

The Two Truths in the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* of mNyam med

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0. Introduction

As I wrote in previous papers,¹ the theory of the two truths (*satyadvaya*, *bden gnyis*) has played a crucial role in Bon as well as in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism.

The first Bonpo thinker who systematically explained the theory of the two truths was Me ston Shes rab 'od zer (1058-1132 or 1118-1192). He composed a treatise entitled *bDen gnyis* and then produced an autocommentary on this text.² These treatises are regarded as the fundamental works on the two truths in the Bon tradition. Later mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415) wrote a commentary on Me ston's *bDen gnyis*, which was called the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*. Until recently this was the only available commentary. In this paper I analyze the theory of the two truths found in mNyam med's *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*. As I have discussed in another paper, he also discusses the theory of the two truths in his *Sa lam rang 'grel* but the theories he presents there differ from what are found in the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*.³

The main objectives of this paper are as follows:

- [1] **To summarize the structure of the theory of the two truths of the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*.**
- [2] **To examine the origin of the theory of the two truths of the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*.**
- [3] **To identify the position of the theory of the two truths of the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* in the history of the Bon religion.**

1. Two Truths (*bden gnyis, satyadvaya**)

mNyam med's *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* closely follows the explanation of the two truths given

¹ Cf. Kumagai [2008], [2009], [2010a], [2010b], [forthcoming].

² Concerning Me ston's theory of the two truths, see Kumagai [2008] and [2010b].

³ Kumagai [forthcoming].

in Me ston's *bDen gnyis rang 'grel*.

According to mNyam med, the theory of the two truths is "that which removes the illness of the mind which wrongly regards things as really existing" (*bden pa'i dngos por 'dzin pa'i blo yi nad sel bar byed pa*).⁴ The absolute truth and the conventional truth are neither the same nor different. They are simultaneously neither the same nor different.⁵

mNyam med subdivides the object of knowledge (*shes bya, jñeya**) into the conventional truth and the absolute truth in accordance with two types of knowledge, that is to say the "way of knowledge which does not realize the essential nature" (*gnas lugs ma rtogs pa'i shes pa'i mthong tshul*) and the "way of knowledge which does realize the essential nature" (*gnas lugs rtogs pa'i shes pa'i mthong tshul*).⁶

2. Four Ways Appearances Are Perceived

mNyam med, in his *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*, presents the following four ways a person may perceive appearances.

[1] One who has an eye-defect (*mig skyon can*) like the disease of phlegm sees everything as double.⁷

[2] The ordinary person (*byis pa so so'i skye bo*) is a person who does not realize the

⁴ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [2a4]: *bden pa'i dngos por 'dzin pa'i blo yi nad sel bar byed pa'i / kun rdzob kyi bden pa dang don dam gyi bden pa gnyis*.

bDen gnyis [A1b1, B1b1-2]: *dngos por 'dzin pa'i nad sel ba'i / bden pa rnam gnyis 'dir gsal bya / bDen gnyis rang 'grel* [2b5-3a1]: *sems can rnams kyi bdag gzhan gzung 'dzin rnam pa rna tshogs la mngon pa zhen pa'i dngos 'dzin gyi gcong snying gi nad chen pos thog ma med pa nas gdung ba bsal ba'i phyir / kun rdzob dang don dam pa'i bden pa gnyis gnas lugs ji lta ba bzhin du / dus nye ba 'di nyid du mun pa la sgron me bteq pa bzhin gsal bar bya'o /*

⁵ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [3a2-4a6].

bDen gnyis [A1b2, B1b3-4]: *shin tu gcig min tha dad min / ldog pas byas min*.

bDen gnyis rang 'grel [4a4-5b2].

⁶ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [4a6-4b1]: *shes bya bon can / rtogs mkhan gyi shes pa gnyis la ltos te kun rdzob kyi bden pa dang / don dam gyi bden pa gnyis su rnam par dbye ba la rgyu mtshan yod de /*

bDen gnyis 'grel pa [4b1-2]: *gang zag gi rtog pa la sogs / gnas lugs ma rtogs pa'i shes pa'i mthong tshul la kun rdzob kyi bden pa dang / ji lta ba rtogs pa'i ye shes la sogs gnas lugs rtogs pa'i shes pa'i mthong tshul la don dam gyi bden par rnam par bzhag pa'i phyir ro /*

bDen gnyis [A1b1-3, B1b2-4]: *phyi nang snod bcud 'khor 'das kun / 'di ltar snang ba'i bon rnams kun / bden pa gnyis su rnam par gnas / shin tu gcig min tha dad min / ldog pas byas min rtogs pa yi / shes pa gnyis ltos rnam par dbye /*

According to the *bDen gnyis rang 'grel* [5b3-4], the two types of knowledge indicate (1) the knowledge of ordinary person (*gang zag gi shes pa*) and (2) the knowledge of the enlightened one (*sangs rgyas kyi shes pa*). According to the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* [4b1-2] of mNyam med, the two types of knowledge mean (1) the knowledge which does not realize the essential nature (*gnas lugs ma rtogs pa'i shes pa*) and (2) the knowledge which realizes the essential nature (*gnas lugs rtogs pa'i shes pa*).

⁷ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [5b2]: *bad kan la sogs kyi mig skyon can la mig yor snang yang /*

essential nature and who regards the various appearances composed of objects and object-perceivers to be true.⁸

[3] The bodhisattva, who is at the post-meditation phase of practice (*rjes shes*), realizes the essential nature, so he realizes that the various appearances are false, like a magical horse or magical cow.⁹ One who attains wisdom at the post-meditative phase of the holy one sees the various appearances but does not regard them as true.¹⁰

[4] The meditative equilibrium (*mnyam bzhag gi ye shes*) of the enlightened ones and excellent bodhisattvas does not perceive any aspects of objects and object-perceivers,¹¹ so it does not cling to them as real.¹²

Me ston had presented this same analysis in an earlier text. In his *bDen gnyis rang 'grel*, he quotes the *MAvBh* of Candrakīrti (ca. 600-650)¹³ regarding the relationship between the theory of the two truths and the ways different people perceive.¹⁴ From this point of view, we can understand that Me ston is willing to adopt a Buddhist interpretation and he is influenced especially by Candrakīrti with respect to this theory. On the other hand mNyam med, in his *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*, does not quote the *MAvBh* itself, but we can say that he is also influenced by Candrakīrti at least partially.

