

Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines



Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines

numéro vingt-quatre — Octobre 2012

ISSN 1768-2959

Directeur : Jean-Luc Achard

Comité de rédaction : Anne Chayet, Jean-Luc Achard.

Comité de lecture : Ester Bianchi (Università degli Studi di Perugia), Anne Chayet (CNRS), Fabienne Jagou (EFEO), Rob Mayer (Oriental Institute, University of Oxford), Fernand Meyer (CNRS-EPHE), Françoise Pommaret (CNRS), Ramon Prats (Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona), Charles Ramble (EPHE, CNRS) Françoise Robin (INALCO), Brigitte Steinman (Université Paul Valéry, Montpellier III) Jean-Luc Achard (CNRS).

Périodicité

La périodicité de la *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* est généralement bi-annuelle, les mois de parution étant, sauf indication contraire, Octobre et Avril. Les contributions doivent parvenir au moins six (5) mois à l'avance. Les dates de proposition d'articles au comité de lecture sont Novembre pour une parution en Avril, et Mai pour une parution en Octobre.

Participation

La participation est ouverte aux membres statutaires des équipes CNRS, à leurs membres associés, aux doctorants et aux chercheurs non-affiliés.

Les articles et autres contributions sont proposées aux membres du comité de lecture et sont soumis à l'approbation des membres du comité de rédaction. Les articles et autres contributions doivent être inédits ou leur ré-édition doit être justifiée et soumise à l'approbation des membres du comité de lecture.

Les documents doivent parvenir sous la forme de fichiers Word, envoyés à l'adresse du directeur (jeanluc.achard@sfr.fr).

Comptes-rendus

Les livres proposés pour compte-rendu doivent être envoyés à la *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, 22, avenue du Président Wilson, 75016 Paris.

Langues

Les langues acceptées dans la revue sont le français (en priorité), l'anglais, l'allemand, l'italien, l'espagnol, le tibétain et le chinois.

La *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* est publiée par l'UMR 8155 du CNRS, Paris, dirigée par Annick Horiuchi.





Revue d'Études Tibétaines

numéro vingt-quatre — Octobre 2012

Studies in the Sems sde tradition of rDzogs chen

Edited by Jean-Luc Achard

Sam van Schaik

Dzogchen, Chan and the Question of Influence

page 5

Christopher Wilkinson

The *Mi nub rgyal mtshan Nam mkha' che* And the *Mahā Ākāśa Kārikās*:
Origins and Authenticity

page 21

Dylan Esler

The Exposition of *Atiyoga* in gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes'
bSam-gtan mig-sgron

page 81

Karen Liljenberg

On the *Thig le drug pa* and the *sPyi chings*, two of the *Thirteen*
Later Translations of the rDzogs chen Mind Series

page 137

Jim Valby

Five Principles of rDzogs chen Transmission in the
Kun byed rgyal po

page 157

Kurt Keutzer

The Nine Cycles of the Hidden, The Nine Mirrors,
and *Nine Minor Texts on Mind*: Early Mind Section Literature in Bon

page 165



The Exposition of *Atiyoga* in gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' *bSam-gtan mig-sgron**

Dylan Esler
Institut Orientaliste
Université Catholique de Louvain

Introduction

The importance of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* for our understanding of the early history of the Great Completeness (*rDzogs-chen*) and its interaction with the contemplative traditions of 9th and 10th century Tibet is already well-known.¹ Its author, gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes (ca. early 10th century), presents a classification of four vehicles that can lead to enlightenment, hierarchically arranged as follows: the gradual approach of the *sūtras*; the simultaneous approach of the *sūtras*; the tantric approach of *Mahāyoga* (which also includes *Anuyoga*); and finally the Great Completeness, also called *Atiyoga*. Although written from the perspective of the Great Completeness, the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* is not a *rDzogs-chen* text *per se*, but rather a doxographical treatise (*grub-mtha'*; Skt. *siddhānta*), as has been pointed out by Achard;² in fact, it is probably the first such doxography to have been written by a Tibetan.

In the present article, it is the long seventh chapter, concerning *Atiyoga*, which will be the focus of our study. The section concerning the view has already been summarized by Karmay.³ Mention should also be made of Meinert, who gives an overview and exposition of the chapter, providing extract translations into German,⁴ and of Baroetto, who recently published a critical edition of the seventh chapter, along with an Italian translation.⁵ It is inevitable that the discussion of the seventh chapter presented here should somewhat overlap with these previous excellent studies; nonetheless, for English readers such an overall presentation of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron's* *Atiyoga* chapter will still be useful. Given the extreme difficulty of this work, there are bound to be differences in various scholars' interpretation of individual passages of the text; these I have signalled, where appropriate, in

* I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Lopon P. Ogyan Tanzin (Sarnath), Dr. Jean-Luc Achard (CNRS, Paris), Professor Christophe Vielle (Université Catholique de Louvain) and Dr. Dan Martin (Jerusalem).

¹ In fact, because of its antiquity, its importance in this regard is second only to the Dunhuang documents. Cf. Karmay, Samten Gyaltzen, *The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007, p. 99.

² Achard, Jean-Luc, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret: Recherches philologiques et historiques sur l'origine de la Grande Perfection dans la tradition rNying ma pa*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1999, p. 62, n. 2.

³ Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, pp. 107-120.

⁴ Meinert, Carmen, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs chen- Lehre: eine komparatistische Untersuchung im Lichte des philosophischen Heilskonzeptes „Nicht-Vorstellen“ anhand der Dunhuang-Dokumente des chinesischen Chan-Meister Wolun und des Werkes bSam gtan mig sgron des tibetischen Gelehrten gNubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes*, PhD thesis, Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, 2004, esp. pp. 243-283, pp. 352-357.

⁵ Baroetto, Giuseppe, *La dottrina dell'atiyoga nel bSam gtan mig sgron di gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes*, 2 Volumes, Lulu, 2010.

the notes to this essay. Moreover, the comparisons and parallels suggested in this article (such as those between gNubs-chen's nine views of the ground and the seven theories on the same subject discussed by Klong-chen-pa) and the hermeneutical reflections developed, have not been touched upon so far. In my presentation, I have also sought to point out wherever possible the many parallels and interconnections that exist between Chapter VII and the previous chapters of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*.

The *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*'s exposition of *Atiyoga*

The seventh chapter follows a relatively straightforward structure: after an introductory section where the basic premises of *Atiyoga* are exposed, the view, meditation, conduct and fruition are elucidated in turn. A final section is devoted to clarifying the distinction between *rDzogs-chen* and the lower vehicles. In this respect, the structure of the chapter parallels that of Chapter IV (concerning the gradual approach), Chapter V (concerning the simultaneous approach), and Chapter VI (concerning *Mahāyoga*). Only Chapter IV can be said to stand somewhat apart: since the gradualist approach takes the lowest position in Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' classification, there is no entire section devoted to distinguishing it from lower vehicles. Nevertheless, the text does mention that the gradual approach presented there, referred to as *Sautrāntika [Madhyamaka]*, is superior to the *Vijñaptimātra* and to the *Yogācāra [Madhyamaka]*.⁶

In the introductory section to the seventh chapter, gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes gives a succinct presentation of the ground, in terms of its being the state of spontaneity (*lhun-gyis-pa'i ngang-nyid*) and the great seminal nucleus of self-originated wisdom (*rang-byung-gi ye-shes thig-le chen-po*);⁷ he emphasises that it is not to be known by evaluating it through individually discerning sapience,⁸ but rather that it is to be assimilated as the actual perception of intrinsic awareness, in which case it is made clear to intrinsic awareness without having to make any assumptions (*blo-bzhag*) about it.⁹

Here one should recall that in *rDzogs-chen*, the ground is neither a cosmological basis localizable somewhere, nor is it to be sought in the mind or any of its functions. It refers to the individual's abiding mode (*gnas-lugs*),

⁶ C 118.3. References to the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* are primarily to Chhimed Rigdzin Rinpoche's 1974 edition (abbreviated as C): gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, *rNal-'byor mig-gi bSam-gtan or bSam-gtan mig-sgron: A treatise on bhāvanā and dhyāna and the relationships between the various approaches to Buddhist contemplative practice*, Reproduced from a manuscript made presumably from an Eastern Tibetan print by 'Khor-gdong gter-sprul 'Chi-med rig-'dzin, Smarntsis shesrig spendzod, vol.74, Leh: Tashigangpa, 1974. Other editions consulted [variants are noted in square brackets] are gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes rin-po-che, *sGom-gyi gnad gsal-bar phye-ba bSam-gtan mig-sgron ces-bya-ba*, in *bKa'-ma shin-tu rgyas-pa*, Edited by mKhan-po Mun-sel, vol.97/je, Chengdu: Kaḥ-thog, n.d. (abbreviated as M) and Baroetto, *La dottrina dell'atiyoga nel bSam gtan mig sgron*, vol.2 (henceforth abbreviated as Baroetto).

⁷ C 290-292; an English translation of this passage will be found in Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, pp. 107f.

⁸ C 291.4-5: *rang gi so sor rtoḡ pa'i shes rab kyis gzhal bar byar yang med [...]*.

⁹ C 201.3: *rang rig pa'i mngon sum khong du chud nas blo bzhag par byar yang med pa'i don chen po rang gi rig pa la gsal bar bya ba yang!* [...].

which is both the ground of liberation (*grol-gzhi*) and of confusion (*'khrul-gzhi*).¹⁰ Such qualifiers as primordial (*ye-nas*), original (*gdod-ma*), alpha (*ka-nas*) or primeval (*thog-ma*) do not refer to a golden age long past, but indicate this very abiding mode, which is ever-fresh and 'prior to' (in an experiential and phenomenological rather than temporal sense) cyclic existence (Skt. *saṃsāra*) and transcendence (Skt. *nirvāṇa*).¹¹ As the ground of our being and the reason for our being here, this ground is itself not grounded anywhere; being pure dynamics, it has neither a beginning nor an end.¹²

I. The view

1. Six questions regarding the view

Next comes the section concerning the view. gNubs-chen introduces this section by asking six questions, which he answers one after another.¹³ Since this has already been dealt with by Karmay,¹⁴ our presentation will be very brief. Suffice it to say that the six questions allow our author to clarify the view according to the Great Completeness, by answering certain misconceptions or objections that could be raised. One should note that all these questions revolve around the epistemological problem of how to know absolute meaningfulness (*don*), since the tradition of the Great Completeness as it is taught by gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes is uncompromising in its insistence that absolute meaningfulness is beyond examination and scrutiny. Let us now turn to these six questions:

1. The first question is introduced by way of a citation from the *Srog-gi 'khor-lo*,¹⁵ to the effect that if the three realms are examined, there is neither cyclic existence nor transcendence.¹⁶ The question, then, is whether this quote does not imply that even here, in the Great Completeness, there is something to be evaluated (Skt. *prameya*)?

gNubs-chen answers the following:

[...] The term "if one examines" is different [in meaning] and does not refer to evaluation. One is struck by intrinsic awareness, neither

¹⁰ As such, the ground is always alpha-pure (*ka-dag*); it is according to an individual's recognition or non-recognition of the ground's illumination (*gzhi-srang*) that it becomes, in the experience of a Buddha, the ground of liberation (*grol-gzhi*) and, in the experience of ordinary sentient beings, the ground of confusion. See Achard, Jean-Luc, 'Le Mode d'Emergence du Réel: L'avènement des manifestations de la Base (*gzhi srang*) selon les conceptions de la Grande Perfection', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no.7, April 2005, pp. 64-96, esp. p. 74.

¹¹ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 103.

¹² Guenther, Herbert V., *Meditation Differently*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992, p. 25.

¹³ C 292-315.

¹⁴ Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, pp. 109-113; a summary of these six questions is also found in Meinert, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs chen- Lehre*, pp. 253f.

¹⁵ *Srog-gi 'khor-lo*, in NGM, vol.1/ka, p. 599.2-3.

¹⁶ I take *mya-ngan* to be an abbreviation for *mya-ngan las-'das-pa* (Skt. *nirvāṇa*), unlike Baroetto, who translates it as "sofferenza". Cf. Baroetto, *La dottrina dell'atiyoga nel bSam gtan mig sgron*, vol.1, p. 68.

thinking nor examining nor scrutinizing: this is the upright path and is maintained to be the supernal evaluation.¹⁷

2. Can the mind be liberated without examining or scrutinizing anything?
gNubs-chen's reply is as follows:

The absence of any liberating action is itself liberation. If it be asked why this is, it is because, transcending examination and scrutiny, one is without imaging any fetters. As a mere designation one speaks of 'liberation'.¹⁸

3. How should absolute meaningfulness (*don*) be indicated?

After replying with quotations from the *sPyi-bcings* and Mañjuśrīmitra's *Sems-bsgom*,¹⁹ gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes writes:

[...] If one shows a clod [of earth] to someone desiring to view gold, he shall not see it; but if he is shown gold, he will recognize it. Likewise, the absolute meaningfulness which is without scrutiny and which liberates from speaking and thinking is not found through the inference of searching and scrutinizing. Being without action and effort, when it is understood as it is revealed, that is the supreme valid measure of actual perception.²⁰

In effect, gNubs-chen is saying that searching and scrutinizing are like a clod of earth and are quite distinct from the gold of absolute meaningfulness, which itself is beyond all forms of evaluation, but must be known through actual perception (Skt. *pratyakṣa*).

4. If these [previously exposed methods] are confused, how is the unmistakable meaning?

The answer given is:

Primordially, it is without the designation of non-duality. Through this state, one is already free from searching, yet there is no exaggeration in terms of being free from searching. Originally, there is no name of spontaneous presence, and the primordial Great Completeness is free from the intellectual label of Great Completeness. Originally, self-originated wisdom is without the

¹⁷ C 293.2-4: *brtags na zhes pa'i sgra yang tha dad pas 'jal ba ni ma yin te/ rang rig pas ci yang ma bsams la ma brtags ma dpyad pa nyid thog tu phebs pas drang po'i lam ste de ni gzhal ba dam pa 'dod do/*.

