

## ➤ WHO DESERVES TO BE PUNISHED DURING A FORMAL DEBATE AND ON WHAT GROUNDS? TWO DIFFERENT TIBETAN VIEWS AND THEIR CONTEXTS

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This article examines two different Tibetan Buddhist approaches to determining points of defeat in formal debate, focusing on the traditions of mTshur ston gZhon nu seng ge and Sa skya Paṅḍita (Sapaṅ). Building upon the foundational debate theory proposed by the Indian masters Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, these Tibetan scholars developed contrasting methodologies for identifying occasions warranting defeat or punishment during formal discourse. mTshur ston's *Shes rab sgron ma* proposes sixteen specific defeat occasions distributed among the three debate participants (defendant, opponent, and arbiter), demonstrating methodological flexibility and a willingness to expand beyond inherited Indian frameworks. In contrast, Sapaṅ's *Tshad ma rigs gter* advocates a more conservative approach, reducing the number of defeat occasions to four while maintaining strict adherence to Indian sources. The comparative analysis offered by this paper reveals a tension in Tibetan Buddhist epistemology between innovative adaptation and faithful preservation of textual authority. The debate illustrates questions about intellectual method, interpretations, and the balance between tradition and innovation within Buddhist philosophical discourse, highlighting how epistemological theories were received and how they evolved as they were transmitted from India to Tibet.

### INTRODUCTION

Understanding formal rules and regulations governing participants in religious and philosophical debates is essential for fostering effective discourse and communication.<sup>1</sup> Within the Buddhist epistemological tradition, systematic theories concerning participant identity and roles, procedural guidelines, criteria for determining victory or defeat, proof statement formulations, permissible rejoinders, and related topics were initially developed by Dignāga, the foundational figure of this system in India. Dharmakīrti later elaborated and expanded these principles through exegetical writings on Dignāga's foundational works, particularly in his *Vādanyāya*.<sup>2</sup>

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1 This paper is based on a dissertation submitted in 2023 to the Department of Indology and Tibetology at the University of Hamburg (Jamtsho 2023b). I have benefited from unpublished translation materials on the eleventh chapter of the *Tshad ma rigs gter*, shared with me by the late Prof. Dr. David Jackson. I would like to thank him for his kindness and trust.

2 For an edition of the Sanskrit text of this work and its translation into English, see Gokhale 1993. For a detailed bibliography on this work, see <<https://east.ikga.oeaw.ac.at/data/7/24/>>.

The core connecting point among these different notions in the Dharmakīrtian tradition is the concept of inference for others (*parārthānumāna*; *gzhan don rjes dpag*), defined as communicative speech conveying knowledge derived from valid cognition. As articulated in epistemological treatises, inference for others constitutes a proof statement concerning what one has cognized, which is then presented for others' benefit.<sup>3</sup> Tibetan *tshad ma*<sup>4</sup> traditions have extensively engaged with these themes, building upon and diverging from Indian Buddhist epistemological frameworks. These traditions can be categorized into two groups: those that adapt and expand beyond inherited conceptual frameworks and those that adhere closely to established parameters of the Indian tradition. The former includes the innovative contributions of Phya pa Chos kyi seng ge (1109–1169)<sup>5</sup> and his disciples, such as mTshur ston gZhon nu seng ge (*circa* 1150–1210),<sup>6</sup> who extended these epistemological principles' scope. The latter group, represented by figures like Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251, also known as Sapaṇ)<sup>7</sup> and his followers, such as Go rams pa bSod nams seng ge (1429–1489),<sup>8</sup> prioritized fidelity to foundational Indian frameworks.