3. Conventional Truth (*kun rdzob bden pa, saṃvṛtisatya**)

3-1. The *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*'s Theory of the Conventional Truth

⁸ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [5a2-3]: *byis pa so so'i skye bo bon can / khyod la gzung 'dzin gyi snang ba sna tshogs tha dad du snang ba ste / khyod gzung 'dzin gyi snang ba sna tshogs tha dad du snang bar bden par zhen pa'i phyir / der thal / khyod gnas lugs ma rtogs pa'i gang zag yin pa'i phyir /*

⁹ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [5a4-5]: *gang zag dam pa g-yung drung sems dpa' rnam bon can / khyod rjes thob la snang ba sna tshogs rnam sgyu ma'i rta glang bzhin du rdzun par rtogs te / khyod gnas lugs mngon sum du rtogs pa'i lam pa yin pa'i phyir /*

¹⁰ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [5b4]: *dam pa'i rjes thob kyi ye shes la snang ba rnam snang la bden zhen med par rtogs pa yang khong du chud par bya'o /*

¹¹ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [5a5-6]: *sangs rgyas kyi ye shes dang / gang zag dam pa g-yung drung sems dpa' mnyam bzhag gi ye shes bon can / khyod gzung 'dzin tha dad kyi snang ba sna tshogs kyi spros pa cir yang mthong bar mi 'gyur te / khyod gzung 'dzin gyi spros pa med pa mngon sum du gzigs pa'i ye shes yin pa'i phyir /*

¹² *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [5b3-4]: *sangs rgyas dang dam pa'i mnyam bzhag gi ye shes la / gzung 'dzin gyi spros pa cir yang mi snang ba dang bden 'dzin med pa'o /*

¹³ Concerning Candrakīrti's explanation of the relationship between the theory of the two truths and the persons perceiving appearances, see Kishine [2001: 66-67].

¹⁴ *bDen gnyis rang 'grel* [6a6-b2]: *'Jug 'grel las / de la so so skye bo rnam kyi don dam pa gang yin pa de'i 'phags pa'i snang ba bcas pa'i spyod yul rnam kyi kun rdzob tsam yin la / de'i rang bzhin stong pa nyid gang yin pa de ni de rnam kyi don dam pa yin pa'o / zhes gsungs so /*

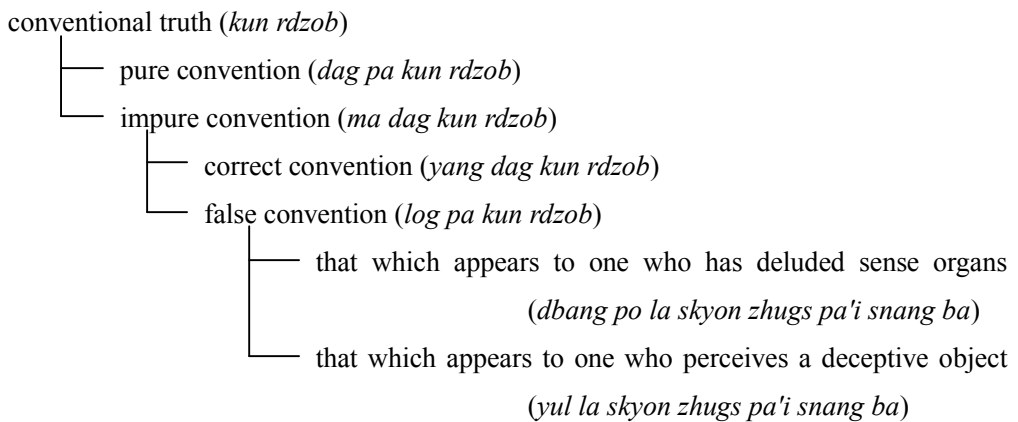
MAvBh, chap. 6, v. 28 (La Vallée Poussin [1912: 108.13-16]; Tohoku [No. 3862, 'A, 255a5]): *de la so so'i skye bo rnam kyi don dam pa gang yin pa de nyid 'phags pa snang ba dang bcas pa'i spyod yul can rnam kyi kun rdzob tsam yin la / de'i rang bzhin stong pa nyid gang yin pa de ni de rnam kyi don dam pa'o //*

Here, I summarize the theory of the conventional truth in mNyam med's *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*.

<Subdivision of convention>

mNyam med subdivides convention into pure convention (*dag pa kun rdzob*) and impure convention (*ma dag kun rdzob*),¹⁵ and then he further subdivides impure convention into correct convention (*yang dag kun rdzob*) and false convention (*log pa kun rdzob*).¹⁶ He further subdivides false convention into "that which appears to one who has deluded sense organs" (*dbang po la skyon zhugs pa'i snang ba*) and "that which appears to one who perceives a deceptive object" (*yul la skyon zhugs pa'i snang ba*).¹⁷

The *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*'s Classification of Convention



<Definition of the conventional truth>

In his *bDen gnyis*, Me ston defines the conventional truth (*kun rdzob kyi bden pa*) as the "appearance of an object which does not [truly] exist" (*yod pa ma yin don snang ba*).¹⁸

¹⁵ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [6b6-7a2]: *dang po ni / kun rdzob dbye ba gnyis su 'dod / ces bya'o / gnyis pa ni / dag pa dang ni ma dag pa'o / zhes pa gang zhe na dag pa kun rdzob dang / ma dag kun rdzob gnyis so / zhes bya'o /*

