

SAMTEN GYALTSSEN KARMAY

The Great Perfection

A PHILOSOPHICAL
AND
MEDITATIVE TEACHING
OF
TIBETAN BUDDHISM

E. J. Brill

The Great Perfection (rDzogs chen in Tibetan) is a philosophical and meditative teaching. Its inception is attributed to Vairocana, one of the first seven Tibetan Buddhist monks ordained at Samye in the eighth century A.D. The doctrine is regarded among Buddhists as the core of the teachings adhered to by the Nyingmapa school whilst similarly it is held to be the fundamental teaching among the Bonpos, the non-Buddhist school in Tibet.

After a general historical introduction to Tibetan Buddhism and the Bon, the author deals with the legends of Vairocana (Part I), analysing early documents containing essential elements of the doctrine and comparing them with the Ch'an tradition. He goes on to explore in detail the development of the doctrine in the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D. (Part II). The Tantric doctrines that play an important role are dealt with, as are the rDzogs chen theories in relation to the other major Buddhist doctrines. Different trends in the rDzogs chen tradition itself and the rDzogs chen according to the Bon tradition are described in Part III.

The author has drawn his sources mainly from early unpublished documents which throw light on the origins and development, at the same time also using a variety of sources which enabled him to explicate the crucial position which the doctrine occupies in Tibetan religions.

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CHAPTER TWO

THE ANCIENT DOCUMENTS ON RDZOGS CHEN FROM TUN-HUANG

Among the Tun-huang Tibetan manuscripts of Sir Aurel Stein preserved in the India Office Library in London, I was able in 1973 to discover three works relevant to rDzogs chen. Two of them are texts which one might call prototypes of the later literature of the rDzogs chen tradition. The third one is merely a list of different successions of religious masters including some of the rDzogs chen tradition in three different places in Tibet in the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. I used these works as sources for my lectures on rDzogs chen at the Sorbonne in 1973 and 74.¹ The existence of these manuscripts has not previously been noted by any of the Tibetologists writing on the rNying ma pa in general or on rDzogs chen in particular.²

Fortunately, unlike many of the Tun-huang manuscripts, these are complete and sufficiently clear so that there is no difficulty in reading them. In the catalogue of de la Vallée-Poussin, the manuscripts bear the following numbers: 594, 647 and 689/2 respectively.³

TUN-HUANG DOCUMENT No. I (IOL 647)

IOL 647 will be treated here at first since it contains one of the fundamental texts of the rDzogs chen tradition. It consists of five folios in the ordinary Tibetan format. Each of the folios has six lines from left to right and the folios are paginated in the usual way from 1*a* to 5*b*. Folio 1*b*, however, does not contain any part of the actual work, but a list of teachings associated with *prajñāpāramitā*.⁴ It is scribed in an obviously different hand from the rest of the manuscript. In spite of this textual interpolation, the text is continuous from folio 1*a* to 2*a* judged in the light of the grammatical structure and also from the point of view of the subject-

¹ "Problèmes historiques et doctrinaux de la philosophie du rJogs-chen", *Annales E.P.H.E.* 1973-74 (Tome 82), pp. 53-57. The third manuscript (*IOL 689/2*) was already published by F.W. Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts Concerning Chinese Turkestan*, Part I (London 1935), pp. 85-87.

² e.g. Tucci, *MBT II*, pp. 102-54; 1973, pp. 117-25.

³ Louis de la Vallée-Poussin, *Catalogue of the Tibetan manuscripts from Tun-huang in India Office Library*, London 1962.

⁴ See the Tun-huang documents reproduced at the end of this book.

matter. I have found no other copy of the same work for comparison. The insertion of the list of the *prajñāpāramitā* teaching which is totally extraneous to the doctrines of rDzogs chen, cannot therefore be explained in the present condition of the manuscript. The style of the manuscript is the 'bru ma script. It is the early style of this script later very popular in certain regions of Kham, e.g. Khyung po and of Amdo, e.g. Zung chu. The Bonpo ritual works in these regions are often written in this form of the script. The folios are made of two sheets of paper stuck together with horizontal lines in the centre and vertical lines on the margin on the right and left-hand sides. The script itself is all in black ink. Like the early Buddhist manuscripts, to hold them together, each of the folios has two round marks in the centre on either side, but they have not been pierced through.

The manuscript in fact contains two works: a basic text (*rtsa ba*) and a commentary (*'grel ba*) though no such terms are used in the works themselves. For convenience, let us call the first part the basic text which in fact consists of only six verses plus the words of salutation at the beginning. Neither the title of the text nor the name of the author are given. The second part of the manuscript begins on folio 1a, line 4 and is continuous right through excepting the textual interpolation which has already been noted. It finishes on folio 5a, line 6. The folio 5b contains certain mantras almost illegible and bears no relation to the texts. Undoubtedly the manuscript belongs to the genre of commentary on a basic text, but the commentator preferred not or overlooked to mention the name of the author of the basic text and that of his own.

The basic text

Although the commentary does not explicitly mention any title for this basic text as such, it gives three indications in the following way: the "Cuckoo of Intellect" is the example, the "Ornament of the appearance which brings one to realisation"⁵ is the meaning, the "Six vajra words" are the number (*rig pa'i khu byug ni dpe/ rig byed snang ba'i rgyan ni don/ rdo rje tshig drug ni grangs/*). These are in fact the titles of the basic text, a fact confirmed by another indication in the same commentary: "keep in mind the principle of the 'Cuckoo of intellect'" (*rig pa'i khu byug gi don yid la brnag par bya'ol*).⁶ It is quite common among the rDzogs chen texts to have several titles for one work, but more often just two. While one con-

⁵ It is under this title that the work is referred to in the *Chos nyid byang chub kyi sems bkra shis mi 'gyur gsal ba gnas pa'i rgyud*, NyG (Kaneko No. 17, f. 595).

⁶ See pp. 55, 58, l. 1.

tains a simile (*dpe*) another conveys the actual subject (*don*) of the work. It is also the case with the manuscript IOL 594⁷ which will be discussed later. In the present case, *Rig pa'i khu byug* is the title of the basic text containing the simile whereas *Rig byed snang ba'i rgyan* is the real title. However, in *KhT* another commentary of the text, a further elaboration has been made concerning the titles. According to this, there are three titles: *Byang chub sems* given from the viewpoint of the subject (*don las btags pa*), *Sa gcig pa*⁸ or *Rig byed snang ba'i rgyan* given from the viewpoint of the quality (*che ba las btags pa*), *Khu byug* as the simile (*dpe las mtshan du btags pa*).⁹

The basic text also forms as the thirty-first chapter of *KG* under the title *rDo rje tshig drug*, but with the title *Rig pa'i khu byug*, it occurs as the first text of the group of the eighteen Sems sde texts which we have already met.¹⁰ The significance of the metaphor in the title, the Cuckoo is not explained in the commentary, but the fact that the basic text was known by this title before the eleventh century A.D. is well attested by the quotations from it in *SM*. There it is quoted twice mentioning simply *Khu byug*.¹¹

However, according to *KhT* there are four kinds of significance in the metaphor: "as the cuckoo comes from India (i.e. from the south) to Tibet either on the 8th or 28th of the first summer month, so those who take up the practice of rDzogs chen are either very intelligent but not learned or those who are very learned; as the cuckoo's singing gives pleasure so does the teaching of rDzogs chen to its adepts; when the cuckoo comes, plants and trees grow, helping the animals to nourish themselves, when one hears the teaching of rDzogs chen, it causes one to attain realisation; as the singing of the cuckoo overpowers other birds so is the teaching of rDzogs chen superior to all other teachings."¹² Similar explanations are also given in *TY*¹³ and *Vairo 'dra 'bag*.¹⁴

The role of this bird in Bonpo tradition is very important. Above all, it is a sacred bird for the simple reason that the Bon Master gShen-rab mi-bo is thought to have come down to earth from heaven in the form of this bird,¹⁵ hence also the importance of the blue colour for the Bonpo.

⁷ See p. 60.

⁸ See p. 47, n. 26.

⁹ *KhT* p. 342.

¹⁰ See p. 23.

¹¹ pp. 323, 347.

¹² pp. 342-45.

¹³ p. 10.

¹⁴ IHa sa Edition. f. 62a, l. 6. On this text, see p. 18 et seq.

¹⁵ *'Dus pa rin po che'i rgyud dri ma med ma gzi brjid rab tu 'bar ba'i mdo*, Delhi 1965, Vol. Ka, chapter 4, *sKye ba bzhes pa*, f. 7a3 (567), 1975.

In the Bonpo rDzogs chen tradition, there are nine imaginary sages through whom the teachings of rDzogs chen are considered to have been transmitted, not by means of verbal communication, but rather telepathically (*dgongs brgyud*). The sixth of the nine beings is called Bar-snang khu-byug, the “Cuckoo of the space”.¹⁶ The second of the nine Bonpo rDzogs chen texts known as *Sems sde dgu* is also entitled *Rig pa'i khu byug*,¹⁷ and according to *Gab pa dgu bskor*, it was first taught in the following way: “Ye-gshen gtsug-phud¹⁸ transformed himself into a cuckoo on a juniper tree¹⁹ and sang clearly the ‘Cuckoo of intellect’, the Enlightened Mind” (*ye gshen gtsug phud kyis/ g.yu lo 'bar ba'i sdong po'i steng du/ 'dab chags khu byug tu sprul nas/ gsung lhang lhang snyan par bsgrags pa'i don/ byang chub sems rig pa khu byug ces bya'ol*).²⁰ This cuckoo is evidently identical to the sage Bar-snang khu-byug mentioned above. However, the Bonpo text of the same title is at present not available for comparative research, therefore its origin remains unknown. However, from the few lines quoted in *BS*²¹ the two texts do not seem to be identical, but on the other hand, it could hardly have been simply coincidental that they have such an identical title. As the Tun-huang text undoubtedly dates back to the ninth century A.D. if not eighth century, the Bonpo must have borrowed it from this version, probably around the eleventh century A.D. but as is often the case, the Bonpo explanation of the metaphor of the title is more fitting than the confused Buddhist ones.

In another Bonpo work entitled '*Grel bzhi rig pa'i rgya mtsho*, the intellect (*rig pa*) is compared to a cuckoo and it states that the doctrine of rDzogs chen must be expounded in five different ways and each of the ways is compared to the quality of one animal: the soaring of a *garuda* (*khyung chen lding ba*), the leap of a lion (*seng ge'i mchong stabs*), the walk of a swan (*ngang mo'i 'gros*), the song of a cuckoo (*khu byug gsung*), and the drawing in of a tortoise (*rus sbal gyi bskum thabs*). The metaphor of the cuckoo is explained in the following words: “for example, the cuckoo, king of the birds, comes in between winter and summer and when it sings most distinctly to

¹⁶ sPa bsTan-rgyal bzang-po, *rDzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan brgyud kyis bla ma brgyud pa'i mam thar* (composed in 1419), *ZhNy Ka*, pp. 10–11.

¹⁷ Karmay 1972, p. 51.

¹⁸ According to *BK* 'Chi-med gtsug-phud another name of Ye-gshen gtsug-phud, who is a Bonpo sage, classified the Bon texts that descended from heaven into 9 or 27 groups (f. 46a: *bon gnam babs rgyu 'bras mi bslu zhes/ ston pa 'chi med gtsug phud kyis/ khu byug dgu'am nyi shu bdun du dbye/*). However, such classification under the term *khu byug* is not known to the Bonpo tradition itself. On the other hand, among the Bonpo scholars, the identification of the “Cuckoo in space” is a popular topic for discussion, Cf. Shar-rdza bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan, *Legs bshad mdzod* (Karmay 1972, pp. 57–58).

¹⁹ *g.yu lo 'bar ba* is an epithet of juniper, the sacred tree of the Bonpo.

²⁰ Edition Delhi (c. 1966), f. 35a.

