To Be Tantric or Not to Be

An Evaluation of the Modern Scholarly Debate on Maitrīpa's *Mahāmudrā* and a Textual Analysis of his *Amanasikāra* Cycle

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis is to elucidate a controversy concerning the necessity of tantric practices in Maitrīpa's *mahāmudrā*. The debate initially started in the traditional Tibetan context, but modern scholars have also disagreed in their interpretations of Maitrīpa. In the first chapter of this thesis, an analysis of both sides of the modern scholarly debate will be offered to demonstrate that current arguments have either relied too much on the Tibetan context and concerns or took into account too few texts of Maitrīpa. As such, an alternative approach which focuses more on the Indian context at the time of Maitrīpa, and takes into account the multiplicity of Maitrīpa's texts will be offered in the second chapter. By taking Sahajavajra's commentary as a basis, the role and importance of the term *yuganaddha* will be investigated in Maitrīpa's works. Maitrīpa can be interpreted as offering a non-tantric view of reality which emphasizes the indivisible union, i.e., *yuganaddha*, of emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena. On the basis of that view, Maitrīpa also seems to present two different ways to practice *amanasikāra*, one tantric and one non-tantric. As such, although Maitrīpa does not directly mention a non-tantric *mahāmudrā*, he does seem to offer a non-tantric practice which allows for the simultaneous practice of compassion and emptiness. In the third chapter, the practice based on *yuganaddha* will be shown to be compatible with the path Maitrīpa lays out in various texts. Similar ideas found in other Indian thinkers, particularly Saraha, will also be explored. Finally, this alternative interpretation of Maitrīpa will be shown to share important similarities with the Kagyupas' and Gampopa's own approach to *mahāmudrā*.

Résumé

Le but de cette thèse est d'éclaircir le débat concernant l'importance des pratiques tantriques pour les enseignements de Maitrīpa sur le *mahāmudrā*. Bien que le débat ait commencé dans le contexte Tibétain traditionnel, les chercheurs actuels sont aussi en désaccord dans leurs interprétations de Maitrīpa. Dans le premier chapitre de cette thèse, une analyse des deux côtés du débat moderne sera offerte afin de démontrer que leurs arguments sont soit trop basés sur les préoccupations et le contexte Tibétain, ou bien ne prennent en compte qu'un nombre minime de textes de Maitrīpa. Ainsi, une approche alternative, qui prend en compte le contexte Indien au temps de Maitrīpa et les nombreux textes de Maitrīpa, sera offerte dans le deuxième chapitre. En prenant le commentaire de Sahajavajra en tant que point de départ, le rôle et l'importance du terme *yuganaddha* sera analysé dans les œuvres de Maitrīpa. Maitrīpa semble offrir une explication non-tantrique de la réalité, qui explique la réalité ultime en tant qu'union indivisible, i.e., *yuganaddha*, entre la vacuité et les phénomènes d'origine conditionnées. Grâce à cette explication, Maitrīpa semble offrir une manière non-tantrique de pratiquer *amanasikāra*. De ce fait, bien que Maitrīpa ne présente pas directement une pratique *mahāmudrā* non-tantrique, il semble offrir une pratique non-tantrique qui permet le développement simultané de la compassion et de la vacuité. Dans le troisième chapitre, cette pratique, basé sur le terme *yuganaddha*, sera démontré comme étant compatible avec les différentes voies vers l'éveil que Maitrīpa présente dans d'autres textes. Des idées similaires que l'on retrouve chez d'autres penseurs Indiens, particulièrement Saraha, seront aussi explorées. Finalement, il sera démontré que cette interprétation alternative des écrits de Maitrīpa partage des similitudes importantes avec la présentation du *mahāmudrā* par les Kagyupas et Gampopa.

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Introduction

The teachings of Maitrīpa (1007-1085 CE) have been the subject of numerous debates, both in Tibet and in the modern academic context. His writings on *mahāmudrā*, a practice where one works with one's own mind to directly realize its true nature, have been interpreted by some as offering its own path to awakening outside *Tantra*, or as being an exclusively tantric practice by others. In Tibet, while many teachings were imported from India during the second transmission of Buddhism, the various interpretations of *mahāmudrā* led to criticisms and debates between various factions. This thesis will explore the interpretation of Maitrīpa's teachings in Indic, traditional Tibetan, and modern scholarly contexts, and propose an alternative approach to understanding his work. To begin, a contextualization of Maitrīpa and the important debates that drew on his work among early Tibetans will set the scene.

Background

Perhaps the most important debate on that subject during the second transmission was between Sakya Paṇḍita (Tib. *sa skya paṇḍita)*, Sapaṇ for short, and the followers of Gampopa (Tib. *sgam po pa)*, the *Kagyupas* (Tib. *bka' brgyud pa)*. As Sapaṇ (1182-1251 CE) taught that *mahāmudrā* could only be practiced in the *Mantrayāna*, he felt justified in criticizing Gampopa (1079-1153 CE) and his followers, as they claimed to practice *mahāmudrā* outside of the tantric context[1]. Gampopa's followers defended their teachings by pointing at Maitrīpa, claiming that Gampopa's teachings had a precedent in those texts. In the modern academic context, scholars have been divided on their interpretations of Maitrīpa's teachings. Mathes argues that Maitrīpa taught *mahāmudrā* outside of Tantra. Kragh is more reserved and only maintains that a direct approach to awakening based on the *Pāramitāyāna* can be found in Maitrīpa's writings, but also states that it is not necessarily the exact same as Gampopa's *mahāmudrā*. Isaacson and Sferra, on the other hand, have argued that Maitrīpa's *mahāmudrā* is not based on the *Pāramitāyāna* and was only taught as a practice of the *Mantrayāna*.

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[1] For a further contextualization of the importance of the debate in the Tibetan and Indian context, one should refer to Braitstein's *The Adamantine Songs*, particularly the chapters *Defining Siddhas* and *Key Theme 1: The Great Seal.*

Maitrīpa's writings have been compiled in a collection of twenty-six texts which is usually referred to as the *Amanasikāra Cycle.* In these texts, Maitrīpa explains many subjects, such as the correct conduct to follow, descriptions of reality, and how to meditate. The main practice and concept at the center of these teachings is *amanasikāra*, mental non-engagement, which can be understood both as a practical instruction and as a description of the ultimate realization. Maitrīpa explains *amanasikāra* as the goal of Buddhist practice and even describes *mahāmudrā*, the Great seal and ultimate realization of the *Mantrayāna*, as being none other than the practice of *amanasikāra*. Maitrīpa's main advice is thus to work directly with one's own mind to overcome dualistic perceptions and to transform our engagement with objects into non-engagement, i.e., an engagement where the duality of subject and object is erased. To do so, one must perceive all phenomena as being dependently arisen, non-abiding, with the help of the *guru*, who introduces the student to the nature of reality and of the mind. The debate on Maitrīpa's teachings is thus about the context in which the *guru* can introduce the student to that nature. Can it be done outside of the context of tantric empowerments? Or does the student need to enter the Mantrayāna to be able to practice *amanasikāra*?

When reading Maitrīpa's texts, one will hardly find any mention of the concerns of the later Tibetans. His discussion of sutra and tantra does not clearly indicate that practices such as *mahāmudrā* can and should only be practiced in the Mantra vehicle, or not. Instead, Maitrīpa was concerned with bringing together the teachings of the Pāramitāyāna and the Tantras, as will be explained below. His own concerns were thus effaced by the concerns of his later readers. For example, both in the Tibetan tradition and in modern scholarships, his readers often take a position on whether or not he taught a non-tantric *mahāmudrā*, when he himself wrote no clear statement on the subject. As such, the modern academic readings of Maitrīpa have been limited in their approaches as they often focus on a single text of the entire *Amanasikāra* cycle or they try to read Maitrīpa from a Tibetan perspective. To differentiate between Maitrīpa's own concerns and the concerns of his later Tibetan readers, one needs to have an idea of the role Maitrīpa played for Tibetan Buddhists. As such, a short review of Sapaṇ's critique of Gampopa is necessary to understand under what circumstances Maitrīpa was read. First, Gampopa's and Sapaṇ's teachings on *mahāmudrā* will be presented, and second the critique of Sapaṇ will be examined.

The Tibetan context and Maitrīpa

For Gampopa, there are three paths to reach awakening: a *Sūtra*, a *Tantra* and a *mahāmudrā* path. Although Gampopa taught *Tantra* to some of his close students, his teachings mainly focus on the first and the third paths (Sherpa, 136). The Sutra path is usually understood to require the practitioner to develop qualities, called Perfections, during several eons. The sūtric path Gampopa taught, however, is not the usual accumulation of merits over many eons. Rather it is a "Mahāyāna-based shortcut to the highest *Mahāmudrā* level of Tantric practice" (Kragh, 32). This *sūtra*-based shortcut is also called *mahāmudrā.* As such, Gampopa uses *mahāmudrā* to designate two different things. One being the traditional understanding of *mahāmudrā*, the third path, a "realization of essence that is superior to the sūtric and mantric paths", and the other being "a pedagogical system that includes many conventional *Mahāyāna* teachings and only culminates in the traditional *mahāmudrā*" (Sherpa, 133). The latter definition of *mahāmudrā* is thus a metonym, where the cause, the preparatory path, is designated by the result, traditional *mahāmudrā* practice (Sherpa, 170). Gampopa does not deny the idea that students of high faculties could enter the traditional *mahāmudrā* path directly, but the collection of his works clearly indicates that most students would require a preparatory path before entering the traditional *mahāmudrā*. As Kragh explains, his works mostly focus on the "*Mahāyāna* path, Mahāmudrā meditation, or a mixture of the two, thereby illustrating the kind of 'blending the two streams of *Bka' gdams pa* and *Mahāmudrā*' that later sources characteristically ascribe to [Gampopa] as the hallmark of his teachings" (Kragh, 31). Doing so, Gampopa avoids "teaching Mantra in depth" by "attempting to leap from the first to the third path", from *sūtra* to *mahāmudrā* (Sherpa, 182). As such, Gampopa denies the necessity of tantric initiations and trainings to practice *mahāmudrā*. His teachings are thus at odds with the presentation of *mahāmudrā* found in Indian tantric texts, such as the *Niruttarayogatantra* that are used by Sapaṇ.

Sapaṇ believed that there were only two paths to reach Buddhahood. One was the "common approach of the Bodhisattva path with its Perfections" that took several lifetimes, i.e., the *Pāramitāyāna*, and the other was the "special *Mantrayāna* approach, with its special short-cut methods and its cultivation of the two stages" (Jackson, 88). These two paths are traditionally accepted in Indian canonical texts such as the *Niruttarayogatantra*. For Sapaṇ, Tantra and *mahāmudrā* could only be practiced by strictly following "the Indian Tantras and their associated Indian commentaries" (Kragh, 49). In those particular *Tantras* and commentaries, *mahāmudrā* is

practiced after receiving four empowerments which "serve to indicate the experience of spiritual realization and its qualities to the practitioner as well as to introduce the yogic techniques leading to this realization" (Kragh, 50). Sapaṇ follows that understanding as he writes "[*mahāmudrā*] consists of gnosis risen from initiation" (Stenzel, 206). In those Tantras, *mahāmudrā* is only achieved after having perfected "these techniques involving ritual, visualization, and yoga" as it is the "final, uncontrived stage wherein all contemplative or yogic technique has been abandoned" (Kragh, 50). *Mahāmudrā* should thus "only be taught" within the Tantric context, as the "outcome of the four empowerments" (Kragh, 51). As the final practice on the tantric path, Sapaṇ explains that *mahāmudrā* is the "union of bliss and emptiness", or the "union of awareness and emptiness" (Stenzel, 210). In other words, it is able to bring all the necessary causes for awakening to the practitioners, if they have completed the necessary pre-requisites, as it trains compassion and emptiness simultaneously. Finally, Sapaṇ explains that even if one is introduced to *mahāmudrā* in the context of a tantric initiation, one still needs to familiarize with that experience through meditation as only a "mimetic gnosis" of *mahāmudrā* arises (Stenzel, 223). There is, however, one small caveat as Sapaṇ adds that for a "few fortunate individuals" the "genuine gnosis of *mahāmudrā*" can appear immediately at the time of initiation (Stenzel, 214). Hence, one can immediately enter the Path of Seeing at the time of initiation, and then gradually progress through the various Bodhisattva grounds. As Sapaṇ explains: "The moment when the direct realization of the emptiness possessing the excellence of all aspects… the real gnosis [of] *mahāmudrā* (*don gyi ye shes*) first arises; [that] is called the attainment of the ―Path of Seeing" (Stenzel, 223). In other words, most people who take a tantric initiation would still need to go through the Paths of Accumulation and Joining to directly experience the genuine *mahāmudrā*, but a few fortunate individuals experience it directly during a tantric initiation. After having experienced the Path of Seeing, one is made to cultivate this realization over and over to remove any latent false conceptualizations about reality until finally reaching Buddhahood. For Sapaṇ, unlike Gampopa, *mahāmudrā* is thus solely a tantric practice. This doctrinal difference will incite Sapaṇ to criticize and question Gampopa's teachings.

Sapaṇ's critique

Jackson's *Enlightenment by a Single Means* is one of the most influential works on Sapaṇ's criticism of Gampopa in modern academia[2]. Cited by Mathes and Isaacson and Sferra, his analysis of Sapaṇ's critique offers insights into the concerns of the time and it is often considered a reference on the subject. Jackson identifies three major points in Sapaṇ's criticism of Gampopa and his followers. First, Sapaṇ criticized the idea that a single factor, even "insight into emptiness presented as [*mahāmudrā*]", was sufficient to attain Buddhahood. Second, he claimed that the gnosis of *mahāmudrā* couldn't "arise through an exclusively non-conceptual meditative method". Third, for Sapaṇ, *mahāmudrā* can never be taught outside of the Mantrayāna (Jackson, 72). Jackson argues that Sapaṇ established these three main points to differentiate his own *mahāmudrā* from that of Gampopa and his followers. Although Jackson's summary offers a detailed overlook of Sapaṇ's arguments, I argue that all these three critiques boil down to one central doctrinal difference: the necessary pre-requisites to practice *mahāmudrā*.

When one considers the totality of Gampopa's teachings, the first two criticisms basically boil down to the same point, i.e., the necessary pre-requisites for *mahāmudrā*. If we look at the first criticism, that emptiness alone cannot be sufficient for Buddhahood, we can only wonder whether Gampopa truly taught emptiness in such a way. Jackson claims that Gampopa indeed taught such a path by quoting from the *Precious Jewel Ornament of Liberation* of Gampopa. "If a person possesses the insight into Emptiness, there is not a single thing not included within this factor. The path, consisting of the Six Perfections, is also completely present in this alone" (Jackson 21). Jackson is however being misleading by quoting this passage out of context. A few pages earlier, in the same chapter of the same book, Gampopa writes:

> If a *bodhisattva* only depends on wisdom awareness without method, he will fall into the one-sided nirvanic peace asserted by the Hearers and be bound there, unable to attain the non-abiding nirvana. Furthermore, it binds one there permanently according to the assertions of the three-vehicle system. Even according to the assertions of the one-vehicle system, one will be bound there for 84,000 *kalpas*. If one only depends on method without wisdom awareness, one will not cross beyond being a childish, ordinary person. Therefore, one will remain bound to samsara. (Gampopa, 234)

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[2] It is interesting to note that in *Enlightenment by a Single Means,* Jackson also mentions the Great Perfection, *rdzogs chen*, throughout his book as it shares some principles with mahāmudrā and suffered the same kind of critics. A further study in the similarities between the reception of the Great Perfection and *mahāmudrā* in Tibet might offer interesting insights to develop our understanding of the religious landscape of the time.

Here Gampopa clearly explains that methods, i.e., compassion, or wisdom awareness, i.e., emptiness, alone are not sufficient and both need to be trained in order to reach Buddhahood. How does one reconcile this with his earlier statement that emptiness alone was enough? One possible answer is that Gampopa is talking about two different practices of meditation on emptiness. In the first passage, where emptiness alone is sufficient, he might be talking about the practice of *mahāmudrā*, whereas in the second passage, where emptiness alone is a fault, he might be talking about the sūtric practice of meditating on emptiness. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that Gampopa explains, in another text, how the practice of *mahāmudrā* can be used to train in all the Perfections:

> For this [mahāmudrā] path with that sort of special feature, any thought that arises becomes part of the path of Pāramitā. It becomes the method aspect because thought, as something not deliberately produced, turns into an assistant as follows: knowledge of the characteristic of any given thought is *prajñā*; through all thoughts having arisen as the path there is absorption; through as much thought as is produced being produced as the path there is the perseverance of thorough preparation; through not being afraid of the fact of the profound *dharmatā* there is patience; through there being no seeds of the afflictions in that kind of absorption there is un-outflowed discipline; and, through the practice of that interdependent connection of method and *prajñā*, compassion automatically arises for sentient beings who themselves have not realized such, so whatever is done turns into something done for the aims of sentient beings, which is generosity. (Duff, 12-13)

Through this passage, Gampopa explains how one can train in all the Perfections solely through working with one's own mind. His *mahāmudrā* being a practice that allows for the simultaneous practice of all Perfections is evidence that he does not believe that emptiness alone could ever be sufficient to reach Buddhahood. Hence Sapaṇ's first criticism is refuted as Gampopa does not believe that emptiness is enough to reach Buddhahood. However, one might argue that Sapaṇ would not agree with the idea that such a practice, which is able to train every single Perfection simultaneously, can exist. That would however be very hard to defend as Sapaṇ writes that *mahāmudrā* is enough to achieve all qualities of a Buddha.

> Through uninterrupted familiarization with that [real gnosis of *mahāmudrā*] and by gradually progressing higher and higher, one advances up to the twelfth [ground][…]

> Then- when the thirteen [grounds] are actualized, the four *kāyas*, the five wisdoms, etc., [and] ocean-like qualities are attained. (Stenzel, 223)

Although this passage refers to a practitioner who has already entered the Path of Seeing, it clearly demonstrates that Sapaṇ sees *mahāmudrā* as able to produce all necessary qualities for Buddhahood as "ocean-like qualities are attained". One could, however, argue that Sapaṇ's *mahāmudrā* does not create those qualities from scratch, but rather perfects them, as entering the Path of Seeing already requires a lot of pre-requisites for him. In short, when Sapaṇ claims that emptiness alone is not sufficient, such a statement cannot simply be applied to Gampopa, as Gampopa himself agrees. However, there is a disagreement on the required pre-requisites for practicing *mahāmudrā*, as Gampopa claims that a student of high faculty can be directly introduced into it while Sapaṇ requires prior training. Sapaṇ's first criticism can thus be summarized as a disagreement on the necessary pre-requisites for practicing *mahāmudrā*. Sapaṇ's criticism can also be further understood as his refusal to accept that any non-tantric meditation would be able to teach emptiness and compassion simultaneously, as such a feat is reserved for the practices of the *Mantrayāna*. Interpreting his first criticism in this way would thus point to the real doctrinal divide between Gampopa and Sapaṇ: whether the tantric context is necessary or not to practice *mahāmudrā*.

   If one looks at the second criticism of Sapaṇ, one can also find that the crux of the argument is none other than the necessary pre-requisites for *mahāmudrā*. Sapaṇ writes that a non-conceptual meditation alone cannot be sufficient to reach Buddhahood. However, it was mentioned earlier that he also believes that a few fortunate individuals might be able to directly enter the Path of Seeing immediately after receiving a tantric initiation (Stenzel, 223). Following that initiation, for those fortunate individuals, all that would be left to do would simply be to cultivate this non-conceptual gnosis, i.e., the practice of *mahāmudrā* (Stenzel, 223-224). Thus, Sapaṇ agrees with the idea that one could simply receive an initiation and then solely focus on familiarizing oneself with that non-conceptual insight. His second criticism is thus not that a non-conceptual meditation is not sufficient to achieve Buddhahood, but rather that such a practice would require prior training, an initiation and a fortunate individual. As Sapaṇ explains, "the direct recognition of the nature of mind, too, will be sufficient if it occurs at the right time. If it happens at the wrong time, it is of no use" (Jackson, 77). On the other hand, Gampopa claims that people of high capacities can receive direct instructions from their teachers that

reveal the nature of the mind, and then simply meditate on that nature, much like Sapaṇ's fortunate individual. The main difference here lies in the various pre-requisites, Sapaṇ requires a fortunate individual, tantric initiations, and all the preliminary practices that comes with it, while Gampopa simply requires someone of high faculties. Just like the first criticism, the second criticism ends up being about the necessity of the tantric path to practice *mahāmudrā*. One might also wonder what Gampopa means by high faculties, and whether his definition of high faculties somehow agrees with the various pre-requisites imposed by Sapaṇ.

Since Gampopa requires for students of the lowest faculties to train in the Perfections, as clearly explained in *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, and those of middling faculties to follow the Tantric path with various initiations, as explained by Sherpa, it would be surprising that those of highest capacities who can bypass those paths would not have developed the qualities normally developed within those paths. In other words, it would be difficult to assume that Gampopa's high capacities students would not display the qualities of someone that is ready to receive Tantric initiations, or ready to enter the Path of Seeing, when he requires all his other students to do so. Alternatively, instead of someone who innately demonstrates a high quality of compassion or a high training in the Perfections, it is also possible that having high faculties refers to someone who has an unusually strong devotion towards the *guru.* One could infer that Gampopa believed that devotion could play the same role as the various qualities developed in the mainstreams path. As Kragh explains, the practice of *guru yoga* and a high devotion were given as pre-requisites to *mahāmudrā* by Gampopa. Doing so, one is "led into the teachers' own realization" which gives rise to "a first glimpse of Awakening" (Kragh, 40). One could see here a similarity between this technique and the goal of a tantric empowerment "which serves to indicate the experience of spiritual realization and its qualities to the practitioner" (Kragh, 50). As such, Gampopa required even the students of highest faculties to experience an introduction to the nature of reality by one's *guru*, which served a purpose similar to a tantric initiation. The point of contention is thus whether or not such an introduction can be done outside the tantric context.

What is left is Sapaṇ's third criticism, that *mahāmudrā* can never be taught outside of the *Mantrayāna*, the central doctrinal divide between the two teachers. As such, although Sapaṇ raises all those various points, when they are taken to their logical conclusion they all boil down to the same critique: the requirement of tantric initiations, and perhaps other tantric practices,

before practicing *mahāmudrā*. Gampopa, on the other hand, clearly also has pre-requisites, either *Mahāyāna* trainings or a high devotion, but simply denies the necessity of the *Mantrayāna* to practice *mahāmudrā*. Gampopa's direct introduction to the nature of reality on the basis of strong devotion, although similar to tantric empowerment, was clearly not labeled as tantric and probably did not follow the standards of an empowerment. Sapaṇ's critique, as he claimed that his interpretation of *mahāmudrā* was rooted in the Classical Indian Treatise, also indicated that he questioned the sources of Gampopa . In Tibet at the time, an important criterion to determine whether a teaching was authentic or not was to trace its origins to the teachings of Indian masters or in Indian texts (Jackson, 82) . As such, Gampopa followers answered the critiques by claiming that a non-tantric practice of *mahāmudrā* can be found in the texts of the Indian master Maitrīpa (Jackson, 81).

Maitrīpa, as will be made clear later in this thesis, was not as concerned as later Tibetans in classifying *mahāmudrā* as tantric or non-tantric. As such, he gives no clear answer to the question in his texts, and modern scholars can only look at the various hints or clues that might or might not indicate a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* in his teachings, even if Maitrīpa himself did not show such concern for this distinction. The later concerns of Tibetans have thus shaped the discussion of his teachings in the Tibetan tradition and in modern academia. One goal of this thesis will be to disambiguate the intentions of Maitrīpa that one might infer from his writings, from the intentions that one might simply project based on the debate.

Objectives of the Thesis

The goal of my first chapter will be to summarize and analyze the current academic works on Maitrīpa's writings. First, I will present the view and main practice taught by Maitrīpa, respectively *apratiṣṭhāna* and *amanasikāra*. Having explained the central ideas of Maitrīpa's teachings, I will summarize Mathes' arguments from his numerous articles. I will then examine Isaacson and Sferra's critique to finally analyze and comment on the debate as a whole. I will not present Kragh's arguments in this section, as he does not look at Maitrīpa's texts themselves but rather questions his influence on Gampopa. My analysis will show that Isaacson and Sferra ignored at least one major argument of Mathes, and that they only succeeded in showing that Mathes' interpretation is dependent on commentaries from direct students of Maitrīpa. As such, Mathes' argumentation succeeds in showing that there most likely was an Indian non-tantric

practice where emptiness and compassion were trained simultaneously, at least in the writings of the students of Maitrīpa. Mathes fails, however, to show that this practice finds direct support in Maitrīpa's writings, or even to show that this practice was indeed called *mahāmudrā* by his students.

In the second chapter, instead of focusing on the term *mahāmudrā* in Maitrīpa's writings, I will analyze another term in Maitrīpa's teaching: *yuganaddha*. As Sahajavajra explains, in his commentary on the *Tattvadaśaka*, that a direct approach to awakening is possible outside of Tantra based on "*yuganaddha*-suchness", I look at Maitrīpa's texts to find a possible support for this particular suchness. In my analysis, I will show that Maitrīpa has two ways to describe reality while emphasizing its nature as being the union of two different natures, one tantric, where reality is described as the union of insight and means, and one non-tantric, where reality is described as the union of emptiness and dependent-arising. I will also argue that those two descriptions also correspond to two different practices that he outlines in various texts. Thus, Maitrīpa will be presented as having offered the possibility for *amanasikāra* to be practiced outside of the *Mantrayāna*, through a particular understanding of emptiness called *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna,* (Tib. *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa*).

In the third chapter, based on my findings of the role of *yuganaddha* in Maitrīpa's writings, I will reinterpret the path he lays out in various texts, principally the *Tattvadaśaka* and the *Tattvaviṃśikā*. I will show that Maitrīpa can be read as offering a unique access to *mahāmudrā*, where one first needs to perceive reality by practicing *amanasikāra* on the basis of non-tantric *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* pith instructions. Afterwards, one can simply enter the practice of *mahāmudrā*, without the need for any real or visualized consort. I will then compare this path to other Indian thinkers, particularly Saraha, to demonstrate that my reading of Maitrīpa shares similarities with current understandings of Saraha's teachings. Finally, I will compare my interpretation of Maitrīpa with the path taught by Gampopa, to show that Sapaṇ's criticism of Gampopa's teachings as being from Chinese sources was too harsh. Maitrīpa certainly set the necessary pre-requisites for Gampopa to teach a non-tantric practice simultaneously training compassion and emptiness, and also to teach a direct entry into *mahāmudrā*, but there are two important differences that can't be ignored. Maitrīpa never called a practice outside of tantra *mahāmudrā*, and Gampopa divided his *mahāmudrā* practices in various subdivisions, such as the four *yogas*, which are not found in Maitrīpa's text. As such, Sapaṇ's criticism is not entirely

unfounded, but his argument that Gampopa's teachings originated in Ch'an Buddhism is clearly an overstatement.

