A History of Buddha-Nature Theory: The Literature and Traditions

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Abstract

Buddha-nature theory, the idea that all beings possess in some way the potential for enlightenment, is found in all Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions. First appearing in India around the third or fourth century CE, it spread to China beginning in the fifth century with the translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and other buddha-nature scriptures, where it inspired the concept of original enlightenment, most famously articulated in the *Awakening of Faith*. Tibetans received the teaching first in the eighth century with the translations of the sūtras, but it only began to have an impact in the eleventh century with the translation of the Ratnagotravibhāga. Conforming to neither Madhyamaka nor Yogācāra, buddha-nature has been incorporated somewhat uneasily into both, although as a positivistic theory of reality it has been more easily accepted by Yogācārin traditions.

The theory of *tathāgatagarbha*—most commonly, if not perfectly, translated into English as "buddha-nature"[1]—is generally thought by scholars to have first appeared around the third or fourth century CE and possibly as early as the second. Many Tibetan and Chinese scholiasts found justification for the ideas in various passages in the Pāli Canon, such as this from the *Aṅguttaranikāya Sutta*: "Luminous, monks, is this mind, but sometimes it is defiled by adventitious defilements. . . . sometimes it is free from adventitious defilements."[2] The Vinaya contains a famous story in which the Buddha sends his gaze over all existence and perceives sentient beings as lotuses rooted in deep mud; the metaphor is taken as pertaining to the buddha-nature of all beings, destined as we are to attain perfectly pure enlightenment.

Traditional and modern scholars debate how much of a link can be found between early Pāli references to "luminosity" and buddha-nature.[3] Mainstream Pāli Buddhism considered consciousness to be one of the five *skandhas*, the building blocks of conditioned existence. Early exegesis of luminosity passages in the scriptures seems to suggest that they were not, in fact, teaching that the mind is naturally pure or that it preexists the skandhas, but only that it has the potential to be made pure.[4] A related concept is *bhavaṅga* mind, meaning the substratum of consciousness that represents mind in its inactive state. This does not appear originally to have been intended as a permanent subconscious; at the moment the mind becomes active, bhavaṅga is cut off and the active

mind (*vīthicitta*) takes over. Still, some scholars have pointed to the concept as a forerunner to the notion of luminosity.[5]

Although over the centuries Chinese and Tibetan scholiasts have categorized the concept of buddha-nature as either Yogācāra or Madhyamaka, there is sufficient reason to believe that the tathāgatagarbha theory developed independently: it is a *cataphatic* doctrine (that is, it uses positive language to describe the nature of reality), which distinguishes it from the *apophatic* approach of Madhyamaka; and it asserts that all sentient beings have an equal capacity to awaken, which contradicts the basic Yogācāra doctrine of different potentials for enlightenment. Instead, the rise of the doctrine was likely a result of Buddhist theorists grappling with long-standing core Buddhist conundrums such as the nature of mind; how to use language to describe what is by definition beyond the reach of language; how nirvāṇa, which is unconditioned and perfect, can arise out of saṃsāra; and how to make sense of various yogic experiences.

Early Appearances of the Term *Tathāgatagarbha*

Scholars currently debate the earliest (surviving) appearance of the term *tathāgatagarbha*. The term itself appears in a handful of early scriptures but without elaboration, suggesting that the term had been coined but its meaning had not yet been fleshed out. These are documented by Karl Brunnhölzl in *When the Clouds Part*:

Possibly the first appearance of the term *tathāgatagarbha* (though not in the sense in which it is used in the *tathāgatagarbha* sūtras) has been traced to the *Mahāsaṃghika Ekottarikāgama* (the Chinese recension of the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*): "If someone devotes himself to the *Ekottarikāgama* / Then he has the *tathāgatagarbha*. / Even if his body cannot exhaust defilements in this life / In his next life he will attain supreme wisdom." The term is also used once in the *Gaṇḍavyūhasūtra* (which is dated prior to the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*) as an epithet of Sudhana, without further explanation. Furthermore, the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra in One Hundred Fifty Lines* (*Adhyardhaśatikāprajñāpāramitāsūtra*) contains the sentence "all sentient beings possess the *tathāgatagarbha*[6] because their entire being is that of the great bodhisattva Samantabhadra."[7]

In *When the Clouds Part*, Brunnhölzl also surveys the literature to which the earliest Indian treatise on tathāgatagarbha, the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, makes reference. These include the *Dhāraṇīśvararājasūtra* and the *Ratnadārikāsūtra*, among others.[8] Although these scriptures do not use the term *tathāgatagarbha*, they provided the treatise's author with much of the doctrinal basis for the explication of the theory.

One such concept on which tathāgatagarbha theory relies is *gotra*, a Sanskrit term that refers to family unit by bloodline and is used metaphorically in Buddhism to refer to "class," "lineage," or "disposition." Buddhist teachings since the early days of the religion

discussed the various predilections of followers, a way of separating the children of the "noble" class—those who are sincere in their renunciation and diligent in their austerities—from the rest of humanity. In the Mahāyāna, three basic classes of Buddhist practitioners were said to exist: *śrāvakas*, who will become *arhats* by following the Hīnayāna path; *pratyekabuddhas*, who will become arhats without being taught; and *bodhisattvas*, or those destined to become buddhas on the Mahāyāna path. An additional gotra was posited in some sūtras: that of the *icchantika*, who does not possess tathāgatagarbha and therefore has no possibility of becoming enlightened.[9] Whether or not such a class of beings truly existed was one of the earliest controversies in buddha-nature theory.

Tathāgatagarbha Scripture

A handful of texts that are sometimes collectively labeled "tathāgatagarbha sūtras" are generally agreed upon as the initial group of literature that developed the concept of buddha-nature as we know it today. These stand distinct from the Yogācāra scriptures such as the *Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*, and from the prajñāpāramitā (perfection of wisdom) literature that provided the foundation for the Madhyamaka; so much so that some historians have posited the existence of a third Indian Mahāyāna school alongside them: the Tathāgatagarbha school. Among the most important of these texts are the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta*, the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanādanirdeśa*, the *Mahābherīsūtra*, and the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*. While later Mahāyāna scriptures such as the *Laṅkāvatāra* and the *Lotus Sūtra* also teach tathāgatagarbha, the above-named scriptures predate the popular *Ratnagotravibhāga*, a fourth-[10] or early fifth-century[11] Indian treatise that systematized tathāgatagarbha theory, and so are considered the first wave of the doctrine. The dates of their creation are unknown, and there is as yet little consensus concerning the sequence of their appearances.

The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* are the likeliest candidates for the earliest surviving instance of the term *tathāgatagarbha* used in the sense that it has come down to us. Michael Radich dates the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* to as early as the second century CE and claims that it is the earliest of the group,[12] while Michael Zimmermann dates the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* to the third century;[13] he once argued that this sūtra was the earliest of the group but has since backed away from that assertion in light of Radich's findings.

The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, like the Hīnayāna sūtra of the same name, is ostensibly a narrative about the final days of the Buddha, but this one extends into a discourse of Mahāyāna doctrine. The Buddha is depicted not as dying but as entering a nirvāṇa that is an enduring presence rather than an extinction. This seems to be the main thrust of the sūtra: to proclaim that the Buddha is ever-present and to equate *parinirvāṇa* with the eternal and all-pervading *dharmakāya*, which eventually came to be equated in the sūtra

with tathāgatagarbha.[14] The sūtra in fact inverts what are known as the four *viparyāsas*, or wrong views: that any phenomenon can be described as being free from suffering, permanent, pure, or endowed with a self. The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* instead states that the Buddha, his enlightenment, and the *buddhadhātu* should all be properly described as blissful, permanent, pure, and endowed with a self. That permanent buddhahood, which is only masked by temporary stains, is tathāgatagarbha. (In typical parochial Mahāyāna fashion, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* reserves complete enlightenment for only those who have completed the Mahāyāna path; the nirvāṇa of the arhat is merely free of the stains, lacking the awareness of the buddhadhātu and bliss.)

The *Mahāparnirvāṇasūtra*'s liberal use of the term *self* (*ātman*) to describe tathāgatagarbha was controversial, flying in the face of one of the central doctrines of Buddhism, that of no-self, or *anātman*. As Christopher Jones points out, two additional tathāgatagarbha sūtras do the same, the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra* and the **Mahābherīsūtra* (both of which will be introduced below), leading him to speculate that opposition to these sūtras from within Buddhist communities was the reason later tathāgatagarbha sūtras dropped the use of the term *ātman*.[15]

In his study of the scripture, Radich argues that the term *tathāgatagarbha*, which he glosses as "womb of a buddha," was used to explain how a perfectly pure being such as a buddha could arise out of a polluted and degraded human being—how, in other words, the conditioned could give rise to the unconditioned. This line of argument remains one of the more popular defenses against the claim that buddha-nature theory is non-Buddhist; if sentient beings and buddhas do not share the same nature, defenders assert, the attainment of enlightenment cannot be explained. Either saṃsāra must be wiped away to reveal what is already present, or a spark of enlightenment that is part of a saṃsāric being's essence is brought to fruition. Otherwise nirvāṇa is the result of some action and therefore determined by causes and conditions, a view that is abhorrent to any Buddhist; nirvāṇa is precisely the absence of any conditioning.

As Brunnhölzl describes it, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* offers an ambiguous definition of *tathāgatagarbha*: it is an intrinsic pure nature that all sentient beings possess and of which they will become aware once obscurations are removed, and it is a seed or potential that will ripen into buddhahood once all conditions are present.[16] Buddha-nature, it would seem, was from the very early days a doctrine that contained both an ontological and a soteriological assertion. In the first case it is a statement about the nature of reality: sentient beings are by nature perfect, but that perfection is obscured by stains that nevertheless do not impact its essence; that perfection is moreover equated with the nature of reality itself, and therefore buddha-nature becomes the basis for both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. In the second case it is an ethical proposal relating to salvation: the potential for perfection is present in all sentient beings, but they must each strive to actualize it. This bifurcated definition would continue through all presentations, to the delight or consternation of many commentators.

The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* appears to have been compiled in at least three stages. As described by Liu Ming-Wood and also by Jikidō Takasaki, the earliest section comprises the first five chapters, which read as a complete text and end with the final days of the Buddha.[17] Chapters 6 through 9 clarify points made in the first, a commentary of sorts in the guise of a continuation, and the final section, chapters 10 through 13, add further explanation. As Christopher Jones explained, Japanese scholar Masahiro Shimoda suggested that the earliest core of the text was concerned with the Buddha's permanent existence; rather than vanishing into nirvāṇa, here the Buddha is permanent and omnipresent. The accretion of the tathāgatagarbha doctrine represents a transition of the Buddha's body into that of sentient beings, the Buddha's presence becoming the true self of ordinary beings. This suggests an interesting link between the early Buddhist concern with the relics—and lasting presence—of the Buddha with the doctrine of buddha-nature.[18] In any case, the sūtra teaches, this innate buddha-body of sentient beings, which came to be called tathāgatagarbha, represents their true self.

A primary divergence between the first and later sections of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* is in their positions on buddha-nature and the *icchantikas*, the class of beings who are beset with the gravest of flaws such that they can never become enlightened; by definition they are devoid of buddha-nature. The first section of the sūtra is adamant that the icchantikas do not have buddha-nature and can never become enlightened; they are a scorched seed that can never sprout. The second section is ambiguous on the subject, and the third states unequivocally that icchantikas do have buddha-nature and therefore do have the potential to become enlightened.[19] By bestowing buddha-nature on the icchantika, the additions brought the sūtra into full conformity with the Single Vehicle (*Ekayāna*) teachings of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*—the *Lotus Sūtra*—which influenced it and other early tathāgatagarbha sūtras,[20] and concurrently into contradiction with the fundamental Yogācāra doctrine of the three natures.

