REMARKS ON TANTRISTIC HERMENEUTICS

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The means which earlier Buddhist, especially mahāyānistic exegesis has applied in its interpretation of the authoritative revelation *(āgamaḥ, lun)* have been explained by E. Lamotte.[1] Here we find a unison—as characteristic for every living religion—of change or deepening of beliefs and development of exegetical methods which enable one to understand the resulting differences in accordance with tradition.

Religious contents, beliefs, are subject to history. They stagnate and die as soon as they become unresponsive to new needs and questions arising in the societies harbouring them, but they also lose their religious value when they deviate from tradition by such changes. Hermeneutics[2] works against such deviation. Its methods have been established in order to separate, via an act of interpretation, the various forms of religious contents

Abbreviations

mChan 'grel	= *rGyud thams cad kyi rgyal po dpal gsan ba 'dus pa'i rgya cher bśad pa sgron ma gsal ba'i tshig don ji bźin 'byed pa'i mchan gyi yan 'grel* (Tson kha pa). (Title of Sendai-catalogue No. 5282) P 6166.
P	= Peking Edition. Ed. D. T. Suzuki, Tokyo-Kyoto 1955–1961.
PKr	= *Pañcakramaḥ (Nāgārjuna): Études et textes tantriques, Pañcakrama.* Ed. L. de la Vallée Poussin, Gand-Louvain 1896.
PKrṬip	= *Pañcakramaṭippanī* (Parahitarakṣita): cf. *PKr.*
Prad	= *Pradīpoddyotanā* (Candrakirti): cf. n. 6.
Prad. abhis. prak.	= *Pradīpoddyotanābhisamdhiprakāśikā* (Bhavyakirti). P 2658a,b.
Prad. uddy.	= *Pradīpoddyotanoddyotaḥ* (Śrī Karuṇaśrīpāda). P 2655.
Prad. ṭīkā	= *Pradīpoddyotanaṭīkā* (Āryadeva). P 2659.
Man gsal	= *dPal gsan ba 'dus pa'i bśad pa'i rgyud Ye śes rdo rje kun las btus pa'i rgya cher bśad pa, rGyud bśad thabs kyi man nag gsal bar bstan pa* (Tson kha pa). P 6198.
VJñST	= *Vajrajñānasamuccatantram.* P 84.
bŚad sbyar	= *sGron ma rab tu gsal bar byed pa'i bśad sbyar, mtha' drug rab tu gsal bar byed pa* (Bu ston). *Collected Works.* Ed. Lokesh Chandra, New Delhi 1967. Vol. Ta, 3. f. 1–271a.

[1] *La critique d'interprétation dans le bouddhisme*: *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 9 (1949), pp. 341–361.

[2] I.e. the study of those methodological principles which rule over the interpretation and explanation of revelatory texts.

within a tradition in such a way that the unity with revelation is preserved in each case and that freedom is created at the same time for a rational foundation of the differences. While the possibility of change in this way guarantees the survival of a religious tradition, it is hermeneutics which guarantees the continuity of this tradition as such.

Hermeneutics in this tradition-maintaining function is to be found at its most valuable in Buddhism, at first in connection with the development of Mahāyāna—as the natural consequence of the notorious breaks of the new tradition with the older ones and, on the other hand, of the living vigour of the Buddhist communities.[2a]

In none of the other great religions do we find the appearance of "new revelations" as natural as we do in Buddhism. The reasons for this are too manifold to be considered here. I only want to point out that it is always the hermeneutic categories of the interpreters which show the connection of the "new revelation" with the existing one and account for a meaning and purpose of the evident differences and thereby do away with the developmental ruptures in an ever new synthesis of the gaping differences.

In the history of Buddhism there exist above all two great masses of "new revelation", the Mahāyānasūtras and the Tantras, which both have brought about the need to formulate corresponding hermeneutic categories. Or shall we say, which have arisen in dialectical unity with the rudimental concepts of new hermeneutic categories?

In spite of the great historical import of hermeneutics especially in the case of these changes within the Buddhist tradition, this theme has been rather neglected, except for Lamotte's description of mahāyānistic hermeneutics. A history of Buddhist hermeneutics, because of its tradition-establishing and tradition-maintaining function, is therefore an urgent desideratum, above all in the history of Buddhism.

Compared with such an enormous task the philological problem I want to present here may seem trifling and to some even artificial and forced. I dare to present it, not because I can hope to elaborate on a set of interpretational rules generally applicable, but rather because I want to share it as a problem with others in the field, and because I think that each respective single text studied with this in mind may yield a richer understanding of certain tantric texts than we have usually been satisfied with up to now.

[2a] Rudiments of a hermeneutical theory are extant of course in older Buddhism, mainly provoked by the need to deal with the Pudgalavāda. They are summarized e.g. in the Sūtra-quotation on the "four points of reference" *(pratisaraṇam)* (cf. *Mahāvyutpatti* § 74).