¹⁸ C 295.1-2: *grol bar byar med pa nyid kyis grol ba ste/ ci'i phyir zhe na/ rtog dpyod las 'das pa la bcings pa nyid ma dmigs pa'i phyir tha snyad tsam du grol zhes bya'ol/*

¹⁹ Norbu, Namkhai, and Lipman, Kennard (trs.), *Primordial Experience: An Introduction to rDzogs-chen Meditation*, Boston: Shambhala, 2001, vv.20-22, pp. 56f (English translation), p. 116 (Tibetan text).

²⁰ C 296.5-6: *de bas na gser lta [lta M 212b.6 : blta C 296.4] 'dod pa la bong ba bstan pas mi mthong gil /gser nyid bstan pas ngo shes pa ltar/ dpyad du med pa smra bsam las grol ba'i don tshol dpyod pa'i rjes su dpogs pas mi rnyed kyil/ bya rtsol med par bstan pa nyid kyis go ba ni mngon sum tshad ma'i mchog go/*.

labelling as self-originated wisdom. Primordially,²¹ in the great seminal nucleus, one does not label ‘a great seminal nucleus’.²²

5. Now for the fifth question along with its answer:

“In any case, absence of strain is said to be a great purpose. Yet how is one to see the truth of the genuine meaning through the means of not examining anything at all?”

It is replied that all phenomena are without the duality of self and other and without the duality of the knowable and the knower. Therefore, ‘seeing’ is merely a metaphor for not seeing anything and not viewing anything. Certainly, there is nothing at all to see aside from this.²³

6. The final question concerns the intent of the vehicle of non-action, i.e. the Great Completeness.

gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes’ answer is unequivocal:

The mother who generates all the Victorious Ones is the antidote to all effortful activities. Whatever means and paths one accomplishes, if this is not realized, there is no awakening.²⁴

He goes on to explain that all the way up to *Anuyoga*, the meaning of equality is not seen. This is because the lower vehicles all engage in effortful action; this state of affairs is comparable to the waves on the ocean’s surface covering the ocean’s limpidity – it is only when the waves subside and the ocean recovers its inherent limpidity that the reflections appear therein without one having to search for them. Hence, *Atiyoga* is unique in that one proceeds through non-action and that awakening (called ‘the root Buddha’) appears without searching.²⁵

²¹ The expression *ye phyi-ma-nas* seems quite strange: while *ye* designates primordially, *phyi-ma* refers to that which is later, and is generally opposed to *sngon-ma* (‘before’). It is possible that *phyi-ma* could here indicate the seminal nucleus labelled by the conceptual mind, which is opposed to the primordially present seminal nucleus (Lopon P. Ogyan Tanzin: personal communication). However, it is unclear to me why *phyi-ma* should be appended directly to *ye* in this way, and I have hence simply translated the whole expression as ‘primordially’.

²² C 304.6-305.4: ‘o na de dag khrul na don ma nor ba de nyid ji lta ba yin ce na ye gnyis su med pa’i tha snyad med pa/ ngang gis btsal [btsal M 218b.4 : brtsal C 305.1] ba dang bral zin pa la btsal [btsal M 218b.5 : rtsal C 305.2] ba bral bar yang sgro gdags su med pa/ [gdod nas lhun gyis grub pa’i ming med pa ye nyid rdzogs pa chen po la rdzogs pa chen po’i blo gdags bral ba gdod nas rang byung gi ye shes rang byung gi ye shes su’ang gdags su med pa/ ye phyi ma nas thig le chen po nang [nang M 219a.2 : nad C 305.4] thig le chen po zhes ma btags pa/.

²³ C 307.1-4: ‘on tang tshogs med don po che zhes bya’o/ [de lta cir yang ma brtags pa’i thabs kyiis [kyiis Baroetto, p. 26 : kyi C 307.2, M 220a.3] yang dag pa’i don gyi bden pa mthong ngo zhes bgyi ba ji lta bu lags/ lan du gsol pa/ chos thams cad la bdag gzhan gnyis med/ shes bya shes byed gnyis med pas/ cir yang ma mthong ma gzigs pa nyid la bla dwags [dwags Baroetto, p. 26 : dag C 307.4 : dags M 220a.5] tsam la mthong zhes bya’i/ nges par gud nas mthong ba ci yang med de/.

²⁴ C 312.3-4 : ‘di ni rgyal ba thams cad bskyed pa’i yum/ rtsol ba’i las thams cad kyi gnyen po yin te/ thabs dang lam gang nas sgrubs kyang/ ‘di ma rtogs par sangs mi rgya bas/.

²⁵ C 312f.

2. *Nine views concerning the ground*

Having introduced his subject by way of these six questions, gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes proceeds to discuss nine possible views concerning the ground. As recognized by Baroetto,²⁶ each of these can be subdivided into a section concerning that view's proper comprehension and another section (usually briefer) presenting the flaws of incomprehension. In the glosses to the text, each of these views is attributed to certain masters of the Great Completeness lineage. Some of these, such as Vimalamitra and Vairocana, are known historical figures, whereas others, such as King Dhahenatalo or the nun Ānandā, are shrouded in greater mystery. Van Schaik sees the mention of these masters' names in the glosses as a strategy of acknowledging the authors after having removed their names from the texts quoted in the *Atiyoga* chapter; hence, in his view, Sangs-rgyas ye-shes would have been complicit in transforming authored texts into revealed scripture.²⁷

The question of whether these masters actually held the views attributed to them will not concern us: as Burckhardt has reminded us in the context of European alchemical texts, the names mentioned there should not be seen as 'authors' in the modern sense, but rather as indications of an initiatory lineage.²⁸ Hence it seems preferable to view these names as pointer-figures alluding to certain filiations of precepts.

Assuming that the glosses belong to an early redaction of the text,²⁹ the names cited here show that, already in gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' time, the *rDzogs-chen* teachings were associated with a well-defined non-Tibetan origin, which was located in India and Oḍḍiyāna;³⁰ in fact, of the masters mentioned, only two are Tibetan: Vairocana and Sangs-rgyas ye-shes himself. Considering gNubs-chen's work as a translator and the numerous trips he is said to have made to India, Nepal and Gilgit, he would have had direct contact with at least some of these foreign masters.³¹

As with the different formulations concerning the ground in the context of the pith instruction section (*man-ngag-sde* – to which we shall briefly return below), these varying views may be compared to a rhetorical device, in that they allow the *rDzogs-chen* authors to clarify all possible aspects of the ground, thereby dispelling potential misinterpretations.³²

²⁶ See in particular the outline in Baroetto, *La dottrina dell'atiyoga nel bSam gtan mig sgron*, vol.1, pp. 235f.

²⁷ van Schaik, Sam, 'The Early Days of the Great Perfection', in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol.27: 1, 2004, pp. 165-206, esp. pp. 197f.

²⁸ Burckhardt, Titus, *Alchimie: Sa signification et son image du monde*, Milan: Arché Milano, 1979, p. 21.

²⁹ While they probably do not stem from the author's own hand, it is likely that they were written down by an immediate disciple. See the discussion in the Appendix.

³⁰ Cf. Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 20; see also the table below.

³¹ Among the masters mentioned in the table below, Sangs-rgyas ye-shes is known to have studied with Vimalamitra, Śrisimha and Ācārya gSal-ba rgyal. See Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, Translated and edited by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, vol.1: The Translations, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991, p. 607; and Dalton, Jacob P., *The Uses of the dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo in the Development of the rNying ma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, PhD thesis, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002, pp. 145f, n.20.

³² Cf. Achard's remarks in this regard in the context of the seven theories peculiar to the pith instruction section, in Achard, Jean-Luc, 'La base et ses sept interprétations dans la

It will not be without interest to note that two of the views mentioned here – the view of integral being and the view of non-duality – have identical names to two views mentioned in Chapter VI on *Mahāyoga*,³³ where six views are discussed. Of course, the fact that the views share the same name does not mean that their meaning is the same, since they are given in two very different contexts, the one dealing with tantric practice, the other with *Atiyoga*.

2-1. The view that is free from thematic foci

The first of the views to be discussed is freedom from thematic foci (*gza'-gtad dang-bral-ba*); this view is said to be held by Oḍḍiyāna Mahārāja³⁴ and by Vimalamitra.³⁵ The term 'freedom from thematic foci' itself belongs to the special terminology of the Great Completeness.³⁶ In this context, 'thematic focus' (*gza'-gtad*) is used to point out a fault in meditation: instead of resting in the abiding mode (*gnas-lugs*) of intrinsic awareness and dropping all the intellect's foci, the beginner often finds himself wondering whether or not he has found the mind's essence. He thereby becomes once again caught up in a focus which thematizes these possibilities.³⁷ Basically, we can say, with Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, that thematic focus (*gza-gtad*) refers to referential imaging (*dmigs-pa*; Skt. *ālambana*).³⁸ Our author presents this view with the following words:

Its unmistakable meaning is that Buddhas and sentient beings, cyclic existence and transcendence, are all nothing but designations. In their essence, the various appearances are without abode. Through this state in which everything is the scope of self-originated wisdom, one is free [from stains] without having to eliminate them. There is neither the theme of something to pursue on the side of

tradition rDzogs chen', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no.1, Octobre 2002, pp. 44-60, esp. p. 59.

³³ In the context of the six views of *Mahāyoga*, these are the fourth and fifth views. I hope to return to the *Mahāyoga* chapter in a future article.

³⁴ Oḍḍiyāna Mahārāja is mentioned in the *Bai-ro 'Dra-'bag chen-mo*, the earliest parts of which go back to the 13th century (Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 18), as the disciple of the Kashmiri preceptor Rab-snang; he is made the master of Gomadevi. See g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, Chengdu: Si-khron mi-rigs dpe-skrunkhang, 1995, p. 53; Norbu, Namkhai, and Clemente, Adriano (tr.), *The Supreme Source: The Kunjed Gyalpo: The Fundamental Tantra of Dzogchen Semde*, Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1999, p. 39.

³⁵ For biographical sketches of many of the masters mentioned here (such as dGa-rab rdo-rje, Mañjuśrīmitra, Śrīsimha, Buddhagupta and Vimalamitra) and a synthesis of the results of Tibetological research concerning them, see Esler, Dylan, 'The Origins and Early History of rDzogs chen', in *The Tibet Journal*, vol.30:3, Autumn 2005, pp. 33-62, esp. pp. 34-37.

³⁶ Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 119.

³⁷ Cf. the definition for *gza'-gtad* given in bTsan-lha ngag-dbang tshul-khrims, *brDa-dkrol gser-gyi me-long*, Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrunkhang, 1997, p. 806: 'that which is focused on upright' (*drang-po gtad-pa*), i.e. a focus that is ready-at-hand for straightforward thematization. Meinert translates "grasping towards an object". See Meinert, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs chen- Lehre*, p. 256.

³⁸ C 318.

enlightenment, nor the theme of desiring to clarify something through absolute awareness. In the nature of oneness, how could there be a referential focus, where [in fact] there is none? It is not that [this view] originates from clarifying thematic foci, but neither is it explained³⁹ by the mere name of 'being primordially free from thematic foci'. Since this very absolute meaningfulness is myself, there is no deliberate pursuing of it. For example, the sun does not search for the light of glow-worms.^{40 41}

gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes points out that those who seek to actualize the absence of thematic foci are involved in searching for a fruition, and he compares them to the blind; since they fail to realize that absolute meaningfulness and the fruition are their integral identity, they are like deer chasing after a mirage.⁴² He quotes the *rMad-du byung-ba*:

For him who desires enlightenment, there is no enlightenment –
The stages and the utterly supreme enlightenment are far away.
Whoever knows phenomena's beingness (Skt. *dharmatā*), which is like
a cause,
Is certain that "This enlightened mind am I" –
He enters the quintessence of enlightenment.
Hence, there is nothing to obtain nor to relinquish:
Designations, such as 'the enlightenment of the Buddhas',
Are not the meaning.⁴³

2-2. The view of spontaneous presence

The second view, that of spontaneous presence, is attributed to dGa'-rab rdo-rje. Its comprehension can be summarized in the following words:

³⁹ Note that *bsnyad-pa* is archaic for *bshad-pa*, meaning 'explanation'. See sKyogs-ston rin-chen bkra-shis, *brDa-gsar-rnying-gi rnam-gzhag li-shi'i gur-khang*, Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 2000, p. 44.

⁴⁰ Cf. Lamotte, Etienne, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa)*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1987, ch.3, §22, p. 161, where Vimalakīrti warns that the sun's radiance should not be confused with the glow-worm's light.

⁴¹ C 316.4-317.3: *de la don ma nor ba ni/ sangs rgyas sems can 'khor ba dang mya ngan las 'das pa ril kyang tha snyad kyi bla chags tsam stel ngo bo sna tshogs snang la gnas pa med pa/ rang byung ba'i ye shes kyi spyod yul thams cad ngang nyid kyi ma bsal bral ba la/ byang chub logs shig nas gnyer bar bya ba'i gza' [gza' Baroetto, p. 40 : bza' C 316.6, M 226b.2] ba dang/ don rig pas gsal byar 'dod pa'i gza' ba'ang med pas/ gcig gi rang bzhin la dmigs gtad ga la yod de med do/ 'di ni gza' gtad gsal ba las byung ba ma yin tel ye nyid gza' gtad med de zhes bya ba'i ming tsam du yang bsnyad du med pa la don de nyid kyang bdag yin pas/ ched du gnyer du med del dper na nyi mas srin bu'i 'od mi tshol ba dang 'dra'ol/*

⁴² C 318f.