Unlike many other Tibetan authors of independent epistemological works of his era or subsequent periods, Sapaṇ devotes a substantial section of his *Tshad ma rigs gter* to summarizing criticism of defeat occasions asserted by non-Buddhist epistemological schools, alongside engaging with Tibetan predecessors' works, which he subjects to investigation and critique.<sup>9</sup> This article undertakes a comparative analysis of these two Tibetan *tshad ma* traditions<sup>10</sup> – those of mTshur ston and Sapaṇ – focusing specifically on their respective theories and deliberations concerning points of defeat in formal debate, as articulated in mTshur ston's *Shes rab sgron ma*<sup>11</sup> and Sapaṇ's *Tshad ma rigs gter*. By examining their approaches to defining what consti-

3 Inference for others, in the strict sense, is not an inference; inference by definition implies a cognitive event, while inference for others constitutes a statement or speech. However, it receives the designation “inference” because it results from one's cognition and serves as a causal condition for generating inference in others. See Sa-paṇ, *Tshad ma rigs gter*, p. 44: *gzhan don rjes dpag rang nyid kyis/ mthong ba gzhan la ston pa'i ngag!*. (“An inference for others constitutes a [proof] statement concerning what one has cognized, presented for the benefit of others.”) See also Sa-paṇ, *Rigs gter rang 'grel*, p. 389). All translations are mine alone, unless mentioned otherwise.

4 The Tibetan term *tshad ma* can be understood narrowly as referring to the means of valid cognition or as valid cognition itself. In this sense, *tshad ma* is a cognitive episode that is trustworthy, normative, and non-erroneous. Alternatively, *tshad ma* can be understood broadly as a discipline. In this general sense, *tshad ma* encompasses diverse topics, including the science of reason, accounts of perception, metaphysics, prescriptive rules for public dialectics, and more. The term *tshad ma*, as a discipline, is also connected to Buddhist religious beliefs and goals, such as rebirth, the Four Noble Truths, possibilities for cultivating infinite compassion, arguments for the centrality of insight into selflessness as key to soteriological goals, and related matters. Here is it to be understood in the second sense.

5 On the life of Phya pa, see Hugon & Stoltz 2019.

6 On the life of mTshur ston gZhon nu seng ge, see Hugon 2004: vii–viii. I have chosen the different interpretations of the points of debate between mTshur ston and Sapaṇ, since the differences are clearly articulated and the former was the teacher of the latter. This serves as a case of a substantial difference existing among Tibetan Buddhist scholars, and vehement disagreement, despite their being teacher and student.

7 On the life and works of Sapaṇ, see Jackson 1987.

8 For information on Go rams pa and his works, see Jamtsho 2023a.

9 These related themes have also been repeated in the third chapter of the *mKhas 'jug*. For an edition and translation, see Jackson 1987.

10 For an account of different schools of *tshad ma* in Tibet, see van der Kuijp 1983. On their fourfold periodization (the Ancient Period, the Pre-Classical Period, the Classical Period, and the Post-Classical Period), see van der Kuijp 1989.

11 On the date and authorship of the *Shes rab sgron ma*, see Hugon 2004: viii–xii. For its relationship with the *Tshad ma rigs gter rang 'grel*, see Hugon 2004: xii–xv.

tutes defeats, this paper aims to elucidate the nuances of their epistemological commitments and contributions to the broader Buddhist intellectual tradition.

## PERSONS INVOLVED AND PROCEDURE

### *The Three Participants in Formal Debate*

Following precedent established by Indian and Tibetan masters, the systematic approach to formal debate recognizes three essential participants, each with distinct roles and responsibilities. The defendant (*vādin*; *rgol ba*) commits to present a thesis and state the proof establishing their position. Within the debate context, this person asserts a position, adduces evidence or arguments with probative force, and defends the proposition, its rationale, and the logical structure of the evidence. The defendant bears primary responsibility for presenting coherent arguments and maintaining the logical integrity of their thesis.

The opponent (*prativādin*; *phyi rgol ba*) commits to refuting the proposition made by the defendant. This person demonstrates logical inconsistencies and empirical counterexamples that undermine the logical structure and examples of the defendant's position, pointing out internal inconsistencies and unwanted consequences within the defendant's overall assertion. The opponent's role is fundamentally critical, aimed at exposing weaknesses in the defendant's reasoning.

