

Mesmerizing with the Useless? A book-review inquiry into the ability to properly reprint older worthy material*

by Jean-Luc Achard (CNRS, CRCAO)

Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung (1242-1290), *Nyams rgyud rgyal ba'i phyag khrid*, Sangs rgyas g.yung drung bon gyi dpe tshogs, Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Triten Norbutse Library, 2008, 140 pp. Edited by Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung & Ponlob Tshangpa Tendzin.

1. The art of reprinting Bon texts

There is certainly no doubt that access to new editions of Tibetan works is often interesting, either for the linguist or the historian, and even more for the translator or the individual involved in the study of such works. However, in certain cases, one can question the validity of some recent editions, in particular when they are done in a rather careless mode.¹ Such editions are not respectful of the tradition and not even of the buyers of the reprint, which brings up the question of what lies behind such publications. With the volume being reviewed here, this question is clearly not an irrelevant one. I have to say that when it comes to the Bonpo tradition, the policy of reprints has always been problematic since its inception in the mid-1960s.² At that time, reprints were made from

* All my thanks go to Marianne Ginalski, Vivien & Michael Hunt for their suggestions and corrections.

¹ This is not a generalization and only applies to a very few examples that came into my hands in the recent years, starting with the edition of the *rGyal ba'i phyag khrid*, which is being reviewed in these pages.

² Raising money for reprinting Bonpo works was not an easy task at the time since the Tibetan population in the growing exile community was not always favorable to Bon, to say the least. However, the Bonpos were somehow able to collect funds to start the publication of several important works. Among the earliest reprints done under the guidance of Lopön Sangye Tenzin, Geshe Samten Gyeltsen (Karmay), and Lopön Tenzin Namdak were the *Tibetan Zan Zün Dictionary* (Tibetan Bonpo Foundation, Delhi, 1965, in book form), the *A Tri Thun-Tsham Cho-Nā Dañ Cha-Lak che Shuk So* (Tibetan Bonpo Foundation, Delhi, 1967, in book form too), the *sNyan rgyud rgyal ba'i phyag khrid*, *ib.*, ca. 1966, in *dpe cha* style), etc. The first "official" publication of the Bon community in exile was probably (this has to be checked) the *Gangs can bod kyi brda sprod dpag bsam ljon pa'i snye ma*, published by Sangye Tenzin Jongdong, Kalimpong, 1960 (in a *dpe cha* comprising 78 folios). Earlier in the 1950s (and thus before exile), Khyung sprul 'Jigs med rdo rje (1897-1955) had started to reprint in Delhi numerous works composed by Shardza Rinpoche. The Delhi prints are probably to be counted as among the first actual Bon publications prepared in India by Bonpos themselves (again before the exile) and they

manuscripts (rarely xylographic prints)³ either brought directly from Tibet or, more frequently, borrowed from Bonpo monasteries in Dolpo (Samling, etc.). Of course, then, it was imperative to issue practically any material⁴ in order to have the Bon tradition known by its own texts and be somehow saved from oblivion, as well as to distribute reprints of Bon works in order to make them available to the Western world. Since there was no Western Bon Sangha at the time, the “Western world” aimed at was mainly made up of a few (a very few actually) Tibetologists working either directly on Bon (such as S.G. Karmay and P. Kvaerne) or on related fields (R.A. Stein, A-M. Blondeau, etc.).⁵ However, the state of the original mss on which these reprints were based is mainly the reason why so little had been done on Bon at the time. Except for the reprints of some xylographic prints (such as those carefully prepared in Tibet by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin, 1912-1978)⁶ and a few other examples, the reproduced mss were full of mistakes, weird spelling, etc., to the extent that one could find for example the same personal name spelt in five different ways on a single folio. Add to this the endemic confusion of genitive, causative, instrumental, dative and ablative cases (*kyi/kyis*, *pa'i/pas*, *la/las*, etc.) plus dramatic license with regard to rules of classical written Tibetan and you have a rather lively picture of the state of affairs.

