Bu-ston on the Schism of the Buddhist Church
and on the Doctrinal Tendencies of Buddhist Scriptures

Translated from Tibetan by Claus Vogel

1. From his History of the Doctrine (Chos-'byun)

Collected Works (gSun-'bum), vol. 24 (ya), pt. 4, fol. 88 b 3–90 b 3.

Preliminary Remark: The chapter presented here in a new English rendering was translated into Japanese by E. Teramoto as early as 1928¹ and into English by E. Obermiller only four years later²; it was examined at full length by D. Seyfort Ruegg in the course of this Symposium³. The passages concerning the languages used by Indian Buddhists were discussed in great detail by Lin Li-kouang⁴ and A. Yuyama⁵; they were referred to by G. Roth during this Symposium⁶ and will be dealt with by J. W. de Jong in a forthcoming article⁷. The ensuing translation, in which literalness prevails over literariness, will be found as a rule to incorporate the results of these scholars but in places to attempt a different approach from theirs.

As regards the third recapitulation (of the doctrine), since it is not (described) in the Ágama, discord becomes apparent in every possible manner. Some say as follows⁸: “At the time when—137 years after the teacher’s passing—the kings named Nanda and Mahāpadma had risen and the elders Mahākāśyapa, Uttara, and others were staying in the city (of) Pāṇḍaraputra⁹, Māra the Wicked One, having taken on the form of the monk named Bhadraka¹⁰, showed all kind of magic power and, having separated the clergy, disarrayed the teaching. At that time¹¹, in the days of the elders Nāgasena and Valguka¹², 63 years after (the clergy) had been split into sects, the elder Vatsīputra recapitulated the teaching.”

³) Inf., pp. 114–119.
⁶) Inf., pp. 127–137.
⁷) Inf., pp. 138–143.
⁸) A similar résumé is found in Bhavya’s Tarkajvālā; see Peking Tanjur, mDo section, vol. 19 (dza), fol. 162 b 6–163 a 3 [ ~ Otani reprint, vol. 96, p. 67].
⁹) Tib. sKya-bo'i-bu for the commoner sKya-nar-gyi-bu [ ~ Pātaliputra].
¹⁰) Tib. bZan-po for the commoner bZan-ladan [ ~ Bhadrika].
¹¹) Tib. de'i tshe; one would rather expect something like de'i phyi tshe “at a later time”.
¹²) Tib. Yid-'on; for the equation see GBM VI, No. 685, ll. 8–9 ~ Peking Kanjur, 'Dul-ba section, vol. 92 (khe), fol. 19 a 3–5 [ ~ Otani reprint, vol. 41, p. 9].
Others say as follows:\(^{13}\): "When—160 years after the teacher’s passing—King Aśoka had risen in the city called Puṣpita\(^{14}\), the Arhats preached the teacher’s dogma in Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apabhraṃśa, and Pāśācika, and so (their) pupils were split and came (to fall) into 18 sects. As the teaching was disarrayed by various discordant views, Arhats and learned ordinary monks recapitulated (it) after coming together in the monastery of Jalandintra. At that time 300 years had gone by since the teacher’s passing."

In the Mahākaruṇāpunḍarīka\(^{15}\) is found (the prophecy): "A hundred years after my passing a king named Aśoka will rise in the city (of) Pāṭaliputra in the Murā family\(^{16}\) and [89 a] build 84,000 stūpas for my bones in one day." And in the Prabhāvatī\(^{17}\) it says: "Thereafter, when King Dharma Aśvaka\(^{18}\) had died, the Arhats, in order to be able to overcome the inclination for words of the Prakrit and Apabhraṃśa (languages) and (of) the intermediate (way of) recitation\(^{19}\), changed the texts one after another so that they were similar to (those in) the Sūtra section etc. written in the great language\(^{20}\). (Thus) there came to be as many as 18 individual teachings." With (these two statements), I think, (the other two) are somewhat at variance.

Some (say as follows): "(The third recapitulation of the doctrine) was performed, as regards (its) purpose, in order to remove the doubts (entertained by) the 18 schools about what was not the word (of the Buddha); (as regards its) time, 300 years after the teacher’s passing; (as regards its) place, in the land of Kashmir, (in) the monastery named Kunvana\(^{21}\); (and as regards) the alms-giver, by Kaniṣṭha, king of Jalandintra. As recapitulators came together 500 Arhats—Pūrṇika et al., 500 Bodhisattvas—Vasumitra et al., (and) 250 or 16,000 ordinary pundits. They held a recitation and recognized all 18 (texts) as the word (of the Buddha)."