The arbiter (*sāksin*; *dpang po*) commits to adjudicating between the two parties involved in the debate. This impartial figure observes the proceedings and makes determinations regarding the arguments' validity and the occurrence of defeat or victory.<sup>12</sup>

### *The Two Primary Activities and Categories of Debate Statements*

The arbiter's role encompasses two fundamental activities based on observations of the defendant's and opponent's performance during the debate. Points of defeat (*nigraha*; *tshar gcod pa*) occur when either party loses the debate due to expressing faulty themes, an inability to persuade, and similar failures. The recognition of defeat represents a crucial moment in the formal debate process. Recognition (*anugraha*; *rjes su 'dzin pa*) occurs when one party wins the debate, either by defending their proposals or by conclusively demonstrating faults associated with the asserted position. Recognition of victory validates the superior reasoning and argumentation of the successful party.<sup>13</sup>

The formal debate process involves various types of statements that participants make during proceedings.<sup>14</sup> These divisions represent different expressions that the defendant or opponent makes during formal debate, either defending the asserted position or attempting to undermine it. Proof statements include the statement of correct proof (*sgrub ngag yang dag*), comprising both the statement of a correct proof of a similar predicate (*chos mthun sbyor gyi*

12 Sapaṇ defines the three as follows in the *Tshad ma rigs gter* (p. 44): *rgol dang phyir rgol dpang po gsum/ sgrub dang sun 'byin brda sprod pa'o//*. ("The three, namely defendant, opponent, and arbiter, represent those who [are committed to] proving, refuting, and adjudicating [respectively].")

13 Sapaṇ defines the three as follows in the *Tshad ma rigs gter* (p. 44): *rgol ba gnyis la skyon yon gyis/ tshar gcad pa dang rjes 'dzin 'jug/ de ltar ston na rgyal pham yod/ min na gnyis ka med par gsungs//*. ("Regarding the two disputants, defeat and acknowledgement [of victory] follow faults and merits [respectively]. [Dharmakīrti] stated that when conducted in this manner, victory and defeat will occur; otherwise, neither will take place".)

14 For discussions of debate in Tibetan monastic courtyards, see Perdue 1992; Onoda 1992; Dreyfus 2003, especially chapters 11, 12, and 13.

*sgrub ngag*) and the statement of a correct proof of a dissimilar predicate (*chos mi mthun sbyor gyi sgrub ngag*), as well as the statement of a pseudo proof (*sgrub ngag ltar snang*). Refutations encompass both correct refutation (*sun 'byin yang dag*) and pseudo refutation (*sun 'byin ltar snang*). Argumentative forms consist of the autonomous argument (*rang rgyud kyi ngag*) and the consequence statement (*thal 'gyur gyi ngag*), the latter including both a correct consequence statement (*thal 'gyur yang dag*) and a pseudo consequence statement (*thal 'gyur ltar snang*).<sup>15</sup>

### **The Four Permissible Answers**

During formal debate, four categories of responses are considered admissible in Sapaṅ's tradition. Agreement (*iṣṭa*; 'dod) indicates that the defendant accepts the consequence presented. An unestablished (*asiddha*; *ma grub*) answer indicates that the reason or argument adduced has not been proven regarding the subject of debate. An uncertain (*aniścita*; *ma nges*) answer indicates that no necessary entailment exists between the predicate and the reason or argument. And a contradictory (*viruddha*; 'gal) answer indicates that the reason not only fails to entail the predicate but is proven to be incompatible with it.<sup>16</sup>

### **Victory and Defeat in Debate**

The determination of victory and defeat constitutes a fundamental aspect of formal debate. As established in the Dharmakīrtian tradition, defeat and acknowledgment of victory regarding the two disputants follow from faults and merits, respectively. Dharmakīrti stated that when conducted properly, victory and defeat will occur; otherwise, neither will take place. Significantly, Dharmakīrti does not accept victory and defeat even when one party is overcome through falsehood and trickery, emphasizing the importance of legitimate reasoning over mere rhetorical manipulation or, worse still, physical intimidation.<sup>17</sup>

