CHAPTER THREE

THE CIG CAR BA TRADITION IN TIBET

In the previous chapter we have made a close study of some Tun-huang documents especially IOL 647 and 594 that helped us to establish a criterion for demonstrating how the rDzogs chen literature and its thought began in the late ninth century.

Let us now look at a work which belongs to a relatively later period than the Tun-huang documents, e.g. the Rig pa’i khu byug, the sBas pa’i rgum chung and the works of gNyams Pal-bdbyangs which are extensively quoted in it. This work, after the Tun-huang documents is the most important work that has yet come to light. It is known under various titles, but the common one is rNal byor mig gi bsam glan and also quite often known as sGom gyi gnad gsal ba phyre ba bsam glan mig sgron.1 It is devoted to the exposition of the different Buddhist approaches to enlightenment: the doctrines of the Gradualist (Rim gyis pa), of the Simultaneist (Cig car ba),2 of the Mahāyoga tantras and of rDzogs chen. The work is therefore unique in treating the doctrine of the Cig car ba on equal terms with the doctrine of the Rim gyis pa in Tibetan religious tradition, and it seems to be the first and last Tibetan work to have included all four doctrines in one work in the framework of a basic text and auto-commentary.3 The way in which its chapters are divided has no precedent nor is its example followed by later Tibetan writers. In consequence, it is the only work which gives a detailed account of the doctrines of the Rim gyis pa4 chiefly developed by Kamalāśīla, and Cig car ba5 propounded by the Chinese monk Hva-shang Mahāyāna, both masters who flourished in Tibet in the eighth century A.D. The treatment of these doctrines then paves the way for the exposition of the tantric doctrines particularly that

2 I adopt the orthography cig car (yugapat) though Mahāvyutpatti gives also cig char. In his Dag yig thon mi’i dgongs rgyan, mTsho sngon 1957, Tshe-brent zhab-drung remarks that the spelling geig char and cig char are no good (geig char dang cig char du ’bri ba mi legs so/), but no reason is given. The word cig char is variously translated in Western works by sudden, instantaneous, immediate, at one go and simultaneous. Cf. Stein 1971, p. 6 et seq.
3 It is evident from the work that it is an auto-commentary, but the basic text (rtsa ba) and the commentary (’grel ba) are not distinguishable except at the end of the work where the epilogue of the rtsa ba occurs in verse (pp. 495–99).
4 SM Chapt. 4, pp. 23–118.
5 SM Chapt. 5, pp. 118–186.
of the Mahāyoga⁶ which then logically leads to the section devoted to the doctrines of rDzogs chen.⁷ To analyse the whole work would be totally beyond the scope of the present study since it is a work encompassing all the principal Buddhist doctrines which were then known in Tibet.

Thanks to the studies of Professors P. Demiéville and G. Tucci, the historical development of the famous Sino-Indian Buddhist controversy in Tibet in the eighth century A.D. is now fairly well known. The controversy flared up between two schismatic factions. One was following the Chinese master Hva-shang Mahāyāna summoned to Tibet by King Khri Srong-lde-btsan from Tun-huang then under Tibetan occupation. The other faction in opposition to the newly arrived Chinese master maintained the Indian Buddhist tradition already established by Śāntarakṣita, the co-founder of the bSam-yas monastery and its first abbot. However, the Chinese master soon began to consolidate his position as the number of his followers gradually increased which finally obliged the Indian faction to invite the famous Indian dialectician Kamalaśīla from Nepal,⁸ a personal disciple of Śāntarakṣita.

According to the Tibetan historical tradition, the controversy ended in the defeat of the Chinese faction and Hva-shang Mahāyāna was sent back to Tun-huang and his doctrine was banned in Tibet by a royal decree.⁹

Professor G. Tucci considers that the central point of the controversy is about the recognition, “anagnose”, of the “spiritual basis” (gzhi). On this same assumption, he also holds the view that not only rDzogs chen tradition, but also the Jo nang pa have developed their doctrines on the basis of the Hva-shang doctrine, namely Buddha-nature.¹⁰ Now it is true that the “spiritual basis” (gzhi) is often the ground of debate between the later Tibetan Buddhist schools. However, the idea of Buddha-nature which appears under various terms like the natural luminosity of mind (sems kyi rang bzhin ’odgsal ba) corresponds to the theory of rang bzhin gnas rigs (prakṛtisthagotra) of the gradualist schools.¹¹ It is known to be parallel to the theory of tathāgatagarbha which in turn corresponds to bodhi-

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⁶ SM Chapt. 6, pp. 186–290.
⁸ BZ’h p. 56.
⁹ BZ’h p. 62. But according to the Chinese accounts the Hva-shang school was authorised to continue its teaching in Tibet, Demiéville 1952, pp. 42, 170. However, D. Ueyama, in an effort to reconcile the contradiction between the Tibetan and the Chinese sources, suggests that the Hva-shang had a debate with Śāntarakṣita (in writing) and won it, but on later occasion he was defeated by Kamalaśīla and then banished to China, Demiéville 1970, pp. 39–41.
¹¹ Ruegg 1969, p. 75 et seq.