Methodology

To undertake my research, I have taken a textual approach. I have first started by reading various scholarships on Maitrīpa, and comparing their interpretations. I have studied both modern scholarly and Tibetan traditional works to get a clear idea of the various understandings of Maitrīpa. Then, I also looked directly at the Sanskrit and the Tibetan texts of Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* cycle in order to develop my own interpretation of his writings. With the help of Mathes' critical edition of the amanasikāra cycle, in both Sanskrit and Tibetan, I was able to analyze the frequency of use of various terms, the context in which certain words are used, and so on. Finally, I also looked at commentaries on Maitrīpa's works by his direct students, such as Vajrapāṇi, Rāmapāla and Sahajavajra. While I mostly looked at translations of those commentaries, I also looked directly at crucial passages in Tibetan and Sanskrit, when available. As such, my research is based on a combination of textual studies of modern scholarships and primary and secondary sources in Sanskrit and Tibetan.

Literature Review

Non-tantric *mahāmudrā* in Maitrīpa's writings

Regarding non-tantric *mahāmudrā* in Maitrīpa's writings, Mathes is by far the most prolific author in modern academia. He wrote a total of four articles and a book on the subject. His works will be presented in chronological order.

In 2006, in *Blending the Sūtras with the Tantras: The Influence of Maitrīpa and his Circle on the Formation of Sūtra Mahāmudrā in the Kagyu schools*, Mathes argues for the Indian origins of the Kagyu *sutra mahāmudrā*. He finds a "not-specifically -Tantric *mahāmudrā*" in Sahajavajra's *Tattvadaśakaṭīkā* and Jñānakīrti's *Tattvāvatāra*. Sahajavajra, according to Mathes, taught a *mahāmudrā* which does not requite tantric initiation, or even skillful means like great bliss. As for Jñānakīrti, *mahāmudrā* is simply another name for *Prajñāpāramitā* as he uses *mahāmudrā* to describe the highest-level practices of the *Sūtras*. Thus, although the appellation *Sūtra Mahāmudrā* was invented in Tibet, its roots can be found in Indian Buddhism. In that sense, Mathes does not completely rule out that the Ch'an tradition might have influenced Kagyu

mahāmudrā, but he establishes that there is a precedent for teaching *mahāmudrā* outside of Tantra in India.

In 2008, in *The Succession of the Four Seals* (*Caturmudrānvaya*), Mathes translates the *Caturmudrānvaya* together with selected passages from Karopa's commentary. In those texts, it is explained that the true cause of *mahāmudrā* is not the *karmamudrā*, but the *dharmamudrā*. Mathes also claims that the *mahāmudrā* has a privileged position amongst all the seals, which might indicate that "an originally independent *mahāmudrā* has been integrated into the setting of the *Yoginītantras*" (122). As such, Mathes argues that the four seals should not be understood as being in a causal relationship, as the *karmamudrā* might not be necessary for every single practitioner. *Mahāmudrā* could then be understood as originally being its own practice, independent from the other seals.

In 2009, in *Maitrīpa's Amanasikārādhāra ("A Justification of Becoming Mentally Disengaged")*, Mathes translates and analyzes the *Amanasikārādhāra*. In this text, Maitrīpa defends the usage of amanasikāra as it is not the simple denial of mind, or attention. The practice of *amanasikāra* is explained through the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* and while it teaches the abandonment of the dualistic way to approach phenomena, it also supports the cultivation of a non-dual perception. In other words, *amanasikāra* is not the simple denial of attention, but the cultivation of an attention which transcends dualistic perceptions.

In 2015, Mathes wrote *A Fine Blend of Mahāmudrā and Madhyamaka*, his book which includes the translation of the complete *amanasikāra* cycle. While he reiterates most of his arguments from previous papers, Mathes also adds a few adjustments or more thorough analyses. For example, Mathes provides readers with a thorough analysis of the *Tattvadaśaka* based on Sahajavajra's commentary. The value of this book is thus both the translations, the critical editions of the original Sanskrit and Tibetan translations of Maitrīpa's texts, and also Mathes' commentaries in which he defends the idea that Maitrīpa taught *mahāmudrā* as being independent from the other seals. His commentary is split over multiple texts but is mainly contained in his discussion of the *Sekanirdeśa*, the *Caturmudrānvaya*, the *Amanasikārādhāra* and the *Tattvadaśaka*. In the discussions of those texts, Mathes explains that the *karmamudrā* was often described as being optional for people of lower-faculties, and that both Maitrīpa and his student, Rāmapāla, equated the practice of *amanasikāra* with mahāmudrā and explained it

through a *sūtra*, the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*. Mathes then argues that these *sūtra*-based explanations clearly demonstrate that *mahāmudrā* can be practiced outside of the *Mantrayāna*.

In *bKaʼ brgyud Mahāmudrā: "Chinese rDzogs chen" or the Teachings of the Siddhas?* An article published in 2016, but written in 2013, Mathes explores the Tibetan debate on non-tantric *mahāmudrā* and questions Sapaṇ's criticism. According to him, Sapaṇ based his criticism on a misquote of a verse from the *Caturmudrānvaya*. Mathes then goes on to explore the various sources of non-tantric *mahāmudrā* in India, particularly Rāmapāla's commentary on the *Sekanirdeśa*. Apart from the arguments he wrote in his book, Mathes also explains in detail how Rāmapāla's commentary closely follows the structure of the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*.

Isaacson and Sferra, in *The Sekanirdeśa of Maitreyanātha (Advayavajra) with the Sekanirdeśapañjikā of Rāmapāla,* have provided a complete translation of the *Sekanirdeśa* and of its commentary by *Rāmapāla*. They also offer a few hagiographies of Maitrīpa in their book, and a few pages are dedicated to criticizing Mathes' interpretation of Maitrīpa's teachings. In those pages, Isaacson and Sferra explain that Mathes' translation is often erroneous, and his interpretations mix the meaning of the commentary with the meaning of the root text, as if they were one. As such, they argue that Mathes has been too hasty in his conclusions and does not let the possibility for other plausible interpretations. For them, there is no clear mention of a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* in Maitrīpa's writings.

Maitrīpa

Brunnhölzl, in *Straight from the Heart,* offers a translation of a hagiography and of a few texts of Maitrīpa, mainly the *Sahajaṣaṭka* and the *Tattvadaśaka*. He also provides a complete translation of Sahajavajra's commentary on the *Tattvadaśaka*. He quotes a few Kagyu sources to explain that Maitrīpa taught *Pāramitā*-based instructions on *mahāmudrā*. Thus, he is not taking part in the debate but simply follows the Kagyu position on the matter.

Tatz has partly translated two Tibetan hagiographies by Padma Karpo and Tāranātha which he presents in *The Life of the Siddha-Philosopher Maitrīgupta*. In this paper, Tatz attempts to recreate a timeline of Maitrīpa's life. His work provides a good background to understand how Maitrīpa was understood by Tibetans at the time.

Almogi, although not directly writing on Maitrīpa himself, wrote *Māyopamādvayavāda versus Sarvadharmāpratiṣṭhānavāda: A Late Indian Subclassification of Madhyamaka and its*

Reception in Tibet, an article on late Indian Buddhist philosophical views of reality. In that article, she translates parts of Vajrapāṇi's commentary on Maitrīpa's *Tattvaratnāvalī*. The commentary is helpful to understand the distinction between *Māyopamādvaya* and *Apratiṣṭhāna*. Her classification of late Indian Buddhist tenets is also a great help to understand the landscape of late Indian Buddhist philosophy as perceived by Tibetans.

In *The Four Joys in the Teachings of Nāropa and Maitrīpa*, Stenzel details the differences between Nāropa's and Maitrīpa's teachings on the four seals. She explains how the fourth seal differs for both thinkers, and explores the various implications this might have for their teachings. She explains that Maitrīpa's choice to put the *samayamudrā* as the last seal might be a way to emphasize the importance of compassionate activities.

Tibetan debate on *mahāmudrā*

On the subject of the Tibetan debate on non-tantric *mahāmudrā*, the most complete research is contained in Jackson book, *Enlightenment by a Single Means*. Although Jackson seems to have a slight bias towards Sapaṇ's explanation, he does a good job of summarizing the arguments of both sides of the debates and explaining Sapaṇ's decision to criticize Gampopa. Sapaṇ wanted to preserve the authenticity of the teachings and tried to do so by engaging in a process of argumentation in line with Indian Buddhist thinkers. His discussion of doctrinal divergences between Gampopa and Sapaṇ is, however, a bit simplistic.

In his introduction of *Tibetan Yoga and Mysticism*, Kragh analyzes the Tibetan debate on non-tantric *mahāmudrā*. Overall, the goal of his book is to provide an analysis of the *Dwags po bka' bum'* and of the narratives surrounding Gampopa's life. To do so, Kragh starts by explaining Gampopa and early Kagyu's teachings on *mahāmudrā* and how they were later criticized by Sapaṇ. Kragh then cites a few sources for non-tantric Indian practices which are similar to *mahāmudrā*, but not necessarily the same as Gampopa's *mahāmudrā*. He also mentions Mathes and explains that while Maitrīpa did not teach a non-tantric *mahāmudrā*, it does seem that he taught a non-tantric "direct approach" to awakening (Kragh, 74). That approach, however, does not share the various divisions of Gampopa's *mahāmudrā*, such as the four *yogas*. Furthermore, while the *Dwags po bka' bum'* shares similar terminology to Maitrīpa's texts, it only contains a few references to the *amanasikāra* cycle. As such, while Kragh agrees with Mathes that Maitrīpa taught a non-tantric direct approach to awakening, he criticizes

Mathes' view that this practice is the same as Gampopa's *mahāmudrā* as it can only be understood to be a predecessor, at best.

In *Padma Dkar Po's Defence of Bka' Brgyud Amanasikāra Teachings*, Higgins offers a thorough explanation of the practice of *amanasikāra* as understood by Padma Karpo. He also offers an overview of the usage of amanasikāra in Buddhist literature and gives the most detailed explanation of *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* I have found in a modern academic article, which is still only a page long. His articles is helpful to understand how Kagyupas practiced amanasikāra, and to get an idea of the importance of the term in Buddhist literature.

While *The Mahāmudrā of Sakya Paṇḍita* focuses on Sapaṇ's explanation of *mahāmudrā*, Stenzel also explores how these explanations are in agreement or disagreement with some Kagyupas' presentation of *mahāmudrā*. Her analysis of Sapaṇ's *mahāmudrā* offers important details that nuance Jackson's presentation of Sapaṇ. Although it is tempting to describe Sapaṇ's *mahāmudrā* in a way that totally contradicts Gampopa's presentation, Stenzel demonstrates that they also share similarities in their teachings.

Other thinkers related to Maitrīpa

In *The Adamantine* Songs, Braitstein offers a thorough analysis, a translation, and a Tibetan critical edition of Sahara's *vajragīti*. In her analysis, she offers a detailed explanation of his presentation of the path to awakening, of the four symbolic terms, and of the role and importance of *mahāmudrā* in those songs. She details the path to awakening offered by Saraha, and explains how it is heavily dependent upon devotion to the guru and the rejection of a multitude of *sūtric* and tantric practice to focus solely upon the correct practice of *mahāmudrā*. Furthermore, her analysis of *skye med* and *dran med* serves as the basis for my comparison with Maitrīpa's presentation of the unborn and *amanasikāra*.

Sherpa**,** in his doctoral thesis entitled *Gampopa, the Monk and the Yogi: His life and Teachings*, provides a lengthy explanation of Gampopa's work and teachings. He defends the idea that Gampopa taught three separate path, and that the tantric path could be skipped entirely as one could start practicing mahāmudrā directly from the sūtric path. Gampopa is also presented as adapting his teachings according to the students. While the masses would mostly get sūtric and *mahāmudrā* teachings, his closest students would also receive tantric teachings. Finally, Sherpa explains that *mahāmudrā* has two meanings for Gampopa. It is sometimes used as a

metonym, where it designates the preparatory sūtric path that one must travel before engaging in the actual practice, and sometimes used as the actual traditional practice of *mahāmudrā*.

Chapter I: Interpretations of Maitrīpa in Modern Scholarship

This chapter will accomplish two goals: giving a brief overview of Maitrīpa's philosophical view and instructions on meditation as accepted today in modern academia, and analyzing the debate between Mathes and Isaacson and Sferra on the correct way to interpret Maitrīpa's teachings. Although Maitrīpa is known as a *siddha*, he was also a great scholar who composed many texts. In those texts, he describes the nature of all phenomena as being non-abiding, *apratiṣṭhāna*, by blending terms of the *Prajñāpāramitā* and the Third Turning of the Wheel. To realize this view, Maitrīpa teaches the practice of mental non-engagement, *amanasikāra*, where one's attention is transformed into a non-dual mind. Although these descriptions are generally accepted by scholars of Maitrīpa, an important disagreement arises when one questions in what context one should practice *amanasikāra*. While Mathes adamantly claims that *amanasikāra*, which Maitrīpa equates with *mahāmudrā*, can be practiced outside of Tantra, Isaacson and Sferra do not find any evidence pointing towards such a definitive answer. After presenting Maitrīpa's philosophical position, practical instructions, and introducing both sides of the debate, this chapter will conclude with an analysis of Isaacson and Sferra's critique. Even though they raise a few good points, Isaacson and Sferra fail at entirely refuting Mathes' position but succeed in demonstrating that Mathes' argumentation is not sufficient to reach a definite answer.

The view of Maitrīpa

The *Tattvaratnāvalī* is often used by scholars as the main text to explain Maitrīpa's philosophical position[3]. In this text, Maitrīpa expounds various philosophical tenets, from what he considers to be the lowest view up to the highest. His exposition culminates in two *Madhyamaka* tenets, the *Māyopamādvayavāda* (Non-duality which is like an Illusion) and the *Apratiṣṭhānavāda (*Non-abiding*)*. Although their respective definitions might vary, Mathes explains that generally " the *Māyopamādvayavādins* positively determines the nature of phenomena as illusion-like", while the Apratiṣṭhānavādins "rejects such attempts, not taking a position about the ultimate at all" (Mathes, 2015, 79)[4]. Maitrīpa clearly favors *apratiṣṭhāna* and

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[3] See Almogi 2010, Mathes 2015, and Gerloff 2018.
[4] Maitrīpa does not follow the latter Tibetan division of *Madhyamaka* into *Svatantrika* and *Prāsaṅgika*. The *Māyopamādvaya-Apratiṣṭhāna* division was clearly known of Tibetan scholars, at least up until Tsongkhapa, who

uses it as his main philosophical position throughout the whole of the *Amanasikāra* cycle. In the *Tattvaratnāvalī*, Maitrīpa describe *apratiṣṭhāna* as follows:

> The manifold [world] is not taken to be eternal
> Or said to be entirely annihilate [either];
> Nor is it a combination of both eternal and annihilate,
> Nor can it be that neither is the case. (TRA *28)*
>
> The wise know the true reality of things
> As the non-abiding in anything.
> Now, this is not just conceptual [analysis], for a [conceptualizing] mind
> Does not know the nature of mind. (TRA *29)*
>
> All superimposition, whatever there is
> All this does not exist in any respect;
> The meaning of *Madhyamaka* is thus the absence of superimposition;
> Where is, then, the denial or establishing [of anything]?
> (TRA *30)*
> […]
> When free from all superimpositions,
> True reality appears of its own accord.
> Expressions such as emptiness,
> Remove superimpositions from it. (TRA *33) (*Mathes*, 2015, 70-72)*

Starting with the *Madhyamaka* tetralemma, Maitrīpa then continues his explanation of *Apratiṣṭhānavāda* by defining their vision of the "true reality of things" as "the non-abiding in anything". Such a view, however, cannot be comprehended by a conceptual mind as it transcends concepts. Maitrīpa then asks the rhetorical question "Where is, then, the denial of establishing [of anything]?" This question can be understood as a criticism of other schools who claim that some things truly exists while other do not[5]. To speak of existence and non-existence, in an ultimate way, is thus an aberration for the *Apratiṣṭhānavādins*, as the ultimate is beyond such conceptions. As explained in Maitrīpa's *Svapnanirukti*:

> Why [should] the nameless be given a name?
> Or is the name called an illusion?

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then later popularized the *Svatantrika-Prāsaṅgika* distinction, but was ultimately rejected. For more information on the difference between Apratiṣṭhāna and Māyopamādvaya, one can consult Almogi 2010, or Mathes, 2015.
[5]Most likely this refers to the *Māyopamādvayavādins*, as they try to either establish true nature as being illusory or deny phenomena on the basis that they are illusory.

But a name for a name is not proper,
And there is no basis in the nameless [for a name] (Mathes, 2015, 160)

In other words, labeling ultimate reality with a name is senseless, as it is nothing more than a label, or a name, and adding a name on top of another name is "not proper"[6]. The dependence between "true reality" and the "apparent" is also further explored in the *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivaraṇa*:

Just as the apparent [truth] is not annihilated
When true reality is taught,
So too true reality is not apprehended
Without the apparent. (PTMV 10) (Mathes, 2015, 98)

Furthermore, Vajrapāṇi himself explains *Apratiṣṭhāna* as follow:

If one examines, on the basis of logical reasoning, that which appears, [one realises that it] is empty; while that which is empty, unattested, and unable to withstand logical analysis is appearance. […] Once [the nature of all] the diverse appearances has been established as emptiness, on the basis of logical reasoning, [one realises that] even the nonexistence of entities and emptiness do not subsist (Almogi, 159).

Apratiṣṭhānavadins thus maintain that through logical reasoning, the ultimate substratum is realized as nothing other than emptiness. Furthermore, once one accepts emptiness as the ultimate nature, on the basis of the same logical reasoning, even non-existence and emptiness are understood to "not subsist". In other words, things do not exist, as they are empty, but things also are not non-existent, as they are empty. As for emptiness itself, while it is the nature of the manifold appearances, it also does not exist, as it is not a substantial entity. While these descriptions mainly use terminology from the *Prajñāpāramitā*, Maitrīpa also describes these views with concepts taken from texts pertaining to the Third turning of the Wheel and from the *Ratnagotravibhāga* throughout the *Amanasikāra Cycle* (Mathes, 2015, 92). For example, in the *Tattvadaśaka*, Maitrīpa defines reality as luminous (Skt. *prabhāsvara* Tib. '*od gsal*):

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[6] Calling it an "illusion", like M*āyopamādvayavādins*, implies a basis for ultimate reality, something which is rejected by Maitrīpa.

Thus phenomena are [all] of one taste,
Unobstructed, and without an abode.
They are all [realized as] luminous
Through the *samādhi* of realizing true reality as it is. (TD 5) (Mathes, 2015, 212)

Apart from luminosity, the descriptions of the mind found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* such as self or reflexive awareness (Skt. *svasaṃvitti*, Tib. *rang rig pa*) (sometimes simply "awareness"), or clarity (Skt. *prakāśa*, Tib. gsal ba) are also used in various texts by Maitrīpa[7]. For example, Maitrīpa explains that the superior *Mādhyamika* tenet is "established on the basis of awareness in the *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivaraṇa*:

> Once the thorn that it (i.e., consciousness or wisdom) exists ultimately
> in such a way is removed, a *Mādhyamika* tenet is [seen to be] superior,
> one established on the basis of awareness, which is continuous in its
> flow of effortless non-dual "union" *(yuganaddha)* and is characterized
> by not abiding in anything. This is realized through the kindness of a
> genuine guru. (Mathes, 2015, 99)

As it is said to be "characterized by not abiding in anything", Maitrīpa is here clearly writing about *Apratiṣṭhāna*. Maitrīpa's explanation of *Apratiṣṭhāna* based on the mind is also continued in his *Madhyamaṣaṭka*, where he offers progressive explanations of reality which ultimately culminate in this final verse:

> Clarity which is free from the four extremes
> Has the nature of deities.
> It has the nature of non-dual bliss
> And is mere dependent origination. (MS 6) (Mathes, 2015, 204)

As this verse is the final verse of this text, and as clarity is said to be mere dependent origination free from the four extremes, Maitrīpa is here once again most likely exposing the view of *Apratiṣṭhāna*. As such, his exposition of the view is not limited to the terminology of the *Prajñāpāramitā*.

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[7] For Maitrīpa, one way to differentiate between *Yogācāra, Māyopamādvaya* and *Apratiṣṭhāna* is to compare the ontological status given to the mind, or awareness. While it is explained as ultimately existent in Yogācāra, the *Māyopamādvayavādins* say it exists only as an illusion, while the *Apratiṣṭhānavādins* simply considers it a dependent-arising like any other phenomenon. See Mathes 2015, 85.

To summarize, Maitrīpa demonstrates a certain versatility in the terminology and ideas he uses to express the view he considers the highest, *apratiṣṭhāna*. Although he uses the terminology and reasoning of the Second Turning of the Wheel when explaining *apratiṣṭhāna* in the *Tattvaratnāvalī*, he does not shy away from using the vocabulary and concepts of the Third Turning of the Wheel in other texts. As Mathes summarizes, "when engaged in analytical activities, one has to follow the second *dharmacakra* thereby avoiding any extreme of superimposition and denial. With a direct access through the *samādhi* of knowing reality for what it is the yogin has a genuine experience of reality as taught in the third *dharmacakra*" (Mathes, 2015, 92). It should also be noted that Maitrīpa was a central figure in the "trend of synthesizing the teachings and practices of the *Anuttarayogatantra*s", which often use the terminology of the Third turning of the wheel, "with the Common *Mahāyāna*" (Kragh, 78). Thus, his particular way of teaching was perhaps Maitrīpa's attempt to keep a description of reality based primordially on the experience of the meditator, while still being compatible with the more analytical and philosophical positions studied in monasteries, such as *Madhyamaka*.

Maitrīpa's Instructions for Meditation

As one would expect, Maitrīpa's philosophical views support his main instructions for meditation practice. The central practice taught by Maitrīpa is *amanasikāra*. This word has quite the history and even became controversial around the time of the debate between Kamalaśīla and Mo'han (Mathes, 2015, 248). And yet, the term also became increasingly popular amongst *siddhas* as a description of "both the practice and the goal of *mahāmudrā*" (Mathes, 2015, 248). *Amanasikāra* is usually considered to be a compound of two terms, *a,* a prefix used to negate or indicate an absence of the term it is attached to, and *manasikāra*, which is itself a compound but is usually translated as "attention". *Amanasikāra* would thus literally be non-attention, or inattention. These translations, however, do not convey the meaning intended by Maitrīpa.

To understand Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* one has to look at the history of the term *manasikāra* in the *Abhidharma* and the *sūtras*. Literally, *manasikāra* means "to do (or make) in the mind", as *manasi* is the locative form of the word *mana,* mind, and *kāra* means doing. The Tibetan translation *yid la byed pa* also indicates an activity towards or in the mind. These literal translations, however, are quite different from the traditional Buddhist explanations of the term. Basing himself on the *Abhidharma* Bhikku Bodhi translates the term as "attention" and explains

it as follow. "Attention is the mental factor responsible for the mind's advertence to the object, by virtue of which the object is made present to consciousness" (Bodhi, 69). Geshe Tashi Tsering also translates the term as attention.

> The last always-present mental factor is *attention*, which focuses the mind on a specific object to the exclusion of other objects. Attention also helps to keep the object before the mind. Without it, the mind would be unable to remain on the object for even a second. Attention is the factor that filters information. (Tsering, 36)

What we get from both definitions is that attention, *manasikāra*, denotes a mental factor that not only brings the mind on the object, but is also responsible for making the mind stay on the object. In a sense, it is the mental factor that denotes the mind engaging with an object, which is why Mathes translates, most of the time, *amanasikāra* as "mental non-engagement". The Tibetan translation of *amanasikāra*, *yid la mi byed pa*, also indicates that what is negated is not the mind but the action that's being done in the mind. Thus, translating *amanasikāra* as "mental non-engagement" agrees with the Tibetan. However, one is left to wonder what exactly is implied by this non-engagement.

    In his *Amanasikārādhāra*, Maitrīpa dispels wrong understanding of *amanasikāra* and explains the variety of meanings it can take. At first, he quotes various *sūtras* to demonstrate that this practice is indeed Buddhist. Perhaps the most important one is the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, which is often quoted to explain the practice of *amanasikāra*[8]. In the *Amanasikārādhāra*, Maitrīpa quotes this particular passage:

> A Bodhisattva, a great being, abandons all characteristic signs,
> which are [produced by] thoughts and consist of mental forms
> through non-conceptual realization *(amanasikāra)*. (Mathes, 2015, 242)

It should be noted that the sentence could also end with "through mental non-engagement". In this passage, what is to be abandoned is "all characteristic signs" that come from mental activity, which indicates that *amanasikāra* is the non-engagement towards those signs. Maitrīpa also explains the meaning of *amanasikāra* through the *Hevajratantra*. The meaning is much less direct as Maitrīpa himself explains that it is "by implication" that *amanasikāra* is understood to

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[8] The *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* is of central importance to Rāmapāla's explanation of amanasikāra, which will be detailed later in this thesis.

be the practice to follow (Mathes, 2015, 243). As the term *amanasikāra* itself is not found, he quotes the following passage from the *Hevajratantra*: "The whole world should be meditated upon [in such a way]/ That it is not produced by the intellect" (Mathes, 2015, 243). Once again, Maitrīpa equates *amanasikāra* with the non-engagement towards anything that is produced by the intellect. Here, as he is simply trying to establish doctrinal support for *amanasikāra*, Maitrīpa is not fully explaining the term. His complete explanation of the compound is offered in his later analysis.

Maitrīpa explains that the prefix *a* can be understood in two ways: either as a non-affirmative negation, where nothing else is implied, or as an affirming negation, where something else is implied. If the prefix *a* is taken as a non-affirmative negation, Maitrīpa explains that there is no fault since it is not the mind that is negated but the mental engagement that results in "something perceived, a perceiver and the like" (Mathes, 2015, 244). In other words, if the negation is taken as non-affirmative, it does not negate the mind as a whole. Rather, it negates the particular way to pay attention to objects that results in duality. In that sense, *amanasikāra* would mean a mental engagement which does not result in duality such as perceiver and perceived. As ordinary attention always results in a dual perception, the non-dual mind which results from non-attention, or mental non-engagement, is called *amanasikāra.* Furthermore, when the compound is taken as an affirmative negation, Maitrīpa explains that "an awareness of essencelessness is maintained" (Mathes, 2015, 245). Maitrīpa explains that taking *amanasikāra* as an affirming negation would be the position of the *Māyopamādvayavādins* as it would mean that the mind implied by the negation is somewhat real. Nevertheless, Maitrīpa sees that as being useful to deny claims of nihilism and does not reject that interpretation (Mathes, 2015, 245).