When older hermeneutics[3] prescribes that we have to view certain revelatory texts in their implicit meaning *(neyārthaḥ, dran don)* and others in their explicit meaning *(nītārthaḥ, ṅes don)*, we have no difficulty in doing so, for we can clearly recognize the hermeneutic tools and can understand the texts subjected to them in their own context. The problem arises when we are summoned by the exegetes to understand one and the same text with different meanings. This is the case e.g. with certain statements of evident madhyamaka-character in the Tantras. If a commentator holds the view that the text should be understood with a fourfold meaning,[4] we have to ask ourselves how far we can follow this invitation in a historical interpretation. It is not possible to follow these prescriptions of the tantristic[5] commentators in a historical critique at full length, for they could be applied as far as possible to the whole suitable material of the older tradition, even where it is clear that it is non-tantric. But can we also resist these prescriptions in those cases where a text of seemingly non-tantric character is to be found in a tantric context? And if we accept the tantristic interpretation of such texts: have the words been uttered by the creators of the Tantra with these meanings in mind? Or has a non-tantric text been incorporated into the Tantra, because to its creator(s) it seemed capable of having the tantric meanings or rather, because it carried these meanings in his understanding?

However one may judge these alternatives and however important definite answers for a history of the formation of the Tantras would be, the question at what moment a not evidently tantric text becomes tantric can only be answered pragmatically, i.e. with the help of the context. If it is also to be found outside the tantric context, it can be interpreted in its own right, having a non-tantric meaning, too. Within the context of a Tantra, however, we have to assume that it also bears the tantric meanings. That is, I think, that without the existence of text-critical arguments outside of a Tantra we are for pragmatical reasons not entitled to neglect the tantric meaning as called for by the commentators when we interpret such seemingly non-tantric texts. Only when the developmental succession and the coexistence of coherent tantristic conceptual structures will have been clarified and thereby the dependent hermeneutical instruments will be localized historically it will also be possible to interprete the Tantras them-

[3] E.g. the *Akṣayamatinirdeśasūtram* quoted in *Prasannapadā*, ed. by La Vallée Poussin, St.-Pétersbourg 1913, p. 43, 4–9 (cf. Lamotte, *loc. cit.* p. 352).

[4] Cf. below 453.

[5] I use the words "tantric" in the sense of "related to the Tantras" and "tantristic" in the sense of "related to the systematic or religious traditions based on the Tantras".

selves more critically in each single case. As long as these developments cannot be judged we have to proceed for the time being from those literary strata which give us exact exegetical advice from a certain historical moment onwards in order to understand the meaning of the tantric revelation.

But what is tantric meaning in such a milieu? There is no answer to this question generally valid for all tantric revelations. It is well known that the various Tantra-traditions are considered as self-contained corpora and it is, therefore, necessary to make a beginning with a particular Tantra-tradition where we find a clue at all. The most elaborate system of tantristic hermeneutics I have found so far has been developed by the so-called "Ārya-school" *('Phags lugs pa)* of commentators on the *Guhyasamājatantram*. This school produced a considerable amount of literature from about the eighth to the twelfth century A.D. which has been held in high esteem especially by the more scholarly inclined Tibetan tantristic exegetes like Bu ston and Tsoṅ kha pa and has thereby exerted great influence on the interpretational techniques of the dGe lugs pa scholars.

A summary of the exegetic categories and rules of this school has been given by Candrakīrti in the 53 introductory verses of his *Pradīpoddyotanā*.[6] According to Candrakīrti's words[7] he only summarizes the precepts of the "Explanatory Tantras" *(vyākhyātantra-, bśad pa'i rgyud)*. Matsunaga Yūkei[8] has questioned the "traditional" identification with the *Vajrajñānasamuccayatantram*[9] as the source for these categories and has assumed

[6] P 2650 *(sGron ma gsal bar byed pa źes bya ba'i rgya cher bśad pa)*. A manuscript of the Sanskrit text was found by R. Sāṅkṛtyāyana in "Ṣa-lu" (Źva lu); cf. his report: *Sanskrit Palm-Leaf Mss. in Tibet*: *JBORS* 31 (1935) p. 37 (No. 112). The photographs of the Ms are kept at the K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute in Patna. They were available to me through the kind help of Prof. H. Bechert, Göttingen, who has provided me with a micro-film of the copy kept at the Indologisches Seminar der Universität Göttingen and to whom I would like to acknowledge my thanks on this occasion. Prof. J. W. de Jong, Canberra, has prepared a transcription of the entire Ms and, since my own copy made from the micro-film proved rather difficult to read, I am extremely grateful to Prof. de Jong for having sent me a copy of his transcription of those parts of the text I needed most. I also want to thank Watanabe Shigeaki, Tōkyō, for having procured copies of the Cone and Derge editions of the *Śrījñānavajrasamuccayaḥ* for me.

