

Bonpo Interpretation of the Two Truths of Buddhist Philosophy Seen in an Anonymous Bonpo Treatise *Theg 'grel* (13th or 14th cen.)

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0. Introduction

The theory of the two truths (*satyadvaya*, *bden gnyis*), that is to say the absolute truth (*paramārthasatya*, *don dam bden pa*) and the conventional truth (*saṃvṛtisatya*, *kun rdzob bden pa*) is important in Indian Buddhism, especially in the Mādhyamika school.¹ This theory is also emphasized in the Bon religion. In another paper I have outlined the history of the two truths theory of the Bon religion, and I pointed out the following two characteristics:²

[A] Concerning the theory of the conventional truth, there seems to be no unity among the Bonpo thinkers. Each one presents his own theory.

[B] Concerning the theory of the absolute truth, there are two traditions: one tradition does not admit any subdivision for the absolute truth, the other tradition subdivides it into two.

Me ston Shes rab 'od zer (also known as Yar me Shes rab 'od zer, 1058-1132 or 1118-1192) seems to be the first Bonpo thinker who presents the tradition of a unique absolute truth.³ On the other hand the *Theg 'grel* is regarded by later Bonpo thinkers such as Tre ston rGyal mtshan dpal (14th cen.) to be the source of the second tradition, which admits two subdivisions of the absolute truth.⁴ The *Theg 'grel* therefore is an essential work for understanding the history of Bonpo's theory of the two truths.

The main objectives of this paper are as follows:

[1] To summarize the construction of the *Theg 'grel*'s theory of the two truths.

[2] To examine the origin of the *Theg 'grel*'s theory of the two truths.

¹ Concerning the theory of the two truths of Indian Buddhism, see La Vallée Poussin [1937].

² Kumagai [forthcoming 1].

³ Kumagai [forthcoming 2].

⁴ Mimaki and Karmay [2007: 60.9-15].

[3] To identify the position of the *Theg 'grel's* theory of the two truths in the history of the Bon religion.

1. The text of the *Theg 'grel*

The *Theg 'grel* is an anonymous commentary on the *Theg rim*. It is composed of eighty seven folios. According to the *Legs bshad mdzod* by Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1859-1935), the *Theg 'grel* was rediscovered by three Buddhist monks in the fifth "cycle" (*rab byung*⁵), i.e. 1267-1326.⁶ The author of the *Theg 'grel* is regarded as Tre ston rGyal mtshan dpal (14th cen.), in the table of contents of the *BGM*. However, it seems to be wrong because Tre ston quotes it in his *Bon sgo gsal byed*.⁷

2. Conventional truth (*kun rdzob kyi bden pa, samvṛtisatya)**

2-1. The *Theg 'grel's* theory of the conventional truth

We will first summarize the *Theg 'grel's* theory of the conventional truth.

<Subdivision of convention>

In the *Theg 'grel*, convention (*kun rdzob*) is subdivided into two: convention which is not determined as deceptive (*bslu bar ma nges pa'i kun rdzob*) and convention determined as deceptive (*bslu bar nges pa'i kun rdzob*).⁸

The convention which is not determined as deceptive is further subdivided into two: the non-conceptual knowledge with apprehended objects and apprehending subjects (*rtog pa med pa'i shes pa yul dang [yul] can du bcas pa*), and the conceptual knowledge with apprehended objects and apprehending subjects and the understanding of objects (*rtog pa dang bcas pa'i shes pa yul dang yul can don rtogs can*).⁹

The convention determined as deceptive is still further subdivided into two: [convention] which appears but which has no ability to perform a function (*snang ba don byed mi nus pa[i kun rdzob]*) and convention which does not appear nor has any ability to perform a

⁵ "Rab byung" is a Tibetan system of sixty years cycle to count the date. Its origin is 1027. So the fifth cycle is 1267-1326.

⁶ Karmay [1972: 152, n. 2].

⁷ When Tre ston quotes the *Theg 'grel*, he uses the verb: *gsungs* ("said") which is honorific form of the verb *bshad*. If the *Theg 'grel* were Tre ston's treatise, he would not use honorific form of verb. See Mimaki and Karmay [2007: 60.9-15].

⁸ *Theg 'grel* [440.4]: *kun rdzob la gnyis te / bslu bar ma nges pa'i kun rdzob dang / bslu bar nges pa'i kun rdzob bo /*

⁹ *Theg 'grel* [443.5-6]: *de la bslu bar ma nges pa'i kun rdzob la gnyis te / rtog pa dang bcas pa'i shes pa yul dang yul can don rtogs can dang / rtog pa med pa'i shes pa yul dang [yul] can du bcas pa'o /*

function (*snang yang mi snang la don byed kyang mi nus pa'i kun rdzob*).¹⁰

The subdivision of convention is illustrated in the following table:

convention (<i>kun rdzob</i>)	
—	convention which is not determined as deceptive (<i>slu bar mi nges pa'i kun rdzob</i>)
—	non-conceptual knowledge with apprehended objects and apprehending subjects (<i>rtog pa med pa'i shes pa yul dang [yul] can du bcas pa</i>)
—	conceptual knowledge with apprehended objects and apprehending subjects and the understanding of objects (<i>rtog pa dang bcas pa'i shes pa yul dang yul can don rtogs can</i>)
—	convention determined as deceptive (<i>slu bar nges pa'i kun rdzob</i>)
—	[convention] which appears but which has no ability to perform a function (<i>snang ba don byed mi nus pa'i kun rdzob</i>)
—	convention which does not appear nor has any ability to perform a function (<i>snang yang mi snang la don byed kyang mi nus pa'i kun rdzob</i>)