\(^{13}\) Compare the elaborate account in Bhavya’s Tarkajvālā, loc. cit., fol. 161 a 3–162 b 6 [~ p.66 sq.].

\(^{14}\) Or Kusumita. Cf. DPPN II, p.179, where Pupphapura and Kusumapura are mentioned as two other names of Pāṭaliputta.

\(^{15}\) Peking Kanjur, mDo section, vol.65 (chu), fol.114 b 4–6 [~ Otani reprint, vol.29, p.178].

\(^{16}\) Tib. Mu-na’i rigs-su, for which the Kanjur version reads Mo’u-nya’i rigs-su “in the Mau-rya family”.

\(^{17}\) Peking Kanjur, mDo section, vol.89 (hu), fol.182 a 8–182 b 1 [~ Otani reprint, vol.127, p.127].

\(^{18}\) Tib. Dharma A-sva-ka, for which the Tanjur version reads Dharma A-so-ka.

\(^{19}\) Skr. madhyoddeśa.

\(^{20}\) I.e. Sanskrit. Tib. rgya chen-po and its cognate rgya che-ba, literally meaning “large in range”, oftenest render Skr. vistāra “widespread” and udāra “noble”; see LC s.vv.

\(^{21}\) Tib. Kun-ba-na (so read for the printed Kun-pa-na) or Ku-ba-na, as found elsewhere. The full name is given by Tāranātha (p.47.17–18) as sNa-rgyan-nags-kyi gtsug-lag-khan, which, if sNa- were understood, would be Kundalavanavihāra in Sanskrit. Cf. A. Schiefner, Tāranātha’s Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien, St. Petersburg, 1869, p.59, n.4.
On the manner in which (the clergy) was split into sects at that (time), Bhavaṭa[22] says that there were two principal (sects) – the Mahāsāṃghikas and the Sthavirās. Others[23] say that along with the Vibhajyavādins there were three (such sects). The Mūḷ(asarv)āstivādins[24] say (as follows): “Until the second recapitulation (of the doctrine) there was no (school) but one – the Mūlasarvāstivādins; thereafter, since (the doctrine) was preached in different languages, there were 17 (other schools). As regards (these other) schools, (the texts used by them) are not the teaching (of the Buddha): they are not met with in the Vinaya since they have not been recapitulated in the table of contents; they are not found in the Śūtra section since they disagree with one another in meaning; they are in discord with the normal state[25] since they teach the meaning of the words otherwise. Therefore they are not the word (of the Buddha).”

To (this) statement (I reply that) the texts of the 17 (other) schools are the word (of the Buddha): for the reason that they are met with in the Vinaya since they teach (superior) morality[26], that they are found in the Śūtra section since they teach superior intelligence[26], [89b] (and) that they do not disagree with the normal state since they are in concord with (the doctrine of) nirvāṇa and teach superior wisdom[26]; for the reason that they have been stamped with the three seals – (that of) the selflessness of all states of existence[27] etc.; for the reason that they let only the meaning of the Buddha’s word stand foremost; for the reason that an explication (of them) has been given by the Arhats; for the reason that they too have sprung from the Buddha’s blessing; and (for the reason that) in the Śūtra setting forth the dream of King Kṛśṇa[28] they have been recognized as the word (of the Buddha), because (there) it has been said: “Great King! As regards the (fact that) in your dream you have seen 18 men pulling at a piece of cotton-cloth, (you shall know that) the teaching of Śākyamuni will be split into 18 varieties, while the cotton-cloth of his (doctrine of) liberation will not be torn.”

