtle selflessness of persons. The Prāsaṅgikas aside, proponents of the four lower schools—Svātantrikas, Cittamātrins, Sautrāntikas, and Vaibhāṣikas—take similar positions on the coarse and subtle selflessness of persons. In three systems—Prāsaṅgika, Cittamātra, and Sautrāntika—the subtle selflessness of persons is said to be emptiness. It is well known that Vaibhāṣikas deny the establishment of the three characteristics and assert that emptiness is nonexistence. Nevertheless, it says in the eighth chapter of the *Treasury of Higher Knowledge*, “Signlessness has the aspect of peace;/ Emptiness is emptiness and selflessness,”<sup>197</sup> [31] and we may infer from this that Vaibhāṣikas use the term *emptiness* for two aspects of the truth of suffering: emptiness and selflessness.<sup>198</sup>

*2) Sautrāntika*

The Sautrāntikas' standpoint on the coarse and subtle selflessness of persons and their nonadmission of a selflessness of dharmas are like that of the Vaibhāṣikas. Of the three characteristics, they assert that dependent phenomena are truly established, and that the other two, imaginary and thoroughly established phenomena, are not truly established. Objection: “If thoroughly established phenomena—emptinesses—are not truly established, then, since the subtle selflessness of persons is both empty and thoroughly established, the thoroughly established would not be suitable as an appearing object of an uninterrupted path.<sup>199</sup> Thus, a direct object of knowledge of an uninterrupted path cannot be posited.” Response: There is no fault, because in this Sautrāntika system, the subtle selflessness of persons is asserted as an indirect object of knowledge of an uninterrupted path of the three vehicles, while the

construct, which is devoid of a self of persons, is the appearing object and the direct object of knowledge of that uninterrupted path.

According to the Vaibhāṣikas, if you meditate at the conclusion of the fourth mental absorption<sup>200</sup> with a mind based on an object of meditation that is any of the sixteen aspects of the four noble truths—impermanence and so forth—you traverse the last four paths of the pratyekabuddha and bodhisattva;<sup>201</sup> and, by meditating on any of those sixteen objects of meditation—impermanence and so forth—on the basis of any of the nine uncorrupted stages, you necessarily attain the arhatship of a śrāvaka.

In the Sautrāntika system, the last four paths of all three vehicles necessarily arise for the first time solely through taking as your basic object a construct that is devoid of self, or so I think. This should be analyzed further.<sup>202</sup>

The three, Cittamātrins, Svāntrikas, and Prāsaṅgikas, assert that there is no indirect object of knowledge of an uninterrupted path; the Cittamātrins and Prāsaṅgikas claim that the direct object of knowledge of that uninterrupted path must be subtle emptiness, while the Svāntrikas posit it as the coarse and subtle selflessness of dharmas and the subtle selflessness of persons.

### 3) *Cittamātra*

The Cittamātra position on the subtle and coarse selflessness of persons agrees with that of the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika, with a slight difference. The Cittamātrins assert that the subtle selflessness of persons is emptiness; and with respect to the selflessness of dharmas, they posit that the subtle selflessness of dharmas is any dharma's (1) emptiness of being established by its own characteristic as the referent object of the thought apprehending it and (2) emptiness of subject-object duality and emptiness of being an external object. They also posit that [32] the coarse selflessness of dharmas is a dharma's emptiness of being an external object that is a collection of the minutest partless particles, while both subtle selflessnesses are posited as emptiness.

### 4) *Svāntrika Madhyamaka*

The Yogācāra Svāntrika Madhyamaka standpoint on the coarse and subtle selflessness of persons is also similar to that of the Vaibhāṣikas. With respect to the selflessness of dharmas, they assert that emptiness of subject-object duality, emptiness of being external objects, and emptiness of existing

by their own characteristics, as the referent objects of the thoughts apprehending them, are the coarse selflessness of dharmas; while the lack of true existence that is empty of being truly established, as well as ultimate truth, are the subtle selflessness of dharmas. Since they assert that all dharmas are established conventionally by their own characteristics, they assert that all dharmas are established merely through appearing to thought or a mind, without maintaining, as Prāsaṅgikas do, that they are merely imputed by thought or merely established by names and signs.

The Sautrāntika Svāntarikas' position on both the coarse and subtle selflessness of persons and on the subtle selflessness of dharmas is like that of the Yogācāra Svāntarikas, but their position on the coarse selflessness of dharmas is different. They agree with the Cittamātrins in asserting as the coarse selflessness of phenomena the nonexistence of an external object that is a collection of the minutest partless particles. They assert that any established base must be both established by its own characteristics as the referent object of the thought apprehending it and also established as an external object.