Maitrīpa gives another possible interpretation of the term *amanasikāra* by analyzing it as a "compound where the middle word is dropped" (Mathes, 2015, 245). In that interpretation, the prefix *a* is interpreted as having a "metaphorical sense", which refers to the unborn, that "which has the nature of non-origination" (Mathes, 2015, 245). As such, mental engagement, *manasikāra*, has to be directed toward the unborn, the prefix *a*. In other words, Maitrīpa is giving a positive definition of the compound by removing the negating role of the prefix *a* and instead interpreting it as a metaphor for the "defining characteristic of non-origination" (Mathes, 2015, 246). Thus, *amanasikāra* is not a mental non-engagement, but a mental engagement towards

non-origination. To support his interpretation of the prefix *a*, Maitrīpa quotes the *Hevajra* Tantra, where it is explained that "the first vowel (i.e., *a*) is Nairātmyā", the consort of *Hevajra* (Mathes, 2015, 247). Nairātmyā is also considered to be the personification of "insight" (Mathes, 2015, 247). In that sense, the letter *a* holds a special meaning in tantra where it refers to the idea of emptiness, of the unborn, and so on. *Amanasikāra* is thus not necessarily a negation of mental engagement, or attention, but rather a re-focus of attention towards the unborn, emptiness. To summarize, Maitrīpa offers two interpretation of the compound. If one takes the prefix *a* to be any sort of negation, then one should understand that what is negated is a mental engagement which creates the duality of the perceiver and the perceived, and not the mind itself. If one takes the *a* as metaphorically referring to the unborn, or emptiness, then *amanasikāra* means the attention which is focused on the non-origination of all things. In other words, the prefix a is not a negation of attention per say, rather it is referring to an attention that transcends conventional perception and is based on non-duality. It is thus a way to engage with phenomena by recognizing their unborn nature.

Maitrīpa concludes his explanation by referring to another tantric meaning of *amanasikāra*. He explains that the compound can be understood as luminous self-empowerment (*prabhāsvara svādiṣṭhāna)* (Mathes, 2015, 247). Luminous, as we have seen before, refers to the ultimate reality of phenomena as things are luminous in nature. On the other hand, self-empowerment here is explained by Maitrīpa as an "an awareness which continues as something that is not separate from emptiness and compassion, [i.e.,] not distinct (*advaya*) from the level of indivisible union (*yuganaddha*)" (Mathes, 2015, 247). We have seen this sort of awareness mentioned earlier in the *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivaraṇa* where it was said to be made possible by the kindness of the guru. I believe that we can also use the previous explanation of the compound, as a mental engagement (*manasikāra*) that is focused on *a* to expand on this final explanation. In that case, *manasikāra*, the mind which is engaged with an object, is the awareness inseparable with emptiness and compassion, and it is focused on *a*, in this case the luminous nature of all things. Hence, the final meaning of *amanasikāra* is an awareness or self-awareness, that only has for object the luminous nature of phenomena.

Maitrīpa's discussion of *amanasikāra* clearly explains that it is not sufficient to simply go into meditation and try to not engage with objects, as if one was in a coma. This non-engagement is a particular one that requires guidance. In Kamalaśila's writings, one finds that *amanasikāra*

needs to be achieved through reasoning and inferences (Mathes, 2015, 253). Mathes, however, denotes that such an approach was not favored by the *siddhas*, especially Saraha, who takes *amanasikāra* as an instruction to "watch our mind without distraction and realize its true nature" (Mathes, 254). The question is then, what approach did Maitrīpa favor?

In the *Sekanirdeśa,* Maitrīpa lists three valid ways to engage in practice: "scriptures, self-awareness, and the pith instructions of the genuine guru" (Mathes, 2015, 107). Given his detailed philosophical position, it is no wonder that Maitrīpa accorded importance to reasoning. However, out of these three ways to engage in practice, the pith instructions of the guru are clearly favored. In the *Tattvadaśaka*, Maitrīpa writes: "Even the middle [path] (i.e., Madhyamaka) which is not adorned/ With the words of a guru, is only middling" (TD 2) (Mathes, 2015, 211). Although one can get an understanding of the middle path, most likely through reasoning, that understanding is "only middling" if it lacks the instructions of one's guru. Furthermore, in the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā*, he writes

> Well, one may realize emptiness
> In the thousand collections of teachings;
> [But] it is not realized through analysis.
> The meaning of emptiness [is learned, rather,] from the
> guru (MV 12) (Mathes, 2015, 195)

From these two passages, it becomes clear that although scriptures, and implicitly reasoning, can be used, the decisive and crucial support for one's practice is the words of one's guru. As realization of emptiness does not come "from analysis but rather "from the guru" the study of scriptures and reasoning are either optional or restricted to an initial inquiry into the ultimate, that is doomed to fail without the support of one's guru.

For Maitrīpa, realizing emptiness means to realize phenomena as being *apratiṣṭhāna*, non-abiding. As *amanasikāra* is the practice of turning one's mind toward the unborn nature of all phenomena, Maitrīpa's philosophical instructions are clearly a support for his main practice. Throughout the *Amanasikāra* cycle, Maitrīpa also calls *amanasikāra* the practice of non-abiding. Rāmapāla explains this in his commentary on the *Sekanirdeśa,* where he comments on the phrase "not to abide in anything":

"In anything" means in the dependently arisen *skandhas*, *dhātus*,
āyatanas and so forth. "Not to abide" means not to reify, not to
become mentally engaged [*amanasikāra*]. (Mathes, 2015, 111)

Thus, not to abide in anything, and by extension the practice of non-abiding, means to not becoming mentally engaged with any phenomena. Maitrīpa also equates this practice of non-abiding with *mahāmudrā* in the *Sekanirdeśa*: "Not to abide in anything / Is known as *mahāmudrā*" (SN *29)* (Mathes, 2015, 107). As such, by writing that *mahāmudrā* is "not to abide in anything", Maitrīpa is equating *mahāmudrā* with the practice of *amanasikāra*. The question that motivated this very thesis, and sparked a huge debate in Tibet, is whether or not this *mahāmudrā* practice is meant to be solely practiced within the Tantric context. As Maitrīpa explains *amanasikāra* by referring to both *sūtras* and tantras in the *Amanasikārādhāra*, it is unclear in which context the practice is to be done. Furthermore, the practice requires the pith-instructions of a *guru*, but the question remains whether those pith-instructions are to be given within the context of a tantric initiation or can simply be given without a tantric context.

Introduction to the Current debate on Maitrīpa's teachings in Modern Academia

As Maitrīpa's teachings were pointed at as the main source for Gampopa's *mahāmudrā*, they gained a lot of attention. A few modern scholars, Mathes, Isaacson and Sferra, have also spent quite a lot of time studying his teachings and debating whether or not his *mahāmudrā* was meant to be practiced within or without Tantra. For these scholars, a teaching is tantric if it follows the definition of Sapaṇ that was detailed earlier. Mainly, a teaching which follows the *Niruttarayogatantra,* requiring one to go through the four empowerments and so on, is considered tantric. Whereas a teaching which would bypass these requirements can be considered non-tantric. On one hand, Mathes has been quite vocal about the non-tantric nature of Maitrīpa's *mahāmudrā* based on his readings of various commentaries. Isaacson and Sferra, on the other hand, have criticized Mathes' reading of Maitrīpa and are not convinced that Maitrīpa ever defended a non-tantric *mahāmudrā*. The debate, however, is far from being well-organized. Not only are Mathes arguments spread over many papers, even if his recent book regroups some of them together, and Isaacson and Sferra's critic is quite short and not very thorough. The points they bring up, however, are worth investigating. In an effort to organize Mathes' arguments, I divided them between those that are based solely on Maitrīpa's writing, and those that are based

on commentaries. I will first present Mathes' arguments, and then Isaacson and Sferra's critics. I will then review both sides of the debate to determine what can be said about Maitrīpa's writings. But first, to understand these arguments a short introduction to Maitrīpa's tantric path is necessary.

Discussion of Maitrīpa's Tantra

According to Mathes, Maitrīpa's tantric path is divided in three sets of four: the four joys, the four moments, and the four *mudrās*, or seals. Each joy corresponds to a moment, which then corresponds to a *mudrā.* Joy corresponds to the manifold moment and to the *karmamudrā,* supreme joy corresponds to the moment of maturation and to the *dharmamudrā,* co-emergent joy corresponds to the moment of freedom from defining characteristics and *mahāmudrā,* finally, the joy of no-joy corresponds the moment of relaxation and *samayamudrā* (Mathes, 2015, 10-11)*.* Through practices and empowerments, one goes from seal to seal and develops "an ever more subtle understanding of the reality of mind" (Stenzel, 2015, 193).

Although each *mudrā* corresponds to a joy and a moment, the four joys and moments are experienced in every *mudrā*, except *mahāmudrā.* In other words, although each *mudrā* is linked to the realization of a joy and moment, the practice of those *mudrās* require the practitioner to experience the four joys and moments but in a way that is specific to each *mudrā*. As we will see below, the four joys and moments of the *karmamudrā* are said to be fabricated, and the *dharmamudrā* is uncontrived. As for the *samayamudrā*, it is experienced when one reaches Buddhahood and emanates deities.

The four seals can also be understood as graduated steps towards Buddhahood. The *karmamudrā* refers to empowerment and practices with a consort. The *dharmamudrā* is the experience of the nature of reality on the basis of teachings and so on, which leads to the realization of *mahāmudrā*. Finally, the *samayamudrā* represents the emanation as Heruka and his consort for the benefit of other beings (Mathes, 2015, 11). In short, this information is available in the following table.

Karmamudrā	*Dharmamudrā*	*Mahāmudrā*	*Samayamudrā*

Practice and empowerment with a consort	Practice and empowerment on teachings on the nature of reality	Abiding in the unborn, Self-awareness, etc.	Manifesting as Heruka and his consort to benefit other beings
Joy	Supreme Joy	Co-emergent Joy	Joy of no-joy
Moment of the manifold	Moment of maturation	Moment of freedom from defining characteristics	Moment of relaxation
Experience of the four fabricated joys and moments	Experience of the four uncontrived joys and moments	Experience of co-emergent joy	Experience of the four joys and moments as a deity.

Although other teachers invert the third and the fourth moment and joy, there is no need to enter this discussion here[9]. What can be mentioned, however, is that Maitrīpa's placement of *samayamudrā* in the fourth position emphasizes "that without altruistic activity, the spiritual path cannot be considered complete" (Stenzel, 2015, 205)[10].

A note on Mathes' translations

The main critics of Mathes, Isaacson and Sferra, have argued that Mathes translations were too biased as they were mostly based on his readings of the commentaries and did not leave enough room for other possible interpretations[11]. At first, I wanted to compare Mathes' translations to their own translations and evaluate the translations of both parties. Unfortunately, Isaacson and Sferra do not offer a lot of alternative translations, and the one time they did, Mathes had already corrected his translation in his latest book. Thus, there was not much to say. Instead, I have decided to take another route. In the following section, where I will present the arguments of both sides of the debate, I will use my own translation of the passages that I will

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[9] See Stenzel 2015

[10] A similar organization of the four seals can be found in Saraha, where the *samayamudrā* is placed as the fourth seal and is described as being the "altruistic act" after having achieved the "result", i.e., awakening (Braitstein, 82).

[11] "Mathes tends to write in a less than entirely balanced manner, tending to take statements of students of [Maitrīpa] that seem to support his own preferred view as evidence that that view was held by [Maitrīpa], and being inclined to overstate the extent to which [Maitrīpa]'s words themselves 'clearly', unambiguously, express that view" (Isaacson, 419).

keep as faithful as possible to the Sanskrit. While it is true that Mathes adds a lot of context with or without brackets in his translations, I have rarely found that the substance of what is being said differs from the original Sanskrit, which directly contradicts Isaacson and Sferra's critique. Whenever I found an important difference, I have indicated it in my explanation or in footnotes. By using my own translations to explain Mathes arguments, I am demonstrating that his arguments are not dependent on fallacious or biased translations of the texts. It is for that reason, that despite explaining other people's arguments, I will be using my own translation of the passages.

Mathes' Arguments Based on Maitrīpa's Root Texts.

Although Mathes argues that a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* can be found within Maitrīpa's teachings, his arguments are mostly based on commentaries. If we solely look at his arguments based on root texts, then the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the *karmamudrā* is not necessary and one can start the tantric path directly with the *dharmamudrā.* Such a conclusion can be reached by looking at two texts: the *Tattvaviṃśikā* and the *Caturmudrānvaya.* In the *Tattvaviṃśikā,* Maitrīpa divides the Tantric path into three, based on the faculties of each practitioner:

> From the treatises of the Mantra,[12]
> The entrance into [*prajña*] should be evident
> Within them are various means
> For the inferior, middling and superior.[13] (TV 6)
>
> With the *karma* and *samayamudrā*
> The inferior ones have prepared the circle
> Meditating on enlightenment
> Their mind is turned towards the external with regards to pure reality.[14] (TV 7)
>
> Accomplished with a *jñānamudrā*
> Starting with Mañjuvajra, and so on, as the lord

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[12] While in earlier articles Mathes seemed to have left out this verse, he translated it in his latest book and agreed that the following verses were indeed solely speaking of the *Mantrayāna* and should not be understood as offering a path outside Tantra.

[13] praveśaś ca bhaved asyāṃ vispaṣṭo mantraśāstrataḥ/ nānā yasmād upayo 'tra mṛdumadhyādhimātrataḥ (Mathes, 459)

[14] karmasamayamudrābhyāṃ cakraṃ niṣpādya bhāvitāḥ / dhyāyanti mṛdavo bodhiṃ śuddhatattve bahirmukhāḥ (Mathes, 459)

Which is nor true nor false appearance
Middling yogins have this nature.[15] (TV 8)

Unable to truly know
The mark of self-empowerment
Their path is taught gradually
Towards achieving awakening.[16] (TV 9)

If there is devotion for deities
How is not imprinted here?
If this imprint, even pure,
Is like all others[17] (TV 10)

However, the yogin for whom reality is seen
Is engaged in *mahāmudrā*.
The one of superior faculties
Should spend time with the essence of all phenomena.[18] (TV 11)

In this passage, Maitrīpa breaks away from his usual presentation of the four seals. He presents the *samayamudrā* beside the *karmamudrā* and seems to use *jñānamudra* instead of *dharmamudrā*. For the *samayamudrā*, Mathes explains that it should be understood as the causal *samayamudrā*, i.e., practices involving mantras, deities and so on (Mathes, 2008, 98). As for the *jñānamudrā* it simply refers to a visualized consort and should most likely be understood as the *dharmamudrā*.[19] In this passage, a practice with a visualized consort is deemed to be better than a practice with a real consort, as it is sufficient for people of middling faculties. This implies that a real consort is not necessary for people of medium faculties. The gradual approach to attain awakening (*bodhi*) is also clearly explained as not being for people of superior faculties. In other words, people of high faculties can have a direct and non-gradual approach to awakening by being wholly devoted to *mahāmudrā*. As Mathes explains only "inferior practitioners rely on a *karmamudrā* and the [causal] *samayamudrā*, while a more direct approach to *mahāmudrā* is

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[15] jñanamudrāsamāpannaṃ mañjuvajrādināyakam / na satyaṃ na mṛṣākāram ātmānaṃ madhyayoginaḥ (Mathes, 2015, 459)

[16] *svādhiṣṭhānapadaṃ jñātuṃ ye śaktās tattvato na hi / mārgo 'yam deśitas teṣāṃ kramato bodhisiddhaye* (Mathes, 2015, 460)

[17] devatābhiniveśaś ced vāsanātra kathaṃ na hi / vāsanaiva viśuddhā cet sarvatraiva tu sā tathā (Mathes, 2015, 460)

[18] *dṛṣṭatattvaḥ punar yogī mahāmudrāparāyaṇaḥ / sarvabhāvasvabhavena vihared uttamendriyaḥ (*Mathes, 2015, 460)

[19] It seems to be the only instance where Maitrīpa uses *jñānamudra* instead of *dharmamudrā* in the *Amanasikāra Cycle*.

open to those with sharp faculties" (Mathes, 2015, 17)[20]. The *karmamudrā* is also framed as an inferior practice in the *Caturmudrānvaya*:

> Of those who do not know the *dharmamudrā*, how, with only the artificial *karmamudrā*, can the real, non-artificial, so called co-emergent arise? From the cause's own kind, a production of that kind arises, not of another kind. In the way that a *śālī*, and not a *kodrava*, sprouts from a *śālī* seed from the vicinity of non-artificial *dharmamudrā* the non-artificial co-emergent arises. By metaphorically dividing the indivisible, the *Bhagavan* said that the *dharmamudrā* is the cause of *mahāmudrā*.[21]

In this passage, Nāgārjuna (or Maitrīpa), makes it clear that the joys and moments that are experienced within the *karmamudrā* are artificial, or contrived, and thus cannot be the cause for the non-artificial, uncontrived, *mahāmudrā*. Only the *dharmamudrā* can be its cause. As Mathes explains, "the wisdom (*jñāna*) that arises from a consort, […] is only a momentary and contrived reflection of the real wisdom" and "it is only in the presence of the uncontrived *dharmamudrā* — special pith instructions on how to identify the goal during the third in the sequence of four moments — that the real wisdom can arise from such a practice" (Mathes, 2015, 127-128). Thus, despite Maitrīpa presenting the four initiations in the *Sekatātparyasaṃgraha,* the *karmamudrā* is deemed optional as what it offers is only helpful for those who are unable to directly practice *dharmamudrā* since it is not a direct cause of *mahāmudrā*[22]. However, in none of these texts Maitrīpa advocates for a non-tantric approach to *mahāmudrā*. Mathes relies on commentaries to get to that interpretation.

Mathes' Arguments Based on Commentaries

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[20] The last thing that should be noted is that even though there are three different paths, those are all part of *Mantrayāna* (Mathes, 2015, 17). This is made clear in Verse 6, as the means of access to *prajña* are all said to be part of the treatises of *Mantrayāna*.

[21] *dharmamudrām ajānānānāṃ kevalayā karmamudrayā kṛtrimayā katham akṛtrimabhūtaṃ sahajākhyam utpadyate / svajātīyāt kāraṇāt svajatīyasyaiva kāryasyotpattir bhavati na tu vijatīyāt / yathā śālībījāt śālyaṅkurasyotpattir bhavati na tu kodravasya / tathā dharmamudrāyā akṛtrimāyāḥ sakāśād akṛtrimaṃ sahajam utpadyate / tasmād dharmamudraiva kāraṇam abhede bhedopacāreṇa mahāmudrāyāḥ kasmāt tarhi bhagavatoktam* (Mathes, 2015, 393)

[22] Various commentaries on Maitrīpa's works also support the idea that the *karmamudrā* can be skipped and one can directly enter *dharmamudrā*, But it is enough to look at the *Tattvaviṃśikā* and the *Caturmudrānvaya* to see that Maitrīpa also shared that position. If one wants to look further into this, one should read Karopa's commentary on the Caturmudrānvaya. Mathes also interprets Rāmapāla as holding the same position. See Mathes, 2015, 110, and Mathes, 2008.

There are three main texts and commentaries that Mathes uses to defend a non-tantric *mahāmudrā*. The shortest, and less detailed, argument comes from Vajrapāṇi's commentary on the *Tattvaratnāvalī*.

> Having summarized all realities for them to be realized by sentient beings of limited intelligence, I shall write only a little. First, there are two individuals. One like the monkey, and one like the crow. The monkey-like enters gradually, and the crow-like enters simultaneously.[23].With regards to the ones who enter gradually, there are three vehicles: The Hearer vehicle, the *Pratyekabuddha* vehicle, and the Great vehicle.[24]

Mathes' translation is a little bit different here, as he understands the crow-like practitioner to enter reality, or awakening, instantaneously instead of simultaneously (*cig car 'jug pa*). While it certainly is a plausible translation, I have decided to offer an alternative simply to show that even a different translation does not necessarily contradict Mathes' point. Usually, the idea is that a monkey grabs branch after branch to finally reach the top of the tree, while the crow can simply land on top. However, if one takes *cig car 'jug pa* to mean simultaneous this image, could also be understood as the monkey using one hand after the other to reach awakening, i.e., training compassion and emptiness separately, while the crow uses both wings simultaneously to fly. Mathes concludes: "In other words, there is only one reality, and it can be realized instantaneously. […] This passage from Vajrapāṇi's commentary provides perfect doctrinal support for Koṅ sprul's essence *mahāmudrā*." (Mathes, 2007, 549). This interpretation is not necessarily at odds with mine, since *mahāmudrā* can also be said to train emptiness and compassion simultaneously, which would imply that there is a path simultaneous with the Great Vehicle solely based on *mahāmudrā*. The question arises, however, about whether this passage refers to *mahāmudrā*, or to tantric practices in general. Perhaps Vajrapāṇi was simply differentiating between the gradual approach of the common vehicles, and the simultaneous approach of Mantrayāna. While Mathes' interpretation is possible, confirming it would require more investigation in Vajrapāṇi's composition. Thus, although Vajrapāṇi's argument seems quite

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[23] Mathes: "the monkey-like enters upon [true reality] gradually, whereas the crow-like enters upon it instantaneously." (Mathes, 2015, 78)

[24] blo dman skye bos rtogs bya 'i phyir / nyid thams cad mdor bsdus nas /cung zad tsam zhig bri bar bya / re zhig gang zag ni gnyis te / spre'u lta bu dang / khwa ta lta bu'o / spre'u lta bu ni rim gyis 'jug pa'o /
khwa ta lta bu ni cig car 'jug pa 'o / rim gyis 'jug pa'i dbang du byas na theg pa ni
gsum ste / nyan thos kyi theg pa dang / rang sangs rgyas gyi theg pa dang / theg pa chen
po 'o (Mathes, 2007, 549)

clear, it is also very short and not extremely convincing as a precedent for an Indian essence *mahāmudrā*.

Mathes' second argument comes from Rāmapāla's commentary on the *Sekanirdeśa*. The *Sekanirdeśa* is a text based on the *Caturmudrānvaya* that discusses the various empowerments and seals. Within that text, Mathes sees a clear blend of *Madhyamika* and *mahāmudrā*. He starts his argument by looking at verse 29 and its commentary by Rāmapāla.

Sekanirdeśa 29:

> Not abiding in anything
> Is called *mahāmudrā*.
> From the stainless self-awareness,
> The manifold and so on are not produced.[25] (SN 29)

Rāmapāla's commentary:

> "In anything" means in the dependently arisen, the *skandhas dhātus*, *āyatanas* and so on. "Not abiding" means not engaging mentally, not being disturbed. This is said in the teachings[26]:
> > The *dharmas* of mental non-engagement are virtuous. The *dharmas* of mental engagement are non-virtuous.
> > Then is it said:
> > Homage to the one without doubt, without concepts, whose mind is non-abiding, without recollection, mentally not-engaged, without support.
>
> > […] It should not be thought that this is impossible to undertake. Certainly, with the kind words of the guru, it becomes possible to perceive *mahāmudrā*, which is characterized by being endowed with benefits in every way. How is it not formed by the four moments? It is said [in the *Sekanirdeśa*]: "From the stainless self-awareness…"[27]. The three impure moments of the manifold and so on are not produced. Therefore, the three joys are not produced.[28]

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[25] sarvasminn apratiṣṭhānaṃ mahamudreti kīrtyate / vimalatvāt svasaṃvitter vicitrāder na sambhavaḥ

[26] Mathes clarifies that this is from the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra*

[27] Mathes here translated the ablative in the verse of the *Sekanirdeśa* as indicating a reason: "because self-awareness is stainless…", which seems to convey the meaning of the commentary better.

[28] *sarvasminn iti pratītyasamutpannaskandhadhātvāyatanādau / apratiṣṭhānam amanasikāro 'nāropaḥ / tad uktam pravacane / amanasikārā dharmāḥ kuśalāḥ / manasikārā dharmā akuśalāḥ / tathā*
ca / avikalpitasaṃkalpa apratiṣṭhitamānasa / asmṛty amanasikāra nirālamba namo
stu te iti // … aśakyānuṣṭhānatā ca na mantavyā / sadgurupādaprasādenāvaśyaṃ
sarvākāravaropetalakṣaṇamahāmudrāyāḥ pratyakṣīkartuṃ śakyatvāt / nanv atra kathaṃ na catuḥkṣaṇarūpatā / āha
/ vimalatvāt svasaṃjvitter nirmalatayā / vicitrādeḥ
kṣaṇatrayasya samalasya nātra sambhavaḥ / tato nānandatrayasambhavaḥ (Mathes, 2007, 555)

Mathes sees two important points from this commentary. First, the practice of not becoming mentally engaged (*amanasikāra*), is directly linked to the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra*, a *sūtra*. Second, not becoming mentally engaged "can be also performed through the kindness of one's guru without the occurrence of the defiled joys and moments of Tantric practice" (Mathes, 2007, 556). Here, Mathes interprets "stainless" as independent from the impure moments. Thus, *mahāmudrā* does not need the other moments to arise, which in turn means that tantric practice is not necessary to not becoming mentally engaged. Instead, what is needed is the kindness of the guru, which would serve, according to Mathes, as pith-instructions on reality.

Rāmapāla relates *amanasikāra* to *sūtras* in more than one place in his commentary. For example, he explains *Sekanirdeśa* verse 36 by quoting from the "*Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* which explains the abandonment of all characteristic signs of the remedy, reality and the fruit by becoming mentally disengaged" (Mathes, 2013, 327). In his 2013 article, Mathes goes into detail to show how the explanation of Rāmapāla follows closely the structure and content of the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, a *sūtra*.[29]

Finally, the last commentary Mathes uses to defend a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* is written by Sahajavajra on the *Tattvadaśaka*, called the *Tattvadaśakaṭīkā*. In this commentary, Sahajavajra explains that Maitrīpa "wished to compose short *Pāramitā* pith-instructions which are harmonious with the system of the secret *mantra*"[30]. Mathes then cites a Tibetan commentary by Ti pi 'bum la 'bar to explain the meaning of being "harmonious with the system of the secret *mantra*". In short, although the methods are not Tantric, the *Tattvadaśaka* has the same goal as Tantra but relies on pith-instructions of the guru based on *Mahāyāna* tenets (Mathes, 2015, 216). Mathes explains that pith-instructions are of central importance even to Maitrīpa as the second verse of the *Tattvadaśaka* reads:

> Wishing to know suchness
> Which is not in *Sākāra* nor in *Nirākāra*
> Even the middle [tenet] which is not adorned

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[29] It is not necessary to reproduce his whole argumentation here as it is also accepted by Isaacson and Sferra in their translation of Rāmapāla's commentary. One can look into Mathes article for more details.
[30] *gsang ngags kyi tshul dang rjes su mthun pa'i pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag mdor bsdud pa byed par 'dod pas* (Mathes, 215)

With the speech of the guru, is only middling. (TD 2)[31]

Thus, scriptures and treatises, although they can be useful, i.e., "middling", are not sufficient to understand suchness without the words of one's guru (Mathes, 2015, 217). The purpose of these pith-instructions is to "enable a direct experience of emptiness as luminosity" according to Sahajavajra (Mathes, 2015, 218). While knowing reality" can be done on the basis of *Madhyamaka* without pith-instructions, Sahajavajra explains that such a path lacks skillful means. To establish suchness as the union of "skillful means and insight", so that both are practiced simultaneously, this needs to be done "with the help of pith-instructions" (Mathes, 2015, 219). Sahajavajra here is stating that through the pith-instructions of the guru, one is able to meditate on suchness in a way that simultaneously trains emptiness and compassion. He calls this special suchness "*yuganaddha*-suchness", or indivisible suchness (Mathes, 2015, 216). Sahajavajra also directly mentions *mahāmudrā* when he quotes *Sekanirdeśa* verse 36:

> Not abiding in the remedy
> Not attached to reality
> Not desiring the fruit
> One finds mahāmudrā [32] (SN 36)

Sahajavajra also quotes from the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* to explain how such a practice would be done (Mathes, 2015, 229). As *mahāmudrā* in the *Sekanirdeśa* was also related to *amanasikāra*, as it consists in "not abiding in anything", and as Sahajavajra seems to equate his non-tantric practice based on *yuganaddha*-suchness with *mahāmudrā*, Mathes concludes that "*mahāmudrā* as *amanasikāra* does not need to be a specifically tantric practice" (Mathes, 2015, 230). Sahajavajra himself also distinguishes this practice from the *Mantrayāna* on the account that it is "without the sequence of the four seals, and because it takes a long time to perfect complete enlightenment through the type of equanimity that lacks the experience of great bliss resulting from pride in being the deity". He also distinguishes it from the *Pāramitāyāna* on the account that "the suchness of indivisible union [*yuganaddha*] is firmly realized" (Mathes, 2015, 237). Finally, Mathes explains that as Sahajavajra quotes from Jñanakīrti's *Tattvāvatāra,* which

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[31]*na sākāranirākāre tathatāṃ jñatum icchataḥ / madhyamā madhyamā caiva guruvāganalaṃkṛtā* (Mathes, 513)

[32] *pratipakṣe sthito naiva tattvāsakto 'pi naiva yaḥ / gārddhyaṃ naiva phale yasya mahāmudrāṃ sa vindati* (Mathes, 388)

classifies advanced *Pāramitāyāna* practitioners as "already in the possession of *mahāmudrā*", it is very likely that both Sahajavajra and Maitrīpa were familiar with this non-tantric classification of *mahāmudrā* (Mathes, 2015, 240). In short, Sahajavajra is proposing a non-tantric path where one meditates on a type of suchness which is indivisible with means, or compassion. As he himself deems this path to be slower than the tantric path, but faster than normal *Pāramitāyāna*, Sahajavajra seems to be offering a practice which is not contained in both these vehicles[33] [34]. Finally, Mathes also makes a short argument that the same expression in Sahajavajra's commentary, "accords with Mantrayāna", can be found in Maitrīpa's *Mahāyānaviṃśika*. This indicates, for Mathes, that this text also offers the same path as the *Tattvadaśaka*, a path outside of tantra based on *amanasikāra* which offers a simultaneous meditation on emptiness and compassion (Mathes, 2015, 225).