²¹ The quotations come from a *Khu byug rang 'grel* “autocommentary”, f. 21a, 23a.

announce the coming of the summer season, it pleases living beings. In the same way this teaching, if propagated . . . gives the pleasure to the enlightened intellect'' (*dper na bya rje khu byug bya ba des/ dbyar dgun gyi mtshams su 'ongs nas/ skad lhang lhang sgrags pas/ sems can thams cad spro ba bskyed pa bzhin dul gsung 'dis kyang . . . rig pa byang chub kyi sems lal sems kyi spro ba bskyed pa'ol*).²²

It is therefore evident that the cuckoo has two functions: one is as the Master of the Intellect (*Rig pa'i ston pa*) who is in the form of the bird, hence the name Bar-s nang khu-byug and the text which contains the teaching transmitted through him bearing the title *Khu byug*. In this sense, the bird itself has the position of a sage. On the other hand, in the second case, it is taken simply as a simile like the ones in the Buddhist texts mentioned above. Just as the cuckoo announces the coming of the summer season so does the teaching of rDzogs chen which awakens the dormant *rig pa byang chub kyi sems* in all living beings.

However, it is no less important to note also that in other Buddhist traditions, Rig-pa'i khu-byug (Vidyākōkila) is the name of an Indian personage appearing in a lineage through which the practice of the *bodhicittotpādasamaya* is transmitted reaching ultimately Atiśa, but nothing much is known of this master.²³ The practice of *bodhicitta* here is a question of a vow in which one is moved by an infinite compassion towards all living beings and so resolves to lead them to salvation. Once this determination is produced in thought, the adept is then qualified to be considered as Bodhisattva in the tradition of the *abhisamayālamkāra* teachings. However, *bodhicitta* in rDzogs chen tradition is already existent in all living beings from the very beginning. On this topic we shall come back in another chapter. There is no known source that gives the slightest clue to this mysterious link between the title of our rDzogs chen text and the name of the Indian master connected with the tradition of the *bodhicitta* vow. This master does not seem to have anything to do with rDzogs chen. On the other hand, the term *bodhicitta* as in other Buddhist teachings plays an important role in rDzogs chen as the Primordial Basis. It is therefore quite probable that there was a connexion between them at a certain stage in the development of the rDzogs chen doctrine, but how this came about remains unresolved in the light of present research.

²² *Byang sems gab pa dgu bskor gyi dgongs pa bkral ba'i 'grel bzhi rig pa'i rgya mtsho* (Karmay 1977, No. 73. text 5, p. 202). Cf. also *sPyi rgyud ye khri mtha' sel gyi lo rgyus chen mo skos kyi mchong*, p. 796.

²³ *Jo bo rje dpal ldan mar me mdzad ye shes kyi rnam thar rgyas pa*, Varanasi 1970, pp. 19–21. In his *BT*, Ngag-dbang chos-grags states that there are two Indian teachers known as Rig-pa'i khu-byug (*che chung gnyis*) and further states that no works of these masters ever existed (f. 207).

The commentary

There are in fact at least three works which could be classified as commentaries of the basic text. Besides the one attached to the basic text in our Tun-huang manuscript, two can be found in *Vairo rgyud 'bum*: *TY* and *KhT*. *TY* is a commentary fairly close to the text which it purports to elucidate, but unfortunately incomplete. On the other hand, in *KhT* the verses are commented upon in a scholastic style so that the distance is very great between the verse and the explanations offered. However, none, including the Tun-huang manuscript, gives any name as its author. The commentary in the Tun-huang document is obviously the oldest. We shall therefore concentrate on this and then note down when the others differ on important points. It begins with the question why the name Kun-tu bzang-po has been given here rather than Vajrasattva who according to all tantras is the "Chief of all yogas" (*rnal 'byor kun gyi gtso bo*). The answer to the question is that when it is about striving towards a goal and when there are different grades as to the goal that one obtains, Vajrasattva is mentioned, but that with rDzogs chen doctrines one pursues nothing of the kind. Therefore Kun-tu bzang-po is preferred. It must be pointed out at the outset that this Kun-tu bzang-po has a quite different role from that of Bodhisattva Samantabhadra who occurs frequently in sūtras. In both the rNying ma pa and Bonpo traditions *dharmakāya* is generally represented by him in the system of the three-fold "Buddha body". In rDzogs chen, Kun-tu bzang-po is merely a synonym of *rig pa byang chub kyi sems*.

After having dwelt upon the salutatory part, the commentary begins to deal with the actual basic text. It tries to elucidate the text verse by verse, but nevertheless this results in obscurity to the extent that any effort to make sense out of it is almost bound to be arbitrary. But then it is evident that the commentary itself embodies interpretations which are often further from the point than one might expect. Many elements of different origins are brought in to explain the doctrines. Thus there are the tantric elements such as the concepts of "deliverance" (*sgrol ba*) and "sexual union" (*sbyor ba*) which make up the four "vows" (*tha tshig nam bzhi*). These two here stand for the first two categories of the four basic rules of the Vinaya (*rtsa ba bzhi*), viz. killing (*srog gcod pa*) and fornication (*mi tshangs bar spyod pa*). The remaining two elements of the four "vows" are identical to those of the Vinaya. However, from the standpoint of rDzogs chen system, it is considered that no acceptance or rejection can have a place in rDzogs chen, for the four "vows" are "intrinsically embodied" (*lhun gyis grub pa nyid du gnas pa*) in the *byang chub kyi sems*. The other tantric elements are the five kinds of passions termed here as *mi spang ba'i dam*

tshig, the “vows concerning that which is not to be rejected”. The author of the commentary states that there are various teachings which are only “intentional”. They do not teach the truth fully. The only doctrine that embodies the truth is the doctrine of rDzogs chen, but at the same time that doctrine has never been pronounced, for the “theory and practice of Kun-tu bzang-po are already inborn in all living beings” (*kun tu bzang po'i lta spyod ni/ 'gro ba kun la zin pa'i chos nyid yin/*). Finally the commentary finishes by emphasising spontaneity in relation to the three tantric elements, viz. “achievement” (*dngos grub*), “vows” (*dam tshig*) and “rituals” (*mchod sbyin*).

Identification of the basic text

As already mentioned, this basic text constitutes as the thirty-first chapter of *KG* under the title *rDo rje tshig drug*. In this work, it is presented as follows: “then, the mind that is enlightened, the king who creates all, pronounced his own nature which is the spontaneity of complete non-action. Oh! listen, the Great Being” (*de nas byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po des/ kun byed nyid kyi rang bzhin bya med rdzogs pa lhun gyis grub pa 'di gsungs sol kye sems dpa' chen po nyon cig/*). At this point the text of the *rDo rje tshig drug* begins and ends with the following words: “so he said. The six vajra words, the thirty-first chapter of the *Byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po*”.²⁴

The basic text is also presented as the first work of the group of the eighteen texts of *Sems sde*.²⁵ In this group it purports to have been a translation from Sanskrit as also in the case of *KG* with the title *Santidarpa* and in Tibetan *rDzogs pa chen po sa gcig pa*, the Great Perfection, the “single stage”,²⁶ but they hardly correspond to each other. Apart from a few variants in the orthography, the text is exactly the same as the other contained in *KG* and the Tun-huang manuscript. It finishes: “the end of the Cuckoo of Intellect, the Enlightened Mind” (*Byang chub kyi sems rig pa khu byug rdzogs sol*).²⁷

The basic text contains the original germ of the fundamental ideas of

²⁴ *KG* f. 96–97. For further discussion on this work, see p. 207.

²⁵ On this group of texts, see p. 23.

²⁶ *santi* is usually given as the Sanskrit equivalent for *rdzogs chen* though no such Sanskrit term is readily definable. Nor is it clear the term *darpa* which may be a corruption of *dhar* or *dharā*, earth (?). However, rDzogs chen doctrine is known as *sa gcig pa* as it occurs in another text: *rdzogs pa chen po sa gcig pa/ gang gi(s) de rtog(s) de yi sal*—“the Great Perfection is the single state. He who realises it, he is at that stage” (*Chos thams cad byang chub kyi sems rdzogs pa chen po 'khor ba rtsad nas gcod pa nam mkha' dang mnyam par yi ge med pa'i rgyud*, Kaneko No. 4, f. 375). Cf. also *Thig le kun gsal chen po'i rgyud*, Kaneko No. 81, f. 238).

²⁷ Kaneko No. 8, f. 419.

what we may call the rDzogs chen theories. It also serves as the basic structure on which later texts are built, expanded and elaborated. In the certain cases, it has been entirely incorporated, for example, in *KG* as we have already noted. But in the *Byang chub sems kyi mdo 'grel chen po bcu*, the six verses have been expanded into many more lines.²⁸ In another work, they are split up and put into different parts of the work in order to fit in different contexts, e.g. *bKra shis pa'i rig pa'i khu byug gi rgyud*.²⁹ In yet another tantra entitled *rDzogs pa chen po chos nyid byang chub sems bkra shis mi 'gyur gsal bar gnas pa'i rgyud*, the six verses suddenly appear at the end of its chapter 8 where they are used to exalt the rDzogs chen doctrine. They are preceded by the following lines:

“Sublime and free from striving,
The best of Buddha-vehicles,
The secret aim of triumphant yogins.”
(*bla med rtsol ba las 'das pa'i/*
sangs rgyas kun gyi theg pa'i mchog/
mal 'byor dbang phyug dgongs pa'i don!).³⁰

The last verses in particular are used more often than the other ones. They recur again and again either with a slight change in the wording or incorporated totally without any kind of indication of their source.³¹ It is this basic text which is quoted in *SM* as one of its primary sources under the title *Khu byug*.³² In his *ThCh*, Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po also has taken these lines as the fundamental work of rDzogs chen under the title of *Byang chub kyi sems rdo rje tshig drug pa* on whose axis revolves his important treatise on rDzogs chen. Rong-zom Pandita analyses the six verses as follows: “the first two lines indicate the ‘deviation’ (*gol ba*), the next two lines display the greatness of the Enlightened Mind which is the permanent presence of Kun-tu bzang-po and finally the last two are concerned with the state of equanimity and spontaneity”.³³ By comparison, this analysis is no clearer than the one in the commentary which we have already seen. Nonetheless, it is evident that this basic text embodies the principal tenets of rDzogs chen, such as the idea of “singleness” or “oneness” suggesting that no other teachings and methods of teaching are more effective and valid than this. The implication is that other systems

²⁸ Kaneko No. 2, f. 305. This text has no colophon and so its origin is uncertain. At any rate, the lines are quoted below.

²⁹ Kaneko No. 16, f. 529. It is said to be a translation of Vairocana.

³⁰ Kaneko No. 17, f. 599. This text is said to be a translation of g.Yu-sgra snying-po. On this personage, see p. 27 et seq.

³¹ e.g. *Ye shes gsang ba'i sgron me* (Kaneko No. 58, f. 9).

³² pp. 323–347.

³³ f. 210.

of teaching are a deviation (*gol ba*). The rDzogs chen approach is therefore described in many terms intended in this sense, for example, *gcig chod* (“enough by itself”), *gcig thub* (“the only one which enables”), and *gcig grol* (“release through one alone”).³⁴ This particular idea is apparent in the first two lines, especially through the word *mi gnyis* (“oneness”) which however must be distinguished from the sense of the word *gnyis med* which expresses negative whereas the former is positive. The next two lines bring in the doctrine that transcends both the theories of *vikalpa* (*rnam par rtog pa*) and *avikalpa* (*rnam par mi rtog pa*). The state of this transcendence is the *rig pa byang chub kyi sems* whose symbolical name is Kuntu bzang-po. The line *ji bzhin pa zhes mi rtog kyang!* – “though without imagination as “suchness” might give the impression that here it is a question of *mi rtog pa* which the Ch’an school has picked up as one of its fundamental tenets. However, it is not the *mi rtog pa* that is referred to, but rather to *ji bzhin pa*, the noumenal aspect of the *sems* which the commentary defines as the “basis from which all good is produced” (*legs par thams cad skyed pa’i gzhir gyur ba*). It further elucidates the state of *ji bzhin pa* in explicit terms: *ji bzhin pa la rtog pa med pa’i phyir* – “for there is no imagination in suchness”. Although the doctrine of *mi rtog pa* in general is important and particularly so in the Ch’an school, according to the rDzogs chen tradition, the very word suggests a counter-part, *rtog pa*, inevitably leading us to the notion of duality which it totally rejects. It is in this context that Rong-zom paṇḍita quotes the following lines from the *lTa ba yang dag sgron ma*:

“Pleasure and pain in a dream,
when we awaken are on the same level.
So if grasped by knowledge,
Both thought and non-thought are on exactly the same level.”
(*rmi lam dag gi bde dang sdug bsngal yang!*
sad par gyur na rang bzhin mnyam pa ltar!
rnam par rtog dang mi rtog gnyis ka yang!
shes pas rig na rang bzhin yongs kyi mnyam!).³⁵

The fifth line contains the notion of “always in being” or “never lacking anything”. This is in its embryonic stage, expressed by the word *zin pa*, “already done”, “nothing more is needed”. Finally the line *lhun gyis gnas par bzhag pa yin!* introduces the theory of the confluence of spontaneity and equanimity, the central tenet of rDzogs chen.