⁴³ *rMad-du byung-ba*, in NGM, vol.2/kha, pp. 779f: *byang chub 'dod pa de la byang chub med/ /sa dang rnam par [rnam par C 318.6, M 227b.5 : rnam thar NGM] byang chub mchog la ring/ /rgyu [rgyu C 318.6, M 227b.5 : sgyu NGM] 'dra'i chos nyid gang gis shes gyur pa/ /de ni [ni C 318.6, M 227b.5 : nyid NGM] byang chub sems [yin ins. C 318.6, NGM] bdag [nyid ins. C 318.6, NGM] yin par nges/ /byang chub snying por bdag 'jug pas/ /thob pa med cing spangs pa [spangs pa C 319.1, M 227b.6 : spang ba NGM] med/ /sangs rgyas rnam kyi byang chub ni/ /tha snyad yin te don du min/.*

In this regard, the unmistakable meaning refers to the essence, i.e. the nature of the entire objective scope pertaining to Buddhas and sentient beings. Being in all aspects⁴⁴ non-existent from the origin, it is non-existent at the end: as the nature of the great state of the spontaneously present beingness of phenomena, there is awakening without remainder (*lhag-ma med-par sangs-rgyas*).⁴⁵

gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes elaborates by comparing spontaneous presence to a wish-granting gem,⁴⁶ which fulfils all one's needs and wishes, without it being possible to determine whether the appearances that manifest from the gem are localizable inside it, outside it or in between. Likewise, the uninterrupted stream of qualities that manifest as spontaneous presence, here equated with phenomena's beingness since it is present with all phenomena, arises as intrinsic illumination (*rang-srang*).⁴⁷ He specifies that it cannot be temporarily accrued in the manner of an accumulation nor can it be sought for, since it is beyond waning and increasing.⁴⁸

Concerning the fault of incomprehension, the text points out the danger of thinking that spontaneous presence might be achieved through some pleasant means of practice (*nyams-su blangs-pa'i thabs*) – here, we must emphasize, of *any* kind whatsoever, since spontaneous presence cannot be 'practised' precisely because it is spontaneously accomplished – in particular through pith instructions concerning referential fixation (*dmigs-'dzin-gyi man-ngag*): all such means have the fault of being encircled by effort.⁴⁹ In support of this, our author invokes the *Nam-mkha'i rgyal-po*:

The great means is primordially spontaneously accomplished;
Engaging in causes and rectification is not a great means.
If one is not free from engaging with causal means,
What can one do with the great means of non-discursiveness?⁵⁰

Here it may not be without interest to turn briefly to Klong-chen-pa's (1308-1364) discussion of spontaneous presence in the context of the seven

⁴⁴ *Yong-ye* must here be read as an archaic synonym for *rnam-pa kun-tu*. See rNam-rgyal tshering (ed.), *Bod-yig brda-rnying tshig-mdzod*, Beijing: Krung-go'i bod-rig-pa dpe-skrunkhang, 2001, p. 514.

⁴⁵ C 320.1-3: *de la don ma nor ba ni/ sangs rgyas dang/ sems can dang/ de'i spyod yul ril gyi rang bzhin gyi* [gyi M 228b.4 : ni C 320.2] *ngo bo nyid na/ yong ye gdod ma med pa nas tha ma med par lhun gyis grub pa'i chos nyid ngang chen po'i rang bzhin du lhag ma med par sangs rgyas so/*.

⁴⁶ The simile of the wish-granting gem is developed in the *Aṣṭasahasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*; see Conze, Edward (tr.), *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary*, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1994, ch.4, §2, pp. 117f. The illustration of spontaneous presence with the simile of the wish-granting gem is also used by Klong-chen-pa; see Dowman, Keith, *Old Man Basking in the Sun: Longchenpa's Treasury of Natural Perfection*, Kathmandu: Vajra Books, 2006, pp. 145f.

⁴⁷ C 320f.

⁴⁸ C 326.

⁴⁹ C 328.

⁵⁰ Only first two lines are found in the *Nam-mkha'i rgyal-po*, in NGM, vol.1/ka, p. 605.5: *ye nas lhun gyis grub pa'i thabs chen la/ rgyu bcos spyod pa thabs chen ma yin* [spyod pa thabs chen ma yin C 328.4, M 234a.4 : *rtog pas grub pa mi 'gyur* NGM] *te/ rgyu 'chang thabs kyi spyod dang ma bral na/ /mi rtog* [rtog M 234a.5 : rtogs C 328.4] *thabs chen de yis ci zhig bya/*.

affirmations concerning the ground (*gzhi-bdun*) found in his *Tshig-don mdzod* and *Theg-mchog mdzod*.⁵¹ It must be emphasized at the outset that the context is different, since in Klong-chen-pa's case the discussion is based, not as here on texts of the mind section (*sems-sde*), but on the *sGra-thal-'gyur* and the *Klong-drug*, texts of the pith instruction section (*man-ngag-sde*). Furthermore, it can be ruled out that Klong-chen-pa had gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-she's exposition in mind when referring to the view of spontaneous presence, since the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* was probably unknown to him: while it is true that a *bSam-gtan mig-gi sgron-me* is mentioned by Klong-chen-pa among the texts received by his own master, Kumarāja, from sLop-dpon sGom-pa, the text in question is not by gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-she's but by Vimalamitra.⁵²

Of the different theories mentioned by Klong-chen-pa, only that concerning spontaneous presence (the first in Klong-chen-pa's enumeration) is nominally identical to a view discussed by gNubs-chen, so we shall limit our comparison to this theory alone.⁵³ For Klong-chen-pa, the conception of the ground as spontaneous presence (*lhun-grub*) is in danger of reifying the ground's attributes and thereby of closing off and rigidifying what is in fact an open dimensionality. For instance, if cyclic existence and transcendence were both spontaneously present as the ground's attributes, then a path to liberation would be meaningless; cyclic existence, like coal whose blackness cannot be removed no matter how long one cleans it, would be permanent; and the qualities of enlightenment would be innate without needing any further development, leading to fatalism on the spiritual path.⁵⁴

Through this example, we can see that the approaches and concerns of the two authors differ: Klong-chen-pa, for the reasons described above, considers the theory of spontaneous presence as one of several 'flawed' (*skyon-can*) interpretations of the ground,⁵⁵ and hence rejects it, either in favour of alpha-purity (*ka-dag*) in his *Tshig-don mdzod* or of alpha-purity inseparable from spontaneous presence in his *Theg-mchog mdzod*.⁵⁶ Sangs-rgyas ye-she's, for his part, nowhere rejects the view of spontaneous presence

⁵¹ See Klong-chen-pa, *Tshig-don rin-po-che'i mdzod*, in *Klong-chen mdzod-bdun*, vol.ca, Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltzen and Khyentse Labrang, 1983, pp. 157-519, the discussion of the seven theories occurs on pp. 160-170; *Theg-mchog rin-po-che'i mdzod*, in *Klong-chen mdzod-bdun*, vols. ga - nga, Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltzen and Khyentse Labrang, 1983, the discussion occurs in vol.ga, pp. 274-284.

⁵² Arguillère, Stéphane, *Profusion de la Vaste Sphère: Klong-chen rab-'byams (Tibet, 1308-1364): Sa vie, son œuvre, sa doctrine*, Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Oriental Studies, 2007, p. 91, p. 672.

⁵³ These seven theories have received detailed treatment by several Tibetologists: a translation of the relevant sections of chapter 1 of the *Tshig-don mdzod* will be found in Germano, David F., *Poetic Thought, the Intelligent Universe, and the Mystery of Self: The Tantric Synthesis of rDzogs-chen in Fourteenth Century Tibet*, PhD thesis, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1992, pp. 143-154. Cornu, for his part, provides a French translation of this section of the *Theg-mchog mdzod*, in Cornu, Philippe, *La Liberté Naturelle de l'Esprit*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994, pp. 153-161; Achard bases his discussion mainly on the *Theg-mchog mdzod*, providing important extracts in translation, in Achard, 'La base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition rDzogs chen'; Arguillère bases his discussion primarily on the *Tshig-don mdzod* and gives a pertinent philosophical analysis; see Arguillère, *Profusion de la Vaste Sphère*, pp. 344-379.

⁵⁴ Arguillère, *Profusion de la Vaste Sphère*, p. 355f.

⁵⁵ Achard, 'La base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition rDzogs chen', p. 59.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 55f.

as a whole, and he seems unconcerned by the danger of fatalism mentioned by Klong-chen-pa; he is merely wary of a possible misunderstanding of spontaneous presence as implying that it can be 'practised' through various forms of referential imaging (*dmigs-pa*; Skt. *ālambana*). It will be seen that for gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, each of the views he discusses can be correct, as long as it is not conceptualized into a goal that is somehow to be attained, something contrary to the spirit of the Great Completeness.

2-3. *The view of integral being*

The third view to be discussed is attributed to Vairocana and concerns integral being (*bdag-nyid chen-po*; Skt. *mahātman*); as mentioned above in the introduction to this section, a view of integral being is also found in Chapter VI on *Mahāyoga*.⁵⁷ Given the Buddhist context in which this view is professed, some words of caution are necessary at the outset. It is well-known that the Buddha refuted the notion of an eternal self (Skt. *ātman*): in the *Paṭṭhapāda-sutta* (*Dīghanikāya, sutta no. 9*), for example, the ascetics' speculations about an eternal self are likened to the fancies of a man who longs for 'the most beautiful woman in the land', yet has neither met nor seen the lady in question, or to a person setting up a staircase at a crossroads in order to climb to the upper storey of a mansion, yet without knowing the location of the mansion.⁵⁸

Having denied the existence of this eternal self, one of the problems of Buddhist philosophy has been to account for continuity; for example, how can there be wandering in cyclic existence if there is no self who wanders? The answer: just as it is impossible to say whether a flame in a given moment is the same as the flame in a preceding moment, so the incessant continuum of aggregates, etc., is named, metaphorically, a 'being', although there is no substantial self to be found therein; supported by craving, this continuum wanders through cyclic existence.⁵⁹ Likewise, to explain recollection, Vasubandhu writes that a past thought of sight (Skt. *darśanacitta*) can give birth to another thought, the present thought, which is a thought of recollection (Skt. *smaraṇacitta*); moreover, it is specified that a thought must belong to the same conscious continuum, otherwise one person could remember another's thoughts!⁶⁰

This, then, is the orthodox position of Buddhist philosophy. It may therefore come as some surprise to see this view of integral being (Skt. *mahātman*) discussed in a Buddhist treatise on contemplation. Would this be an attempt to surreptitiously reintroduce the idea of an eternal self? Unequivocally, the answer must be in the negative, since here the term 'integral being' is not reified into an eternally enduring entity. Rather, it

⁵⁷ See C 200-204.

⁵⁸ Walshe, Maurice (tr.), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995, p. 166. The same comparison is also found in the *Tevijja-sutta* (*Dīghanikāya, sutta no. 13*), *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵⁹ La Vallée Poussin, Louis de, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, Traduction et Annotations, vol.5, Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1971, ch.9, p. 271.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, vol.5, ch.9, p. 276.

points to the inseparability of emptiness and clarity (*stong-gsal dbyer-med*), which is experienced by the individual as his or her true condition. The fact that it is explicitly described as being both empty and luminous excludes reification into a monolithic self. This becomes clear from gNubs-chen's own exposition, where he writes that all that appears in terms of the phenomena pertaining to 'self' and 'other' is intrinsically clear as the integral identity (*bdag-nyid*) of intrinsic awareness' non-abiding wisdom.⁶¹ The Tibetan language precisely distinguishes between integral being (*bdag-nyid chen-po*) or integral identity (*bdag-nyid*) and the ordinary egocentric 'I' (*nga*) or self (*bdag*), which is an instance of misplaced concreteness.⁶² It is precisely when egocentric apprehension, the mistaken moment-by-moment reification of a self (Skt. *ātman*), falls aside that one can speak of integral being (Skt. *mahātman*), without this notion contradicting more normative Buddhist ideas of selflessness (Skt. *anātman*). The term 'integral being' is used because it conveys that which is most naturally present to oneself once the dualistic dichotomies that fragment one's holistic experience of appearance (*snang-ba*) into self and others have collapsed.⁶³ These words by Guenther are well to the point:

[...] Being-in-itself cannot be known as an object, nor can it be grasped as a subject behind the phenomena. It is its very own and so far as I am concerned it is my very self. It is nothing determinate and hence infinitely open to new possibilities. It cannot be defined or characterized in any way. But it seems (or is felt) to be a vast continuum, out of which all entities are somehow shaped, and which surrounds and pervades the worlds.⁶⁴

If the ground is spoken of in terms of integral being, then, it is in order to emphasize the fact that it is experienced as an immediately present reality. In gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' words, it is so that neophytes might avoid their ill-founded hope that the fruition can come from elsewhere.⁶⁵

The foregoing discussion should make it clear that the tantric and *rDzogs-chen* notion of integral being (Skt. *mahātman*) should not be misconstrued to contradict the orthodox Buddhist insistence on selflessness (Skt. *anātman*), simply because of the use of related words with *different* shades of meaning. As mentioned above, the terminology used is sufficiently precise to ward off misunderstanding, and that is to say nothing of the contextual meaning, which leaves no trace of doubt. Furthermore, it is futile to try to determine whether a given tradition, such as *rDzogs-chen*, is orthodox simply by judging outwardly the occurrence of certain words and phrases. This is not to say that orthodoxy is simply a matter of opinion or of political expediency, as many, who falsely consider esotericism and mysticism to be by nature heterodox, would have these days. Rather, it is necessary to

⁶¹ C 328f.

⁶² Guenther, Herbert V., *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996, p. 201, n.192.

⁶³ Higgins, David, 'Non-mentation Doctrine in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism', in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol.29: 2, 2006, pp. 244-303, esp. p. 279.

⁶⁴ Guenther, Herbert V., *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 117.

⁶⁵ C 329.4-5. See the translation of this passage below.

examine whether a given tradition is *intrinsically* orthodox: whether it can be viewed as an organic development of the wider tradition in which it is embedded; whether its doctrine presents an internal coherence; and whether its soteriological path is capable of embracing the whole of man and hence of producing the flower of holiness.⁶⁶ In the case that concerns us here, it must be borne in mind that the orthodox position of Buddhism is the middle way which avoids the two extremes of eternalism (Skt. *śāśvata-dṛṣṭi*) and nihilism (Skt. *uccheda-dṛṣṭi*): the former refers to the belief in an eternally valid and self-contained self and an omnipotent external God; the latter refers to the utter annihilation of any continuity at death and to the denial of karmic cause and effect. Since integral being is precisely the inseparability of emptiness and clarity, it avoids these two extremes: its empty aspect prevents any reification into an eternal self, whereas its aspect of clarity means that one avoids falling into the trap of nihilism, the belief that there is nothing.

Having given these preliminary words of caution, let us return to gNubschen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' own exposition concerning the right understanding of this view:

[...] All phenomena without exception included in self and other – everything that appears in terms of 'I' and 'mine' – without being transformed or corrupted, are primordially intrinsically clear as the integral identity of intrinsic awareness' non-abiding wisdom; [this is so] even without labelling them with the designation of 'integral being'. They primordially transcend the designations expressed through words and letters. In that case, it may be asked whether it is not unnecessary to label it with words. [It is replied that words are used] in order that neophytes, individuals who believe in the great vehicle, should repel their craving for other paths and their hope in a fruition from somewhere else. Yet in its essence it is inherently without the exaggeration and denigration pertaining to self and other.