¹⁶ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [7a6-7b1]: *dang po ni ma dag kun rdzob rnam gnyis te / zhes pa / ma dag kun rdzob la dbye na gnyis te / zhes bya'o / gnyis pa ni / log pa dang ni yang dag go / zhes pa gang zhe na / log pa kun rdzob dang / yang dag kun rdzob gnyis so /*

¹⁷ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [7b2-3]: *mig skyon can la mig yor la sogs dbang po la skyon zhugs pa'i snang ba dang / smig rgyu la chur snang ba la sogs yul la skyon zhugs pa'i dbang gi snang tshul rnams bon can / khyod dbang po dang yul la skyon med pa'i gang zag la ltos te log pa kun rdzob tu rnam par bzhag ste /*

¹⁸ *bDen gnyis* [A2a5-b1, B2b5]; *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [8b2]: *kun rdzob bden pa'i mtshan nyid ni // yod pa*

In his *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*, mNyam med gives other definitions such as "that which does not truly exist" (*yang dag par yod pa ma yin pa*), "that which is not established as true and so is deceptive" (*bden par grub pa ma yin par rdzun pa*), "that which appears as a deceptive object" (*'khrul pa'i don du snang ba*), and "that which does not exist as true but which appears to be like a true object" (*bden par yod pa ma yin zhing bden pa'i don ltar snang ba*).¹⁹

<Word meaning of the conventional truth>

mNyam med follows Me ston's explanation of the word meaning of the conventional truth, that is to say "that which has a disposition to obscure [the essential nature] by imputation."²⁰

<Other explanations of the conventional truth>

[1] mNyam med gives other explanations of convention as follows.

- The way the mode of existence appears to deluded cognition is convention because it cannot withstand logical examination.²¹
- Convention is the "phenomena of cyclic existence" (*'khor ba'i bon rnams*)²² and "that which is like an illusion" (*sgyu ma lta bu*).²³
- The demonstration: "Conventional appearances of cyclic existence are established as true" is not logical.²⁴
- Conventional appearances of cyclic existence seem to be comfortable, pleasing, profitable, or harmful if they are not examined logically. But these cannot withstand the power [of

ma yin don snang ba'o //

¹⁹ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [8b2-4]: *tha snyad du kun rdzob kyi bden pa'i mtshan nyid gang zhe na / yang dag par yod pa ma yin pa'am bden par grub pa ma yin par rdzun pa'am 'khrul pa'i don du snang ba de / kun rdzob kyi bden pa'i mtshan nyid do / zhes gsungs so / yang na bden par yod pa ma yin zhing bden pa'i don ltar snang ba de / kun rdzob kyi mtshan nyid do zhes bya'o /*

There is a similar passage in Me ston's *bDen gnyis rang 'grel* [12a5-6]: *kun rdzob kyi mtshan nyid yin te / yang dag pa bden pa'am grub pa ma yin pa rdzun pa'am 'khrul pa'i don snang ba'o / zhes bya'o /*

²⁰ *bDen gnyis* [A2a1, B2a4-5]; *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [6a4]: *kun tu brtags pas sgrub par byed / mtshan ma'i dngos pos bden pa'o /*

²¹ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [4b4-5]: *gnas lugs la 'khrul pa'i shes pa la snang tshul thams cad bon can / khyod kun rdzob yin te / khyod rigs pas brtag mi bzod pa'i bon yin pa'i phyir / dper na smig rgyu chur snang ba bzhin no /*

²² *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [10a2]: *'khor ba'i bon rnams kun rdzob yin par ston pas gsungs te /*

²³ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [10a3]: *sgyu ma lta bur ston pas gsungs te /*

²⁴ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [9a2-3]: *'khor ba kun rdzob kyi snang ba bon can / khyod bden par grub par bsgrub pa la / yang dag pa'i rigs pa med de / khyod bden par yang dag pa'i rigs pas mi 'grub pa'i phyir /*

logic] if they are examined logically.²⁵

[2] mNyam med explains pure convention (*dag pa kun rdzob*) to be "convention which does not obscure the realization of the meaning of the essential nature" (*gnas lugs kyi don rtogs pa la mi sgrib pa'i kun rdzob*), "convention which regards appearances to be deceptive and without truth" (*snang ba bden pas stong zhing rdzun par mthong ba'i kun rdzob*), and "things whose appearances regarded as false [even by ordinary people], such as a dream or an illusion in the wisdom of post-meditation of the tenth level" (*bcu'i rjes thob kyi ye shes la rmi lam dang sgyu ma ltar rdzun par 'char ba'i snang ba rnams*).²⁶

[3] mNyam med explains impure convention (*ma dag kun rdzob*) to be "convention which is regarded to be true as they appear and which obscures the realization of the essential nature" (*snang ba ltar bden par zhen pa dang / gnas lugs rtogs pa la 'grib par byed pa'i kun rdzob*) and "phenomena which appear variously as objects and object-perceivers to one who lives in cyclic existence" (*gzung 'dzin gyi snang ba sna tshogs 'khor ba pa la snang ba'i bon rnams*).²⁷

[4] mNyam med explains correct convention to be "that which is grasped by worldly people whose objects and sense organs are not polluted by error" (*yul dang dbang po skyon gyis ma bslad pa'i 'jig rten pas bzung ba*), "that which is convention and which for non-deluded worldly people is true according to its appearance" (*kun rdzob dang 'jig rten pa ma 'khrul pa la snang ba ltar bden pa*), and the "mutual base between convention and the true existence for the worldly person who has non-deluded mind" (*kun rdzob dang 'jig rten tha snyad pa'i blo ma 'khrul ba'i shes ngor bden par grub pa gzhi mthun pa yin pa*).²⁸

[5] mNyam med explains false convention to be "that which is regarded as the same, by one who has no fault in his sense organs and objects, in that it is not true as it appears"