[Table 1]

<Definition of convention>

The *Theg 'grel* defines convention to be things as they appear with apprehended objects and apprehending subjects (*snang ba ci lta ba yul dang yul can du bcas pa*),¹¹ appearance of the object of deluded cognition (*'khrul pa'i shes pa'i yul snang ba*),¹² and deluded cognition (*'khrul pa'i shes pa*).¹³

The *Theg 'grel* defines "convention which is not determined as deceptive" to be that which is established temporally through valid cognition and has temporal ability to perform a function (*res shig pa'i tshad mas grub cing res shig pa'i don byed nus pa*),¹⁴ and that

¹⁰ *Theg 'grel* [443.6-444.1]: *bslu bar nges pa'i kun rdzob la gnyis te / snang ba don byed mi nus pa dang / snang yang mi snang la don byed kyang mi nus pa'i kun rdzob bo /*

¹¹ *Theg 'grel* [441.3-4]: *de la kun rdzob spyi'i mtshan nyid gang zhe na / snang ba ci lta ba yul dang yul can du bcas pa'o /*

¹² *Theg 'grel* [441.4-5]: *de yang rtog pa yod rung med rung yongs gcod byed pa'i shes pa de ni 'khrul pa'i shes pa'o / de'i yul snang ba 'di'o / de la yul 'di kun rdzob yin te / rig[s] pa'i tshad mas gnod pa'i phyir ro /*

¹³ *Theg 'grel* [441.5-6]: *yang 'khrul pa'i shes pa bon can / kun rdzob yin te / spros pa gcod pa la bslu ba'i phyir ro /*

¹⁴ *Theg 'grel* [443.1-2]: *rang gi mtshan nyid ni / res shig pa'i tshad mas grub cing res shig pa'i don byed nus pa ni / bslu bar ma nges pa'o /*

which is produced on the basis of causes and conditions, which is not established logically, which appears equally [to worldly people], and which has the ability to perform a function (*rgyu rkyen la brten nas skyes pa dang / brtag pas dben pa dang / mthun par snang ba dang / don byed nus pa*).¹⁵

The *Theg 'grel* defines "convention determined as deceptive" to be that which is not established even temporally through valid cognition and has no temporal ability to perform a function (*res shig pa'i tshad mas grub cing don byed nus pas stong pa*),¹⁶ and that which is not produced on the basis of causes and conditions, which is established logically [to be true], which does not appear equally [to worldly people], and which has no ability to perform a function.¹⁷

<Word meaning of convention>

The *Theg 'grel* explains convention to be that which appears but which cannot withstand logical examination (*snang la brtag mi bzod pa*),¹⁸ and that which is deceptive (*bslu ba*).¹⁹

2-2. The origin of the *Theg 'grel's* theory of the conventional truth

2-2-1. A different analysis of the conventional truth than the Buddhists

The *Theg 'grel's* subdivision of convention seems to be partially similar to those of Śāntarakṣita's *SDVP*, Atiśa's *SDA*, etc., in that they all subdivide convention into two stages. Śāntarakṣita and Atiśa subdivide convention into correct convention and false convention, and then they further subdivide the false convention into two.²⁰ However, they do not further subdivide correct convention. In contrast, the *Theg 'grel* subdivides both the convention which is not determined as deceptive and the convention determined as

¹⁵ *Theg 'grel* [443.3-4]: *yang rgyu rkyen la brten nas skyes pa dang / brtag pas dben pa dang / mthun par snang ba dang / don byed nus pa ni bslu bar ma nges pa'o /*

¹⁶ *Theg 'grel* [443.2-3]: *res shig pa'i tshad mas grub cing don byed nus pas stong pa ni / bslu bar nges pa'i kun rdzob bo /*

¹⁷ *Theg 'grel* [443.4]: *yang rgyu rkyen la brten nas skyes pa dang / brtag pas dben pa dang / mthun par snang ba dang / don byed nus pa ni bslu bar ma nges pa'o / de las bzlog pa du bslu bar nges pa'o /*

¹⁸ *Theg 'grel* [442.6-443.1]: *de la nges tshig ni / snang la brtag mi bzod pa'i phyir dang /*

¹⁹ *Theg 'grel* [442.6-443.1]: *de la nges tshig ni / snang la brtag mi bzod pa'i phyir dang / bslu ba'i phyir ro /*