During that time and for about 15 years, there was a somewhat irregular production of Bon works published in Dolanji and covering all facets of Bon history, culture, language and religious practices.⁷ The publishers of these materials are sincerely to be thanked for providing access to a wide range of fields of study associated with Bon to an unprecedented scale since accessing Bon texts was rather difficult prior to this reprint policy. Since then, by the late 1980's, thanks to the activities of Tibetans in Tibet a considerable amount of works have become available, including the then no-longer legendary Bonpo *Kanjur* and *Tengyur*, and several sets of *Collected*

were actually later reproduced in large format books by the Tibetan Bonpo Foundation when Dolanji was founded.

³ The *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* was among the earliest examples of Bon xylographic works that were reprinted in exile. Its publication in the *Satapiṭaka Series* (vol. 73, New Delhi, 1968) was made possible owing to a print that Lopön Tenzin Namdak was able to keep with him during exile, together with other xylographic works prepared by his master Lopön Sangye Tenzin, as well as the relics of mNyang med Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1356-1415); see note 6 below.

⁴ By this, I do not mean that the reprinted material was not of quality. On the contrary, this reprint policy made available numerous texts which were totally unknown outside Tibet. And the quality of the choices for reprint was also paired with the variety of works that were then reprinted (historical, philosophical, tantric, etc.).

⁵ For a bibliography of these early works on Bon, which were of course preceded by even earlier studies, see Dan Martin, *Unearthing Bon Treasures*, Brill, 2001, pp. 287-442; *id.*, “Bön Bibliography: An Annotated List of Recent Publications”, *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no. 4, 2003, pp. 61-77; *id.*, *Bön Bibliography, New Combined Version*, November 2009, 152 pp.

⁶ According to Lopön Tenzin Namdak (personal communication, Paris, 1999), Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin prepared xylographic editions of the five following sets of works: 1. *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, 2. *sNyan rgyud rgyal ba'i phyag khrid*, 3. *rDzogs chen Nam mkha' 'phrul mdzod*, 4. *rDzogs chen Ye khri mtha' sel*, and 5. *Srid pa'i mdzod phug*. The first three cycles have been reprinted by the Bonpo Foundation. The *Ye khri* version exists in the form of photocopies of one original print in the possession of Lopön Rinpoche. At the time of writing this paper, I have no information regarding the fate of the prints of the fifth text.

⁷ On these works, see S.G. Karmay, *A Catalogue of Bon po Publications*, Toyo Bunko, 1977, *passim*.

Works (*gsung 'bum*), such as those of bDe chen gling pa (1833-1893),⁸ Shar rdza Rinpoche (1859-1934),⁹ dBra ston paṇḍita (sKal bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1897-1959)¹⁰ and a few others. While these *Collected Works* have been carefully edited and published, the editions of the *Kanjur* and *Tengyur* are far from satisfactory and by this I do not refer to the antagonism brought forward by Yongdzin Tendzin Namdak Rinpoche regarding *Eternal Bon* or *New Bon* editions of these collections, but to the rather disappointing state of the reproduced manuscripts.

2. The Practice Manuals of the Zhang chung snyan rgyud

The cycle of teachings which is being reviewed here has been available to us in both a manuscript version known after the first title of the collection — *sNyan rgyud kyi sngon 'gro rim pa rnam* (published in 1966) — and a xylographic edition prepared by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin in Tibet and reprinted in Dolanji in 1974.¹¹ There are of course small variants between the two versions but nothing really dramatic.

This cycle is generally known as the *Phyag khrid* or *Bru rgyal ba'i phyag khrid*, to distinguish it from another cycle similarly abbreviated as *Phyag khrid* (see below). It is regarded as the most important manual for the practice of the *Zhang chung snyan rgyud* (hereafter ZZNG) teachings. For many people, it is approached as the *only* manual of the ZZNG. This is a misconception. In fact one can list as many as five manuals, two being individual texts, while the last three are cycles or collection of texts.¹²

The first actual practice text of the ZZNG is the *mNyam bzhas sgom pa'i lag len* which is included in most editions of the root-texts of the ZZNG.¹³ It is furthermore considered as a practice manual for the first sub-cycle of the ZZNG, the *Phyi lta ba spyi gcod*. It is different from the other manuals since it is considered to be a written transcription of the oral teachings transmitted by Tapihritsa to sNang bzher lod po, and not a composition based on already existing material, as in the case of the four other manuals (which are in all evidence later works). According to the tradition, the redaction of this text would go back to the imperial period, although it is impossible to prove or to contradict such an assertion. The proto-colophon of the text says laconically: *zhes sprul pa'i sku yis gyer spungs chen po la gsungs sol!*¹⁴ — “This was enunciated by the Emanation Body to the great Gyer spungs”, the Emanation Body being Tapihritsa (the 25th lineage holder of the ZZNG) and Gyer spungs being his disciple, Gu rub sNang bzher lod po.