In summary, there are two types of arguments in Mathes' articles. Those which are based on root texts and those based on commentaries. As for the arguments based on root text, Mathes argues that Maitrīpa offered a tantric path to awakening that did not require the *karmamudrā* and could thus begin with the dharmamudrā. He finds support for this position in the *Tattvaviṃśikā*, where the *karmamudrā* is said to be optional, and in the *Caturmudrānvaya*, where it is made clear that the real cause for *mahāmudrā* is the *dharmamudrā*, and not the *karmamudrā*.[35]

Using arguments based on commentaries, Mathes claims that Maitrīpa indeed taught a *mahāmudrā* path outside of tantra. First, he quotes from Vajrapāṇi's commentary on the *Tattvaratnāvalī* to indicate that there was a separation between a graduated path to enlightenment and a more direct approach. Mathes argues that the direct approach is most likely a precedent for essence *mahāmudrā*. Second, he uses Rāmapāla's commentary on the *Sekanirdeśa* to make three points: 1) *mahāmudrā* is linked to the practice of *amanasikāra*, and *amanasikāra* is explained as a practice found in *sūtras*. 2) Realizing *mahāmudrā* is said to be possible through the pith-instructions of the guru, which are not necessarily tantric 3) *mahāmudrā* is independent from the three impure joys and moment, and thus one does not need to experience them to cultivate

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[33] As a side-note, Sahajavajra is offering a practice outside of tantra that trains emptiness and compassion simultaneously, his mention of *mahāmudrā* in his commentary does not necessarily mean that the practice is equivalent to *mahāmudrā*, unlike Mathes' claims. This will be discussed at great lengths in the third chapter of this thesis.

[34] As a final comment, Mathes mentions that this type of practice is completely absent from Sahajavajra only other known work (Mathes, 2015, 240)

[35] It is interesting to note that Maitrīpa's tantric teaching thus do not necessarily fit Sapaṇ's own definition of what makes a practice Tantra, as the four seals are not all considered to be required.

mahāmudrā. Through these three arguments, Mathes explains that *mahāmudrā* is independent from the succession of the four seals and is possible to achieve simply through *amanasikāra*, which only requires pith-instructions of the guru. Finally, Mathes uses Sahajavajra's commentary on the *Tattvadaśaka* to demonstrate that there is a clear path outside of tantra which "accords with Mantrayāna" as emptiness and compassion are trained simultaneously thanks to the words of the *guru*. Mathes argues that such a path is called *mahāmudrā* as Sahajavajra makes a reference to the *Sekanirdeśa*. Mathes also suggests that the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā* offers the same kind of path, as Maitrīpa himself uses the same expression, "in accordance with Mantrayāna", to describe the text (Mathes, 2015, 225). I have brought up a few issues in Mathes' argumentation, particularly on his reading of Vajrapāṇi's commentary. Isaacson and Sferra, on the other hand, have been much broader in their criticisms as they argue that Mathes' methodology, translations and arguments are flawed.

Isaacson and Sferra's Criticism of Mathes

Isaacson and Sferra's criticism of Mathes can be divided in two general criticisms and in four specific criticisms. In general, they first argue that Mathes often coalesces the meaning of the commentary with the meaning of the text, which prevents other possible interpretations of the root material. This is problematic since not all students of Maitrīpa seem to hold the same positions, as Devacandra argued for the necessity of a *karmamudrā* in tantric practice (Isaacson, 419). Their second general criticism is that Mathes takes description of reality, such as *mahāmudrā* being non-abiding, as practical instructions. For them, while both tantric and non-tantric descriptions of reality can be the same, it is not the case that these descriptions necessarily refer to practical instructions (Isaacson, 419). Overall, they find that Mathes' methodology and translations are plagued by these problems.

They also bring up four criticisms which are more specific to certain passages translated by Mathes. Two of these arguments concern Mathes' interpretation of Rāmapāla's commentary on the *Sekanirdeśa*. Isaacson and Sferra, having fully translated the *Sekanirdeśa* and Rāmapāla's commentary, feel that Mathes gave a biased interpretation of Rāmapāla's writings. Particularly, they claim that Mathes misinterprets Rāmapāla's explanation of *mahāmudrā* as being made available through the "kindness of one's guru". While Mathes interpreted it as reference to a non-tantric practice, Isaacson and Sferra argue that it could simply be referring to a tantric

context (Isaacson, 413). They do not see any reference to a non-tantric *mahāmudrā*, especially since the *Sekanirdeśa* is first and foremost a text about the four tantric seals. Second, they criticize Mathes' interpretation of *mahāmudrā* being "stainless" as meaning that it is independent from the three other joys and seals. For Isaacson and Sferra, *mahāmudrā* only makes sense within the tantric context, and it is the very absence of these impure joys that defines it. In other words, the fact that only the co-emergent joy arises in *mahāmudrā* means that *mahāmudrā* is characterized by the absence of the three impure joys, and thus can only be practiced in the tantric context of the four joys. (Isaacson, 413). It is only through experiencing the other joys that the co-emergent joy is able to be differentiated and experienced for what it is. As such, for Isaacson and Sferra, the description of *mahāmudrā* as stainless means the exact opposite of Mathes' interpretation. *Mahāmudrā* is not independent from the three impure joys, rather it only makes sense in the tantric context of the four joys (Isaacson, 414).

While Isaacson and Sferra generally criticized Mathes translations as being too dependent on a commentary, they also point to a very specific example when they argue against his interpretation of the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā* and the *Tattvadaśaka*. Mathes suggested that the phrase *mantrayānānusāreṇa,* "in accordance with Mantrayāna", found in the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā* and the *Tattvadaśaka* meant that these texts taught a practice where emptiness and compassion were trained simultaneously without requiring tantric initiations, i.e., without being part of the *Mantrayāna*. Isaacson and Sferra argue against this interpretation, as they find that the terminology and concepts used in the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā* are tantric in nature, and that passages from this text have been cited in many tantric works (Isaacson, 417). For them, the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā* is simply teaching a tantric path to awakening. They end their critique by looking at the *Tattvadaśaka* and explain how Mathes' interpretation is entirely reliant on Sahajavajra's commentary. For them, the *Tattvadaśaka* itself does not offer a path outside of Tantra, as it also contains tantric terminology and concepts, and although Sahajavajra does seem to suggest such a path, one should not forget that another disciple of Maitrīpa, Devacandra, seemed to suggest the opposite (Isaacson, 418). Devacandra wrote that a *karmamudrā* is necessary for practice in some of his own works (Isaacson, 419). In other words, "in accordance with Mantrayāna" can only be taken as suggesting a path outside of Tantra by using Sahajavajra's commentary and the only text composed by Maitrīpa where one can find such a sentence, the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā*, seems to be Tantric in nature.

Analysis of the Debate

      Looking at Appendix I, where the debate is summarized in the form of a tree-diagram, one can see that there are two arguments of Mathes that Isaacson and Sferra ignored. First, they did not mention Vajrapāṇi's commentary, but we can assume that their critique on Sahajavajra's commentary could be applied., i.e., it can't be assumed that the meaning of the text and the commentary are the same. Second, Isaacson and Sferra ignored Mathes' argument on *amanasikāra* being explained with *sūtras*. Their decision to ignore that argument is odd as they recognize that Rāmapāla is indeed following a *sūtra* when explaining verse 36 of the *Sekanirdeśa* on *amanasikāra* and *mahāmudrā* (Isaacson, 320). Mathes also made that argument in an article that they do quote but they still decided to ignore it[36]. For Mathes, one of the reasons why *amanasikāra* and *mahāmudrā* could be non-tantric is that they are fully explained by using a *sūtra*. It is also based on that argument that Mathes takes Rāmapāla's reference to the "kindness of one's guru", pith-instructions, as being non-tantric in nature.[37] Furthermore, as mentioned above, Isaacson and Sferra claim that Mathes confuses a similar description of ultimate reality with practical instruction, as he takes "non-abiding" as a reference to a practice based on *Madhyamaka.* However, Mathes' argument is also heavily dependent on Rāmapāla's use of sūtras to describe *amanasikāra*. As non-abiding as a view is linked to the practice of *amanasikāra* in various texts, especially the *Amanasikārādhāra*, and as Rāmapāla explains *amanasikāra* by quoting from several *sūtras*, it becomes logical to understand "non-abiding" as a reference to a *mahāmudrā* based on *sūtras*. The fact that Isaacson and Sferra fail to mention this important argument, and then criticize Mathes for confusing descriptions of reality with practical instructions is a little bit disconcerting. It is thus quite unfortunate that this central argument is not mentioned as it clearly answers two of their criticisms: their general criticism of Mathes mistaking descriptions of reality for practical instructions, and their more specific criticism of Rāmapāla's mention of pith-instructions being understood as non-tantric.

      Isaacson and Sferra also make an important assumption throughout their critique. While they express how Maitrīpa's works are difficult to read and could be interpreted in a number of

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[36] They quote from Mathes, 2006, where he first made that argument.

[37] See Mathes, 2006, where he explains at great lengths how Rāmapāla's explanation of *amanasikāra* is entirely based on the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*.

ways, they also criticize Mathes for coalescing the meaning of the commentary with the meaning of the main text. They write "Mathes tends to write in a less than entirely balanced manner, tending to take statements of students of [Maitrīpa] that seem to support his own preferred view as evidence that that view was held by [Maitrīpa], and being inclined to overstate the extent to which [Maitrīpa]'s words themselves 'clearly', unambiguously, express that view" (Isaacson, 419). Through this critique, one can understand that Isaacson and Sferra make a clear distinction between the meaning contained in Maitrīpa's texts and the meaning found in their commentaries. Some of their counter-arguments also demonstrate that they believe they can read and fully understand Maitrīpa's texts on their own, despite calling them "obscure"(Isaacson, 419). At the center of that assumption is the idea that one can read these texts simply by using "the careful examination of the wording of Sanskrit texts as a tool" (Isaacson, 411). While one can certainly get a certain understanding of these texts by reading them on their own, it is not obvious that Isaacson and Sferra's reading is close to an objective meaning, or even truly the product of logic, or "reflection", as they claim (Isaacson, 413). For example, Isaacson and Sferra, while talking about *mahāmudrā* being independent of the three impure joys and moments, claim that "reflection should show that this assertion is relevant precisely in, and only in, the tantric context of the Four [Joys]" (Isaacson, 413). Such an interpretation of the four joys in Maitrīpa's teaching is not backed by any quotes from Rāmapāla's commentary and is solely based on their own understanding and "reflection". This idea, however, is problematic. As Isaacson and Sferra themselves admit, in the *Tattvaviṃśikā*, Maitrīpa seems to allow for some practitioners to bypass the *karmamudrā*. Thus, if the four joys, which according to Maitrīpa correspond to the four seals, were to be taken as a whole that should not be separated, it would certainly be odd for one of the seals to be optional. Wouldn't that also suggest that one of the joys and moments is also optional? Isaacson and Sferra mention that in the *Tattvaviṃśikā*, the high faculty practitioner most likely went through a *prajñājñānābhiṣeka* as it mentions that this is a tantric path (Isaacson, 416). But in Maitrīpa's *Sekatātparyasaṃgraha*, the *prajñājñānābhiṣeka* is clearly done with a *karmamudrā* or a visualized consort, both of which are said to not be necessary for practitioners of high capacities in the *Tattvaviṃśikā*.[38] This suggests that the four joys do not need to be taken as an inseparable whole to experience co-emergent bliss. Especially as the *Tattvaviṃśikā* claims that the yogin of highest faculty is "wholly devoted to *mahāmudrā"*, which implies that he can

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[38] See TV 11 above.

simply do without the succession of the seals. Thus, reflection shows that it is truly unclear how the four seals, and thus the four joys and moments, could be taken as a dependent whole when one considers other texts of Maitrīpa.

Isaacson and Sferra's tendency to solely look at the original Sanskrit text while using logic also points towards a larger issue. Although the use of logic can certainly be valid, it is also conditioned by one's own understanding and pre-understanding of the material. As both Isaacson and Sferra are great scholars, I do not doubt that their position must come from an educated position. And yet, even if they claim that they are backed by "reflection", it seems that their argument lacks insight. As reading the Sanskrit is not sufficient to reconstruct the context surrounding a text, and as it ignores the community interpreting it, Isaacson and Sferra's methodology is necessarily limited. On the other hand, Mathes explains that since *mahāmudrā* seems to have a privileged position, as it is the only seal which is without the three impure joys, perhaps "an originally independent *mahāmudrā* has been integrated into the setting of the *Yoginītantras*" (Mathes, 2008, 122). He then backs up that claim by referring to Saraha, who according to him "uses the term *mahāmudrā* independent of the other seals, equating *mahāmudrā* with the true nature of mind" (Mathes, 2008, 122)[39]. Thus, although one could question the strength of his argument, Mathes clearly points towards Indian works which are at least related to Maitrīpa and *mahāmudrā* to make his claims. While I do not reject the idea that one can understand an ancient cryptic text through a careful analysis of the Sanskrit, one's arguments can only be made stronger if they are backed by the cultural context. Although Isaacson and Sferra's understanding of the four joys is most likely based on a traditional understanding of Tantra, as their interpretation is quite similar to Sakya Paṇḍita's, they do not provide enough evidence to apply that understanding to Maitrīpa's teachings. Although it is certainly true that other meanings can be interpreted from Maitrīpa's texts, it makes little sense to criticize Mathes for coalescing the meaning of commentaries with the meaning of the text. After all, a direct student of Maitrīpa is a great entry point into the community of interpretation surrounding his texts. While the way he translates sometimes does seem to prevent other interpretations of the root text, he is also quite transparent about how he came to that

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[39] It should be noted that Braitstein offers a similar interpretation of Saraha. For her, Saraha gives a particular importance to *mahāmudrā* as he "posits the Great Seal as the authentic, natural, effortless practice and goal" (Braitstein, 84).

conclusion[40]. To suggest that he picks and chooses from commentary to "support his own preferred view" is also unfair (Isaacson, 419). As I also provided my own translations, as faithful as possible to the Sanskrit, while explaining Mathes' arguments it demonstrates that his conclusions are not dependent on a contrived interpretation of Maitrīpa's writings. Thus, I deem that Isaacson and Sferra's general criticism of Mathes as coalescing the meaning of commentaries with the meaning of the text is unfair. While I do not doubt that Mathes' interpretation of Rāmapāla's commentary is not the only possible one, Isaacson and Sferra have failed to provide enough evidence to support their own interpretation.

Up until now, I have answered the two general criticisms and two specific criticisms of Isaacson and Sferra. However, their last two criticisms are their strongest by far as they back their claims with Indian sources and a clear methodology that is not solely dependent on reflection. Looking at the *Tattvadaśaka*, Isaacson and Sferra once again differentiate between the meaning of the root text and of the commentary. They criticize Mathes for coalescing the meaning of the commentary with the meaning of the text and argue against it on the basis that the *Tattvadaśaka* seems to be a tantric text, while the commentary clearly provides a non-tantric practice (Isaacson, 418). They deem the text to be tantric by referring to two terms used in verse 9 of the *Tattvadaśaka*: *unmattavrata* (madman conduct) and *svādiṣṭhāna* (self-empowerment).

> One who has abandoned the worldly *dharmas*
> follows the madman conduct (*unmattavrata)*
> Doing everything without support,
> decorated with self-empowerment. (*svādiṣṭhāna)* [41] (TD 9)

Isaacson and Sferra explain that these two terms, particularly *unmattavrata*, are tantric. Although Sahajavajra explains these terms as "non-conceptual realization" (Mathes, 2015, 214), Isaacson and Sferra claim that *unmattavrata* does not occur anywhere in the "literature of the Pāramitāyāna" (Isaacson, 418). Thus, it would require for Maitrīpa to have given a unique non-tantric meaning to this word for one to argue that it is indeed used as a non-tantric term in this text. Trying to prove that it is the case, Mathes explains that Maitrīpa uses this particular term in

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[40] See Mathes 2006, 2015, where Mathes does include a lot of information in brackets, but also later explains the commentary or the reasoning at the origin of these translations.
[41] *lokadharmavyatīto 'sau unmattavratam āśritaḥ /sarvaṃ karoty anālambaḥ svādhiṣṭhanavibhūṣitaḥ* (Mathes, 2015, 487)

the *Kuḍṛṣṭinirghātana* as a conduct that followers of the *Pāramitāyāna* can follow (Mathes, 2015, 214). Isaacson and Sferra are quick to point out that in that particular text, the term is used by quoting from the *Hevajratantra* and thus suggests a tantric context (Isaacson, 418). As such, Mathes fails to answer this particular argument.

Likewise, looking at the *Mahāyānaviṃśika*, Isaacson and Sferra offer a critique of Mathes' interpretation of *mantrayānānusāreṇa* as "'on a par with Mantrayāna,' i.e. different from but with the same or a similar status" (Isaacson, 417). They argue that in "Maitreyanātha's Sanskrit or any other learned Sanskrit author" reading *anusāreṇa* as "different from but with the same status" is impossible. That critique, however, is unfair. Although *anusāreṇa* or *anusāra* clearly means "in accordance with", "harmonious with", Mathes' interpretation of the term as "different from but with the same or a similar status" stems from Sahajavajra's explanation of the term *mantrayānānusāreṇa*. To suggest that Mathes translated the term on his own, and that his translation does not accord with the Sanskrit, is quite disingenuous. However, Isaacson and Sferra bring up two good points about this *Mahāyānaviṃśika*. First, they mention that this text is quoted in other tantric works (Isaacson, 418). Therefore, it seems that the text was definitely taken as tantric by others.[42] Their second argument is that two verses of the *Mahāyānaviṃśika* seem to be using tantric concepts and terminology.

> Afflictions are not separate from awakening, nor do they arise in awakening.
> From confusion the conception of afflictions [is born] and confusion has a spotless nature.[43] *(MV 9)*

> Having known concisely in this way that which is form, starting from the Buddha and so on,
> While enjoying everything in all places, the knower of reality is accomplished.[44] *(MV 11)*

Isaacson and Sferra explain that these verses look a lot like common Tantric verses and contain tantric ideas such as enjoying all phenomena. Thus, they conclude that the *Mahāyānaviṃśika*

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[42] They do not, however, mention which part is quoted or how it is quoted, nor any of the texts in which it is quoted. Although I do not doubt that this text is indeed quoted in tantric works, it would be interesting to look at how and in what context it is done.

[43] *na kleśā bodhito bhinnā na bodhau kleśasambhavaḥ / bhrāntitaḥ kleśasaṃkalpo bhrāntiḥ prakṛtinirmalā* (Isaacson, 417)

[44] *vijñāyaivaṃ yathā rūpaṃ buddhādīnāṃ samāsataḥ / bhuñjānaḥ sarvathā sarvaṃ tattvavedī prasidhyati* (Isaacson, 417)

accords with Tantra because it is tantric, and not because it is "on a par" with Tantra (Isaacson, 417). In both texts, Mathes' interpretation of these terms as non-tantric is entirely dependent on Sahajavajra's explanation of the compound *mantrayānānusāreṇa*. Isaacson and Sferra succeed in showing that Sahajavajra's interpretation is most likely not the only plausible one, as both texts seem to contain tantric concepts and terminology.

In summary, I have answered two out of four specific criticisms that Isaacson and Sferra have used against Mathes. As they ignored Rāmapāla's quotes of *sūtras* when he referred to pith-instructions, they were unable to truly refute this specific Mathes' argument. As for their idea that *mahāmudrā* only makes sense in the context of the four joys and seals, it goes against what Maitrīpa writes in the *Tattvaviṃśikā*. The last two criticisms, i.e., that it is unclear that Sahajavajra's commentary holds the final meaning of Maitrīpa's *Tattvadaśaka* and *Mahāyānaviṃśika*, have the merit of throwing some doubt on Mathes conclusion. While it is certain that at least one student of Maitrīpa did defend such a position, it is unclear that Maitrīpa himself did so as the texts contain tantric terminology.

As for the two general criticisms of Isaacson and Sferra, I believe that they were both answered. The criticism that Mathes confounds description of reality with practical instructions is answered by Rāmapāla's commentary explaining *amanasikāra* with a *sūtra*, an argument ignored by Isaacson and Sferra. As for Mathes picking and choosing passages of commentaries, or using biased translations to make his point, those have been answered by making my own translations of the passages he quotes and by demonstrating that Mathes simply chooses to follow commentary instead of arguments solely based on reflection. Nevertheless, Mathes' reading of the *Tattvadaśaka* is unambiguously biased and solely based on Sahajavajra's commentary. As Mathes does not provide any evidence that the non-tantric practice mentioned by Sahajavajra is also mentioned directly in Maitrīpa's root texts, his argument is incomplete. Also, from an historical point of view, it is clear that Mathes should be more careful in not directly attributing to Maitrīpa positions which can only be found in commentaries.

Overall, Mathes does provide a lot of arguments for a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* in Maitrīpa's writings. Those arguments are however solely based on commentaries of his direct students. While Rāmapāla's quoting of a *sūtra* to describe the practice of *mahāmudrā* is quite telling, there is also no clear statement that one does not need to enter the *Mantrayāna* to do such a practice. I believe that Mathes has been too focused on finding mentions of *mahāmudrā* in

Maitrīpa's texts and did not try to analyze those texts from another perspective. While his approach is understandable, one needs to demonstrate how Sahajavajra's practice based on *yuganaddha*-suchness, i.e., emptiness trained simultaneously with compassion through non-tantric pith instructions of the guru, is at least compatible with Maitrīpa's teachings. Mathes' argument to equate this practice with *mahāmudrā* are also undermined by Kragh.

Although Kragh did not directly participate in the debate on Maitrīpa's teachings, he points out an important flaw in Mathes' argumentation. While Sahajavajra's commentary on the *Tattvadaśaka* teaches a non-tantric practice which has similarities with *mahāmudrā*, Kragh explains that both Sahajavajra and Maitrīpa use the term *mahāmudrā* solely in tantric contexts. In his book, Kragh makes the argument that Maitrīpa "never spoke explicitly of *Mahāmudrā* as a practice to be used outside the Tantric context of the four empowerments and the four *mudrā*s"[45] (Kragh, 79). Even when looking at Sahajavajra's commentary, Sahajavajra seems reticent to call the practice he teaches "*mahāmudrā*". Sahajavajra writes "Some call this the wisdom of reality [or] *mahāmudrā*" (Mathes, 238). As Kragh explains, this kind of statement is often used to distance oneself from the idea expressed. A little later in his commentary, Sahajavajra also says "the followers of [Mantra]yāna point out that the mere meditation of means and insight is not *mahāmudrā* meditation; otherwise it would follow that *Pāramitāyāna* and *Mantranaya* are not different "(Mathes, 239). Sahajavajra's practice thus cannot be called *mahāmudrā*, as *mahāmudrā* is a word that Sahajavajra reserved for practices of the Mantrayāna . Even if the practice he teaches and *mahāmudrā* share similar principles and the same goal, complete awakening, they are done in a completely different context. As the term *mahāmudrā* seems to be associated with tantric practices for Maitrīpa and Sahajavajra, trying to find mention of non-tantric *mahāmudrā* in their texts is problematic as it ignores that the term *mahāmudrā* had to undergo an evolution in the Tibetan context to be associated with non-tantric practices. Nevertheless, although the association of *mahāmudrā* with non-tantric practice might have been a later development, a non-tantric practice sharing the same basic principles could've existed under another name. Thus, Mathes seems to have tried to answer the wrong question. Instead of asking whether or not Maitrīpa taught a non-tantric *mahāmudrā*, one should ask whether or not Maitrīpa taught a non-tantric practice that shares the same principle as *mahāmudrā*, i.e., trains

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[45] Maitrīpa's mentions of *mahāmudrā* they are mainly in three texts: the *Sekanirdeśa*, the *Caturmudrānvaya* and the *Tattvaviṃśikā*, all of which are explicitly tantric.

compassion and insight simultaneously while working directly with one's own mind. To answer this question, the next two chapters will respectively explore and analyze such a practice in the writings of Maitrīpa, and then compare it with Gampopa's presentation of *mahāmudrā*.