³⁴ See pp. 189, n. 71; 198.

³⁵ *T&Ch* f. 262. The text is one of the “Six lamps”, see p. 66, n. 21.

Translation of the basic text (IOL 647, Part I)

- (1a) Svasti.³⁶ Homage to the great bliss of the indestructible body, speech and mind³⁷ of the most holy, Kun-tu bzang-po,³⁸ the one who is most glorious!
- (1) All the varieties of phenomenal existence as a whole do not in reality differ from one another.³⁹
- (2) Individually also they are beyond conceptualisation.
- (3) Although as “suchness”⁴⁰ there is no mental discursiveness (with regard to them).
- (4) Kun-tu bzang-po shines forth in all forms.⁴¹
- (5) Abandon all the malady of striving, for one has already acquired it all.⁴²

³⁶ = “good luck”, “blessing”, translated by the expression *dpal gyi dpal*. However, the commentary *KhT* (p. 343) asserts that this is a word of the language of O rgyan (Oddiyāna) and means *khu byug* (cuckoo)!

³⁷ Normally known as *rdo rje gsum* in Buddhist tantras, viz. *sku rdo rje*, *gsung rdo rje* and *thugs rdo rje*.

³⁸ The supreme Buddha in rDzogs chen tradition. Kun-tu bzang-po is a symbolical name or rather personification of the noumenal aspect of the *sems*, *byang chub kyi sems* (see pp. 52, n. 45; 177. It is he who propounds the rDzogs chen tantras.

³⁹ *mi gnyis*, “not two”. The commentary defines this as *tha mi dad*, “not different”. It does not necessarily have the same connotation as *gnyis med*, “without two”. While the first is a partial negation (*ma yin dgag* = *paryudāsa-pratiśedha*, *Mvy* 4510), the 2nd is a total negation (*med dgag* = *prasajya-pratiśedha*, 4509).

⁴⁰ *ji bzhin pa*, a contraction of *ji lta ba bzhin*. *SM* (p. 396) defines it as *bcos bsfad med pa*, “that which is neither altered nor spoiled”. It has the same sense as that of *de kho na nyid* or *de bzhin nyid* (*tathatā*), “that which just is so”. It is therefore translatable by “thusness” or “suchness”. In fact, it often occurs with these side by side: *ji bzhin pa de kho na nyid* (*SM* pp. 388–89), but also in rDzogs chen refers to the *gzhi*, the Primordial Basis which according to *SM* (p. 399) is beyond 50 expressions (*tha snyad lnga bcu las grol ba*). In a later work (*TY* p. 171), commenting on the same verse, *ji bzhin pa* is explained as being *sems nyid* or *sems kyi de kho na nyid*, “the reality of the mind”, but always *ye ji bzhin ma* or *ji bzhin nyid kyi skye mched* in Bon works (*Bya bral rjes med*, *ZhNy* 2a, p. 470).

⁴¹ The phrase *nam par snang mdzad* here does not seem to have any relation to Buddha Vairocana of the five Buddha families, though the commentary refers to a *mandala* that needs no mental creation through the process of meditation (*bskyed rdzogs bya mi dgos par dkyil 'khor gdon pa*, pp. 55, 58). Moreover, *KhT* (p. 349) comments as: *nam par ji 'dra bar snang yang/ sems kyi rol ba yin pa'i phyir/*—“in whatever forms they appear, they are the play of the mind”.

⁴² *zin pa*, Lit. “already done”, “finished”, but also has the connotation of something that is done from the beginning especially if it is preceded by *ye nas*. Twenty kinds of *zin pa* (*zin pa nyi shu*) are given in *SM* (pp. 344–45), 390):

1. *'gro don ye nas byas zin/*—“the work for living beings is already accomplished”.
2. *dkyil 'khor ye nas bkod zin/*—“the *mandala* is created from the beginning”.
3. *mchod pa ye nas phul zin pa/*—“offering is made from the beginning”.
4. *spyod pa ye nas spyod zin/*—“practices are done from the beginning”.
5. *lta ba rtogs zin/*—“already comprehended the theory”.
6. *sgom pa byas zin/*—“already practised the meditation”.
7. *dam tshig srungs zin/*—“already observed the vows”.

(6) One leaves it as it is with spontaneity.⁴³

These six verses occur slightly expanded in a late rDzogs chen text entitled *Byang chub sems kyi mdo 'grel* whose composition may go back to the twelfth century A.D. The verses in this version are little more expressive. They are translated below so that they can easily be compared to the version of the Tun-huang document:

- (1) "Phenomenal existence involves diversity, but it does not differentiate in absolute terms (*dharmatā*).
- (2) The essence, *bodhi*, has no beginning or end.
- (3) Hence it cannot be illustrated as it is beyond any expression.
- (4) In the absolute which is unalterable.
- (5) As "suchness", there is no imagination.
- (6) But it appears in diverse forms.
- (7) Since there is no acceptance or rejection, it is the one Kun-tu bzang-po.
- (8) This has always been beyond striving.
- (9) One rests with spontaneity."
(sNang ba'i chos ni sna tshogs tel
chos nyid dag las mi gnyis kyang/

8. *bsgrub pa byas zin/*—"already practised the *sādhana*".

9. *dngos grub thob zin/*—"already obtained the *siddhi*".

10. *tshogs rdzogs zin/*—"already accumulated the merit".

11. *dngos grub brtsams zin/* (Cf. n. 9).

12. *sa non zin/*—"already arrived at the stage" (*bhūmi*).

13. *dbang rdzogs zin/*—"already obtained the *dbang, abhiṣeka*".

14. *sgrib pa sbyang zin/*—"already purified".

15. *phyag rgya being bsgoms byas zin/*—"already done the meditation with which one binds (the divinity) to oneself (by means of) hand gesture".

16. *bzlas brjod byas zin/*—"already recited (the *mantra*)".

17. *sbyor ba byas zin/*—"already completed the practice of the union".

18. *bsam skyon byas zin/*—"already corrected the mental faults".

19. *rtags thon zin/*—"already perceived the signs (of success)".

20. *drod rnyed zin/*—"already acquired the warmth", this also refers to a similar sign of success in meditation, more on this, see *SM* pp. 252–53, 465.

The *zin pa nyi shu* sums up well the general Buddhist tantric practice. The only element that is not included in this list is *sgrol ba* which we shall have occasion to discuss.

⁴³ The adverb *lhun gyis*, "spontaneously", "effortlessly", "naturally" occurs with other verbs, but *lhun gyis gnas pa*, "remain" or "rest spontaneously" seems to have been used only in works later than the 11th century A.D. In other combinations, however, it occurs frequently in rDzogs chen texts: *lhun gyis 'jug pa*, "entering spontaneously", *lhun gyis rdzogs pa*, "achieved spontaneously". The most frequent one and used in works other than on rDzogs chen is *lhun gyis grub pa* (*lhun grub pa, anābhoga*, *Moy* 411), "effortless", "without striving". *lhun grub* is one of the two terms used to describe special qualities of the Primordial Basis. The other term being *ka dag*, Primaeval Purity. Further discussion on these terms, see p. 181.

snying po byang chub chags gzhigs nas/
mtshon du med de spros dang brall/
ma bcos pa zhes mi rtog kyang/
sna tshogs rnam par snang mdzad lal/
blang dor med pas kun tu bzang/
ye nas rtsol sgrub 'das pas nal/
byas zin rtsol ba'i nad spangs tel/
*lhun gyis gnas pas bzhag pa yin/)*⁴⁴

Translation of the commentary (IOL 647, Part II)

(f. 1a, l. 4) “In all the tantras,⁴⁵ it is stated that Vajrasattva⁴⁶ is the chief of all yoga,⁴⁷ but here Kun-tu bzang-po is mentioned as the chief. What is the significance of this?”⁴⁸ “It is thought that Vajrasattva is mentioned when it is about seeking a desired goal and when there are different grades in the achievement. But here one does not seek any kind of goal like that. Taking into account this fact, Kun-tu bzang-po is even more suitable. (2a) This is very clear to those who are intelligent enough.”

The significance of the phrase *dpal gyi dpal*⁴⁹ is this: *dpal* means “that which is given”, but to show that one is spontaneous and devoid of any striving, mental or physical, is even better than that which is totally given. The phrase *bcom ldan 'das* signifies one who possesses the *dharani* in which there is neither integration nor disintegration.⁵⁰ *Kun-tu bzang-po*

⁴⁴ Kaneko No. 2, f. 305.

⁴⁵ The tantras referred to here are the Mahāyoga tantras, such as the *Guhyagarbha* rather than the rDzogs chen tantras, i.e. Atiyoga tantras mostly found in *NyG*. However, admitted that they refer to Atiyoga tantras, we face two problems:

a) most of the tantras grouped in the section of rDzogs chen in *NyG* are undatable. At any rate, in the present form, they hardly date back beyond the 11th century A.D. except some of the texts which constitute the group of the 18 Sems sde texts (see p. 23) and those which are quoted in *SM*.

b) It is Kun-tu bzang-po and not Vajrasattva who is presented in these “tantras” as being the supreme Buddha preaching Atiyoga tantras. He appears under various names: Kun-byed rgyal-po, Kun-rig rgyal-po, Rig-pa'i rgyal-po, Shes-rig-gi rgyal-po, and so forth. On the other hand, in Mahāyoga tantras, it is Vajrasattva who is presented as the chief Buddha.

⁴⁶ See note 45.

⁴⁷ As the central point of the tantric teachings is yoga, different ways came into use for classifying tantras according to the different “grades” of yoga, Cf. pp. 172–74.

⁴⁸ This question is very important in that it indicates that in the time of the author of this text, no “tantras” like the later “rDzogs chen tantras” having Kun-tu bzang-po as the supreme Buddha yet existed, Cf. note 38. It further confirms the fact that the text here under discussion is one of the earliest prototypes of the rDzogs chen texts.

⁴⁹ Cf. note 36.

⁵⁰ This interpretation differs totally from the definition of the epithet given in *GB* (p. 73–5–7).

signifies that in whichever way one rolls, one never wanders away from the centre of the point.⁵¹

The significance of *sku gsung thugs rdo rje*⁵² is the “single way”⁵³ which leads one away from the three worlds. *bDe ba chen po* denotes that one who has the experience of tasting “suchness”. The phrase *phyag ’tshal lo* signifies spontaneous dwelling in the state of the “great bliss”.

The way of this, is elucidated in the following verses such as *sna tshogs rang bzhin mi gnyis kyang!* etc. (2b)

(1) *sna tshogs rang bzhin mi gnyis kyang!*

All the elements in the phenomenal world, defect and quality etc. involve diversity, but all of them are by nature undifferentiated from one another in their essential equanimity. “Well! If you consider that oneness involves diversity, is it not as if one were dividing space into small parts?” (Reply to the question:) “It is not possible as far as the central principle is concerned”. That is why one says:

(2) *cha shas nyid du spros dang bral!*

i.e. oneness cannot be diversified. As no word can convey its significance, it is explained as being without amplification.⁵⁴

(3) *ji bzhin pa zhes mi rtog kyang!*

The word *ji bzhin pa* refers to the preceding subject. The word *mi rtog* means not to dwell upon that subject (i.e. *ji bzhin pa*). “Well! One finds in all the authentic scriptures (3a) that (i.e. *ji bzhin pa*) is the basis from which all good develops and if one does not dwell upon it, would one be able to acquire any part of the great qualities?” (Reply to the question:) “I agree that mental activity ceases in “suchness”, but there is no question of dwelling upon it nor is there any question of the great qualities not existing, for one says:

(4) *rnam par snang mdzad kun tu bzang!*

As the appearance of all kinds of forms is the production of “suchness” one needs not make any effort to acquire the great qualities, for they are the play of the essence from the beginning and one already possesses them all.