Whether or not it was the first tathāgatagarbha sūtra, most scholars agree that the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* was among the earliest of the group. It has been translated into English by William Grosnick[21] and again by Michael Zimmermann[22], who also prepared critical editions of the Chinese and Tibetan which he published together with a lengthy study. Zimmermann explains in patient detail that there are two versions of the text, the first of which lacks much of the content of the second, later recension (see below in the section on translations into Chinese). Like the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* offers both an ontological and soteriological definition of tathāgatagarbha, although "definition" is probably not the right word: the short text simply lists nine similes to describe the concept. These include a golden statue covered in mud and a seed that is destined to grow into a tree, suggesting both an already-perfected nature and the potential to become something that one is presently not.

Zimmermann and others have noted that tathāgatagarbha theory may have initially been developed more for an ethical and soteriological purpose; the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* did not have to explain the idea with complicated philosophical arguments because it was

intended to encourage and inspire, not convince. It is an appeal to emotion rather than to the intellect. Madhyamaka and Yogācāra schools of doctrine were then in ascendance in Mahāyāna communities, and it is reasonable to hypothesize that practitioners were put off by the seeming nihilism of Madhyamaka; emptiness is too easily interpreted to mean that the ultimate is, terrifyingly, simply a void. Yogācāra, meanwhile, advocated a theory of "class" or "disposition" (*gotra*) in which only certain beings were said to be able to attain enlightenment. Such a doctrine might leave some of the faithful—not to mention potential converts—feeling left out. The early tathāgatagarbha literature countered both. It offered a positive description of the ultimate—buddha-nature, the true and real nature of both a person and reality—and it guaranteed complete and perfect enlightenment to all beings who were willing to strive for it (on the Mahāyāna path, of course). Yogācāra, it should be noted, also uses positive language to describe the ultimate—mind, at least in later Yogācāra scriptures, is said to be truly existent—and this has led some scholars to erroneously label tathāgatagarbha a Yogācāra doctrine.[23]

Another early tathāgatagarbha scripture, perhaps one of the most influential, was also an early instance of the concept of a single vehicle, merging all previous Buddhist doctrine into a single doxographical order. This was the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanādanirdeśa*, known in English as *The Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*. Although it is no longer extant in Sanskrit, it was evidently highly influential in India, judging by the many references to it in other scriptures.[24] Diana Paul argues that it was composed at least by the year 350, to give it time to gain popularity in India and be brought to China, where it was translated in 435.[25] In the sūtra, Queen Śrīmālā of Ayodhyā is prompted by a letter from her parents to supplicate the Buddha, who appears before her and inspires her to teach. The main topics of her discourse are tathāgatagarbha, the Single Vehicle, and the Four Noble Truths. Although the sūtra affirms that all beings share the same buddha-natures, the *Śrīmālā* asserts that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas (that is, non-Mahāyāna Buddhists) cannot comprehend the steps needed to shed adventitious stains and reveal the intrinsic purity of mind; only bodhisattvas can. Thus while the sūtra proclaims a single vehicle and universal buddha-nature, it does so with some reservation, suggesting a Yogācāra influence. This inequality is probably an indication of the scripture's early date: Mahāyāna communities were still in competition with the earlier Buddhist orders, and bodhisattvas and śrāvakas could not be depicted as equals.

In *When the Clouds Part*, Karl Brunnhölzl draws attention to a novel conception of emptiness in the *Śrīmālā*: tathāgatagarbha "is empty of adventitious stains but not empty of its limitless inseparable qualities."[26] With this the sūtra seems to be addressing the question of how tathāgatagarbha theory is to be addressed by Mādhyamikas. If tathāgatagarbha is another name for emptiness, as some Madhyamaka theorists would argue, then buddha-nature ought to conform with Madhyamaka definitions of emptiness and lack its own qualities. Instead, buddha-nature is described as empty of all but its own characteristics, an early suggestion of a philosophical view that came to be known in Tibet as "other-emptiness."

The above three early tathāgatagarbha scriptures describe an ultimate nature that is naturally pure but is obscured by adventitious stains. The very short *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* further expands the ontological aspect of buddha-nature. The *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta*, or "No-Increase, No-Decrease Chapter," exists today only in Chinese translation, although it was eventually known to Tibetans through extensive quotations in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (initial Tibetan translators of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* did not recognize the quotations and so failed to identify it as a sūtra). Jonathan Silk dates the text to at least before the early fifth century, after the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* and the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanādanirdeśa*,[27] as does Diana Paul,[28] while Jikidō Takasaki argues for it having appeared after the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* and before the *Śrīmālādevī*.[29]

Like other tathāgatagarbha scriptures, the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* is ambiguous as to whether tathāgatagarbha is a womb/seed or an intrinsic nature, a currently nonexistent potential or an already-existent presence. Silk argues that the text understands the term in the latter sense. The title of the scripture comes from the discussion of whether the number of ordinary beings decreases when someone becomes a buddha. Such a question reveals dualistic thinking, the Buddha chides in the narrative, and is therefore flawed, because ordinary beings and buddhas are not fundamentally different in nature. As Brunnhölzl puts it, the text teaches that

when the dharmakāya is obscured by adventitious stains, it is called "sentient being." When this very same dharmakāya becomes weary of saṃsāra and practices the ten pāramitās and bodhisattva conduct, it is called "bodhisattva." When it is free from all stains, it is called "buddha."[30]

In other words, there is no essential difference between an ordinary being and a buddha, and to ask whether there is a change in population when a person attains enlightenment is nonsensical, not unlike asking whether there is a change in the number of water molecules when ice melts. It is simply that ordinary beings are afflicted by stains and a buddha is not, similar to a golden statue wrapped in rags compared to a statue on display in all its glory. (Note how in the above passage buddha-nature and dharmakāya are treated as synonyms.)

One of the main contributions of the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* is the emphasis on faith as a necessary—though not sufficient—condition of enlightenment. Such a rhetorical move might suggest an admission that tathāgatagarbha is a notion that is not available for logical proof—it does, after all, raise the specter of a quasi-Hindu transcendent self, not to mention a mystical presence that is beyond the reach of language. The use of positive terms to describe tathāgatagarbha, much less its use of the word *ātman*, required a lot of exegesis to convince many that the doctrine was in accordance with current understandings of emptiness and did not violate the Buddha's teaching of no-self.[31]

The *Mahābherīsūtra*, another tathāgatagarbha sūtra that like the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* is concerned with the issue of whether the sum total of

sentient beings can increase or decrease, also makes extensive use of the term *ātman*. The sūtra was translated into Chinese in the fifth century by Guṇabhadra and was influenced by the *Lotus Sūtra*, which it mentions by name. Christopher Jones proposed that because the presentation of the issues in the *Mahābherīsūtra* is less sophisticated than in the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta*, it should be considered to have been composed earlier. Jones also argues that with the *Mahābherīsūtra* and the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* came an important expansion of the meaning of *tathāgatagarbha*: earlier scriptures posited that all beings have buddha-nature in them and that they had the potential to become a buddha. Jones writes that these two sūtras were responsible for equating tathāgatagarbha with dharmakāya (as we saw above), the all-pervading true nature of all reality. Buddha-nature in this way is no longer just a potential or nature of the individual; it is the fundamental nature of reality shared by all beings.[32]

A final early tathāgatagarbha sūtra, if it can fairly be included in the category, is the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*, which like the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* examines earlier material through a Mahāyāna lens. Here is the story of the conversion of a bandit who has killed so many people and fashioned such an impressive necklace of their fingers that he has earned the epithet Aṅgulimāla, "Rosary of Fingers." Like the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* and the *Mahābherīsūtra*, the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra* equates tathāgatagarbha with ātman, distinguishing it from non-Buddhist conceptions of the term. As Jones pointed out, referencing Kazuo Kano's Japanese-language scholarship, the message of the scripture is not, as one might think, the universality of buddha-nature, even for those who commit heinous crimes. Aṅgulimāla is not actually converted in the Mahāyāna version of the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*; rather, his killings are presented as illusory, and the violence is justified as a defense of the Dharma.[33] Buddha-nature is rather incidental to this message.

Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras in China

Translation of the Scriptures

All the above tathāgatagarbha scriptures were translated into Chinese between the fifth and sixth centuries, during a period of intense translation activity. As evidence of the availability of Sanskrit manuscripts, forty-one Sanskrit fragments of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* have been found in Central Asia, a primary region through which Buddhism was brought from India to China.[34] Dunhuang in particular, it is believed, was a hub of buddha-nature transmission in China. Of the six scriptures described above, five were done in the fifth century. Three were translated by Guṇabhadra[35] and two by Buddhabhadra.[36] Dharmakṣema[37] translated one of these, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, a second time, and may have also translated the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*. Bodhiruci (of the Wei)[38] translated the sixth scripture in the early sixth century.

There are three recensions of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, although only two are technically translations. The first, the *Dabannihuan jing* 大般泥洹經 (T376), was translated into

Chinese in the southern capital of Jiankang 建康 around 416–418 by Buddhabhadra and Faxian 法顯.[39] This consists of only the first five chapters (said to be the original core) of the sūtra. The second is the *Dabanniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (T374), done around 421–432 by Dharmakṣema in the northern kingdom of Beiliang 北涼.[40] This was revised in the 430s as *Dabanniepan jing* 大般涅槃經 (T375), also known as the "Southern Version," produced in Liu Song 劉宋 by Huiyan 慧嚴, Huiguan 慧觀, Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385–433), and others. This is not technically a translation, as they did not consult a Sanskrit original.[41] According to Diana Paul, the prolific translator Guṇabhadra also later corrected Dharmakṣema's translation.[42]

The *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* may have been translated into Chinese as early as the late third century by a man named Faju 法炬,[43] who was active at least between 290 and 306. This information is based on a catalog called the *Chu sanzang ji ji* 出三藏記集 by Sengyou 僧祐 (445–518), but it is far from certain, and the assertion has been discounted by some scholars; it would certainly push back the date of the sūtra's creation.[44] The early surviving recension of the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* is the *Dafangdeng rulaizang jing* 大方等如來藏經 (Taishō 666), which was translated into Chinese in the early fifth century by Buddhabhadra. A second recension, *Dafanghuang rulaizang jing* 大方廣如來藏經 (T667), was translated by Amoghavajra[45] around the middle of the eighth century.