The second practice manual is that of the *Byang chub sems kyi gnad drug*,¹⁵ an important work styled as an offshoot of the *sGron ma drug gi gdams pa*, the

⁸ On the bDe chen gling pa tradition, see Achard, *Bon po Hidden Treasures*, Brill, 2004.

⁹ See *id.*, *Enlightened Rainbows*, Brill, 2008.

¹⁰ See *id.*, *The Collected Works of Ratön Kelzang Tenpai Gyeltsen* (provisional title, in progress).

¹¹ See Karmay, *A Catalogue...*, no. 58-II, p. 109.

¹² Only no. 3 and 5 of the list are actually considered as “real” ZZNG practice manuals by the tradition.

¹³ See the translation of this text in Achard, *La Pratique Méditative de l'Accès-à-l'Égalité*, Khyung-mkhar, privately published, 1996. Inger Olson has also prepared a complete study and an English translation of this text in her doctoral research.

¹⁴ P. 354 of the Triten Norbutse edition, Kathmandu, 2002.

¹⁵ Pp. 621-642 of the Triten Norbutse edition, Kathmandu, 2002.

root-text of the second sub-cycle of the ZZNG, the *Nang man ngag dmar khrid*. However, this text is clearly a composition and not an oral transmission. The tradition attributes it to Yang ston chen po, a.k.a. Yang ston Shes rab rgyal mtshan (11th century) but this is a mistake. In its own colophon, the text is attributed to Ya ngal Gong khra pa chen po. This means that the author was from the Ya ngal clan, therefore a Yang ston for sure, and that he spent time in Gong khra, a sanctuary close to Zhwa lu. If we look at the biographies of the ZZNG lineage masters, one can clearly deduce that this Gong khra pa chen po was actually Dam pa 'Bum rje 'od, the eldest son of Yang ston chen po. Further elements from the *Nyams rgyud* collection corroborate this identification. For instance, the colophon of the *Nyams rgyud* text entitled *Lus kyi gos dang 'dra ba'i gdams pa* states: / rje kun 'dul gyi gsung las/ yang ston shes rab rgyal mtshan gyis zhus/ de la sras yang ston gong khra bas/de la gcung po klu brag pas/.¹⁶ Because of the presence of the *gcung po* Klu brag pa, the previous son (Yang ston gong khra ba) listed in the transmission is clearly the elder son of Yang ston chen po, namely Dam pa 'Bum rje 'od. As stated, it is obvious that the text is an offshoot of the *sGron ma drug* but it is also clear that its contents and structure have influenced the more complex works known as *Phyag khrid*, as one shall see now.

The third practice manual is that known as the *Zhang ston phyag khrid*, Zhang ston Rinpoche being here Zhang ston Rin chen rgyal mtshan. I will describe this one elsewhere. As far as I know, it has not been reprinted yet.

The fourth practice manual is the collection known as the *sNyan rgyud rtsa khrid mun sel shel phreng*,¹⁷ compiled by Rang grol Bla ma rgyal mtshan in the 14th century. It is an important set of relatively short works which covers the entire path of Dzogchen, including dark retreats (*mun mtshmas*) and channels and wind practices (*rtsa rlung*), among other things. It is clearly based on works belonging to the third section of the *Nyams rgyud* collections, namely the *Nyams rgyud thor bu*. In a certain sense, it can be considered as an explicit *Nyams rgyud* manual.

The fifth practice manual — the one being reviewed here — is the famed *Bru rgyal ba'i phyag khrid*, compiled, as its title indicates, by Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung (1242-1290) at the end of his life.¹⁸ So far, I have not seen any edition of this cycle of teachings in its original form, since all those available show additional texts or have some missing. The original contents of this cycle should be:

1. the biographies of the lineage holders in the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi lo rgyus* ;¹⁹

¹⁶ *Nyams rgyud rgyas 'bring gnyis kyi gsung bod*, Triten Norbutse, Kathmandu, 2002, p. 98.

