Even before the Institute of Tibetology was established, His Holiness the Dalai Lama presented Buddhist Texts from the blocks housed in Shol-Parkhang, the printing house below Potala, Lhasa. The books presented were that of the Lhama Edition, such as BKAI-HGYUR, the works of BU STON, TSONGKHAPA, RGYALTBASH RJE and MKHAS DRU RJE, the lives and works of the thirteen Dalai Lamas, etc. Recently His Holiness the Dalai Lama has presented the Institute of Tibetology with a set of complex works of BODONG which is rightly described in English as Encyclopaedia Tibetica, through the Ven. Dobócom Rampoche, Director, Tibet House, New Delhi. It is a mammoth collection consisting of 133 volumes.

The author of the Encyclopaedia was BODONG PHYOGLAS RNAM RGYAL, who was also known as JIIGMED DRAMS PA. BODONG PHYOGLAS RNAM RGYAL was born in the Wood-Hare year of the Tibetan Calendar corresponding to 1374 of the Western Calendar, near a place called mount Lakpa Kang in the north of Mount Parnnas in Western Tibet. His father was a lama, a skilled craftsman and a great poet known as CHETS DBYANG RGYAL MTSHANG. His mother DBYANG CHUB SDRON was a pious and learned lady.

According to legends, miracles and extra-ordinary phenomena characterized BODONG’S life from the moment of conception. When he was in the womb, the mother had strange dream of four suspicious signs. First, she saw a full moon much brighter than any full moon. Secondly, rainbow colours emanated from her body. Thirdly, she heard unusual melodious sounds and fourthly, she got the smell of the scent of the best sandalwood.

At the age of three, while his governess was taking him around, he suddenly disappeared from the sight. The governess searched in vain all over, and suddenly found him on the other side of the river. To get him across the river, the governess had to engage some sturdy men. There were many lookers, some felt they had seen a child swim across the river like a swan, others felt they saw him flying across, and there were still others, who felt they saw him walk on the water while crossing the river. These visions signified that in his previous life he had crossed the ocean of Samsara and attained enlightenment.

During childhood, the author was indeed unlike other children of his age. He would perch himself on a high stone, or anything
high and gather the other children around and go to preach religion. When he reached the age of five, he could assimilate contemplation in different ways due to his propensities in former life. Once he disappeared, and was found meditating in the seven perfect meditation postures, in a dilapidated house. He thus disguised himself in many religious practices even at this early age.

Once, when his teacher in BSAM STAN GLING Monastery asked him what he was looking at, in reply to the teacher’s query he said, that he could see the letter AH written in white in the middle of his forehead. From this letter ‘AH’ numerous other letters filling the whole sky, and then all the letters assimilated back into the white ‘AH’ again. At the age of five he took ordination to be a perfect monk from his uncle, Panchen Dragpa Rigpab Mtshe, and he was named RGYAL MTSHAN SENGE GD. Later, he went to CHHOS DUBYING Monastery to take the vow of Prajnaparamita (DOE TSHUL) from his teacher DRAG PA RGYA: MTSHE. At such a young age he received the teachings in THAD MA (Pratima) and had full knowledge of the subject. While studying the Pratima he had a bright clear vision of Lord Buddha surrounded by SHODASA MAHASTEVIRA, the Sixteen Arhats.

At the age of thirteen, he made up his mind to write Commentaries on all the Sutras and Tantras. While contemplating over the master, Vajrasattva and Vajra Yogini, appeared to him in Real Form and told him to write Commentaries on Yamamahayana of Santarakshita. Once he saw Lotsoa Drukpa Gyaltsen in his dream telling him to correct the text of Swam ‘byed rgya mtsho in which Lotsoa Drukpa Khyabshos felt that he had made some mistakes. BODONG was asked not only to correct mistakes and also to write a commentary on the subject.

At the age of sixteen he went to Sakya to have discourses on Pratima Vartika Kashika (THSHAD MA KNaN ‘CRE) with some great scholars, The scholars were impressed with him. Although having not studied Poetry, he composed a Poem in praise of Lord Buddha’s Twelth Decha. He even wrote sonnets on some topics, He became a renowned poet like Pandita Anyuma. He studied subjects like Prayajapramita, Madhyamaka etc; and did the Oral Test on all the subjects with his Teacher Rashapa Chosang.