²⁵ bDen gnyis 'grel pa [9a5-6]: *de nas 'khor ba kun rdzob kyi snang ba 'di / rigs pas ma brtag na bde ba mnyams dga' ba dang phan byed dang gnod byed ltar snang la / rigs pas brtag na rigs pas sbungs dang nus pa mi bzod pa khong du chud par bya'o /*

²⁶ bDen gnyis 'grel pa [7a4-5]: *bcu'i rjes thob kyi ye shes la rmi lam dang sgyu ma ltar rdzun par 'char ba'i snang ba rnams bon can / dag pa kun rdzob yin te / gnas lugs kyi don rtogs pa la mi sgrib pa'i kun rdzob yin pa'i phyir / der thal / snang ba bden pas stong zhing rdzun par mthong ba'i kun rdzob yin pa'i phyir /*

²⁷ bDen gnyis 'grel pa [7a2-3]: *gzung 'dzin gyi snang ba sna tshogs 'khor ba pa la snang ba'i bon rnams bon can / khyod ma dag kun rdzob yin te / snang ba ltar bden par zhen pa dang / gnas lugs rtogs pa la 'grib par byed pa'i kun rdzob yin pa'i phyir /*

²⁸ bDen gnyis 'grel pa [7b5-7b6]: *yul dang dbang po skyon gyis ma bslad pa'i 'jig rten pas / gsher zhing rlan pa la chur bzung ba dang / tsha zhing sreg pa la mer bzung ba dang / gangs ri dkar por bzung ba rnams bon can / khyod 'jig rten pa ma 'khrul pa la ltos te yang dag kun rdzob yin te / khyod kun rdzob dang 'jig rten pa ma 'khrul pa la snang ba ltar bden pa'i phyir /*

bDen gnyis 'grel pa [9b2-3]: *khyod kun rdzob dang 'jig rten tha snyad pa'i blo ma 'khrul ba'i shes ngor bden par grub pa gzhi mthun pa yin pa'i phyir /*

(*dbang po dang yul la skyon med pa'i gang zag gi ngor snang ba ltar mi bden pa gzhi mthun pa yin pa*)²⁹ and the "common base between convention and the false existence for the worldly person who has conventional and non-deluded cognition" (*kun rdzob dang 'jig rten tha snyad pa'i blo ma 'khrul ba'i shes ngor rdzun par snang ba gzhi mthun pa*).³⁰

3-2. Origin of the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*'s Theory of the Conventional Truth

<Subdivision of convention>

In his *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*, mNyan med subdivides convention (*kun rdzob*) into pure convention (*dag pa kun rdzob*) and impure convention (*ma dag kun rdzob*),³¹ and then he further subdivides impure convention into correct convention (*yang dag kun rdzob*) and false convention (*log pa kun rdzob*).³² This subdivision of convention into two levels is the same as that of Me ston.³³ mNyan med further subdivides false convention,³⁴ but this subdivision is not attested in the previous texts of Bonpo thinkers such as Me ston. In his *Sa lam rang 'grel*, mNyan med also further subdivides correct convention into individual characteristics (*rang mtshan*) and general concepts (*don spyi*),³⁵ but he does not give this subdivision in his *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*. In any case mNyan med is unique in that he subdivides convention into three levels.

Indian Mādhyamika thinkers such as Śāntarakṣita (ca. 725-788)³⁶ and Atiśa (ca.

²⁹ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [7b2-4]: *mig skyon can la mig yor la sogs dbang po la skyon zhugs pa'i snang ba dang / smig rgyu la chur snang ba la sogs yul la skyon zhugs pa'i dbang gi snang tshul rnam bon can / khyod dbang po dang yul la skyon med pa'i gang zag la ltos te log pa kun rdzob tu rnam par bzhag ste / khyod dbang po dang yul la skyon med pa'i gang zag gi ngor / snang ba ltar mi bden pa / gzhi mthun pa yin pa'i phyir /*

³⁰ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [9b3-4]: *khyod kun rdzob dang 'jig rten tha snyad pa'i blo ma 'khrul ba'i shes ngor rdzun par snang ba gzhi mthun pa yin pa'i phyir /*

³¹ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [6b6-7a2]: *dang po ni / kun rdzob dbye ba gnyis su 'dod / ces bya'o / gnyis pa ni / dag pa dang ni ma dag pa'o / zhes pa gang zhe na dag pa kun rdzob dang / ma dag kun rdzob gnyis so / zhes bya'o /*

³² *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [7a6-7b1]: *dang po ni ma dag kun rdzob rnam gnyis te / zhes pa / ma dag kun rdzob la dbye na gnyis te / zhes bya'o / gnyis pa ni / log pa dang ni yang dag go / zhes pa gang zhe na / log pa kun rdzob dang / yang dag kun rdzob gnyis so /*

³³ *bDen gnyis* [A2a2, B2a6]: *kun rdzob dbye ba gnyis su 'dod // dag pa dang ni ma dag pa'o //*

bDen gnyis [A2a3, B2b1-2]: *ma dag kun rdzob rnam gnyis te // log pa dang ni yang dag go //*

³⁴ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [7b2-3]: *mig skyon can la mig yor la sogs dbang po la skyon zhugs pa'i snang ba dang / smig rgyu la chur snang ba la sogs yul la skyon zhugs pa'i dbang gi snang tshul rnam bon can / khyod dbang po dang yul la skyon med pa'i gang zag la ltos te log pa kun rdzob tu rnam par bzhag ste /*

³⁵ Arguillère [2006: 313.16-17]: *de dag ni shin tu mang bar gnas kyang / rang mtshan dang don spyi'i sgo nas gnyis su bsdu pa'o /*

³⁶ 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*

982-1054)³⁷ also subdivide convention into two levels. Though their subdivisions are formally similar to mNyam med's, looking at the actual examples given within each subdivision suggests that mNyam med's theory is actually modeled on that of Candrakīrti, as will be explained below.

