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, ltu) 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. Hermeneutics² 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 gsal pa ’dus pa'i rgya cher bsad pa sbyor ma gsal ba'i tshig don ji bsin 'byed pa'i mchan gyi yan 'grel (Tson khra pa). (Title of Sendai-catalogue No. 5282) P 6166.


PKrTip = Pañcakramatippani (Paraśitaramāṇa): cf. PKr.

Prad = Pradīpidhyotanā (Candragātasi): cf. n. 6.

Prad. abhis. prak. = Pradīpidhyotanābhīsambhuprakāśikā (Bhavyakātari). P 2658a,b.


Prad. tīkā = Pradīpidhyotanatīkā (Āryadeva). P 2659.

Mak gsal = dpal gsal ba ‘dus pa’i bsad pa’i rgyud Ye s秘诀 rje kun las bzhin pa’i rgya cher bsad pa, rGyud bsad thabs kyi man ngag gsal bar bstan pa (Tson khra pa). P 6198.

VIJñST = Vajrajñānasamuccayantram. P 84.


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.\(^2\)

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 Mahāvānasūtras 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 mahāyānic 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.

\(^{2}\) 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, draṅ don*) and others in their explicit meaning (*nītārthaḥ, ūcēs 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 interpret the Tantras them-

\(^3\) E.g. the *Akṣayamatiniṁrdeśasūtrak* 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 Guhyasamājatantra. 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. According to Candrakīrti’s words he only summarizes the precepts of the “Explanatory Tantras” (vyākhyātantra-, bśad pa’i rgyud). Matsunaga Yūkei has questioned the “traditional” identification with the Vajrajñānasamuccayatantra as the source for these categories and has assumed

<sup>6</sup> P 2650 (sGron ma yes byed pa ŋes bya ba’i rgya cher bśad pa). A manuscript of the Sanskrit text was found by R. Sāṅkrtyāyana in “Ṣa-lu” (Zvā lu); cf. his report: *Sanskrit Palm-Leaf Mss. in Tibet: JBO RS 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 Śrijñānavajrasamuccayā for me.

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

<sup>7</sup> Prad vv. 13d, 40c, 52a, 53d.

<sup>8</sup> A Doubt to Authority of the Guhyasamāja-Ākhyāna-tantras: *IBK* 12 (1964), pp. 840 f.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. Bu ston, bSad sbyar f. 21a5, 28a4, 29b5; Tsoṅ kha pa, *mChan 'gres f. 5a2, 9a7, 11a5. But this is not even the opinion of the older, Indian commentators: the corresponding identifications they give are the “Vajramālā and others” (Śrī Karuṇāsirī-
that at least the second part of this Explanatory Tantra depends on the Pradipoddityotanā.10 As the Devendrapariprscchā,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 system12 to either the Explanatory Tantras or the Sādhanas13 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” (pañcakramah, rim lha) (vv. 2–6) and the motives of his following elaboration (vv. 7–10) he gives

pāda’s Prad. uddy. f. 18b8, Bhavyakīrti’s Prad. abhis. prak. f. 112b4) or the “Caturdevvipariprscchā and others” (Āryadeva’s Prad. īkā 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 Pradipoddityotanā, but I do not know where.

12 sūtraśāstrām vyākhyaānam and catuśvidhāham ākhyānam (except for aksārārthah !) are extant in the first part of the Vajrajñānasamuccayatantram (cf. Matsunaga, loc. cit. p. 838). The nine topics of the first two “preparations”, viz. upodghatah (comprising: saṁjñā, nimițum, kartā, pramā, prapojanam) and nyāyah (comprising: saṁtānāh, 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 (dvividhahbhedaḥ) 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 (sātyānubhuvanirnayaḥ) is only of summarizing function (cf. Prad v. 51).

13 The Pindikīrtaśādhanam (P 2661; = Pindikramasādhanam) contains the utpattikramah, the Pañcakramah (P 2667) the utpannakramah 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” (saptālāṃkārāḥ, rgyan bdun).

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”. Matsunaga has given a survey-explanation of these “seven preparations”. As a whole they are those exegetical topics which help to organize the contents of the Tantra and

15 According to Bhavyakirti (Prad. abhis. prak. f. 101b4–102a5) alamkārāḥ, rgyan is either a reality which makes perfect, complete (dīnas po sgrub par byed par sgrur pa, f. 101b5) — and in this case it is a specific “ornament of word or of meaning” (sgra 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 (byed par byed pa, *vācyu-) from what is to be revealed (sgra bar byed pa, *cyaṅg-ya-) (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 alamkārā 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 (sabdu-, gañ 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 alamkārā in our context is this: the seven alamkāra- 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 alamkāra-. 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 alamkāra-. 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 alamkāra, 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 sabdu-, arthālamkāraḥ.