The epistemological tradition distinguishes between worldly and philosophical approaches to victory and defeat. Worldly practitioners consider defeat and acknowledgment of victory to result from forcible deprivation and bestowal of ranks (*'phrog dang sbyin pa*), while the adoption and renunciation of philosophical tenets (*grub mtha' blang dor*) are considered by the wise to constitute defeat and acknowledgment of victory. This distinction underscores the intellectual rather than merely competitive nature of formal philosophical debate.<sup>18</sup>

15 For formal definitions, divisions, and related topics with these themes, see chapter 11 of the *Tshad ma rigs gter* and its autocommentary (*Rang 'grel*).

16 For a discussion on the differences between allowable answers within debates among Sapaṅ and his opponents, see Onoda 1988.

17 Defeat and acknowledgment of victory during formal debate are determined solely by the strength of arguments and their efficacy in undermining the confidence of the opposing party. Defeat or victory based on rhetoric, physical force, deception, and similar factors do not count as legitimate outcomes. As Sapaṅ states in the *Tshad ma rigs gter* (p. 44): *dzun dang g.yo sgyus tshar gcad kyang/ de la rgyal pham mi bzhed dol/*. (“[Dharmakīrti] does not accept victory and defeat even when one party is overcome through falsehood and trickery.”)

18 Sapaṅ distinguishes between debates and arguments – along with their resulting defeats and victories – among ordinary people versus learned individuals. This is explained in the *Tshad ma rigs gter* (p. 44): *'phrog dang sbyin pas 'jig rten pa/ tshar gcad pa dang rjes 'dzin 'dod/ grub mtha' blang dor byed pa la/ dam pa'i tshar gcad rjes 'dzin 'dod/*. (“Worldly people consider defeat and acknowledgment [of victory] to result from forcible deprivation and bestowal [of ranks]. The adoption and renunciation of philosophical tenets are considered by the wise to constitute defeat and acknowledgment [of victory].”) He notes that some kings practice both approaches: *thams cad skyong ba'i rgyal po dag tshul gnyis ka byed do zhes grag go/* (Sa-paṅ, *Rigs gter rang 'grel*, p. 391).

## TWO TIBETAN VIEWS ON THE POINTS OF DEFEATS

### *Positions of the Shes rab sgron ma on the Points of Defeat*

According to mTshur ston's *Shes rab sgron ma*, sixteen occasions constitute defeat and warrant censure or punishment. These are systematically distributed as six each for the defendant and opponent, three for the arbiter,<sup>19</sup> and one common to all participants. These points of defeat can be tabulated as follows:<sup>20</sup>

Table 1 *Shes rab sgron ma* on the Occasions of Defeat

The Occasions of Defeat for Defendants	The Occasions of Defeat for Opponents	The Occasions of Defeat for the Arbiter
Not committing to a thesis when asked by the defendant ( <i>phyir dgol gyis dam bca' dris pa'i tshe dam mi 'cha'</i> )	Not questioning after having accepted to question ( <i>dri bar khas blangs nas ma 'dri ba</i> )	Not making judgments when the defendant and the opponent disagree ( <i>rgol phyir dgol ma mthun pa'i tshe gshag mi 'byed pa</i> )
Committing to an inappropriate thesis ( <i>dam 'bca' bar mi 'os pa 'cha' ba</i> )	Questioning inappropriately ( <i>mi 'os par 'dri ba</i> )	Making incorrect judgments ( <i>phyin ci log du 'byed pa</i> )
Accepting a contextually inappropriate thesis ( <i>skabs su ma bab pa dam 'cha' ba</i> )	Questioning contextually inappropriate ( <i>skabs su ma bab pa 'di ba</i> )	Making contextually inappropriate judgments ( <i>skabs su ma bab pa'i gshag 'byed pa</i> )
Not stating logical reasons ( <i>sgrub byed mi brjod pa</i> )	Not stating faults ( <i>skyon mi brjod pa</i> )	
Stating what is not reason ( <i>sgrub byed min pa brjod pa</i> )	Stating non-faults as faults ( <i>skyon min brjod pa</i> )	
Stating (proofs) that are contextually inappropriate ( <i>skabs su ma bab pa brjod pa</i> )	Stating faults that are contextually inappropriate ( <i>skabs su ma bab pa'i skyon brjod pa</i> )	
Not paying attention, which applies to all three ( <i>rna mi gtod pa</i> )		