(5) *zin pas rtsol ba’i nad spangs tel!*

(6) *lhun gyis gnas pas bzhag pa yin!*

⁵¹ The same phrase occurs in *SM* (p. 351) with several misspellings: *’gro (’gre) log spyid (spyi) tshugs gang (gar) ’dres (’gres) kyang! snying po’i don las ’da’ ba med dol*, but in a slightly different context. Here it is used to convey the idea that since the essence of Buddha is within oneself, it is no use searching for it elsewhere, for example, “whichever way one rolls, one is never away from one’s own physical centre”. In yet another text (*TG* f. 226) it reads: *’gro ldig spyi gtsu gar song yan! snying po don las g.yos pa med!*

⁵² See note 37.

⁵³ This probably refers to the notion similar to *theg pa gcig pa (ekayāna)*, and may also be connected with *sa gcig pa*, see note 26.

⁵⁴ Cf. with the verses 7 and 8 of *IOL* 594, p. 72; also *KhT* pp. 347–48.

The word *zin pa* here signifies that every wish has already been fulfilled. To do something that is already done is just a malady which causes fatigue in oneself. The malady of striving must be avoided. (3b) One is therefore intrinsically endowed with all the things one wants though one has never pursued them. That is why it is called “resting spontaneously”, that means nothing is to be done. One leaves oneself undisturbed in the state of “suchness”. It means without striving and pursuing something pointedly.⁵⁵

The general summary of all this is known as the way of the Great Bliss of the glorious one Kun-tu bzang-po. To be able to resolve to abandoning all the objects to which one is attached is called the “Great inner ambrosia”, and it is the best means for comprehending the non-realizable Enlightenment. When one is dwelling upon the authoritative sources, the practice of one’s vows also resides totally in spontaneity.

(1. Killing) As for “deliverance”, the “material” eliminates itself. Self-elimination is the main method (of deliverance). But here (i.e. according to rDzogs chen doctrine) even the word “material” itself does not exist (4a), “deliverance” is therefore the chief means, and it resides intrinsically in spontaneity.⁵⁶

(2. Fornication) As for the “union”,⁵⁷ it is the “sphere” where there is neither union nor disunion. (But here), there is not (even the notion of) “union”, for one is unceasingly in union with the queen.⁵⁸

(3. Stealing) One remains within the possession of all the phenomena of the world and beyond, hence nothing is needed. Though one has not been given anything, one possesses all. So it is called “stealing”.

⁵⁵ On *gza' gtad*, Cf. p. 113; The six verses are treated in great detail in *KhT* (pp. 346–50) under the framework of *lta ba* (view), *sgom pa* (contemplation), *la bzlas pa* (transcendence) and *gol sa* (deviation). These last two verses (5–6) are also explained in *ThCh* (f. 274) as follows: *chos thams cad kyi rang bzhin ni kun tu bzang po'i sku gsung thugs rdo rje bde ba chen po'i ngang du rdzogs zin pa'i phyir/ mi mthun pa dang gnyen po blang dor gyi nad spans tel btang snyoms chen po'i ngang la lhun gyis gnas pa 'di ni mnyam par bzhag pa ces bya ba'i don yin nol.*

⁵⁶ For a discussion on the practice of *sgrol ba*, see Karmay 1979, p. 151, ff.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 151 ff.

⁵⁸ The expression *gzungs kyi rgyal mo* refers to *shes rab* (*prajñā*), i.e. *yum*. In *sādhanas*, the feminine partner is known under various terms: e.g. *rig ma* or *gzungs ma*. The feminine partner is called *gzungs ma* because in order to be qualified as such she has to be “blessed” with five *dharanī* syllables, Cf. *rDo rje bkod pa*, *K* Vol 81, No. 4576, P. 263–1–2: *skyes pa bla mas yum du bzung/ gzungs su byin gyis brlabs pa nil de yi gzugs kyi phung po lal bde bar gshags pa'i sa bon lngal 'phro 'du gsal bar gyur ba stel . . .* Cf. also *PT* 841, f. 2b; *gzungs* by itself also has the same meaning in certain works, e.g. *Sangs rgyas kyi sa* by Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po (*Rong zom bka' 'bum*, f. 450): *gzungs dang gnyis su med sbyor ba . . .*

(4.) As for “lie”, it means a word which has no relevance to the truth. (But here), whether a word has a point or not, it is a deviation from the principle. So it is called “lie”.

Hence all the four vows reside in spontaneity. The four neither increase nor decrease (i.e. are never more or less). Now the five vows⁵⁹ for not abandoning, they overlap the above group. Anger belongs to (the category of) “deliverance”. Desire to “union”. (4b) Ignorance means that which is beyond the object of intellect, but the Great Self⁶⁰ (i.e. Kun-tu bzang-po) possesses no intellect. So it is called “ignorance”. Pride signifies something which does not change. The Great Self is unchangeable, for it is never away from its own nature of greatness. As for jealousy, even if one imparts (the teaching) to those who are not suited to receive it, they do not understand. Though one’s qualities are great, no one knows about them and so they (remain) in great secrecy by nature.

The four main points (i.e. of the basic text):

- (1) Salutation.
- (2) The “Enlightened Mind” which is beyond description and spontaneous.
- (3) Creation⁶¹ of the *mandala* without the meditational practices of *utpannakrama* and *sampannakrama*.
- (4) Remaining unaltered in spontaneity.

The “Cuckoo of Intellect” is the example. The “Understanding of the ornament of appearance” is the meaning. The “Six Vajra words” are the number (i.e. the verses of the basic text).⁶²

(5a) Reflect upon the theory and practice of yoga according to the way of the Great Perfection which is content of the “Cuckoo of Intellect”. Now the level of intelligence among people varies enormously from one to another. The *dharma* teachings are accordingly very numerous and are mainly taught as intentional (*neyārtha*). But to the intelligent ones, the truth (*nītārtha*) is taught in the form of most correct precepts. The Absolute (*dharmatā*) has, from the beginning, never been pronounced, for it is devoid of cause. Since the theory and practice of Kun-tu bzang-po are of

⁵⁹ The five kinds of passions are here treated as the “five vows”.

⁶⁰ On this term see p. 114.

⁶¹ *gdon pa*, *'don pa*, to recite, but the use of the word here implies the recitation of ritual texts when a *mandala* is being constructed, mentally or otherwise.

⁶² These are the titles of the text, Cf. p. 42.

the reality immanent in all sentient beings, no effort and striving⁶³ are necessary now and in the future.

Therefore, there are three principles to be observed with regard to that which is already achieved from the beginning:

(1) To remain without striving is the “accomplishment”.

(2) To avoid nothing is the “vow”.

(3) To hold nothing is the “offering”.

Kun-tu bzang-po says that to remain within these principles is yoga. The end.

Transliteration of the Tibetan text

IOL 647 (Ch. 73 III 20 [29])

(Part I)

(Fol. 1a, line 1) svasti dpal gyi dpal/ bcom ldan 'das/ kun tu¹ bzang po/
sku gsung thugs rdo rje bde ba chen po la phyag 'tshal lo// (l. 2)

(1) sna tshogs rang bzhin myi gnyis kyang/

(2) cha shas nyid du spros dang bral/

(3) ji bzhin pa² zhes myi rtog kyang/

(4) rnam par snang mdzad kun tu (l. 3) bzang/

'(5) zin pas rtsol ba'i nad spangs te/

(6) lhun gyis³ gnas pas⁴ bzhag⁵ pa yin//

(Part II)

(l. 4) de la rnal 'byor kun gyi⁶ gtso bo ni/ dpal rdo rje sems dpa' 'o zhes/
rgyud mtha' dag las grags na/ (l. 5) 'dir kun tu bzang po gtsor smos pa/
don gyi dbang gang las dgongs she na/ de ni bsgrub pa'i mtha' dang grub
pa'i khyad par⁷ dag kyang (l. 6) gsung par⁸ bzhed la/ 'di ni de lta bu
gang yang myi sgrub pas/ don gyi⁹ dbang 'di btsan¹⁰ par¹¹ byas na/ kun
tu bzang po ni de'i yang rje btsun du 'os pa/ (Fol. 2a, l. 1) rig pa rnyed
pa dag la shin tu¹² gsal lo/ de la dpal gyi dpal zhes bya ba la/ thams cad¹³
du legs pa sbyin pa¹⁴ dpal yin la/ (l. 2) de yang bstal ba myed par lhun

⁶³ *bya ba dang bral ba*, “act free”, hence the expression *bya bral ba*, one who has renounced all mundane life, but in a Bonpo rDzogs chen work entitled *Bya bral rjes med* (*ZhNy* 2a, p. 470), it is explained as “that which is beyond the calculation of mind” (*blo'i rtsis gdab dang bral bas bya bral*). Cf. also p. 112.

¹ Throughout the text, the particle *du* for *kun tu* is given.—² Again the syllable *ba* instead of *pa* for *jin bzhin pa* occurs throughout the manuscript.—³ This particle occurs as *kyis* insistently.—⁴ The copy of the same work preserved in *NyG Ka*, f. 419 reads *gnas pa*.—⁵ *gzhag*,—⁶ *kyi*,—⁷ *bar*,—⁸ *bar*,—⁹ *kyi*,—¹⁰ *brtsan*,—¹¹ *bar*,—¹² *du*,—¹³ The manuscript has the form *chad* throughout.—¹⁴ *ba*.

las myi g.yo bar bzhag²³ pa yin te/ gza' gtad kyi rtsol sgrub myed do
zhes bya ba'i don to/

'di'i (l. 3) spyi don ni/ dpal kun tu bzung po bde ba chen po rdzogs pa'i
tshul zhes bya'o/ gces myi gces kyi mtshan ma thams (l. 4) cad gtong bar
dang du len par nus pa ni/ nang gi bdud rtsi chen po zhes bya ste/ myi
len pa'i byang chub len pa'i thabs (l. 5) dam pa yin pa'i²⁴ phyir/ ji bzhin
pa'i lung la gnas pa'i dus na/ spyod pa'i dam tshig kyang lhun gyis grub
pa nyid du tshang bar gnas te/ (l. 6) bsgral ba yang dngos po'i chos
rnams/ 'jig pa'i thabs kyi gtso bo yin te/ 'di na dngos po mying tsam yang
rab tu²⁵ nub pas/ sgrol ba thabs kyi (Fol. 4a, l. 1) gtso bor gyurd pa'i
phyir/ sgrol ba lhun gyis grub par gnas so/ sbyor ba ni 'du 'bral myed pa'i
dbyings la bya ste/ 'du 'bral (l. 2) gyi ming yang myed pas/ gzungs kyi
rgyal mo dang rgyun myi 'chad par sbyor ro/ 'di las 'jig rten dang 'jig
rten las 'das pa'i chos thams (l. 3) cad/ bsnan pa myed par gnas te/ ma
byin yang thams cad yod pas/ ma byin par blangs pa zhes bya'o/ (l. 4)
brdzun du smra ba ni/ don dang ma 'brel pa'i tshig la bya ste/ gza' gtad
kyi don thams cad dang/ gza' ba myed (l. 5) pa'i don 'dir gol bas/ brdzun
du smra ba zhes bya'o/ de ltar tha tshig rnam bzhi yang lhun gyis grub
pa nyid du gnas te/ skye 'grib kyi skabs (l. 6) myed do/ de la ni/ myi spang
ba'i dam tshig rnam pa lnga yang/ gong ma nyid du 'dus te/ zhe sdang
ni sgrol bar 'dus/ 'dod chags ni sbyor bar 'dus/ (Fol. 4b, l. 1) gti mug ni
rig shes kyi spyod yul las 'das pa la bya ste/ bdag nyid chen po 'di la rig
shes tsam yang myed pas/ gti mug ces bya/ nga rgyal (l. 2) ni 'gyur ba
myed pa'i don la bya ste/ nges pa chen po'i bdag nyid la 'gyur ba myed
de/ che ba'i rang bzhin las myi 'da' ba'i phyir ro/ phrag dog (l. 3) ni snod
ma yin pa rnams la bstan kyang myi shes te/ legs pa'i yon tan che yang/
sus kyang myi shes pas/ (l. 4) rang bzhin gyis gsang ba chen po yin pa'i
phyir ro/

don bzhi la/ phyag 'tshal ba dang/ brjod pa dang bral ba'i (l. 5) byang
chub kyi sems lhun gyis grub pas/ bskyed rdzogs bya myi dgos par dkyil
'khor 'don²⁶ pa lhun gyis gnas pa la ma bcos par (l. 6) gnas pa'o/ rig pa'i
khu byug ni dpe/ rig byed snang ba'i rgyan ni don/ rdo rje tshig drug ni
grangs// //

