

The logical value of the thesis (*pratijñā*) in Candrakīrti's Madhyamaka thought

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One of the most controversial problem in the history of the Indo-Tibetan Madhyamaka tradition is how to understand the rejection of a thesis or proposition (*pratijñā*) of one's own by early Madhyamaka masters, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva and Candrakīrti. Since it is unclear to what extent the scope of the thesis they repudiate is limited, one can hardly define the value of their own propositional statements of the Madhyamaka doctrines. Among these masters, Candrakīrti (7th c.) most closely discusses in the first chapter of his *Prasannapadā* the idea that the Mādhyamika disowns a thesis in the course of his criticism of Bhāviveka (6th c.), who uses an autonomous inference (*svatantrānumāna*). In general, Candrakīrti's rejection of a thesis is considered to have grounded on the fundamental standpoint of the middle way (*madhyamaka*) that ultimate reality is ineffable beyond discursive proliferation (*prapañca*) and free of dichotomizing conceptual construction (*nirvikalpa*) as well as on the Madhyamaka ontological tenet that all things are empty (*śūnya*) and lack self-existence (*svabhāva*). Insofar as a thesis aims to positively establish a self-existent thing, it is unneeded by the Mādhyamika, for he solely negates substantial positions of his opponents. A sole negation is safe from being a thesis if it is stated not implying an affirmation of the opposite meaning of that which is negated (i.e., if it is stated not as a *paryudāsa* but as a *prasajyapratishedha*). Thus, the issue has been understood within the framework of the Madhyamaka system.

Considering the facts that Candrakīrti rejects the use of a thesis together with that of an autonomous inference and that he applies the knowledge of logic derived from the Naiyāyika and Dignāga, however, it may also be conceivable that Candrakīrti gives a certain logical evaluation to the thesis that he rejects and differentiates it from the Mādhyamika's own propositional statements. Shortly before the time of Candrakīrti, a debate concerning the definition of the thesis took place between Dignāga and the Naiyāyikas. The latter provided the simple definition of the thesis as a presentation of the probandum (*sādhyanirdeśa* in the *Nyāyasūtra*). By some early Buddhist logicians including Dignāga, in turn, the thesis is qualified as being intended by the proponent himself (*svayaṃ iṣṭa* by Dignāga in *Pramāṇasamuccaya* III 2; *svapakṣaparigraha* in the *Hetuvidyā*; *svavacita* in the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*). Candrakīrti as well employs the term "one's own thesis" (*svatantrā pratijñā*, *svapratijñā*) when he articulates the idea that the Mādhyamika disowns a thesis. According to this qualification, the Mādhyamika's negative statements or *prasaṅga* arguments are outside the scope of the thesis that is to be rejected unless the negation is regarded as the probandum that is intended by the Mādhyamika himself.

My paper will aim to clarify the logical value which Candrakīrti may have assigned to the thesis by reviewing his discussion in the *Prasannapadā* within the aforementioned historical and theoretical context of his time.