The text of these introductory verses covers ff. 1b–3b4 of the Sanskrit Ms and ff. 1–4b1 of the Peking edition.

[7] *Prad* vv. 13d, 40c, 52a, 53d.

[8] *A Doubt to Authority of the Guhyasamāja-Ākhyāna-tantras*: *IBK* 12 (1964), pp. 840 f.

[9] E.g. Bu ston, *bŚad sbyar* f. 21a5, 28a4, 29b5; Tsoṅ kha pa, *mChan 'grel* f. 5a2, 9a7, 11a5. But this is not even the opinion of the older, Indian commentaries: the corresponding identifications they give are the "Vajramālā and others" (Śrī Karuṇaśrī-

that at least the second part of this Explanatory Tantra depends on the *Pradīpoddyotanā*.[10] As the *Devendrapariprcchā*,[11] one of the other Explanatory Tantras, has not been translated into Tibetan and is therefore no longer extant, we cannot definitely estimate the degree of originality of Candrakīrti in composing his exegetical system. It seems to me, however, that although we can possibly trace most of the components of his system[12] to either the Explanatory Tantras or the Sādhanas[13] of the school, the system as a whole might indeed have been conceived by Candrakīrti. And where Candrakīrti's description does not provide complete information, e.g. with regard to the names of all the categories, we may use, as Matsunaga demonstrated,[14] the second part of the *Vajrajñānasamuccayatantram* as a corroborative instance. Candrakīrti's summary is in any case an important turning-point in the development of the exegesis and hermeneutics of the Guhyasamāja-tradition. Starting from it the formation of its different components will have to be investigated in the future, since his summary itself represents already the final culmination.

Tantristic exegesis is the main theme of Candrakīrti's introduction. After a concise summary of the "five stages" *(pañcakramaḥ, rim lña)* (vv. 2-6) and the motives of his following elaboration (vv. 7-10) he gives

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pāda's *Prad. uddy.* f. 18b8, Bhavyakīrti's *Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 112b4) or the "Caturdeviparipṛcchā and others" (Āryadeva's *Prad. ṭīkā* f. 14a8), thus corroborating Matsunaga's doubts.

[10] *loc. cit.* pp. 838 f. and 836.

[11] According to A. Wayman, (*The Buddhist Tantras*. London 1973, p. 14) this text is cited in the *Pradīpoddyotanā*, but I do not know where.

[12] *ṣaṭkoṭikāṃ vyākhyānam* and *caturvidham ākhyānam* (except for *akṣarārthaḥ* !) are extant in the first part of the *Vajrajñānasamuccayatantram* (cf. Matsunaga, *loc. cit.* p. 838). The nine topics of the first two "preparations", viz. *upodghātaḥ* (comprising: *saṃjñā, nimittam, kartā, pramā, prayojanam*) and *nyāyaḥ* (comprising: *santānaḥ, nidānam, niruktiḥ, hetuḥ*) are rooted in the general Indian tradition of a methodology valid for the composition of *śāstras* and Buddhist "anthropology" respectively. The fifth *(dvividhabhedaḥ)* and sixth *(pañcapudgalāḥ)* "preparations" are related to the career of the tantristic adepts and although I do not know of an older list than Candrakīrti's it seems very likely that the *pañcapudgala*-list is earlier, too. Unfortunately I cannot give more information at this time for lack of more specific research. The seventh *(satyadvayaviniṛṇayaḥ)* is only of summarizing function (cf. *Prad* v. 51).

[13] The *Piṇḍīkṛtasādhanam* (P 2661; = *Piṇḍīkramasādhanam*) contains the *utpattikramaḥ*, the *Pañcakramaḥ* (P 2667) the *utpannakramaḥ* of the school. For the Sanskrit texts cf. *PKr.*

[14] *loc. cit.* pp. 839 f.

a thoroughly systematic survey of a group of exegetical tools collectively called "seven preparations" *(saptālaṃkāraḥ, rgyan bdun)*.[15]

These "seven preparations" provide the formal means which are used in interpreting the revelation of the *Guhyasamājatantram* "with its extensive objects condensed in a small textual space".[16] Matsunaga has given a survey-explanation of these "seven preparations".[17] As a whole they are those exegetical topics which help to organize the contents of the Tantra and

[15] According to Bhavyakīrti (*Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 101b4–102a5) *alaṃkāraḥ, rgyan* is either a reality which makes perfect, complete (*dños po sgrub par byed par gyur pa*, f. 101b5) —and in this case it is a specific "ornament of word or of meaning" (*sgra dan don rgyan*, f. 101b5 f.) —, or the means or function which makes perfect (*byed pa sgrub par byed pa*, f. 101b5). The difference between these two meanings of the word is taken to be the difference of what is to be expressed *(brjod par bya ba, *vācya-)* from what is to be revealed *(gsal bar bya ba, *vyaṅgya-)* (f. 102a1–4).