(Fol. 5a, l. 1) rnal 'byor gyi lta spyod rdzogs pa chen po'i tshul/ rig pa'i
khu byug gi don yid la brnag par bya'o/ de la gang zag gi blo'i rim (l. 2)
pa ni/ bsam gyis myi khyab pas/ chos kyi sgo yang/ de dang mthun par²⁷
drang ba'i don du mang du gsungs kyis kyang/ nges pa'i don blo mchog
dang (l. 3) ldan pa la/ yang dag pa'i man ngag tu²⁸ bya na/ chos nyid ni
gdod ma nas ma gsungs pa'i phyir/ rgyu rkyen gyis dben (l. 4) la/ kun tu

²³ gzhag—²⁴ ba'i—²⁵ du—²⁶ gdon—²⁷ bar—²⁸ du

bzang po'i lta spyod ni/ 'gro ba kun la zin pa'i chos nyid yin pas²⁹/ da
gzod rtsol zhing bya ba dang bral (l. 5) ba yin no/ de lta bas na ye nas zin
pas chos la/ myi brtsal bar bzhag³⁰ pa ni dngos grub/ gang yang ma
spangs pa ni dam tshig/ yongs (l. 6) su gzung ba myed pa ni/ mchod sbyin
yin te/ don 'di gsum la gnas na/ rnal 'byor yin no zhes/ kun tu bzang
pos³¹ gsungs³²/ iti/ rdzogs sho//

TUN-HUANG DOCUMENT NO. II (IOL 594)

The Tun-huang manuscript *IOL 594* consists of two folios in the traditional Tibetan format. Folio 1a contains a short introductory comment in nine lines to the main text which begins on folio 1b and finishes on folio 2b in the first line. The text itself is in 26 verses and is complete. The introductory part is copied in that typical early Tibetan script found mostly among the Tun-huang manuscripts. This particular style of the script seems to have survived only in Bhutan. The main text is scribed in 'bru ma script in rather big characters with interlinear notes in red in the small Tun-huang *dbu can* script already described. The interlinear notes have been placed in a particular way wherever they are required, but are not accompanied by the usual Tibetan way of marking which is to put small dots leading towards the word or phrase whose meaning they are meant to clarify.

Problem of the identification of the text

It is stated in the introductory part that the main text was composed by a Sangs-rgyas sbas-pa which would be Buddhagupta in Sanskrit, but the author of the introductory part does not mention his own name. The main text itself indicates no name of author though it has a short colophon containing one of its titles, *sBas pa'i rgum chung*. The question whether the interlinear notes were of the author's own or added to the text later by someone else remains unanswered. At any rate, they had been with the text before the time of writing the introductory part was written, for it speaks of certain topics, such as six kinds of *jñāna* and the *che ba lnga* which are to be found only in the interlinear notes and not in the main text. As regards the question of author identification, we have at least a name clearly indicated, but this name is unfortunately surrounded by obscurity and confusion and so we shall therefore have to consider

²⁹ bas—³⁰ gzhag—³¹ po—³² gsung

it in another place.¹ The introductory part is of considerable importance for an understanding of the origin and content of the main text. That it is joined with the main text in the manuscript points to the fact that it was written by someone who perhaps had been a close contemporary of the author of the main text, if not an immediate disciple. Before examining the main text, let us therefore consider the introductory part. It states that the main text has two titles: the “Small hidden grain” (*sBas pa'i rgum chung*) which is the simile (*dpe*) title, while “the central point of space” (*nam mkha'i thig le*) is the real title (*don*). Although the introductory part does not link the first title with the name of the author, i.e. Sangs-rgyas sbas-pa, it is not impossible that it is connected with its author's name, the Small grain of (Sangs-rgyas) sbas-pa. The tradition of giving two titles to one work is quite common among the works on rDzogs chen of the Bonpo. For example, the *Byang sems gab pa dgu bskor* is also known as the *g. Yung drung sems kyi myu gu* which is given as the simile title (*dpe las mtshan du btags pa*), whereas the first one is given from the viewpoint of the subject (*don las mtshan du gsol ba*).²

It is therefore quite probable that this work, *sBas pa'i rgum chung* was one of the prime movers of the literary development of the rDzogs chen tradition. It seems to have served as the basis for certain parts of *KG* of the rNying ma pa and of the *Byang sems gab pa dgu bskor* of the Bonpo. Moreover, it is certain that it was taken as the basis for other texts on rDzogs chen. This is proved by the fact that it not only gave the philosophical and doctrinal inspiration to but some parts of it are actually incorporated into three important works which go back at least to the late ninth century A.D.: the *rDo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*,³ the *lTa ba rgum chung*⁴ and the *Man ngag rgum chung*,⁵ all three preserved in the *bsTan 'gyur* under the name of their author, gNyan dPal-dbyangs. While verses 19–26 are incorporated in the *rDo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*, verses 1–4 have been placed

¹ See p. 61.

² *Gab pa'i 'grel bzhi rig pa'i rgya mtsho* (Karmay 1977, No. 73, text 5, pp. 187–88; Cf. *Rin po che tsod pa'i 'khor lo*, T Vol. 144, No. 5841, p. 117–4–7. A story had it that when Atiśa composed his famous short work, *Bodhipathapradīpa*, he asked the Tibetans how they give a title to a book and they told him that one title is given in accordance with the contents, another one from the view point of a simile and also in connection with the place where a work is composed as well as the person at whose behest the author writes his book. Atiśa was astonished and said: “Ah! in Tibet there are a lot of accounts of things that are unheard of in India!” (*LB* p. 40: *jo bo rjes byang chub lam sgron mdzad pa'i tshé khyed bod la mtshan gyi 'dogs lugs ji lta bu yod gsung! bod ston rnams kyis! don la mtshan du gsol ba dang! dpe la mtshan du gsol ba dang! yul dang zhu ba po la mtshan du gsol ba la sogs pa du ma bdog zhus pas! a yel bod na rgya gar na med pa'i gnam mang po 'dug gsung!*).

³ See p. 67.

⁴ T Vol. 150, No. 5920.

⁵ T Vol. 150, No. 5922.

at the end of the *lTa ba rgum chung* and verses 5–8, 11, and 13–16 are found in the *Man ngag rgum chung*. Some verses have simply been incorporated while others have been slightly changed or re-written keeping the essential points. For comparative studies, the last two works have been edited below and translated along with our Tun-huang document. *SM* is the earliest work which quotes some of the verses under the title of *rGum chung*,⁶ but a comparison shows that *SM* has quoted from the works of gNyan dPal-dbyangs and not from the *sBas pa'i rgum chung*, i.e. the work contained in our Tun-huang document.

The first four verses are also quoted in the important eleventh century work, *ThCh* of Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po. However, here too, he quotes them as being from the *lTa ba rgum chung*.⁷ Therefore, there is no doubt regarding the antiquity of the *lTa ba rgum chung* and the *Man ngag rgum chung*. The fact that both *SM* and *ThCh* quote from these texts and not directly from the *sBas pa'i rgum chung* suggests that the latter had already fallen into oblivion in the tenth and early eleventh centuries A.D. and works such as the *lTa ba rgum chung* and the *Man ngag rgum chung* which had used the *sBas pa'i rgum chung* were current in the time of the author of *SM*, around the early tenth century and in the time of Rong-zom, mid-eleventh century. It is therefore not improbable that the composition of the text *sBas pa'i rgum chung* of which we have only a Tun-huang manuscript copy dates back to the eighth century A.D., but this question indeed is correlated to the identification of the authors of the works concerned, and which we propose to deal with below.

The author of the sBas pa'i rgum chung

The introductory part of *IOL* 594 ascribes the *sBas pa'i rgum chung* to a master known as Sangs-rgyas sbas-pa (Buddhagupta). A Buddhagupta is also mentioned in *SM* as an adept of the Mahāyoga tantras beside Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava in the chapter on Mahāyoga tantric teachings and again three times as one of the rDzogs chen masters in the chapter on rDzogs chen of the same work.⁸ There is little doubt that all these refer to the personage who was the author of the *sBas pa'i rgum chung*. That this name occurs in *SM* beside the names of other masters, like Vimalamitra points to the fact that the author of *SM* in the tenth century considered Buddhagupta as belonging to a period which seemed to him already long in the past.

⁶ *SM* p. 382, Cf. also pp. 404, 440 of the same work.

⁷ *ThCh* f. 289.

⁸ *SM* pp. 223, 315, 344, 414 (in the last three references the name occurs in the inter-linear notes).

The rNying ma pa tradition also knows a Buddhagupta. The name occurs in the *Vairo 'dra 'bag* as the twentieth in a line of twenty-three rDzogs chen masters.⁹ And this is presumably one and the same personage. However, the problem does not end here. Affected by strong criticisms of the rDzogs chen doctrine by other Buddhist sects, the rNying ma pa often tried to shelter themselves by making false identifications of the ancient masters with those who were traditionally accepted as great teachers by other sects. It has been claimed that the name Buddhagupta is simply another form of the name Buddhaguhya (Sang-rgyas gsang-ba). Therefore, the rDzogs chen master Buddhagupta would be identical with the tantric master Buddhaguhya who elsewhere is well known as an adept of Yoga tantras of the gSar ma pa tradition. He was a disciple of Buddha-śrījñānapāda and is thought to have been a resident for some time near Mount Kailash in the eighth century A.D.¹⁰ There is a letter which is said to have been sent by him to King Khri Srong-lde-btsan (742–797). The letter implicitly indicates that it was in this place that he received the Tibetan king's envoy with an invitation to him asking him to come to Central Tibet which however he declined.¹¹ Nevertheless, he authored several works as a gift to the king on yoga tantras whose translations in Tibetan are preserved in the *bsTan 'gyur*.¹² The translations are mostly made by dBa' 'Jam-dpal go-cha (Mañjuśrīvarma),¹³ one of the three members of the embassy. Therefore we have no problem as to the historicity of this personage, Buddhaguhya who lived in the middle of the eighth century nor is there any doubt of his authorship of the works just noted.

The name Buddhaguhya occurs in the colophons of most of the above works except in certain cases where the name Buddhagupta is given. Accordingly in Tibetan when it is Buddhaguhya, it is translated as Sangs-rgyas gsang-ba and when Buddhagupta by Sangs-rgyas sbas-pa, but both names refer to one and the same person, i.e. Buddhaguhya, for the lo-tsa-ba who did the translation of the works is always dBa' 'Jam-dpal go-cha. As noted, Buddhaguhya is a master of the Yoga tantras of the gSar ma pa tradition, but at the same time we also find that a number of works

⁹ Folios 24b–31b, but Cf. *TY* p. 138 where only 22 names are given, see pp. 19–20.

¹⁰ Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub, *Yoga gru gzings*, *SPS* Vol. 51 (Da), p. 135; Tāranātha, *Dam pa'i chos rin po che 'phags pa'i yul du ji ltar dar ba'i tshul gsal bar ston pa'i dgos 'dod kun 'byung* (*rGya gar chos 'byung*), Varanasi 1971, pp. 201–2.

¹¹ *T* Vol. 129, No. 5693, p. 284–2–5.

¹² *T* Vol. 70, No. 3324; 77, Nos. 3461, 3486; 78, Nos. 3495, 3504, 3751–52; 79, Nos. 3687, 3750; 81, No. 4528. In *TD*, however, the form of Buddhagupta is consistently given (p. 146–5–3) despite the fact that in the colophons it is often Buddhaguhya.