### 5) *Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka*

Prāsaṅgikas claim that the coarse selflessness of persons is the person's emptiness of being a self-sufficient, substantial existent, while the subtle selflessness of persons is the absence of an inherently established person. The coarse selflessness of dharmas is the lack of any substantial difference between a gross object composed of partless particles and the valid cognition that apprehends it, while the subtle selflessness of dharmas is the aggregates' or bases of imputation's emptiness of being truly existent. The two subtle selflessnesses are distinguished only by their basis and not by their object of negation. In the subtle selflessness of persons, the object of negation—true existence—is negated with the person as the basis, while in the subtle selflessness of dharmas, true existence is negated with the aggregates, and so forth, as the basis. There is no distinction of subtle and coarse in the subtle selflessnesses of either persons or phenomena; both, it is claimed, are the final, ultimate nature. [33]

### 3. *How proponents of the four philosophical systems avoid the extremes of eternalism and nihilism in each of their own systems*

The Vaibhāṣikas say they avoid the extreme of eternalism because the cause ceases when the result arises, and avoid the extreme of nihilism because the

result arises right after the cause ceases. The Sautrāntikas assert that they avoid the extreme of nihilism because composites go on without interruption, and avoid the extreme of eternalism because composites are destroyed moment by moment. The Cittamātrins state that they avoid the extreme of eternalism because the imaginary nature is not truly established, and avoid the extreme of nihilism because the dependent nature is truly established. The Mādhyamikas claim they are free of the extreme of nihilism because all dharmas exist conventionally, and of the extreme of eternalism because all dharmas do not ultimately exist. So it is taught.

Accordingly, both the Vaibhāṣikas and Sautrāntikas have to claim that the gnosis realizing impermanence is the ultimate middle path. However, because they definitely must also have abandoned the two extremes based on the definitions of both subtle and coarse selflessness in their respective systems, this statement about gnosis appears to be meant as a loose explanation, or merely as a characterization. If measured by the Prāsaṅgikas, all our Buddhist schools from Svātantrika on down fall to both extremes—eternalism and nihilism—even while boasting that their own systems admit of a middle that is free of the two extremes of eternalism and nihilism and loudly claim to be “middleists.”<sup>203</sup>

#### 4. *Summary*

Although there are degrees of superiority and inferiority among those philosophical systems, it is inappropriate to disparage the Hinayana philosophical systems, saying, “The Mahayana philosophical systems are best,” for they also are followers of the Buddha. Not only that, but as the omniscient Second Dalai Lama, Gendün Gyatso,<sup>204</sup> taught, “The view of each of the lower philosophical systems is a stairway to each of the higher.”<sup>205</sup> Except for one or two philosophical systems’ admission of their own unique positions, the Buddhist view is as taught in the sutras, in the works of the great charioteers Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga, and in the excellent explanations of the great Jé Tsongkhapa—emptiness of a permanent, single, independent self; selflessness that is empty of being a self-sufficient, substantial existent; reality that is empty of a subject-object divide; ultimate essencelessness, even though all dharmas exist by their own characteristics; and the nonexistence of even the merest particle that is established by its own characteristics, even though all dharmas do exist conventionally.<sup>206</sup>

As for the progressive degrees of selflessness that permit the establishment of all actions and agents of cause and effect and samsara and nirvana: the

earlier, lower ones are [34] easier to realize than the later, higher ones, and the earlier are the means to enter the later. For some people, being shown the views of the lower philosophical systems allows them to gradually be led to the higher views. If they were shown the higher views at the outset, it would bring more harm than benefit.

The standpoints of the individual non-Buddhist and Buddhist philosophical systems: Since explanations of them occur extensively and in detail in treatises on philosophical systems, I will say nothing more about them here.

### *Concluding verses*

I say:

Those who are realized know how to distinguish their own teaching  
from that of others.

They are able to sound the music of wondrous discourse before the  
learned,

And honest people will raise high the banner of their splendid  
renown.

Ah! Who would not strive to distinguish the principles of the various  
philosophical systems!

Nevertheless, many past scholars  
Have already provided  
This very account, extensively and clearly,  
So why do what's already done?

Even if the mass of jewels of newfound eloquence  
Is heaped up in a pile, it's like the riches  
Of wealthy merchants set out in the alleys  
Of an impoverished city. What's the point?

When all the books of excellent explanation by the sages of India  
and Tibet  
Are perceived as mere things and sit, like ornaments,  
On bookshelves deep within houses, in such times  
Someone like me is little inclined to real effort.

Therefore, in order to indicate here  
The complete body and limbs of my subject,  
I have revealed just a few supreme limbs  
Of the philosophical systems of the Holy Land and am content with  
that.

These verses are additional.

From *The Crystal Mirror: An Excellent Explanation Showing the Sources and Assertions of All Philosophical Systems*, this completes the explanation of the history of the philosophical systems of the non-Buddhists and our own Buddhist schools in the Holy Land of India. May all awaken! [35]