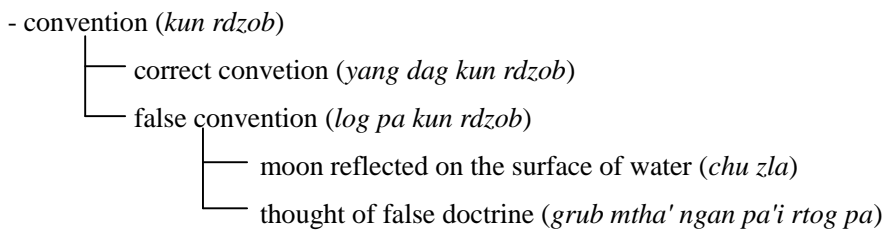
²⁰ *SDVP* (*Tohoku* [No. 3883, 27a7]): *de ltar na kun rdzob ni rnam pa gsum du bstan te / yang dag pa'i kun rdzob ni rnam pa gcig go // yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun rdzob la ni rnam pa gnyis te / rnam par rtog pa dang bcas pa dang rnam par mi rtog pa'i bye brag gi phyir ro //*

SDA, k. 2 (Lindtner [1981: 190]; Ejima [1983: 361-362]; *Tohoku* [No. 3902, 72a4-5]): *kun rdzob rnam pa gnyis su 'dod / log pa dang ni yang dag go // dang po gnyis te chu zla dang // grub mtha' ngan pa'i rtog pa'o //*

deceptive.²¹ This *Theg 'grel's* way of making subdivision is not attested in other Bonpo treatises, so it seems to be particular to the *Theg 'grel*.

2-2-2. Influence of late Indian Mādhyamika philosophy on the *Theg 'grel's* subdivision of convention

As referred also above, the subdivision of convention which is determined as deceptive seems to accord with the subdivision of the false convention of late Indian Mādhyamika thinkers such as Atiśa. Atiśa's classification of the convention in his *SDA*²² is as follows:



[Table 2]

Among them, the "moon reflected on the surface of water" is that which appears but has no ability to perform a function, and the "thought of false doctrine" is that which neither appears nor has any ability to perform a function. They accord respectively with the *Theg 'grel's* "[convention] which appears but which has no ability to perform a function" and "convention which does not appear nor has any ability to perform a function."

Thus, the *Theg 'grel's* subdivision of convention has a similarity with that of Indian Mādhyamika thinkers such as Atiśa.

2-2-3. Influence of late Indian Mādhyamika philosophy on the *Theg 'grel's* definition of convention

As we have seen, the *Theg 'grel's* definition of convention is things as they appear with apprehended objects and apprehending subjects (*snang ba ci lta ba yul dang yul can du*

²¹ See footnote 9 and 10.

²² *SDA*, k. 2-3 (Lindtner [1981: 190]; Ejima [1983: 361-362]; *Tohoku* [No. 3902, 72a4-5]):
kun rdzob rnam pa gnyis su 'dod // log pa dang ni yang dag go //
dang po gnyis te chu zla dang // grub mtha' ngan pa'i rtog pa'o //
ma brtags gcig pu nyams dga' ba'i // skye ba dang ni 'jig pa'i chos //
don byed nus dang ldan pa ni // yang dag kun rdzob yin par 'dod //

bcas pa).²³ In Buddhism, Jñānagarbha (8th cen.) has already explained convention to be "things as they appear" (*yathābhāsa, ji ltar snang ba*).²⁴

The technical terms: "convention which is not determined as deceptive" (*slu bar mi nges pa'i kun rdzob*) and "convention determined as deceptive" (*slu bar nges pa'i kun rdzob*) are not attested in Indian Buddhist texts. But they seem to substantially accord with correct convention (*tathyaśamvṛti, yang dag kun rdzob*) and false convention (*mithyāśamvṛti, log pa kun rdzob*) respectively. In fact, the *Theg 'grel* presents the ability to perform a function (*don byed nus pa*) as a means of distinguishing convention which is not determined as deceptive from convention determined as deceptive.²⁵ Jñānagarbha has already used the "ability to perform a function" as a way to differentiate correct convention from false convention.²⁶ Likewise, there is another proof in the *Theg 'grel*: "that which is produced on the basis of causes and conditions" (*rgyu rkyen la brten nas skyes pa*)²⁷ which accords with Jñānagarbha's explanation: "that which is produced by depending on [causes and conditions]" (*brten nas gang skyes*).²⁸

The *Theg 'grel*'s definition: "that which does not exist if examined [logically]" (*brtag pas dben pa*)²⁹ is also close to the technical term of late Indian Mādhyamika: "that which is pleasing insofar as it is not examined [logically]" (*avicāraikaramaṇīya, ma brtags gcig pu na nyams dga' ba*).³⁰

²³ See footnote 11.

²⁴ SDV, k. 3cd (Eckel [1987: 156.4-5]; *Tohoku* [No. 3881, 1a3-4]): *ji ltar snang ba 'di kho na // kun rdzob gzhan ni cig shos yin //*

²⁵ See footnote 15 and 17.

²⁶ SDVV, v. 12 (Eckel [1987: 163.20-25]; *Tohoku* [No. 3882, 6b5]): *yang kun rdzob ni rnam pa gnyis su bstan te / snang du 'dra yang don byed dag // nus pa'i phyir dang mi nus phyir // yang dag yang dag ma yin pas // kun rdzob kyi ni dbye ba byas // (k. 12) zhe bya ba'o //*

²⁷ See footnote 15.