¹³ He is probably one and the same as Mañjuśrīvarma who participated in the compilation of the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* (*GB* p. 73–1–3).

of uncertain origin on Māyājāla (*sgyu 'phrul*) tantras in the *bsTan 'gyur* are attributed to his name. For example, the *Thugs kyi thigs pa*.¹⁴ It is stated that this work was composed by Sangs-rgyas gsang-ba as well as by Vimalamitra and sGeg-pa-pa'i rdo-rje (Lilāvajra). The attribution of works on Māyājāla to Buddhaguhya in the *bsTan 'gyur* such as the work just mentioned is therefore totally uncertain. The Māyājāla tantras however do have a connection with rDzogs chen, especially the *Guhyagarbha-tantra* which came to be considered the most important tantra of the Mahāyoga category of the rNying ma pa tradition.¹⁵ Moreover, it may be considered as the source of a certain trend of the rDzogs chen thought. It is probably because of this connection that 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu-dpal (1392–1481) and the rNying ma pa insist on the identification of the rDzogs chen master Buddhagupta with Buddhaguhya of the Yoga tantras of the gSar ma pa tradition. 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba seems to have been the first to propose this superficial solution of the problem on behalf of the rNying ma pa.¹⁶

However, the existence of a Buddhagupta practising Māyājāla tantras and consequently as one of those who first promulgated the rDzogs chen doctrine is irrefutably attested by the mention of the name in *SM* in the chapter on Mahāyoga tantras. This Buddhagupta may therefore be one and the same as Sangs-rgyas sbas-pa, the author of the *sBas pa'i rgum chung*, and also the one who figures as the twentieth in the line of twenty-three Indian masters given in the *Vairo 'dra 'bag*. Yet still another major problem remains: did Sangs-rgyas sbas-pa write the text first in Sanskrit? If he did, no mention is made with regard to the question of translation nor any indication is found that it had a Sanskrit title. Nevertheless, unlike other works on rDzogs chen in *NyG*, our text at least has no pretension of being of Indic origin although it may be so. To judge from the syntactical structure, it could in fact have been composed in Tibetan from the very beginning. The possibility that this personage was a Tibetan master who had a name in Sanskrit cannot entirely be excluded.

Analysis of the text sBas pa'i rgum chung and its introductory part

The introductory part which is not an integral part of the main text gives

¹⁴ *T* Vol. 83, No. 4738.

¹⁵ See p. 139.

¹⁶ *DNg Ga*, f. 31b (*BA* p. 170). A similar tendency to identify obscure names of the rNying ma pa teachers with well known ones of the gSar ma pa has continued right up to this day. In his *Chos 'byung lha dbang g.yul las rgyal ba'i rnga bo che'i sgra* (Kalempong 1964), bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje states: "according to some, Buddhaśrījñānapāda is another name for Śrīsimha and if we compare their life-stories, I also think that these names are of the same person (f. 63b)". On Śrīsimha, Cf. Karmay 1975, p. 149–51.

an outline of the important points in the main text under the following five headings:

1. Author: Sangs-rgyas sbas-pa.
2. Category: Atiyoga.
3. Source: *Byang chub kyi sems kyi lung* (This is not the title of a specific work, but rather a certain category of works).
4. Purpose: For the very intelligent ones.
5. Framework: in five sections.

After this analysis, it gives a list of three different groups of teachings which are in fact indicated only in the interlinear notes in the manuscript:

1. The Six kinds of *ye shes* (*jñāna*).¹⁷
2. The “Five great ones” (*che ba lnga*).¹⁸
3. The “Three Beings” (*yin pa gsum*).¹⁹

The first six verses of the main text according to the interlinear notes signify the “Six *jñāna*”, but how these verses signify them is not explained. Another note just below the first verse of the main text also says: *che ba mam lngar yang sbyar*—“each of the ‘Five great ones’ is to be put together (with each of the five verses)”, but here too no explanation is given as to how and why the *che ba lnga* should correspond to the first five verses. The first three verses of the main text also signify the *yin pa gsum*. These different elements in the interlinear notes are simply “represented” by certain verses and so they are symbolical and suggestive rather than explanations of the actual sense of the verses.

Before going on to the actual framework of the main text, the introductory part discusses the different titles of which there are two and which we have already had occasion to mention. The framework of the main text is as follows:

1. Homage, rendered by the phrase that precedes the verses.
2. The nature of “the Enlightened Mind” which is dealt with by verses 1–6.
3. “The Enlightened Mind” being without an example.
4. The exposure of the face of the “Basis of All”.²⁰
5. The “deviation” explained by the verses 7–20.

Doctrines contained in the sBas pa'i rgum chung

As is the case in the *Rig pa'i khu byug*, Kun-tu bzang-po is here also pre-

¹⁷ To the usual five kinds of *ye shes* (*jñāna*), *stong pa chen po'i ye shes* is added.

¹⁸ This is mentioned only once in the interlinear notes. For a detailed discussion on this, see p. 200, n. 40.

¹⁹ For these, see p. 114, n. 58. 71.

²⁰ See p. 178.

sented as the supreme being to whom the text pays homage. It then begins with a discussion of the theory of *mi rtog pa*, but at the same time attempts to resolve an apparent contradiction: “if a non-imagination appears as an object of mind, then it is not simply a non-imagination, because the mind perceives non-imagination as its object”. The answer to this riddle is as follows: “one experiences the depth of the non-imagination. The experience is not an act of imagination. Therefore when imagination occupies the mind, with its depth, it is experiencing itself, not perceiving.”

The text then goes on to state that all words fail to express this experience and physical and mental activities involve a “fixing stake” (*'dzin pa'i phur pa*). The remaining verses bring in the important rDzogs chen theories: the absolute aspect of mind (*sems nyid*) being the basis of all (*kun gzhi*). *Byang chub sems*, the noumenal state of *sems nyid* which is often symbolically called Kun-tu bzan-po. By implication, there is the usual three principle structure of explanation with regard to the relation between the *sems nyid* (*rtags*), *chos nyid*, the noumenal object of *sems nyid* (*don*) and *nam mkha'*, the simile of *sems nyid* (*dpe*). The text then ends with its colophon.

One might get the impression that this work contains certain ideas that are parallel to those of the school of the simultaneous path (*cig car 'jug pa'i lugs*). However, it would perhaps be too naïve to assume that once mention is made of *mi rtog pa*, it is “influenced by the Ch'an school”. It is undeniable that *mi rtog pa* is taken as the central dogma of the Ch'an school, but it has always been the most important aspect of Buddhist contemplation in general. It is also true that the Ch'an school generally reduces the importance of physical activities in its religious practices, but at the same time it lays strong emphasis on the need of physical discipline with regard to the posture when meditating. As is noted in our text, this is totally rejected as being “a precursor of attachment to the body”. On the other hand, there are a certain number of elements which have no parallel in the Ch'an school. Kun-tu bzang-po, the personification of *bodhicitta*; *boddhicitta*, the noumenal state of *sems nyid*; *sems nyid*, being the absolute aspect of the mind, and the mind, the “basis of all” (*kun gzhi*) or the “grand father of all” (*spyi mes*). All these point to the predominance of the tantric nature of the rDzogs chen tradition rather than any indication of linkage with the thoughts of the Dhyāna school which is entirely based on sūtras particularly *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*. More discussion will be devoted to the relation between these trends of thoughts elsewhere in this work.

*The identification of the author of the lTa ba rgum chung (T 5920)
and the Man ngag rgum chung (T 5922)*

We have already discussed the fact that the above mentioned two works

contain a number of verses that can be traced to the *sBas pa'i rgum chung*. First of all, these two works are parts of the six short texts known as the "Six lamps" (*sGron ma drug*)²¹ of gNyan dPal-dbyangs. They are allowed to remain in the *bsTan 'gyur* though Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub does not mention them in his *Chos 'byung*. Pho-brang Zhi-ba-'od in his *bka' shog* considered them as unauthentic.²² These texts have been noted by G. Tucci who has given brief summaries of them.²³ The summaries, however, hardly accord with the actual contents of the works. For example, the first four verses of the *sBas pa'i rgum chung*, which is incorporated into the *lTa ba rgum chung* towards the end of the text, have not been summarised despite the fact that these four verses constitute the conclusion of the treatise. In the case of the *Man ngag rgum chung*, Professor Tucci summarises only four verses out of thirty-two verses. The summaries therefore have not given a true picture of the content of the works at all. The verses that have been summarised are relatively easy to understand. They are concerned with the posture of meditation. After a brief discussion on the identification of the author of the six treatises, Professor Tucci reaches the conclusion: "We are not yet definitely in the rDzogs chen atmosphere".²⁴ Indeed, not all of the six treatises are concerned with rDzogs chen doctrines. It must be pointed out that only two of the six are devoted to the doctrines of rDzogs chen, but these two have not been "summarised" fully. The remaining four texts are on the doctrines of the *gSang ba snying po* (*Guhya garbha*), the principal tantra of the Mahāyoga tantras. The two treatises with which we are concerned have, unlike the others, double titles. The titles ending with the word *rgum chung* were probably the original ones given by the author himself in imitation of the *sBas pa'i rgum chung* and also under these titles they are quoted in *SM* and not the ones ending with the word *sgron ma*. Indeed, in *ThCh*, Rong-zom paṇḍita quotes these works with titles ending *sgron ma*.²⁵ Apart from the two treatises in question, the remaining four of the six had titles ending with the word *sgron ma*. It was probably a later redactor who put them all together for the sake of conformity and gave new titles such as *mTha'i mun sel sgron*

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- ²¹ i. *Thus kyi sgron ma* (T Vol. 150, no. 5918),
 ii. *lTa ba yang dag sgron ma* (T 5919),
 iii. *mTha' yi mun sel sgron ma* or *lTa ba rgum chung* (T 5920),
 iv. *Thabs shes sgron ma* (T 5921),
 v. *rNal 'byor spyod pa'i lugs nges pa'i don ji bzhin bsgom thabs* or *Man ngag rgum chung* (T 5922),
 vi. *lTa ba rin po che sgron ma* (T 5923).
²² Karmay 1980, p. 17, No. 72.
²³ *MBT* II, p. 143–47.
²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 150.
²⁵ *ThCh* ff. 262, 278–79.

ma for the *lTa ba rgum chung* and *rNal 'byor spyod pa'i lugs nges pa'i don ji bzhin bsgom thabs kyi sgron ma* for the *Man ngag rgum chung*. It is evident from the title *rNal 'byor spyod pa'i lugs . . .* that the work was at one time considered to be a treatise on the method of meditation according to the Yogācāra system. Indeed, in both Yogācāra and rDzogs chen, mind has the predominance above everything else. rDzogs chen's affiliation to the Vijñānavāda doctrines is quite evident, but later rDzogs chen masters e.g. Klong-chen rab-'byams have denied outright this linkage. We shall have occasion to return to this topic in another section.²⁶

Let us now return to the original question which is the identification of the author of the "Six lamps". The name dPal-dbyangs appears with various components in the colophons of the works concerned. It is preceded by the title Ācārya (*slob dpon*) in three colophons²⁷ and in two colophons as Bod kyi paṇḍita bsNyan dPal-dbyangs,²⁸ and gNyan dPal-dbyangs,²⁹ but simply dPal-dbyangs in one colophon.³⁰ Despite the variations in the titles preceding the personal name, dPal-dbyangs, it seems certain that they all refer to one personage who belongs to the clan gNyan/bsNyan and who apparently was a renowned master learned in Mahāyoga tantras and rDzogs chen doctrines. The fact that this dPal-dbyangs was an adept of the Mahāyoga tantras is proved by the mention of his name in *SM* among the adepts who succeeded in attaining the prescribed goal according to the method of the Mahāyoga tantras.³¹ In this regard, more textual evidence can also be brought to bear by the following identification. Among the Tun-huang manuscripts in India Office Library, there is a work entitled *Zhus lan*.³² In its colophon, it is stated that the work was composed by a Slob-dpon dPal-byams at the behest of his disciple, sNa-nam lDong-khyu. Another copy of the same work is also preserved in the *bsTan-'gyur*³³ with the title *rDo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan* and from the colophon of this copy, it is clear that it is not dPal-byams but dPal-dbyangs. This orthographical variation is further corroborated by the fact that the same work is also quoted in *SM* five times under the title *Zhus lan*. When it is quoted for the first time, it is unmistakably stated as being from *mKhan po dPal-dbyangs kyi man ngag* and this is identified by an inter-linear note: *zhus lan*.³⁴ All the passages that are quoted can also be traced

²⁶ See p. 180.

²⁷ *T* 5919, 5921, 5923.

²⁸ *T* 5920.

²⁹ *T* 5922.

³⁰ *T* 5918.

³¹ *SM* p. 278.

³² *IOL* 470, another manuscript copy exists in the Pelliot collection in Paris, *PT* 837.

³³ *T* Vol. 87, No. 5082.

³⁴ *SM* pp. 30, 201, 219, 255, 277.

back to the work in question. This work, the *rDo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan* is in the form of a dialogue between the author and his disciple as the title *zhus lan* (question and answer) indicates. There are fifty-three questions and answers to them centering upon the essential points in the doctrines and practices of Mahāyoga tantras. The work is extremely important for the understanding not only of the religious ideas of the Tibetans of the ninth century A.D. but also the beginning of the development of the rDzgos chen doctrines.