The *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanādanirdeśa* was translated twice, first in 435 by Guṇabhadra as the *Shengmen shizi hou yicheng da fangbian fangguang jing* 勝鬘師子吼一乘大方便方廣經 (T353).[46] Guṇabhadra worked with a disciple of the great Central Asian translator Kumārajīva[47] named Baoyun 寶雲, who was also a companion to Faxian.[48] The second is *Shengmen furen hui* (T310), done by Bodhiruci (of the Tang) (572–727)[49] between 706 and 713 as part of his translation of the Ratnakūṭa scriptural collection. Diana Paul mentions that Chinese catalogs record two translations made prior to Guṇabhadra's, one by Dharmakṣema and the other done in 320 by a monk named Seng Fani 僧法尼. She suspects that the records may in fact point to the presence of Sanskrit manuscripts circulating in the region and several failed attempts at translations.[50] Paul lists six commentaries to the *Śrīmālādevīsūtra*, the first being done before the year 500 and the last in 722, which attest to its popularity. The *Mahābherīsūtra* was also translated by Guṇabhadra, circa 435–436, as *Dafa gu jing* 大法鼓經 (T270),[51] as was the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*, with the title *Yang jue mo luo jing* 央掘魔羅經 (T120), between 435 and 453.[52] Finally, the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta*, which, as mentioned above, exists only in Chinese, was translated by Bodhiruci (of the Wei Dynasty) in 520 in Luoyang with the title *Foshuo bu zeng bu jian jing* 佛 說不增不減經 (T668).[53]

Influence of the Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras in China

Of these six scriptures, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* had the widest impact in terms of buddha-nature. Not long after its appearance in China, scholiasts merged its teaching of universal enlightenment with the indigenous Chinese Buddhist doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment (*dunwu* 頓悟).[54] At the center of this synthesis was the Six Dynasties monk Daosheng (道生 360/375-434), a disciple of Kumārajīva.[55] Daosheng had earlier developed the theory of Sudden Enlightenment based initially on Abhidharma teachings he received from the hermit Saṅgadeva in Lushan at the end of the fourth century and later expanded based on Ekayāna and Madhyamaka doctrines.[56] Sudden Enlightenment holds that enlightenment is not causal; rather than being the result of a path requiring effort over innumerable eons, one need only recognize one's own natural state. Universal buddha-nature, defined as that natural state, therefore had obvious appeal to Daosheng. His community, however, initially had access only to Faxian's version of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, in which icchantikas are not endowed with buddha-nature. In preaching universal buddha-nature, Daosheng was accused by his colleague Huiguan 慧觀 of heresy, and in 428–429 he was banished from Qingyuan Monastery 青园寺 in Jiankang 建康, the capital of the Southern Dynasty. The following year, in 430, Dharmakṣema's translation of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, which extended buddha-nature to the icchantikas, became available in Jiankang, and Daosheng was exonerated.[57]

Daosheng was not the first to link Sudden Enlightenment with the buddha-nature theory of the *Mahāpanirvāṇasūtra*. This honor goes to Sengrui 僧叡, who, in his polemical Mahāyāna tract *Treatise Clarifying Doubts* (*Yuyi lun* 喻疑論), linked those who criticized Sudden Enlightenment to those who rejected universal buddha-nature and, somewhat incongruously, alluded to such people as icchantikas.[58] Nevertheless, it was Daosheng who popularized the idea. There was, of course, resistance to Daosheng and his followers' cataphatic embrace of buddha-nature. Jizang 吉藏 (549-623), the founder of Chinese Madhyamaka, wrote in his *Treatise on the Mystery of the Mahāyāna* (*Dacheng xuanlun* 大乘玄論) that "always it is necessary to oppose any definition of buddha-nature."[59]

The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*'s teaching of universal buddha-nature found congress with another, related Chinese Buddhist doctrine: Original Enlightenment. As explained by Jacqueline Stone, Original Enlightenment theory was first articulated in three apocryphal Chinese scriptures: *Jingang sanmeijing* 金剛三昧經 and *Renwangjing* 任王經 (both of which were said to have been translated by Amoghavajra but were likely composed in China in the sixth century) and, most important, the wildly popular *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, or *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論. In these works and their commentaries, Chinese scholiasts adopted buddha-nature theory as a tool to explore the ontological basis on which ordinary sentient beings become buddhas. The

author of *Awakening of Faith* merged buddha-nature theory with the Yogācāra doctrine of *ālayavijñāna*, which attempts to explain the nature of ignorance. This was done in order to, as Stone puts it, "clarify the relation between the mind, understood as originally pure, and ignorance."[60] *Awakening of Faith* treats originally pure mind and ignorance as merely two different perceptions of the same reality: buddha-nature, originally pure, is the ultimate reality of things—that is, emptiness; ālayavijñāna, the storehouse of saṃsāra, is reality as perceived through the lens of delusion and corresponds to conventional reality. And because even deluded perception is grounded in the dharmakāya, ignorance can be said to share the same fundamental nature as original purity.

Both tathāgatagarbha and ālayavijñāna theory describe the process of buddhification in terms of adventitious stains that must be cleansed over untold eons of ardent practice. In a cultural setting such as India, where a seemingly endless string of deaths and births was taken for granted, this probably was not a problem. Chinese audiences, however, appear to have been dismayed at the length of time needed to arrive at the goal of full enlightenment. The *Awakening of Faith*, by redefining ignorance and wisdom, shifted the nature of the path from the one to the other. There is, ultimately, no ignorance to purify. To attain buddhahood one needs only to recognize the original purity of one's own mind, to realize the fundamental emptiness of all phenomena, including one's own crass thoughts and experiences. The successful practitioner actualizes an enlightenment (*shizhue* 始覺) that is no different from the "original enlightenment" (*benzhue* 不覺).

Original Enlightenment was hugely influential in Chinese Buddhist communities, and the *Awakening of Faith* became one of two main scriptures for the Huayan school, alongside the *Avataṃsakasūtra*. It was central in the writings of the great patriarchs Fazang (法藏 643–712) and Zongmi (宗密 780–841) and was key to the later Tiantai theory of the buddha-nature of inanimate objects: if all phenomena are in fact the dharmakāya, and the dharmakāya is the equivalent of buddha-nature, then even roof tiles have buddha-nature and can be said to preach the Dharma. Sudden Enlightenment, meanwhile, came to be adopted in various degrees by most Chinese and later Japanese Buddhist schools and was contrasted with what the Chinese classified as the gradual path.[61] The two were the subject of a famous eighth-century doctrinal debate in Tibet between the Indian Mādhyamika Kamalaśīla (713–763) and the Chan master Heshang Moheyan 和尚摩訶衍 (discussed below). The difference between them was also given expression in the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*, where two monks leave dueling verses on a monastery wall: the one giving voice to the gradual path on which one strives to purify the obscurations, the second to the sudden path, with its expression of original enlightenment and admonition to not solidify the fog of saṃsāra:

The body is the bodhi tree;
The mind is like a bright mirror's stand.
Be always diligent in rubbing it—
Do not let it attract any dust.

Bodhi is fundamentally without any tree;
The bright mirror is also not a stand.
Fundamentally there is not a single thing—
Where could any dust be attracted?[62]

Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras in Tibet

Tibetan Translations of the Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras

Very little research has been done on the early transmission of tathāgatagarbha theory in Tibet. We know that most of the important buddha-nature sūtras were translated as part of the first transmission of Buddhism in Tibet, as they are listed in the early ninth-century Denkarma Catalog (*Ldan dkar ma*) of all known translated scriptures.[63] Dorje Wangchuk points to a number of native Tibetan compositions that make reference to the doctrine, such as Yeshe De's[64] *Differentiations of Views* (*Lta ba'i khyad par*) and Pelyang's[65] *Lamp of the Method and Wisdom* (*Thabs shes sgron ma*), an early proto-Dzogchen treatise.[66] Nupchen Sangye Yeshe[67] quoted the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, albeit without mentioning the term *tathāgatagarbha*, in his *Lamp for the Eyes in Contemplation* (*Bsam gtan mig sgron*).[68] The terms *tathāgatagarbha* and *sugatagarbha*[69] also appear in tantras belonging to the Nyingma classifications of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga. Despite the early appearance, Wangchuk finds little evidence that *tathāgatagarbha* became widespread—the term appears, but there seem to have been no attempts to explain or integrate the idea until the translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in the late eleventh century.

Regarding the translations, the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* was translated around the year 800 as *'Phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (D258). The Tibetan Yeshe De, who was later apotheosized into one of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava (his mystical ability was said to be flight) is credited with the translation, alongside Śākyaprabha.[70] One recension of the translation alternately credits the work to Jinamitra and Dānaśīla, prolific translators who are well represented in the Tibetan canon. There is reason, however, to doubt the association—Michael Zimmermann reasonably surmised that this was an attempt on the part of the scribe to connect the translation with more established figures.[71] The Tibetan corresponds to the Chinese T667. The sūtra inspired at least one commentary, *Golden Key* (*Gser gyi lde mig*) by the great Butön Rinchen Drup.[72]

The *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* was translated into Tibetan three times, one of which was from the Chinese. This is the *'Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po'i mdo* (D119), translated by a Chinese man whose name was Tibetanized as Wangpabzhun (Wang phab zhun) together with Gewai Lodrö[73] and Gyatso De,[74] none of whose dates are known. They possibly worked from T374, as Radich states that the two correspond.[75] A second

translation, '*Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po theg pa chen po'i mdo* (D120), was done in the early ninth century by Jinamitra, Jñānagarbha, and Devacandra. This translation corresponds to T376. A third, *'Phags pa yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa chen po'i mdo* (D121), was done later, at the start of the second diffusion period, by Kamalagupta and Rinchen Zangpo.[76]

The Tibetan canon has only one translation of the *Śrīmālādevīsiṃhanādanirdeśa*, the *'Phags pa lha mo dpal phreng seng ge'i sgra shes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (D92), which is part of the Ratnakūṭa collection translated by Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, and Yeshe De.[77] The *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra* was translated as *'Phags pa sor mo'i phreng ba la phan pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (D213) in the late eighth or early ninth century by Dharmatāśīla, Śākyaprabha, and a monk named Tong Ācārya who was either Indian or Chinese.[78] The *Mahābherīsūtra* was translated as *'Phags pa rnga bo che chen po'i le'u zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (D222) in the ninth century by Vidyākaraprabha and Pelgyi Lhunpo.[79] Christopher Jones writes that the Tibetan is longer than the Chinese version (T270) and is altered in ways that suggest that the translators sought to make sense of difficult passages.[80] As mentioned above, no Tibetan translation of the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* exists, if it was ever made. Ngok Lotsāwa Loden Sherab[81] did not recognize the title as a sūtra when he and Sajjana translated the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and so they integrated the words of the title into the passage. Later Tibetans, however, did know that it was a sūtra title, proving at least that it was known to Tibetans, whether through Chinese translation or Sanskrit, or even a possible lost Tibetan.[82]

Influence of the Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras in Tibet

To the degree that buddha-nature theory provided the foundation for the sudden/gradual debate, the so-called Council of Lhasa or Samye Debate played an important role in popularizing the ideas in Tibet, albeit framed in a negative perspective. According to Tibetan and Chinese sources, some time at the end of the eighth century an Indian monk and a Chinese Chan master met to debate the nature of enlightenment and the requirements of the path. The Indian was the highly educated Kamalaśīla, a monk from the great Indian monastic university Vikramalaśīla and a student of Śāntarakṣita, the monk who ordained the first Tibetan monks. The Chan master is known only as Monk Mahāyāna—Heshang Mohoyan in Tibetan, or, in Chinese, Heshang Moheyan 和尚摩訶衍. Although their encounter is commonly depicted as a meeting between the two monks in the presence of the Tibetan king Tri Songdetsen,[83] the historical record suggests it was more of "a haphazard series of indirect confrontations," in the words of Luis Gomez.[84] Documentation rests almost entirely on Kamalaśīla's *Bhāvanākrama*, which was the basis for Tibetan historian Butön Rinchen Drup's account of the contest,[85] and a Chinese work, *Dunwu Dacheng Zhenglijue* 頓悟大乘正理決, that is ostensibly by Moheyan's disciple Wangxi 王錫, which consists of a series of questions and answers on points of

doctrine. Various popular narratives of the encounter give different outcomes; most have Moheyan losing and returning to China in humiliation, but some accounts have him victorious.