¹⁷ See Karmay, *op. cit.*, p. 99, no. 51-ii-15.

¹⁸ As shown below with the final colophon, the cycle is undated. However, the first chapter (dealing with the biographies) is dated of a Rat year (*byi lo*) which may either be 1264 (Bru rGyal ba is probably too young at that time), 1276 or 1288. See Achard, *Les Instructions du Vainqueur Eternel*, vol. II, p. 51 n. 1.

¹⁹ The compilers of the version that is being reviewed have not even bothered to reproduce this text which was carefully edited by Lupon Sangye Tenzin in Tibet. They have bypassed the text, probably because it was not already electronically inputted, like the rest of the collection (widely available in Tibet in electronic form). This clearly demonstrates the lack of accuracy and the carelessness with which the compilers have treated the original material. On the other hand, since they had several electronically inputted works which do not bear any direct relation with the *Phyag khrid*, they have not hesitated in integrating

2. the preliminary practices (*sngon 'gro*) in the *sNyan rgyud kyi sngon 'gro rim pa rnams*, also known as the *Bon spyod dgu rim* ;
3. the main practice (*dnegos gzhi*) in the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi khrid rim lag len*, also known as the *Zab mo gnad kyi gdams pa dnegos gzhi* ;
4. the instruction on the View (*lta ba*, corresponding to *khregs chod*)²⁰ in the *gZhi rang ngo spras pa gcer mthong lta ba'i khrid* ;
5. the instruction on Meditation (*sgom pa*, corresponding to *thod rgal*) in the *Lam nyams su len pa 'od gsal sgom pa'i khrid* ;
6. the instruction on Conduct (*spyod pa*, corresponding to various kinds of integrations) in the *rKyen lam du slong ba rtsal sbyong spyod pa'i khrid* ; and
7. the instruction on the Fruit (*'bras bu*, corresponding to the way Enlightenment is obtained and how it manifests) in the *'Bras bu rang sa bzung ba sku gsum dmar thag bcad pa'i khrid*.²¹

At the end of text no. 7 comes the following colophon, clearly indicating that the collection originally stopped at that point²²: *de ltar rdzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi phyi nang gsang ba yang gsang dang bcas pas gnad bsdu/ zab mo'i gdams pa du ma'i bcud dril ba/ grub chen gong ma rnams kyi zhal gdams mthar thug pa 'di ni/ bru'i btsun pa rgyal ba g.yung drung la/ ngur smrig 'dzin pa'i bshes gnyen bkra shis rin chen gyis yang nas yang du bskul ba'i don du/ lag len go rim bzhiin du/ g.yas ru dben sa kha'i dgong du sbyar ba'o/ mu tsug smar ro/ e ma ho/ bla ma dang gdams pa gcig pa ma gtogs/ su la yang yi ge ris su bstan par mi bya'o/ bkra shis par gyur cig/*

This means that all texts included after the 7th one in all available editions are additions which did not make part of the original cycle, as elaborated by Bru rGyal ba. The author himself was one of the most important masters of the Bon tradition in the second part of the 13th century. His various commentaries on Sutras, Tantras and on Dzogchen cycles are still used to this day, starting with the present manual of ZZNG practice. This importance is not pointed out in the preface made by the editors, nor is there barely any information regarding him in that preface.

3. The author of the *Phyag khrid*

Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung was the main disciple of Yang ston gDan sa pa, an eminent accomplished scholar of g.Yas ru dben sa kha and the lineage

this material, probably to justify the existence of a volume which would have lacked enough pages to make up a proper book. This is significantly unprofessional.

²⁰ Both expressions *khregs chod* and *thod rgal* are not used in the context of the ZZNG, except *thod rgal* which appears in the "standard" non-dzogchen context of categorizing students into *rim gyis pa*, *thod rgal ba*, and *cig car ba*. Otherwise, the practice of *thod rgal* is defined as that of Clear-Light (*'od gsal*) in this cycle. This is quite common in earlier Bon Dzogchen works. Even though it has antecedents in both Eternal Bon and New Bon traditions, starting at least with the *rDzogs chen gser zhun* by bsTan gnyis gling pa, the use of the classical expressions *khregs chod* and *thod rgal* became quite regular with various works redacted by Kun grol grags pa (b. 1700).