Vinītadeva and Varṣaprccāpaṇḍita[29] posit four principal sects. Vinītadeva[30] says:

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22) In his Tarkavāla; see Peking Tanjur, mDo section, vol.19 (dza), fol.163.a2–3 [ ~ Otani reprint, vol.96, p.67].
24) Excerpted and abridged from Śākyaprabhā’s Prabhāvatī; see Peking Tanjur, mDo section, vol.89 (hu), fol.182.b2–6 [ ~ Otani reprint, vol.127, p.127].
25) Skr. dharmaṭā.
26) Skr. adhiṣṭāla, adhicitta, adhiprajñā; they constitute the three instructions (āśa).
27) Skr. sarvadharmanāraśāmya.
28) According to Tāranātha (p.47.15–17), this Śūtra was entitled gSer-'phreṅ-can-gyi rtogs-brjod, that is, Kañcanamālāvadāṇa. Most probably it is the same as the Sumāgadhāvādāna, which forms the 93rd Pallava of Kṣemendra’s Avadānakalpalatā; on the episode in point see vv.84–107, especially 93.cd and 104.cd, and its indirect rendering by G.N. Roerich, The Blue Annals, I, Calcutta, 1949, p. 26 sq.
29) According to Tāranātha (p.167.13–14), the actual name of this author was Padma-'byun-gnas-dbyaṅs, that is, Padmākara-ngoṣa.
“The sects of the Pūrva(śaila)s, Apara(śaila)s, Haimavatas, Lokottaravādins, and Prajñaptivādins—(this) pentad (constitutes) the Mahāsāṃghikas. The Mūlasarvādins, the Kāśyapīya sect, the Mahiśāsaka sect, the Dharmagupta sect, the Bāhuṣrutīya (and) Tāmraśāṭiya disciples, and the Vibhajyavāda sect are the Sarvāstivādins. The Jetalavaniyas, Abhaya(giri)vāsins, (and) Mahāvihāra(vāsin)s (are) the Sthaviras. The sects of the Kaurukullakas, Avantakas, (and) Vātsiputrīyas (are) the three individual Saṃmatīyas. Owing to the difference in place, intent, (and) teacher, there have come to be 18 different individual (sects).”

According to Varṣarccchāpanḍita, the Mahāsāṃghikas are taken to be (split into) six (sects), the Astivādins (into) four, the Saṃmatīyas (into) five, (and) the Sthaviras (into) three.

Among these (sects), the Sarvāstivādins (are so called) because they say [vadanti] that the three(less of) agglomerations, senses, (and) mental elements or the three(less of) time is [asti] all [sarvam] immaterial. They are (called) Mūlasarvāstivādins because they speak in the Sanskrit language and (thus) form the basis [mūla] from which the laws and customs of the other sects derive, just as the laws and customs of the world derive from the noble class. [90a] (Their) teacher is stated (to have been) Rāhulabhadra, a Kṣatriya deeply devoted to the (three) instructions; (their) language, (to have been) the Sanskrit language; (their) waist-cloth, (to have been) made of 25 to 29 strips; (and their) insignia, (to have been) a blue lotus, a white lotus, a jewel, and the leaf of a tree.

As regards the Mahāsāṃghikas, (they were called) Mahāsāṃghikas because (their) was a clergy [sangha] on the one hand and this was large [maha] on the other. (Their) teacher was Mahākāśyapa, a brahmin richly endowed with the (twelve) qualities of the purified man; (their) language (was) the Prakrit language; (their) strips (were) 23 to 27; (and their) insigne (was) a conch-shell.

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30) In his Nikāyabhedopadeśanāsṛṣṭi; see Peking Tanjur, mDo section, vol.90 (u), fol.187 b4–8 (~ Otani reprint, vol.127, p.257).
31) Metrically short for “Mulasarvāstivādins”.
33) Read jigs-med-gnas as found in the Tanjur version.
34) In his Srāmanera- and Bhikṣuvāsarāphrccchā; see Peking Tanjur, mDo section, vol.90 (u), fol.79 a4–79 b1 and fol.318 a4–318 b1 (~ Otani reprint, vol.127, p.213 sq. and p.309).
35) Metrically short for “Sarvāstivādins”.
37) Past, present, future.
38) Skr. śikṣā; see above, n.26.
39) Skr. pilota; not “fringe”, as Obermiller has it. For illustrations of waist-cloths made of 25, 7, and 5 strips respectively see ’Dul ba gleng ’bum, Delhi, 1970, last page.
40) Skr. dhūtaguna.
The Sammatiāyas (are so called) because they teach the method of a master honoured [ṣammatā] by many people. (Their) teacher was Upāli, a Śūdra strictly adhering to the Vinaya; (their) language (was) the mutilated (or) Apabhṛṣṭa language; (their) strips (were) 21 to 25; (and their) insignes (was) a Socika flower.41

As regards the Sthaviras, (they are called) Sthaviras because they say that they are (of) the (spiritual) family of the noble Sthaviras. (Their) teacher is mentioned (to have been) Kātyā(ya)na, a Vaiśya foremost in converting the borderland, (and their) language, (to have been) the intermediate (way of) recitation; (their) strips and insignes (are said to have been) as with the Sammatiāyas.—Some take the language (of) the Mahāśāṃghikas (to have been) the language of the intermediate (way of) recitation, (that of) the Sammatiāyas (to have been) the Prakrit language, (and that) of the Sthaviras (to have been) Apabhṛṣṭa.