19 Significantly, the *Shes rab sgron ma* explicitly acknowledges that the occasion of defeat about the arbiter is not mentioned in the treatises, indicating an innovation beyond established Indian epistemological works. This represents one of several instances where mTshur ston's tradition diverges from Dharmakīrtian orthodoxy; see *Shes rab sgron ma* (p. 290): *dpang po tshar gcad du 'gyur ba'i gnas ni gzhung nas bshad pa mi snang mod kyi...* ("Although the points of defeat concerning the arbiter seem not to have been explained in the treatises...").

20 These are stated by gZhon nu seng ge as follows in the *Shes rab sgron ma* (pp. 289–290): *re zhig phyir dgol tshar gcad du 'gyur ba'i skabs ni gnyis te/ don gyi dngos po 'dri ba'i skabs dang/ skyon brjod byed pa'i skabs su'o/ dang po ni dri bar khas blangs nas ma 'dri ba dang/ gzhi ma grub pa'i khyad par gyi chos la 'dri ba dang gzhi grub pa nyid na khyad par gyi chos grub bsal byung zin pa'i don la 'dri bas dri bar mi 'os pa 'dri ba dang/ skabs su ma bab pa 'dri ba gsum gyis tshar gcad su 'gyur ba yin la/ gnyis pa skyon brjod pa'i skabs su yang skyon mi brjod pa dang/ skyon min brjod pa dang/ skabs su ma bab pa'i skyon brjod pa gsum gyis yin te/ de ltar na drug gis phyir dgol tshar gcad du 'gyur ba yin no/ dgol ba tshar gcad du 'gyur ba la yang dam bca' 'jog pa'i skabs dang/ sgrub byed 'god pa'i skabs su 'gyur ba gnyis las/ dang po ni phyir dgol gyis dam bca' dris pa'i tshe dam mi 'cha' ba dang/ dam 'bca' bar mi 'os pa 'cha' ba dang/ skabs su ma bab pa dam 'cha' ba gsum gyis yin la/ gnyis pa bsgrub pa 'god pa'i tshe yang sgrub byed mi brjod pa dang/ dngos po skyon can dang/ blo skyon can dang/ sgra skyon can brjod pa gsum gyis sgrub byed min pa brjod pa dang/, thun mong du phan tshun gyi ngag la rna mi gtod na tshar gcad du 'gyur ro//, dpang po tshar gcad du 'gyur ba'i gnas ni gzhung nas bshad pa mi snang mod kyi 'on kyang gsum gyis yin te/ rgol phyir dgol ma mthun pa'i tshe gshag mi 'byed pa dang/ phyin ci log du 'byed pa dang/ skabs su ma bab pa'i gshag 'byed pa'o zhes gsung ngo//. Additionally, see Sa-pan, *Rigs gter rang 'grel*, p. 392. This is also discussed in Sa-pan's *mKhas 'jug*; see Jackson 1987: 324–365.*