²⁸ SDV, k. 8abc (Eckel [1987: 160.3-5]; *Tohoku* [No. 3881, 2a2]): *brtags pa'i don gyis dben gyur pa // dngos tsam brten nas gang skyes te // yang dag kun rdzob shes par bya //*

²⁹ See footnote 15 and 17.

³⁰ According to Akahane [2003: 51-52], the expression "that which is pleasing insofar as it is not examined logically" (*avicāraikaramaṇīya, ma brtags gcig pu na nyams dga' ba*) is attested in Avalokitavrata's *PPT* (*Tohoku* [No. 3859, Za, 84a6, Sha, 245b7]) for the first time among Buddhist texts. But Avalokitavrata uses this expression merely as the adjective of the "illusion" which is an example of convention. He does not have the intention to use it as the definition of convention.

This expression is used for the definition of convention in Śāntarakṣta's *MA* (k. 64a: Ichigo [1985: 202]; *Tohoku* [No. 3884, 55a6]) for the first time, and then later thinkers started to use it: Kamalaśīla's *Madhyamakālaṃkārapañjikā*, Śrīgupta's *Tattvāvatāravṛtti*, Atiśa's *SDA* etc.

2-2-4. Influence of late Indian Mādhyamika on the word meaning of convention

The *Theg 'grel's* word meaning of convention: "that which appears but which cannot withstand the logical examination"³¹ also seems to be influenced by the theories of late Indian Mādhyamikas'. For example, Jñānagarbha gives the same meaning: "we cannot examine logically convention which has the characteristic as it appears."³² The expression: "that which cannot withstand logical examination" (*brtag mi bzod pa*) itself is attested in late Mādhyamika treatises such as Śāntarakṣita's *MAVri*.³³

2-3. Position of the *Theg 'grel's* theory of the conventional truth in the Bon religion

As we have seen the *Theg 'grel* subdivides convention into two: convention which is not determined as deceptive (*slu bar mi nges pa'i kun rdzob*) and convention determined as deceptive (*slu bar nges pa'i kun rdzob*).³⁴ Tre ston rGyal mtshan dpal (14th cen.) also uses the similar terms: non-deceptive convention (*mi slu ba'i kun rdzob*) and deceptive convention (*slu ba'i kun rdzob*).³⁵ However, Tre ston's subdivision above is not that of convention but that of false convention, so it is different from the *Theg 'grel's* subdivision.

As mentioned above, the *Theg 'grel* proposes a number of proofs in order to distinguish "convention which is not determined as deceptive" from "convention determined as deceptive": the production on the basis of causes and conditions, the voidness of [logical] examination, equal appearance [to worldly people], and the ability to perform a function.³⁶ Me ston has also already presented the four similar proofs:³⁷

³¹ See footnote 18.

³² *SDVV*, v. 21 (Eckel [1987: 175.7-12]; *Tohoku* [No. 3882, 10a7]): '**ji ltar snang bzhin ngo bo'i phyir // 'di la dpyad pa mi 'jug go // (k. 21ab)** ci ste kun rdzob ni ji ltar snang ba bzhin yin te / de la ni ji skad bshad pa'i dpyad pa'i gnas med pa nyid do // 'di ltar / **rnam par dpyod pa byed na don // gzhan du song bas gnod par 'gyur // (k. 21cd)**

³³ *MAVri*, v. 64 (Ichigo [1985: 204.1-3]; *Tohoku* [No. 3885, 70b7-71a1]): kun rdzob 'di ni sgra'i tha snyad tsam gyi bdag nyid ma yin gyi / mthong ba dang 'dod pa'i dngos po rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba mams ni *brtag mi bzod pas* yang dag pa'i kun rdzob ste /

³⁴ See footnote 8.

³⁵ *Bon sgo gsal byed* (Mimaki and Karmay [2007: 58, 19-21]): log pa kun rdzob kyi mtshan nyid / 'khrul pa'i ngo bor snang zhing / don byed pa ltar snang ba / de la dbye na / slu ba'i kun rdzob dang / mi slu ba'i kun rdzob gnyis so //

³⁶ See footnote 15 and 17.

³⁷ *bDen gnyis rang 'grel* [14b2-4]: kha gcig na re / rgyu rkyen las skyes / mthun par snang / don byed nus / brtag na dben / de ltar mtshan nyid bzhi dang ldan pa yang dag pa'i kun rdzob yin la / de bzhin mi ldan pa log pa'i kun rdzob yin zer te /

[1] that which is produced from causes and conditions (*rgyu rkyen las skyes*)

[2] that which appears equally [to ordinary people] (*mthun par snang*)

[3] that which has the ability to perform a function (*don byed nus*)

[4] that which does not exist when it is examined [logically] (*brtag na dben*)

However, Me ston presents them as opponent's theory, so he refutes them. It thus seems that within Bonpo thinkers there are two traditions with respect to these four definitions, one which accepts them and one which refutes them.