Chapter II
Maitrīpa and *Yuganaddha*

In this chapter, Sahajavajra's practice based on *yuganaddha*-suchness will first be presented in more details, and then the role and importance of *yuganaddha* in Maitrīpa's writings will be explored. By using a commentary of a direct student of Maitrīpa, by keeping in mind the Indian context of the time, and by focusing on a multiplicity of Maitrīpa's texts, this approach aims to avoid drawing conclusions which ignore the community of interpretation surrounding texts. This approach does not aim, however, to provide a definitive or pure reading of Maitrīpa's writings. Rather, it simply answers the following question: Can Maitrīpa's writings be interpreted in a way that supports Sahajavajra's presentation of a non-tantric practice which trains emptiness and compassion simultaneously based on *yuganaddha*-suchness? As Mathes focused mostly on finding mentions of *mahāmudrā* in Maitrīpa's writings, and the whole *Amanasikāra Cycle* only got translated recently, no modern scholar has yet analyzed important themes and terminology in Maitrīpa's teachings. An analysis of the way Maitrīpa presents reality by emphasizing the indivisible union, *yuganaddha*, of emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena is thus necessary for the debate on non-tantric *mahāmudrā* as it is a central idea in Sahajavajra's commentary. Although I do not doubt that Maitrīpa could be interpreted in many different ways depending on one's methodology, I believe that reading him through the lens of Sahajavajra is a great entry point for an interpretation that considers the cultural context and the concerns of Maitrīpa, instead of the concerns of later Tibetan thinkers.

Sahajavajra's *Yuganaddha-suchness*

Earlier, Sahajavajra's commentary on the *Tattvadaśaka* was explained as teaching a non-tantric practice which allowed for the simultaneous training of emptiness and compassion. For such a feat to be possible, Sahajavajra explains that this practice requires a special practice of suchness:

> […] The suchness which was formerly established through valid cognition as something which exists, is here established as yuganaddha[-suchness] by way of pith-instructions. […] The reason for this is that attainment through conduct is not a topic of [relevance to] suchness, true reality and the like, for insight alone lacks skilful means, lacking as it does the pith-instructions of the genuine *guru*. (Mathes, 2015, 219)

In this passage Sahajavajra differentiates between two types of suchness. The one established by valid cognition, which implies analysis, and the one established by "pith-instructions of the genuine *guru*". The difference between the two is that the latter possesses "skillful means". As it possesses both insight and skillful means, a practice based on *yuganaddha*-suchness is later explained as allowing the simultaneous practice of emptiness and compassion:

> This *samādhi* of realizing true reality as it is, for its part,
> Comes from arousing [*bodhi*]*citta*,
> Because true reality arises without interruption
> For those who are aware of its abode. (TD 6)
>
> For those who, thanks to the pith instructions of the genuine guru, are aware of the basis of this engaging [*bodhi*]*citta*, whose nature is the suchness [of the two truths] united as a pair, there arise uninterruptedly-that is, in every moment-emptiness and compassion inseparable, [these being] the defining characteristics of ultimate *bodhicitta*. They are called *yogins* because they are of this very nature. (Mathes, 2015, 222)

Sahajavajra here explains how through the "pith instructions of the guru", the practitioner is able to generate an engaging "[*bodhi*]*citta*" where both "emptiness and compassion" arise inseparably. By being aware of the basis of *bodhicitta*, one is able to meditate on a special type of suchness which allows for the simultaneous training of compassion and insight or emptiness. Sahajavajra calls this particular type of suchness "*yuganaddha*", which means "indivisible union". Thus, through the pith instructions of the guru, one can has access to *yuganaddha*-suchness which is allows for the training in both emptiness and compassion simultaneously, without entering the *Mantrayāna* per say. The question arises, however, if such a practice is a mere invention of Sahajavajra or if it was actually part of Maitrīpa's teachings.

Yuganaddha in Maitrīpa

Yuganaddha is usually a tantric term which refers to the indivisible union of "illusory body and luminosity" when one reaches Buddhahood (Mathes, 2015, 16). Maitrīpa, however, employs the term to describe reality in accordance with *Madhyamaka*. A *yuganaddha* view has the characteristic of describing reality by emphasizing the union of two things, either emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena, or insight and means, etc. In the *Amanasikāra Cycle*, there are a few texts that directly mention *yuganaddha*, and even a short text entirely devoted to it, the

Yuganaddhaprakāśa[46]. In the Tibetan colophon of various texts, there are also mentions that the text is presenting the *yuganaddha* view. The texts that do not mention *yuganaddha* directly but are said to be about *yuganaddha* in the Tibetan colophon will be marked by an asterisk in the following list. After analyzing the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, I will divide the texts in two categories. Some texts, while still sometimes presenting final stages of practice in tantric terms, teach a way to realize reality that is not explicitly tantric. The others offer an entirely tantric path and view of reality. Despite both containing some mentions of tantric concepts, the first type of texts will be referred to as "non-tantric texts" while the latter as "tantric texts" for simplicity. Some texts also seem to present both a non-tantric and a tantric path side-by-side and will simply be left unclassified. By separating the texts in this way, I want to demonstrate that Maitrīpa has two different ways to speak of *yuganaddha* depending on the context, one tantric and one non-tantric.

List of Maitrīpa's *Yuganaddha* Texts

The following texts of the *amanasikāra* cycle have for subject *yuganaddha* and are classified as non-tantric: *Tattvaprakāśa, Apratiṣṭhānaprakāśa**. The following *yuganaddha* texts are classified as tantric: *Mahāsukhaprakāśa, Tattvaviṃśikā*, Premapañcaka**. Finally, the following texts have for subject *yuganaddha* and are unclassified: *Yuganaddhaprakāśa, Sahajaṣaṭka, Madhyamakaṣaṭka*, Mahāyānaviṃśika, Tattvadaśaka.* Although the last text seems to be non-tantric in its approach to practice and its description of reality, I have left it unclassified as Isaacson and Sferra have made the argument that it is tantric. I will thus analyze it at the end once I have presented the various ways Maitrīpa writes about *yuganaddha* in his writings and offer an alternative to Isaacson and Sferra's interpretation.

***Yuganaddha* in Other Sources**

While researching the role and use of *yuganaddha* in Maitrīpa's writings, I realized that very few modern scholars had written about a tenet on reality centered around *yuganaddha*. In fact, it seems that there are only mentions of such a tenet in various texts, but it is never fully explained or strongly acknowledged. And yet, it seems that the idea of *yuganaddha*-suchness

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[46]The term *mahāmudrā* is employed 15 times throughout the *amanasikāra* cycle, and the term *yuganaddha* comes close by being mentioned 11 times. Although it is less employed, the fact that Maitrīpa dedicates a whole short text to this term does demonstrate that it had a certain importance.

was central to Sahajavajra, and was also quite important to Maitrīpa, as will be shown below. Before diving into Maitrīpa's treatment of *yuganaddha*, it is worthwhile to establish that this tenet was indeed discussed at some point. Furthermore, this tenet is often called *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa* or *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, which accords well with Maitrīpa's own explanation of phenomena as *apratiṣṭhāna*. While *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa* seems to have been discussed in greater details much later by Mipham[47], the Tibetan mention of this tenet closest to Maitrīpa I was able to find is in the *Dwags po bka' bum'*, more precisly in the segment DK.A.Ca.1[48]. In this segment, a list of various tenets is offered which ultimately culminates to *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa* (Kragh, 229). Kragh does not go in any details about what is said about the school, but right after the presentation of this tenet, the text announces that it will now start the presentation of *Mantrayāna* tenets. This implies that the *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa* is a not only a non-tantric tenet, but also the last non-tantric tenet, and thus the highest.

An Indian Buddhist thinker, Avadhūtipa (unknown date) offers another presentation of *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa* or *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*. In his *Dohakoṣahṛdayārthagītiṭīkā*, he presents three *yogas* of *amanasikāra*, lower, middle, and higher. Each of these *yogas* also contains a progression of three visions of reality, the first being *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*. The other two are *śūnyatā-* (Tib. *stong nyid*) and *uccheda-* (Tib. *rgyad chad*) *apratiṣṭhāna*. Each strand is said to reflect "progressive degrees of" *amanasikāra* (Higgins, 449). The following passage from Avadhūtipa's text offers great insight in the role of *yuganaddha*, *zung 'jug*, during *amanasikāra* meditation:

> In the context of the higher yoga, what were labeled as "wisdoms" by the middle yoga are like an illusion. They are merely the "*apratiṣṭhāna* of unity" (*zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa*) that is, the inseparability of mindfulness and mental nonengagement [amanasikāra]. But the absence of any mindfulness and mental activity is the "*apratiṣṭhāna* of emptiness" (*stong nyig rab tu mi gnas pa*). And the [sic] since it is free from thought, not being known by anyone's intellect, it is the "*apratiṣṭhāna* of termination" (rgyun chad rab tu mi gnas pas). Moreover, since these *apratiṣṭhāna* [strands] are inseparably united with *amanasikāra*, through the capacity of unifying any dualities whatsoever, the three aspects of *saṃsāra* and three *nirvāṇas* are only the magical emanation of mind and wisdom. (Higgins, 450)

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[47] See Almogi 2010, to read more about Mipham description of *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa*. While he is too remote from Maitrīpa to draw any definitive conclusions, his explanation of *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* seems to accord with Maitrīpa's own treatment of the tenet I will present in the following pages.
[48] See Kragh, 229.

In this passage, one can see that the various strands of *apratiṣṭhāna* represent a clear progression in how one perceives phenomena. They are first understood on the basis of *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, or "*yuganaddha* of unity", and finally culminate in the *uccheda-apratiṣṭhāna*, or *apratiṣṭhāna* of termination. However, the idea of *yuganaddha,* or union, is also found in the final description of *amanasikāra*, as it unifies "any dualities whatsoever". As such, the idea of *yuganaddha* is omnipresent in descriptions of *amanasikāra* practice, at least for Avadhūtipa. It is interesting to note that while Gampopa placed *uccheda-apratiṣṭhāna* lower than *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, Avadhūtipa did the opposite by placing *uccheda-apratiṣṭhāna* in the final position. Given my reading of Maitrīpa, I believe that Maitrīpa, like Gampopa, placed *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* as the highest tenet, which might imply that there were different interpretations of *amanasikāra* in the *siddha* tradition.

In the following analysis, I argue that Maitrīpa's highest position on reality was not simply *apratiṣṭhāna*, but rather *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, or *zung 'ju rab tu mi gnas pa,* which he considered a non-tantric view of reality. Nevertheless, this particular presentation of reality has the characteristic of tantric tenets which usually emphasize reality as being the union of two things, such as means and insight. As such, Maitrīpa's *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* seems to be an effort to translate this characteristic of tantric tenets into a Madhyamaka tenet. I will also argue that Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra*, much like Avadhūtipa's, is based on a view of reality which is centered around the concept of *yuganaddha*. As such, I believe that Sahajavajra's *yuganaddha-*suchness finds support in Maitrīpa's teachings, and that *yuganaddha* is a term central to the practice of Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* in the non-tantric context.

An analysis of the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*

Although the term is usually used in tantric contexts, in the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, Maitrīpa employs *yuganaddha* in a non-tantric manner to describe the indivisible union between dependently arisen phenomena and emptiness. The text starts with a few verses that explain the dependent nature of all phenomena, for example:

> At the beginning, fire exists neither in the rubbing sticks
> Nor in the block

Nor in the person's hands,
It arises as something in dependence. (YNP 3) (Mathes, 2015, 175)

Having established that everything arises in dependence, Maitrīpa explains how anything arises despite there being no existence nor non-existence:

Even though there is nothing to abandon or adopt at all,
The conventional unfolds.
Once dependent arising is understood,
[One realizes that the conventional], like an illusion, lacks an
own-being. (YNP 6)

Lacking an own-being, it has not [truly] arisen,
And due to conditions (i.e., dependent arising), there is no termination [of it either].
Thus, there is neither existence nor non-existence,
But their indivisible union [yuganaddha] nonetheless manifests. (YNP 7) (Mathes, 2015, 176)

Whatever manifests is thus not existent or non-existent, rather it exists as the indivisible union between their dependently arisen and empty nature. As such, calling them existent would be to reify something which is dependently arisen, while calling them non-existent would be to mistake their lack of own being for nihilism. Maitrīpa continues in the next verses to speak of *yuganaddha*, but this time by pairing emptiness with other terms:

The unity of emptiness and compassion
Is not producible by one's own thought.
It is the natural indivisible union (*yuganaddha*)
Of emptiness and clarity. (YNP 8) (Mathes, 2015, 176)

Here, Maitrīpa gives another example of *yuganaddha*, one where emptiness and compassion are understood to be in union, due to the indivisible union of emptiness and clarity. Maitrīpa only uses "clarity" (Skt. *prakāśa*) one other time in the *Amanasikāra Cycle*. In the *Madhyamaṣaṭka*, clarity is explained as possessing "the nature of deities", which makes it a tantric term. Thus, verse 7 of the YNP offers a not specifically tantric definition of *yuganaddha* while verse 8 seems to offer a tantric view of reality. Given that the two verses simply follow each other, was Maitrīpa trying to equate the *yuganaddha* of both views as similar? In other words, was he trying to equate the philosophical views of the *Mantrayāna* and the *Pāramitāyāna*? By describing

reality in *Madhyamaka* terms and then in more tantric terms, Maitrīpa is also perhaps demonstrating that the Second and the Third turning of the Wheel point to the same view of reality. Maitrīpa makes another clear reference to the *Mantrayāna* when he speaks of the goal which is achieved by training with such a view:

> Given that they are thus only conditions,
> Phenomena lack an own-being.
> A yogin who abides in this [view],
> Does not fall out of supreme bliss. (YNP 5) (Mathes, 2015, 176)

 "Supreme bliss" is a translation of *saṃvara*, which usually means "restraint" or "vow" but can also have the meaning of supreme bliss in tantric texts such as the *Cakrasaṃvara* Tantra[49]. Maitrīpa might also be playing with the double meaning of the word, as he concluded the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa* with the following verse:

> Once the wise man is always steeped [in this realization]
> With body, speech and mind,
> Whether he follows the [prescribed] conduct or not;
> He will still be called an observer of [proper] conduct. (YNP 10) (Mathes, 2015, 176)

Perhaps being called an "observer of [proper] conduct" is here put in juxtaposition with *saṃvara*. As such, Mathes' translation of the term as "supreme bliss" hides the possible parallelism that Maitrīpa might have built in this text. In summary, the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa* describes reality as the indivisible union of existence, i.e., dependently arisen phenomena, and non-existence, i.e., being empty of an own-being, but also as the indivisible union of emptiness and clarity or compassion, as seen in verse 8. As for the final goal of the practice, it is described as not falling out of *saṃvara*, "supreme bliss"[50] but also as being an "observer of proper conduct". The *Yuganaddhaprakāśa* thus opens up the meaning of *yuganaddha*. The usually tantric term *yuganaddha* is applied similarly to a *Madhyamaka* view of reality and to a more tantric view of

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[49] Gray explains that in the Cakrasamvara tantra, the term is both used to refer to restraint or vow, but can also sometimes refer to the ultimate result of such a practice, i.e., great bliss. The Tibetans have decided to include that interpretation in their translation as they translate samvara as *bde mchog*. This interpretation however also finds its soruce in "old Indian Buddhist interpretive etymology" for example in the *Samvarodaya*, where samvara is also explained as referring to great bliss. *(*Gray, 37).

[50] Which might also simply be referring to proper conduct, depending on one's translation. Given that other elements seem to be tantric in the Yuganaddhaprakāśa, I have decided to leave Mathes' translation as it is.

reality. While the latter is also explained as the union of emptiness and compassion, it is unclear if this comparison also applies to the former *Madhyamaka* view of reality. In short, while this text might support Sahajavajra's idea that the *yuganaddha* of emptiness and compassion is also possible outside of Tantra, no such conclusion can be reached yet as it is unclear whether both views are truly equal. The text however demonstrates that Maitrīpa has two ways to speak of *yuganaddha*, one non-tantric and one tantric. As such, I have divided Maitrīpa's *yuganaddha* texts in those which teach the non-tantric *yuganaddha* tenet, and those who teach a tantric tenet.

Non-tantric *Yuganaddha* Texts

In the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, Maitrīpa' explains that "there is nothing to adopt or abandon at all" and that phenomena are beyond the concepts of existence and non-existence (Mathes, 2015, 176). Those statements are reminiscent of Maitrīpa's teaching on *apratiṣṭhāna.* As a reminder, in the *Tattvaratnāvalī*, when presenting *apratiṣṭhāna*, Maitrīpa asks: "Where is, then, the denial or establishing [of anything]?" (Mathes, 2015, 72). In the *Tattvaprakāśa*, the relationship between *yuganaddha* and *apratiṣṭhāna* is further explored as Maitrīpa continues to describe *yuganaddha* by using *Apratiṣṭhānavāda* terminology.

It suffices to look at the last verse of the *Tattvaprakāśa* to establish that it clearly teaches a *yuganaddha* view of reality:

> Whatever merit I have accumulated
> From having composed the *Tattvaprakāśa*,
> May the entire world be[come] a [worthy] recipient
> Of [the teaching on] indivisible union [*yuganaddha*] through it. (TP 15) (Mathes, 2015, 165)

The last line clearly indicates that the *Tattvaprakāśa* teaches a view of reality called "*yuganaddha*". To teach that view, Maitrīpa starts his text by using an example of "net-like apparitions":

> Just as somebody who is partially blind
> Thinks that there are net-like apparitions in the sky,
> So too the extremely foolish, those hindered
> By the darkness of ignorance, [have a false impression of] the
> world. (TP2)

> For somebody with a pure view the [net-like] hairs [which appear]
> Because of delusion are recognized as nothing but the sky;
> For a *yogin* with pure vision
> All states of existence appear in such a way. (TP 3) (Mathes, 2015, 163)

Maitrīpa here makes the usual distinction between ignorant beings, who believe that phenomena truly exist, and the wise *yogin,* who understands all phenomena as being illusion-like. Maitrīpa then continues:

> Alas! Look into the sky!
> I do see net-like apparitions!
> Then somebody with a pure view would say:
> "It is not so, your mind is confused." (TP 4)
>
> In order to abandon the confusion of those who are partially
> blind,
> He says that in the future [confusion] will not [exist anymore].
> Because the manifestation is empty of being anything else
> There is in reality neither denial nor assertion. (TP 5) (Mathes, 2015, 164)

The first two line of the fourth verse should be taken as ignorant beings stating what they experience. The *yogin* then instructs them that these only appear because their mind is confused, and that this confusion will no longer exist in the future. Maitrīpa then explains that the idea that confusion will not exist is nothing other than a skillful mean. It is only said to "abandon the confusion of those who are partially blind", but truly nothing can be said to be existent or non-existent, as "there is in reality neither denial or assertion". As such, confusion can't be non-existent in the future as it was never existent (or non-existent) in the first place. Once again, Maitrīpa describes reality in a way that is concordant with *Apratiṣṭhānavāda* as their main claim is that since things are non-abiding, nothing can be said to be existent or non-existent. In the next verses, Maitrīpa simply explains that this view is *Madhyamaka*, and summarizes it as follow:

> From the extreme limit of reality
> The manifold [world] arises in dependence;
> It is empty of real things, unborn,
> Distinct [from independent being] and a name only. (TP 11)
> […]

The true reality of phenomena is [their] non-arising.
This accords with the Dharma of the Buddha
And is maintained by the noble Nāgārjuna
Who was prophesied by the *Tathāgata*. (TP 14) (Mathes, 2015, 165)

The idea that the manifold is a name only, unborn and a dependent-arising agrees with Maitrīpa's usual presentation of *Apratiṣṭhānavāda*. Maitrīpa also makes a direct reference to (the non tantric) Nāgārjuna and thus clearly sets the view expounded in this text as *Madhyamaka*.

When discussing *Apratiṣṭhānavāda*, Maitrīpa usually conjointly mentions *amanasikāra* as the practice to correctly realize that view. The *Tattvaprakāśa* is no exception as Maitrīpa also explains how to realize the particular view he expounds in that text:

The omniscient one taught making a distinction
Between self-empowerment and luminosity;
Teaching either of them,
The [view of] nihilism is abandoned. (TP 12)

In whomever there is no attachment
To the fruit, true reality or remedy,
For that one the level of a Buddha is completed
Through a practice which is effortless. (TP 13) (Mathes, 2015, 165)

As a reminder "self-empowerment" and "luminosity" have already been used to explain *amanasikāra* in the *Amanasikārādhāra*, where *a* referred to luminosity and *manasikāra* to self-empowerment[51]. The reference to *amanasikāra* continues with verse 13, where the description of the practice is very similar to the practice of *mahāmudrā* explained in the *Sekanirdeśa*:

Not abiding in the remedy
Not attached to reality
Not desiring the fruit
One finds mahāmudrā (SN 36) (Mathes, 2015, 109)

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[51] In TP 12, however, Maitrīpa can also be interpreted as referring to the ultimate view of reality which states that the nature of all things is luminous, or is self empowerment, i.e., "an awareness which continues as something that is not separate from emptiness and compassion, [i.e.,] not distinct from [the level of] indivisible union [*yuganaddha*]" (Mathes, 2015, 247). In that sense, one can understand that Maitrīpa is simply speaking of the highest level of reality, which corresponds to *amanasikāra* not as a practice but as a realization of that reality.

Earlier in the *Sekanirdeśa*, *mahāmudrā* was also equated with "effortless wisdom", and was explained as being the practice of *amanasikāra* (Mathes, 108). In the *Tattvaprakāśa*, however, Maitrīpa does not mention *mahāmudrā* and instead leaves the practice unnamed, which can be understood in two ways. Perhaps in the *Tattvaprakāśa* Maitrīpa is simply referring to *mahāmudrā* without naming it and thus simply mentioned "a practice which is effortless". Or, Maitrīpa is explicitly not mentioning *mahāmudrā* in verse 13 to express that *amanasikāra* based on the *Madhyamaka* view expounded in the *Tattvaprakāśa* shares the same instructions and principles as *mahāmudrā*, while also not being the exact same practice. While the latter hypothesis does not necessarily mean that such a practice would be done in a non-tantric context, it does allow for that possibility. Further analysis is however required before reaching a definite conclusion.

In summary, in the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, Maitrīpa seems to present two different understandings of *yuganaddha*. One is mostly based on a *Madhyamaka* view, where *yuganaddha* refers to the indivisible union of non-existence and existence. That view is quickly mentioned in the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, and fully explained in the *Tattvaprakāśa*.[52] This description of reality based on *yuganaddha* which accords with *apratiṣṭhāna* is what I consider to be *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, and perhaps corresponds to the Tibetan classification of *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa* found in the *Dwags po bka' bum'*. As this view was classified non-tantric by Gampopa, it seems to share similarities with the *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* view of Maitrīpa I have presented in this section, and also reinforces the idea that there was indeed a non-tantric way to present reality while emphasizing union, *yuganaddha*. As for the understanding of *yuganaddha* based on more tantric terms which was mentioned in the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, it is explained in detail in texts such as the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa*.

Maitrīpa's Tantric Descriptions of Reality

I have classified the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa* as tantric simply because the terminology used, and the path described makes it impossible to imagine another context. While we still find the

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[52] Another text, the *Apratiṣṭhānaprakāśa*, which is said to teach *yuganaddha* emptiness in the Tibetan colophon, offers the same view of reality as the *Tattvaprakāśa*. However, as it does not mention *yuganaddha* directly, it is not of much use for my current analysis.

idea of *yuganaddha* between emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena, these terms are usually replaced with more tantric equivalents. In the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa*, there are a few explicit and implicit mentions of *yuganaddha*:

> Having venerated *Vajrasattva*,
> Whose nature is insight and means,
> I will now explain in brief the non-duality of great bliss[53],
> Which is the true reality of entities. (MSP 1)
> […]
> These two truths are pure:
> Emptiness [and] the apparent [truth] of the yogin;
> Their non-duality must be established,
> Once what is worthless is abandoned. (MSP 9)
> […]
> By then, he will have penetrated to the extreme summit of true
> reality
> And reached the level of the indivisible union [*yuganaddha*]
> A yogin abiding on this level
> Strives solely for the sake of sentient beings. (MSP 11)
> […]
> True reality has the nature of insight and means
> For its purity is [both] outer and inner.
> Once it is realized, the mantra practitioner is, in short,
> Delighted through the practice of non-abiding. (MSP 13) (Mathes, 2015, 181-183)

In the first verse, the nature of Vajrasattva is said to be insight and means which is a common tantric description of the nature of Buddhas. In the eleventh verse, the word *yuganaddha* is directly used to refer to the goal of tantric practice. Also, MSP 13 explains true reality as having the nature of "insight and means", which is most likely referring to their union. These verses also use a terminology which is proper to the Tantras to describe reality. While *yuganaddha* in the non-tantric passages of the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa* and the *Tattvaprakāśa* emphasizes the union of emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena, the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa*, replaces them with insight (*prajña*) and means (*upāya*). The difference in the terminology used to describe *yuganaddha* is also accompanied by a clear difference in the way the path is described. In verse 13, Maitrīpa clearly mentions that it is a "mantra practitioner" who is "delighted through the

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[53] *Mahāsukha* not *saṃvara*

practice of non-abiding". In other verses, it is also made clear that this text solely speaks of a tantric path:

> The meditation of the creation [phase] is one [form of meditation],
> And the meditation of the completion [phase] a second;
> Therefore, the meditation of both together
> Is here called identity. (MSP 2)
> […]
> From the awakening towards emptiness, a seed [syllable] arises.
> From it, an image [of a deity and so forth].
> And for [such] an image there are projection and dissolution
> [phases].
> Therefore, everything arises in dependence. (MSP 4)
> […]
> The gifted one, whose character is formed by the practice
> Of mantras and [visualized] forms, becomes submerged in bliss.
> Then he sees in such a manner [of practice] the manifold
> [world]
> To be like an illusion and non-dual. (MSP 10) (Mathes, 2015, 181-183)

As opposed to the texts that I deemed non-tantric in the path they presented, here Maitrīpa presents a tantric path while defining emphasizing that the true nature of reality is the union of insight and means. Such a description of reality in a tantric text is not surprising, but the contrast with non-tantric descriptions of reality emphasizing the union of two elements needs to be highlighted to understand Maitrīpa's approach.

In the *Premapañcaka*, Maitrīpa continues to emphasize the nature of reality as being the union of dependently arisen phenomena and emptiness through the metaphor of a couple's union:

> Were it not for the handsome suitor of appearances
> Which are but dependent arising,
> The [beloved] mistress of emptiness
> Would be considered no better than dead. (PP 1)
>
> Emptiness is a most lovely mistress
> With an incomparable figure.
> If they ever parted,
> The handsome lover would be forlorn. (PP 2)
>
> Therefore, trembling with anxiety,

> The man and woman are seated in font of the guru,
> And through their natural pleasure
> [The guru] has generated the love belonging to co-emergence. (PP 3) (Mathes, 2015, 207)

Although this text does not mention *yuganaddha*, it is easy to see why the Tibetan colophon classified it as a text that expressed a *yuganaddha* view of reality, as reality is described by emphasizing the union of emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena. Through the union of the couple and the *guru*, the co-emergent, which corresponds to the third joy and thus to *mahāmudrā*, is manifested.[54] The terminology used to speak of *yuganaddha* here is "appearances, which are nothing but dependent arising" and "emptiness". While the terminology is reminiscent of the non-tantric texts such as some parts of the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, this text is set in a tantric context as it uses sexual analogies.[55] Most likely, Maitrīpa is here using the usual understanding of what Tibetans later called *yab-yum* (father-mother), where the father represents means and the mother insight, to explain the union of emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena. In other words, the tantric indivisible union of means and insight seems here to be equated with *yuganaddha- apratiṣṭhāna*.