Therefore, in the state of integral being one does not pick out phenomena pertaining to others, and these are abolished in one's integral identity. If it be asked why, [we reply with] the *sPyi-bcings*:⁶⁷

I am; others are not. Great self and other are due to spontaneous presence. Since there is oneness in the state of Samantabhadra, there is no other.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ On this notion of intrinsic orthodoxy, see Schuon, Frithjof, *Treasures of Buddhism*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1993, pp. 18f; and Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 79.

⁶⁷ Non-extant source; see Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 24. It evidently does not correspond to the *Rin-po-che'i spyi-bcings-kyi le'u bcu-pa*, in *sKu'i rgyud padma 'khyil-ba*, in NGM, vol.9/ta, pp. 363-367.

⁶⁸ C 328.6-329.6: [...] *bdag dang gzhan gyis bsdus pa'i chos ma lus pa dang/ bdag dang bdag tu snang ba thams cad/ ma bsgyur ma bslad [bslad Baroetto, p. 61 : slad C 329.1, M 234b.2] par ye nas rang rig pa mi gnas pa'i ye shes ky'i bdag nyid du rang gsal ba la bdag nyid chen po zhes bya ba'i tha snyad kyis kyang mi thogs te/ ye [ye M 234b.3 : yi C 329.2] tshig dang yi ges brjod pa'i tha snyad las 'das so/ 'o na tshig tu btags pa'i dgos pa [C 329.3 ins. shad] de rang med dam zhe na/*

gNubs-chen warns against certain individuals still subject to referential imaging who, while accepting that the view of integral being reflects the intent of the Thus-gone One (Skt. *tathāgata*), obstinately hold that for those unable to see absolute meaningfulness effortful exertion could lead them to awakening. He writes that their experience is dismal and compares them to someone owning a renovated castle⁶⁹ who would still put up a tent on a lawn.⁷⁰

2-4. *The view of self-originated wisdom*

According to the fourth view, attributed to the nun Ānandā,⁷¹ one sees all the phenomena included in birth and destruction as being in essence self-originated wisdom, inherently free from causes and conditions. In support of this view, the *Yon-tan bcu* is invoked:

Earth, water, fire and air,
The vessel of the world and its inhabitants –
All is by nature the open dimension of wisdom;
There is no wisdom apart from that.⁷²

This *Yon-tan bcu*, a no longer extant text attributed to dGa'-rab rdo-rje,⁷³ is quoted five times in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* – twice in the context of *Mahāyoga*⁷⁴ and thrice in the chapter on *Atiyoga*.⁷⁵ This makes it clear that at

theg pa chen po la mos pa'i gang zag gsar bu rnam lam gzhan du zhen pa dang/ 'bras bu gzhan du re ba dag bzlog pa'i phyir tel ngo bo la bdag gzhan gyi sgro skur ngang gis med del/ ldes na bdag nyid chen po'i ngang la gzhan pa'i chos ma bkol bar bdag nyid kyi snubs pa'o/ de ci'i phyir zhe na/ spyi bcings las/ bdag ni yod do/ gzhan ni med do/ bdag gzhan chen po lhun gyis grub pas yod do/ kun tu bzhang po'i ngang du gcig pas gzhan med del/ zhes bya ba'i don gyis [...].

⁶⁹ Note my emendation of 'khar-lan to mkhar-lan ('renovated castle').

⁷⁰ The castle stands for primordial awakening, whereas putting up a tent on a lawn represents the useless activity of searching for awakening outside oneself. Cf. C 339.3-5: [...] *dus deng sang gi gang zag dmigs pa can rabs gcig/ thams cad bdag yin na bsgrub ci dgos/ de skad bya ba'i rang bzhin tel/ de bzhin gshegs pa'i dgongs pa'o/ /gang zag gis de mthong du mi rung bas/ bsgrub dgos te rtsol bas 'bad na/ sangs rgya'o zhes rang nyams ngan pas smra ba kha cig mkhar [mkhar em. : 'khar C 339.4, M 241b.2] lan spangs la phub ste tshi chad do/ de ci'i phyir/ sangs rgyas bdag yin pa la/ gzhan nas re ba rnyed pa'i dus med pa'i phyir rol.* Note that my interpretation of this passage differs from Meinert's, in that she takes it to mean that gNubs-chen recommends effort as a last resort for those still subject to referential imaging, thereby ignoring the explanation that follows in the text. Cf. Meinert, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs chen- Lehre*, p. 258.

⁷¹ As well as being Vimalamira's master, she was one of Padmasambhava's teachers. An emanation of the sky-farer (Skt. *ḍākini*) Guhyajñānā, she is said to have transformed Padmasambhava into the syllable HŪM and swallowed him, thereby granting him the four empowerments. See Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, vol.1, p. 469. In the *Bai-ro 'Dra-'bag chen-mo*, she is described as the daughter of a prostitute; her own master is given as Śrīsimha. See g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, p. 61; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, p. 45.

⁷² C 340.6: *sa dang chu dang me dang rlung/ /de bzhin 'jig rten snod bcud [bcud M 242a.6 : bcus C 340.6] kyang/ /kun kyang rang bzhin ye shes dbyings/ /de las ma gtogs [gtogs M 242a.6 : rtogs C 340.6] ye shes med/.*

⁷³ See C 191.

⁷⁴ C 191, 272.

least by the time of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, dGa'-rab rdo-rje's name was already associated with the doctrine of the Great Completeness. Furthermore, as mentioned by Achard, we can deduce from the passages quoted in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* that the *Yon-tan bcu* was a doxography which covered at least the view of *Mahāyoga* to the conduct of *Atiyoga*.⁷⁶

The proper comprehension of this view is explained as being without any objective scope (*spyod-yul*), and hence without discursive grasping towards any view.⁷⁷ Quotations are given to this effect from various texts, including the *Khyung-chen ldings-pa*:

Self-originated wisdom always abides as it is in non-discursiveness;⁷⁸

And the *Nam-mkha'i rgyal-po*:

Without the intellect that is intrinsic to the sense-faculties, it is free from an objective scope.⁷⁹

On the other hand, when one fails to have confidence in this view, one ends up desiring and searching for the clarity of self-originated wisdom. This searching causes one to be embroiled in suffering and is compared to a doctor searching a doctor,⁸⁰ a comparison taken from the *Nam-mkha'-che*:

Because of the confusion of corruption through childishness,⁸¹
One is like a doctor searching for a remedy.⁸²

2-5. *The view without action and searching*

The fifth view is attributed to Buddhagupta; here, one's ordinary experience of the world and its inhabitants is transfigured into that of a seraphic mansion (*gzhal-yas-khang*) filled with Buddhas. It might be asked whether this is not akin to the process of tantric transformation. The answer would have to be negative, in that here there is nothing to transform or to search

⁷⁵ C 340, 341, 453.

⁷⁶ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 32, n.36.

⁷⁷ C 341.

⁷⁸ *Khyung-chen ldings-pa*, in NGT, vol.1/ka, p. 419.5; *Kun-byed rgyal-po*, ch.22, in NGM, vol.1/ka, p. 87.5; *Khyung-chen-gyi rgyud*, in NGM, vol.1/ka, p. 540.1: *rang byung ye shes mi rtog kun tu ji bzhin gnas/*.

⁷⁹ C 341.4: *dbang po rang gi blo med spyod yul bral/*. Cf. *Nam-mkha'i rgyal-po*, in NGM, vol.1/ka, p. 602.2-3, which reads "without the scope of objects and sense-faculties" (*/yul dang dbang po'i spyod yul med pa la/*).

⁸⁰ C 344.

⁸¹ Klong-chen-pa too compares ordinary conditioning to childish games. See Dowman, *Old Man Basking in the Sun*, pp. 77-79.

⁸² *Nam-mkha'-che*, in NGM, vol.3/ga, p. 189.7: *byis pas bsalad pas* [*pas* C 344.4, M 244b.3 : *pa'i* NGM] *'khrul pa'i phyir* [*phyir* NGM : *phyin* C 344.4, M 244b.3]/ */sman nyid sman pa 'tshol* [*tshol* NGM : *tshol* C 344.4, M 244b.3] *ba bzhin/*.

for: “suffering is spontaneously present as great bliss; the obscurations intrinsically blaze forth as wisdom.”⁸³

This view of freedom from action and searching (*bya-btsal dang bral-ba*) presents, as already noted by Karmay,⁸⁴ a certain lexical similarity to *Ch'an*; hence, gNubs-chen is keen to point out the differences between both approaches. The gist of his argument lies in the fact that such freedom from action does not mean that actions are to be rejected – this would again be falling into a one-sided conceptual trap; indeed, *Atiyoga* is beyond both discarding virtues and taking them up, so there is no need to interrupt whatever it is one is doing.⁸⁵ Hence, ‘freedom from action and searching’, far from referring to an artificial form of quietism in which one refrains from action, signifies that the practitioner rests in phenomena’s open dimension (Skt. *dharmadhātu*) beyond the contrived opposition between doing and non-doing.⁸⁶

This becomes especially clear when gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes points out the fault of not comprehending this view: one becomes caught up in effort precisely by pursuing the concept of non-action, all the while speaking the word ‘effortless’.⁸⁷

2-6. The view of great bliss

The next view, that of great bliss, is attributed to Kukurāja⁸⁸ and Śrīsimha. Here, the various phenomena pertaining to suffering, the afflictions as well as their effects, are considered to be primordially non-existent. This is not to postulate an inert nothingness, but rather points to a plenum, referred to as a pure expanse of bliss.⁸⁹ Thus, great bliss does not reside apart from suffering, or behind it, and suffering is not first to be relinquished in order to experience bliss; the non-obstructed plenitude of this expanse of bliss actually pervades each and every experience on a level ‘prior to’ the fragmentation into pain and pleasure. Put differently, great bliss is an individual’s most basic natural state, whereas the fluctuating feelings of pleasure and suffering represent various levels of disturbance of this state.⁹⁰ This inalienable nature of great bliss becomes clear when Sangs-rgyas ye-shes explains that intrinsic awareness is luminously clear as great bliss.⁹¹ In this regard, we must remind ourselves that existence⁹² itself is ‘ec-static’ in the etymological sense of ‘standing bare’ in the open clearing of the ground,

⁸³ C 345.1: *sdug bsnal bde ba chen por lhun gyis* [gyis Baroetto, p. 89 : *gyi* C 345.1, M 245a.1] *grub/sgrib pa ye shes su rang 'bar/*.

⁸⁴ Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 116, p. 120.

⁸⁵ C 351.4: *de ltar shes na ci byas kyang mi 'gog stel/*.

⁸⁶ Cf. C 351f.

⁸⁷ C 352.3-4.

⁸⁸ Note that two Kukurājas are mentioned in the *Bai-ro 'Dra-'bag chen-mo*. See g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, p. 55, pp. 57f; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, p. 41, p. 43.

⁸⁹ C 353.2: *bde ba chen po'i klong dag pa/*.

⁹⁰ Guenther, Herbert V., *The Tantric View of Life*, Berkeley: Shambhala, 1972, p. 41.

⁹¹ C 353.4-5.

⁹² Seen in itself, existence (Skt. *bhāva*) is the fragmentary vision characterized by the dualistic pairs of happiness and pain, etc.

and that “we are, in an ontological sense, centres of visionary ecstasy, and not egological subjects.”⁹³

To comprehend this view means that whatever is ordinarily perceived as being characterized by suffering is instantly seen in a new, ever-fresh light, as pervaded by bliss:

The third order chiliocosm is installed in bliss. Deviations and obscurations are shifted to great bliss.⁹⁴

Indeed, a shift in perception is called for, whereby one’s experience of ordinary temporality (the ‘three times’) is transformed. Such a transfigured experience of temporality means that one “refuses the temptation to totalize and instead embraces the temporal *ekstasis* which spans our past, present, and future. [It is thereby possible to understand and enjoy] the intertwining of potential and retentional experiences, living to the fullest its opening up to the present.”⁹⁵

By failing to comprehend this view, one desires to be free from suffering and seeks bliss as a separate reality; one thereby turns one’s back to one’s integral identity, which in itself is already blissful. gNubs-chen compares such an attitude to someone who, although riding an elephant, does not realize this and seeks it separately.⁹⁶ Here, our author cites the *Khyung-chen ldings-pa*, which says:

Desiring bliss, one turns one’s back thereto;
Where there is already bliss, one searches for bliss with bliss.
Confused about enlightenment, one’s primordial greed casts doubt
on the doctrine:
Such a subject does not see the Buddha.⁹⁷

2-7. The view of non-duality

The seventh view to be discussed concerns non-duality and is attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra, the author of the previously quoted *Sems-bsgom*. As was mentioned above, a view of non-duality is also discussed in Chapter VI on

⁹³ Levin, David Michael, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation*, London: Routledge, 1988, p. 213.

⁹⁴ C 355.3: *stong gsum bde ba la bkod/ /gol sgrib bde chen du skyas btab* [*skyas btab* C 355.3, M 251b.1 : *bskyal btang* Baroetto, p. 107]/.

⁹⁵ Levin, *The Opening of Vision*, p. 458.

⁹⁶ C 356.2-3.

⁹⁷ *Khyung-chen ldings-pa*, in NGT, vol.1/ka, p. 421.6; *Kun-byed rgyal-po*, ch.22, in NGM, vol.1/ka, pp. 89f: *bde ba 'dod pa* [*pa* C 356.3, M 252a.3 : *pas* NGT, NGM] *bde bar* [*bde bar* C 356.3, M 252a.3 : *bde la* NGT, NGM] *rgyab kyis phyogs/ /bde ba* [*bde ba* C 356.4, M 252a.4 : *bde des* NGT : *bde bas* NGM] *zin te bde bas bde ba 'tshol* [*'tshol* C 356.4, NGT : *tshol* M 252a.4, NGM] /*byang chub 'khrul pa* [*'khrul pa* C 356.4, M 252a.4, NGM : *'khrul bas* NGM] *ye rngam chos la za/ /de lta* [*de lta* C 356.4, M 252a.4 : *de lta'i* NGT : *'di lta'i* NGM] *yul can sangs rgyas mthong ba med/*.