²¹ See the detailed summary of the entire cycle in Achard, *Les Instructions du Vainqueur Eternel*, II, Ed. Khyung-Lung, 2006, *passim*.

²² This was clearly noted by Samten Karmay in his *Catalogue of Bon po publications*, p. 109.

holder of the *sNyan rgyud* and of the single transmission (*gcig brgyud*) of the *Nyams rgyud* set of teachings. It is directly from him that rGyal ba g.yung drung recorded the biographies of the lineage masters included in the first chapter of his compilation.

Bru had a rather short but intense life (he passed away at the age of only 48). He spent most of his early life visiting the Bon monasteries of dBus and gTsang, meeting with important *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* masters such as rTogs ldan Dad pa shes rab and 'Gro mgon 'Dul ba rin po che. He even met some direct disciples of the great Yang ston Shes rab rgyal mtshan but his main connection to this lineage of teachings was made through the blessings of Yang ston gDan sa pa.

rGyal ba g.yung drung then spent a certain part of his life wandering on the high plateaus of the sTod region, living in isolated hermitages, without settling in a particular place. He is said to have had visions of Dran pa nam mkha' and Tshe dbang rig 'dzin, *8th century figures who played a decisive role in the constitution of newly discovered Bon teachings throughout Tibet. Through some of these visions, he received specific instructions on channels and winds (*rtsa rlung*), and owing to the time he spent performing the related yogic practices, his experiences improved to such an extent that he then never regressed from these.

Later in life, he went back to his root-master, Yang ston gDan sa pa, and received from him the single transmission (*gcig brgyud*) of the *Experiential Transmission (Nyams rgyud)*, as well as all the related instructions.

The line of transmission passing through gDan sa pa represents one of the single transmission lineage but Bru rGyal ba received similar teachings from two other lines (the second one also passing through gDan sa pa):

1. Yang ston Dam pa 'Bum rje → 'Khrul med zhig po → dPon gsa Khyung rgod rtsal → dByil ston Nam mkha' bsod nams → rTogs ldan Dad pa shes rab → Bru rGyal ba ; and
2. 'Khrul med zhig po → rTogs ldan Nyag sgom ri pa → Sum ldan Rong sgom → Phyogs med sGom sde pa → *ri khrod pa* Shes rab Tshul khriims → mKhas grub Zhang ston → Yang ston gDan sa pa → Bru rGyal ba.²³

4. The Triten Norbutse edition

Let us be fair and honest with the potential buyer of the edition being reviewed: it is anything but a professional product. Of course, it has a nice layout and cover but this is not a result so difficult to achieve. A more difficult task, evidently, for the editors appears to be to check the originals and make sure the work is complete. But, the first thing that is shocking when one has the book in hand is its title: *Nyams rgyud rgyal ba'i phyag khrid*. Despite the numerous occasions during which Yongdzin Rinpoche stated that the *Nyams rgyud* has only three sub-cycles and that the *Phyag khrid* belongs to the *sNyan rgyud*, some (fortunately not all) of the younger generation of Bon lamas tend to systematically style this cycle as belonging to the *Experiential Transmission*. There is actually no reason at all for this and the mistake could have been easily avoided with a better knowledge of how

²³ See Achard, *Les Instructions du Vainqueur Eternel*, vol. II, pp. 50-51.

the collections are constituted. There are indeed several works describing the contents of the *Nyams rgyud* and *sNyan rgyud* collections. We can for example check what is probably the earliest work of this nature in Yang ston dpal bzang's *rDzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi rtsis byang them yig rgyas pa* which was written in *1289 (*sa glang*). In this text, the three sub-cycles of the *Nyams rgyud* are clearly described and one can also see that the *Phyag khrid* is not included among these works. Similarly, if we look at one more recent work, in the way Shardza Rinpoche (1859-1934) describes the *Nyams rgyud* collection in his *Treasury of Space and Awareness* (*dByings rig mdzod*, I, Chamdo ed., pp. 62-63), we can clearly see that the *Phyag khrid* is in no way part of the *Experiential Transmission*. Furthermore, if we look carefully into the *Phyag khrid* itself and check its sources, we can also easily see that Bru rGyal ba's compilation quotes mainly works from the *sNyan rgyud* or canonical texts (such as the '*Bum*'), as well as individuals such as Bla chen (Dran pa nam mkha'), but very few quotes from the *Nyams rgyud*.²⁴ In addition, a quick look at the beginning of the chapter containing the instructions on how to perform the preliminaries (*sngon 'gro*, and which serves as an introduction to the whole compilation) shows that in the author's mind the *Phyag khrid* belongs to the *sNyan rgyud* exclusively:

(...) these instructions on the Oral Transmission of the Great Perfection from Zhang zhung are enunciated according to four (divisions): 1. the outer general sections on the View, 2. the inner essential instructions on the Precepts, 3. the secret vision of Awareness in its nakedness, and 4. the innermost secret identification of the Natural State.²⁵

This is the standard way of classifying the works belonging to the *sNyan rgyud*, not to the *Nyams rgyud*.²⁶ So why is this mistake so frequently repeated by a few *lamas* of the younger generation? One wonders if this has anything to do with marketing and the deliberate intent to interest an uneducated (in terms of *rDzogs chen*) audience that is likely to be more attracted by anything styled "experiential". It is also not surprising to note here that these are the same people who constantly use incorrect expressions such as the "three heart mantras" for the three essence [mantras] (*snying po rnam gsum*) or the "six lokas" for the six gatis (*rigs drug*), etc.

The next thing that raises questions is the use of illustrations at the start of the book. The first illustration comes from a modern *thangka* depicting sTon pa gshen rab. A *thangka* of gShen lha 'od dkar — the central figure of the *sNyan rgyud* daily preliminaries — or Kun tu bzang po might have been

²⁴ See for example the *sNyan rgyud chen mo* quoted p. 47 of the Triten Norbutse edition, which is actually not to be found in the *sNyan rgyud rgyas bshad chen mo* (included in the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud bon skor*, Dolanji, 1974, pp. 31-146), as one might expect, but in the *Lha sgom srungs pa'i man ngag* (p. 533). Quotes from another *Nyams rgyud* text — the *Lha khrid* —, appearing on pp. 36, 41, etc. of the Triten Norbutse edition are not to be found in the actual *Nyams rgyud* text entitled *Man ngag lha khrid*, *op. cit.*, pp. 443-456.

²⁵ *sNyan rgyud kyi sngon 'gro rim pa rnams*, p. 14: ... rdzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi gdams pa 'di la/ phyi lta ba spyi gcod/ nang man ngag dmar khrid/ gsang ba rig pa gcer mthong/ yang gsang gnas lugs phugs gcod (= phug chod) dang bzhir gsungs pa la/. My underlining.

²⁶ On the standard and unusual classifications of the texts belonging to the *sNyan rgyud*, see Achard, *La Structure du Zhangzhung Nyenyü*, Khyung-Lung, 2006.

more appropriate. The second illustration depicts Srid pa'i rgyal mo: again, if a picture of a Protector was needed here, Nyi pang sad or sMan mo (or both) would have been preferable. But if we look at the other books published in the same collection, one realizes that these are exactly the same pictures — sTon pa gshen rab and Srid pa'i rgyal mo — which are used throughout in all volumes, no matter their subject. The choice is thus not very meaningful and it is a pity because Nyi pang sad and sMan mo are not so frequently represented. This would have been an enriching occasion that the editors chose not to fulfill.

The preface of this volume (pp. 1-2) contains the regular “advertising”²⁷ material describing the high level of rDzogs chen teachings, its importance for reaching Buddhahood in a single lifetime, etc. This is ironic because the compilers have treated the material with a carelessness which does not comply with the attention and carefulness such religious texts should deserve. But the irony goes even further, since this reprint edition is, according to the preface (p. 2) aimed at those who want to dedicate their life to these teachings by practicing them in retreat, but also at those who study rDzogs chen from a more academic perspective. In reality, for both categories of people, the edition is of no use at all since it lacks two of the main chapters of the collection.