As seen, gNyan dPal-dbyangs, who is a *slob dpon* as well as a *mkhan po*, is a master of Mahāyoga doctrines. He is one of the earliest masters who seem to have begun to formulate the rDzgos chen doctrines. He is in the habit of incorporating his sources. For example, several verses from the *sBas pa'i rgum chung* are incorporated into his *rDo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*, *lTa ba rgum chung* and *Man ngag rgum chung*. However, nothing is known about his life. According to Tāranātha, he lived in Kha-ra sgo-btsun, a district in gTsang where Tāranātha himself was born³⁵ and gNyan is said to have founded a temple called g.Yung-drung-gi lha-khang in 'Dam-chen.³⁶

However, the question whether this gNyan dPal-dbyangs is one and the same as dBa' dPal-dbyangs has up to now gone unresolved. Professor Tucci has not reached any definite conclusion on this subject. He asks the following question: "Are we sure that the author of these treatises is the same dPal-dbyangs, the successor of Śāntarakṣita?"³⁷ First of all, no Tibetan sources, early or late, state that gNyan dPal-dbyangs succeeded Śāntarakṣita, still less is he one and the same as dBa'/sBa dPal-dbyangs. dPal-dbyangs (Śrīghoṣa), like other Tibetan religious names is a very common one, especially among the Tun-huang manuscripts.³⁸ Moreover, when the clan names are attached to the personal name, as in the case of dBa' or gNyan, it is self evident that they are names of different personages. As the later Tibetan sources maintain, dBa' dPal-dbyangs succeeded dBa' Ye-shes dbang-po as the second *Rings lugs 'dzin pa* of bSam-yas. The reliability of this tradition is confirmed by a Tun-huang manuscript.³⁹ In this manuscript dBa' dPal-dbyangs is clearly mentioned just after dBa' Ye-shes dbang-po, the first Tibetan abbot at bSam yas. It is possible that he is identical with dGe-slong dPal-dbyangs, the

³⁵ *rGyal khams pa ta ra na thas bdag nyid kyi nram thar nges par brjod pa'i deb gter shin tu zhib mo ma bcos lhug pa'i rtogs brjod* f. 51. Cf. also *bTsun mo bka' thang*, ff. 40b,6-42b,4.

³⁶ Ne'u Paṇḍita Grags-pa smon-lam blo-gros, (c. 14th century), *sNgon byung gi gnam me tog gi phreng ba*, *Rare Tibetan historical and literary texts from the library of Tsepon W.D. Shakap-pa*, Calcutta 1974, No. 2, p. 109.

³⁷ *MBT* II, pp. 20-21.

³⁸ H. Karmay, *Early Sino-Tibetan Arts*, Warminster, England 1975, pp. 10-14.

³⁹ *IOL* 689/2, see p. 78.

author of the *gCes pa bsdu pa'i 'phrin yig*⁴⁰ which is written primarily to address a king, but whose name is not mentioned. If he was the one who succeeded dBa' Ye-shes dbang-po, the king would be none other than Khri Srong-lde-btsan (742–797). However, the language of the letter does not give one the impression that it is of great antiquity going back to the latter half of the eighth century A.D.

The author of *SM*, too, makes a distinction by mentioning dBa' dPal-dbyangs when quoting from an unidentified work of dBa' dPal-dbyangs⁴¹ and gNyan dPal-dbyangs when discussing Mahāyoga tantric teachings.⁴² gNyan dPal-dbyangs, in later sources is considered to be a disciple of Lo-tsa-ba gNyags Jñānakumāra *alias* Jo-bo Zhang-drung and one of the teachers of gNubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, the author of *SM*, but no evidence dating back beyond the eleventh century, textual or otherwise, can be found for gNyan dPal-dbyangs' connection with the author of *SM* except that in *SM*, the above mentioned works of gNyan dPal-dbyangs are treated as one of the principal sources. However, if gNyan dPal-dbyangs was a teacher of the author of *SM* as the later tradition maintains, he could have lived towards the end of the ninth century A.D.

Translation of the introductory part of IOL 594

(f. 1a)

- (i) (Author) : the *Byang chub kyi sems* is written by the most learned Sangs-rgyas sbas-pa.
 - (ii) Category : it belongs to Atiyoga.⁴³
 - (iii) Sources : it is extracted from all the scriptures concerned with the Enlightened Mind.⁴⁴
 - (iv) Purpose : it is taught to the intelligent adept.
- The work is divided into five sections⁴⁵ from the beginning to the end.

⁴⁰ *T* Vol. 144, No. 5842; For a brief summary of this work, see *MBT* II, pp. 141–43.

⁴¹ *SM* p. 35: *dba' dpal dbyangs kyi zhal snga nas/ lus la gru'i blo bzhaq stel* . . . This line appears in the *gCes pa sdu pa'i 'phrin yig as: lus la glu (gru) yi glo (blo) zhag(bzhaq) stel* (*T* Vol. 144, No. 5842, p. 127–1–4). Apart from this line, the quotations in *SM* do not correspond to the *gCes pa bsdu pa'i 'phrin yig* at all. It therefore suggests that either there is another work of dBa' dPal-dbyangs or there are different versions of the *'phrin yig*.

⁴² *SM* pp. 204, 241, 278.

⁴³ Cf. pp. 172–74.

⁴⁴ *Byang chub kyi sems kyi lung* is a certain type of work mostly grouped with *Sems sde* in later classifications of the rDzogs chen texts. However, it is hard to tell which texts are actually meant here, because most of the texts of *Sems sde* do not date back beyond the 10th century A.D.

⁴⁵ See below.

As for the contents of it, there are the “Six kinds of *jñāna*”,⁴⁶ the “Five great ones”,⁴⁷ the “Three true beings”.⁴⁸

The metaphorical title of this work is the “Small hidden grain”.⁴⁹ The subject title is “the Central point of Space”. The five sections of this work are:

- (i) Homage to the nature of Kun-tu bzang-po.
- (ii) Elucidation of the nature of the Enlightened Mind.⁵⁰
- (iii) Explanation of the Enlightened Mind being beyond an exemplar.
- (iv) Demonstration of the “immaculate face” of the sphere of the “Basis of All”.⁵¹
- (v) Presentation of the deviation and obscurity.⁵²

Now, if we divide the text according to these five points, it is as follows:

- (1) The phrase beginning with the words *bCom ldan 'das . . . to phyag 'tshal lol* pays homage.
- (2) The verses beginning from *ji tsam* to *mi 'jug gol* explain the nature of the Enlightened Mind.
- (3)⁵³
- (4) The verses beginning with *ji tsam zab mo . . . up to rnam par 'gyur ba gzhi ma yin/* demonstrate obscurity and obstacles.⁵⁴
- (5) The rest of the verses up to *byang chub rgyu 'bras yongs kyis myed/* show the “immaculate face” of the sphere of the “Basis of All”.

⁴⁶ See notes 58–63.

⁴⁷ See n. 58.

⁴⁸ See n. 58.

⁴⁹ This word appears with various spellings: *rgum*, *sgum* and *dgum*. The dictionary by Chos-grags (Peking 1957) has: *sgum mthu (thu ba)*, “collecting *rgum*” and is explained by *bza' bya*, “victuals” as *bza' bya bsdogs pa* “preparation of victuals”. However, in his *Gangs can bod kyi brda sprod dpag bsam ljon pa'i snye ma* (Delhi 1961, f. 16a) Hor-btsun bsTan-'dzin blo-gros rgya-mtsho (1889–1975) has explained it as *nas rgum bu*, “grain as of barley”. It also occurs with a similar definition in another recent work, *Dag yig gсар bsgrigs*, compiled by a bSam-gtan (mTsho sngon, 1979), as *rgum bu* and is explained: *byas za ba'i dngos rdzas* “the substance that is eaten by birds”.

⁵⁰ *ThCh* (f. 205) explains *byang chub sems kyi rang bzhin* as: “The Enlightened Mind is of non-duality in relation to all elements of the phenomenal existence. It therefore has always been enlightened. Now it can neither be altered by any means nor acquired by any “antidote”. It is already achieved spontaneously” (*phyi nang snang srid kyi chos thams cad gnyis su med pa'i byang chub kyi sems/ snying po byang chub kyi rang bzhin du gdod ma nyid nas sangs rgyas tel/ da lam gyis bcas shing gnyen pos sgrub du myed de brtsal ba myed par lhun gyis grub pa'ol*).

⁵¹ Cf. p. 178.

⁵² Usually abbreviated as *gol sgrib*. In *TY* (p. 169) it is explained as: *'og mar gol ba'i gol sa*—“deviation to a lower level”; *gong ma mthong ba'i sgrib pa*—“obscuring one's vision of the upper level”. There are thirty kinds of *gol sgrib* (*ThCh* f. 90a,b).

⁵³ There should be some verses devoted to the subject of *byang chub sems kyi dpe mi dmigs pa* in this context, but there are none. Something seems to be missing. Yet the main text itself is complete even though divided according to divisions: 1, 2, 4 and 5 as it is.

⁵⁴ Here the terms *sgrib pa* and *gags* have a similar connotation to that of *gol sgrib*, see note 52.

Translation of the main text of IOL 594, i.e. the sBas pa'i rgum chung

- (f. 1b) Homage⁵⁵ to the most holy⁵⁶ and glorious Kun-tu bzang-po.⁵⁷
- (1) How much does a deep non-imagination,⁵⁸
 - (2) Appear as an object of the intellect?⁵⁹
 - (3) The experience of the profound non-imagination⁶⁰
 - (4) Is of experience, not imagination.⁶¹

⁵⁵ From now on there are interlinear notes in the manuscript and these will be noted down with the word *mchan*. In most of the cases if the *mchan* is above the verse it is indicated with A and if below the verse with B. The expression *phyag 'tshal lo* is explained by the note as: *ji bzhin pa'i klong du gyur ba la phyag zhes bya*—*phyag* means that which has become the realm of “that which is just so”. On the term *ji bzhin pa*, Cf. p. 49.

⁵⁶ *mchan* below the word *bcom*: *bdud bzhi nyid*, hence *bdud bcom*—“vanquishing the *māra*.” Another *mchan* below the word *ldan*: *byang chub* hence *byang chub ldan*—“possessing enlightenment”. Yet another *mchan* below the word *'das*: *'du 'bral myed pa*—“neither integration nor disintegration”.

⁵⁷ *mchan* A: *bskyed rdzogs dang tshig dang yi ge las 'das pa'ol*—“he who transcends the stages of *utpannakrama*, *sampannakrama*, terminology and letters”.

⁵⁸ There are three *mchan*. The one above the verse reads: *chos kyi dbyings nam par dag pa'i ye shes* (*dharmadhātuvīśuddhi Mvy* 110), the first of the five *jñāna*. The 5 verses (i.e. Nos. 1–5) have each of the five *jñāna* in *mchan*. They are symbolical rather than having anything to do with the actual meaning of the verses concerned. The *mchan* below the verse: Kun-tu bzang-po, as below the second verse Kun-tu bzang-po. Kun-tu bzang-po, Kun-tu bzang-po and *gNyas su med pa byang chub kyi sems* are known as *yin pa gsum*, the “Three true beings”, see p. 130. Yet another *mchan* below the verse states: *che ba nam lngar sbyar*—“pair (these verses, i.e. Nos. 1–5) also with the “Five *che ba*”, i.e. each of the first five verses of the text represents one of the “Five *che ba*”, but the five are not given. Here again it is purely a question of “representation”. *che ba* here is to be understood in the sense of *byang chub sems kyi che ba*, the “greatness of *bodhicitta*”, see p. 114, n. 40.

⁵⁹ *mchan* A: *me long lta bu'i ye shes* (*ādarśa-jñāna*, *Mvy* 111) *mchan* B: Kun-tu bzang-po (see n. 58).

⁶⁰ *mchan* A: *mnyam pa nyid kyi (ye shes)* (*samatā-jñāna*, *Mvy* 112); *mchan* B: *gnyis su myed pa'i byang chub kyi sems*, one of the *yin pa gsum*, see n. 58. Another *mchan* below the words *nyams myong na* says: *bde ba chen po* (*mahāsukha*) “great bliss”, i.e. experiencing the “Great bliss”.