Mahāyoga.⁹⁸ To illustrate what non-duality means in the context of the Great Completeness, gNubs-chen explains that by examining the enlightened mind as to its essence, it is non-existent; yet at the same time, it can appear as anything. The manner it appears depends to a great extent on the way one thinks about it, yet it cannot be limited to any of its guises: hence, existence and non-existence are non-dual. Similarly, its nature is completely indefinite, yet it rests with all phenomena, which are its qualities, so that eternalism and nihilism are non-dual.⁹⁹

In this context, incomprehension refers to mouthing the view of non-duality when in fact one is merely focusing on a limitation. The fact that the limitation happens to be unchanging changes nothing to the matter – indeed, this rather indicates a form of spiritual sclerosis, whereby one becomes caught up in referential imaging. Unable to find absolute meaningfulness, one deviates towards limiting positions.¹⁰⁰

2-8. *The view of the great seminal nucleus*

The penultimate view, attributed to Rājahastin,¹⁰¹ concerns the great seminal nucleus (*thig-le chen-po*). In the teachings of the Great Completeness, the abiding mode (*gnas-lugs*) of intrinsic awareness is often described as the unique seminal nucleus (*thig-le nyag-gcig*) to indicate its unitary and non-fragmentary character. This might remind us of the mystery of the supreme point mentioned in Jewish esotericism, which is comprehended in the inner palace of the heart.¹⁰² This supreme point manifests as a multitude of central points, each one being surrounded by an expansion that simultaneously veils and reflects its cause; each point of this expanding configuration is dependent on a point hierarchically above it, yet at once virtually contains the centre of all centres.¹⁰³ From the perspective of sacred geometry, the point cannot be said to pertain to space, representing as it does the principle of space, a principle which it manifests by situating itself in the spatial dimension.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, in the case which concerns us here, this unitary nature of the seminal nucleus remains ever-present, so that the atemporal process of the manifestation of the awakened bodies and wisdoms (*sku dang ye-shes*), known in the pith instruction section (*man-ngag-sde*) as the ground's illumination (*gzhi-s nang*), is in no wise separate from the ground itself. What is more, in the visions of crossover (*thod-rgal*) of the pith instruction section, the ground's self-illumination (*rang-s nang*) appears as chains of seminal nuclei; in spatial terms, every point of space becomes the centre from which a kaleidoscopic display of light manifests.¹⁰⁵ The contemplation of these

⁹⁸ C 204-210.

⁹⁹ C 357.1-2.

¹⁰⁰ C 368.3-4: *des na nam yang don mi rnyed de phyogs las gol lo/*.

¹⁰¹ In the *Bai-ro 'Dra-'bag chen-mo*, Rājahastin is said to be the son of Dhahenatalo; he received direct teachings from dGa'-rab rdo-rje and deepened his understanding through his father's instructions. See g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, pp. 49f; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, p. 36.

¹⁰² Guénon, René, *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, Paris: Editions Vega, 2007, p. 45.

¹⁰³ Schaya, Léo, *L'Homme et l'Absolu selon la Kabbale*, Paris: Editions Dervy, 2009, pp. 73f.

¹⁰⁴ Guénon, René, *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, p. 134.

¹⁰⁵ Achard, 'La base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition rDzogs chen', pp. 48f.

visions reveals to the *yogin* the unique seminal nucleus which is none other than his ever-present abiding mode.¹⁰⁶

gNubs-chen's description of this view, despite perhaps his more sober style typical of the mind section (*sems-sde*), confirms the above allusions to the seminal nucleus' non-fragmentary reality. He writes that phenomena merely appear to be different for those with misconceptions and those still on the path. However, when awakening to the great seminal nucleus, the enlightened mind no longer referentially images such dualistically elaborated phenomena, yet needs not reject them.¹⁰⁷ This non-referential wisdom which knows non-discursively is, in a quote from the *rMad-du byung-ba*, paradoxically spoken of as 'stupidity' (*gti-mug*; Skt. *moha*):

Stupidity inseparably assimilates the individual views regarding all the phenomena that originate from integral identity. Since it does not possess the intent that analyses them individually, it is stupidity. [...] ¹⁰⁸ Since all phenomena become the awakened mind of the Bliss-gone One (Skt. *sugata*), in this gladness of the supreme secret, everything dwells in the single identity. Since it does not possess [the intent that] analyses the stages and their phases, it is stupidity. [...] ¹⁰⁹

Here the affliction of stupidity (*gti-mug*; Skt. *moha*) takes on a spiritually 'positive' sense in that it is principally identified with the wisdom of phenomena's open dimension (Skt. *dharmadhātu-jñāna*), which is beyond all discursiveness and conceptualization. This is clearly reminiscent of the 'wise ignorance' (Lat. *docta ignorantia*) spoken of by Dyonisius the Areopagite (ca. 5th-6th centuries) and his spiritual heir Scotus Erigena (ca. 815- ca. 877). In this current of mystical theology, man's apotheosis is inseparable from his progression in divine knowledge: the highest form of wisdom is that where conceptual thought falls away completely, laying bare the ultimate reality in the dark light of unknowing. From the limited perspective of discursive rationality, the divine self-disclosure must always appear as an abysmal darkness, which is why the knowledge of this transcendent reality is termed 'unknowing'.¹¹⁰ In this same line of understanding, the *Cloud of Unknowing*, a medieval English mystical work, states:

Be blind for the time being, and cut away desire for knowledge, for it will hinder you more than help you.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, pp. 111f.

¹⁰⁷ C 369.4-6.

¹⁰⁸ Several additional lines in NGM.

¹⁰⁹ *rMad-du byung-ba*, in NGM, vol.2/kha, pp. 788.4-789.1: *gti mug ni bdag nyid las byung ba'i chos thams cad la/ [shad om. NGM] lta ba so sor [so sor C 372.5, M 262b.1 : so so NGM] dbyer med par thugs su chud de/ so sor [so sor C 372.6, M 262b.1 : so so NGM] dbye ba'i dgongs pa mi mnga' bas gti mug pa dang/ [...] chos thams cad bde bar gshegs pa'i thugs nyid du gyur pas/ gsang ba mchog gi dgyes pa na thams cad bdag nyid gcig pur [gcig pur C 373.1, M 262b.3 : gcig pu NGM] bzhuvs te/ sa dang sa'i rim par dbye ba'i dgongs [dbye ba'i dgongs NGM : dbye ba'i C 373.2, M 262b.3] pa mi mnga' bas gti mug pa dang/ [...].*

¹¹⁰ Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, pp. 19f, p. 25.

¹¹¹ Spearing, A.C. (tr.), *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, London: Penguin Books, 2001, p. 57.

The reason is that:

By grace it is possible to have full knowledge of all other created things and their works, and indeed of the works of God himself, and to think clearly about them, but of God himself no one can think. And so I wish to give up everything that I can think, and choose as my love the one thing that I cannot think.¹¹²

Importantly, the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* reminds us that the seminal nucleus even defies the description of being 'one'. This is crucial since the incomprehension of this view implies an artificial search for 'oneness' aside from duality; Sangs-rgyas ye-shes describes those subject to this misunderstanding as seeking to assemble disparate phenomena as one and compares this to pouring something into a reduced and tattered sack¹¹³ – the metaphor is telling in that it conveys the fundamental inadequacy of conceptual thought (it is both too narrow and too weak) in grasping non-referential reality.

2-9. *The view concerning the ground of all phenomena as it is*

The final view is espoused by our author himself and is also shared, according to the gloss, by dGa'-rab rdo-rje¹¹⁴ and King Dhahenatalo.¹¹⁵ Sangs-rgyas ye-shes writes:

As for the view concerning the ground of all phenomena as it is,¹¹⁶ it is especially unmistaken. If it be asked why this is the case, [it is replied that,] since the very suchness of reified entities is uncontrived and uncontaminated, it is the Great Completeness of *Atiyoga*. Concerning the enumeration of its names, the parts of its qualities as they appear transcend numbering. Since suchness is without referential grasping, it is renowned as 'free from thematic foci'. Since everything is complete in the fruition, it is also renowned as 'spontaneous presence'. Since as such there is not even the name of suffering, it is also renowned as 'great bliss'. Since it is without extrinsic phenomena, it is also renowned as 'integral being'. Since it is without peer or elaboration, it is renowned as 'the great seminal nucleus'. Since it is without limiting phenomena, it is also renowned

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹¹³ C 374.3-4.

¹¹⁴ Note that dGa'-rab rdo-rje is also associated with the second view described above, that of spontaneous presence (C 315.6, 320.2).

¹¹⁵ According to Lopon P. Ogyan Tanzin (personal communication), Dhahenatalo is probably an *Apabhramśa* name. In the *Bai-ro 'Dra-'bag chen-mo*, Dhahenatalo is said to have been a direct disciple of dGa'-rab rdo-rje, from whom he received the essence of the *rDzogs-chen* teachings. He then went on to study more detailed instructions under Mañjuśrīmitra's guidance. See g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, pp. 48f; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, p. 35.

¹¹⁶ Note that an alternative name of this view is given earlier in the chapter (C 316.2-3): 'the great intrinsic mode which, without relinquishing them, is free from all limitations'.

as ‘non-duality’. Since as such everything is luminously clear, it is also renowned as ‘self-originated wisdom’. Because there is no hope for a fruition and it is non-effort, it is also renowned as ‘free from effortful action’.¹¹⁷ Since the indications may be different while the essence is non-different, and since though it is one it is everything, and though it is everything it is one, these are the enumerated names of the ground as it is.¹¹⁸

This passage should make it clear that for gNubs-chen this ninth view, concerning the ground of all phenomena just as it is, virtually includes the eight previous views. Hence, the different views are not contradictory, but rather represent varying angles from which to view the ground. In our author’s perspective, it is the ninth view which enables the *yogin* to gain a truly complete and holistic understanding of the ground, just as it is. This echoes a similar statement made in the context of the six views of *Mahāyoga* (Chapter VI, §1.7), where gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes explains that the different teachings concern the faculties of individuals, but that all of them appear from the essence of thusness according to the particular qualities required under the circumstances.¹¹⁹

Compared to Klong-chen-pa’s exposition of the seven theories concerning the ground alluded to above, gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes seems less severe towards the alternative views. In his *Tshig-don-mdzod*, Klong-chen-pa affirms the superiority of the theory of the ground as alpha-purity (the seventh view in his classification). On the other hand, in his *Theg-mchog mdzod*, he also rejects this view, since, if the ground were merely alpha-pure, it would be devoid of self-originated wisdom itself, being merely empty. Hence, in the *Theg-mchog mdzod* he accepts the view that the ground is both alpha-pure in terms of its essence (*ngo-bo*) and spontaneously present in

¹¹⁷ Here the text reads *bya-rtsol bral-ba* (‘freedom from effortful action’), whereas previously the expression *bya-btsal dang-bral-ba* (‘freedom from action and searching’) was given; cf. C 316.1, C 344.4 and M 249a.1 (correcting C 351.1 *brtsal* to *btsal*). I have resisted the temptation of standardizing the expression, as the meaning is, in any case, quite similar. There is indeed a close connection in *rDzogs-chen* between the notions of non-searching (*ma-btsal*) and non-effort (*mi-rtsol*) or effortlessness (*rtsol-med*). See Achard, *L’Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 63, n.6.

¹¹⁸ C 375.5-377.1: *de la chos thams cad gzhi ji bzhin par lta ba ni/ khyad par du’ang ma nor ba ste/ de ci’i phyir zhe na/ dngos po rnam kyid de kho na nyid kho [kho M 264a.6 : kha C 375.6] na ma bcos ma bslad pa nyid pas a ti yo ga rdzogs pa chen po’o/ de’i mtshan gyi rnam [rnam M 264a.6 : rnam C 376.1] grangs ni yon tan gyi cha las snang ba grangs las ‘das so/ /de kho na nyid la dmigs ‘dzin med pas/ gza’ gtaḍ bral zhes bya ba yang grags/ de la ‘bras bu ril rdzogs pas lhun gyis [gyis Baroetto, p. 139 : gyi C 376.2, M 264b.2] grub pa zhes bya bar yang grags/ de kho na sduḡ bsgal ming med pas bde ba chen po zhes bya bar yang grags/ gzhan pa’i chos med pas bdag nyid chen por yang grags/ zla dang spros pa med pas thig le chen por grags/ mtha’i chos med pas gnyis su med par yang grags/ de nyid du thams cad du gsal bas rang [C 376.5 ins. rang (ditto)] byung [byung M 264b.4 : ‘byung C 376.6] ye shes su yang grags/ ‘bras bu la re ba med pas mi rtsol ba’i phyir/ bya rtsol bral ba zhes bya bar yang grags tel/ de dag rtags tha dad kyang ngo bo la tha dad med pas/ gcig kyang thams cad yin la/ thams cad gcig pas/ gzhi ji bzhin pa’i mtshan gyi rnam [rnam Baroetto, p. 139 : rnam C 376.6, M 264b.6] grangs so/.*

¹¹⁹ C 215.6.

terms of its nature (*rang-bzhin*).¹²⁰ In this optic, he qualifies the lower views as 'flawed' (*skyon-can*).¹²¹ One could also say that each of the six erroneous formulations concerning the ground is right to the extent that it picks out an aspect of the ground, but wrong in the sense that it absolutizes this aspect.¹²²

While it is true that gNubs-chen considers the ninth view to be "especially unmistaken,"¹²³ he does not reject the eight other views. In each case, it is merely a particular form of incomprehension that he rejects; typically, this incomprehension entails reifying the view under question into an abstract conceptualized goal, something that is to be attained – such reification, as we have seen, implies being caught up in referential imaging (*dmigs-pa*; Skt. *ālambana*). For example, the view of freedom from action and searching, if misinterpreted, becomes the deliberate rejection of action.¹²⁴ Likewise, the individual who misunderstands self-originated wisdom becomes caught up in a futile search for that which has never left him.¹²⁵

Returning to the ninth view under discussion, Sangs-rgyas ye-shes explains that the manner of properly comprehending the suchness (*de-khona-nyid*) of reified entities is such that each of the preceding views is realized in its primordially, so that the concept of that view disappears; hence, he writes that "primordial freedom from thematic foci is without freedom from thematic foci" or that "the primordial view of the great seminal nucleus is without viewing the great seminal nucleus." Moreover, suchness itself is not viewed, since there is neither viewer nor object to view.¹²⁶ gNubs-chen goes on to point out that to follow after anything is a mistake and prevents one from realizing the ground.¹²⁷ After giving a lengthy enumeration of various characteristics of suchness, our author concludes:

In any case, suchness as it is, the luminous nature of mind, is non-obstructed by any such characteristics, since it is not maintained to be graspable in terms of being this or that. Abiding in the great Eminent *Yoga*, since one is dissociated from all thoughts without inhibiting them, appearances are not discursively examined. Why is this so? Everything is the self and the self appears as everything. Therefore, the meaning of not imaging appearances is that, at one time, there is clarity without referential focus.¹²⁸

¹²⁰ Achard, 'La base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition rDzogs chen', pp. 55f, quoting Klong-chen-pa, *Tshig-don rin-po-che'i mdzod*, pp. 167f and *Theg-mchog rin-po-che'i mdzod*, pp. 282-284.