This sober explanation of the term's meaning is kept fairly general and would allow the translation "ornament" as used for the term within the context of the science of poetics. Nevertheless I think we have to refrain from translating *alaṃkāraḥ* in our context with "ornament", for it evidently means more than a beautifying element and, although it bears essentially the same meaning as in the context of poetics, the usual translation's emphasis on the esthetic aspects of the conceptual spectrum of the word is too narrow. This is especially clear when we recall its sixth item which consists of the five kinds of men *(pudgala-, gaṅ zag)* as recipients of the tantric revelations (dealt with in Prad vv. 41–49). Therefore this attempt of another translation for our context.

My comprehension of the meaning of *alaṃkāraḥ* in our context is this: the seven *alaṃkāra-* are those elements which the Tantra is presumed to be using in order to fulfil its revelatory purpose at its best on every level of recipiency. The Tantra is "ready, complete, made adequate, arranged, prepared" by means of these *alaṃkāra-*. The possibility of the Tantra's full value being present includes, of course, a consideration of the recipient's abilities, too. Mediated by their being taken into consideration on the side of the Tantra the recipients become a particular category of formation of the Tantra itself. Naturally, then, it is impossible to understand and explain the meaning of the Tantra without taking recourse to these *alaṃkāra-*. Thus we have to go back to the broader meaning of the term as a "magical-religious expedient" (cf. e.g. J. Gonda, *The Meaning of the Word alaṃkāra*. Selected Studies II, Leiden 1975. 265).

I, therefore, assume a double meaning of the term, both expressed by the proposed translation "preparation" (German: "Zurichtung"):

a) "preparations" of the exegetical object, the Tantra, which prepare its words in a way that they may be understood in its full meaning by the apt persons.

b) "preparations" as categories of exegetical study when the "preparations" of the Tantra are being taken into consideration and used to analyze it.

It is this latter meaning of the term we are concerned with in our paper. Of course I still translate the word by "ornament" in the compounds *śabda-, arthālaṃkāraḥ*.

[16] *svalpagranthe prabhūtārthe samāje* (*Prad* v. 9ab).

[17] *Shichi shoku ni tsuite*: *IBK* 11 (1963), pp. 470–476.

to formulate its interpretation in a philological and systematical way. That is: with the help of these tools the tantric revelation can be shaped into a system of tantristic religion.[17a] There are two of these "preparations" of special interest for our theme: the third one, which is called "explanation by six ends/alternatives" *(ṣaṭkoṭikaṃ vyākhyānam, 'rgyas bśad mtha' rnam pa drug)*, and the fourth, which is called "fourfold explanation" *(caturvidhaṃ ākhyānam, bśad pa rnam ba bźi)*.[18]

Both "preparations" are called "explanations" *(ākhyānam, vyākhyā, vyākhyānam, bśad pa, rgyas bśad pa)* which would characterize both as hermeneutic instruments. On closer examination, however, we find that they differ substantially. While the set of the "fourfold explanation" is truly hermeneutic, as will be shown later, the third "preparation", "explanation by six alternatives" consists actually of different kinds of speech.

It is defined as "an ascertainment by means of words of six alternatives, which is given by the methods of the Yogatantra and elucidates the sealed meaning".[19] That is: this category presents six alternatives of words or speech as used by the Tantra to propound its object.[20]

It contains these alternatives in three pairs which are already known from pre-tantristic exegesis,[21] although I have not come across the set as such in non-tantric Mahāyāna-literature so far. The pairs are:[22] "implicit or hinted meaning" *(neyārtha-, dran[ba'i]don)* and "explicit or evident meaning" *(nītārtha-, ṅes [pa'i] don)*; "intentional language" *(sandhyāya bhāṣitam, dgoṅs [pas] bśad)* and "non-intentional language" *(no sandhyā, nāsandhyā, dgoṅs [pa] min [pas bśad])*;[23] "literal or standard (words)"

[17a] Of course we have to keep in mind that these tools are applied only to this particular Tantra, the Guhyasamāja, and cannot be taken as a set of tools generally applicable to any tantric revelation.

[18] *Prad* v. 11cd; later the third is simply called "six alternatives" *(ṣaṭkoṭi-, mtha' drug*, v. 24b), the fourth "explanation" *(vyākhyā, bśad pa*, v. 31b). For other variants of the terms cf. Matsunaga, *loc. cit.* p. 471.