Young BODONG wishing to obtain advanced knowledge of such subjects as Tantayana and Sutrayana went to CHHOS DUBYING Monastery to propitiate DRIYANGS CHEN MA (Goddess Saraswati). He went back, retired, and not before long Goddess Saraswati appeared.
to him holding a Sgra snyan (stringed instrument) from which emanated melodious sounds of dharmā. From then onwards the Goddess often appeared to him and gave him guidance. He composed a poem in praise of Goddess Saraswati. The title of the poem is Bring bai glu byyang (Song of the Bees) and records the composer's name as Dbyang Chen Dgach ba Panderi, meaning the Pandita who adores Goddess Saraswati.

Roden's work was well versed in the Three Courses that lead to the perfection of the Author of Shatra. The first course is a thorough knowledge of the subject as preached by the great teachers, ranging from Lord Buddha himself down to the author's own Guru. The second course is complete mastery over the five sciences, namely, the science of Grammar, the science of Medicine, the science of Logic and the knowledge of the symbolic meaning of the Triptikas. The third and the last course is the author being blessed by a vision of his tutelary deity and being told to write a Shatra.

Within a short while he had full knowledge of the texts on Vinaya, Abhidharma, Pramana, Prajñapramitā and Madhyantika composed by Nagājuna, Maitreyya, Asanga, Vlaubandhu, Dipagāra, Dharmakirti, Chandrakirti and Gunaçalita. He read these texts in original (Sanskrit) and translated in (Tibetan). He was able to learn the texts by heart by going through the texts only thrice. He went to Central Tibet to have discussions with great scholars. The scholars, after debating with the young scholar, were amazed and pleased with his knowledge. He received initiation and exposition of Chatur Vidha Tantra from Lotsava Drakpa Rgyal Mtsan and especially on the subject Yogatattva, Lotsava Drakpa Rgyal Mtsan gave him teachings on Guhyasamaj (Guang-ha-huusa), the Six Doctrines of Naropa (Na-ro Chho-drag), the Chakra Samvara and Lam 'dorje. He also received teachings from different learned scholars on different subjects. He had acquired perfect knowledge of the subjects that were taught to him.

Once while studying in a place called Smad grong near Kyidung, he ritualized Lama Shonggas Dorje Galsen (GSHONG STON RDO RJE RGYAL MTSAN) seated in the robe of a Pandita, with religious texts loaded on several Elephants. The Lama seated on the throne read all the texts to the author one by one, and told him that he had imparted all the knowledge of Buddhism to him, and that the author should realize all meanings in order to be able to propagate Buddhism. He was blessed and consecrated by the Lama. From the time of this vision the author could write on all aspects of Buddhism. Learned Lamas like Gyag tig pa and Rong tig pa were defeated in debate by the author. On receiving an invitation from the
SIHU RAB ISTAN PA OF GTSHANG DISTRICT, HE WENT TO RTGAL TSE PREACHING RELIGION ALL ALONG HIS WAY. ON THE WAY SPONTANEOUSLY A RAIN OF FLOWERS SHOWED FROM THE SKY. THE FLOWERS WERE OF WHITE, RED AND BLUE IN COLOUR, AND COULD BE SEEN AND TOUCHED BY THE PEOPLE, WHO WERE AMUSED. SIMILARLY, SEVERAL MIRACLES OCCURRED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

BODONG HAD MANY SIMILARLY GUIDED DISCIPLES. WHEN ABOVE SEVENTY, HE HAD THE MIND TO LEAVE THE WORLD, SO HE PROCEEDED TO HIS DISCIPLES ACCORDING TO THEIR INDIVIDUAL ASPIRATIONS. DURING HIS STAY AT SHEKAR (SHEL DAKAR) A PLACE IN WESTERN TIBET, HE TOLD HIS DISCIPLE BODONG DURWA (BODONG SGRUB PA) THAT THE TIME HAD COME FOR HIM TO GO TO DOKPA KACHOW (Dorga mKhar-'dbyor), HEAVEN OF VAJRAVARDHI. HE ALSO TOLD HIM THAT HE WAS GOING TO LEAVE FOR CHOOSANG MONASTERY, WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED BY HIM, IN ORDER TO COMPLETE HIS UNFINISHED WORKS, BEFORE LEAVING FOR THE HEAVEN OF HOG MIN.