¹²¹ Achard, 'La base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition rDzogs chen', p. 59.

¹²² Arguillère, *Profusion de la Vaste Sphère*, p. 346.

¹²³ C 375.6.

¹²⁴ C 351f.

¹²⁵ C 344.

¹²⁶ C 377.

¹²⁷ C 378f.

¹²⁸ C 401.5-402.1: 'on tang na ji bzhin pa de kho na nyid sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba de'i mtshan nyid cir yang ma 'gags pa/ yin yin du bzung [bzung C 401.5; M 283b.3 : gzung Baroetto, p. 187] du mi 'dod pa'i phyir/ lhag pa'i rnal 'byor chen po che [che M 283b.3 : chen C 401.6] la gnas pa yang bsam pa thams cad ma ba kag bral bas snang zhing mi rtog go/ de ci'i phyir thams cad kyang bdag yin la/ bdag thams cad du snang bas/ snang ba dang mi dmigs pa'i don dus gcig tu dmigs gtad [gtad M 283b.5 : gtang C 402.1] med par gsal lol.

In this context, incomprehension refers to taking the ordinary reified entities of one's concretistic conceptual grasping to be suchness. This, it is warned, is again referential grasping (*dmigs-'dzin*) and pertains to the stage of an ordinary person.¹²⁹

II. Meditation

In the second section of the chapter, which is devoted to meditation, gNubs-chen describes two methods, which focus on the body and mind respectively: the means of resting the body and those of the mind's approaching [suchness].

1. *The means of resting the body*

Regarding the first, quoting the *Man-ngag rgum-chung* of gNyan dpal-dbyangs,¹³⁰ our author points out that any emphasis on a physical posture reflects grasping towards the body, which prevents one from seeing absolute meaningfulness.¹³¹ This does not mean, however, that he is in favour of rejecting such physical posture in meditation; the point is not to engage in any deliberate action (*ched-du bya-ba*) – as such, this does not contradict taking up a physical posture.¹³² (Here, we are reminded of what was said above in the context of the view 'without action and searching'.) In support of this, he quotes the *rNal-'byor grub-pa'i lung*:

Neither contemplation nor the body nor solitude should be
contrived;
In this regard, uncontrived solitude
Is the abode of primordial solitude,
The domain of the supreme *yogin*.¹³³

Here, one might recall gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' statement in Chapter I that true solitude is not to be found outside, and that those who are attached to outward solitude will not see the great meaning.¹³⁴ An interesting parallel might be drawn with the solitude (Germ.

¹²⁹ C 403.

¹³⁰ gNyan dpal-dbyangs, *Man-ngag rgum-chung*, in TD, vol.211/no, p. 770; Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, pp. 84f; cf. Norbu, Namkhai, *sBas-pa'i rgum-chung: The Small Collection of Hidden Precepts: A Study of an Ancient Manuscript of Dzogchen from Tun-huang*, Arcidosso: Shang-Shung Edizioni, 1984, pp. 100f (the latter corresponds in part only).

¹³¹ C 404.6.

¹³² C 403.6.

¹³³ *rNal-'byor grub-pa'i lung*, in NGM, vol.16/ma, p. 452.4: *bsam gtan lus dben bcos mi bya/ /de la de dben ma bcos pa/ /de nyid ye nas* [nas NGM : shes C 404.3, M 285b.3] *dben pa'i guas/ /'di ni rnal 'byor mchog gi yul/*.

¹³⁴ C 8f.

Abgeschiedenheit) or detachment emphasized in the thought of the German mystic Meister Eckhart (ca. 1260- ca. 1327), where it is considered as the highest virtue;¹³⁵ Eckhart writes that in its inward sense, solitude refers not so much to outer isolation, but rather to an attitude of complete unwavering towards any experience, whether pleasant or painful.¹³⁶

2. *The means of the mind's approaching [suchness]*

Regarding the second means, gNubs-chen observes that the mind enters suchness without entering anything. He goes on to explain this as a non-referential state where "no scrutinizing thoughts are produced in the intellect."¹³⁷

Next, three possible defects of concentration are listed: the concentration of apprehension, that of thorough searching and the hybrid concentration.

1. As it is, absolute meaningfulness is without any thoughts whatsoever; to be convinced: "This is it!" is to apprehend it. The genuine absolute cannot be seen thereby. One can trust that this is said to be a defect of grasping.¹³⁸

2. Concerning thorough searching, the vast expanse of phenomena's beingness is inherently free from scrutinizing thoughts; resting in equipoise therein, one searches for the mind's locus of resting. For example, notions are like a fly searching for a hollow; discursive thoughts that ponder: "Is it comfortable to meditate like that?" or "Is it suitable to rest like that?", are a defect that creates thoughts.¹³⁹

3. As for the hybrid concentration, in the expanse of equality, concepts are alpha-pure; phenomena's beingness is without action or searching. Because one's intellect does not assimilate the crucial point of non-duality, at times the meaning of signlessness is clear, whereas at others the conceptions of signs fluctuate. When such a medley occurs, there is hybrid [concentration]; one thereby does not realize meditation without thematic foci.¹⁴⁰

There then follows a long passage where our author explains that, if meditating correctly, all the previously listed nine views concerning the

¹³⁵ Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 13.

¹³⁶ Eckehart, Meister, *Schriften und Predigten*, Aus dem Mittelhochdeutschen übersetzt und herausgegeben von Hermann Büttner, vol.1, Jena: Eugen Dietrichs, 1923, p. 60.

¹³⁷ C 406.5-6.

¹³⁸ C 407.2-3: /don ji bzhin pa cir yang bsam du med pa la/ 'di kho na la'o zhes nges par bzung nas yid la byed pa ste/ des yang dag pa'i don mi mthong ngo/ /de yang 'dzin pa'i skyon yin te/ /zhes pas yid ches so/.

¹³⁹ C 407.3-5: /yongs su tshol ba ni/ chos nyid yangs pa'i klong [klong Baroetto, p. 196 : klongs C 407.4, M 288a.2] bsam dpyod ngang gis bral ba la mnyam par 'jog cing sems kyi gzhas [gzhas C 407.4 : bzhas M 288a.3] sa tshol te/ dper na bung ba khung tshol ba lta bur 'du shes te/ 'di ltar bsgoms na bde'am/ de ltar bzhas na rung ngam snyam pa'i bsam pa tshor rtog can/ de yang bsam pa byed pa'i skyon yin no/.

¹⁴⁰ C 408.1-3: /'phra men gyi ting nge 'dzin ni/ mnyam pa'i klong la rnam rtog ka nas dag pa/ chos nyid bya ba tsam du yang btsal du med pa la blo gnyis med kyi gnad ma chud pas/ res mtshan ma med pa'i don gsal/ res mtshan ma'i rtog pa rgyu stel 'dren mar byung na 'phra men te/ des gza' gtad med pa'i bsgom [bsgom M 288b.4 : bsgoms C 408.3] pa mi rtogs so/.

ground will be included in the *yogin's* realization. Sangs-rgyas ye-shes writes:

Because absolute meaningfulness and the meditator are not delimited and are one, phenomena's beingness is the essence of being as it is. Hence, one rests without deliberately resting the intellect. Likewise, since phenomena's beingness is spontaneously accomplished, intrinsic awareness too rests in spontaneous presence. Since phenomena's beingness is luminously clear as the essence of the great seminal nucleus, intrinsic awareness too rests as the great seminal nucleus. Because absolute meaningfulness is free from effortful action, intrinsic awareness is free from effortful action. Since phenomena's beingness is non-dual, awareness is non-dual. Since phenomena's beingness is free from thematic focus, awareness is free from thematic focus.¹⁴¹

He continues in the same vein, in effect covering each of the nine views, though not necessarily in the same order as listed in the previous section. What we can see from this citation is that gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes juxtaposes phenomena's beingness (*chos-nyid*; Skt. *dharmatā*) on the one hand with intrinsic awareness (*rang-rig*) on the other: these two aspects correspond to what might be called the ontological and sapiential dimensions of the realization of the Great Completeness; one could also say, to the 'objective' and 'subjective/cognitive' poles of this realization, if these terms were not overburdened with precisely the kind of subject-object dichotomy that the doctrine presented here intends to overcome. The indivisibility of these two aspects is indicated by the inseparable union of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, symbolizing intrinsic awareness, with his consort Samantabhadrī, symbolizing phenomena's beingness, which is then evoked as phenomena's open dimension (*chos-kyi dbyings*; Skt. *dharmadhātu*).¹⁴²

Phenomena need not have the solidified concreteness that we habitually attribute to them – such concreteness is, in fact, merely the result of inveterate reification, technically termed the all-imputing ignorance (*kun-tu btags-pa'i ma-rig-pa*).¹⁴³ It may not be without interest to recall that the

¹⁴¹ C 409.1-4: *don dang bsgom pa por rgya ma chad de* [C 409.1 ins. *shad*] *gcig pa'i phyir chos nyid ji bzhin pa'i ngo bo yin pas/ bla ji bzhin par ched du ma bzhig par bzhag gol /de bzhin du chos nyid lhun gyis grub pas rang rig pa'ang lhun gyis* [gyis M 289b.1 : gyi C 409.2] *grub bar bzhag gol/ chos nyid thig le chen po'i ngo bor gsal bas/ rang rig pa'ang thig* [thig M 289b.2 : theg C 409.3] *le chen por bzhag gol /don bya ba rtsol ba dang bral ba'i phyir/ rang rig pa bya ba rtsol ba dang bral ba'o/ chos nyid gnyis su med pas/ rig pa gnyis su med pa'o/ chos nyid gza' gta'd dang bral bas/ rig pa gza' gta'd dang bral ba'o/*

¹⁴² Cf. Guenther, Herbert V., *From Reductionism to Creativity: rDzogs chen and the New Sciences of Mind*, Boston: Shambhala, 1989, pp. 197f.

¹⁴³ This all-imputing ignorance is itself the final phase in a triune dynamic of nescience, which the *rDzogs-chen* texts of the pith instruction section describe as the ignorance of one's single identity (*bdag-nyid gcig-pu'i ma-rig-pa*: the most basic non-recognition of one's true nature), the co-emergent ignorance (*lhan-cig skyes-pa'i ma-rig-pa*: it manifests as a misapprehension of one's basic wisdom – hence co-emergent with it – and the subtle conceptualization that accompanies it), and the all-imputing ignorance (*kun-tu btags-pa'i*

etymological sense of 'phenomenon', which many translators use to render one of the meanings of *dharma*,¹⁴⁴ is precisely that which appears, which shows itself, presences itself, or lights up.¹⁴⁵ In this sense, phenomena (*chos*; Skt. *dharma*) are appearances (*snang-ba*). Whereas the Tibetan word *snang-ba* first means 'appearance' in the sense of phenomenon, we also witness a move whereby this term comes to mean illumination, hence being closely associated with the clarity (*gsal-ba*) aspect of the ground's nature (*rang-bzhin*). This is how the same word comes to refer to vision in the wider sense, as that which lights up to and as one's perception.¹⁴⁶

In their lighting-up, phenomena manifest within an open dimensionality which is their very nature. This open dimension suffuses and nurtures phenomena in their lighting-up, though we habitually become forgetful of this fact. The beingness of phenomena is therefore not some mysterious force animating phenomena, nor is it a cause: *dharmatā* refers simply to the way things are, hence to their beingness; it does not even begin to answer the question of why they are or happen a certain way.¹⁴⁷ That is why phenomena's beingness (Skt. *dharmatā*) or open dimension (Skt. *dharmadhātu*) cannot be sought separately from phenomena. Furthermore, that is why, once awareness is attuned to this open dimension, it consists "in a 'state' of continual presence, or continual openness: a lively, vigorous attentiveness which serenely rests in, or stays at, the primordial ground of awareness, while at the very same time it moves in a shifting succession of focusings from one being to the next. Thus, we may say that, regardless of 'content', regardless of the *beings* with which we are concerned, [...] we stay with, or dwell in, a ground of awareness – a ground which always opens limitlessly before, and around, any particular content, any particular being."¹⁴⁸

In *rDzogs-chen*, awareness, itself inseparable from the ground, is the act of 'awaring' whereby the ground comes to be aware of, to know, itself.¹⁴⁹ Hence, it refers to the direct, non-discursive and immediate cognition of phenomena's beingness, which is none other than the ground.¹⁵⁰ Since this unmediated act of cognition is, in effect, *already* potentially present as the ground's innate intelligence, it is *always* possible as an *ever-fresh* re-cognition (*ngo-shes*) of one's own true face – in fact, the practice of contemplation as described in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* is precisely what permits one to re-

ma-rig-pa: it refers to the ordinary mind's inveterate tendency to impute a reality to the sense-objects). See Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 107f.

¹⁴⁴ Traditionally, ten meanings of the word *dharma* are listed; see Dorje, Gyurme, and Kapstein, Matthew, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, vol.2: Reference Materials, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991, p. 166. See also the elucidation of the term *dharma* in Conze, Edward, *Buddhist Thought in India: Three Phases of Buddhist Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962, pp. 92-106.