16 svalparyānta prabhātāte samāje (Prad v. 9ab).
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. There are two of these “preparations” of special interest for our theme: the third one, which is called “explanation by six ends/alternatives” (ṣaṭkotiṇam vyākhyānam, rgyas bṣad mtha’ rnam pa’i drug), and the fourth, which is called “fourfold explanation” (catur-vidham ākhyānam, bṣad pa’i rnam ba’i bī). Both “preparations” are called “explanations” (ākhyānam, vyākhyā, vyākhyānam, bṣad pa, rgyas bṣad 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”. That is: this category presents six alternatives of words or speech as used by the Tantra to propound its object.

It contains these alternatives in three pairs which are already known from pre-tantristic exegesis, although I have not come across the set as such in non-tantric Mahāyāna-literature so far. The pairs are: “implicit or hinted meaning” (neyārtha-, draṅ[ba’i]don) and “explicit or evident meaning” (nītārtha-, nes [pa’i] don); “intentional language” (sandhyāya bhāṣitum, dgon [pas] bṣad) and “non-intentional language” (no sandhyā, nāsandroṭa, dgon [pa] min [pas bṣad]); “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. 116; later the third is simply called “six alternatives” (ṣaṭkotiṇ, mtha’ drug, v. 24b), the fourth “explanation” (vyākhyā, bṣad pa, v. 31b). For other variants of the terms cf. Matsunaga, loc. cit. p. 471.

19 punas tṛtyo 'tānkhāras ṣaṭkotiṇapunānśeṣayaḥ | yogatantarāyogabhisto muḍitārtha-prabodhanah || Prad v. 24.

20 Cf. the expression rjod byed in Bu ston, bṢad sbyar f. 21a6.

21 Cf. Lamotte, loc. cit. passim.

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

(yathārtha-, ji bzin sgra) and “non-literal or coined (words)” (na rula-
artha-, [ji bzin sgra] ma yin, ji bzin min pa).

While the second and third pairs contain terms which indicate different sorts of speech in the revelatory texts, it is only the first pair of alternative terms which suggest a hermeneutical import. For these two differentiates the texts according to the way they bear their meaning and prescribe a corresponding interpretation of the relevant texts. But this seems to be strictly true only for their non-tantristic usage in Mahāyānistic and Abhidharmic exegesis. It is still to be investigated whether their meaning and application remained exactly the same in tantric exegesis as well. So far I have no definite answer for this question which requires a much more extensive historical examination than I could venture on at this time. I think, however, that within tantristic exegesis—or at least within our list of the “six alternatives”—these two terms are not primarily hermeneutic, i.e. prescriptive for an interpretation, but rather refer to different kinds of speech like the other terms of the list. The fact that they are “ornaments of meaning” (arthañāṃkāraḥ, don gyi rgyan) does not impede this assumption.

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

24 There is evidently some difference of opinion among the commentators as to which of these “preparations” are ornaments of words and which of meaning. Tibetan exegetes (Bu ston, bsdul sbyar f. 24b1f.; cf. also Tsong kha pa. Man gsal f. 207b3f.) say that the third pair must be taken as both, sbod- and arthañāṃkāraḥ, while Bhavyakirti (Prad. abhis. prak. f. 107b5f.) considers the first pair and “non-intentional language” as arthañāṃkāraḥ, and the third pair and “intentional language” as sbodlālamkāraḥ.

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, mahāyānistic hermeneutic function one accepts a hermeneutic import of the two terms, too the question of their particular hermeneutic function and its relation to the hermeneutic categories of the list of the “fourfold explanation” must be answered. This problem has been investigated e.g. by Tsong kha pa in his commentary on the Jñānavijrasya-mucaiyah (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” (pañcaārahā, rim lṭūi), 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 Māhātantran itself and the original part of the oldest of the Explanatory Tantras, the Vajramālā. 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 Guhyasāmājā-tradition and which can give us a clue in our search for tantric meaning.

This list contains the following terms:

1. “literal meaning” (aktararthaḥ, tshig gi don)
2. “common meaning” (samastāṅgam, spyi’i don)
3. “the hidden or pregnant (meaning)” (garbhi, sbas pa)
4. “the ultimate (meaning)” (kolikam, mthar thug pa)

Cf. Matsumaga, A Doubt to Authority . . ., pp. 843f.

As appearing in Prad v. 31. The following are the main Tibetan variants of these terms: 1. yi ge’i don (Prad v. 33, VJnST f. 294a4), 3. sbas pa (Prad v. 35, VJnST 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).