<Relationship between the subdivision of the convention and the different ways in which appearances are perceived>

As I have pointed out in another paper, Me ston's subdivision of convention corresponds to that of Candrakīrti.³⁸ Moreover, Me ston quotes the *MAvBh* concerning the relationship between the subdivisions of conventional truth and the different ways in which appearances are perceived by different kinds of people.³⁹ He therefore seems to be strongly influenced by Candrakīrti. mNyam med, on the other hand, does not quote the *MAvBh* directly, but we may consider that he was influenced by Candrakīrti indirectly in that he follows the essentials of Me ston's theory of the conventional truth. The correspondence between mNyam med's subdivision of the conventional truth and that of Candrakīrti is seen in the following list.

***Relation between mNyam med and Candrakīrti
concerning the Subdivision of Convention***

subject	mNyam med's subdivision	Candrakīrti's subdivision
[1] holy one (<i>'phags pa</i>)	pure convention (<i>dag pa kun rdzob</i>)	mere convention (<i>saṃvṛtimātra, kun rdzob tsam</i>) ⁴⁰

dang bcas pa dang rnam par mi rtog pa'i bye brag gi phyir ro //

³⁷ SDA, k. 2-3 (Lindtner [1981: 190]; Ejima [1983: 361-362]; *Tohoku* [No. 3902, 72a4-5]).

³⁸ Kumagai [2010b].

³⁹ *bDen gnyis rang 'grel* [6a6-b2]: '*Jug 'grel las / de la so so skye bo rnam kyis don dam pa gang yin pa de'i 'phags pa'i snang ba bcas pa'i spyod yul rnam kyis kun rdzob tsam yin la / de'i rang bzhin stong pa nyid gang yin pa de ni de rnam kyis don dam pa yin pa'o / zhes gsungs so /*

MAvBh, chap. 6, v. 28 (La Vallée Poussin [1912: 108.13-16]; *Tohoku* [No. 3862, 'A, 255a5]): *de la so so'i skye bo rnam kyis don dam pa gang yin pa de nyid 'phags pa snang ba dang bcas pa'i spyod yul can rnam kyis kun rdzob tsam yin la / de'i rang bzhin stong pa nyid gang yin pa de ni de rnam kyis don dam pa'o //*

⁴⁰ *MAvBh*, chap. 6, v. 28 (La Vallée Poussin [1912: 108.11-19]; *Tohoku* [No. 3862, 'A, 255a4-6]): *de ltar na re zhib bcom ldan 'das des kun rdzob kyis bden pa dang kun rdzob tsam du gsungs pa yin no // de la so so'i skye bo rnam kyis don dam pa gang yin pa de nyid 'phags pa snang ba dang bcas pa'i spyod yul can rnam kyis kun rdzob tsam yin la / de'i rang bzhin stong pa nyid gang yin pa de ni de rnam kyis don dam pa'o // sangs rgyas rnam kyis don dam pa ni rang bzhin nyid yin zhing / de yang slu ba med pa nyid kyis*

[2] ordinary one (<i>so so'i skye bo</i>)	correct convention (<i>yang dag kun rdzob</i>)	conventional truth in the world (<i>lokasaṃvṛtisatya, 'jig rten gyi kun rdzob kyi bden pa</i>), ⁴¹ true in the world (<i>lokataḥ satya, 'jig rten nyid las bden</i>) ⁴²
[3] one who has defective eyes (<i>mig skyon can</i>)	false convention (<i>log pa kun rdzob</i>)	Convention which is untrue in the world (<i>alokasaṃvṛti, 'jig rten kun rdzob bden pa ma yin pa</i>), ⁴³ untrue in the world (<i>lokato mithyā, 'jig rten nyid las log pa</i>) ⁴⁴

<Relation between the conventional truth and logic>

As we have seen, mNyam med explains that the conventional truth (*kun rdzob bden pa*) is not established [as true] by true logic, because it appears to be false [if it is analyzed logically].⁴⁵ This explanation concerning the relationship between the conventional truth and logic is similar to that given by late Indian Mādhyamika thinkers such as

don dam pa'i bden pa yin la / de ni de rnams kyi so sor rang gis rig par bya ba yin no //
⁴¹ *PrasP*, chap. 24, v. 8 (La Vallée Poussin [1913: 493.5-6]): *loka-saṃvṛtyā satyaṃ loka-saṃvṛti-satyam / sarva evāyam abhidhānābhidheya-jñāna-jñeyādi-vyavahāro 'śeṣo loka-saṃvṛti-satyam ity ucyate / Tohoku* [No. 3860 ,163b2-3]: *'jig rten gyi kun rdzob tu bden pa ni // 'jig rten kun rdzob bden pa ste // brjod bya dang / rjod byed dang / shes pa dang / shes bya la sogs pa'i tha snyad ma lus pa 'di dag thams cad ni // 'jig rten gyi kun rdzob kyi bden pa zhes bya'o //*
⁴² *MAv*, chap. 6, k. 25 (Cited in the *BCAP*, chap. 9, v. 2: La Vallée Poussin [1901/1912: 353.13-16]): *vinopaghātena yad indriyāṇāṃ ṣaṅṅām api grāhyam avaiti lokāḥ / satyaṃ hi tal lokata evaṃ śeṣaṃ vikalpitaṃ lokata eva mithyā //* La Vallée Poussin [1912: 104.4-7]; *Tohoku* [No. 3861, 'A, 205a7]: *gnod pa med pa'i dbang po drug rnams kyis // gzung ba gang zhig 'jig rten gyis rtogs te // 'jig rten nyid las bden yin lhag ma ni // 'jig rten nyid las log par rnam par bzhag //*
⁴³ *PrasP*, chap. 24, v. 8 (La Vallée Poussin [1913: 493.2-4]): *atha vā timira-kāmalādy-upahatendriya-viparīta-darśanāvasthānās te 'lokās teṣāṃ yā saṃvṛtir asāv aloka-saṃvṛtiḥ / ato viśiṣyate loka-saṃvṛti-satyam iti / Tohoku* [No. 3860, 162a7-b1]: *rab rib dang ling tog sngon po dang / mig ser la sogs pas dbang po nyams pas mthong ba phyin ci log la gnas pa de dag ni 'jig rten ma yin te / de dag gi kun rdzob gang yin pa de ni // 'jig rten kun rdzob bden pa ma yin pas // 'jig rten kun rdzob bden pa dang // zhes de las khyad par du byas so //*
⁴⁴ *MAv*, chap. 6, k. 25 (Cited in the *BCAP*, chap. 9, v. 2: La Vallée Poussin [1901/1912: 353.13-16]): *vinopaghātena yad indriyāṇāṃ ṣaṅṅām api grāhyam avaiti lokāḥ / satyaṃ hi tal lokata evaṃ śeṣaṃ vikalpitaṃ lokata eva mithyā //* La Vallée Poussin [1912: 104.4-7]; *Tohoku* [No. 3861, 'A, 205a7]: *gnod pa med pa'i dbang po drug rnams kyis // gzung ba gang zhig 'jig rten gyis rtogs te // 'jig rten nyid las bden yin lhag ma ni // 'jig rten nyid las log par rnam par bzhag //*
⁴⁵ *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* [9a1]: *'khor ba kun rdzob bden pa la / yang dag rigs pas 'grub mi 'gyur / kun rdzob rdzun par snang phyir ro /*

