

Report of BuddhistRoad Guest Lecture

22 July 2021 Yi (Allan) Ding (Chicago)

RECONCILING THE IRRECONCILABLE? REVISITING THE *DUNWU DASHENG ZHENGLI JUE* 頓悟大乘正理決

[THE JUDGEMENT ON SUDDEN AWAKENING BEING THE TRUE PRINCIPLE OF MAHAYANA] AND THE SAMYÉ DEBATE IN THE 8TH CENTURY

invited lecture at the BuddhistRoad project, CERES, Ruhr-Universität Bochum

The ERC project BuddhistRoad team invited Dr. Yi (Allan) Ding of the DePaul University to give a virtual BuddhistRoad Guest Lecture on July 22, 2021 on the *Dunwu dasheng zhengli jue* 頓悟大乘正理決 [The Judgement on Sudden Awakening Being the True Principle of Mahāyāna], which survives in three Dunhuang manuscripts (P. 4646 + S. 8609, Or. 8210/S. 2672, and P. 4623), and its relationship with the Samyé Debate between the Chinese master Moheyan (fl. second half of 8th c., 摩訶衍) and the Indian master Kamalaśīla in the late 8th century; P. 4646 was first translated by Paul Demiéville in 1952. In the talk Dr. Ding discussed the Tibetan origin of the series of questions in the Chinese *Judgement* and the composite nature of this text in question.

This presentation first examined the process with which Moheyan responded to the three lists of questions (Chin. *wen* 問) sent from the Indo-Tibetan side. The circumstances concerning the ‘debate’ suggest that the questions were originally composed in Tibetan and later translated into Chinese. At the very least, Moheyan was not responsible for the diction of the questions and the occasional mistranslation. The talk demonstrated that Tibetan materials, such as the canonical sources and other polemic texts, can help us decipher some of the difficulties in the *Judgement*. In light of the existence of a translation process, some of Paul Demiéville’s assumptions about the *Judgement* should be reconsidered, as he underestimated the importance of relevant Tibetan materials. Most importantly, the *Judgement* should not be dismissed as a text “teeming with terminological misunderstanding.”

Dr. Ding further discussed how to rethink the contents of the *Judgement* in several different ways. Moheyan considered his writings sent to the Tibetan court as ‘petitions’ (Chin. *biao*



表), which maintained a customary structure in the Tang Dynasty (618–907, 唐). The questions and answers in the Tibetan counterpart (P. T. 823, 827, and 829) can be taken as belonging to the genre ‘question and answer treatises’ (Tib. *zhus lan*). Despite the antagonistic tone in the *Judgement* and the disputes about meditative practices (Tib. *sgom ba*), the philosophical outlook (Tib. *lta ba*) of Moheyan was actually quite close to Kamalaśīla’s thought. Although Kamalaśīla is not mentioned by name in the text, Kamalaśīla’s main concerns are represented in the questions.

Lastly, Dr. Ding proposed a way to reconcile the conflicting views on the outcome of the debate. From a historical perspective, the Indo-Tibetan side failed to put a stop to the spread of Chan in Tibet, while the Chan side did not manage to establish a meaningful relationship with the court. Neither Moheyan nor Kamalaśīla served as the emperor’s personal spiritual advisor (Skr. *kalyāṇamitra*). Despite the fact the Indo-Tibetan side enjoyed the support from the royal court, Kamalaśīla’s view on meditation did not gain much attraction in the ninth century, when ‘subtist’ tantric practices became increasingly popular. The religious importance of Kamalaśīla and the Samyé Debate was reinvented and reemphasized centuries later.