As the terms are of a somewhat strange appearance I may venture an explanation. aktararthaḥ is evidently to be taken as “the meaning of the words”, where aktara- is short for aktarasamudāya-, i.e. puna-. It is, however, not only the meaning of the single words but also the meaning of the whole statement. With the broadest meaning of aktara- as “words individually and taken together” I take the term, therefore, as “literal meaning in general”.

samastāṅgam, where anīga- is translated into Tibetan by don (= artha-), is a difficult term. Except for some remarks of Bhavyakirti I have not found anything that could be of help. Bhavyakirti explains anīga- with reference to the two motives which are given in Candrakirti’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 yogi. The first term, however, refers to the secular level of understanding. It is therefore only an ornament of words (śabḍālaṃkāraḥ), while the others are ornaments of meaning (arthaḷaṃkāraḥ). 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.

Candrakirti’s definitions relate these four categories and their eight remorse (kaṇḍṛtyavinirṛti-) with those who adhere to the Śūtras and 2. the connecting with the stage of generation (utpattikramayoga-) (cf. Prad. abhis. prak. f. 108a7). Thus saṃstāṅga could be taken as a bahuvrihi: “with common members, parts” said of arthaḥ, the whole expression being understood as “meaning, where both (relevant) members are commonly given”. This bahuvrihi would then have been substantivized secondarily to saṃstāṅgana 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 Śūtras 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. Candrakirti (Prad. v. 35) defines garbha- as the first three stages of the stage of perfection (sampannakramana-) (cf. also Prad. abhis. prak. f. 108b6ff.). garbhīn-, therefore, is that meaning which refers to these three stages.

kolikam is explained by Candrakirti himself (Prad. v. 36). He says the word kolik meant “end, limit” (parīvatavācaka-). 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 Tson kha pa in his commentary on Prad. v. 30 (cf. mChan 'grel f. 8a4). kolikam like garbhi is mostly used by itself as a substantivized attribute of arthaḥ. In Prad. v. 36, however, it is clearly an attribute (kolika[h]praktaḥ).

29 Cf. Bhavyakirti, Prad. abhis. prak. f. 108a3 and 109a2. This may be the reason for the conspicuous lacking of the aksārārthaḥ in the first part of the Vaijrānīnasamaucayatanaṃ, too (cf. P 84, f. 290b2–293b8), which has already been noted by Matsumaga (loc. cit., 839). If this cannot be accounted for by another reason, which I do not see, we are entitled to take Candrakirti 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.

20 Prad. vv. 33–36 (= f. 2b6–3a2):

bāhyadāstravada maikes śabdālaṃkāraparāyaṇah/
tadvatipratkāśāya aksārārthaḥ nigadyate//

“The many knowsers 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.”

saṃstāṅgana prapannānām kaṇḍṛtyavinirṛtīdah/
uputtikramayogaḥ ca saṃstāṅgane prakāśitum//

“In order to dispel the remorse with those who keep to the Śūtras 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 (vyutpattih, bkod pa), because—as Bu ston says—31 if the analysis is not given, they will not become candidates (vineyau, gdul bya).

2. The “common meaning” is of relevance for two levels of progress: firstly for those who adhere to the Sutras, i.e. Hinayāna- and Mahāyāna-Buddhists, with the particular purpose to dispel their scrupulous uneasiness or remorse (kauktyam, 'gyod). And secondly for those who adhere to the yogic practices of the “stage of generation” (utpattikramah, bskyed pa'i rim), i.e.—according to Bu ston—those who follow the Kriyā-, Caryā- and Yoga-Tantras.

The other two terms are reserved for yogis in the “stage of completion” (sampannakramah, rdzogs pa'i rim) and comprise together five categories which are directly related to the “five stages” (pañcakramah).—33

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

(a) “illumination of the nature of passion” (rāgadharmaprakāśanam, 'dod chagschos rab ston) refers to the first step of the completion, namely the “stage of diamond muttering” (vajrajāpakramah, rdo rje bzlas pa'i rim pa).

(b) “perception of the truth of conventional existence” (samvrtah satyasambodha[h], kun rdzob bden pa rtogs) refers to the third—34 step, the

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31 bSud sbyar f. 25b6: de ltar ma bsd na de rnams gdul byar mi 'gyur ro/
32 bSud sbyar f. 26a2f.
33 The relations are shown by Bhavyakirti 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" (svādhīśṭhānakramaḥ, bdag la byin gyis rlob pa'i rim pa).\(^{35}\)

(c) "discernment of the three knowledges"\(^{36}\) (jñānatrayavīcetanam, ye ūs gsum po rnam brtags pa) refers to the second step, the "stage of purification of mind" (cittaviśuddhikramaḥ, sms pa 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" (prabhāsvavaprakāśāḥ, 'od gsal ba rab ston) refers to the fourth step, the "stage of total enlightenment" (abhisambodhikramaḥ, micon par byan chub pa'i rim pa).\(^{37}\)

(e) "awakening towards coincidence" (yuganaddhaprabodhanam, zuñ du 'jug pa rtogs pa) belonging to those on the last level of the "stage of coincidence" (yuganaddhakramaḥ, zuñ 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 ff., 7 ff., 15 ff., 23 ff., 37ab; Matsumaga 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. PKrTip 44.2 f.: sarvānyapadesakam iti prabhāsvaram, tad eva caturthābhisambodhibh.