[19] *punas tṛtīyo 'laṅkāras ṣaṭkoṭipadaniścayaḥ | yogatantranayoddiṣṭo mudritārthaprabodhanaḥ || Prad* v. 24.

[20] Cf. the expression *rjod byed* in Bu ston, *bŚad sbyar* f. 21a6.

[21] Cf. Lamotte, *loc. cit.* passim.

[22] I give the terms as they appear in *Prad* vv. 25–30.

[23] On the latter two terms cf. Lamotte, *loc. cit.* pp. 354 ff. and p. 354, n. 2 (for earlier literature); A. Bharati, *Intentional language in the Tantras*: *JAOS* 81 (1961), pp. 261–270; A. Wayman, *Concerning saṃdhā-bhāṣā (saṃdhi-bhāṣā) saṃdhyā bhāṣā. Mélanges d'indianisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou*, Paris 1968, pp. 789–796; *Twilight language and a Tantric song*, in *The Buddhist Tantras*. London 1973, pp. 128–135; G. R. Elder, *Problems of language in the Buddhist Tantras*: *History of Religion* 15 (1976), pp. 231–250.

(yathāruta-, ji bźin sgra) and "non-literal or coined (words)" *(na ruta-aruta-, [ji bźin sgra] ma yin, ji bźin min pa)*.

While the second and third pairs contain terms which indicate differen sorts of speech[24] in the revelatory texts, it is only the first pair of alternative which suggests a hermeneutical import. For these two differentiate th texts according to the way they bear their meaning and prescribe a corre sponding interpretation of the relevant texts. But this seems to be strictly true only for their non-tantristic usage in Mahāyānistic and Abhidharmi exegesis. It is still to be investigated whether their meaning and applicatio remained exactly the same in tantristic exegesis as well. So far I have n definite answer for this question which requires a much more extensiv historical examination than I could venture on at this time. I think, how ever, that within tantristic exegesis—or at least within our list of the "si alternatives"—these two terms are not primarily hermeneutic, i.e. pre scriptional for an interpretation, but rather refer to different kinds of speec like the other terms of the list. The fact that they are "ornaments of mean ing" *(arthālaṃkāraḥ, don gyi rgyan)* does not impede this assumption.[25]

To give a rough conclusion: the "six alternatives" seems to represent a first, possibly heterogeneous list of categories within tantristic exegesi which derives from earlier, non-tantristic exegesis and is intended to giv a structurized survey of the actually extant kinds of tantric speech. Tha this and the next "preparation", are both called "explanation" has th following reason: the third "preparation", "explanation by six alternatives" is "explanation" because the Tantra "explains" by means of using si

[24] There is evidently some difference of opinion among the commentators as to whic of these "preparations" are ornaments of words and which of meaning. Tibetan exegete (Bu ston, *bŚad sbyar* f. 24b1f.; cf. also Tsoṅ kha pa, *Man gsal* f. 207b3f.) say that th third pair must be taken as both, *śabda-* and *arthālaṃkāraḥ*, while Bhavyakīrti (*Prad abhis. prak.* f. 107b5f.) considers the first pair and "non-intentional language" a *arthālaṃkāraḥ*, and the third pair and "intentional language" as *śabdālaṃkāraḥ*.

[25] Because in their case it is nonetheless the choice of different words which serve as a basis for the different meanings. In other words, they are ornaments of meanings but are definitely also different kinds of speech. If, however, due to their earlier, mahā yānistic hermeneutic function one accepts a hermeneutic import of the two terms, too the question of their particular hermeneutic function and its relation to the hermeneu tic categories of the list of the "fourfold explanation" must be answered. This proble has been investigated e.g. by Tsoṅ kha pa in his commentary on the *Jñānavajrasa muccayaḥ* (*Man gsal* f. 206b2–207b3), where he can show at least one case, where— although in different texts—one and the same tantric text has been interpreted once with the help of the "fourfold explanation" and in the other instance with the help of the "implicit and explicit meaning".

different kinds of speech, while the fourth, "fourfold explanation", is "explanation" because the Tantra "explains" by referring to four different meanings. And both of them can again be taken dialectically as "tantric explanations" and as "tantristic explanations" as well.

I may add a systematical argument to strengthen this interpretation of the whole list being non-hermeneutic: there is no attempt to be found which relates the terms of this list to the very core of the tantric development-structure, i.e. the "five stages" *(pañcakramaḥ, rim lña)*, which relation turns out to be the main motive for a distinction of tantric meanings. The contrary is true of the fourth "preparation", the "fourfold explanation": its structure is directly related to the "five stages" and it can thus be considered as the genuine set of tantristic hermeneutics. That it is later than the "explanation by six alternatives", too, is evident from the fact that even the "five stages" itself does not appear in the oldest parts of the relevant literature, namely the *Mūlatantram* itself and the original part of the oldest of the Explanatory Tantras, the *Vajramālā*.[26] It is, therefore, basically this set of four different explanations of one and the same text which constitutes the categories of hermeneutics used in this particular school of the *Guhyasamāja*-tradition and which can give us a clue in our search for tantric meaning.