The first text that is lacking in this edition is the *Lo rgyus* (text no. 1 in the structure given above). One should note though that it is lacking in all other editions of the *Phyag khrid* except that carefully prepared by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin in Tibet before 1959 and reproduced in Dolanji in 1974. The text is also to be found in the *dBal khyung bka' 'gyur*, in vol. 33, pp. 223-261, under the title of *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi lo rgyus*. This is one of the early — although not the earliest — example of texts describing the life-stories of the *sNyan rgyud* lineage masters. It is obvious that it has been influenced by earlier works by Yang ston shes rab rgyal mtshan²⁸ and that it has itself influenced the later work by sPa ston.²⁹

²⁷ I borrow this rather “cynical” characterization of the compilers’ style from Patrick Carré’s oral and ironic description of this aspect of classical prefaces in canonical commentaries.

²⁸ To whom are credited large, medium and short biographies of the lineage holders. See Yang ston dPal bzang, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

²⁹ See sPa ston’s *Bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar, passim*. Bru rGyal ba’s text is organized as follows:

I. The Long Transmission: I-a. The Contemplative Transmission of the Victorious Ones. // I-b. The Meditative Transmission of the Mind Heroes (*sems dpa'*), covering the lives of the Six Transcending gShens, the Six gShens of the Six Principles, the Nine gShens of the Nine Oral Instructions, and the Four gShens with the Tiaras. // I-c. The Transmission of Knowledge Holders (with the life of sNang bzher lod po).

II. The Short Transmission: II-a. The lives of Tapihritsa and sNang bzher lod po. // II-b. the reason why the Short Transmission was maintained. // II-c. The Diffusion and Spread of the Short Transmission:

i. The six lineage holders from Zhang zhung (rGyal gzigs gsas chung, dMu Tso ge, dMu Tso stang, dMu Shod khram, dMu rGyal ba blo gros, and dPon chen bstan po). //

ii. The six lineage holders from Tibet (Lhun grub mu thur, gShen rgyal lha rtse, Lom ting sgom chen, dNgos grub rgyal mtshan, 'Or sgom Kun 'dul).

iii. The six lineage holders of the Canonical Transmission (Yang ston Shes rab rgyal mtshan, Yang ston Dam pa 'bum rje 'od, rTogs ldan dbon po, Yang ston gDan sa pa, and Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung).

The second work that is lacking is the *Lam nyams su len pa 'od gsal sgom pa'i khrid rim*³⁰ which is the central text for the highest practices of rDzogs chen. It is actually a development of the teachings given in the last part of the third chapter concerned with the practice of Clear-Light (*'od gsal*). Since the work is missing in the edition being reviewed, it might be interesting to give its structure here, according to Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin's edition:

gnyis pa lam nyams su blang ba 'od gsal sgom pa'i khrid

1. sgom tshul lam gyi rim pa brkyang thabs
2. sgom byed blo yi dri ma bsal lugs
 - 2-1. phyi mi dang mi min gyi bar chod
 - 2-2. nang 'du ba nad kyi bar chod
 - 2-3. gsang ba bsgom pa nyams kyi bar chod
3. bsgoms pas nyams dang 'od gsal 'char tshul
 - 3-1. shar ba'i snang ba byung tshul
 - 3-1-1. phyi'i snang ba mthong tshul
 - 3-1-2. nang gi nyams myong bskyed tshul
 - 3-2. goms pa'i snang ba 'phel tshul
 - 3-2-1. snang ba 'phel ba'i tshul
 - a. phyi ltar ['phel tshul]
 - b. nang [ltar 'phel tshul]
 - 3-2-2. snang ba mched pa'i tshul
 - a. untitled [= phyi ltar mched tshul]
 - b. untitled [= nang ltar mched tshul]
 - 3-2-3. snang ba rgyas pa'i tshul
 - a. untitled [= phyi ltar rgyas tshul]
 - b. untitled [= nang ltar rgyas tshul]
 - 3-2-4. snang ba rdzogs pa'i tshul
 - a. untitled [= phyi ltar rdzogs tshul]
 - b. untitled [= nang ltar rdzogs tshul]
 - 3-2-5. snang ba mthar thug pa'i shar tshul
 - a. untitled [= snang ba mthar thug pa phyi ltar shar tshul]
 - b. untitled [= snang ba mthar thug pa nang ltar shar tshul]
 - 3-3. de dag gi lam gyi rim pa dang sbyar ba