3. Absolute truth (*don dam bden pa, paramārthasatya**)

3-1. The *Theg 'grel's* theory of the absolute truth

The *Theg 'grel* subdivides the absolute truth (*don dam pa'i bden pa*) into the absolute of the profound word (*zab mo gtam gyi don dam*) and the absolute known in the world (*'jig rten grags sde'i don dam*).³⁸

- absolute truth (*don dam pa'i bden pa*)

- ├ absolute of the profound word (*zab mo gtam gyi don dam*)
- └ absolute known in the world (*'jig rten grags sde'i don dam*)

[Table 3]

<Definition of the absolute truth>

The *Theg 'grel* defines the absolute truth as that which is not determined through logical cognition (*rig shes yongs gcod med pa bon can*),³⁹ and object of logical cognition without discursiveness (*rig[s] pa shes pa'i yul spros bral*).⁴⁰

The *Theg 'grel* defines the absolute of the profound word to be that which is without all discursiveness (*spros pa'i phyogs mtha' dag dang bral ba*).⁴¹

The *Theg 'grel* defines the absolute known in the world to be that which is without a part of discursiveness (*spros pa'i phyogs gcig dang bral ba*).⁴²

³⁸ *Theg 'grel* [440.1]: *de la don dam pa'i bden pa la gnyis te /*

Theg 'grel [440.3-4]: *dang po zab mo gtam gyi don dam dang / 'jig rten grags sde'i don dam mo /*

³⁹ *Theg 'grel* [441.1-2]: *rig shes yongs gcod med pa bon can / don dam yin te /*

⁴⁰ *Theg 'grel* [441.2]: *de ltar rig[s] pa shes pa'i yul spros bral la / de don dam yin te /*

⁴¹ *Theg 'grel* [444.4-5]: *spros pa'i phyogs mtha' dag dang bral ba ni zab mo gtam gyi don dam mo /*

⁴² *Theg 'grel* [444.3-4]: *mtshan nyid ni gnyis te / spros pa'i phyogs gcig dang bral ba ni / 'jig rten grags sde'i don dam mo /*

<Word meaning of the absolute truth>

The *Theg 'grel* explains the word meaning of the absolute truth to be excellent object of experience of enlightened one (*sangs rgyas kyi spyod yul dam pa*),⁴³ that which is established logically and which is not damaged by valid cognition (*rigs pas grub cing tshad mas mi gnod*),⁴⁴ and that which purifies the obscuration, which produces wisdom, and which supports sentient beings for the liberation, when it is experienced (*gang la dmigs na sgrib pa dag cing ye shes bskyed la lus can sgrol ba'i rten byed pa*).⁴⁵

The *Theg 'grel* explains the word meaning of the absolute of the profound word to be that which performs without formation, which is world transcending, untainted, and without discursiveness (*mngon par 'du byed pa med par 'jug pa'i 'jig rten las 'das pa / zag pa med pa spros pa med pa*),⁴⁶ and the wisdom, discursive characteristic of which is completely removed, so which is without production and cessation, so exists like a space, which is not established as nature, where all existence is silent, and which does not exist even in the silence (*spros pa'i mtshan ma thams cad yongs su chad pas / skye 'gag dang bral te nam mkha' ltar gnas pa / ci ltar yang ma grub pa / dngos po thams cad nye bar zhi ba / yang zhi ba tsam la yang mi gnas pa'i ye shes*).⁴⁷

The *Theg 'grel* explains the word meaning of the absolute known in the world to be that which performs with formation, which corresponds with the accumulations of merit and wisdom, which is called the pure and worldly wisdom, and which is discursive (*mngon par 'du byed pa dang bcas par 'jug pa bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs kyi rjes su mthun pa dag pa 'jig rten pa'i ye shes zhes bya ba spros pa dang bcas pa*),⁴⁸ and the logical cognition with apprehended objects and apprehending subjects (*rig[s] pa'i shes pa yul dang yul can du bcas pa*).⁴⁹

⁴³ *Theg 'grel* [444.2]: *nges tshig ni sangs rgyas kyi spyod yul dam pa yin pa'i phyir dang /*

⁴⁴ *Theg 'grel* [444.2]: *rigs pas grub cing tshad mas mi gnod phyir dang /*

⁴⁵ *Theg 'grel* [444.2-3]: *gang la dmigs na sgrib pa dag cing ye shes bskyed la lus can sgrol ba'i rten byed pa'i phyir ro /*

⁴⁶ *Theg 'grel* [440.1-2]: *de la gcig ni mngon par 'du byed pa med par 'jug pa'i 'jig rten las 'das pa / zag pa med pa spros pa med pa'o /*

⁴⁷ *Theg 'grel* [440.5-6]: *de la zab mo gdam gyi don dam zhes bya ba gang zhe na / spros pa'i mtshan ma thams cad yongs su chad pas / skye 'gag dang bral te nam mkha' ltar gnas pa / ci ltar yang ma grub pa / dngos po thams cad nye bar zhi ba / yang zhi ba tsam la yang mi gnas pa'i ye shes so /*

⁴⁸ *Theg 'grel* [440.2-3]: *gnyis pa ni mngon par 'du byed pa dang bcas par 'jug pa bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs kyi rjes su mthun pa dag pa 'jig rten pa'i ye shes zhes bya ba spros pa dang bcas pa ste /*

⁴⁹ *Theg 'grel* [441.1]: *'jig rten grags sde bya ba'i don dam gang yin zhe na / rig[s] pa'i shes pa yul dang yul can du bcas pa'o /*

3-2. Influence of Buddhist philosophy on the *Theg 'grel's* theory of the absolute truth

The *Theg 'grel's* explanations of the word meaning of the absolute of the profound word and the absolute known in the world are almost the same as the passages in the *TJ* of Bhāviveka (ca. 500-570).⁵⁰ Thus the author of the *Theg 'grel* seems to be influenced by Bhāviveka.