### **Positions of the Tshad ma rigs gter on the Points of Defeat**

Sapaṅ's approach to defeat points, as articulated in his *Tshad ma rigs gter*<sup>21</sup> and the *mKhas 'jug*,<sup>22</sup> represents a more conservative position that maintains closer adherence to the Indian Buddhist epistemological models. The author argues that the arbiter cannot be either defeated or acknowledged as victorious; thus, only the two debaters can be declared defeated or victorious.<sup>23</sup> For the defendant, defeat occurs on two occasions: when they fail to state part of the proof and when they state what is not part of the proof. Similarly, the opponent faces two occasions of defeat: when they fail to state the fault associated with the proponent's proofs, and when they state what is not an actual fault. This, too, can be tabulated:

Table 2 *Tshad ma rigs gter* on the Occasions of Defeat

The Occasions of Defeat for Defendants	The Occasions of Defeat for Opponents
Not stating part of the proof ( <i>sgrub pa'i yan lag mi brjod pa</i> )	Not stating the fault ( <i>skyon mi brjod pa</i> )
Stating what is not part of the proof ( <i>yan lag ma yin pa brjod pa</i> )	Stating what is not the fault ( <i>skyon min brjod pa</i> )

### **COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND SOURCES**

According to the commentator Go rams pa,<sup>24</sup> the eleventh chapter of the *Tshad ma rigs gter* and its *Rang 'grel* draw primarily on the account presented in the *Vādanyāya* concerning debate participants and their distinctive roles, along with the twenty-two occasions of defeat. The chapter also incorporates fourteen different types of *jāti* from the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and ten from the *Nyāyaparīkṣā* attributed to non-Buddhist epistemological traditions. This is a crucial move for Sapaṅ, since for him, being grounded in a received tradition is of supreme importance. Any deviances, perceived or otherwise, are self-innovation (*rang bzo*). This is a serious charge in a context where philosophy is practiced by writing commentaries on authoritative sources.

Sapaṅ subjected the enumerated items from the *Shes rab sgron ma* to systematic critique, categorizing them as either redundant or extraneous, with certain entries failing to constitute legitimate instances of defeat. Fundamentally, Sapaṅ contended that the sixteen-point enumera-

21 Sapaṅ states his position in the *Tshad ma rigs gter* (p. 44) as follows: *tshar gcad gnyis las phye ba'i bzhi/ rigs pa mkhyen pa'i dgongs pa yin//*. ("The four [occasions of] defeat are elaborated from two basic categories. These represent the intentions of one who understands logical reasoning.") These lines are glossed in the *Rigs gter rang 'grel* (p. 391): *rgol bas bsgrub pa'i yan lag mi brjod pa dang/ yan lag ma yin pa brjod pa gnyis dang/ phyir rgol skyon mi brjod pa dang/ skyon min brjod pa gnyis so//*.

22 For an edition and a translation of texts from the *mKhas 'jug* related to the debates, see Jackson 1987.

23 Sapaṅ states his position in the *Tshad ma rigs gter* (p. 44) as follows: *dpang po la ni tshar gcad med/ ci nas byed na ha cang thall//*. ("No [occasion of] defeat exists regarding the arbiter, as illogical consequences would ensue.")

24 Go rams pa, *sDe bdun rab gsal* (pp. 19–20): *rab byed bcu gcig pas ni rtsod rigs nas gsungs pa'i rtsod pa'i gnas skabs kyi gang zag gi rab tu dbye ba dang/ tshar gcod nyi shu rtsa gnyis dang/ mdo nas gsungs pa'i ltag chod bcu bzhi dang/ rigs brtag nas las gsungs pa'i ltag chod bcu dang/ gzhung gsum char gyi gzhan don le'ur gsungs pa'i sgrub pa dang sun 'byin gyi rab tu dbye ba rnam bstan no/ ltag chod nyi shu rtsa bzhi po ni tshar bcad nyi shu rtsa gnyis kyi tha ma yin la/ de lta bu'i tshar bcad kyi grangs nges ni phyi rol mu stegs byed kyi 'dod pa yin pas bkag nas rtsod rigs las gsungs pa ltar gnyis las phye ba'i bzhir grangs nges par sgrub pa'o//*. This can also be confirmed by citations from authoritative works given by Sapaṅ in the commentary on the eleventh chapter.

tion contravened norms established within canonical Indian treatises, which constituted his ultimate epistemic authority. Sapaṅ maintains that legitimate occasions of defeat can be reduced to four fundamental categories.<sup>25</sup> This reduction reflects his commitment to systematic simplification based on Indian precedent rather than the proliferation of categories.