Jñānagarbha.⁴⁶

mNyam med also says that convention cannot withstand the power of logic if it is examined logically. This statement seems to have a connection with the *MA* of Śāntarakṣita.⁴⁷

mNyam med further explains that convention appears to be pleasing if it is not examined logically.⁴⁸ This explanation also seems to be derived from the expression "that which is pleasing insofar as it is not examined [logically]" (*avicāraikaramaṇīya, ma brtags gcig pu na nyams dga' ba*), which was given by late Indian Mādhyamika thinkers such as Śāntarakṣita.⁴⁹

mNyam med thus seems to be strongly influenced by Indian Mādhyamika thinkers concerning his understanding of the relation between the conventional truth and logic.

<Word meaning of the conventional truth>

mNyam med follows Me ston's explanation of the word meaning of the conventional truth, namely "that which has a disposition to obscure [the essential nature] by conception."⁵⁰ This explanation seems to have been influenced by Buddhist philosophy. Candrakīrti refers to the expression: "that whose [essential nature is] obscured"⁵¹ but he does not use the phrase: "by conception." Jñānagarbha regards false convention to be "that which is conceptualized" (*parikalpita*), and he also considers convention to be "that which covers the truth by the conceptual mind."⁵² Thus mNyam med's explanation seems closest to that

⁴⁶ *SDVV*, v. 21ab (Eckel [1987: 173.7-10]; *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 //*

⁴⁷ *MA*, v. 64 (Ichigo [1985: 202-204]; *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 rnam ni brtag mi bzod pas yang dag pa'i kun rdzob ste /*

⁴⁸ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [9a5-6]: *de nas 'khor ba kun rdzob kyi snang ba 'di / rigs pas ma brtag na bde ba mnyams dga' ba dang phan byed dang gnod byed ltar snang la / rigs pas brtag na rigs pas sbungs dang nus pa mi bzod pa khong du chud par bya'o /*

⁴⁹ Concerning the origin of this expression, see Akahane [2003: 51-52].

⁵⁰ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [6a4]: *kun tu brtags pas sgrib par byed / mtshan ma'i dngos pos bden pa'o /*

⁵¹ *PrasP*, chap. 24, v. 8 (La Vallée Poussin [1913: 492.10]): *samantād varaṇaṃ samvṛtiḥ /*

Tohoku [No. 3860, 163a5]: *kun nas sgrib pas na kun rdzob ste /*

⁵² *SDV*, k. 15ab (Eckel [1987: 171.1-2]; *Tohoku* [No. 3881, 2b1]): *gang zhig gis sam gang zhig la // yang dag sgrib byed kun rdzob bzhed //*

SDVV, v. 15ab (Eckel [1987: 171.1-2]; *Tohoku* [No. 3882, 9a2-3]): *blo gang zhig gis sam blo gang zhig la yod na yang dag pa sgrib par byed pa 'jig rten na grags pa de lta bu ni kun rdzob tu bzhed de /*

SDVV, v. 8d (Eckel [1987: 160.25-28]; *Tohoku* [No. 3882, 5b6-7]): *yang dag min ni kun brtags yin // (k. 8d) yang dag par skye ba la sogs pa gang yin pa de ni rtog pa'i bzos sbyar ba ste / de ni yang dag pa ma yin pa'i kun rdzob kyi bden pa'o //*

of Jñānagarbha.

<Relation between the subdivision of the conventional truth and the ability to perform a function>

mNyam med presents, as an opponent's theory, the "ability to perform a function" (*don byed nus pa*) as a means of distinguishing correct convention from false convention.⁵³ This method was in fact given by Indian Buddhist logicians such as Dharmakīrti (ca. 600-650),⁵⁴ and also Indian Mādhyamika logicians such as Jñānagarbha (8th cen.).⁵⁵ However, mNyam med does not admit this theory as his own position. We can therefore say that he seems to be indirectly influenced by Indian Buddhist logicians. However, he does admit this position as his own in his other treatise, the *Sa lam rang 'grel*.⁵⁶

3-3. The Position of the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*'s Theory of the Conventional Truth in the History of Bon

As mentioned above, mNyam med's *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* develops Me ston's theory of the conventional truth. For example, mNyam med gives supplementary explanations concerning the conventional truth. He also develops Me ston's subdivision of the conventional truth into two levels, and then he finally gives a subdivision into three levels.

Concerning the subdivision of the conventional truth there are differences between the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* and the *Sa lam rang 'grel* of mNyam med. For example, the *Sa lam rang 'grel* subdivides both correct convention and false convention into two.⁵⁷ On the other

⁵³ *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* [9b4-10a2].