The *Theg 'grel* explains the word meaning of the absolute truth to be the excellent object of experience of the enlightened one (*sangs rgyas kyi spyod yul dam pa yin pa*). This is an explanation of the term as a genitive *tatpuruṣa* compound. In Indian Mādhyamika, Bhāviveka presents three interpretations of the word meaning of the absolute: [1] *karmadhāraya* compound, [2] *tatpuruṣa* compound, and [3] *bahuvrīhi* compound.⁵¹ Of these the *Theg 'grel* takes up only the explanation in which the term is treated as a *tatpuruṣa* compound.

3-3. Position of the *Theg 'grel's* theory of the absolute truth in the Bon religion

Two subdivisions of the absolute: the absolute of the profound word (*zab mo gtam gyi don dam*) and the absolute known in the world (*'jig rten grags sde'i don dam*) are adopted

⁵⁰ *TJ*, chap. 3, v. 26 (*Tohoku* [No. 3856, Dza 60b4-5]): *de la gcig ni mngon par 'du byed pa med par 'jug pa 'jig rten las 'das pa zag pa med pa spros pa med pa'o //*

Theg 'grel [440.1-2]: *de la gcig ni mngon par 'du byed pa med par 'jug pa'i 'jig rten las 'das pa / zag pa med pa spros pa med pa'o /*

TJ, chap. 3, v. 26 (*Tohoku* [No. 3856, Dza 60b5]): *gnysis pa ni mngon par 'du byed pa dang bcas par 'jug pa bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs kyi rjes su mthun pa dag pa 'jig rten pa'i ye shes zhes bya ba spros pa dang bcas pa ste /*

Theg 'grel [440.2-3]: *gnysis pa ni mngon par 'du byed pa dang bcas par 'jug pa bsod nams dang ye sddxxhes kyi tshogs kyi rjes su mthun pa dag pa 'jig rten pa'i ye shes zhes bya ba spros pa dang bcas pa ste /*

⁵¹ As Ejima [1980: 102-105] has pointed out, Bhāviveka gives three types of interpretation of the compound of the word "absolute truth" (*Skt. paramārtha, Tib. don dam gyi bden pa*), that is to say [1] *karmadhāraya* compound, [2] *tatpuruṣa* compound, and [3] *bahuvrīhi* compound.

PPr (*Tohoku* [No. 3853, Tsha, 228a3-4]): *don dam par (sic, read pa) ni [1] de don kyang yin la / dam pa yang yin pas don dam pa 'am / [2] rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes dam pa'i don yin pas / don dam pa ste /*

PPr (*Tohoku* [No. 3853, Tsha, 228a5-6]): **[3]** *rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes de'i yul can yang yul med pa'i tshul gyis don dam pa ste / de la don dam pa yod pa'i phyir ro // de 'gog pa dang rjes su mthun pa skye ba med pa la sogs pa bstan pa dang / thos pa dang / bsams pa dang / bsgoms pa las byung ba'i shes rab kyang don dam pa ste / don dam pa rtogs pa'i thabs kyi phyir phyin ci ma log pa'i phyir ro //*

TJ, chap. 3, v. 26 (*Tohoku* [No. 3856, Dza, 59b1]): *don dam pa zhes bsdu ba ni [1] de don yang yin la dam pa yang yin pas don dam pa'o // [2] yang na dam pa'i don te rnam par mi rtog pa'i ye shes dam pa'i don yin pas dam pa'i don to / [3] yang na don dam pa dang mthun pa ste don dam pa rtogs pa dang rjes su mthun pa'i shes rab la don dam pa de yod pas don dam pa dang mthun pa'o // don dam par na zhes bya ba ni don dam pa de nyid du'ang (P: 'am) don dam par ro //*

also by Tre ston in his *Bon sgo gsal byed*.⁵² In contrast to these, Me ston refutes the subdivision of the absolute.⁵³

So there are thus two traditions as follows:

[A] The tradition that regards the absolute truth as unique.

[B] The tradition that subdivides the absolute truth into two.

The *Theg 'grel* seems to be the first example of the latter tradition.

4. Conclusion

I now summarize the *Theg 'grel*'s theory of the two truths.