⁶¹ *mchan* A: *so sor rtogs pa ('i ye shes)* (*pratyavekṣaṇā-jñāna*, *Mvy* 113); below the word *myong ba* the *mchan* reads: *myi rtog pa chen po* which means that what is experienced is *mi rtog pa*, “non-imagination” which in tantric terms would be *bde ba chen po*.

These four verses (nos. 1–4) occur in a slightly different form quoted in *SM* (p. 463) from a work entitled *Sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*:

ji tsam rtag(rtog) tu med pa'i zab mo zhig!
blo'i ngang du gsal bar de zhen nal
gang la mi rtog zab mo'i don myong bal
myong ba yin phyir de ni rtog pa yin(min!)

The text *Sems bsgom pa'i rgyud* for the present remains unidentified, but the version of the verses it contains gives the impression that it is a recension of our text of the Tun-huang manuscript. However, the last verse here ends in the affirmative rather than negative. Rong-zom Paṇḍita agrees with the *Sems bsgom pa'i rgyud* in stating that “experience” is a kind of “conscious thought” (*rtog pa*) and he explains the verses (i.e. Nos. 1–4) thus: “one asserts that there is a time when one experiences the sense of the profound “non-imagination”, but one has no means of demonstrating it to others. That is so, but since experience is merely a “conscious thought”, that cannot be described as “seeing the truth”

- (5) All phenomena possess “suchness”.⁶²
- (6) Phenomenal existence does not follow itself.⁶³
- (7) However profound the words one utters,⁶⁴
- (8) One cannot express the point.⁶⁵
- (9) The activities of accumulation of merit, both physical and spiritual,⁶⁶
- (10) The practice of contemplation, and purification of the samsāric traces,⁶⁷
- (11) All are a “fixing stake”.⁶⁸ (f. 2a)
- (12) Intangible space cannot be modified.⁶⁹
- (13) Sitting up with legs crossed,⁷⁰
- (14) All physical adjustment,⁷¹

(on this expression see p. 111–112). For example, the taste of salt is experienced by men and animals, but to someone who has not tasted it, there is no way of showing him by saying “the taste of salt is like this”. Likewise, even though one has tasted the taste of *samādhi*, one cannot show it to others. So the experience cannot be included in the category of the “profundity”. It is nothing but imagination (*ThCh* f. 290: *dus gang gi tshé nram par mi rtog pa'i don zab mo gzhan la bstan pa'i thabs myed pa zhig/ rang gi blos nyams su myong ngol de lta yang nyams su myong ba nyid kyi phyir rtog pa zhig tu zad pas/ bden pa mthong ba zhes mi bya'ol 'di ltar rang gis myong ba gzhan la bstan pa mi nus pa ni mngon sum kun gyi chos nyid yin tel dper na lan tshva'i ro ni mi dang dud 'gro phal mo ches kyang thun mong du nyams su myong ba yin mod kyi/ 'on kyang lan tshva'i ro ma myong ba zhig lal lan tshva'i ro ni 'di 'dra'o zhes bstan pa'i thabs ni myed dol de bzhin du rang la ting nge 'dzin gyi ro myong ba yod nal/ gzhan la bstan pa mi nus kyang/ zab mo'i grangs su mi chud de nram par rtogs(rtog) pa zhig tu zad dol/*

⁶² *mchan* above the verses: *bya ba nan tan (gyi ye shes) (kṛtyānustāna-jñāna, Mvy 114)*; *mchan* below the word *ji bzhin pa* reads: *rig pa'i rgyal po rang lags te gzhan las mi 'byung*—“one is oneself, the king of the intellect (i.e. *ji bzhin pa*, “that which is just so”) and that does not originate in others.

⁶³ *mchan* A: *stong pa chen po ('i ye shes)*. This sixth *jñāna* is not in *Mvy*. This verse remains totally obscure as to the sense, hence the translation is merely provisional.

⁶⁴ *mchan* B: *lus(lung) dang man ngag sde snod*—“inspired teachings, precepts and scriptures”, i.e. all these are not much use for bringing about the realisation of the rDzogs chen principle.

⁶⁵ *mchan* B: *byang chub sems dang gol sa*—“the Enlightened Mind and deviation”, Cf. n. 52.

⁶⁶ *mchan* B: *'di man chad sgrib pa dang gags ston*—“from here onwards, obscurity and obstacles are presented, i.e. from verse No. 9.

⁶⁷ *mchan* B: *bsam gtan gyi bde ro bde ba'*—“the taste of the bliss of contemplation”.

⁶⁸ *mchan* B: *gzungs 'dzin gyi mtha' ste byang chub kyi sems dang gol sa* “the extremity of the object and subject (*grāhya, grāha*), (betokening) the Enlightened Mind and deviation from it (Cf. n. 52). This verse is incorporated into the *Man ngag rgum chung* and is also quoted in *SM* (pp. 404, 405). A somewhat more precise explanation of the phrase *'dzin pa'i phur pa* is given in *SM* (p. 443): *sgo gsum ched du 'chos shing rtsol ba nil 'dzin pa'i phur pa dang sgrib pa yin/*—“to strive and correct in serving the three components of being (*viz.* body, speech and mind) constitutes the “fixed post” and “obscurity”. In another place of the same work (*SM* p. 444) it is stated: *bcos su med pa la bcos pa nyid/ rtog pa'i 'dzin pa dang phur pa'ol/*—“to alter that which cannot be altered constitutes the fixed post of conscious thought”.

⁶⁹ *mchan* B: *bya brtsal dang bral ba*, usually abbreviated as *bya bral*. On this see, p. 112.

⁷⁰ *mchan* B: *drang srong dang bsam gtan*—“*ṛiṣi* and those (who practise) *dhyāna* meditation”. The *ṛiṣi* and those who practise *Dhyāna* (Ch'an) attach great importance to the physical posture when meditating whereas in rDzogs chen one does not, see p. 84, ll. 13–15; 119.

⁷¹ *mchan* B: *rab tu 'byung ba dang dka' thub la stsogs pa*—“monks and those who prac-

- (15) Derives from attachment to the body.⁷²
 (16) Formless space cannot be modified.⁷³
 (17) That which exists from the beginning, like space,⁷⁴
 (18) Does not sit up with legs crossed.⁷⁵
 (19) Just as the nature of oneself remains in a space-like state,⁷⁶
 (20) It is the basis for transforming into space.⁷⁷
 (21) So is mental space,⁷⁸
 (22) the basis of acquiring Enlightenment.⁷⁹
 (23) The mind that has no roots,⁸⁰
 (24) Cannot be searched for and found. It is like space.⁸¹
 (25) The unborn Enlightenment,⁸² (f. 2b)
 (26) Is devoid of cause and effect.⁸³

The most profound precept, the “Small hidden grain”, the key to the scriptures and precepts.⁸⁴ The end.

tise austerity, etc.” This note is actually a continuation of the previous one, see n. 64.

⁷² *mchan* B: *nga dang bdag*—“I and self”, i.e. physical activities come about from the attachment to oneself.

⁷³ *mchan* B: *rgyu 'bras gnyis ka byang chub chen po*—“The sublime Enlightenment is there in both (the stages of) cause and effect”. This *mchan* has no relation, it seems to me, to the verse.

mchan A: *dge sdig*—“virtue and vice”. The verses Nos. 13–16 are incorporated into the *Man ngag rgum chung*, see p. 85, ll. 13–16.

⁷⁴ *mchan* B: *bdal ba chen po*—“great expansion” i.e. space.

⁷⁵ *mchan* B: *Kun-tu bzang-po*, i.e. since one is oneself in effect a *Kun-tu bzang-po*.

⁷⁶ *mchan* B: *rtogs pa'i ye shes*—“the primordial intellect”.

⁷⁷ *mchan* B: *spros pa dang bral ba (nisprapañca)* “without form”, “without extension”. The word *gzhi ma* designates “basis”, “foundation”. It often occurs in *KG* (f. 69): *nga ni chos kyi gzi ma yin/ nga ni chos kyi rtsa ba yin/* (See also f. 139–40).

⁷⁸ *mchan* B: *kun gzhi chos nyid*—“the reality of the “Basis of All””. i.e. *sems nyid*. There is a further note which reads *bdus drangs*, but whose sense remains unknown.

⁷⁹ *mchan* A: *brtsal sems dang bral ba*—“without a mind that searches”, i.e. one must not search. Searching is considered to be an obstacle, *KG* (f. 67): *lta yul gang yang mthong ba med/ des na brtsal ba'i las ma byed/*.

⁸⁰ *mchan* B: *thog ma dang tha ma dang dbu ma dang mtha' myed pa'ol* “No beginning and no end; without middle and edge”.

⁸¹ *mchan* B: *ri dags(dvags) smug(smig) rgyu snyog pa (dang 'dra)*—“(like) a wild animal following a mirage”. *mchan* B: *mye 'is(yis) chu gsod pa dang 'dra*—“it is like trying to kill water with fire”.

⁸² *mchan* B: *kun tu bzang po'i rang bzhin la/*—being in the nature of *Kun-tu bzang-po*.

⁸³ *mchan* B: *sa dang sa'i khyad par dge sdig mtho ris dang thar ba'i (khyad par med)*—“(The Enlightenment is devoid of any causes, such as): the distinction between various stages, virtue and vice, the heaven (*svarga*) and liberation (*moksa*)”.

⁸⁴ *mchan* B: *so mangs dang pho bsnyung dang 'dra/*—“like a comb and a *pho bsnyung*”. The sense of the word *pho bsnyung* is not clear. It is however attested at least in two other works in a similar context. *gZer mig* (Vol. II, f. 863,1): *ngul dkar pho snyung 'dis/ yid kyi dbang po dbye zhing . . . /*—“With this silver *pho snyung*, one opens the heart” . . . / In *GCh* (Vol. 4, p. 473) it is used as: *man ngag spyi yi rgya mdud 'di/ blo dman rnam kyis mi khrol bal pho snyung 'dra ba'i lta bas bkrol/*—“The knot of precepts cannot be undone by the unintelligent. (But) here they are explained with theories which are like a *pho snyung*”. It is therefore an instrument similar to a key.

- (22) byang chub sgrub pa'i gzhi ma (l. 5) yin/²³
 (23) gzhi rtsa myed pa'i sems nyid la/²⁴
 (24) btsal bas myi rnyed nam mkha'ṅ 'dra/²⁵
 (25) skye dang bral ba'i byang chub la/²⁶ (2b, l. 1)
 (26) byang chub rgyu 'bras yongs kyis myed/²⁷
 lung dang man ngag gi lde myig man ngag bla na myed pa sbas pa'i rgum
 chung//²⁸ rdzogs sho//

ṅ ka

²³ *mchan* B: brtsal sems dang bral ba

²⁴ *mchan* B: thog ma dang tha ma dang dbu ma dang mtha' myod(myed) do/

²⁵ *mchan* B: mye 'is(yis) chu gsod pa dang 'dra + ri dags(dvags) smug(smig) rgyu
 snyog pa'

²⁶ *mchan* B: kun tu bzang po'i rang bzhin la

²⁷ *mchan* B: sa dang sa'i khyad par dge sdig mtho ris dang thar pa'

²⁸ *mchan* B: so mangs dang pho bsnyung dang 'dra/

TUN-HUANG DOCUMENT NO. III (IOL 689/2)

This Tun-huang manuscript simply contains four different lists of abbots or teachers in two religious establishments, *viz.* bSam-yas and 'Phrul-s nang¹, and in three other places, *viz.* mDo-gams(= Amdo), Kam-cu² and Gong-cu.³ While bSam-yas and 'Phrul-s nang are well known, the manuscript does not give any specific names of the religious centres (*chos grva*) in the other named regions.

Here it is not intended to make a historical study of the places mentioned above. That would be outside the scope of the present undertaking and they are mostly well known elsewhere. I therefore limit myself to the analysis of the content of the manuscript which has a direct connection with some masters of the rDzogs chen tradition.

However, I believe, the manuscript itself is very important for the study of the history of bSam-yas. It is the only Tun-huang document which not only mentions bSam-yas but also gives a list of its successive abbots. The existence of other documents like this, ancient or late having a similar content, so far is not attested. The manuscript is therefore unique in its importance.

¹ The full name of Jo-khang in Lhasa is Ra-sa'i 'phrul-s nang gtsug-lag-khang, *KtG* f. 109 (Richardson 1980, p. 65).

² Kam-chu, a region in Kan-su fell under Tibet in 766 A.D. Demieville 1952, p. 171; Richardson 1977, p. 223.

³ I am unable to identify this place.