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 /*

⁵⁴ *PV*, chap. 3, k. 3 (Miyasaka [1971-72: 42-43]):

arthakriyāsamarthaṃ yat tad atra paramārthasat / anyat samvṛtisat proktam te svasāmānyalakṣaṇe //

don dam don byed nus pa gang // de 'dir don dam yod pa yin //

gzhan ni kun rdzob yod pa ste // de dag rang spyi'i mtshan nyid bshad //

⁵⁵ *SDV*, k. 12 (Eckel [1987: 163.21-24]; *Tohoku* [No. 3881, 2a4-5]): *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 //*

⁵⁶ Arguillère [2006: 313.21-22]: *'khrul pa'i shes ngor grub cing mtshan mar snang tshul ltar don byed nus pas stong pa ni / log pa kun rdzob kyi mtshan nyid du gsungs so /*

⁵⁷ Correct convention is further subdivided into individual characteristics (*rang mtshan*) and general concepts (*don spyi*). (Arguillère [2006: 313.16-17]: *de dag ni shin tu mang bar gnas kyang / rang mtshan dang don spyi'i sgo nas gnyis su bsdus pa'o /*)

False convention is further subdivided into the object of deluded sense cognition (*dbang shes 'khrul pa'i yul*) and the object of deluded mental cognition (*vid shes bslad pa'i yul*). (Arguillère [2006: 313.23-25]:

hand the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* subdivides only false convention.⁵⁸

There is also a difference between both texts concerning the relationship between the "ability to perform a function" and the subdivision of the conventional truth. For example, the *Sa lam rang 'grel* gives the inability to perform a function as a means of distinguishing false convention from correct convention.⁵⁹ On the other hand in his *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*, mNyam med himself refutes this theory.⁶⁰

4. Absolute Truth (*don dam bden pa, paramārthasatya*)

4-1. mNyam med's Theory of the Absolute Truth

Now we will summarize the theory of the absolute truth in mNyam med's *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*.

<Definition of the absolute truth>

The absolute truth has no definition because it is without the discursiveness of definition and that which is defined, but it is defined as "that which is without discursiveness" (*spros pa rnams dang bral ba*) for the sake of those who must use words.⁶¹

<Word meaning of the absolute truth>

mNyam med gives two word meanings of the absolute truth.

The first meaning is "that which is an object and is also excellent" (*don yin dam pa yin pa*).⁶² This is an interpretation of the word "absolute" (*paramārtha, don dam*) as a *karmadhāraya* compound.

gnyis pa mtshan gzhi'i dbye ba ni / dbang shes 'khrul pa'i yul zla ba gnyis snang dang / dung ser snang la sogs dang / yid shes bsld pa'i yul la / rmi lam gyi snang ba la sogs rnams so /

⁵⁸ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [7b2-3]: *mig skyon can la mig yor la sogs dbang po la skyon zhugs pa'i snang ba dang / smig rgyu la chur snang ba la sogs yul la skyon zhugs pa'i dbang gi snang tshul rnams bon can / khyod dbang po dang yul la skyon med pa'i gang zag la ltos te log pa kun rdzob tu rnam par bzhag ste /*

⁵⁹ Arguillère [2006: 313.21-22]: *'khrul pa'i shes ngor grub cing mtshan mar snang tshul liar don byed nus pas stong pa ni / log pa kun rdzob kyi mtshan nyid du gsungs so /*

⁶⁰ *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* [9b4-10a2].

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 /*

⁶¹ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [8b5-6]: *don dam la mtshan nyid med de rnam par chad / don dam de mtshan mshon de la sogs kyi spros pa dang 'brel ba'i phyir ro / 'on kyang tha snyad dang ma bral ba'i ngor / spros pa rnams dang bral ba de / don dam gyi mtshan nyid du bzhag go /*

⁶² *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [6a6-b1]: *don yin dam pa yin pa 'am /*

The second meaning is the "object of the holy one" (*dam pa rnams kyi yul*).⁶³ This is an interpretation of the word "absolute" as a *tatpuruṣa* compound. He explains that, in this case, "that which is excellent" (*dam pa*) is eminent wisdom, and the "object" (*don*) is the object to be realized by wisdom.⁶⁴

<Other explanations of the absolute truth>

mNyam med also says that the absolute truth is the "all modes of arising in the wisdom of the enlightened one without delusion" (*'khrul pa de'i dben pa'i sangs rgyas kyi ye shes la 'char tshul thams cad*),⁶⁵ "that which is not an object which is explainable by thought, conception, or word" (*bsam pa dang rtog pa dang sgras dngos brjod pa'i yul min*),⁶⁶ "essential nature which is unthinkable, beyond comparison, imperceptible, and beyond the object of examination" (*shes bya'i gnas lugs bsam du med pa dpe las 'das pa bltar med pa brtag pa'i yul las 'das pa*),⁶⁷ and "that which, like space, has no characteristics of discursiveness" (*nam mkha' bzhin du spros pa'i mtshan ma med pa*).⁶⁸

<Subdivision of the absolute truth>

In his *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*, mNyam med refutes the possibility of subdividing the absolute truth.⁶⁹ He regards subdivisions such as the "absolute of profound word" and the "absolute known in the world" to be nothing but illusory convention.⁷⁰

⁶³ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [6ab1]: *dam pa rnams kyi yul yin la /*

⁶⁴ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [6b2-3]: *dam pa ni ye shes phul du phyin pa nyid la / don ni ye shes kyi rtogs bya'i don yin la /*

⁶⁵ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [4b5-6]: *'khrul pa de'i dben pa'i sangs rgyas kyi ye shes la 'char tshul thams cad bon can / don dam yin te / shes bya'i gnas lugs yin pa'i phyir /*

⁶⁶ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [19a6-b1]: *don dam de bsam pa dang rtog pa dang sgras dngos brjod pa'i yul min kyang /*

⁶⁷ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [19b3-4]: *shes bya'i gnas lugs bsam du med pa dpe las 'das pa bltar med pa brtag pa'i yul las 'das pa.*