Regardless of the context for the encounter, it is clear that Indian and Chinese Buddhist ideas were circulating in Tibet, particularly after the Tibetan Empire conquered Dunhuang, then a center of Chan activity. Chan subitism may have been parodied in Tibetan literature—Moheyan is said to have taught that all activity perpetuates saṃsāra, and so liberation can only be gained through utterly ceasing to act or think—but there is ample evidence that many Tibetans took Chinese notions of Sudden Enlightenment seriously.[86] As documented by Sam van Schaik in his book *Tibetan Zen*, the Chan tradition did have a presence in Tibet, although earlier claims of its influence on Dzogchen have, he argues, been overstated.[87]

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the Later Spread of Buddha-Nature Theory in India

The Ratnagotravibhāga

While the tathāgatagarbha sūtras were being translated and circulated in China, someone in India—we do not know who[88]—composed a treatise that systematized the doctrine for the first time. This is the *Ratnagotravibhāga Mahāyānottaratantraśāstra*, which roughly translates as "The Final Teaching (*uttaratantra*) of the Mahāyāna, A Treatise (*śāstra*) Analyzing (*vibhāga*) the Source (*gotra*) of the [Three] Jewels (*ratna*)."[89] In root and explanatory verses, with a prose (auto)commentary, the treatise provides a philosophical basis for supporting buddha-nature theory, quoting extensively from most of the aforementioned sūtras.[90] The date of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is not known; some scholars have speculated that it can be dated to as early as the mid-third century, but it was most likely composed in the mid to late fifth century. We know that the *Ratnagotravibhāga* existed in India by at least the year 498, the earliest date that Chinese records give for the arrival in China of its translator, Ratnamati.[91] Although it appears to have been largely forgotten in India between the sixth and the tenth centuries, it was revived there in the eleventh century and promulgated in Central Asia, moving from there into Tibet in the early eleventh century.

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* is divided into five chapters, the first four of which cover what it calls the seven *vajrapadas*, or "vajra points": the Buddha, Dharma, Saṃgha, tathāgatagarbha, enlightenment, buddha qualities, and buddha activity. Chapter 1 deals with the first three and tathāgatagarbha, chapter 2 with enlightenment, chapter 3 with buddha qualities, and chapter 4 with buddha activity. The final chapter concerns the virtues and benefits of teaching tathāgatagarbha and the customary Mahāyāna exhortations to promulgate the text.

The bulk of the first chapter, following a brief discussion of the Three Jewels, is dedicated to tathāgatagarbha. This topic is introduced with two famous verses that set forth the three reasons that justify the claim that all sentient beings possess buddha-nature. As translated by Brunnhölzl, verses 1.27 and 1.28 read as follows:

Since buddha wisdom enters into the multitudes of beings,
Since its stainlessness is nondual by nature,
And since the buddha disposition is metaphorically referred to by
[the name of] its fruition,
All beings are said to possess [buddha-nature].

Since the perfect buddhakāya radiates,
Since suchness is undifferentiable,
And because of the disposition,
All beings always possess [buddha-nature].[92]

In other words, all sentient beings have buddha-nature because the dharmakāya is the essential nature of all beings, because sentient beings' nature is not different from the Buddha's, and because all sentient beings have the same disposition (*gotra*) as the Buddha and therefore have the potential to attain an identical enlightenment. These three reasons, abbreviated as the essence, qualities, and disposition, became a primary framework for the exposition of buddha-nature theory in Tibet.

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* does not elaborate on these verses; its author instead states that the similes taken from the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* (a kernel of grain in its husk, a kingly being in the womb of a destitute woman, and so forth) will serve to explicate their meaning. Yet before moving to the nine analogies, the text addresses ten topics (tathāgatagarbha's nature, cause, fruition, function, endowment, manifestation, phases, all-pervasiveness, changelessness, and inseparability of qualities), the main thrust of which appears to be the classification of all beings into three categories, only one of which has the actual potential to attain enlightenment. These categories are those who desire saṃsāric existence, those who long to be free of saṃsāric existence, and those who do not desire either extreme. Ordinary sentient beings are in the first category; śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, and non-Buddhist renunciates are in the second; and bodhisattvas are in the third. Only these bodhisattvas, the text asserts in typical Mahāyāna fashion, can attain enlightenment, although the text goes to some length to clarify the exact type of bodhisattva who will be victorious. Thus although the treatise affirms that buddha-nature is universal, it does not assert that all sentient beings have the actual potential to realize their nature and attain enlightenment. There is no promise, as in the *Lotus Sūtra*, that even those currently on the Hīnayāna path will eventually convert and join the bodhisattvas. For this reason interpreters who have taken the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to have belonged to the Yogācāra school can be forgiven.

While the treatise overall does not reflect standard Yogācāra positions, certain statements on emptiness made it difficult for adherents of the Madhyamaka to incorporate the

Ratnagotravibhāga into their literature, primarily because the text asserts that the teaching on buddha-nature is superior to that of emptiness. The *Ratnagotravibhāga* accepts the teaching of the emptiness of conventional reality but not of buddha-nature, stating in verse 1.155 that buddha-nature is "not void of unsurpassable qualities."[93] Although buddha-nature is unconditioned, it possesses the perfect characteristics of a buddha and therefore cannot be said to be utterly void, as all other things are.

It is likely that the author, whoever he was (he was almost certainly a he), was neither an adherent of the Yogācāra nor the Madhyamaka doctrinal schools, although clearly well acquainted with the doctrines of both. We also gather, from textual evidence, that transmission of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in India between the late sixth and the tenth centuries was minimal. It is not quoted in any surviving composition, indicating that it was not widely read. Kazuo Kano offers three indications that transmission of the text survived, however sporadically: a Dunhuang manuscript quotes from it, and two texts—the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha* (late seventh to eighth century) and a text called *Bṛhaṭṭīkā* ascribed to Daṃṣṭrasena and translated in Tibet by Surendrabodhi and Yeshe De in the ninth century—both used language similar to that found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.[94]

Late Indian Sources on Buddha-Nature

Regardless of the initial failure of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to find an audience in India (or at least other authors who would quote it explicitly), due to the popularity of the tathāgatagarbha literature the theory itself spread widely in India, eventually seeping into both Yogācāra and Madhyamaka schools. Sūtras outside the main tathāgatagarbha scriptures also taught buddha-nature, increasing the doctrine's popularity among the more established Buddhist schools. Chief among these would be the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, a central text in the promotion of "mind-only" theory and one of the main scriptures of Chan/Zen. The sūtra either was produced after the *Ratnagotravibhāga* or was unknown to its compilers, as there are no quotations from it in that treatise.[95] As described by Brunnhölzl,[96] the *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* provided language that allowed the integration of buddha-nature theory into both Yogācāra and Madhyamaka communities, by equating tathāgatagarbha with both ālayavijñāna and emptiness. In the sūtra the Buddha travels to the island of Laṅka, where he teaches the bodhisattva Mahāmati that all phenomena are manifestations of mind, outlining the eight consciousnesses as taught in the Yogācāra school, and equating tathāgatagarbha with ālayavijñāna, which, although by nature pure, is obscured by adventitious stains. The Buddha explains that the nature of the ālayavijñāna is emptiness, and so tathāgatagarbha, ālayavijñāna, and emptiness are all different words for the same thing.

The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* is ambivalent around these definitions, however, most likely a result of having been patched together over many years, similar to so many other Buddhist scriptures. The sūtra also equates tathāgatagarbha with the mind's quality of innate

awareness and states that buddha-nature is the true understanding of emptiness, as distinct from nihilistic interpretations: "by virtue of the purity of natural luminosity, [buddha-nature] is primordially pure, endowed with the thirty-two major marks, and hidden within the bodies of all sentient beings." Yet the sūtra also presents buddha-nature as a provisional teaching, given by the Buddha to ease the fear of no-self among the Buddhists and to encourage non-Buddhists, who are attached to the wrong view of an existent self, to embark on the Buddhist path. Such a statement, of course, puts the sūtra in contradiction with the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.

The debate over the definition of buddha-nature—whether it is luminosity or emptiness, and whether it is a provisional or definitive teaching—would continue through to the final days of Buddhism in India and be taken up with vigor in Tibet. Kazuo Kano gives as an example of buddha-nature in Yogācāra literature the Central Indian translator and Yogācārin adherent Paramārtha (499–569), who was so steeped in its ideas that they informed his translations into Chinese of several Yogācāra classics.[97] Madhyamaka patriarchs Bhāvaviveka (circa 490–570), Candrakīrti (circa 600–650), and Kamalaśīla (circa 740–795) all wrote on buddha-nature, attempting to define it in a way that makes it conform to Madhyamaka doctrine. This was done in a myriad of ways; Candrakīrti downgraded tathāgatagarbha to provisional status (along with ālayavijñāna), while Kamalaśīla used it to bolster his argument for Single Vehicle doctrine, and so classified it as definitive.[98]

Buddha-nature also was taken up by Tantric communities. Kano[99] gives several examples: the *Adhyardhaśatikā Prajñāpāramitā*, a Yogatantra text, states: "All sentient beings have Buddha-nature, owing to [their] identity with Samantabhadra, the Great Bodhisattva," a passage that is quoted by Dharmamitra in his *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentary. Another, the *Amoghapāsakalparāja*, has: "He (who worships Avalokiteśvara, is empowered by Avalokiteśvara, and is equated with Avalokiteśvara) should be known as having Buddha-nature (or possessing a buddha inside)." The Tantric embrace of buddha-nature would be exponentially expanded in Tibet.

The **Ratnagotravibhāga** *in China*

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* was translated into Chinese by Ratnamati, who possibly arrived in China from Madhyadeśa (Zhongtianzhu 中天竺) between 498 and 508 and worked on the translation in Luoyang between 511 and around 520.[100] He may or may not have brought the manuscript with him and may have been assisted by Bodhiruci.[101]

The Chinese title of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is *Jiu jing yi cheng bao xing lun* 究竟一乘寶性論 (Taishō no. 1611, vol. 31), which Jikidō Takasaki has reconstructed as *Uttara-ekayāna-ratnagotra-śāstra* and which translates to something like "Treatise on the Superior Jewel Family of the Single Vehicle." Kano, however, reasonably suspects that the *yicheng* 一乘 is a mistake for *dacheng* 大乘, or Mahāyāna. If this is the case, then the

title would back-translate to a more familiar form (note that the Chinese does not contain the word *tantra*).[102] The first section (lines 813a8–820c20) consists of eighteen opening verses that are not found in Sanskrit or Tibetan translation; their origin is not explained. The treatise itself is lines 820c21–848a27 complete with root verses, commentarial verses, and prose commentary.

Kano documents the influence of the Chinese translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* three texts that exist only in Chinese. The first of these is the **Mahāyānadharmadhātunirviśeṣa* said to be written by Sāramati, the same man to whom the Chinese tradition assigns authorship of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, and translated by the Khotanese monk Devendraprajña in 691. Kano suggests it might have been composed around the fifth century, if in fact the attribution to Sāramati is correct, soon after the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. The text develops the ten buddha-nature topics as outlined in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and expands the discussion of *bodhicitta*, here equated with *dharmadhātu*, which is said to abide in all beings naturally.[103] Kano describes two additional works, both of which were translated and possibly composed by Paramārtha, a prolific translator of Yogācāra works. The first is titled **Anuttarāśrayasūtra*, a reworking of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in the form of a Mahāyāna sūtra.[104] The second is titled **Buddhadhātuśāstra* and is ascribed to Vasubandhu. Both texts also rework the ten buddha-nature topics from the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, while the second asserts that buddha-nature theory is consistent with Yogācāra three-nature theory. As seen above, buddha-nature theory had already spread widely in China by the time the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was translated in the early sixth century. Western scholars do not appear to have explored the role of the treatise in the further development of the doctrine in China.