This list contains the following terms:[27]

1. "literal meaning" *(akṣarārthaḥ, tshig gi don)*
2. "common meaning" *(samastāṅgam, spyi'i don)*
3. "the hidden or pregnant (meaning)" *(garbhī, sbas pa)*
4. "the ultimate (meaning)" *(kolikam, mthar thug pa)*[28]

[26] Cf. Matsunaga, *A Doubt to Authority . . .*, pp. 843f.

[27] As appearing in *Prad* v. 31. The following are the main Tibetan variants of these terms: 1. *yi ge'i don* (*Prad* v. 33, *VJñST* f. 294a4), 3. *sbas pa* (*Prad* v. 35, *VJñST* ibid.), *sbas pa'i don* (*Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 108b3, 5), 4. *mtha'* (*Prad* v. 36), *mthar thug* (:*thugs* P) *pa'i don* (*Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 109a2).

[28] As the terms are of a somewhat strange appearance I may venture an explanation.

akṣarārthaḥ is evidently to be taken as "the meaning of the words", where *akṣara-* is short for *akṣarasamudāya-*, i.e. *pada-*. It is, however, not only the meaning of the single words but also the meaning of the whole statement. With the broadest meaning of *akṣara-* as "words individually and taken together" I take the term, therefore, as "literal meaning in general".

samastāṅgam, where *aṅga-* is translated into Tibetan by *don (= artha-)*, is a difficult term. Except for some remarks of Bhavyakīrti I have not found anything that could be of help. Bhavyakīrti explains *aṅga-* with reference to the two motives which are given in Candrakīrti's definition of this category (*Prad* v. 34): 1. the dispelling of

The arrangement of these four terms is in accordance with the career of a tantristic yogī. The first term, however, refers to the secular level of understanding. It is therefore only an ornament of words *(śabdālaṃkāraḥ)*, while the others are ornaments of meaning *(arthālaṃkāraḥ)*.[29] Thus we may refer only to the latter as categories of "tantric meaning" strictly speaking, although all four form a well-conceived and logically arranged set of tantristic hermeneutics.

Candrakīrti's definitions[30] relate these four categories and their eight

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remorse *(kaukṛtyavinivṛtti-)* with those who adhere to the Sūtras and 2. the connecting with the stage of generation *(utpattikramayoga-)* (cf. *Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 108a7). Thus *samastāṅga-* could be taken as a bahuvrīhi: "with common members, parts" said of *arthaḥ*, the whole expression being understood as "meaning, where both (relevant) members are commonly given". This bahuvrīhi would then have been substantivized secondarily to *samastāṅgaṃ* with the same sense. That this meaning has both members, further, means nothing else but that this meaning is of relevance for those who adhere to the Sūtras as well as for those who practice the stage of generation. Therefore I translate the term as "common meaning".

garbhī is an attribute of *arthaḥ*, mostly used, however, by itself. Candrakīrti (*Prad* v. 35) defines *garbha-* as the first three stages of the stage of perfection *(sampannakrama-)* (cf. also *Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 108b6f.). *garbhin-*, therefore, is that meaning which refers to these three stages.

kolikam is explained by Candrakīrti himself (*Prad* v. 36). He says the word *kolaḥ* meant "end, limit" *(paryantavācaka-)*. The word is in other contexts not known to bear this meaning, appears, however, among others in a list of "coined words" *(aruta-)* given by Tsoṅ kha pa in his commentary on *Prad* v. 30 (cf. *mChan 'grel* f. 8a4). *kolikam* like *garbhī* is mostly used by itself as a substantivized attribute of *arthaḥ*. In Prad v. 36, however, it is clearly an attribute *(kolika[ḥ]proktaḥ)*.

[29] Cf. Bhavyakīrti, *Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 108a3 and 109a2. This may be the reason for the conspicuous lacking of the *akṣarārthaḥ* in the first part of the *Vajrajñānasamuccayatantram*, too (cf. P 84, f. 290b2–293b8), which has already been noted by Matsunaga (loc. cit., 839). If this cannot be accounted for by another reason, which I do not see, we are entitled to take Candrakīrti indeed for the one who has put together the complete list of the "fourfold explanation" by incorporating with the inclusion of the "literal meaning" the realm external to the religious career, thus truly starting a system of tantristic hermeneutics of enduring influence.