¹⁴⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p. 51. See also Partridge, Eric, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982, p. 199.

¹⁴⁶ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, pp. 120f.

¹⁴⁷ Rahula, Walpola, 'Wrong Notions of *Dhammatā* (*Dharmatā*)', in Cousins, Lance, et al. (eds.), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I.B. Horner*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1974, pp. 181-191, esp. p. 182, p. 184, p. 188.

¹⁴⁸ Levin, David Michael, *The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism*, London: Routledge, 1985, p. 11.

¹⁴⁹ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 125.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

attune to this most primordial way of being and knowing, a state of open-dimensional presence suffused with innate wakefulness.

Eight systems of meditation

For this purpose, gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes presents eight different methods of meditation according to different instructors, the names of which are given in the glosses. Each of the approaches is introduced with the words “According to one perspective...” (*rnam-pa gcig-tu*; Skt. *atha vā*).

1. The first method, associated with Ācārya gSal-ba rgyal,¹⁵¹ elucidates meditation as being the realization¹⁵² of the expanse (*klong*):

In awareness one neither deliberately gives in to the mind, nor does one lapse therein. If one intrinsically rests with recollection where there is nothing to recollect, one’s meditation is unmistakable. Furthermore, if one prolongs [one’s meditation] with the diligence of non-action, the root, phenomena’s beingness, becomes actual.¹⁵³

2. The second system is attributed to the nun Ānandā (whom we have already come across above in the context of the fourth view, that of self-originated wisdom) and teaches that meditation on the view of *Atiyoga* is settling in quietude (*mnal-du phebs-pa*).¹⁵⁴ It is further explained that self-originated wisdom is without any objective scope (*spyod-yul*; Skt. *gocara*), so that awareness is beyond all scrutinizing thoughts.

3. The third system is again attributed to gSal-ba rgyal.¹⁵⁵ Here it is mentioned that meditation allows one to rest the intellect. Awareness is compared to an ocean, wherein are reflected the planets and stars – whatever reflections arise in the ocean of awareness are neither inhibited nor grasped at.¹⁵⁶

4. The fourth approach is attributed to Buddhagupta; it will be recalled that this master was associated with the fifth view of freedom from action and

¹⁵¹ This personage is an Indian master also known as bDe-ba gsal-mdzad; he is said to have written a number of short texts on evocations and empowerments based on the *dGongs-pa 'dus-pa'i mdo*; these were collected, edited and translated by gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes. See Dalton, *The Uses of the dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*, pp. 145f, n.20.

¹⁵² Note that *phol-ba* is archaic for *rtogs-pa*. See sKyogs-ston rin-chen bkra-shis, *Li-shi'i gur-khang*, p. 58.

¹⁵³ C 412.4-5: [...] *rig pa la sems ched du ma btang ma shor tsam du dran pas dran rgyu med pa rang bzhag nal de bsgom pa ma nor ba ste/ de yang bya ba med pa'i brtson 'grus kyis yun bsrings nal phyi mo chos nyid rang mngon du gyur rol*.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Chos-kyi grags-pa, dGe-bshes (attributed to), *brDa-dag ming-tshig gsal-ba*, Beijing: Mirigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1995, p. 477, where the etymologically related expression *mnal-du 'bebs-pa* is found under the perfective form *mnal-du phab-pa* and is defined as *bsam-pa skyid-po* ('happy').

¹⁵⁵ Cf. the first system mentioned above; note that the epithet Ācārya ('instructor') is not given here.

¹⁵⁶ The simile of the reflections appearing in water is also used by Klong-chen-pa; see Dowman, *Old Man Basking in the Sun*, p. 106.

searching. This meditative approach is introduced with a citation from the *Nam-mkha'-che*:

Phenomena's beingness is without appearance;
Resting therein without searching is meditation.¹⁵⁷

gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes writes that quintessential enlightenment is beyond limitations and that the appearances that are experienced as objects are essenceless in absolute meaningfulness. Hence, one should desist from making anything into a referential focus (*dmigs-gtad*).

5. The fifth system, attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra, teaches that spontaneously complete wisdom is untouched by limitations and is without concept-endowed loci (*rnam-rtog ldan-pa'i sa*). Its clarity is compared to that of the sun, since it is clear without any deliberate effort.

6. The sixth method is associated with Vimalamitra. Quoting the *Nam-mkha'i rgyal-po*,¹⁵⁸ Sangs-rgyas ye-shes compares the beingness of phenomena (Skt. *dharmatā*) to space (*nam-mkha'*; Skt. *ākāśa*), which is without thought; neither discursively examining nor imaging anything, the intellect (*blo*) does not waver from phenomena's beingness, and the *yogin* thereby rests in meditative equipoise.

7. The seventh system is said to be maintained by Vairocana and concerns freedom from action; having resolved to be free from an object of meditation, one's meditation is uninhibited. Mention is made of the diligence of non-action (*bya-ba med-pa'i brtson-'grus*), whereby "one is without grasping towards the conception of meditating, and without the conception of imaging or non-imaging."¹⁵⁹

8. The eighth approach is said to have been held by dGa'-rab rdo-rje: here, the principle is meditation in the expanse of self-originated wisdom without extremes (*rang-byung ye-shes mu-mtha' med-pa'i klong*), in which the poles of awareness as subject and appearances as object are non-existent, everything being suffused¹⁶⁰ in one's integral identity (which, as mentioned above, is of course beyond the subject-object dichotomy).¹⁶¹

It will have been noticed that several of the teachers mentioned in the glosses are identical to those associated with the nine views concerning the ground. The relationship will be made explicit in the following table, which also includes references to the *'Dra-'bag chen-mo*:

¹⁵⁷ *Nam-mkha'-che*, in NGM, vol.3/ga, p. 175.5: *snang ba med pa'i chos nyid ni [ni C 414.1, M 293a.5 : la NGM] / ma btsal bzhags pas [pas C 414.1, M 293a.5 : na NGM] bsgom pa yin/.*

¹⁵⁸ Cf. *Nam-mkha'i rgyal-po*, in NGM, vol.1/ka, p. 601.5-7.

¹⁵⁹ C 417.1: [...] *bsgom pa'i rtog [rtog Baroetto, p. 212 : rtogs C 417.1, M 295b.1] 'dzin med la/ dmigs pa ma dmigs pa'i rtog [rtog Baroetto, p. 212 : rtogs C 417.1, M 295b.1] 'dzin med pa/.*

¹⁶⁰ Though *snum*s as a verb is not attested in any of the dictionaries (even those specialized in the archaic terms), it is evidently related etymologically to *snum* ('oil'), which suffuses whatever substance it comes into contact with (Lopon P. Ogyan Tenzin: personal communication).

¹⁶¹ The above is summarized from C 412-417.

Name of master ¹⁶²	9 views concerning the ground	8 systems of meditation ¹⁶³	Comments from <i>Bai-ro 'Dra-'bag chen-mo</i> ¹⁶⁴ (13 th century) ¹⁶⁵
Ānandā (nun)	No.4 self-originated wisdom (<i>rang-byung ye-shes</i>)	No.2 “settling in quietude”	Disciple of Śrīsiṃha, master of Vimalamitra
Buddhagupta	No.5 freedom from action and searching (<i>bya-btsal dang dral-ba</i>)	No.4 “resting without searching”	Disciple of Devarāja, master of Śrīsiṃha
Dhahenatalo (king)	No.9 ground of all phenomena as it is (<i>chos thams-cad gzhi ji-bzhin-pa</i>)		Disciple of dGa'-rab rdo-rje and Mañjuśrimitra I, master and father of Rājahastin
dGa'-rab rdo-rje	No.2 spontaneous presence (<i>lhun-grub</i>) No.9 ground of all phenomena as it is (<i>chos thams-cad gzhi ji-bzhin-pa</i>)	No.8 “expanse of wisdom free from extremes”	Originator of the human lineage of <i>rDzogs-chen</i> ; he receives the teachings from Vajrapāṇi as an emanation of Vajrasattva ¹⁶⁷
Kukurāja	No.7 non-duality (<i>gnyis-su med-pa</i>)		Kukurāja I: disciple of A-tsan-tra Āloke, master of Ṛṣi Bhāṣita. He is also held to have met dGa'-rab rdo-rje ¹⁶⁸
gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes	No.9 ground of all phenomena as it is (<i>chos thams-cad gzhi ji-bzhin-pa</i>)		Not mentioned
Oḍḍiyāna Mahārāja	No.1 freedom from thematic foci (<i>gza'-gtad dang bral-ba</i>)		Disciple of Kashmiri preceptor Rab-s nang and master of Gomadevi
Mañjuśrimitra	No.7 non-duality	No.5 “spontaneously	Mañjuśrimitra I:

¹⁶² Given in Roman alphabetical order, whereby Tibetan words are listed under the first occurring radical letter (*ming-gzhi*), so that dGa'-rab rdo-rje appears under 'g' rather than 'd'.

¹⁶³ Unlike the nine views concerning the ground, the eight systems of meditation do not have names assigned to them in the text; however, the phrases given in quotation marks taken from their respective descriptions are sufficiently evocative to capture what is being referred to.

¹⁶⁴ Mainly taken from g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, pp. 48-62; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, pp. 35-46.

¹⁶⁵ Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 18.

	(<i>gnyis-su med-pa</i>)	complete wisdom"	disciple of dGa'-rab rdo-rje and master of King Dhahenatalo ¹⁶⁹
Rājahastin (crown prince)	No.8 great seminal nucleus (<i>thig-le chen-po</i>)		Received the essence from dGa-rab rdo-rje; then studied in greater detail under his father King Dhahenatalo
Śrīsiṃha* ¹⁶⁶	No.6 great bliss (<i>bde-ba chen-po</i>)		Disciple of Buddhagupta and master of the nun Ānandā, of Vairocana and of Vimalamita
gSal-ba rgyal* (Ācārya)		No.1 "realization of expanse" No.3 "ocean-like awareness"	Not mentioned
Vairocana	No.3 integral being (<i>bdaḡ-nyid chen-po</i>)	No.7 "freedom from action"	Disciple of Śrīsiṃha ¹⁷⁰
Vimalamitra*	No.1 freedom from thematic foci (<i>gza'-gtad dang bral-ba</i>)	No.6 "phenomena's beingness (Skt. <i>dharmatā</i>) as like space"	Disciple of Śrīsiṃha

It is important to understand that, similarly to the nine views concerning the ground, these eight systems of meditation are not in contradiction or competition with each other. gNubs-chen takes pains to explain that it is not from the perspective of the doctrinal texts or supreme persons that these systems differ, but merely in terms of the intellects of various individuals,

¹⁶⁷ g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, p. 43; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, pp. 30f.

¹⁶⁸ Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, p. 35. A second Kukurāja is also mentioned, who was the disciple of Nāgārjuna and the master of Mañjuśrīmitra II. See g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, pp. 57f; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, p. 43.

¹⁶⁶ Names followed by an asterisk are considered direct teachers of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes.

¹⁶⁹ g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, pp. 44-48; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, pp. 31-35. A second Mañjuśrīmitra is mentioned, who was the disciple of Kukurāja II and the master of Devarāja. See g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, p. 58; Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, pp. 43f.

¹⁷⁰ Vairocana's search for and meeting with Śrīsiṃha is described in g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, pp. 115-139; the passage is summarized in Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, pp. 22-25.

observing that any of these systems of meditation, if practised properly, allows one to strike the point (*thog-tu phebs-par 'gyur-ro*).¹⁷¹

It is noteworthy that rather than providing a set of meditative techniques, the different contemplative approaches discussed in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* appear as poetic evocations of the ground that enable the practitioner to re-tune to the intrinsic awareness of the abiding mode. Hence, there appears to be a rhetorical negation of meditation technique, something quite typical of the mind section;¹⁷² in this regard, one might recall gNubs-chen's denial of physical posture.¹⁷³ However, it must not be forgotten that this rhetorical deconstruction does not take place in a spiritual vacuum, but occurs within a particular context, which is that of a contemplative life dedicated to the practice of meditation: one will recall Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' emphasis on the importance of retiring to a retreat location¹⁷⁴ and of relinquishing worldly attachment¹⁷⁵ in Chapter I, as well as the teaching concerning the defects of non-meditation¹⁷⁶ and the qualities of meditation¹⁷⁷ found in Chapter II. What the deconstructive approach to meditation taken in Chapter VII seems to hint at, is that the different systems of meditation do not really diverge from the perspective of contemplative praxis; rather, they are so many vistas open on to the ground, each one having the potential of eliciting a response according to the needs of particular individuals.

gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes continues his exposition by pointing out various defects in a beginner's meditation, noting in particular that any dislike of signs in favour of signlessness, or any dislike of wavering in favour of unwavering, prevents realization of equality.¹⁷⁸

The next subsection¹⁷⁹ contains instructions for the moment of passing away: in view of all that has been written on the subject concerning Karma gling-pa's famous *Bar-do thos-grol*, it may not be without interest to say something of the matter here: whereas the usual description of the appearance of deities in the post-mortem state is clearly connected to the four visions of crossover (*thod-rgal*) of the pith instruction section,¹⁸⁰ gNubs-chen's presentation belongs to the mind section. This part (C 423-425) mainly consists of a long quote from an unidentified source, the *Man-ngag bde-klong*, which is translated here in full:

The greatly secret pith instructions are for the moment of passing away:

With regard to the uncontrived sphere of the seminal nucleus,
It is hidden at the centre of three secret treasuries.
Becoming confident in planting the mind's vitality,

¹⁷¹ C 419.2.

¹⁷² Germano, David, 'Architecture and Absence in the Secret Tantric History of rDzogs-chen', in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol.17:2, 1994, pp. 203-335, esp. pp. 227f.

¹⁷³ C 404.

¹⁷⁴ C 5, also C 21.

¹⁷⁵ C 17-20.

¹⁷⁶ C 36-40.

¹⁷⁷ C 40-45.

¹⁷⁸ C 420f.

¹⁷⁹ Note that this subsection still belongs to the 'means of the mind's approaching suchness'.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 127f.