The **Ratnagotravibhāga** *in Late Indian Buddhism*

As Kazuo Kano has described in his magisterial book on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, in the early eleventh century there was a flurry of interest in India in the treatise, largely centered around the monastic university Vikramalaśīla. Although not all the commentators he named used the *Ratnagotravibhāga* specifically to advance buddha-nature theory, the increased interest in the treatise certainly had the effect of spreading buddha-nature across the diverse philosophical traditions of Indian Buddhism. The compositions of these authors often vary in their presentations of buddha-nature only along the subtlest points of definition, reminding us that classical Indian writers, like the Tibetan commentators who succeeded them in Mahāyāna Buddhist exegesis, can easily be compared to contemporary academic writers who make their names in part by differentiating themselves from their predecessors and peers.

According to legend, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was rediscovered in a *stūpa* by a monk from Vikramalaśīla named Maitrīpa (born 1007 or 1010). This person is known only through hagiographies and legends around the recovery of the treatise; different versions give the name of the man who found the text as Maitreyanātha or Aṇarakṣita.[105] He is credited as

the author of multiple works, however. Maitrīpa left no writing on buddha-nature, but he did quote the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in one of his compositions, the *Pañcatathāgathamudrāvivaraṇa*,[106] and was possibly the first commentator to do so. His position, Kano explains, was basically Madhyamaka but with decided Nirākāravāda-Yogācāra leanings.[107] Kano identified seventeen subsequent Indian and Kashmiri authors who composed commentaries or otherwise left remarks on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. Those based around Vikramalaśīla included Jñānaśrīmitra (circa 980–1030), a teacher of Maitrīpa who quoted the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in his *Sākārakiddhiśāstra*, a work on Sākāravāda-Yogācāra doctrine, as well as in its summary, *Sākārasaṃgraha*. His use of the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, as detailed by Kano, was largely to defend his position that the *dharmakāya* and the *saṃbhogakāya* are identical in nature, the first being a conventional quality of the second, which is a definitive body of a buddha. He further argued that buddha-nature, likewise, is a quality of the ultimate and a synonym of both the dharmakāya and emptiness.[108] Kano notes that Jñānaśrīmitra is generally described as a teacher of Maitrīpa, and so unless Jñānaśrīmitra received the transmission of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* from an unnamed source, he would have to have received it from his own student.

Both Maitrīpa and Jñānaśrīmitra equated buddha-nature with emptiness and understood it to be universal. A contemporary of theirs, Ratnākaraśānti (late tenth century to early eleventh century), who was the main Indian teacher to Drokmi Lotsāwa,[109] took roughly a more mainline Vijñānavāda-Yogācāra view, restricting buddha-nature to bodhisattvas alone.[110] Prajñākaramati (early eleventh century), another teacher of Drokmi, quoted the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in a commentary on Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.[111] Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (982/986–1054/1065) received the *Ratnagotravibhāga* at Vikramalaśila and taught it in Tibet, at Tangpoche, most likely the first time the treatise was taught there.[112] Kano points out that although he produced the first translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* into Tibetan, Atiśa's position on buddha-nature is difficult to gauge, as the translation is lost and the sole surviving quotation is simply to establish the Single Vehicle doctrine.[113]

Atiśa's contemporary Yamāri (first half of the eleventh century) used the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to defend his Sākāravāda position and refute the Alīkākāravāda stance.[114] A man named Vairocanarakṣita (there were two, both living from the eleventh to twelfth centuries) composed a brief gloss of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* titled *Mahāyānottaratantraṭippaṇī*; the eleventh-century Vikramalaśīla-based Vairocanarakṣita wrote a commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* in which he quoted the *Ratnagotravibhāga*,[115] a work that Kano surmises was based on Prajñākaramati's work mentioned above. A disciple of Maitrīpa, Rāmapāla, who lived in the eleventh century, quoted the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in a commentary to his teacher's *Sekanirdeśa*, in a discussion of the bodies of the Buddha.[116] Another of Maitrīpa's disciples, Sahajavajra, also quoted the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in a commentary of one of his teacher's compositions, the *Tattvadaśaka*, in a discussion of erroneous perception.[117] In the early twelfth century, Abhayākaragupta, one of the last known paṇḍitas of Vikramalaśīla, composed

over a dozen works on Tantra, Prajñāpāramitā, and Madhyamaka. He quoted the *Ratnagotravibhāga* repeatedly in several of these, taking a clear Madhyamaka position that buddha-nature is to be equated with emptiness and that there is but a single vehicle to liberation.[118] Other late Indian Buddhist writers who quoted the *Ratnagotravibhāga* include *Śāntyākara,[119] Daśabalaśrīmitra, Ratnarakṣita, and Vibhūticandra.[120]

Contemporary with the above authors based at Vikramalaśīla was a line of teachers in Kashmir: Sajjana, Mahājana, Amṛtākara, and Jayānanda. Sajjana, who helped Ngok Lotsāwa translate the *Ratnagotravibhāga* into Tibetan in the late eleventh century, received the transmission of the treatise from *Ānandakīrti, who is said to have received it from Maitrīpa. His disciples Ngok Lotsāwa and Tsen Khawoche[121] are credited with the two main interpretive strategies of buddha-nature and the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in Tibet: the "analytic" and the "meditative" (discussed below). Sajjana's *Mahāyānottaratantra-śātropadeśa* consists of thirty-seven verses summarizing the main points of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and laying out his own position regarding the various points of doctrine.[122] This includes the assertion that there is no contradiction between emptiness as presented in the Prajñāpāramitāsūtras and buddha-nature: everything conditioned is empty, but because buddha-nature is not conditioned, it is not empty of its own qualities. Moreover, Sajjana appears to equate buddha-nature with luminous mind, which generates itself from moment to moment.[123] An interlinear note to a surviving Sanskrit manuscript of the text reads:

In this statement, the conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) is comprehended (*abhivyāpta*) as being empty, whereas the luminous mind (*prabhāsvaraṃ cittaṃ*) is not conditioned. This is because [in the luminous mind] there is nothing to be done through cause and conditions coming together, based on the fact that the origination of the [luminous] mind in the succeeding moment depends on [the mind] that was generated by its (the mind's) own kind (*sajāti*) in the previous moment.[124]

Sajjana's son Mahājana[125] was also an author of commentaries that cite the *Ratnagotravibhāga*,[126] as was his (possible) contemporary, Amṛtākara, whose exact position in the transmission lineage is not known; Kano places him in Kashmir based on the fact that the only surviving copy of his *Catuḥstavasamāsārtha* is preserved in a manuscript written in proto-Śāradā, a script used only in the region.[127] The Kashmiri logician Jayānanda, who lived between the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries, used the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to defend the Single Vehicle doctrine. An ardent Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamika, he used it as a weapon to refute Yogācāra; Jayānanda declared buddha-nature to be provisional, writing, "It was taught that just as the teaching of Buddha-nature is provisional, the teaching of mind-only is also provisional," a position he repeats in several passages. Yet buddha-nature for Jayānanda was also another word for emptiness: "Therefore, just as the purpose of teaching Buddha-nature is nothing other than [to teach] emptiness, so too the teaching of mind-only is also [merely] a means of entering emptiness."[128]

The *Ratnagotravibhāga* was brought to Tibet first by Atiśa in the middle of the eleventh century and then by Ngok Lotsāwa several decades later. Atiśa translated the *Ratnagotravibhāga* with the help of Naktso Tsultrim Gyelwa,[129] who had himself studied under a disciple of Maitrīpa's named Vajrapāṇi.[130] As with all Tibetan translations save that of Ngok, Atiśa and Naktso's has been lost, although it survived at least until the fifteenth century, when Gö Lotsāwa Zhönu Pal[131] used it in preparing for his commentary.[132] Atiśa's translation was done at Yerpa Barang[133] in Taktse Rinchen Gang,[134] near Samye,[135] at the request of Ngok Jangchub Jungne, the monastery's founder,[136] between Atiśa's arrival at Samye in 1047 and his death in 1054. As mentioned above, Atiśa taught the *Ratnagotravibhāga* at Tangpoche at the request of a man named Khuton,[137] the head monk of the monastery.[138]

Chronologically, the next translation of the *Ratnagotravibhāga* is the only one that remains extant, that of Ngok Lotsāwa and Sajjana. It was produced in Kashmir, in a city known in Tibetan as Peme (Dpe med) and which Kano reconstructs as *Anupamapura. Kano dates the translation to between 1076, when Ngok left Tibet, and around 1092, when he returned home. Ngok and Sajjana's translation was widely adopted, remaining the standard translation today; Kano points out that later translations appear for the most part to be simply revisions of it.[139]

In the Tibetan canon, in the Tengyur (*Bstan 'gyur*), Ngok and Sajjana's translation is divided into two texts, one comprised solely of verses and the other complete with verses and prose. The name of the extracted verses is *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos*, which back-translates into Sanskrit as *Mahāyāna-uttaratantra-śāstra* (D4024). The complete text, however, is titled *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos rnam par bshad pa* (D4025), which reconstructs as **Mahāyāna-uttaratantra-śāstra-vyākhyā* and translates to "A Commentary on the Treatise on the Final Teaching of the Mahāyāna." It is important to note that the title *Ratnagotravibhāgavyākhyā*—or any version with *vyākhyā*—is not attested in any surviving Sanskrit redaction; Kazuo Kano surmised that the root verses were extracted by a disciple of Ngok and given the title of the work, at which point the prose section was deemed to be a commentary and therefore given the status of "vyākhyā."[140] With two texts, Tibetan tradition decided that there would be two authors: Maitreya for the verses and Asaṅga for the commentary. Takasaki's comment on how this happened was simply that "the point is undecided."[141] Western scholars on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, coming entirely out of the Tibetan studies field, have largely followed Tibetan tradition and divided the text in two, speaking of root verses and "a *vyākhyā*."

While the translation was a vital moment in the transmission of buddha-nature theory into Tibet, Ngok's commentary, *Condensed Meaning of the "Ultimate Continuum of the Mahāyāna"*,[142] perhaps the first Tibetan exegesis on the topic, was of equal importance. Ngok's interpretation, generally known as the analytic tradition, in which buddha-nature is equated with emptiness, became the dominant Tibetan position. Ngok was himself a

follower of the Madhyamaka, and he regarded the *Ratnagotravibhāga* as belonging to that tradition; as such, he considered it to be definitive (on the other hand, the four other of the so-called Five Books of Maitreya, clear Yogācāra treatises, he deemed to be provisional).[143] For Ngok, buddha-nature had three aspects: causal, inherent, and resultant. The causal was the aspect possessed by saṃsāric beings, while the resultant was unique to the buddhas. All sentient beings have buddha-nature in the sense that we have the potential to become perfect, not in the sense that we contain within us an already-existent perfection. Buddha-nature for Ngok is the seed that grows into a mango tree, not the golden statue covered in mud. For this reason, buddha-nature does not possess the buddha qualities, and it is therefore empty. Ngok extends the metaphor:

After allaying the "heat" of defilements with the "cool rainwater" of repeated study, carried by the "clouds" of good teachers; and after moistening the "seeds" of Buddha-nature (*bde gshegs snying po*), you should cultivate "crops" of perfect Buddha-qualities.[144]

Because buddha-nature as taught in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was the equivalent of emptiness, for Ngok the treatise could be in agreement with Madhyamaka scriptures and therefore of definitive meaning.