In the texts that I have deemed non-tantric, I expressed how Maitrīpa was describing reality in accordance with *Madhyamaka*, particularly with his view of *apratiṣṭhāna* where everything is explained to be non-abiding and thus beyond assertion or denial. I hypothesized that this position probably corresponded to the Tibetan classification of the *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pa*. In those texts, Maitrīpa's description of reality emphasizes the union of emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena. In tantric texts where he writes about *yuganaddha,* especially the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa*, Maitrīpa uses more tantric terms to emphasize this union when describing reality, such as bliss, insight, means and so on. As such, there seems to be two ways to speak of reality as the union of the apparent nature of phenomena and their lack of own existence. While tantric descriptions describing the nature of reality as being the union of means and insight are not surprising, Maitrīpa's decision to emphasize this union while using a terminology which accords with the *Apratiṣṭhānavāda* seems to support his efforts to equate the

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[54] See the table in the previous chapter which summarized Maitrīpa's explanation of joys and seals.

[55] One could argue that the union of the couple could be understood as a simple metaphor and not a tantric practice, since in his other texts Maitrīpa clearly explains that the *karmamudrā* is not a sufficient cause for *mahāmudrā*. Such an argument would however be quite a stretch.

teachings of the Tantra with the teachings of the Common Mahayana[56]. As such, his non-tantric description of reality, *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, can be understood as an effort to take an important characteristic of the Tantras, the emphasis on the union of means and insight, and to translate it into terms and philosophical which were more commonly accepted by Buddhist of the times. Translating this important characteristic of the tantric view into a non-tantric view could also be understood as Maitrīpa laying down the philosophical foundation for practices where the union of emptiness and compassion is trained simultaneously outside of the Tantras.

Furthermore, in the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, following the verse where he explains *yuganaddha* as the indivisible union of existence and non-existence, which I deemed to be *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, Maitrīpa immediately mentions the indivisible union of emptiness and compassion. It was unclear whether Maitrīpa was equating these two views of reality as being equal, or simply exposing two different views of reality, but I believe that one can find an answer in the *Premapañcaka*. In that text, Maitrīpa explicitly names the male consort, which usually symbolizes means, as "appearances which are but dependent arising", and the female consort, usually symbolizing insight, as "emptiness". With this move, Maitrīpa might be equating the non-tantric *apratiṣṭhāna-yuganaddha* view of reality as the union of dependent arising and emptiness with the tantric *yuganaddha* view of reality as the union of means and insight. In other words, based on my reading of the *Premapañcaka*, I believe that in the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, Maitrīpa was equating the union of emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena with emptiness and compassion, and not simply stating two different ways to describe reality. As Maitrīpa continuously equates the *Madhyamaka* view with tantric descriptions of reality in his *Amanasikāra Cycle*, it is not a huge surprise that he would hold the same position for *yuganaddha* descriptions of reality. If the two types of *yuganaddha* are indeed equal, it allows for the possibility that a practice based on *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* would train one in emptiness and compassion simultaneously, just as Sahajavajra argued in his commentary. There is however one important flaw to this argument. As Isaacson and Sferra have previously argued, offering tantric and non-tantric descriptions of reality do not necessarily imply that there are two corresponding tantric and non-tantric practices. Perhaps Maitrīpa is simply demonstrating that his tantric view of reality is entirely compatible with *Madhyamaka*, and not advocating for a non-

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[56] See Kragh, 78, to read more about Maitrīpa's efforts to synthesize both vehicles.

tantric practice based on *yuganaddha*. As such, it is still necessary to show that Maitrīpa also offered two different paths.

One or Two paths?

Although Maitrīpa does use *yuganaddha* to describe reality in two different ways, one based on *Madhyamaka*, or *apratiṣṭhāna*, and one based on Tantra, it is unclear whether he taught one or two paths to reach Buddhahood. Mathes looked for a practice of *mahāmudrā* outside of tantra, but did not look for a non-tantric practice based on *yuganaddha*-suchness in Maitrīpa's writings. Although Maitrīpa does mention in texts such as the *Tattvadaśaka* and the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā* that the goal of his practice is accessible through pith-instructions of the *guru* and the practice of *amanasikāra*, it is unclear in which context one receives such pith-instructions. While Maitrīpa does seem to equate the union of dependently arisen phenomena and emptiness with the union of compassion and emptiness, it is also unclear whether that carries over to an actual meditation practice. Does Maitrīpa truly teach a *Pāramitāyāna*-based practice which trains emptiness and compassion simultaneously? Or is was he simply attempting to prove that the tantric view is indeed in accordance with Madhyamaka? The way Maitrīpa continuously mentions two different ways to realize reality seems to favor the first option.

In the *Nirvedhapañcaka*, Maitrīpa presents two different ways to train wisdom and compassion simultaneously:

Wisdom is [not only] spotless and empty,
[But] has [also] the nature of effortless compassion.
It arises in dependence
And is free from [both] an own-being and non-existence.(NVP 2)

The emptiness of phenomena- amazing!
Compassion-even more amazing!
Amazing, the power of great bliss!
Amazing, the pure apparent! (NVP 3) (Mathes, 2015, 200)

In these two verses, one can see a clear distinction in the terminology used to describe the two different types of wisdom. NVP 2 does not use any word that is indubitably tantric. Describing wisdom as beyond "own-being and non-existence" accords with the *apratiṣṭhāna* texts which mentioned "assertion and denial", "existence and non-existence" and so on. The description of

reality in the second verse is thus similar to *apratiṣṭhāna*. As for the third verse, the mention of great bliss and the pure apparent is clearly reminiscent of the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa*. In short, this text seems to offer two ways to practice insight, the first which has the nature of effortless compassion, and the second which is clearly tantric, the first based on an *apratiṣṭhāna* view of reality, and the second based on the *Mantrayāna*. As these two verses follow each other, they could be interpreted as depicting two paths, one based on *Pāramitāyāna* and the other based on tantra. That interpretation seems to be supported by the use of the expression "effortless compassion" , found only one other time in the *Amanasikāra Cycle*, in the *Māyānirukti*:

> Not [even] stretching his legs any more,
> And abandoning pride and the like-
> The *yogin* adopts [such proper] conduct,
> And [so] is well established in the practice of non-abiding. (MN 7)
>
> Whoever does not adopt [proper] conduct
> [Even] after obtaining the best food and drink,
> And having proclaimed [what is] pure,
> Is not a fit vessel for perfect enlightenment. (MN 8)
>
> People talk about true reality
> And approve [proper] conduct,
> But it is difficult to find a person
> Accomplished in the practice of awareness. (MN 9)
>
> Earth is the bed, the directions (i.e., nakedness) are the clothes,
> Food is the rice obtained in alms.
> One endures the true nature of non-arising
> And is engaged in effortless compassion. (MN 10) (Mathes, 2015, 156-157)

In these verses, one finds four different ways to talk about practices. There is the "practice of non-abiding", "[proper] conduct", the "practice of awareness" and being "engaged in effortless compassion". All these practices can most likely be understood to be the same especially as there is a parallelism in verse 7,9 and 10 where the last line always mentions a particular practice. The idea of "[proper] conduct" was also expressed in the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa*, where it was said that one who sees all things as dependently arisen would be called "an observer of [proper] conduct". Hence, it is quite logical to think that both the *Māyānirukti* and the *Yuganaddhaprakāśa* speak of the same practice, which is identified here as the practice of non-abiding and effortless

compassion. As "effortless compassion" was also used in the *Nirvedhapañcaka* to describe a particular type of wisdom which was differentiated from a more tantric way to approach insight, and as the *Māyānirukti* does not contain any obvious tantric terminology, the practice of non-abiding can be interpreted as being not necessarily tantric in nature.

Finally, the last text which presents two different paths, one non-tantric and one tantric, is the *Sahajaṣaṭka*. In the first three verses, Maitrīpa describes reality and the practice of non-abiding in the usual non-tantric *Madhyamaka* terminology:

> Buddhists take true reality
> To be free from permanence and nihilism;
> To engage in affirmation and exclusion
> When it comes to naturally arisen phenomena, this is the talk
> of fools. (SS 1)
>
> To those who claim [that there is] existence we say
> That, upon analysis, nothing exists.
> To those who claim [that there is] no existence we say
> That, when no analysis is done, everything exists. (SS 2)
>
> In whatever manner superimpositions
> Present themselves to the *yogin* of true reality,
> In like manner superimpositions
> Are destroyed by the *yogin* of true reality. (SS 3) (Mathes, 2015, 259)

In those three verses, reality is expressed in the same way as it was in the texts I deemed to be non-tantric. Once again "affirmation and exclusion", or "assertion or denial" are said to be improper to describe reality, just like existence and non-existence. In the third verse, Maitrīpa describes the practice of a *yogin* following this particular view of reality as "destroying superimpositions". In the *Tattvaratnāvalī*, it was said that "the meaning of *Madhyamaka* is thus the absence of superimposition" (Mathes, 72). One can easily understand that the practice described in the third verse is thus based on a *Madhyamaka* view of reality. Given other texts, the practice is almost certainly *amanasikāra*. In the next three verses, Maitrīpa explains reality and the path followed by a practitioner of the *Mantrayāna*:

> As the co-emergent is not fabricated,
> Attachment does not pertain to the co-emergent.
> Bliss is not different from the co-emergent;

Bliss has the defining characteristic of freedom from attachment. (SS 4)

Once the genuine bliss associated with realization is known-
[Bliss] whose nature it is to be free from attachment
Once the manifold [world] is turned into self-realization
It is dissolved into the ocean of the co-emergent. (SS 5)

The *yogin* of mantra reality
Is thoroughly established in a state without attachment.
Once this has transformed the factors of existence into gurus,
He should be one who has no attachment to objects. (SS 6) (Mathes, 2015, 260)

The fourth and fifth verse mention the co-emergent (*sahaja*), which is also the name of the joy usually associated with *mahāmudrā*. The sixth verse of the *Sahajaṣaṭka* has obvious parallelisms with the third verse. Both verses describe two different approaches to reality and practices. In the sixth, the practitioner is obviously following the *Mantrayāna* as he or she is said to be "a *yogin* of mantra reality", as opposed to the third verse "*yogin* of true reality". The parallelism between the two verses could be interpreted as Maitrīpa emphasizing an opposition between two practices, one which relies on tantric techniques, while the other does not necessarily relies on such techniques.

By itself, the *Sahajaṣaṭka* could be interpreted as referring to the common *Pāramitāyāna* way to realize emptiness in the first three verses versus the *Mantrayāna* practice of insight in the last three verses. However, up until now I have demonstrated that Maitrīpa has two different ways to describe reality when emphasizing *yuganaddha*, one non-tantric based on *Madhyamaka* and one tantric. I also shown that Maitrīpa mentions two types of wisdom, one most likely non-tantric and the other as being part of the *Mantrayāna*. The first type of wisdom was said to have effortless compassion for its nature in the *Nirvedhapañcaka* and the *Māyānirukti*. "True reality" is also mentioned in verse 9 of the *Māyānirukti* where it is said:

People talk about true reality
And approve [proper] conduct,
But it is difficult to find a person
Accomplished in the practice of awareness. (MN 9) (Mathes, 2015, 156)

The "person accomplished n the practice of awareness" is also called a "*yogin*" in previous verses. In this verse, it is clear that the person who is accomplished in the practice of awareness

has a complete understanding of "true reality" and does not just talk about it. Thus, it could be argued that the "person" of this verse is a "*yogin* of true reality". The use of a similar terminology in the *Māyānirukti* and the first three verses of the *Sahajaṣaṭka* might suggest that Maitrīpa was writing about the same type of practice and practitioner. As mentioned earlier, in the *Māyānirukti,* the practice of awareness was also equated with the practice of non-abiding and engaging in effortless compassion. As such, the "*yogin* of true reality" of the third verse of the *Sahajaṣaṭka* is most likely not a common *Pāramitāyāna* practitioner, but rather a practitioner whose practice is non-abiding and engages in effortless compassion. As *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* was deemed to be a non-tantric tenet on reality, and as it was equated with the union of emptiness and compassion, one can infer that the "*yogin* of true reality" is meditating on the basis of *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna.*

These two different practices can also be simply understood as a practice sharing the same principles but done in two different contexts. As Maitrīpa emphasized the importance of *amanasikāra*, it would be difficult to argue that he offered two completely different practices. Most likely, Maitrīpa is teaching in these texts that the practice of *amanasikāra* can be done on the basis of either a non-tantric view of reality, *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, or a tantric view of reality. His discussion of "people who talk about true reality" as opposed to those "accomplished in the practice of awareness" is also reminiscent of the difference between one who engages with phenomena, using *manasikāra*, and one who is aware of their non-abiding nature, practicing *amanasikāra*. As the practice of amanasikāra was also explained as being found in both the Tantras and the *sūtras* in the *Amanasikārādhāra*, it seems quite logical that Maitrīpa would offer two different ways to practice it, one which uses the methods of the Mantrayāna, and one based solely on a Madhyamaka view.

In summary, I have shown in the first part of this section that Maitrīpa describes reality by emphasizing *yuganaddha* in two ways, one non-tantric, which I believe was known as *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pas* in Tibet, and the other tantric, which is conform to the traditional tantric view that the nature of reality is the union of means and insight. I have also shown that Maitrīpa discusses two different types of wisdom and practices of insight in the *Nirvedhapañcaka* and the *Sahajaṣaṭka*. One is non-tantric, based on *Apratiṣṭhāna*, and the other based on a tantric description of reality as bliss. In the *Nirvedhapañcaka* and the *Māyānirukti*, the non-tantric practice is also said to either have the nature of effortless compassion, or to be the engagement in

effortless compassion. As such, Maitrīpa's twofold presentations of *yuganaddha*-suchness can be interpreted as corresponding to two different practices. Or, most likely, to the practice of *amanasikāra* done in two different contexts, one tantric and one non-tantric. While I do not doubt that Maitrīpa might be read in other ways, my goal was simply to show that there is a logical and reasonable way to find support for Sahajavajra's non-tantric practice based on *yuganaddha*-suchness in Maitrīpa's writings. We also find that Maitrīpa can indeed be interpreted, on the basis of Sahajavajra's commentary, in a way that seems to promote a non-tantric practice which allows for the simultaneous training of emptiness and compassion. This reading of Maitrīpa also seems to share some similarities with Avadhūtipa's presentation of *amanasikāra*. While Avadhūtipa understood *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* as the first view out of three that a practitioner of *amanasikāra* needs to progress through, Maitrīpa does not seem to present such a path anywhere. Nevertheless, both teachers gave a central importance to a view of reality based on *yuganaddha* in the practice of *amanasikāra*. For Maitrīpa, the practice of *amanasikāra* in the *Pāramitāyāna* is entered through *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* under the guidance of the guru, while in Tantra it seems to be entered through the realization of reality as bliss and as the union of means and insight with the help of the *guru*.

Yet, an important question is still unanswered. Is the non-tantric practice of *amanasikāra* supposed to be abandoned for the tantric path at a certain point, or are the two paths for two different types of person? In other words, does one practice *amanasikāra* outside of tantra at first, and is then introduced to the tantric method, or are some people always going to practice outside of tantra while others simply practice within the *Mantrayāna*? In the *Sahajaṣaṭka*, the two ways to approach emptiness are simply explained one after the other, which could support the idea that one starts as a "*yogin* of true reality" and then becomes a "*yogin* of mantra reality", or simply support the idea that those paths are parallel in nature and meant for different people. The path taught by Maitrīpa is partially explained in the *Tattvaviṃśikā*, the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa* and the *Tattvadaśaka*.

Chapter III

Reinterpreting Maitrīpa and his Influence on Gampopa

In this chapter, I want to re-interpret the path that was laid down by Maitrīpa in some of his texts, principally the *Tattvaviṃśikā* and the *Tattvadaśaka*, while taking into consideration the *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna amanasikāra* practice I have presented in the previous chapter. Doing so, I wish to demonstrate that while Maitrīpa favored the tantric path in the end, he also believed that the students of highest faculties only needed to practice *mahāmudrā*, while skipping all other tantric practices. In other words, practitioners of the highest faculty could simply perceive reality through non-tantric *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* pith-instructions of the guru, and then directly enter the quicker *Mantrayāna* to practice *mahāmudrā*, without the need for any real or visualized consort. After demonstrating that one can logically interpret Maitrīpa's works in this way on the basis of Sahajavajra's commentary, I will look into other Indian sources for a non-tantric simultaneous practice of emptiness and compassion, particularly Saraha, to show that my interpretation of Maitrīpa shares important similarities with other Indian teachings. Although Maitrīpa and Saraha have important differences, they also seem to share a similar approach of focusing on one central practice as the essence of *Dharma*. Finally, I will compare my reading of Maitrīpa with the commonly accepted explanation of Gampopa's teachings in modern academia, to demonstrate that while Gampopa's and Maitrīpa's teachings do have differences, Sapaṇ's critique was unfounded as the basic principle at the heart of Gampopa's teachings can indeed be found in Maitrīpa's works.

Maitrīpa's path

As mentioned in the first chapter, Maitrīpa's *Tattvaviṃśikā* describes three different paths for the practitioners of the *Mantrayāna*. For those of lowest faculties, practice must include a *karmamudrā* and the causal *samayamudrā*, i.e., mantras and deity practices. For those of middling faculties, only the *jñānamudra*, i.e., a visualized consort, was necessary. As for those of highest faculties, it was said that they should focus solely on *mahāmudrā*. For the first two, this justification was given:

> Unable to truly know
> The mark of self-empowerment
> Their path is taught gradually

Towards achieving awakening.[57] (TV 9) (Mathes, 2015, 188)

Unlike those of lower capacity, those of highest faculties do not need to be taught gradually, as they are able to "know the mark of self-empowerment". Self-empowerment was explained previously in the *Amanasikārādhāra* as the awareness indivisible from emptiness and compassion which corresponds to the ultimate level of reality. This is also clarified by the following verse:

> However, the yogin for whom reality is seen
> Is engaged in *mahāmudrā*.
> The one of superior faculties
> Should spend time with the essence of all phenomena.[58] (TV 11) (Mathes, 2015, 189)

This verse clearly states that the requirement to engage directly in *mahāmudrā* is to see reality. The *Mahāsukhaprakāśa* also supports the idea that seeing reality is necessary to enter *mahāmudrā*:

> The gifted one, whose character is formed by the practice
> Of mantras and [visualized] forms, becomes submerged in bliss.
> Then he sees in such a manner [of practice] the manifold [world]
> To be like an illusion and non-dual. (MSP 10) (Mathes, 183)

Here, the goal of practices done with the *karmamudrā* and the *jñānamudra* becomes clear. By being submerged in bliss, the practitioner can perceive the world as non-dual. Having seen the world as non-dual the practitioner then engages solely in *amanasikāra*:

> True reality has the nature of insight and means
> For its purity is [both] outer and inner.
> Once it is realized, the mantra practitioner is, in short,
> Delighted through the practice of non-abiding. (MSP 13) (Mathes, 2015, 183)

Thus, when one realizes reality as having for its nature the union of insight and means, one simply engages in *amanasikāra*, the practice of non-abiding. One could wonder what is left to be realized

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[57] svādhiṣṭhānapadaṃ jñātuṃ ye śaktās tattvato na hi / mārgo 'yam deśitas teṣāṃ kramato bodhisiddhaye (Mathes, 2015, 460)

[58] dṛṣṭatattvaḥ punar yogī mahāmudrāparāyaṇaḥ / sarvabhāvasvabhavena vihared uttamendriyaḥ (Mathes, 2015, 460)

once one has seen true reality. Does one simply achieve Buddhahood as they enter the *mahāmudrā*? Or is their realization in need of further refining? In the *Tattvaviṃśikā*, Maitrīpa makes the following claim:

> For [one who has attained] enlightenment there is mind only,
> And mind is [then] taken as no-mind;
> No-mind [in turn] is self-awareness,
> And [such an] awareness depends on the guru. (TV 14) (Mathes, 2015, 189)

Having attained "enlightenment" here most likely refers to having seen the true reality of all things, given the context and the fact that Maitrīpa uses *bodhi* as a synonym for suchness in the *Tattvadaśaka*.[59] Although one has seen reality, Maitrīpa clearly explains that they still need to understand the nature of the mind itself. Such a progression, from mind to self-awareness, was clearly explained in the *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivaraṇa*:

> Once the thorn that it (i.e., consciousness or wisdom) exists ultimately
> in such a way is removed, a Madhyamika tenet is [seen to be] superior,
> one established on the basis of awareness, which is continuous in its
> flow of effortless non-dual "union" and is characterized
> by not abiding in anything. This is realized through the kindness of a
> genuine guru. […] (Mathes, 2015, 99)

Thus, the awareness which "depends on the guru" mentioned in the *Tattvaviṃśikā* is most likely the same awareness mentioned in this text. In both texts, that awareness is understood to be the ultimate realization of the mind. The *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivaraṇa* tells us that such an awareness "is continuous in its flow of effortless non-dual "union" and is characterized by not abiding in anything". To achieve this awareness, one needs to remove the "thorn" that the mind exists ultimately. In a later passage of the same text, the way to remove that "thorn" is explained as follow:

> But again, illustrious one, it is precisely no-mind
> which is the inconceivable element. What is the reason for this? Mind is
> not found in no-mind. As to the element which is without mind, it
> is mind for [through it] mind is realized as it is. (Mathes, 2015, 100)

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[59] See Mathes, 2015, p. 19.

"No-mind" is thus the "element" which allows one to realize mind as it truly is. In other words, at first, one still sees the mind as truly existent, but by meditating on no-mind, which could be interpreted as the non-abiding of the mind[60], one realizes the mind as self-awareness. Self-awareness is understood to be nothing more than a dependent arising, and thus holds no special ontological status, as explained in the previous chapter. Going back to TV 14, the progression from mind, to no-mind to self-awareness is most likely the same progression explained in the *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivaraṇa* which is the necessary steps to take to remove the idea that the mind has inherent existence. In other words, for Maitrīpa, even if one sees reality and starts practicing *mahāmudrā*, the mind is still taken as truly existent, and thus the realization needs to be refined until one understands the mind as non-abiding.

In summary, for the tantric path, the goal of all practices for people of low and middling faculties is to experience reality. Once reality is experienced, one still has to perfect one's understanding of one's own mind through the practice of non-abiding. To do so, the help of the genuine *guru* is required as mind has to be ultimately realized as being self-awareness and nothing more than a dependent-arising. However, how do the people of highest faculties, which are directly able to see reality as it truly is, without the need for *karma* or *jñānamudra*, practice? In the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa*, Maitrīpa explained that one followed *Mantrayāna* practices to understand reality as having the nature of insight and means. One was then said to enter the practice of non-abiding[61]. I have also mentioned earlier that the practice of non-abiding, *amanasikāra*, could be practiced in non-tantric contexts and, as Mathes argued, was also explained with the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* by Maitrīpa and Rāmapāla. Thus, as *amanasikāra* can be practiced outside of Tantra, the goal of the lower and middling tantric path, i.e., seeing reality, seems to also be achievable outside of Tantra. Thus, if one realizes, or is introduced, to *yuganaddha*-suchness in the non-tantric context, i.e., as the union of emptiness and dependently arisen phenomena, it is possible that one could enter the *Mantrayāna* immediately through the *mahāmudrā*, as described in the *Tattvaviṃśikā*. Practitioners of high faculty would thus be

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[60] That is, the non-existence of an inherently existent mind.

[61] True reality has the nature of insight and means/For its purity is [both] outer and inner./Once it is realized, the mantra practitioner is, in short,/Delighted through the practice of non-abiding. (MSP 13) (Mathes, 2015, 183)

practitioners that did not need to use tantric methods to see reality and were able to practice *amanasikāra* directly with *Pāramitāyāna* pith-instructions. In other words, one could use either tantric means, such as consorts and mantras, to perceive reality, or one can simply be introduced to *yuganaddha*-suchness outside of the tantric context and later enter the *Mantrayāna*. This hypothesis finds some support in the *Tattvadaśaka*.

Isaacson and Sferra argued that the *Tattvadaśaka* was tantric because two of the last verses contained tantric terminology. Instead, I make the argument that the use of tantric terminology was restricted to describing later stages of the path, and not the initial stages themselves. First, in the *Tattvadaśaka*, reality is described as such:

> Homage to you, suchness,
> Which has no association with existence and non-existence,
> Because, [when] stainless, this very [suchness]
> Has the form of enlightenment in virtue of realization (TD 1)

The description of reality is reminiscent of *Apratiṣṭhāna* and of the texts that I deemed non-tantric, as it is said to have "no association with existence and non-existence". The view is thus obviously *Madhyamaka*. As for the practice, it is explained as follow:

> Thus phenomena are [all] of one taste,
> Unobstructed, and without an abode.
> They are all [realized as] luminous
> Through the samādhi of realizing true reality as it is. (TD 5)

> [This] samādhi of realizing true reality as it is, for its part,
> Comes from engaging [*bodhi*]*citta*,
> Since true reality arises without interruption
> For those who are aware of its abode. (TD 6) (Mathes, 2015, 212)

In the *Sahajaṣaṭka*, the "*yogin* of true reality" was opposed to the mantra practitioner as they both had their own practices done in their unique contexts. Furthermore, in the *Nirvedhapañcaka* and the Māyānirukti, a most likely non-tantric wisdom was said to have the nature of "effortless compassion". In these two verses of the *Tattvadaśaka*, Maitrīpa speaks of the *samādhi* of realizing true reality as it is and explains that this *samādhi* "comes from engaging [*bodhi*]*citta*", which seems to resonate with the description of non-tantric wisdom in the *Nirvedhapañcaka* and

the *Māyānirukti*. Furthermore, the "*yogin* of true reality" described in the *Sahajaṣaṭka* would most likely follow the "*samādhi* of true reality" mentioned in verse 6 of the *Tattvadaśaka*. As such, one could interpret the practice exposed in the *Tattvadaśaka* as the same practice based on *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* found in all those other texts, that I deemed to be non-tantric. Reading Maitrīpa in this way is dependent upon a specific interpretation based on Sahajavajra's commentary and as such I do not claim that this is the one definitive meaning. However, I do argue that such an interpretation is logically sound and as thus one could interpret Maitrīpa in that way. Finally, having exposed the view and the practice to follow, the text explains the final stages of the path with these two verses:

> By the power of having realized this true reality,
> The yogin, with eyes wide open,
> Moves everywhere like a lion,
> By any [chosen] means [and] in any [chosen] manner. (TD 8)

> [The yogin] who has left the [eight] worldly dharmas behind
> And adopted yogic conduct [that appears to be] crazy
> Does everything without [any need for] a reference point,
> Being adorned with self-empowerment. (TD 9) (Mathes, 2015, 212)

The eighth verse starts by explaining that the pre-requisite for tantric practice, "the power of having realized this true reality" has already been acquired. As a reminder, in the *Tattvaviṃśikā* 11, the practitioner who could directly enter into *mahāmudrā* was said to be "the *yogin* for whom reality is seen" [62]. Furthermore, as the terminology "true reality" was opposed to a more tantric description of reality in the *Sahajaṣaṭka*, one could interpret this passage as indicating that the practitioner has not yet entered the tantras and has simply realized reality on the basis of *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna.* The tantric descriptions of practices that follow this passage might also indicate that the practitioner is expected to practice the techniques of the *Mantrayāna* once one has achieved the necessary pre-requisites. In other words, the *Tattvadaśaka* can be read as offering a direct answer to the question created by the *Tattvaviṃśikā*: How is one supposed to enter directly into *mahāmudrā* without using a *karma* or a *jñānamudra*? In this text, one could read Maitrīpa as describing a practitioner who realizes reality through *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*

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[62] *dṛṣṭatattvaḥ [...] yogī*

pith-instructions of the guru, and who later can simply enter the highest level of tantric practice, *mahāmudrā*, bypassing any practices with a *karma* or a *jñānamudra*.