[1] Concerning the conventional truth

- The *Theg 'grel*'s theory of the conventional truth is partially influenced by other Buddhist and Bonpo authors.
- The *Theg 'grel*'s subdivision of convention into convention which is not determined as deceptive (*slu bar mi nges pa'i kun rdzob*) and convention determined as deceptive (*slu bar nges pa'i kun rdzob*) is substantially similar to the subdivision of convention of late Indian Mādhyamika, namely correct convention and false convention.
- The *Theg 'grel*'s two subdivisions of convention which is determined as deceptive seem to accord with the two subdivisions of false convention of Atiśa.
- The *Theg 'grel*'s definition of convention: "things as they appear with apprehended objects and apprehending subjects" seems to be influenced by late Indian Mādhyamika thinkers such as Jñānagarbha.
- The *Theg 'grel*'s word meaning of convention: "that which appears but which cannot withstand the logical examination" also seems to be influenced by late Indian Mādhyamika thinkers.
- In the terms of the words used, the *Theg 'grel*'s categories of "convention which is not determined as deceptive" and "convention determined as deceptive" seem to be similar to Me ston's non-deceptive convention and deceptive convention. But their substantial meanings are completely different.

⁵² Mimaki and Karmay [2007: 60.9-15].

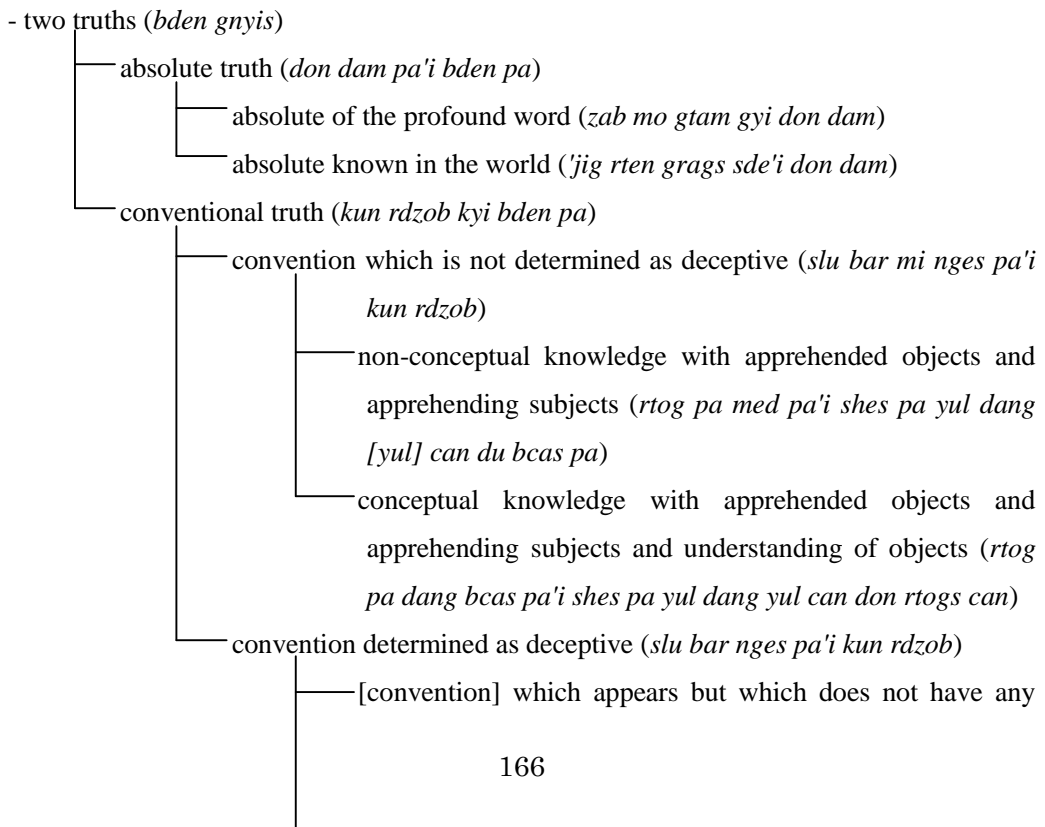
⁵³ *bDen gnyis* [A2b3-4, B3a2-3]: *don byed nus dang mi nus sogs // kun rdzob dbye ba'i khyad par 'dod // skye ba med dang sgyu mar mtshungs // brtag na khyad par yod ma yin //*
bDen gnyis 'grel pa [9b6-10a1]: *shes bya bon can / gsher zhing brlan pa la chur snang ba dang / smig rgyu chur snang ba gnyis la / yang dag kun rdzob dang log pa kun rdzob yin min gyi dbye ba dang rnam bzhas mi 'thad par thal / de gnyis la rigs pas brtag na don byed nus mi nus la sogs kyi khyad par med pa'i phyir /*

- There are two positions in the Bon religion: one position which refutes the four proofs in order to distinguish correct convention from false convention, and another position which accepts the four proofs.

[2] Concerning the absolute truth

- The *Theg 'grel's* explanation of the definitions of the absolute of the profound word (*zab mo gtam gyi don dam*) and the absolute known in the world (*'jig rten grags sde'i don dam*) is almost the same as the explanation of two types of absolute given by the Buddhist thinker Bhāviveka in his *TJ*.
- Bhāviveka gives three possible interpretations of the compound of the absolute (*paramārtha*), that is to say [1] *karmadhāraya*, [2] *tatpuruṣa*, and [3] *bahuvrīhi*. In contrast to him, the *Theg 'grel* presents only the *tatpuruṣa* compound.
- There are two traditions concerning the subdivision of the absolute in the Bon religion: one tradition that regards the absolute as unique, and another tradition that subdivides the absolute into two. The *Theg 'grel* seems to be the first example of the latter tradition.