After Ngok, Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen[145] was probably the most prominent adherent of the analytic tradition. A follower of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka position, he addressed buddha-nature in his famous *Distinguishing the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye*) and appears to have been the first Tibetan scholiast to deem the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the teachings on buddha-nature to be of provisional status. A hundred years later, the Sakya lama Butön Rinchen Drup followed Sakya Paṇḍita in classifying buddha-nature as provisional and in rejecting the position that it was a synonym of emptiness. His disciple Dratsepa Rinchen Namgyal took the same position.

Not all Kadam and Sakya authors adopted Ngok and Sakya Paṇḍita's positions on buddha-nature. Monlam Tsultrim,[146] for example, an abbot of Nartang, composed several instruction manuals in which he expressly defined buddha-nature as the natural luminosity of mind.[147] Chomden Rikpai Raldri,[148] a student of Sakya Paṇḍita's at Sakya Monastery, composed a *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary that is firmly in the meditative tradition.[149] Chomden had also studied with Monlam Tsultrim and, as a result, in contrast to Sakya Paṇḍita, he considered the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and the teachings of buddha-nature to be definitive and in agreement with both Madhyamaka and Yogācāra teachings. He defined buddha-nature as "the natural luminous mind that is inseparable from *dharmatā*" and equivalent to the "ultimate truth, which is unconditioned and primordially existent."[150]

As seen above, Ngok's teacher Sajjana appears to have advocated a different position on buddha-nature than Ngok; for Sajjana, buddha-nature was not an emptiness that was a nonaffirming negation but instead was equivalent to luminous mind, which is unconditioned and not empty of its own qualities, a view certainly supported by the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Ngok's fellow disciple Tsen Khawoche followed this line of exegesis

and is credited by Tibetan historians for giving birth to the so-called meditative tradition (*sgom lugs*), or Tsen tradition (*btsan lugs*). According to the Sakya philosopher Śākya Chokden, the analytic and meditative traditions are not mutually exclusive; after all, they stemmed from the same teacher. They are instead merely different points of emphasis.[151]

After Tsen Khawoche the earliest author of a *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentary who can be said to be associated with the meditative tradition is Marpa Dopa Chökyi Wangchuk, who studied with Parahitabhadra in either Kashmir or Toling, and possibly with Sajjana himself.[152] He is said to have encountered Marpa Chökyi Lodrö[153] in Nepal and to have been blessed by Nāropa in India. A disseminator of the *Cakrasaṃvāratantra* in Tibet and a student of Vajrapāṇi (born 1017) and other disciples of Nāropa, Marpa Dopa, as Brunnhölzl puts it, "represents a clear connection between the Mahāmudrā lineage and the lineage of the Maitreya texts."[154] A commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* titled *A Commentary on the Meaning of the Words of the Uttaratantra* (*Rgyud bla ma'i tshig don rnam par 'grel pa*) claims to preserve his and Parahitabhadra's teachings and is translated in *When the Clouds Part*. The text presents a strong Yogācāra position, asserting that enlightenment is the realization of the natural luminous nature of mind freed from the adventitious stains.

Not long after Marpa Dopa's teachings were set down, Gampopa Sonam Rinchen,[155] who merged Marpa Chökyi Lodrö's tantric teachings with the Kadam monastic practices and thereby initiated the Kagyu tradition, is said to have embraced the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, asserting that it was in accord with Mahāmudrā and definitive in its presentation of emptiness.[156] Many Kagyu commentaries on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* followed, chief among them those of the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje,[157] whose lost commentary had considerable influence on later Kagyu writing. His surviving writings provide ample entry into the early development of the Kagyu synthesis of Mahāmudrā and buddha-nature teachings.[158] Subsequent Karmapa incarnations, including the Seventh, Chodrak Gyatso (who wrote about other-emptiness),[159] and Eighth, Mikyö Dorje,[160] also famously wrote on buddha-nature; both accepted the perspective of the meditative tradition, albeit with a slightly different emphasis.

Buddha-nature theory has remained an important aspect of Kagyu teachings. The great fifteenth-century historian and translator Gö Lotsāwa Zhönu Pal wrote an influential commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*,[161] which Mathes states is nearly identical to that of the fourteenth-century Drukpa Kagyu master Barawa Gyeltsen Pelzang.[162] Karma Trinle Chokle Namgyal[163] wrote a commentary on the Third Karmapa's composition, but it unfortunately has been lost. Karma Trinle, a student of the Seventh Karmapa and a teacher to the Eighth Karmapa, did write elsewhere about buddha-nature, however, including in a commentary on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* and the Third Karmapa's *Profound Inner Principles*.[164] Another disciple of the Seventh Karmapa was Tashi Özer.[165] Born in Kham and trained in central Tibet, he was a disciple also of the Third Situ, Tashi Peljor,[166] and a primary teacher to the Eighth Karmapa. In his commentary on t the *Ratnagotravibhāga* titled *Heart of the Luminous Sun*,[167] he equates buddha-nature

with the ālayavijñāna.[168] Later prominent Kagyu authors who have touched on buddha-nature include the Fourth Drukchen, Pema Karpo;[169] the Eighth Situ, Chökyi Jungne[170]and Jamgon Kongtrul.[171]

The interpretation of buddha-nature as either emptiness or luminosity accorded to a large degree with the social setting of the teachers and their patrons. The royal patrons in western Tibet who initiated the Second Propagation were primarily interested in sūtra-based Buddhism. Buddha-nature in these circles was almost always equated with emptiness and Madhyamaka. The Kadam tradition that arose out of their work and the Geluk tradition that supplanted it continues to maintain the "analytic" interpretation.[172] But the clan-based translators who brought in Tantric systems that gave rise to the Kagyu and, through their innovation of treasure revelation, the Nyingma traditions, were interested primarily in the meditative interpretation, in which buddha-nature was aligned with practice, and positive terms such as *the natural luminosity of mind* were needed to describe meditative experiences. Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen,[173] who was wary of most Tantric systems then circulating in Tibet, was dismissive of buddha-nature, and so the Sakya largely held to Ngok's interpretation; as Tsongkhapa was a disciple of Sakya Paṇḍita, this served to strengthen the Geluk position that buddha-nature was a provisional teaching. The shifting political winds of Tibet have helped to determine the ebb and flow of buddha-nature's popularity. After the end of Sakya rule of Tibet in the fourteenth century, there was a flourishing of Kagyu and Jonang commentaries on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, as Tsang in particular became a region of great doctrinal exchange and innovation. This ended with the start of Geluk hegemony in the sixteenth century, which brought about the repression of the Jonang and a clamping-down on Kagyu and Nyingma activity, at least in central Tibet. Buddha-nature as luminous mind has continued to thrive in areas not tightly controlled by the Geluk, such as Kham.

A third important, early *Ratnagotravibhāga* transmission vector was through Parahitabhadra, who was a student of Mahāpaṇḍita Somaśrī and Ratnavajra and a collaborator with Sajjana on the translation of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*. Despite his involvement in Yogācāra literature, he appears to have primarily been a Mādhyamika, as were most paṇḍits in Kashmir of the period. He also traveled to Tolung, and it was either there or in Kashmir that he gave teachings to Ngok, Patsab Nyima Drak, and Marpa Dopa Chökyi Wangchuk.[174] Marpa Dopa was perhaps one of the earliest to combine Mahāmudrā teachings with those of buddha-nature.[175]

By the fourteenth century, commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* had become sophisticated enough to give rise to doctrinal innovations particular to Tibet. The great Dölpopa Sherab Gyaltsen,[176] a fourteenth-century monk from the Tibetan-Nepali border region who became abbot of the monastery Jonang, is credited in Tibet with the theory of "other-emptiness," or *zhentong* (*gzhan stong*), a fairly radical interpretation of emptiness based largely on buddha-nature theory. Although primarily trained in the Sakya tradition, Dölpopa took the Kālacakra as the highest Tantric system; he is said to have awoken to the other-emptiness view of ultimate reality while practicing Kālacakra in retreat, and he

framed his buddha-nature teachings around that Tantric system. Dölpopa also received teachings on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* from the Third Karmapa. He was openly critical of Sakya Paṇḍita and of his own contemporary Butön, whose students took particular care to refute Dölpopa in return.[177] Dölpopa's student Sabzang Mati Paṇchen[178] wrote a commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* that largely echoed that of his teacher.[179] The primary inheritor of Dölpopa's mantle was Tāranātha,[180] the twenty-sixth abbot of Jonang Monastery.

Late-period Kadam and early Geluk scholiasts largely followed Sakya Paṇḍita in classifying buddha-nature as a provisional teaching and vehemently rejected Dölpopa's view of buddha-nature and ultimate truth.[181] Rendawa Zhönu Lodrö returned to Ngok's position of equating buddha-nature with emptiness, although deeming the teaching to be provisional.[182] One of the major commentaries on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in terms of impact on buddha-nature theory in Tibet was that of Gyaltsap Je Darma Rinchen,[183] one of several close disciples of Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa,[184] who together initiated the Geluk tradition.[185] Because Tsongkhapa himself left no commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, many scholars have looked to Gyaltsap Je to understand his master's positions on the topic. Gyaltsap Je agreed with Ngok that buddha-nature was emptiness but only, like Rongtön (and Tsongkhapa?), in the causal sense, as did Paṇchen Sönam Drakpa;[186] the view has long since been Geluk orthodoxy.

A contemporary of Gyaltsap Je's, Rongtön Sheja Kunrik,[187] accepted Ngok's view that buddha-nature and emptiness were the same, but only insofar as emptiness was the potential for buddhahood.[188] A student of the Sakya master Yakton Sangye Pal[189] and also the Fourth Karmapa, Rolpai Dorje,[190]Rongtön was the founder of Nalendra Monastery. He is famous in part for composing seven commentaries on the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*, all with a clear "self-emptiness" interpretation of the ultimate. In line with his Sakya heritage, he rejected Dölpopa's other-emptiness and the natural luminosity of mind. Nor did he accept that buddha-nature was the dharmakāya in the sense of pervading all things; rather, only a fully awakened buddha can be said to be imbued with the dharmakāya. Rongtön, as a fifteenth-century Sakya teacher, can be said to have occupied a sort of middle ground between the extremes of Geluk negation and Jonang (and, to some degree, Kagyu) affirmation. That space was expanded by two of his most famous students, Gorampa Sönam Senge[191] and Śākya Chokden.[192] While their presentations may have differed, they each attempted to categorize the schools of thought and define their terms in a way that allowed for the full span of Sajjana's teachings, everything that is otherwise divided between the analytic and the meditative.

Through it all, Tibetan scholiasts struggled to stake out a position that conformed to either Madhyamaka, Yogācāra, or a synthesis of the two. Ngok's tradition, however, was adopted by the disciples of Tsongkhapa and has become dominant, propagated by the Geluk and Sakya traditions. The other-emptiness-inflected meditative tradition, which conforms with the Tantric systems of Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen, is stronger in the Jonang, Kagyu, and Nyingma traditions. Although there are significant differences among

the philosophical positions taken by Tibetan scholiasts who have written on buddha-nature, the categories of meditative and analytic can be used, if cautiously, to describe Tibetan commentators up through the present day.