Anybody who has worked on Bon texts of rDzogs chen will acknowledge that, with its detailed description of the five Visions (*snang ba lnga*), this work is of crucial importance for the practice and study of the whole cycle. Its description of the five Visions is specific to the system of the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* which is slightly different from the "standard" presentation in four visions (*snang ba bzhi*). In his *Treasury of Space and Awareness (dByings rig mdzod*, II, Chamdo ed., pp. 326-327), Shardza Rinpoche explains that the system in four visions is generally associated with the diurnal practice of *Thod rgal* (namely the Visions of the Day, *nyin snang*), and he implies that the system in five visions is linked to the Visions of the Night (*mtshan snang*) corresponding to dark retreats (*mun mtshams*). If that is obviously true for works such as the *Six Essential Points of the Pure and Perfect Mind (Byang chub sems kyi gnad drug)*, explaining the practice in terms of four or five visions

³⁰ Pp. 657-673 from the 1974 reprint of the edition prepared by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin Rinpoche.

actually does not really imply any difference in terms of the Fruit: these are simply two different ways of explaining the progression of the visionary developments arising during the practice.

Therefore, given the crucial importance these two texts have for the tradition, any professional work made for reprinting this collection would have at least added a note as to why these two texts are lacking. I suggest that the first one is lacking out of laziness (being too long to input electronically) and that the second one was simply forgotten, during the time the various electronic files were compiled for the print. Someone familiar with such a material would have noticed the absence of these two works. I am convinced that Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin would certainly have never authorized the dissemination of such a reprint, precisely because of the absence of these two key works and certainly also because it contains some material which is unrelated to the original composition made by Bru rGyal ba.

5. A legitimate question

One must seriously and legitimately question the necessity of having such material so carelessly reprinted. Even though the first two editions have been out of print for decades, the recent reprint of the *Bon gyi brten 'gyur chen mo* includes a reproduction of the manuscript version in vol. 138 and the 1974 reprint of the xylographic edition prepared by Yongdzin Sangye Tenzin is still widely used and photocopied. Another edition recently published in Kathmandu (in book form, *Nyams* (sic!) *rgyud rgyal ba'i phyag khrid*, published by mKhan po bsTan 'dzin dar rgyas, Kathmandu, 2002) might be of better use since, even though it reprints the *Bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar* from sPa ston's version rather than the original first chapter by Bru rGyal ba, it does contain all the other original works of the *Phyag khrid* plus extra material. So if the Triten Norbutse edition was not printed just for making money, it appears barely of any practical use for monks, practitioners, and academic scholars alike.

6. Conclusion

It should not be difficult to take into account the advice of the elders of the tradition when reprinting classical works (especially when they have the experience of Lopön Tenzin Namdak or HH Menri Tridzin in this field). Tibetan editors can certainly comply with the rules (or at least some of the rules) necessary to critically edit a text, as can be witnessed by, for example, the "critical" edition of the Buddhist *Kanjur* by a specialized bureau of editors in Chengdu. But it seems that many of them simply have works inputted electronically, laid out in a given format (book form or *pecha*) and then simply sent to the press. There is no editing process at all in this approach and, if not distributed for free, it is certain that it is not done for anything else than profit, in particular when reprinted works are available from previous (recent and better) editions. It is very important that Bon pos be more careful about reprinting or re-editing older material, because examples like the one discussed in this book-review are detrimental to the

tradition in every respect. Such a counter-example might show that Bon pos are quite careless with their material and ready to sell it no matter what. Simply reprinting a text without editing it might still be a good idea, like Bon pos used to do, starting from the 1960s down to the late 1980s, because it makes rare manuscripts available to Tibetologists or translators in their original form. But carelessly reprinted books are of no interest at all and, I insist, detrimental to the tradition.

Unfortunately I doubt that the concerned editors will ever comply with the editing rules such as those recently established by Cathy Cantwell and Rob Mayer for editing traditional works from the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum* (in their recent publications) but they could at least enrich their reprint with a preface or introduction written with competent skills, mentioning the source of the reprints, material on the author, an analytical description of the contents, a bibliography, etc., all this carefully and professionally produced so as to avoid the deplorable defects mentioned above. Nothing of this was done in this edition which readers are more than welcome to avoid.