As further support for this theory, the tantric practice explained here in the *Tattvadaśaka* shares similarities with Maitrīpa's description of *mahāmudrā* in the *Sekanirdeśa*. In the *Sekanirdeśa*, *mahāmudrā* is said to be the practice of not abiding in anything, and is also called self-awareness, while in the *Tattvadaśaka*, the yogi is said to move without a reference point, i.e., without holding anything as real or abiding, and is also said to be adorned with self-empowerment, which was previously explained as "an awareness which continues as something that is not separate from emptiness and compassion" (Mathes, 2015, 247). As the terms self-awareness and awareness are also used interchangeably by Maitrīpa in the *Tattvaviṃśikā*[63], he is most likely speaking of *mahāmudrā* when describing the practitioner adorned with self-empowerment in the *Tattvadaśaka*. In the commentary of the *Tattvadaśaka*, Sahajavajra pointed out that the practice based on the non-tantric *yuganaddha*-suchness was slower than the *Mantrayāna* as it lacked "the experience of great bliss resulting from pride in being the deity" (Mathes, 2015, 237). This would also explain why the practitioner is expected to enter the *Mantrayāna* at the end of the *Tattvadaśaka*, even if one could travel in the *Pāramitāyāna* at first. As such, some practitioners as described in the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa* entered the tantric path through the usual means and practices within the succession of the four seals, until seeing reality as it is to finally reach *mahāmudrā* and practice *amanasikāra*. Others, who were pointed to the nature of reality by a *guru* outside of the tantric context could then directly enter *mahāmudrā*. The *Tattvadaśaka* indicates that outside of the Mantrayāna, the guru gave direct pith-instructions for the practitioner to realize suchness:

> Wishing to know suchness
> Which is not in [the tenets of] *Sākāra* nor in *Nirākāra*
> Even the middle [tenet] which is not adorned
> With the speech of the guru, is only middling. (TD 2)[64]

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[63] No-mind [in turn] is self-awareness [svasaṃvittir], / And [such an] awareness [vitti] depends on the guru. (TV 14) (Mathes, 2015, 189)

[64] *na sākāranirākāre tathatāṃ jñatum icchataḥ / madhyamā madhyamā caiva guruvāganalaṃkṛtā* (Mathes, 513)

It is thus only through the speech of the *guru*, that one can truly understand suchness and directly perceive reality for Maitrīpa. That perception of reality is then established as the pre-requisite to enter the *Mantrayāna* by practicing *mahāmudrā* immediately[65].

To summarize, through my interpretation of Maitrīpa as offering a non-tantric way to practice *amanasikāra* on the basis of *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, I have reinterpreted the *Tattvaviṃśikā* and the *Tattvadaśaka*. I have shown that these texts could be interpreted as presenting a special entry into the *Mantrayāna*, where one could bypass any tantric practices preliminary to *mahāmudrā* by seeing reality directly through *amanasikāra* based on *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* pith-instructions of the guru. As Maitrīpa claims that the only requirement to practice *mahāmudrā* is to perceive reality, that requirement does not need to be achieved in the tantric context. Furthermore, I have argued that most likely Maitrīpa favored the tantric practice of *mahāmudrā* afterwards, when one still needs to perceive the lack of inherent existence of the mind, as it was deemed faster by Sahajavajra. Although I do not doubt that my interpretation of Maitrīpa is not definitive, I have shown that on the basis of Sahajavajra's commentary, one could read Maitrīpa, in a logical and consistent way, as offering a non-tantric way to practice *amanasikāra* and perceive true reality to then immediately enter the tantric practice of *mahāmudrā* without the use of a *karmamudrā* or a *jñānamudrā*. In other words, the usual tantric path which requires various initiations with a consort can be bypassed if one has previously perceived reality directly with *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* instructions. As such, one could argue that Kagyupas might have read Maitrīpa in a similar way, and in that sense were being logical and consistent with their own community of interpretation when they pointed to Maitrīpa as a source for a non-tantric practice which trains emptiness and compassion simultaneously which allowed for a direct entry into mahāmudrā. One could wonder, however, if any other Indian thinkers seemed to offer a similar approach or if my reading of Maitrīpa is in disagreement with every other thinker of the time. As such, an analysis of other possible sources of a non-tantric simultaneous practice of compassion and emptiness is necessary.

Other Sources

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[65] Whether one had the option to not enter the *Mantrayāna* seems to not be addressed, which might be another indication that Maitrīpa did not share the same concerns as Gampopa about restricting the access of the *Mantrayāna* to only a few students.

Although Kagyu thinkers mostly pointed to Maitrīpa as a source for *mahāmudrā* practice outside of tantra, he was not the only thinker that taught such practices in India at the time. Mathes mentions Jñānakīrti's *Tattāvatāra*:

> For outstanding *yogins*
> The union of means and insight is simply meditation.
> The victorious ones call it
> *Mahāmudrā* union. (Mathes, 2015, 238)

Brunnhölzl also offers a few translated sentences from the *Tattāvatāra*:

> As for those of highest capacities among the persons who exert themselves in the *pāramitās*, when they perform the meditations of calm abiding and superior insight, even at the stage of ordinary beings this grants them the true realization characterized by having its origin in *mahāmudrā*. (160)

Unlike Maitrīpa, Jñānakīrti did call *mahāmudrā* practices that were not done in the tantric context. Jñānakīrti seems however to have made this statement for the normal *Pāramitāyāna* practice of insight which is done after the long accumulation of merit, not a special practice based on *yuganaddha*-suchness that would be on a par with Tantra.

Kragh also points to another Indian writer for evidence of a non-tantric *mahāmudrā*. He explains that Śākyaśrībhadra, a teacher of Sakya Paṇḍita, composed a text that contains an instantaneous approach to awakening and non-tantric meditation where both emptiness and compassion are practiced simultaneously. In the *Gdam ngag rin chen 'bru dgu*, (Nine Jewel Pebbles of Instruction), Śākyaśrībhadra writes:

> As long as these two aspects [of compassion and insight] have not been cultivated, the less competent meditator should cultivate these in unison by alternating [between them]. Thereafter, letting the meditation become relaxed, he should practice them instantaneously in unison, like the [two] wings of a bird. In general, a crucial key point [of the practice] is to mix emptiness and compassion as much as possible until they become perfected as being of a single taste and then rest in a meditative absorption therein. (Kragh, 64)

Śākyaśrībhadra is offering a meditation that resembles Sahajavajra's *yuganaddha*-suchness. Although there is no mention of the need of pith instructions, it seems like this text is also

offering a way to meditation on both compassion and emptiness at the same time outside of Tantra. Kragh explains however that this text is quite controversial, as only the Kagyupas recognize it as an authentic text composed by Śākyaśrībhadra (Kragh, 65). Kragh, however, explains that the text should not be so easily dismissed as it is not impossible for Śākyaśrībhadra to teach an "instantaneous approach" to his personal translator who was a Kagyu practitioner (Kragh, 67). While Jnānakīrti and Śākyaśrībhadra seem to share some similarities with Maitrīpa they also have important differences in their presentation of the path. Saraha, another Indian *siddha*, offers an explanation of *dharma* which has more similarities with Maitrīpa.

Maitrīpa and Saraha

In Buddhist literature, the term *amanasikāra* often appears side-to-side with another similar term *asmṛti.* In the *Śrāvakabhūmi*, Mathes explains that *amanasikāra* is "mentioned along with *asmṛti*": [The yogin] pursues [the practice of not being mindful [*asmṛti*] and withdrawing his attention [*amanasikāra*] from any notion. (Mathes, 2015, 249). Likewise, in the *Samāhitā Bhūmi*:

> How does one perform [the practice of] not being mindful [*asmṛti*] and
> non-conceptual realization [*amanasikāra*]? By bringing the mind to rest within,
> and the like. (Mathes, 2015, 250)

Finally, in the *Jñānālokālaṃkāra* a *sūtra* which was quoted by Maitrīpa and Rāmapāla:

> Homage to You, who is without imagined thoughts,
> Whose intellect is not based [on anything] ,
> Who is without recollection [asmṛti], who does not become mentally engaged
> [amanasikāra],
> And who is without any cognitive object. (Mathes, 2015, 112)

Surprisingly, Maitrīpa does not mention *asmṛti* in the *Amanasikāra Cycle* except when he quotes this excerpt. Just like *amanasikāra, asmṛti* is a composed of the prefix *a* and one of the "five object-determining mental events in Asaṅga's *Abhidharmasamuccaya*", i.e., *smṛti* (Braitstein, 95)*. Smṛti* has been used in various ways throughout Buddhist literature, and has been generally translated as "mindfulness" in English. This translation, however, hides the complexity of the term as it could also mean "recollecting", "remembering" and as Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche

explains, as "the ability to focus and pay attention to the object of meditation in an unwavering fashion" (Braitstein, 97). As a reminder, Geshe Tashi Tsering explained *manasikāra* as that which "helps to keep the object before the mind" (36) and Bhikkhu Bodhi explained it as "the mental factor responsible for the mind's advertence to the object, by virtue of which the object is made present to consciousness" (69). There is no necessity to delve deeper into the various interpretations and differences of *smṛti* and *manasikāra* in Buddhist literature, but it should be established that they both refer to the mind's capacity to either apprehend or hold objects[66].

In the previous chapter, Maitrīpa's understanding of *amanasikāra* was defined as a transcended *manasikāra*, where one's attention is able to engage with objects non-dually as it perceives their unborn nature. The *a* prefix was thus not indicating the mere absence of attention, but rather the absence of duality, or was metaphorically representing the unborn nature of all things. As Maitrīpa does not teach about *asmṛti*, one has to look at another Indian saint, Saraha (circa 7th-9th C.E.), to find teachings based on *asmṛti*. First, I need to point out my assumption that the Tibetan *dran med* corresponds to the Sanskrit *asmṛti*. When *asmṛti* is mentioned in the *Amanasikāra* cycle, it is translated as *dran med* in Tibetan. Braitstein also points out that "there is a wide range of terms that Tibetan translators translated as *dran pa*, thought the Sanskrit, *smṛti*, is by far the most common" (Braitstein, 95). By extension *dran [pa] med* is the most likely translation of *asmṛti*. As such, one might wonder whether Saraha's *asmṛti* is similar to Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra*, where the *a* prefix does not simply negate *smṛti*, but rather represents a transcendence of that central faculty of the mind. In other words, does Saraha's *asmṛti* share similarities with *amanasikāra*, or did Saraha mean something completely different from Maitrīpa?

Braitstein offers an analysis of Saraha's use of the term *dran med* in her translation of Saraha's *Vajragīti.* She explains that *dran med* "is consistently used to describe a state that is advanced beyond *dran pa*, one where appearances are purified" (Braitstein, 101). She also points out that *dran med* can point to "a sphere or realm of experience where meditative equipoise (*samāhita, mnyam bzhag)* is great bliss and where appearances continue to arise" (Braitstein, 101-102). *Dran med* thus does not refer to a "coma or a long-lasting swoon" (Braistein, 102). In

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[66] However, if one wishes to delve further into the *Abhidharmic* explanation of smṛti, or sati, particularly at the way these mental functions are understood to emphasize a dualistic framework, one can look at Gyatso's *In the Mirror of Memory*, particularly Jaini's article, p.47, and Cox's, p. 67. One should also look into Braitstein's discussion of recognition and decognition, p.95.

other words, *dran med* does not refer to the complete absence of *dran pa*, but rather a state in which the erroneous, or afflicted, way to hold objects in one's own mind is absent. Braitstein quotes a verse from the *Body Treasury Adamantine Song* to illustrate this point: "From the natural liberation of *dran pa*, *dran med* arises freely/Recognize whatever is experienced as mere appearances, and *dran med* is restored" (Braitstein, 103). Braitstein explains that "recognize whatever is experienced as mere appearances" should be understood as "the very process of liberating *dran pa"* (Braitstein, 104). In other words, *dran med* arises when one experiences phenomena as "mere appearances". The idea that *dran med* corresponds to the correct experience of conventional reality is also explained in the various songs of Saraha. Braitstein points out that in the *Speech Treasury*, *dran med* is said to "burn up duality", as Saraha writes, for example, "as soon as [*dran med]* illuminates, the benefit of self and others is not two" (Braitstein, 116). She also explains that, in the *Speech Treasury,* "training in [*dran med*] as a mode of experiencing phenomena is the very antidote to the experience of duality" (Braitstein, 117). Finally, Braitstein analyzes *dran pa* as "the basis of the incorrect, or bewildered, perception" and *dran med* as "the basis for correct conventional perception" (Braitstein, 109). Thus, *dran med* undoes the incorrect perception of *dran pa*. As she translated *dran pa* as "recognition" in most cases, Braitstein illustrates the undoing of recognition by translating *dran med* as decognition.

Within Braitstein's analysis of the word *dran med,* which I argued is most likely *asmṛti* in Sanskrit, one can find similarities with Maitrīpa's explanation of *amanasikāra*. In Saraha's *Vajragīti, dran med* is not a negation of *dran pa*, but rather a transformation of a basic factor of the mind which apprehends objects. Through this transformation, one stops wrong and dual apprehension of phenomena. Maitrīpa was also adamant in explaining that *amanasikāra* was not a refutation of *manasikāra*, but rather a negation of the dualistic perception of *"something perceived, a perceiver and the like"* (Mathes, 2015, 244). He also explained that the prefix *a* could stand metaphorically for the unborn, and thus *amanasikāra* meant to engage with all phenomena while being aware of their true unborn nature. Likewise, *asmṛti* was explained to destroy duality and to allow for the correct perception of conventional phenomena. There is however an important difference. Central to Saraha's teachings are the four specialized (Tib. *brda*) terms, of which both *asmṛti* and the unborn (Tib. *skye med*) are a part. As such, in Saraha's teachings, the term *skye med* is distinguished as a term separate from *asmṛti*, which makes it

improbable that the prefix *a* in *asmrti* would also share the meaning of *skye med*. In other words, Maitrīpa's interpretation of the prefix *a* as metaphorically representing the unborn does not apply seamlessly to Saraha's own teachings, as *dran med* and *skye med* are two different terms with their own explanations for Saraha. Nevertheless, one can also argue that Maitrīpa's metaphorical interpretation is a skillful way to teach the function of *amanasikāra*: a mode of engaging with phenomena which acknowledges their unborn nature. As such, although the metaphor might not be applied to Saraha's *asmṛti*, it seems that *asmṛti* or *dran med* can be interpreted as sharing a role similar to *amanasikāra*: a way to engage with phenomena which correctly perceives their nature. As such, Saraha and Maitrīpa share similarities in the way they envisioned *Dharma* and perhaps in the tradition they belonged to, since Maitrīpa is usually acknowledged as the one who "revived" the tradition of the "mystical songs" of Saraha (Kragh, 71). Furthermore, as I have also mentioned, since amanasikāra and asmṛti were often presented together in *sūtras*, both Maitrīpa and Saraha might have been part of a *siddha* tradition which used these terms to describe their own vision of *Dharma*.

Maitrīpa's presentation of the path focused on *amanasikāra* thus seems to have non-negligible similarities with Saraha. Although a more thorough analysis might demonstrate that they also have important differences in the path they present, it would be hard to argue that they did not share similarities as they both use very similar terms to describe the state of an awakened mind. Saraha's teachings can thus be understood as an acceptable entry point to understand Maitrīpa's own position. Although one must be wary to not draw hasty conclusions, in the next section I will explore how Maitrīpa's own teachings can be understood as sharing similar motivations to Saraha's. Particularly, I would like to highlight two important characteristics of Saraha's teachings. First, Saraha was highly critical of Buddhist practitioners of his time following the conventional *Pāramitāyāna* and *Mantrayāna*. He "continually scoffs at them" as he feels that their practice is not genuine (Braitstein, 84). Second, Saraha emphasized *mahāmudrā* over all other seals, and explains that it is the "authentic, natural, effortless practice and goal, accessed naturally through the blessing of the Guru" (Braitstein, 84). As such, Saraha, as least in his *Vajragīti* was concerned with emphasizing the sole practice of *mahāmudrā* as being the correct focus and goal of Buddhist practice. In that sense, Saraha offered a bare-bones approach to *Dharma* where he only emphasized what he believed was essential, the instructions of the guru and the practice of *mahāmudrā* and criticized or rejected myriad of other practices. I

believe that Maitrīpa can be interpreted as sharing similar visions of *Dharma*, as he explains the goal of any Buddhist practice as converging towards the practice of non-abiding, *amanasikāra*.

Maitrīpa's bare-bones approach to Dharma

Maitrīpa's *Amanasikāra* cycle accomplishes two main goals. Kragh pointed out that Maitrīpa wanted to "synthesize the teachings of the *Anuttarayogatantras* with the common Mahāyāna" (Kragh, 78). It is true that Maitrīpa clearly equates and explains tantric terms and ideas through *Pāramitāyāna* and *Madhyamaka* terminology. Doing so, he demonstrates that Tantras are entirely compatible with the view and principles laid out in the *Mahāyāna*. I believe that this first goal, however, is deeply intertwined with Maitrīpa's other main concern: teaching *amanasikāra* as the heart of Buddhist practice. While Maitrīpa seemed to have accounted for two different paths in his writings, the common denominator is that in the end, one should always practice *amanasikāra* and experience the world as non-abiding. On the basis of the similarities in their teachings, I want here to draw a parallel with Saraha, who was very critical of Tantric practitioners of his times, particularly those who simply did the practice without understanding its essential purpose. In the People's *doha*, Saraha writes:

> Those who are devoid of co-emergence,
> Meditating on cyclic-existence and liberation,
> And dividing them,
> Will not achieve the latter, the ultimate concern.
> How can one who craves some [liberation]
> Attain freedom by siting in concentration?
> What use are butter lamps, what use are divine offerings?
> What can these do? What use is teaching mantras?
> There is no use in going to the bathing steps, no use in austerity,
> How can one attain freedom by dipping in the water? (50-59) (Schaeffer, 136)

For Saraha, if one does not experience the co-emergent, and thus *mahāmudrā*, all practices are meaningless. Whether one uses mantras, makes offerings, or even achieves high levels of concentrations, it is simply useless if one does not understand the essential meaning of *dharma,* i.e., the experience of the co-emergent achieved in *mahāmudrā* meditation. Saraha was thus concerned with reframing the purpose and goal of Buddhist practice as the experience of the co-emergent, i.e., transcending one's own dual way of apprehending phenomena. While Saraha can

either be interpreted as denying the usefulness of tantric practices all-together, or simply as reframing their purpose, what is clear is that his main goal was to emphasize the essence of Buddhist practice which made all other activities meaningful. I read the same intention in Maitrīpa.

While he does not vigorously criticize Buddhist practitioners in the same way as Saraha, Maitrīpa is concerned with teaching and explaining what he considers essential to Buddhist practice. Most of his texts come back to the same point: practicing non-abiding, or mental non-engagement, by experiencing the unborn nature of all things. He also warns practitioners to not get lost in misleading practices, for example by emphasizing the defects of the *karmamudrā,* and emphasizes that all practices should lead to the experience of *amanasikāra.* This is nicely summarized in the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa*:

> What was taught by [Śākya]muni
> As the outer union of the couple,
> [All] that [should] be clearly known in the tantras,
> To be for the sake of realizing something different. (MSP 5)
>
> Without bliss there is no enlightenment,
> Since [the latter] is considered to have the nature of bliss.
> But [if bliss actually] existed, there would be great attachment,
> Which would be the cause of *saṃsāra* arising. (MSP 6)
>
> The bliss which has arisen in dependence
> Realize it as the bliss of primordial quiescence!
> It does not represent an entity [, though].
> Therefore we say that bliss neither exists nor does not exist. (MSP 7)
> […]
> The gifted one, whose character is formed by the practice
> Of mantras and [visualized] forms, becomes submerged in bliss.
> Then he sees in such a manner [of practice] the manifold [world]
> To be like an illusion and non-dual. (MSP 10)
> […]
> True reality has the nature of insight and means
> For its purity is [both] outer and inner.
> Once it is realized, the mantra practitioner is, in short,
> Delighted through the practice of non-abiding. (MSP 13) (Mathes, 2015, 182-183)

The *karmamudrā*'s purpose is not to simply feel bliss, but to recognize that bliss as "the bliss of primordial quiescence", and without an own-being. Doing so, one realizes reality as being

beyond existence and non-existence, "like an illusion and non-dual". Once that step is done, one is "delighted through the practice of non-abiding", which is none other than *amanasikāra*. As such, all tantric practices, and even seeing reality as it is, is simply done to practice *amanasikāra*.

When trying to find a source for Gampopa's *mahāmudrā* in Maitrīpa's writings, scholars have mostly tried to find the exact same wordings, or explanations, that would definitely support Gampopa's position. Doing so, however, Maitrīpa's main approach to *Dharma* was mostly ignored: teaching a bare-bones approach to *Dharma*, where a single practice could encompass the whole path. Although students of lower and middling faculties require various practices, such as the *karmamudrā* and the recitation of mantras and so on, those are not essential as the *Tattvaviṃśikā* states that they can simply be ignored if one is able to meditate on the nature of all things. The *Yuganaddhaprakāśa* even goes so far as to say that for one who has realized "the profound inborn emptiness", "whether he follows the [prescribed] conduct or not; / he will still be called an observer of [proper] conduct" (Mathes 176). Hence, one who is able to practice *amanasikāra* accomplishes all the goals of path. Furthermore, when Maitrīpa wrote in the *Tattvaviṃśikā* that all seals, except for the *mahāmudrā*, were optional, he was most likely telling his readers that all other practices are useless if they do not bring to the experience of mind and reality as non-abiding, i.e., to the practice of *mahāmudrā*. However, unlike Saraha, Maitrīpa also emphasizes how all *Mantrayāna* practices can be useful to most practitioners, as only those of highest faculties with the help of the *guru* could truly do without them[67]. The fact that he uses the word "*amanasikāra*" and not "*mahāmudrā*" directly could also be a statement that *amanasikāra* transcends the *Mantrayāna*. It is not a practice that is confined to the tantric context, as it can also be experienced in the *Pāramitāyāna*. For him, *mahāmudrā* is a term only used in the *Mantrayāna*[68], and thus arguing that *mahāmudrā* is the goal of Buddhist practice would most likely go against his point that both the *Pāramitāyāna* and the *Mantrayāna* shared the same goal[69]. However, by making obvious that the sole purpose of the *Pāramitāyāna* and the *Mantrayāna* is to see mind and reality as non-abiding and experience *amanasikāra*, Maitrīpa is setting the stage for other thinkers to take a step forward and teach, as its own path, a practice of

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[67] As explained in the Tattvaviṃśikā. See the first section of this chapter.
[68] As explained at the end of the second chapter, and also argued by Kragh.
[69] In his effort to synthesize the teachings of the tantras with the Common *Mahayāna*, it is clear that Maitrīpa deemed that both path shared the same goal.

seeing reality directly through the kindness of the guru. Perhaps such a step was already taken by Saraha, as some argue, but Maitrīpa seemed to be more concerned with reframing the correct purpose of both the *Pāramitā* and Mantra vehicles rather than promoting a path outside of both[70]. Maitrīpa can be interpreted as not only synthesizing elements of the *Mantrayāna* with the *Pāramitāyāna*, but rather as framing the entire goal of *Dharma* practice as the same practice, *amanasikāra*, which is compatible with both vehicles. As such, synthesizing the two vehicles could also be interpreted as a way to demonstrate that both vehicles can be synthesized in a single practice, as they both share the same final goal. Just as Saraha saw in mantras, offerings, concentration, etc., possible distractions from the true goal of Buddhist practice, Maitrīpa taught that only the practice of non-abiding was truly *Dharma* and all other practices were simply a means to that end.

Gampopa and Maitrīpa

Overall, some thinkers in India seemed to teach a meditation which trained emptiness and compassion simultaneously outside of Tantra. It is thus surprising that Sapaṇ missed all of them when he decided to criticize Gampopa's teachings as being rooted in Ch'an Buddhism. Kragh formulates the hypothesis that Sapaṇ had received a lineage which came before "the new trend of synthesizing the teachings and practices of the *Anuttarayogatantra*s with the Common *Mahāyāna*" which had Maitrīpa as a central figure (Kragh, 78). As such, Sapaṇ might not have been familiar with *Mahāyāna* teachings that tried to emulate the principle of the *Mantrayāna* by teaching emptiness and compassion simultaneously. In that sense, Sapaṇ's idea that emptiness and compassion could only be practiced simultaneously in *mahāmudrā* might be due to having received teachings from a "slightly earlier stage in Indian Tantrism" (Kragh, 78). Whether it was earlier or not, Sapaṇ did seem to have received a different transmission of some of Maitrīpa's teachings. As Mathes points out, a central argument of Sapaṇ is based on his translation of the following verse of the *Caturmudrānvaya*, which is here attributed to Nāgārjuna but is still central to Maitrīpa's explanation of the tantric path:

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[70] His desire to explain *amanasikāra* as the goal of both the *Pāramitāyāna* and the *Mantrayāna* might also suggest that *amanasikāra* already existed as its own path, as it would demonstrate that *amanasikāra* is the true supreme path that all other paths lead to. Such an argument would require, however, many more proofs that *amanasikāra* was understood as its own path in the *siddha* movement.

In his *Caturmudrā[nvaya]*, Noble Nāgārjuna said this:
If, through not having known the *karmamudrā*,
One is also ignorant of the *dharmamudrā*,
It is impossible for one to understand
Even the name *mahāmudrā*.7 (III.178) (Mathes, 2016, 311)

Sapaṇ's quotation has the direct opposite meaning of the *Caturmudrānvaya* translated earlier in this thesis. Mathes points out that the difference between the two versions of the *Caturmudrānvaya* was already remarked by Padma Karpo (Mathes, 2016, 312). For Padma Karpo and in the Sanskrit version uncovered by Mathes, the *Caturmudrānvaya* states that the *karmamudrā* is not necessary for *mahāmudrā*, the exact opposite of Sapaṇ's translation. One could conclude that Sapaṇ mistranslated the passage, which would be possible but quite improbable. Another conclusion is that Sapaṇ had received another version of the text[71]. The latter conclusion might support Kragh's hypothesis that there were new transmissions and interpretations of tantric texts which were not transmitted entirely to Sapaṇ. As such, Sapaṇ was indeed too quick to judge Gampopa's teachings as originating from *Ch'an* Buddhism. That, however, does not mean that Gampopa's view of *mahāmudrā* is entirely supported in Maitrīpa's texts.