Notably, as pointed out earlier, Sapaṅ denies that the arbiter can be defeated, as this would lead to illogical consequences. His reasoning suggests that if the arbiter could be defeated, this would undermine the very foundation of adjudication, creating an infinite regress where no final authority could determine the validity of judgments. However, one could ask why an arbiter should be immune from being censured in some form if, having committed to the role, they failed, either intentionally or otherwise, to judge and adjudicate correctly.

The divergence between these two traditions illuminates a crucial methodological distinction in Tibetan Buddhist epistemology. Whereas Sapaṅ maintained that propositions within the logico-epistemological domain must derive legitimacy through explicit articulation or implicit derivation from authoritative Indian sources, mTshur ston demonstrated greater methodological flexibility, exhibiting a willingness to modify and augment received doctrinal frameworks, occasionally advancing positions that directly challenged established Indian orthodoxy. mTshur ston explicitly differs from Dharmakīrti on at least two occasions, claiming that the propositions and supporting arguments of the latter are false. Within the epistemological context, these comprise rejection of the doxographical scheme of Dharmakīrti:

Among these four philosophical schools, when the two masters (Dignāga and Dharmakīrti) systematized the realist position, they followed the Sautrāntika school, the one who espoused representation. When they established the idealist position, they rejected the position of satyākāravādin and followed alikākāravādin. Yet, if we examine things here with analytical reasoning, conventionally, the position of object-cognizing consciousness without representations is reasonable, so one should accept that system.<sup>26</sup>

The second is the invalidation of two arguments that Dharmakīrti proposed to prove the representationalist epistemological theory and the contention that the subject and object are

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25 Sapaṅ states his position in the *Tshad ma rigs gter* (p. 44): *tshar gcad yin na snga mar 'dus/ min na tshar gcad nyid ma yin//*. (“If these constitute [occasions for] defeat, they are subsumed within the previous [four categories]; if not, they are not [occasions of] defeat at all.”) In his commentary on these lines, Sapaṅ explains how genuine occasions of defeat can be subsumed within the four categories he lists, and he quotes extensive passages from authoritative treatises. See *Rigs gter rang 'grel*, pp. 392–293.

26 In the *Shes rab sgron ma*, mTshur ston gZhon nu seng ge proposes a different reading of epistemology, accepting the Vaibhāṣika system – that is, epistemological theory without representation – as more viable when examined by cognition that relates to the factual state (*dnegos po sems pa'i blos dpyad*), thereby rejecting the position of the initiators of Buddhist epistemology. The author states that regarding the acceptance of external phenomena, two systems exist: with aspect and without aspects (*rnam bcas dang rnam med*), and, regarding the idealist position, True and False Aspectarians (*rnam bden rdzun*). See *Shes rab sgron ma*, p. 141: *grub mtha' bzhi po de dag las slob dpon gnyis kyi don rig pa'i rnam gzhag mdzad pa na rnam bcas mdo sde pa'i lugs ltar mdzad la/ rnam rig pa'i rnam gzhag mdzad pa na rnam bden pa'i phyogs sun phyung nas nram brdzun pa ltar mdzad mod kyi 'dir dnegos po sems pa'i blos dpyod na tha snyad du don rig rnam med kyi phyogs nyid rigs pas de'i lugs ltar khas blang bar bya'o//*.

of the same constituents.<sup>27</sup> The contrast between these approaches reflects different attitudes toward intellectual innovation within the Buddhist epistemological tradition. On the one hand, as illustrated by mTshur ston in the *Shes rab sgron ma*, the Phya pa's tradition was willing to extend the analytical framework beyond its Indian origins, developing new categories and distinctions that they deemed necessary for a comprehensive understanding of debate dynamics.

