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Khyentse Center for
Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship



Einladung zu einem Gastvortrag

von

Frau
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über das Thema

Images in Cognition or Aspects of Cognition? An Eighth-Century Buddhist Debate on *Ākāras*

The eighth century is the culmination of a fruitful period in the development of Buddhist (as well as non-Buddhist) doctrines of various schools. In the Buddhist tradition of logic and epistemology (*pramāṇa*), three authors—Śubhagupta, Śāntarakṣita, and Kamalaśīla—voiced the need to systematize (and, at times, develop further) some of the theories and arguments discussed within that tradition. They adopt similar doctrinal and argumentative strategies against the Brahmanical opponents, particularly the Mīmāṃsakas. This is true, for example, with respect to the proof of direct perception of extrasensory objects (*atīndriyadarśana*) for human beings, which has also a soteriological import.

However, they clash on some of the central epistemological and ontological tenets of the tradition. While Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla represent the mainstream Dignāga-Dharmakīrtian movement, Śubhagupta fiercely attacks its Vijñānavāda, “idealistic,” viewpoint. In his magnum opus, the **Bāhyārthasiddhikārikā*, he is particularly keen on disproving the *sahopalambhaniyama* argument, which was formulated by Dharmakīrti and was meant to demonstrate the non-difference between a cognition and its object. Śubhagupta regards it as one of the main proofs establishing the “idealistic” viewpoint and refutes the theory that a cognition is endowed with the image (*ākāra*) of an external object. He explains the commonly experienced appearance of images based on the fact that a cognition has the characteristic of grasping external forms without assuming their shape.

In this lecture, I shall exemplify the two different types of “interfaith” and “intrafaith” debates. This will be presented through the analysis of various verses taken from a selection of virtually unstudied works of Śubhagupta as well as verses and passages found in some works of Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla. My aim is to shed light on the instances of ideas and arguments where Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla join forces with (and likely follow in the footsteps of) Śubhagupta against the Brahmanical opponents; but also, at the same time, on their reception and refutation of Śubhagupta’s “heterodox” epistemological views on *ākāras* of cognition.

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08.05.2019

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16:15 Uhr

ESA-OST, Raum 120

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