In Choosang Monastery he engaged thirty scribes to help him complete his incomplete works. With his blessings, each could complete thirty pages a day even though most of the scribes were not very competent. Before his PARINIRVANA he was able to do all the corrections and even add notes for all the works he started.

At the age of seventy seven on the 30th day of the second month of the Fire-Sheep year of the Tibetan Calendar (1461 of Western Calendar), he left for, heaven (Dag Pa mKha’ spyod) lying on his right side with his eyes focused on the sky.

BEFORE HE LEFT THE WORLD, HE TOLD HIS DISCIPLES THAT THEY WERE NOT TO MOURN FOR HIM ON HIS PARTING. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT DUE TO HIS MEDITATIONS, PROPITIATIONS OF DESTINIES AND OTHER PRACTICES OF RELIGION, DURING HIS COUNTLESS LIVES, THOSE THAT MEET, HEARD AND HAD ANY CONNECTIONS WITH HIM, WOULD NOT BE BORN AS BEASTS, HUNGRY GHOSTS OR GO TO HELL. IT IS RECORDED IN ORAL AND WRITTEN SOURCES THAT SOME OF THE DISCIPLES HAD VISIONS OF THE MASTER, BEING ERECTED TO HEAVEN BY GODDESS WITH OFFERINGS AND SONGS. ON THE DAY OF HIS CREMATION, THERE WERE MANY SPECTACULAR PHENOMENA AND WONDERFUL SIGNS.

IN THE HISTORY OF BUDDHIST SAINTS AND SCHOLARS, IN TIBET AND IN INDIA, BODONG PHYOGS LAS RINWAM RTGAL IS THE SINGULAR FIGURE WHO COMPOSED AS MANY AS 157 VOLUMES COVERING ALL ASPECTS OF BUDDHISM AND COMPLETE MEDICINE, SCIENCES AND ARTS.

While legends and miracles are for believers, the undisputed fact is on firm record that BODONG PHYOGS LAS RINWAM RTGAL was an encyclopedist scholar of the East born in 1373, who attained the
peak of his scholarly career in his twenties, when he began his writing on not only DURMA but also on subjects like science and technology. A brief survey of the contents of the GSHUNG HRUIM is made here.

A look at this rather sketchy outline of the contents will inspire all modern readers about Buddhism or Tibetan sources to go deeper into this monumental work from Tibet's past. Modern scholars will have reason to be grateful to His Holiness The Dalai Lama for advising and organising this authentic reproduction of BCDONIO GSHUNG HRUIM.

CONTENTS OF GSHUNG BUM

The works of Bo-dong Phyog-las Rnom-Rgyal consist of over 955 texts included in 117 volumes. Apart from his immense contribution on Dharma, both Hinayana and Mahayana, BOLOHNG also composed works on technical subjects, such as, History of Buddhism, Biography, Poetry, Kalu Grammar, Lexicon, Medicine, Astronomy, Mathematical Calculation, Astrology, Art, Religious paintings, etc.

Hereunder are mentioned some of the important works subject wise:

Hinayana

Hinayana Account of the Buddhism, Ordination Ritual—Vinaya, Sramanera ordination etc.

Mahayana

Prajnaparamita Sutras, Abhidharmakosa, Abhidharma Samuccaya etc.

History

Bu-ston-Rinchen-grub's History of Kalachakra tantra.

Biography

Sixteen biographies including Bo-dong Phyog-las Rnom Rgyal,

Logic

Four works on Hindu and Buddhist logic

Philosophy

Including Jaina, Mimusasa, Sankhya, Vaiseshika and Vedanta

Technical subjects

Kosa (Aramkosa), Grammar (Kalapa), Sanskrit Poetics (Kavyadarsa), Nitisatra, Ayurveda (Astangahridayasamhita), Astronomy, Astrology.
Tantra