Sapaṇ, by contrast, maintained that intellectual authority, within the framework of logico-epistemological study, resided primarily in canonical Indian sources and that Tibetan contributions should remain within the parameters established by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. His systematic critique of the sixteen-point schema represents not merely disagreement with specific categories but rejection of the methodological premise that authorized such innovations. The following harsh comment by Sapaṇ reflects his conservative stance:

Following Dharmakīrti's system,  
[they] refute the Great One's reasoning.  
The monkeys dwelling in the forests  
Scatter excrement on the trees.<sup>28</sup>

This debate has broader implications for understanding the development of Buddhist intellectual culture in Tibet. The tension between conservative preservation of Indian precedent and innovative adaptation to Tibetan scholastic needs reflects ongoing questions about the relationship between textual authority and interpretive creativity within Buddhist philosophical traditions in Tibet.

## CONCLUSION

The comparative examination of these two Tibetan approaches to defeat in formal debate reveals the complexity and richness of Buddhist epistemological thought as it developed beyond its Indian origins. While both traditions, that of mTshur ston and that of Sapaṇ, maintain a commitment to the fundamental principles established by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, their different approaches to systematization and categorization reflect broader questions about intellectual authority, methodological innovation, and the relationship between textual fidelity and creativity.

The positions articulated by mTshur ston and Sapaṇ's traditions represent not only technical disagreements about debate procedures but substantial differences in epistemological method and interpretive authority. mTshur ston's innovative flexibility contrasts with Sapaṇ's fidelity

27 Likewise, the two reasons proposed by the Dharmakīrtian tradition to prove the idealistic philosophy – namely, the reasoning of being invariably perceived together (*sahopalambhaniyama*; *lhan cig dmigs nges kyi rtags*) and the reason of cognizance (*gsal zhing rig pa'i rtags*) – were subjected to analysis and established as invalid reasoning in gZhon nu seng ge's work. The reason for cognizance is documented as either unestablished or uncertain (*ma grub pa'am ma nges pa*), and observation does not necessarily entail that the subject-object shares a single substance or are not different. gZhon nu seng ge explains in *Shes rab sgron ma*, p. 8: *de la sgrub byed med pa ni rtags gnyi gas snang ba shes par mi 'grub pa las re zhig gsal zhing rigs pa'i rtags kyis mi 'grub ste/ rtags kyi don la brtags na rig byed yin pa mi 'grub cing rig bya yin pa dang rig pa tsam ni ma nges par 'gyur ba'i phyir ro/ lhan cig dmigs nges kyis kyang snang ba shes pa'i bdag nyid du mi 'grub ste/ mi mthun phyogs rdzas tha dad dus mnyam la dngos po'i lhan cig dmigs nges 'jug pa 'brel ba med pa'i rtags kyis mi khegs pa'i phyir ro/ 'brel ba med kyang bdag rkyen dbang po'i nus pa'i khyad par gyis rdzas gzhan dus mnyam pa'i yul dmigs pa mi 'gal te 'brel med kyi sgron ma nye ba'i gzugs kyi gsal byed du nges pa bzhin no//.*

28 See *Tshad ma rigs gter*, p. 14: *chos kyi grags pa'i gzhung bzung nas/ bdag nyid chen po'i rigs pa 'gog/ nags la gnas pa'i spre'u dag/ ljon pa'i shing la mi gtsang 'thor//.*

to Indic orthodoxy, illuminating their respective commitments. While mTshur ston expands the framework with sixteen defeat occasions, Saṅg streamlines it to four, grounded in authoritative texts. These differences continue to influence Tibetan Buddhist intellectual culture today, demonstrating the ongoing vitality of the various *tshad ma* traditions as they evolved within Tibetan scholastic contexts.

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