⁶⁸ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [20a5]: *don dam gyi khyad par nam mkha' bzhin du spros pa'i mtshan ma med pa gsal bar rtogs pa yin te /*

⁶⁹ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [8a2-3]: *don dam bon can / khyod la don la dbye ba med de / khyod gcig dang gnyis la sogs su ma grub pa'i phyir te / khyod gcig dang gnyis la sogs kyi spros pa rnams dang bral ba yin pa'i phyir / ri bong gi rwa bzhin no /*

⁷⁰ *bDen gnyis 'grel pa* [8a4-6]: *zab mo gtam gyi don dam dang / 'jig rten grags sde'i don dam dang / stong nyid bco brgyad dang / g-yung drung dbyings dgu la sogs don dam gyi grangs dang / dpe thams cad nam mkha' la bsdu zhes don dam gyi dpe dang / nam mkha'i ngang tshul can zhes bya bar sems can rnams la bon ston ces sogs / don dam mtshon pa'i tshig rnams ston pas gsungs pa la dgos pa yod de / gdul bya'i bsam pa dang sbyar nas drang ba'i ched yin pa'i phyir /*

bDen gnyis 'grel pa [8b1]: *kun rdzob sgyu mas khrid nas nges pa'i don bstan pa zhes gsungs so /*

4-2. Origin of the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba*'s Theory of the Absolute Truth

As mentioned above, there are two different traditions concerning the subdivision of the absolute truth: the tradition which does not admit such subdivision (Me ston), and the tradition which subdivides the absolute truth into two (the *Theg 'grel*).⁷¹ Me ston seems to be influenced by Candrakīrti as he quotes the *MAvBh* of Candrakīrti, who is, in Tibet, regarded as a *Prāsaṅgika* thinker. On the other hand the *Theg 'grel* uses passages from Bhāviveka's *Tarkajvālā*, so the *Theg 'grel*'s tradition seems to be influenced by the so-called *Svātantrika* school.⁷² While mNyam med's *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* follows the former tradition, his *Sa lam rang 'grel* follows the latter tradition. It is thus important to notice the difference between the two treatises.

5. Conclusions

mNyam med's *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* is a commentary on Me ston's *bDen gnyis*, so they generally take similar positions. But mNyam med often further develops Me ston's theories. For example, while Me ston subdivides convention into two levels, mNyam med subdivides it into three levels.

There are differences between the *Sa lam rang 'grel* and *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* of mNyam med. For example, the *Sa lam rang 'grel* subdivides both correct convention and false convention. On the other hand the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* subdivides only false convention. The texts also disagree about the validity of using the concept "ability to perform a function" as a criterion for subdividing the conventional truth. For example the *Sa lam rang 'grel* gives "inability to perform a function" as a means of distinguishing false convention from correct convention. On the other hand the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* regards this theory as an opponent's, and refutes it from its own position. Concerning the absolute truth, the *Sa lam rang 'grel* subdivides the absolute truth into two, but the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* regards such a subdivision as merely illusory convention.

Concerning his relationship with Indian Buddhism, mNyam med's *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* seems to be influenced by Buddhist thinkers such as Candrakīrti and Atiśa, by way of Me ston's *bDen gnyis rang 'grel* which quotes Candrakīrti's *MAvBh*. It is also partially

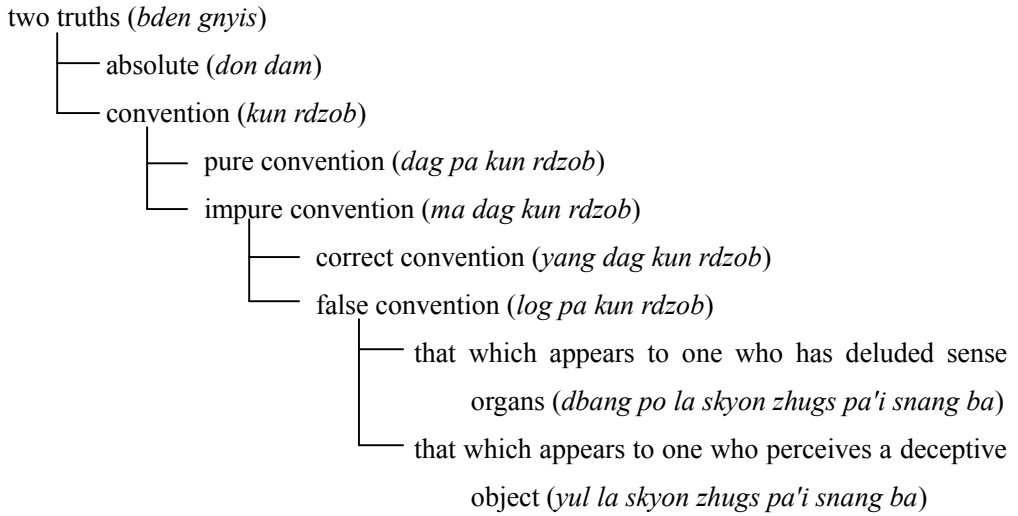
⁷¹ See Kumagai [2009].

⁷² See Kumagai [2010a].

influenced by Jñānagarbha and Śāntarakṣita who are in Tibet regarded as *Svātantrika* thinkers. Nevertheless, it seems to be most strongly influenced by the so-called Buddhist *Prāsaṅgika* school. On the other hand his *Sa lam rang 'grel* seems to be strongly influenced by the so-called *Svātantrika* school. In fact, in that text he quotes the *Theg 'grel*, which reproduces almost exactly passages from Bhāviveka's *Tarkajvālā* concerning the subdivision of absolute truth. Many other explanations in the *Sa lam rang 'grel* are also strongly influenced by Jñānagarbha and Śāntarakṣita.

The classification of the two truth in the *bDen gnyis 'grel ba* is as follows.

Classification of the Two Truths in mNyam med's bDen gnyis 'grel ba



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