Thus the 18 (sects) show a great dissimilarity in views and (yet) follow the teaching of the teacher. Accordingly it is said 43:

“On account of the difference in views alone, these (sects) have been differentiated; different (founding) teachers there are none.”

And 44:

“As regards the teaching of the Lion of the Śākyas, (that) it has thus come to be (split into) 18 varieties is (the) inevitable (consequence of) a former act of this lama of the world.”

Thus the third recapitulation (of the doctrine) was made. Then, lest ordinary monks not possessed of the (four) magic formulas 47 should recite the word of the sage wrongly by proclaiming it in an enlarged or abridged form, [90 b] it was committed to writing in books. Until that 48 (time) it is said to have been recited by heart, and no written text (of it is said) to have existed. Some say that this is not true, for the reason that it has been (fore)told 49: “The son of Ajātaśatru named Upa 50) will put the dogmas of

41) Unidentifiable.
42) I.e. Tibet.
43) In the Śrāmaṇera- and Bhikṣuvaṃśa-grapṛcchā; see Peking Tanjur, mDo section, vol. 90 (ii), fol. 79 a 5–6 and fol. 318 a 5 [ ~ Otani reprint, vol. 127, p. 213 and p. 309].
44) lb., fol. 79 b 1–2 and fol. 318 b 1–2 [ ~ p. 214 and p. 309].
45) Read gypsum with the Tanjur versions.
46) Or, reading nes-pa with the Bhikṣuvaṃśa-grapṛcchā, “is the punishment for”.
47) Especially the first of these, styled dharmadhāraṇi, which enables a Bodhisattva to remember a book on simply hearing it. Cf. Bhp p. 272 sq.
48) Read de yan-chad.
49) Prose paraphrase of Mmk p. 604.5–7: tasyāpi suto rājā ukārākhyah prakīrtitaḥ / bhavisyaḥ tadā kṣipram āṣānāṁ ṭhāyaḥ // tadb etat pravacanam sātu likhāpayasyaḥ vistaram // “His [i.e. Ajātaśatru’s] son in turn, known to have a name (beginning) with the letter U, will be king thereafter. Instantly striving for the doctrine, he will have this very preaching of the master written down in full.” Cf. Peking Kanjur, rGyud section, vol. 12 (na), fol. 267 a 8 [ ~ Otani reprint, vol. 6, p. 257].
50) His full name is Udāyin.
the Buddha in writing." Others in turn think that they may have been written down even earlier, because it has been stated in the Vimalaprabhā⁵¹:

"After the Exalted One had passed into complete nirvana, the recitators wrote down (the teachings of) the three Vehicles in books."

2. From his History of the Doctrine (Chos-'byun)

Collected Works (gsUn-'bum), vol. 24 (ya), pt. 4, fol. 130 a 2–130 b 2.

Preliminary Remark: The following paragraph, previously put into English by E. Obermiller⁵² and into Italian by A. Ferrari⁵³, tallies in a large measure with the introduction to the Madhyayutpatti, which was turned into Italian—partly—by A. Ferrari⁵⁴ and into German by N. Simonsso⁵⁵. Again the present interpretation will be found sometimes to deviate from its predecessors.

Ral-pa-can, renowned as the incarnation of Vajrapāni, began his reign at the age of 18 and erected the Chinese-roofed Nine-storeyed Palace (of) 'U-šan-rdo⁵⁶. Previously, in the old days of the Divine Son’s father, the teachers Bodhisattva, Ye-ses dba-po, Žaṅ rGyal-ñen na-bzaṅ, and Blon Khri-bzer saṅ-śi, the lo-tsā-bas Jñānadevakoṣa and IČe Khyi-brug, and the brahmīns Ananda et al. had translated the word of the doctrine, (in which) there occurred many (terms) unknown in Tibet, from various (languages) such as Chinese, Khotanese, and Za-hor⁵⁷), and so, because of many non-uniform terms, the doctrine (had become) difficult to study. Seeing this, he gave the following order:

"The Aparāntaka teachers⁵⁸) Ācārya Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, Śīlendrabodhi, Dānāśīla, and Bodhimitra, the Tibetan teachers Ratnarakṣita and Dharmatāśīla, and the learned lo-tsā-bas Jñānasena, Jayarakṣita, Maṅjuśrīvarman, Ratnendrāśīla, et al. shall translate (directly) from the Sanskrit language of the Mahāyānic and Hīnayānic (scriptures) into the Tibetan language and record the (words) used as technical terms in a register. They shall never deviate from this text, and shall render (their translations) suitable to be studied by all."

Moreover, after the earlier translations had been re-examined linguistically and reduced to a (new) system, he set up three individual regulations: (1) With regard to the different sects [130 b] he prescribed that (works)

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⁵³ Arthaviniścaya (testo e versione), Roma, 1944, pp. 541–542.
⁵⁴ Ib., pp. 540–541.
⁵⁷ The dialect of Za-hor, modern Sahor pargana of Bhagalpur District in Bihar, where Atiśa was born. Cf. H. Eimer, Berichte über das Leben des Atiśa (Dīpaṇkarāśrījñāna), Wiesbaden, 1977, p. 13, n. 2.
⁵⁸ Cf. BHSD p. 44.
other than Mūlasarvāstivāda as well as mantras were not to be translated. (2) Down to *bre*, *sraṇi*, *žo*59, etc. he (had all weights) harmonized with (those of) India. (3) To every initiate he assigned seven servant households (for alms), spreading his headgear as a seat (for him and) placing the (man’s) foot on his top (by way of reverence).

3. From his General Disposition of the Vinaya

(*Dul-ba spyi'i rnam-par gzag-pa*)


Preliminary Remark: The following passage is made known here for the first time. It was sought out by Geshe Pema Tsering, Bonn, whose constant co-operation in searching for relevant source material and verifying references is worthy of special mention in this context.

In the Vinaya ..., the number of granthis (of which has been) stated to be 100,000, there are (the following): in the Āgama- [i.e. Vinaya-] vibhāṅga, 25,000 ślokas (and) 83 bam-pos; in the (Vinaya)vastu, 32,700 ślokas; in the (Vinaya)kṣudraka(vastu), reportedly 59 bam-pos and accordingly 18,700 ślokas; in the (Vinaya-)uttamagrantha60, 53 bam-pos (and) 15,900 ślokas; (and in) the Bhikṣuṇī(vinaya)vibhāṅga, when duly counted, even though (this) does not seem to be a vibhāṅga of the present [i.e. Mūlasarvāstivāda] sect, 28 bam-pos (and) 8,400 ślokas61. All summed up, there are 99,700 ślokas, missing 100,000 by 300 ślokas62). Though indeed some claim that (the number of ślokas in) the Vinayapiṭaka (is) 125,000, in the Āgama it has been stated to be 100,000. By the master dGe-legs bṣes-gñen too it has been stated to be 100,000.

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59) Skr. *drona* (11.648 kg), *pala* (45.5 g), *kṣaṇa* (11.375 g).

60) Tib. (*Dul-ba*) *gziṅ dam-pa* for the usual *Dul-ba gziṅ bla-ma* [~ Vinaya-uttamagrantha].

61) This statement was referred to, for instance, by gSer-mdog Pañ-chen Śākya-mchog-ldan (1428–1507), one of the great scholastic luminaries of the 15th century. See his Collected Works (*gSun-bum*), vol. 17 (*tsa*), pt. 11, fol. 10b 5–6:

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dge-slo-ning-ma-nams bam-po-ner-brgyad-pa //
thams-cad-yod-smra'i 'dul-ba ma yin mod //
sde-pa gziṅ-gyi lun-las 'chugs žes-pa //
Bu-ston chen-po'i nam-dpyod rtsal-gyis bton //
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“The Bhikṣuṇī(vinayaviibhāṅga) has 28 bam-pos; it is not indeed (found in) the Vinaya of the (Mūla)sarvāstivādins (but has been taken over) from the Āgama of another sect by mistake. The said (fact) was brought to light by the investigative skill of the great Bu-ston.”

62) There is a mistake in transmission here; the numbers given in the text as it stands add up to 100,700.