

Prasannapadā madhyamakavṛtti
A Commentary on the Madhyamaka[-śāstra]
In Clear Words

Pratyayaparīkṣā nāma prathamam prakaraṇam
Chapter One: Examination of Conditions

A Note on the Title

The Sanskrit titles for Candrakīrti's MMK commentary and its chapters occur only at the end of each chapter in the respective manuscript colophons. The text of the PsP in Tibetan translation as found in the four Tanjur xylograph editions and in the Golden Tanjur manuscript is preceded, in accord with the general convention for translated texts, by a Sanskrit title transcribed in Tibetan characters followed by a Tibetan translation of the title. The Peking and Narthang editions of the PsP as well as the Golden Tanjur manuscript give the Sanskrit title as “*mūlamādhyamikavṛtti prasannapada*” ([sic] Derge and Cone attest *mūlamādhyāmika*^o).¹ It is well known that the oldest Tibetan translations, i.e., those from Dunhuang and the works mentioned in the IDan dkar ma catalogue, lacked Sanskrit titles and

¹ Title (P, N, G): *rgya gar skad du | mu la mā dhya mi ka vṛtti pra sanna pa da nā ma | bod skad du | dbu ma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa tshig gsal ba zhes bya ba* |. Cp. this title to that at the beginning of the stand-alone MMK as found in the Peking Tanjur: *prajñā nāma mūlamādhyamakakārikā*; Derge reads °*madhyāmakakārika*. It is unlikely that Nā-gārjuna applied this or a similar title to his work; see Vetter 1982: 100f.; Seyfort Ruegg 1981: 1, n. 3.

that later Tibetan redactors re-sanskritized many of the titles.² Whereas the individual PsP Tib chapter-colophons refer to Candrakīrti's work only as “*tshig gsal ba*,” the final colophon characterizes it as “*bstan bcos dbu ma rtsa ba'i 'grel pa tshig gsal ba*.” De La Vallée Poussin places the Peking/Narthing version of the Sanskrit title (omitting *mula*) at the beginning of his Sanskrit edition of the PsP, but in the first note in his “Additions et Corrections,” he corrects the title from *Mādhyamikavṛtti* to *Madhyamakavṛtti*.³

Stcherbatsky, obviously alluding to the difficulties he experienced when translating the first chapter of the PsP, states that Candrakīrti has titled his commentary “The Clear-worded” “probably not without some dose of irony, since, as Prof. Wassilieff attests, its extreme dialectical subtlety, especially in the first chapter, is equalled by no other work in the whole domain of northern Buddhist literature.”⁴ Hopkins asserts, “It strikes me that Chandrakīrti gave his commentary on Nāgārjuna's *Treatise on the Middle Way* (*Madhyamakashastra*) this title in contrast to Bhāvaviveka's commentary, *Lamp for* (Nāgārjuna's) ‘Wisdom’ (*Prajñāpradīpa*) which, due to its brevity and lack of elaboration, is often difficult to fathom and thus unclear.”⁵ His brief comment on his own translation choice, viz., “*Prasannapadā* is translated as *Clear Words* though it would be just as suitable as *The Lucidly Worded*, or *The Clear Worded* as Stcherbatsky does in his *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana ...* or *Lucid Exposition of the Middle Way* as Mervyn Sprung does in his condensation of the text”⁶ may (excepting Sprung's title) hold as far as the Tibetan translation of the title is concerned, but the Sanskrit chapter-colophons of all the PsP manuscripts consistently understand “*prasannapadā*,” i.e., a *bahuvrīhi*, and not a *karmadhāraya* as Hopkins' preferred translation would assume. For example, the first-chapter colophon in the palm-leaf manuscripts reads *ācāryacandrakīrtipāḍoparacitāyāṃ prasanna-*

² Cf., e.g., Erb 1990: xlv; 106, n. 2.

³ Cf. PsP_L 1, n. 1 and PsP_L 595.

⁴ Stcherbatsky 1927: 67, n. 1.

⁵ Hopkins 1983: 845, n. 496.