Gampopa's teachings emphasized devotion as giving a special access to a direct perception of reality, which allowed high capacities practitioners to skip the usual prerequisites to practice *mahāmudrā* through pith-instructions of the guru. These pith-instructions did not need to be given in a tantric context. He also taught a special sūtric path, which allowed his students to go directly from sūtric practices to the practice of *mahāmudrā*, by bypassing any other tantric practices[72]. Gampopa also described the path of *mahāmudrā* in great details by explaining it in terms of four *yogas*, and so on (Kragh, 78). Out of all these characteristics of Gampopa's *mahāmudrā*, Maitrīpa's writings seem to support directly the special role of devotion, or of the *guru,* and the special access to *mahāmudrā*. As mentioned earlier, Maitrīpa often emphasizes the need for the *guru* to truly realize suchness in texts such as the *Tattvaviṃśikā* and the *Tattvadaśaka*. As for teaching *mahāmudrā* outside of Tantra, he never truly did so. In his writings, *mahāmudrā* is only mentioned as a tantric practice and as such it might have been too much of an oxymoron to call *mahāmudrā* a practice which is not set in the

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[71] Or was perhaps motivated by political reasons to translate in this particular way.
[72] See the Introduction for a longer explanation of this subject.

Mantrayāna. What he did, however, was to equate the practice of *mahāmudrā* with *amanasikāra*. a practice which can be done outside of the tantric context. The main difference being that one might enters *amanasikāra* through bliss and other tantric means, or through a special access based on *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* pith-instructions of the guru. The latter option also allows the practitioner to directly enter *mahāmudrā* while bypassing any practices requiring consorts. As such it is quite similar, at least in principle, to Gampopa's sūtric path which was explained as offering a direct access to *mahāmudrā* without the need for tantric practices. Furthermore, in the *Sekanirdeśa* Maitrīpa explains the practice of *mahāmudrā* as *amanasikāra* and explains the view of reality that goes with such a practice in *Madhyamaka* terms. *Sekanirdeśa* 29, which was already quoted several times in this thesis, states that "Not abiding in anything / Is called *mahāmudrā*". As explained by Rāmapāla's commentary, and Maitrīpa's mentions of the "practice of non-abiding", not abiding in anything is a synonym of practicing *amanasikāra*. In the same section of the *Sekanirdeśa* on *mahāmudrā*, Maitrīpa writes the following:

> All superimposition, whatever there is
> All this does not exist in any respect;
> As to the meaning of *Madhyamaka*, it is the absence of superimposition;
> Where is, then, the denial or the establishing [of anything]?
> (SN 32 = TRA 30)

It should be noted that this verse is exactly the same verse as *Tattvaratnāvalī* 30 where Maitrīpa explains the view of *Apratiṣṭhānavāda*. Maitrīpa thus relates *mahāmudrā* to the *Pāramitāyāna* in two ways. First, by equating the practice of *mahāmudrā* with *amanasikāra* he is stating that the way to practice *mahāmudrā* is not exclusive to the *Mantrayāna* as both Maitrīpa and Rāmapāla explained *amanasikāra* with the *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, a *sūtra*. Although *mahāmudrā* is a special tantric way to practice *amanasikāra*, *amanasikāra* is not a tantric-only practice. Second, by explaining the view of *mahāmudrā* with *Apratiṣṭhānavāda*, Maitrīpa is also stating that the view supporting *mahāmudrā* is not exclusive to the *Mantrayāna*, rather, it is a view which is ultimately common to both the *Pāramitāyāna* and the *Mantrayāna*. Maitrīpa also offers a more tantric description of reality in the *Mahāsukhaprakāśa*, which most likely means that a tantric practitioner's view of reality can be taught in terms of *Madhyamaka* and also in terms of great bliss and so on. In summary, although Maitrīpa did not call *mahāmudrā* a practice outside of the

Mantrayāna, he did teach that the practice of *mahāmudrā* was based on the same principle as a non-exclusively tantric practice, *amanasikāra*, which trains emptiness and compassion simultaneously when accomplished through the kindness of the *guru*. As the non-tantric *amanasikāra* and the tantric *mahāmudrā* shared the same principles for Maitrīpa, one could also enter directly *mahāmudrā* if one had seen reality while practicing the non-tantric *amanasikāra*[73]. However, I have not found any texts of Maitrīpa which would mirror Gampopa's division of *mahāmudrā* practice in four *yogas*. As such, although Gampopa and Maitrīpa might have shared similar ideas about how one can access *mahāmudrā*, the practices they taught are not entirely similar. Those divisions perhaps came from another source or were simply a later evolution. Although not all aspects of Gampopa's *mahāmudrā* can be found in Maitrīpa's writings, both teachers shared similarities in their approach to teaching *Dharma*.

Although Gampopa diverged from Maitrīpa when he called a *Pāramitāyāna*-based practice *mahāmudrā*, his choice can be interpreted as Gampopa's efforts to offer a bare-bones approach to *Dharma* in the Tibetan context. The point of contention between Gampopa and Maitrīpa is not whether such a practice can be practiced in the *Pāramitāyāna*, but rather whether that practice should be called *mahāmudrā* or *amanasikāra*. It would be naïve, however, to think that Gampopa's *mahāmudrā* and Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* are the exact same practice. Nowhere does Maitrīpa speak of the four *yogas* for example. However, both practices do share the same idea that directly seeing the nature of reality in a way that trains compassion and emptiness simultaneously is the essence of *Dharma* practice. While Sapaṇ understood that as a practice exclusive to the *Mantrayāna*, both Maitrīpa and Gampopa saw the possibility for such a practice to be done outside of Tantra. However, Sapaṇ was also criticizing Gampopa for calling such a practice *mahāmudrā*, a step that Maitrīpa never took. Gampopa's decision can perhaps be explained by his desire to teach what he considered the essential practice of Buddhism to an audience that was mostly interested in Tantra. Although tantric practices seemed to be popular in Tibet around his time, the "ordinance of the Western Tibetan royal monk Lha Bla ma Ye shes 'od" (959-1040) also indicates that some of these practices were misused (Sherpa, 136). In that sense, Gampopa followed in Atiśa's footsteps and was cautious not to teach Tantra in public but only to his closest students (Sherpa, 131). His decision to teach *mahāmudrā* in public, however,

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[73] As explained earlier, the Tattvadaśaka and the Tattvaviṃśikā can be interpreted as offering a special access to *mahāmudrā* which bypasses any consort practices.

could be understood as his desire to demonstrate that the *Mantrayāna* should not be misunderstood for something else, as it really is only about *mahāmudrā*, and not about, for example, sexual practices. In that sense, esoteric and mystical practices of Tantras were framed as optional and only available to those who could truly understand their purpose, while *mahāmudrā*, as it is the purpose of *dharma* practice, could be directly presented. This story, taking place at the end of Gampopa's life seems to support this idea:

> In the end, when [Gampopa] was passing into *Nirvāṇa* in the waterfemale-hen year [1153 CE], two monks each holding a sacrificial cake in their hands approached, calling out: "We request instruction in the Path of Means, so pray compassionately accept us!" "Don't let them come near," [Bsod nams rin chen] replied. Then one of his attendants advised them: "You should call out saying that you are requesting *Mahāmudrā*!" Accordingly, those two then called out for a long time: "But we are requesting *Mahāmudrā*, sir!" Thereupon, [Bsod nams rin chen] said, "Now send them in," and he let them in and gave them the instructions of *Mahāmudrā*. In this way, he emphasized *Mahāmudrā* in particular from among his teachings (Kragh, 33)

In that story, Gampopa refuses to teach Tantra, "the Path of Means", but accepts when they ask for *mahāmudrā*. One possible interpretation is that Gampopa was, like Maitrīpa and Saraha, concerned with teaching the essence of *Dharma* practice and framing all other practices as a simple means to that end. Unlike Maitrīpa, however, Gampopa decided to call this practice *mahāmudrā* perhaps because Tibetans were mostly interested in Tantra. As such, calling it *mahāmudrā* might have been a skillful means to attract more followers, as posited by Sherpa (163). In that sense, Gampopa can be understood as following the example of teachers like Saraha and Maitrīpa who focused on offering a bare-bones approach to *Dharma* by reducing it to one central practice.

Sapaṇ's desire to rectify wrong understandings of Tantras in Tibet and Gampopa's urge to pinpoint the essence of *Dharma* as the direct realization of reality as *mahāmudrā* can be understood as stemming from the same motivation: teaching the correct way to practice *Dharma*. Sapaṇ was thus not necessarily wrong when he criticized Gampopa. Even if one argues that Gampopa was simply using a skillful means, the idea that *mahāmudrā* could be practiced outside of Tantra can also lead to confusion if not understood in the right context. Given that he also might not have had access to the same transmissions as Gampopa, his desire to criticize is partly justified. He went too far in his criticism, however, when he claimed that Gampopa's teachings

were none other than *Ch'an* Buddhism, as Gampopa's ideas are clearly in the same line of thought as Maitrīpa. That is not to say, however, that Gampopa's *mahāmudrā* is entirely supported in Maitrīpa's writing. They share the basic principle that one can access to the true nature of reality to practice emptiness and compassion simultaneously inside or outside the *Mantrayāna*, and then access *mahāmudrā* directly. And yet, Gampopa's presentation of such a practice as *mahāmudrā*, and the division of such a practice in four *yogas* and so on, is not found in Maitrīpa's writings. Kragh also points out that there are very few references to Maitrīpa in the *Dwags po'i dka' bum'* and that it was only in the later tradition that people defended Gampopa's teachings by pointing back at Maitrīpa (Kragh, 77). While Maitrīpa certainly sets an Indian precedent for teaching a practice which trains emptiness and compassion simultaneously, which answers Sapaṇ's main critic, not all of Gampopa's teachings have a precedent in Maitrīpa's writings. That was, however, not the claim made by all of Gampopa's followers. The *Blue Annals*, one of main texts that points to Maitrīpa as a source for Gampopa, states the following:

> *Dags po'i rin po che* [i.e., Gampopa] caused an understanding of *Mahāmudrā* to arise even in beginners who had not received [Tantric] empowerment. This is called the *Pāramitā* method (i.e., the Common *Mahāyāna*) … With regard to this, though the *Dharma* Master *Sa skya pa* [i.e., Sapaṇ] stated that the *Pāramitā* method ought not to be called *Mahāmudrā,* since the awareness of *Mahāmudrā* arises solely from Tantric empowerment, [he was mistaken]. [In fact,] the [Indian] Ācārya Jñānakīrti states in his *Tattvāvatāra* that even at the level of an ordinary person, someone who possesses a sharp intellect may attain an irreversible understanding, since he can understand *Mahāmudrā* properly and with certainty [merely] by relying on the [Common *Mahāyāna*] practices of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* in accordance with the *Pāramitā* approach… Accordingly, Rgod tshang pa has explained that Sgam po pa's *pāramitā* method is precisely what had [formerly] been taught by Maitrīpa. (Kragh, 77-78)

In this excerpt, it is made clear that Gampopa's decision to call his method *mahāmudrā* is not an influence from Maitrīpa, but rather from Jñānakīrti. While some followers might have stated that Maitrīpa himself called it *mahāmudrā*, important texts such as the *Blue Annals* did not share that idea. It does, however, argue that Gampopa's method comes "precisely" from Maitrīpa, which is, in my opinion, an overstatement. While Maitrīpa certainly provided a lot of the pre-requisites to allow a practice which trains emptiness and compassion simultaneously outside of the *Mantrayāna*, and allowed a special access to *mahāmudrā*, Gampopa's own method is not a simple copy of Maitrīpa's teachings and thus can hardly be said to be "precisely what had

[formerly] been taught by Maitrīpa". Gampopa's followers might have overstated the influence of Maitrīpa on Gampopa, but they certainly provided enough arguments to show that the Kagyu teachings did not originate from *Ch'an* Buddhism, as the basic principles at the heart of their practice can definitely be interpreted from Maitrīpa's writings. Sapaṇ's criticism should thus be taken as an example of how Tibetans tried to make sense of all the various teachings and practices that entered Tibet at the time, but not as a proof that Kagyu teachings were somehow non-Indian.

Conclusion

To conclude, whether a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* similar to Gampopa was taught by Maitrīpa is not easy to answer. While Maitrīpa did not use mahāmudrā outside of the tantric context, he certainly equated the practice of *mahāmudrā* with *amanasikāra*, which can be practiced outside of the *Mantrayāna*. As such Sapaṇ's criticism of Gampopa seems to be mostly unfounded. Jackson explained that Sapaṇ criticized three main points in Gampopa's doctrine: Buddhahood being taught as achievable through a single factor, the gnosis of *mahāmudrā* being generated through an exclusively non-conceptual method, and teaching *mahāmudrā* outside of the Mantrayāna. By demonstrating that the first two points truly boiled down to Gampopa's definition of a student with high capacities, and by arguing that such a student most likely developed qualities similar to someone who practiced all traditional preliminary practices for *mahāmudrā*, I concluded that Jackson's first two points boiled down to the same critique. As such, the only doctrinal difference on that subject between the two thinkers seemed to be Gampopa's choice to teach *mahāmudrā* outside of the *Mantrayāna*.

In the first chapter, I detailed current understanding of Maitrīpa's philosophical view and teachings on meditation. He held *apratiṣṭhāna* as the highest tenet and his central practice is called *amanasikāra*, where the prefix *a* stands not for the absence or removal of *manasikāra*, attention, but can be understood as metaphorically referring to the unborn, emptiness. As such, *amanasikāra* is not the denial of attention, but a practice where one brings attention to *a*, the unborn. This type of attention destroys the dualistic perception of subject and object and is ultimately explained as "luminous self-empowerment", where *a* stands for luminous, and *manasikāra* for self-empowerment. Having explained the general ideas in Maitrīpa's teachings, I turned to the analysis of Mathes' arguments for a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* taught by Maitrīpa. His arguments based solely on root texts only demonstrated that Maitrīpa defended various possible paths in the *Mantrayāna*, as the *karmamudrā* is optional. Mathes' arguments based on commentaries, on the other hand, have shown that there was indeed a non-tantric practice which trained emptiness and compassion simultaneously, and that *amanasikāra* was fully explained through a sūtra, the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*. Isaacson and Sferra answered Mathes' argument by bringing up two general and four specific criticisms. In general, they criticized Mathes' tendency to coalesce the meaning of commentaries with the meaning of root texts, which ignores other possible interpretations, and they also criticize Mathes' interpretation of practical

instructions as they should simply be understood as descriptions of reality. Specifically, they first disagreed with the idea that Rāmapāla's mention of the "kindness of one's guru" implies a non-tantric context. Second, they also refuted Mathes' idea that *mahāmudrā* is independent from the other *mudrās*, as it can only make sense in the context of the succession of the four joys. Thirdly, they criticized Mathes' translation of *mantrayānānusāreṇa* as meaning on a par with *Mantrayāna*, i.e., different but able to produce the same results. Finally, they explained that the *Tattvadaśaka* and the *Mahāyānaviṃśika*, which were described as non-tantric by Mathes, did in fact contain tantric terminology and ideas.

By analyzing Isaacson and Sferra's critic, I pointed out that they ignored one of Mathes central argument, mainly that Rāmapāla and Maitrīpa explained *amanasikāra* by following closely the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, which implies that *amanasikāra* can be practiced solely on the basis of the sūtras. I also put into question most of their reasoning, such as explaining *mahāmudrā* as being dependent on the succession of the four seals, as Maitrīpa clearly states that the *karmamudrā* is optional. I also questioned whether Mathes' choice to interpret Maitrīpa solely through commentaries was problematic or not. I concluded that, although the reader definitely needs to take into account that Mathes' arguments are based on commentaries, claiming that Maitrīpa's intention is the same as the commentaries of his direct students is not a very controversial decision. Although it is true that from a strictly historical point of viewMathes should not attribute to Maitrīpa positions that can only be found in commentaries of his students. However, as the texts themselves are cryptic, few other options are available, and Isaacson and Sferra's choice to use reflection lacked a comprehensive understanding of the entirety of Maitrīpa's works. Finally, I did agree with Isaacson and Sferra on the uncertainty of the tantric status of the *Tattvadaśaka* and the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā*. I hypothesised that perhaps Maitrīpa only described the goal in tantric terms to prove that non-tantric methods led to the same result as the *Mantrayāna*, but also agreed that such a position would require many more proofs. As such, I concluded that while Mathes arguments make a strong case for an Indian non-tantric *mahāmudrā*, or at least an Indian non-tantric practice which trains compassion and emptiness simultaneously while working with one's own mind directly, his arguments did not show that Maitrīpa himself held such a position.

In the second chapter, I attempted to tackle the debate from other perspectives by analyzing the term *yuganaddha* in Maitrīpa's teachings. Although Kragh does not disagree with

Mathes on Maitrīpa teaching a non-tantric direct approach to awakening, he was more skeptical of the similarities between Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* and Gampopa's *mahāmudrā*. As Maitrīpa never used the term *mahāmudrā* outside of the four seals, Kragh maintains that Mathes fails to prove that Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* is equivalent to Gampopa's *mahāmudrā*. Given that Kragh does not go in much details about Maitrīpa's direct approach to *mahāmudrā*, I decided to investigate the path to awakening taught by Maitrīpa. As a starting point, I took Sahajavajra's mention of *yuganaddha*-suchness, which was said to be able to train emptiness and compassion directly, due to the kindness of the *guru*, while not being tantric. I also mentioned that there was a Tibetan classification of views on reality which included *zung 'jug rab tu mi gnas pas*, *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*. Building on these two elements, I analyzed the use of *yuganaddha* in Maitrīpa's writings. I concluded that he taught two ways to understand reality while emphasizing the union of two elements*, one which was non-tantric and based on *apratiṣṭhāna*, which I called *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, and one tantric based on concepts such as great bliss, insight and means. I then demonstrated how Maitrīpa did not simply taught two ways to describe reality, but also two different ways to practice non-abiding, one for the "yogin of true reality", and the other for the "yogin of mantra reality".

Finally, in the third chapter, I attempted to scheme the path laid out by Maitrīpa in all his teachings. He taught at least three different ways to enter and practice Tantra, the final one being to simply practice *mahāmudrā*. Based on my reading of the *Tattvadaśaka*, I suggested that this path was most likely entered after one had been directly introduced to *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, which could be done outside of the *Mantrayāna* through pith-instructions of the *guru*. Having established that Maitrīpa could be interpreted as having taught a non-tantric meditation which trains emptiness and compassion by working directly with one's own mind, I explored other Indian thinkers who mentioned similar practices. I emphasized the similitude between Saraha's *asmṛti* and Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra*, as both practices are based on a similarly constructed compound and share important principles. Finally, I compared Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* to Gampopa's *mahāmudrā*. The two practices share the same basic principle of working with one's own mind directly with the help of the *guru* to train emptiness and compassion simultaneously, and Maitrīpa allows for a special entry into *mahāmudrā* which bypasses the usual tantric practices with consorts, which is quite similar to Gampopa's sūtric path. However, Gampopa's decision to call the non-tantric practices *mahāmudrā*, and his further subdivisions, such as the
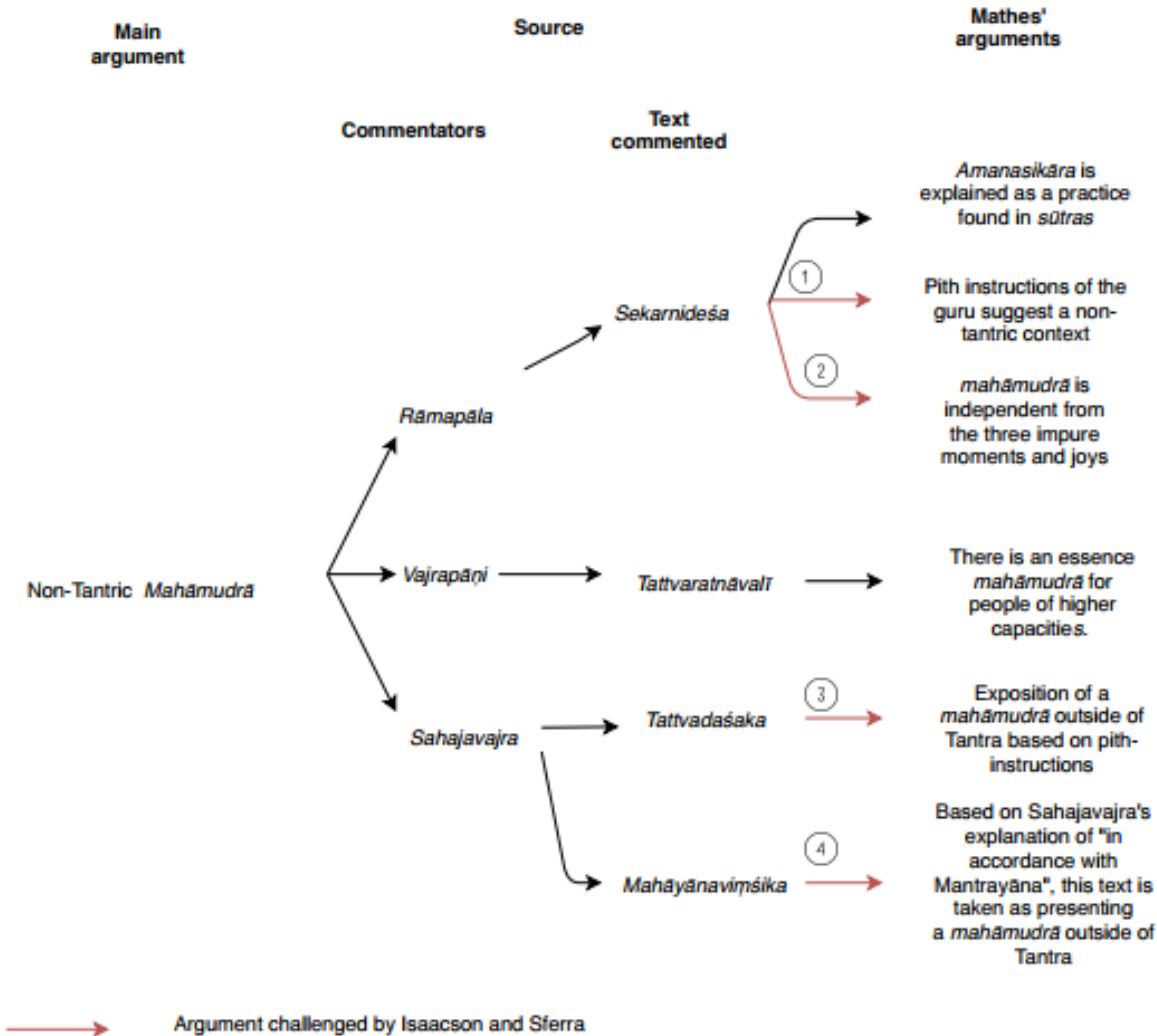
four *yogas,* are important differences in the two practices. However, calling the practice *mahāmudrā* can be explained as a skillful means used by Gampopa to fit the Tibetan context. Moreover, other Indian thinkers, such as Jñānakīrti, also called some *Pāramitāyāna* practices *mahāmudrā*. It seems that at least some followers of Gampopa were very well aware of that, and simply made the claim that Gampopa's *mahāmudrā* "is precisely what had [formerly] been taught by Maitrīpa", while claiming that calling this practice *mahāmudrā* was based on Jñānakīrti. While Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra* and Gampopa's *mahāmudrā* do share important underlying principles, and operate under a very similar approach to *Dharma* it would be an overstatement to say that Gampopa's *mahāmudrā* is precisely Maitrīpa's *amanasikāra*. Sapaṇ's desire to criticize Gampopa was thus partly justified, as it has the merit of forcing students to debate and avoid erroneous interpretations of *mahāmudrā*. But, it is also based on a false assumption that Indian Buddhists never taught a non-tantric way to practice emptiness and compassion simultaneously. As such, it made sense for Gampopa's followers to point to Maitrīpa to defend their lineage and practices as being rooted in Indian Buddhism.

Maitrīpa, however, should not be understood as being as concerned as Tibetans with classifying practices as part of the *Pāramitāyāna* or of the *Mantrayāna*. His mains concerns were to show that both vehicles shared many similarities and that *amanasikāra* was not only a practice compatible with both vehicles, but also their ultimate goal. As such, his concerns were somewhat different from Gampopa and Sapaṇ, which explains why Maitrīpa never made a direct statement which tackles all the issues which were important for Tibetans. His presentation of reality based on *apratiṣṭhāna* and his emphasis on *yuganaddha*, which was deemed a central term for *amanasikāra* practice while discussing Avadhūtipa, could be understood as hints pointing that Maitrīpa was really trying to reframe an independent path solely based on *amanasikāra* within the mainstream vehicles. His motivation could simply be to share the techniques and practices of the *siddhas* with all other practitioners. This position would require more evidence that *amanasikāra* was indeed understood as being its own path in *siddha* circles. However, even if this hypothesis ends up being wrong, it is clear that Maitrīpa's works have framed the practice of *amanasikāra* as the goal of *Dharma* practice. As such, Maitrīpa does not give a lengthy explanation as to whether or not *amanasikāra* is tantric or sūtric, as he understands the *Pāramitāyāna* and the *Mantrayāna* as simple tools to see reality as it is and enter the practice of non-abiding. Thus, his work should not be understood as defending a non-tantric *mahāmudrā* per

say, but rather as explaining the ultimate practice of the *Mantrayāna*, *mahāmudrā,* and of the *Pāramitāyāna* as being the same practice, *amanasikāra*. That practice is then simply done in a different context and on the basis of a different explanation of reality, as one is based on *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna*, and the other is based on a tantric description, where insight, means and great bliss are emphasized. As such, one can also simply access *mahāmudrā* directly if one is able to perceive reality through a non-tantric practice of *amanasikāra* based on *yuganaddha-apratiṣṭhāna* instructions of the guru.

Appendixes

Tree-diagram of the debate between Mathes and Isaacson and Sferra

Main argument

Source

Mathes' arguments

Commentators

Text commented

Amanasikāra is explained as a practice found in *sūtras*

Sekarnideśa

① Pith instructions of the guru suggest a non-tantric context

② *mahāmudrā* is independent from the three impure moments and joys

Rāmapāla

Non-Tantric *Mahāmudrā*

Vajrapāṇi → *Tattvaratnāvalī* → There is an essence *mahāmudrā* for people of higher capacities.

Sahajavajra → *Tattvadaśaka* ③ Exposition of a *mahāmudrā* outside of Tantra based on pith-instructions

④ *Mahāyānaviṃśika* Based on Sahajavajra's explanation of "in accordance with Mantrayāna", this text is taken as presenting a *mahāmudrā* outside of Tantra

→ Argument challenged by Isaacson and Sferra

Explanation of Isaacson and Sferra's arguments

① Pith instructions do not necesarily mean a non-tantric context. They can often be tantric.

② Although *mahāmudrā* does not contain the three impure moments and joys, it is still defined by their absence. Thus, the fact that they are not present does not mean that it is independent from them, but rather it only makes sense within that very context

③ That argument is entirely dependent on Sahajavajra's commentary, and is should be noted that the main texts alone does not seem to support the same view

④ The *Mahāyānaviṃśika* contains terminology that reminds of Tantra and it is quoted in several tantric texts.

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