[30] Prad vv. 33–36 (= f. 2b6–3a2):

bāhyaśāstravido naike śabdamātraparāyaṇaḥ/
tadvyutpattiprakāśāya akṣarārtho nigadyate//

"The many knowers of the non-Buddhist Śāstras (consider) the words alone as the last resort. In order to explain the analysis of the (words) the literal meaning is stated."

sūtrāntādau prapannānāṃ kaukṛtyavinivṛttitaḥ/
utpattikramayogāc ca samastāṅgaṃ prakāśitam//

"In order to dispell the remorse with those who keep to the Sūtras etc. and to connect with the stage of generation the common meaning is proclaimed."

subdivisions to the levels of understanding gained in the progress of a tantristic yogi's career. These meanings are being borne by the words and sentences of the Tantra and are successively available to the practitioner:

1. The "literal meaning" of the teachings is meant for those secular, non-Buddhist scholars, who cling to the words alone, in order to explain the word-analysis *(vyutpattiḥ, bkod pa)*, because—as Bu ston says[31]—if the analysis is not given, they will not become candidates *(vineyaḥ, gdul bya)*.

2. The "common meaning" is of relevance for two levels of progress: firstly for those who adhere to the Sūtras, i.e. Hīnayāna- and Mahāyāna-Buddhists, with the particular purpose to dispell their scrupulous uneasiness or remorse *(kaukṛtyam, 'gyod)*. And secondly for those who adhere to the yogic practices of the "stage of generation" *(utpattikramaḥ, bskyed pa'i rim)*, i.e.—according to Bu ston[32]—those who follow the Kriyā-, Caryā- and Yoga-Tantras.

The other two terms are reserved for yogis in the "stage of completion" *(sampannakramaḥ, rdzogs pa'i rim)* and comprise together five categories which are directly related to the "five stages" *(pañcakramaḥ)*:[33]

3. The "pregnant meaning" has three functions related to the first three stages:

(a) "illumination of the nature of passion" *(rāgadharmaprakāśanam, 'dod chags chos rab ston)* refers to the first step of the completion, namely the "stage of diamond muttering" *(vajrajāpakramaḥ, rdo rje bzlas pa'i rim pa)*.

(b) "perception of the truth of conventional existence" *(saṃvṛteḥ satyasaṃbodha[ḥ], kun rdzob bden pa rtogs)* refers to the third[34] step, the

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garbhīti garbham asyāsti rāgadharmaprakāśanaḥ/
saṃvṛtes satyasambodha jñānatrayavicetanam//
"The pregnant is that (meaning) which has the *garbha*, (i.e.): illumination of the nature of passion, full cognition of the truth of conventional existence, discerning cognition of the three knowledges."

prabhāsvaraprakāśaś ca yuganaddhaprabodhanam/
dvividhaḥ kolika proktaḥ kolaḥ paryantavācakaḥ//
"The illumination of the Clear Light and the awakening towards coincidence is called the twofold ultimate (meaning). *kolaḥ* is a word for end."

[31] *bŚad sbyar* f. 25b6: *de ltar ma bśad na de rnams gdul byar mi 'gyur ro//*

[32] *bŚad sbyar* f. 26a2f.

[33] The relations are shown by Bhavyakīrti whom I follow here. Cf. *Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 108b2–109a1.

[34] According to the sequence in *PKr*. So far I cannot explain the change of place.

"stage of establishing oneself" *(svādhiṣṭhānakramaḥ, bdag la byin gyis rlob pa'i rim pa)*.[35]

(c) "discernment of the three knowledges"[36] *(jñānatrayavicetanam, ye śes gsum po rnam brtags pa)* refers to the second step, the "stage of purification of mind" *(cittaviśuddhikramaḥ, sems rnam par dag pa'i rim pa)*.

4. The "ultimate meaning" finally has the two functions related to the fourth and fifth step:

(d) "illumination of the Clear Light" *(prabhāsvaraprakāśaḥ, 'od gsal ba rab ston)* refers to the fourth step, the "stage of total enlightenment" *(abhisambodhikramaḥ, mṅon par byaṅ chub pa'i rim pa)*.[37]

(e) "awakening towards coincidence" *(yuganaddhaprabodhanam, zuṅ du 'jug pa rtogs pa)* belonging to those on the last level of the "stage of coincidence" *(yuganaddhakramaḥ, zuṅ du 'jug pa'i rim pa)*.

This well-arranged system of meanings of the tantric revelation[38] gives

[35] It is actually the predicate in the definition of this *kramaḥ* in *PKr* IV v. 10ab.

[36] The three knowledges are defined in *PKr* III vv. 4 f., 7 ff., 15 ff., 23 ff., 37ab; Matsunaga prefers to use the form *trayajñānam* (loc. cit., passim), but I find only *(vi)jñānatraya-* (e.g. PKr II v. 66c, III v. 6b, v. 36c). Cf. A. Wayman, *Notes on the Sanskrit term jñāna*: *JAOS* 75 (1955), pp. 253–268.