⁶ Ibid., 845, n. 496.

*padāyāṃ madhyamakavṛttau pratyayaparīkṣā nāma prathamam prakaraṇam samāptam.*⁷ David Seyfort Ruegg therefore renders the title as the “Clear-Worded Commentary on the Madhyamaka-[kārikās],”⁸ while Jacques May paraphrases it as “Commentaire (*vṛtti*) au Traité du milieu, rédigé en termes (*pada*) clairs ou limpides (*prasanna*).”⁹ My own rendering of Candrakīrti’s title *prasannapadā* as “In Clear Words” attempts to improve upon the more clumsy “The Clear(Iy) Worded” while still retaining the sense of the *bahuvrīhi*; that is, the reference is to a commentary which has been composed in clear words.

All of the Sanskrit manuscripts, with the exception of ms P whose first folio has been lost, commence with a short statement of homage. The object of homage for manuscripts A through M is the Buddha and that for manuscript N Vajrasattva and the Three Jewels. Ms Q’s damage has left only *ddhāya* intact, suggesting that its object of homage was also the Buddha. De La Vallée Poussin has added in square brackets after his edition’s Sanskrit chapter title the salutation *āryamañjuśrīye kumārabhūtāya namaḥ*, taken over from the Tibetan translation, which immediately following the work’s main title presents the words *’phags pa ’jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa la phyag ’tshal lo*, “Homage to noble Mañjuśrī-Kumārabhūta.” An identical statement of homage is found antecedent to the main Tibetan text of, for example, the MA, the MABh and the YŚ, works also translated by Pa tshab nyi ma grags, and occurs as part of the homage at the beginning of, for example, MMK_T and the Tibetan translations of BP and PP. The less frequently occurring homage to Jñānasattva-Mañjuśrī (*’Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa’*) occurs in two related texts that were translated by Ye shes sde, namely, Candrakīrti’s YŚV and the ŚSV attributed to Nāgārjuna.¹⁰ Erb notes that in forty of the approximately two hundred and forty-seven works Ye shes sde was involved with in his function as a translator, Mañjuśrī is honoured, as here at the

⁷ I have corrected ms P’s and Q’s minor scribal errors.

⁸ Seyfort Ruegg 2002: 3.

⁹ May 1959: 5.

¹⁰ On YŚV’s title, see Scherrer-Schaub 1991: 101, n. 1.

commencement of PsP Tib, as Kumārabhūta, and that only the two works just mentioned, the YŚV and the ŚSV, contain an homage directed toward Mañjuśrī in his aspect of Jñānasattva.¹¹ Seyfort Ruegg, referring to the invocation of Mañjuśrī-Kumārabhūta that appears at the beginning of the Dharmadhātustava, writes that according to Tsong kha pa and Gung thang dkon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me, homage to Mañjuśrī-Kumārabhūta serves to indicate a work's belonging to the category of *śāstra* connected with the Abhidharma in a broad sense, that is, to the treatises related to *prajñā*, of which Mañjuśrī is the master.¹²

¹¹ Erb 1990: 106f., n. 3.

¹² Seyfort Ruegg 1971: 464, quoted in Scherrer-Schaub 1991: 101, n. 1. See also Erb 1990: 106, n. 3. De La Vallée Poussin (La Vallée Poussin 1907: 251, n. 1) notes in his MABh translation that the ninth *bhūmi* is that of the *kumārabhūta*, the “royal prince,” and the tenth that of the (*bodhisattva*) princes associated with royal power (“*yauvarāja*”), but in his Hastings article “Bodhisattva” (La Vallée Poussin 1909: 747f.) he connects the eighth *bhūmi* with the *kumārabhūta* and the ninth with the “*yauvarāja*.” In RĀ V.55ab the *kumārabhūta* is assigned to the eighth *bhūmi*. On Mañjuśrī-Kumārabhūta, see also Lamotte 1960: 2, 14, n. 38 and Hirakawa 1990: 291-293, 304. Dayal (1978: 46-47) refers briefly to this form of Mañjuśrī.