Notes

1. *Buddha-nature* is actually an English translation of a Chinese term, *foxing* 佛性. This term appears to have been invented in China to translate *buddhadhātu*, possibly also *buddhatā*, *tathatā*, *prakṛtivyadadāna*, and other terms. See King, *Buddha Nature*, 173–74n5. The most common Sanskrit term, *tathāgatagarbha*, means something like "womb/essence/seed (*garbha*) of the one who has gone/come (*gata* / *āgata*) to thusness (*tathā*; i.e., enlightenment)." The Chinese translation of *tathāgatagarbha* is *rulaixing* 如來性. The Tibetan equivalents of *buddha-nature* include *rang bzhin gnas rigs*and *sangs rgyas kyi snying po*. *Tathāgatagarbha* is translated as *de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*: "the essence of those who have gone/come to thusness."
2. Morris, *The Aṅguttara-Nikāya*, i.10, 11–16, as quoted in Silk, *Buddhist Cosmic Unity*, 39. For more early scriptural passages on the mind's natural luminosity, see Skorupski, "Consciousness and Luminosity."
3. Jonathan Silk, for example, (*Buddhist Cosmic Unity*, 39) points out that the compilers of the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* appear to have been aware of the *Aṅguttaranikāya* passage, as they integrated it into that Mahāyāna sūtra nearly verbatim.
4. For scholarship on luminosity in early Buddhism, see Shih, "The Concept of 'Innate Purity of Mind' in the Agamas and Nikayas"; and Williams, *The Reflexive Nature of Awareness*.
5. See, for example, Collins, "Momentariness and the *Bhavaṅga* Mind," in *Selfless Persons*; Harris, "The Problem of Idealism" in *The Continuity between Madhyamaka and Yogācāra in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism*; and Harvey, "The Brightly Shining Bhavaṅga Mind," in *The Selfless Mind: Personality, Consciousness and Nirvāṇa in Early Buddhism*.
6. Brunnhölzl (*When the Clouds Part*, 3) translates *tathāgatagarbha* in this passage as "*tathāgata* heart," as he does throughout the book. The Sanskrit is on page 985n11).
7. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 3.
8. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 3–4.
9. Various translations of *icchantika* into Chinese and Tibetan shed light on the ways in which the category has been understood (the Chinese transliteration is *yichanti*一闡提). Tibetans translate it as "one who is cut off from a *gotra*" (*rigs chad pa*) or "one of great lust" ('*dod chen po*), the first signifying that the icchantikas are excluded from the beings who will reach enlightenment, the second that they are conceived of as being unable to surmount their lust ("hedonist" also has been offered as a translation). Three Chinese

translations all likewise reference the aspect of excessive desire: *duoyu* 多欲 ("many desires"), *leyu* 樂欲 ("cherishing desires"), and *datan* 大貪 ("great greed").

10. Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within*, 12.

11. Takasaki, *A Study*, 61. As discussed below, the *Ratnagotravibhāga* was translated into Chinese in the first decade of the sixth century.

12. Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 99.

13. Zimmermann, "The Process of Awakening," 514. Radich (*The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 85) argues for no earlier than 250 and as late as the mid-fourth century.

14. On the history of the concept of the dharmakāya, see Harrison, "Is the Dharma-kaya the Real 'Phantom Body' of the Buddha?" Harrison argues that in most early Mahāyāna scripture *dharmakāya* ought to be read as an adjective, meaning "the body of the buddha as the dharma," and not as some ontological universal principle.

15. Jones, "A Self-Aggrandizing Vehicle," 121.

16. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 18. The same can be said about the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra'*s similes; see below.

17. Liu, "The Problem of the Icchantika," Takasaki, "Tathāgatagarbha theory in the Mahāparnirvāṇa." The first five chapters were also translated independently in China in 418 by Faxian 法顯 and in Tibet by Jinamitra, Jñānagarbha, and Devacandra in the late eighth century (Hodge, *Textual History*) or early ninth century (Jones, "A Self-Aggrandizing Vehicle," 122–23).

18. Jones, "A Self-Aggrandizing Vehicle," 124.

19. It is important to note that a slightly later translation by Dharmakṣema altered the icchantika passages in the first five chapters in order to bring them into line with the rest of the text. Faxian, who was a committed Yogācārin, did not. We will return to this below.

20. Jones, "A Self-Aggrandizing Vehicle."

21. Grosnick, "The Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra."

22. Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within*.

23. For example, the translations and studies of D. T. Suzuki.

24. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 1.

25. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 25.

26. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 14.

27. Silk, *Buddhist Cosmic Unity*, 4.

28. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 3.

29. Silk, *Buddhist Cosmic Unity*, 21.

30. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 13.

31. For a fine discussion of the use of *ātman* in the tathāgatagarbha sūtras, see Jones, "A Self-Aggrandizing Vehicle."

32. Jones, "Beings, Non-Beings, and Buddhas," 61–63.

33. Jones, "A Self-Aggrandizing Vehicle," 137.

34. Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 21.
35. Guṇabhadra lived from 394 to 468. His name was transliterated (in contemporary Chinese pronunciation) as Qiu na ba tuo luo 求那跋陀羅.
36. Buddhabhadra lived from 359 to 429. His name is transliterated as Fo tuo ba tuo luo 佛陀跋陀羅.
37. Dharmakṣema lived from 385 to 433. His name was transliterated as Tan wu chen 曇無讖.
38. Bodhiruci (of the Wei) lived in the sixth century. His name was transliterated as Pu ti liu zhi 菩提流支.
39. Faxian's dates are estimated as between 320 and 420. Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 20–21; Liu, "The Doctrine of the Buddha-Nature," 64.
40. Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 20–21.
41. Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 21; Liu, "The Doctrine of the Buddha-Nature," 64.
42. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 18. Paul names Dharmakṣema's translation as the first but does not give dates of translation.
43. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 14: Faju also translated the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra* (T119).
44. Zimmermann (*A Buddha Within*, chapter 4) hesitates to abandon the possibility, while Radich (*The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 196n477), who strives to predate the *Mahāyāna Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* to the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra*, does not.
45. Amoghavajra lived from 705 to 774. His name was translated as Bukong Jingang 不空金剛.
46. Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 97.
47. Kumārajīva lived from 344 to 413. His name was transliterated as Jiu mo luo shi 鳩摩羅什.
48. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 16.
49. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 2.
50. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 18
51. Jones, "Beings, Non-Beings, and Buddhas," 63.
52. Jones, "Beings, Non-Beings, and Buddhas," 137.
53. Jones, "Beings, Non-Beings, and Buddhas," 60.
54. The roots of Sudden Enlightenment, of course, reach back to India, but the doctrine is certainly a Chinese innovation, heavily dependent on Daoist and other indigenous Chinese intellectual and religious traditions.
55. Whalen Lai and other scholars have named Daosheng as the founder of a Nirvāṇa school, which was short-lived, lasting from 420 to 589, when it was absorbed by the Tiantai school. See his "Sinitic Speculations." Daosheng, who assisted Kumārajīva with the translation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, placed the *Mahāparnirvāṇasūtra* above the *Lotus*

Sūtra (the first taught the permanently abiding buddha-nature, where the later taught the truth of the Single Vehicle), a hierarchy that was reversed in the Tiantai school.

56. Lai, "Sinitic Speculations," 136.

57. Lai, "Sinitic Speculations," 136.

58. Lai, "Sinitic Speculations," 137. Whalen Lai dates the treatise to "after 423," while Erik Zürcher (*The Buddhist Conquest of China*, 341n198) places it around 428.

59. Lai, "Sinitic Speculations," 145.

60. Stone, Original Enlightenment, 5.

61. See the various contributions in Gregory, *Sudden and Gradual*.

62. McRae, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 20, 22. The first verse is attributed to Shenxiu, the second to the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng. Contemporary scholarship has revealed the duel to be a later polemical invention. See, for example, McRae, "Shen-hui and the Teaching of Sudden Enlightenment," and Goméz, "Purifying Gold."

63. See Ruegg, *Le traité du tathâgatagarbha*, 23–26, and Wangchuk, "The rÑiṅ-ma Interpretations of the Tathāgatagarbha Theory," 178–80.

64. Ye shes sde, eighth century.

65. Dpal dbyangs, ninth century.

66. On this text see Takahashi, "A Luminous Transcendence of Views," 159–177, and Higgins, *The Philosophical Foundations,* 174.

67. Gnubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes, born around 844.

68. Wangchuk, "The rÑiṅ-ma Interpretations of the Tathāgatagarbha Theory," 179.

69. Wangchuk ("The rÑiṅ-ma Interpretations of the Tathāgatagarbha Theory," 178 n21) explains that this term is possibly an erroneous correction for *tathāgatagarbha*: a well-meaning editor may have replaced the Tibetan *de* (*tathā*) with the homonym *bde* (*sugata*). Hence the asterisk before the term, as it nowhere appears in surviving Sanskrit literature and is very likely a Tibetan neologism.

70. Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within*, 16; 210–12. Śākyaprabha was a disciple of Śāntarakṣita and one of the main transmitters of the Vinaya in Tibet.

71. Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within*, 211–12. The author provides a list of Tibetan recensions.

72. Bu ston rin chen sgrub, 1290–1364. See Ruegg, *Le Traité du Tathāgatagarbha de Bu ston Rin chen grub*, 1973.

73. Dge ba'i blos gros.

74. Rgya mtsho'i sde.

75. Radich, *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 20–21.

76. Rin chen bzang po, 958–1055. Radich does not reference this translation.

77. Paul, *The Buddhist Feminine Ideal*, 2; 200, n4.

78. Jones, "A Self-Aggrandizing Vehicle," 137. Kazuo Kano (cited by Radich *The Mahāparinirvāṇa-mahāsūtra*, 62n127) points out that the colophon to the sūtra in the Tabo version of the Tibetan canon states that both Sanskrit and Chinese were used by the

translators, and that while it refers to Tong Ācārya as an Indian paṇḍit (*rgya gar gyi mkhan po*), in other versions he is called a Chinese translator (*rgya'i lo tsA ba*), although this is ambiguous; *rgya* could here theoretically be an abbreviation for India (*rgya gar*) as well as for China (*rgya nag*).

79. Dpal gyi lhun po.

80. Jones, "Beings, Non-Beings, and Buddhas," 63–64.

81. Rngog lo tsA ba blo ldan shes rab, 1059–1109.

82. Silk, *Buddhist Cosmic Unity*, 3.

83. Khri srong lde'u btsan, 742–796.

84. Gómez, "Indian Materials," 396.

85. Obermiller, "A Sanskrit Manuscript from Tibet."

86. See, for example, Paul Demiéville's *Le Concile de Lhasa* and several articles by Luis Gómez: "Purifying Gold," "Indian Materials on the Doctrine of Sudden Enlightenment," and "The Direct and the Gradual Approaches of Zen Master Mahāyāna." Gómez ("Indian Materials," 396–97) suggested that some of Kamalaśīla's arguments were directed against Tantric traditions as well as Chan Subitism.

87. Van Schaik, *Tibetan Zen*.

88. The Chinese tradition credits a man named *Sāramati. The Central Asian manuscripts ascribe the text to Maitreya, while the Tibetan tradition divides the verse and prose sections, with the verses being taught by Maitreya to Asaṅga, who composed the prose.

89. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 31. On the translation of *uttaratantra* as "Final Teaching" or "Ultimate Continuum," see here.

90. As well as from many other sūtras; Karl Brunnhölzl counts eighteen sūtras quoted in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Remarkably, the treatise does not quote the *Aṅgulimālīyasūtra*, the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, or the *Mahābherīsūtra* (*When the Clouds Part*, 287). On the translation of "uttaratantra" as "Final Teaching" or "Ultimate Continuum" see here.

91. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 20. Ratnamati's name was transliterated as Le na mo ti 勒那摩提.

92. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 356–57; see his appendix 1 for a survey of commentaries on these verses. I have used "buddha-nature" to replace "buddha heart" in both verses. Kano (*Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 262–63) translates the verses as follows:

1.27: [It is] because the Buddha’s wisdom (i.e. the *dharmakāya*) pervades [all] categories of sentient beings, because these [sentient beings’] immaculateness (i.e. *tathatā*) is by nature non-dual (i.e. is not different from the Buddha’s immaculateness), and because the fruit of that (i.e. Buddhahood) is termed, metaphorically, the Buddha’s *gotra* (i.e. potential to become a buddha), [that the Buddha] taught that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature.

1:28: [It is] because the body of the Perfect Buddha (i.e. the *dharmakāya*) is all-pervading, because *tathatā* is inseparable (i.e. since it pervades everything), and because [the

Buddha's] *gotra* exists [in sentient beings that the Buddha taught] that all sentient beings always have Buddha-nature.

93. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 270.

94. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 38, n73.

95. The *Laṅkāvatārasūtra* probably dates to the fourth century; it was first translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa in 420, although this translation was lost. Guṇabhadra translated it again in 433 (Taishō 670), Bodhiruci in 513 (T671), and Śikṣānanda once more in 704 (T672). Two Tibetan translations were done, but unfortunately little is known about when or by whom; the Peking edition of the first (Q775) makes no attribution, but the Derge (D107) and Nartang (N95) claim it was translated from the Chinese by Go Chodrub ('Gos chos grub), Facheng 法成 in Chinese, a well-known translator of Buddhist scriptures from Chinese into Tibetan. Suzuki (*Studies in the Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, 12–14) points out that the translation accords closely to the Sanskrit and so he discounts the attribution. The second translation (Q776, D108) does attribute it to Chodrub, working together with Ācārya Wenhui 文慧 during the reign of Ralpachen (Ral pa can) in the ninth century. This was almost certainly a translation from Guṇabhadra's Chinese.

96. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 25–38.

97. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 34–37.

98. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 39–40.

99. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 6n17.

100. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 21.

101. Silk, *Buddhist Cosmic Unity*, 7–8.

102. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 21n14.

103. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 34.

104. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 35.

105. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 43–54; Mathes, *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within*, 35–37.

106. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 52.

107. Yogācāra-Vijñāvāda is said to have divided into two subschools, Sakāravāda and Nirākāravāda. Both teach that the phenomenal world has no real existence and is instead a production of mind, which is existent. Where the two differ is in the understanding of perception and mental images, or *ākāra*. The Sakāravāda claim that the divide between the object of cognition and the subject who cognizes is illusory, and that both image and perceiver are existent, whereas the Nirākāravāda teach that the objects of cognition are not real and depend on the cognizer; the image is a delusion. Kano (*Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 70) suggests that the split between Sakāravāda and Nirākāravāda was possibly a catalyst for renewed interest in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* in eleventh-century India. Sakāravāda again was divided between the Alīkāravāda and Satyākāravāda, "false aspectarianism" and "true aspectarianism," a division that the Tibetan philosopher Śākya

Chokden (ShAkya mchog ldan, 1428–1507) used to separate Yogācāra from Cittamatra. See Komarovski, *Visions of Unity*.
108. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 54–69.
109. ’Brog mi lo tsA ba, circa 992–1043/1072), who is credited with bringing the *Hevajra Tantra* and the Lamdre teachings to Tibet.
110. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 72–96.
111. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 97–98.
112. Thang po che was a Kadam monastery founded in 1017 in the Yarlung Valley.
113. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 98–101.
114. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 101–3.
115. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 103–5.
116. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 105–7.
117. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 108.
118. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 108–23.
119. Only the Tibetan translation of his name exists (Zhi ba ’byung gnas), and so the Sanskrit version is a tentative reconstruction.
120. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 124–31.
121. Btsan kha bo che, born 1021.
122. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 136–37, 215–28.
123. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 224–25.
124. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 227. Kano admits that the note could easily have been written by a disciple and not Sajjana himself.
125. Kano (*Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 140–41) details the sources supporting the identification of Mahājana as Sajjana's son, as opposed to others that have him as Sajjana's father.
126. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 139–44.
127. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 144–47.
128. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 148–52.
129. Nag tsho tshul khrims rgyal ba, 1011–1064.
130. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 99.
131. 'Gos lo tsA ba gzhon nu dpal, 1392–1481.
132. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 155.
133. Yer pa ba rang.
134. Stag rtse rin chen sgang.
135. Bsam yas.
136. Rngok byang chub 'byung gnas.
137. Khu ston.
138. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 157.
139. Subsequent translations were done by Patsab Nyima Drak (Pa tshab nyi ma grags, born circa 1055), who may have studied with Sajjana; Marpa Dopa Chökyi

Wangchuk (Mar pa do pa chos kyi dbang phyug, circa 1042–1136), who collaborated with Sajjana's son Mahājana; Jonang Lotsāwa Lodro Pal (Jo nang lo tsA ba blo gros dpal, 1299/1300–1353/1364), a student of Dölpopa; Yarlung Lotsāwa (Yar klung lo tsA ba), who may or may not have been Yarlung Lotsāwa Drakpa Gyaltsen (Yar lungs lo tsA ba grags pa rgyal mtshan, 1242–1346). Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 167–77.

140. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 18, 29.
141. Takasaki, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, 7.
142. *Theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i don bsdus pa*.
143. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 249.
144. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 272.
145. Sa skya paN+Di ta kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1182–1251.
146. Smon lam tshul khrims, 1219–1299.
147. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 314–22, 777–802.
148. Bcom ldan rig pa'i ral gri, 1227–1305.
149. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 311–19; Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 29–34.
150. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 315.
151. Van der Kuijp, *Contributions*, 42–43.
152. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 88–91, 301–6, 473–694.
153. Mar pa chos kyi blo gros.
154. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 89.
155. Sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen, 1079–1153
156. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 353. On this point, an oft-quoted passage attributed to Gampopa (as yet unlocated in his available writings) reads, "The hallmark of my Mahāmudrā is self-awareness and its scriptural source is the Uttaratantra treatise." Quoted by Śākya Chokden and translated by David Higgins and Martina Draszczyk, *Mahāmudrā and the Middle Way*, vol. 2, 17.
157. Karma pa 03 Rang 'byung rdo rje, 1284–1339.
158. Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 30–33; Schaeffer, "The Enlightened Heart of Buddhahood"; Mathes, *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within*, 51–75.
159. Karma pa 07 Chos grags rgya mtsho, 1454–1506. Higgins and Draszczyk, *Mahāmudrā and the Middle Way*, 58–59.
160. Karma pa 08 Mi bskyod rdo rje, 1507–1554. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 323–24, 803–30; Higgins and Draszczyk, *Mahāmudrā and the Middle Way*, 226–342; Rheingans, *The Eighth Karmapa's Life*.
161. 'Gos lo tsA ba gzhon nu dpal, 1392–1481. Mathes, *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within*; Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 352–59; Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 310–14.
162. ’Ba’ ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang, 1310–1391. Mathes, *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within*, 113–25. A contemporary of Barawa named Yeshe Dorje Pelzangpo (Ye

shes rdo rje dpal bzang po) also composed a commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Brunhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 309–10.

163. Karma phrin las phyogs las rnam rgyal, 1456–1539.

164. Higgins and Draszczyk, *Mahāmudrā and the Middle Way*, 148–225.

165. Bkra shis 'od zer, born late 15th century.

166. Si tu 03 Bkra shis dpal 'byor, 1498–1541.

167. *Gsal ba nyi ma'i snying po*.

168. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 306–8, 695–776.

169. Brug chen 04 Padma dkar po, 1527–1592. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 72; Higgins and Draszczyk, *Mahāmudrā and the Middle Way*, 342–429.

170. Si tu 08 Chos kyi 'byung gnas, 1700–1774.

171. 'Jam mgon kong sprul, 1813–1899.

172. That said, several important early Kadam thinkers are considered to belong to the "meditative tradition": Drolungpa Lodrö Jungne (Gro lung pa blo gros 'byung gnas, circa 1040s to 1120s), who was one of Ngok's four main disciples. Chapa Chökyi Senge (Phywa pa chos kyi seng ge, 1109–1169), an abbot of Sangpu Monastery and a contemporary of Ngok and who was another early adopter of Svātantrika Madhyamaka, received *Ratnagotravibhāga* transmission from Ngok's disciple Zhang Tsepongwa Chökyi Lama (Zhang tshes spongs ba chos kyi bla ma) and composed his own commentary to the treatise. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 291–309; Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 14–24; van der Kuijp, *Contributions*, 60–70. Drolungpa's position was that buddha qualities are relative, and buddha-nature is definitive, but as potential. Chapa Chökyi Senge's positions: buddha-nature is the same as emptiness but also, on a conventional level, as ālayavijñāna. Buddha-nature is a definitive teaching, although certain passages in the *Uttaratantra* are not definitive, namely that buddha-nature is a cause of enlightenment. The ultimate is empty of its own qualities (*rang stong*).

173. Sa skya paN Di ta kun rgya rgyal mtshan, 1182–1251.

174. Mar pa do pa chos kyi dbang phyug, 11th–12th century.

175. Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 88–91; Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 167.

176. Dol po pa shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292–1361.

177. Mathes, *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within*, 45–48, 75–84.'

178. Sa bzang ma ti paN chen, 1294–1376.

179. Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 55–58; Mathes, *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within*, 84, 55–58; Stearns, *The Buddha from Dölpo*, 27.)

180. 1575–1634.

181. Although not all; several fourteenth-century buddha-nature Kadampa writers also followed the meditative tradition, such as Rinchen Yeshe (Rin chen ye shes), who was a teacher to Dölpopa. See Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 29–34, 34–39, and Brunnhölzl, *When the Clouds Part*, 308–9. Dölpopa's influence in Kadam communities can be found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* commentaries

of Sangpuwa Lodrö Tsungme (Gsang phu ba blo gros mtshungs med; see Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 320–36; Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 29–34; Mathes, *A Direct Path to the Buddha Within*, 91–98), Gendün Özer (Dge 'dun 'od zer; see Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 59–63), and Gyalse Tokme Zangpo (Rgyal sras thogs med, 1295–1365), the author of the famous *Thirty-Seven Practices of the Bodhisattva*, who all followed their predecessor Ngok Lotsāwa in considering the *Ratnagotravibhāga* to be a definitive teaching even as they differed from him by holding buddha-nature to be ultimately existent. See Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 59–63.

182. Red mda' ba gzhon nu blo gros, 1349–1412. Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 83–89.

183. Rgyal tshab rje dar ma rin chen, 1364–1432.

184. Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357–1419.

185. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 349–52; Wangchuk, *The Uttaratantra in the Land of Snows*, 97–107; Ruegg, *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra*, 291–96.

186. PaN chen bsod nams grags pa, 1478–1554.

187. Rong ston shes bya kun rig, 1367–1449.

188. Kano, *Buddha-Nature and Emptiness*, 345–49; Bernert, *Perfect or Perfected?*

189. G.yag ston sangs rgyas dpal, 1348–1414.

190. Karma pa 04 Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1340–1383.

191. Go rams pa bsod nams seng ge, 1429–1489. Cabezón, *Freedom From Extremes*.

192. ShAkya mchog ldan, 1428–1507. Komarovski, *Visions of Unity*; Higgins and Draszczyk, *Mahāmudrā and the Middle Way*, 44–147.