\(^{38}\) Cf. table. The terms with asterix are supplemented on the basis of Bhavyakirti’s comments (Prad. abhis. prak. f. 108b2-109a1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Fourfold explanation&quot;</th>
<th>Variety</th>
<th>Levels of understanding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. aksārtrtah sskig gi don, yi ge'i don</td>
<td>1. vyutpattirupakāsa- bhyāt pas rab lstan pa</td>
<td>1. bāhyāastravidāḥ physi rol lstan boos mkaḥs pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. smastajignant spyi'i don</td>
<td>2. kunyutvuvicertiddhah 'gyud pa stog par byed pa</td>
<td>2. sūrūndadud prapannāḥ ndo sogs la rab žug pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. garbhā sthas pa</td>
<td>3. utpattikramayogāḥ bskyed pa'i rim don da lshan pa dag</td>
<td>3. *utpattikramaḥ (kriyā-, caryā, yogatattva-followers) bskyed pa'i rim pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. samarteḥ satyasambodhah kun rdzob dten pa rtogs pa</td>
<td>a. *vajrajāpakramaḥ rdo rje bzhis pa'i rim pa</td>
<td>a. *vajrajāpakramaḥ rdo rje bzhis pa'i rim pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. jñānatrayavicetanam ye ūs gsum po rnam brtags pa</td>
<td>b. *svādhīśṭhānakramaḥ bdag la byin gyis riob pa'i rim pa</td>
<td>b. *svādhīśṭhānakramaḥ bdag la byin gyis riob pa'i rim pa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. *cittaviśuddhikramaḥ sms pa rnam par dag pa'i rim pa</td>
<td>c. *cittaviśuddhikramaḥ sms pa rnam par dag pa'i rim pa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.\(^3^9\) 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. Sanskrit</th>
<th>b. Tibetan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aksarārthaḥ</td>
<td>(Variants of the same term are included)</td>
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<tr>
<td>arutā-</td>
<td>kun rdzob bden pa rtogs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alaṁkāraḥ</td>
<td>bkod pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>upodghātaḥ</td>
<td>dgoṅs pa min pas bṣad</td>
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<tr>
<td>kartā</td>
<td>dgoṅs pas bṣad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kolikam</td>
<td>dgoṅs min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kaukṛtyam</td>
<td>dgoṅs bṣad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garbhī</td>
<td>'gyod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>caturvīdhām ākhyānam</td>
<td>rgyan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jñānatrayam</td>
<td>rgyan bdun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jñānatrayavīcetanam</td>
<td>rgyas bṣad mtha’ rnam pa drug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dvividhabhedaḥ</td>
<td>nes don</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trayajñānam</td>
<td>nes pa’i don</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na rūta-</td>
<td>ji bzin sgra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nāsandhyā</td>
<td>ji bzin sgra ma yin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nidānam</td>
<td>ji bzin min pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nimittam</td>
<td>mtha’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>niruktīḥ</td>
<td>mtha’ drug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nītārthaḥ</td>
<td>mthar thug pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>neyārthaḥ</td>
<td>mthar thug pa’i don</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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4. kolikam | 7. prabhāśvaraprakāśaḥ | d. *abhisambodhikramaḥ |
| mthar thug | ’od ysal ba rab ston | mnon par byan chub pa’i rim pa |

8. yuganaddhaprabodhanam | e. *yuganuddhakramaḥ |
| zuṅ du ’jug pa rtogs pa | zuṅ du ’jug pa’i rim pa |

\(^3^9\) I follow A. Wayman (The Buddhist Tantras. London 1973, p. 14) in giving the first half of the ninth century to Candrakīrti.
no sandhyā
nyāyāh
pañcakramaḥ
pañcappudgalāḥ
prabhāsvarapradhānakasyāḥ
pratīmā
prayojanam
yuganaddhaprabodhanam
vāgadhanapradhānakasyānaṃ
vijñānatrayam
vyākhyā
vyutpattiḥ
śatkoṭikam vyākhyānam
śatkoṭiḥ
sānubteṣaḥ satyasambodhaḥ
sāntiḥ
satyaudvayavirnayaḥ
santuḥ
sandhyāya bhāṣitam
saptālaṃkāraḥ
sumastaṅgam
hetuḥ
draṇ don
draṇ ba'i don
'dod chags chos rab ston
spyi'i don
sbras
sbras pa
sbras pa'i don
tshig gi don
zuñ du 'jug pa rtogs pa
'od gsal ba rab ston
yi ge'i don
ye sles gsum po rnam brtags pa
rim lha
bṣad pa
bṣad pa rnam pa bzi