Here is the classification of the *Theg 'grel's* theory of the two truths:



ability to perform a function (*snang ba don byed mi nus pa[i kun rdzob]*)

convention which does not appear nor has any ability to perform a function (*snang yang mi snang la don byed kyang mi nus pa'i kun rdzob*)

[Table 4]

<Abbreviations>

BGM *Bonpo Grub mtha' Material, Six Texts Including the Bon sgo gsal byed and the Theg rim mdo rgyud Commentary of Tre-ston Rgyal-mtshan-dpal on the Establishment of the Philosophical Base of Bon*, Dolanji: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1978.

D Tibetan Tripiṭaka, sDe dge Edition.

Otani *The Tibetan Tripitaka Catalogue and Index*, Tokyo: Suzuki Research Foundation, 1961. (repr. *The Tibetan Tripitaka Catalogue and Index*, Kyoto: Rinsen Book Co., 1985.)

P Tibetan Tripiṭaka, Peking edition.

Tohoku *A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons*. Edited by Hakuju Ue, Munetada Suzuki, Yenshō Kanakura, and Tōkan Tada, Sendai: Tohoku Imperial University, 1934.

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[Indian sources]

MA Śāntarakṣita: *Madhyamakālaṃkārikā*; *dBu ma rgyan gyi tshig le'ur byas pa*.
Tib. ed. Ichigo [1985].

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3884; *P*: Otani No. 5284.

MAVri Śāntarakṣita: *Madhyamakālaṃkāravṛtti*; *dBu ma'i rgyan gyi 'grel pa*.

Tib. ed. Ichigo [1985].

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3885; *P*: Otani No. 5285.

PPr Bhāviveka: *Prajñāpradīpamūlamadhyamakavṛtti*; *dBu ma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa shes rab sgron ma*.

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3853; *P*: Otani No. 5253.

PPT Avalokitavrata: *Prajñāpradīpaṭīkā*; *Shes rab sgron ma rgya cher 'grel pa*.

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3859; *P*: Otani No. 5259.

SDA Atiśa (Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna): *Satyadvayāvatāra*; *bDen pa gnyis la 'jug pa*.

Tib. ed. Lindtner [1981], Ejima [1983].

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3902, 4467; *P*: Otani No. 5298, 5380.

SDV Jñānagarbha: *Satyadvayavibhaṅgakārikā*; *bDen pa gnyis rnam par 'byed pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*.

Tib. ed. Eckel [1987].

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3881.

SDVP Śāntarakṣita: *Satyadvayavibhaṅgapañjikā*; *bDen pa gnyis rnam par 'byed pa'i dka' 'grel*.

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3883; *P*: Otani No. 5283.

SDVV Jñānagarbha: *Satyadvayavibhaṅgavṛtti*; *bDen pa gnyis rnam par 'byed pa'i 'grel pa*.

Tib. ed. Eckel [1987].

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3882.

TJ Bhāviveka: *Madhyamakahrdayavṛttitarkajvālā*; *dBu ma'i snying po'i 'grel pa rtog ge 'bar ba*.

Tib. *D*: Tohoku No. 3856; *P*: Otani No. 5256.

[Tibetan sources]

Theg 'grel Unknown authorship (rediscovered in the fifth Rab byung, i.e. 1267-1326):
Theg pa'i rim pa mngon du bshad pa'i mdo rgyud kyi 'grel pa. BGM, pp. 387-599.

Theg rim Unknown authorship (rediscovered in the fifth Rab byung, i.e. 1267-1326):
Theg pa'i rim pa mngon du bshad pa'i mdo rgyud kyi 'grel pa. BGM, pp. 369-85.

bDen gnyis Me ston Sher rab 'od zer (1058-1132 or 1118-1192):
[A] *dBu ma bden gnyis kyi gzhung* in *Sa lam rnam 'byed 'phrul sgron rtsa 'grel theg chen gzhi lam 'bras bu rtsa 'grel dbu ma rtsa 'grel skor gyi gsungs pod bzhungs*, vol. 2 Kha, (Kathumandu, 1991), No. Cha. (5 folios, dBu can script)
[B] *dBu ma bden gnyis kyi gzhung* edited by Yam Lama and Samtin Jansin, Delhi, 1961. (6 folios, dBu med script)

bDen gnyis rang 'grel Me ston Sher rab 'od zer (1058-1132 or 1118-1192): *Theg pa chen po dbu ma'i rang 'grel gsal byed sgron ma legs par bshad pa*. This is an autocommentary by Me ston. A copy of this text was given to me by Dangsong Namgyal a Bonpo monk of Triten Norbutse monastery. It has 94 p. This treatise is listed in the catalogue of Nyi-ma bstan-'dzin, cf. Kværne [1974: 117 (T35-2)].

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