[37] Cf. *PKṬip* 44,2 f.: *sarvaśūnyopadeśakam iti prabhāsvaram. tad eva caturthābhisambodhiḥ.*

[38] Cf. table. The terms with asterix are supplemented on the basis of Bhavyakīrti's comments (*Prad. abhis. prak.* f. 108b2–109a1).

"Fourfold explanation"	*Variety*	*Levels of understanding*
1. *akṣarārthaḥ* *tshig gi don,* *yi ge'i don*	1. *vyutpattiprakāśa-* *bkod pas rab bstan pa*	1. *bāhyaśāstravidaḥ* *phyi rol bstan bcos mkhas pa*
2. *samastaṅgam* *spyi'i don*	2. *kaukṛtyaviniveṛttitaḥ* *'gyod pa zlog par byed pa*	2. *sūtrāntādau prapannāḥ* *mdo sogs la rab źugs pa*
	3. *utpattikramayogāt* *bskyed pa'i rim daṅ ldan pa* *dag*	3. **utpattikramaḥ (kriyā-,* *caryā, yogatantra-* followers) *bskyed pa'i rim pa*
3. *garbhī* *sbas pa*	4. *rāgadharmaprakāśana-* *'dod chags chos rab ston*	4. **sampannakramaḥ:* *rdzogs pa'i rim pa* *a. *vajrajāpakramaḥ* *rdo rje bzlas pa'i rim pa*
	5. *sameṛteḥ satyasambodhaḥ* *kun rdzob bden pa rtogs pa*	*b. *svādhiṣṭhānakramaḥ* *bdag la byin gyis rlob pa'i* *rim pa*
	6. *jñānatrayavicetanam* *ye śes gsum po rnam brtags pa*	*c. *cittaviśuddhikramaḥ* *sems rnam par dag pa'i* *rim pa*

the impression of being conceived by a certain author with the background of a longer development of its constituent parts. And—for a working-hypothesis—I would consider Candrakīrti as the one who has finally put these hermeneutical pieces together.

In any case we have to assume that the final development of these tantristic hermeneutics took place around 800 A.D.[39] And starting from that period this hermeneutical system was obligatory, at least for all Indian and later Tibetan scholars with an exegetical interest in the *Guhyasamāja*-cycle. In the case mentioned at the beginning, of a seemingly non-tantric statement within the Tantra we must, therefore, be aware of the fact that it has—if possible—more than one or two meanings, namely four: one which can be taken as literal, while the others are tantric.

List of terms

a. Sanskrit	*b. Tibetan*
akṣarārthaḥ	(Variants of the same term are included)
aruta-	kun rdzob bden pa rtogs
alaṃkāraḥ	bkod pa
upodghātaḥ	dgoṅs pa min pas bśad
kartā	dgoṅs pas bśad
kolikam	dgoṅs min
kaukṛtyam	dgoṅs bśad
garbhī	'gyod
caturvidham ākhyānam	rgyan
jñānatrayam	rgyan bdun
jñānatrayavicetanam	rgyas bśad mtha' rnam pa drug
dvividhabhedaḥ	ṅes don
trayajñānam	ṅes pa'i don
na ruta-	ji bźin sgra
nāsandhyā	ji bźin sgra ma yin
nidānam	ji bźin min pa
nimittam	mtha'
niruktiḥ	mtha' drug
nītārthaḥ	mthar thug pa
neyārthaḥ	mthar thug pa'i don

4. *kolikam* *mthar thug*

7. *prabhāsvaraprakāśaḥ* *'od gsal ba rab ston*

8. *yuganaddhaprabodhanam* *zuṅ du 'jug pa rtogs pa*

*d. *abhisambodhikramaḥ* *mṅon par byaṅ chub pa'i rim pa*

*e. *yuganaddhakramaḥ* *zuṅ du 'jug pa'i rim pa*

[39] I follow A. Wayman (*The Buddhist Tantras*. London 1973, p. 14) in giving the first half of the ninth century to Candrakīrti.

no sandhyā	dran don
nyāyah	dran ba'i don
pañcakramah	'dod chags chos rab ston
pañcapudgalāh	spyi'i don
prabhāsvaraprakāśah	sbas
pramā	sbas pa
prayojanam	sbas pa'i don
yuganaddhaprabodhanam	tshig gi don
rāgadharmaprakāśana-	zun du 'jug pa rtogs pa
vijñānatrayam	'od gsal ba rab ston
vyākhyā	yi ge'i don
vyutpattih	ye śes gsum po rnam brtags pa
śatkotikam vyākhyānam	rim lna
śatkotih	bśad pa
samvrteh satyasambodhah	bśad pa rnam pa bźi
samjñā	
satyadvayavinirnayah	
santānah	
sandhyāya bhāsitam	
saptālamkārah	
samastangam	
hetuh	