One ambles about in the open dimension of the three peaks.
 Since its depth is unfathomable, it is vast
 Like a treasure of utterly pure jewels.
 In the seraphic mansion of *bodhicitta*¹⁸¹
 One plants the deathless vitality
 And shows the path without deviation.
 In the phalanx-sized jewelled seraphic mansion
 The king of the fruition's vitality rides
 The stallion of the unhoisted breath.
 Raised through *A* and *YA*,
 It radiates without birth and death
 In the pervasive expanse of the seminal nucleus of Akaniṣṭha,
 In the pervasive expanse without hope and misgiving.
 Just as, when pouring molten gold [over a statue], its form becomes
 luminous,
 So when appearance-existence is luminously clear as the mind, it is
 integral being.
 As for both meditation and non-meditation, they are just the path of
 words;
 Becoming proficient is the king of meditation.¹⁸²

This quote is interesting, since its symbolic language (“The uncontrived sphere of the seminal nucleus [...] hidden at the centre of three secret treasuries”) appears to allude to the fact that the matrix of enlightenment – imaged as a seraphic mansion (*gzhal-yas*) – is physically ‘located’ in the heart, something that will of course take on a great importance in the pith instruction section (*man-ngag-sde*).¹⁸³ Moreover, practices involving the use of the inner winds are hinted at (“The king of the fruition’s vitality rides / The stallion of the unhoisted breath”), as well as the fact that the ultimate purpose of meditation is to realize that appearance-existence (*snang-srid*) is the luminous clarity of the mind, which is none other than integral being.

3. Defects in meditation

We now come to various defects in meditation. It is pointed out¹⁸⁴ that the defects are similar to those in *Mahāyoga* and in the common vehicles,¹⁸⁵ but it is in the manner of rectification that a distinction lies. Indeed, the uniqueness of *Atiyoga* is that it does not seek to rectify defects;¹⁸⁶ knowing the defects to

¹⁸¹ The Tibetan text gives the word *bodhicitta* as transliteration from Sanskrit.

¹⁸² C 424.3-425.3.

¹⁸³ See Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, pp. 129-136.

¹⁸⁴ C 425.

¹⁸⁵ The defects of the lower vehicles are listed in the corresponding sections of the previous chapters; i.e. Chapter IV (the gradual approach): C 79-83, also C 77 (defects specific to calm abiding); Chapter V (the simultaneous approach, *sTon-mun*): C 162-170; Chapter VI (*Mahāyoga*): C 228-238 (concerning the defects of the gradual tantric approach) and C 242-250 (concerning the simultaneous tantric approach).

¹⁸⁶ C 440f.

be the beingness of phenomena, they are instantaneously appeased, as is pointed out in the *Don-drug*,¹⁸⁷ which is quoted here:

Whatever conceptual signs occur,
If one knows conceptions to be the beingness of phenomena,
One need not meditate on phenomena's open dimension
elsewhere.¹⁸⁸

There seems little point to give a list of these defects, demons (*bdud*) and obscurations here, except to point out that each of the lower vehicles can be considered a deviation from the perspective of the ones above; *a fortiori*, all of these vehicles are deviations from the point of view of *Atiyoga*. Aside from the gradual approach, the simultaneous approach and the *Mantrayāna* (comprising both *Mahāyoga* and *Anuyoga*),¹⁸⁹ the following deviations are also mentioned: the deviation of nihilism, the deviation of distracted evenness (*phyal-ba g.yeng-ba*), the deviation of unclarity and that of ordinary worldlings, the deviation of the four contemplations, the deviations of the auditors and independent victors, and the deviation of *Cittamātra*.¹⁹⁰

III. Conduct

Our presentation of the practice of *Atiyoga* as described in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* would be incomplete without a mention, however brief, of the role of conduct. Conduct is the integration of meditative realization into daily life; hence, it is elsewhere referred to as post-attainment (*rjes-thob*; Skt. *praṣṭhalabdha*) and concerns the period following meditative equipoise (*mnyam-bzhag*; Skt. *samāhita*); for example, 'Jam-mgon kong-sprul (1813-1899) writes that the accumulations of wisdom and merit are to be completed through meditative equipoise and post-attainment, both of which are to be integrated to each other.¹⁹¹

1. Four types of conduct

In the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*, four types of conduct are detailed, which will briefly be discussed here. Let us note in passing that yet again the structure parallels the presentation of Chapter V on the simultaneous approach and

¹⁸⁷ This *Don-drug* is equivalent to the *sGom-pa don-grub*, itself identical to the third chapter of the 'Khor-ba *rtsad-nas gcod-pa'i nyi-zla-dang myam-pa dri-ma med-pa'i rgyud*. See Liljenberg, Karen, 'On the history and identification of two of the Thirteen Later Translations of the Dzogchen Mind Series', in *Revue d'Études Tibétaines*, no.17, Octobre 2009, pp. 51-61, esp. p. 54.

¹⁸⁸ *Don-drug*, in NGM, vol.1/ka, p. 697.4: *rnam par rtog pa'i mtshan ma ci byung yang/ /rtog pa de nyid chos nyid yin shes* [shes NGM : zhe C 441.4, M 314b.3] *na/ /chos kyi dbyings nyid gzhan du bsgom* [du bsgom C 414.4, M 314b.3 : *nas btsal* NGM] *mi dgos/*.

¹⁸⁹ C 433-437.

¹⁹⁰ C 429-433.

¹⁹¹ Cf. 'Jam-mgon kong-sprul, *Thun-mtshams rnal-'byor-la nye-bar mkho-ba gsar-rnying-gi gdams-ngag snying-po bsdus-pa dgos-pa kun-tshang*, in 'Jam-mgon kong-sprul, *rGya-chen bka'-mdzod*, vol.12, Paro: Ngodup, 1975, pp. 289-367, esp. pp. 366f.

Chapter VI on *Mahāyoga*, each of which mention four types of conduct.¹⁹² In the context of *Atiyoga*, the four types of conduct are as follows:

1-1. The conduct of great compassion¹⁹³

Concerning the behaviour of great compassion, since it becomes the great origin of the compassionate means, great compassion shines forth without bias and effects the purpose [of wandering beings]. If it be asked in what manner this takes place, [it is replied that] by sending forth [emanations] in order to lead [sentient beings] away from cyclic existence,¹⁹⁴ one's non-obstructed mind is aware without imaging: this is not the great compassion that is primordially finished. The uninterrupted actions and emanations [that manifest] from self-originated wisdom are the behaviour of one's integral identity. He who knows this effects the purpose [of others] without searching for great compassion and without reference.¹⁹⁵

Let us here recall Achard's important observation that in *rDzogs-chen*, the semantic range of the term 'compassion' (*thugs-rje*) includes both awareness and ignorance. Literally, *thugs-rje* means the 'lord of the heart'. 'Heart' refers to the awakened body, speech and mind, whereas the term 'lord' refers to the fact that it contains within itself the potential of full awareness of the ground's abidingness (*gnas-lugs*).¹⁹⁶ When this awareness of the ground is actualized, its natural responsiveness to the needs of others manifests as compassion: without premeditation or contrivance, one is able to fulfil the purpose of others (*gzhan-don*; Skt. *parārtha*).

Compassion, or solicitude, essentially involves an awareness of universality and wholeness: we are not alone; and we are not whole, without caring for others.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² In Chapter V (C 173-177) the four types of conduct are (1) conduct that responds to resentment; (2) conduct that is subsequent to conditions; (3) conduct that does not search for anything; and (4) conduct that is compatible with the accumulations. In Chapter VI (C 258-265) the four types of conduct are (1) the conduct of intrepid deportment; (2) the conduct without attachment or hatred; (3) the emulation of absolute meaningfulness; and (4) the conduct of agreeable conformity.

¹⁹³ Detailed in C 444-447.

¹⁹⁴ Baroetto's insertion of a negative particle, emending *btang* to *ma-btang* (Baroetto, *La dottrina dell'atiyoga nel bSam gtan mig sgron*, vol.2, p. 261) seems unnecessary; cf. Meinert's translation, which would confirm the interpretation of the phrase proposed here, in Meinert, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs chen- Lehre*, p. 275. Furthermore, my interpretation of the following phrase (*thugs-rje chen-po ye-zin-pa yang min*) differs both from Baroetto's (who emends *min* to *yin*) and from Meinert's (who does not seem to see the link between both phrases, signalled by the emphatic particle *ni* that follows *rig-pa*).

¹⁹⁵ C 444.6-445.3: */de la thugs rje chen po'i mdzad spyod ni/ 'dir thugs rje thabs kyi 'byung gnas chen por gyur pas/ /snying rje chen po phyogs med par shar bas don mdzad do/ /de yang tshul ci 'dra zhe na/ 'dir 'khor ba 'dren ['dren M 317b.1 : bdren C 445.1] ched du [Baroetto, p. 261 ins. ma] btang bas sems ma 'gags la ma dmigs par rig pa ni/ thugs rje chen po ye zin pa yang min [min C 445.2, M 317b.1 : yin Baroetto, p. 261]/ rang byung gi ye shes las mdzad pa dang sprul pa rgyun mi chad pa nyid bdag nyid kyi mdzad spyod do/ bdag gis de ltar shes nas/ thugs rje chen po btsal ba dang/ /dmigs pa med par don mdzad do/.*

¹⁹⁶ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 111.

¹⁹⁷ Levin, *The Body's Recollection of Being*, pp. 97f.

Indeed, the obstinate insistence of some translators on rendering *thugs-rje* by such words as 'energy', 'dynamism', etc., in the *rDzogs-chen* context betrays a failure on their part to grasp the multiple connotations of a single word that continue to resonate on different hermeneutical levels of meaning.¹⁹⁸ Far from being mere sentimentality, compassion is intimately connected to the awareness of the ground's intrinsic illumination. In the triadic mode of the ground's unfolding – as essence, nature and compassion – described in the pith instruction section,¹⁹⁹ compassion is particularly associated with the ground's illumination. As when not recognizing one's reflection in a mirror, the non-recognition of intrinsic illumination (*rang-srang*) means that for sentient beings, their awakened body coagulates into their physical body, the open dimension is fragmented as objects, and their intrinsic awareness manifests as their ordinary mind.²⁰⁰

The compassion evoked by *gNubs-chen* is one that is without deliberate action and without reference; hence, any attempt to deliberately send forth emanations in order to help others is not great compassion, but merely a form of altruism that may be morally laudable yet remains metaphysically incomplete. Self-originated wisdom is understood as being the effortless source of uninterrupted actions and emanations for the purpose of others. Furthermore, this compassion has the specificity of never vanishing throughout the three times; that is because "it is without wavering from the state which is equal to oneself that one completes the purpose of wandering beings. In the state of great compassion, any objectifying or referential imaging is liberated as self-originated wisdom."²⁰¹

1-2. *The conduct free from effortful action*²⁰²

This aspect of conduct is described as being free from following any deliberate purpose. It should be noted that from the perspective of the Great Completeness, whatever actions one performs are deviations if they are not sealed by the recognition of mind's beingness.²⁰³ *gNubs-chen* writes that if one were to take up non-action, that would again be falling in the trap of an action and agent. This echoes the similar statement made in connection with the fifth view of freedom from action and searching.²⁰⁴ To the question whether one is to stay without action, *Sangs-rgyas ye-shes* replies that one should not even referentially imagine 'staying'. If there is such a thing as staying, then there is also its absence. One should engage in the four types of

¹⁹⁸ Arguillère, *Profusion de la Vaste Sphère*, pp. 486f.

¹⁹⁹ As will be explained below, this notion of the ground's triadic expression is absent from the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*'s presentation.

²⁰⁰ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 161.

²⁰¹ C 446.5-6: *bdag mnyam pa'i* [pa'i C 446.5 : pas M 318b.4] *ngang las ma g.yos pas 'gro don rdzogs pa stel snying rje chen po'i ngang la yul du byed pa la dmigs pa rang 'byung ye shes su bsgral lol*.

²⁰² Detailed in C 447-450.

²⁰³ Achard, 'La base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition *rDzogs chen*', p. 46.

²⁰⁴ Cf. C 351.

conduct²⁰⁵ without obstructing or referentially imaging anything; in that case, whatever one does, there is no doing.²⁰⁶

1-3. The conduct of salvific means²⁰⁷

Our author explains that in the state of Samantabhadra, the primordial Buddha, there is nothing whatsoever to accept or to relinquish.²⁰⁸ Once one has assimilated this with confidence, one's conduct does not deviate, without there being anything to reject – the salvific means are nothing else. As an illustration of this form of conduct, gNubs-chen quotes the *Sems-bsgom* of Mañjuśrīmitra:

Because {both} the conduct of sapience and {the conduct of} means are not abided in, to engage therein is akin to Māra's [activity]. Even the teachings of the six [heretical schools]²⁰⁹ and the activities of Māra are not rejected nor are they discursively examined as evil.²¹⁰

²⁰⁵ These are are strolling ('*chag-pa*; Skt. *caṃkrama*), standing up ('*greng-ba*; Skt. *sthāna*), sitting ('*dug-pa*; Skt. *niṣadyā*) and lying down (*nyal-ba*; Skt. *śayyā*). See Negi, J.S., *Dharmasaṅgraha-Kośah*, Sarnath: CIHTS, 2006, p. 216.

²⁰⁶ C 447.4: *cir yang byas kyang byas pa med*.

²⁰⁷ Detailed in C 450-453.

²⁰⁸ See also Norbu, Namkhai, *Dzogchen: L'Etat d'Auto-Perfection*, Paris: Les Deux Océans, 1994, pp. 116f.

²⁰⁹ The gloss here lists the six heretical teachers: Kakuda Kātyāyana, Ajita Keśakambala, Pūraṇa Kāśyapa, Maskarī Gośālīputra, Nirgrantha Jñātiputra and Sañjayī Vairādīputra. Their Sanskrit names are here given according to Negi, *Dharmasaṅgraha-Kośah*, p. 115. These six heretical teachers were contemporaries of the Buddha. The latter criticized their teachings because they were unable to lead to release from cyclic existence. According to the *Sāmaññaphala-sutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* (*sutta* no.2), their respective doctrines can be summarized as follows: Kakuda Kātyāyana taught that various entities exist as uncreated and indestructible monads, so that one cannot talk of killing anyone, but merely of inserting a blade in the space between these monads. Ajita Keśakambala maintained the doctrine of nihilism, according to which there is no consciousness that can be said to survive death. Pūraṇa Kāśyapa held that virtuous and non-virtuous deeds have no karmic effect. For Maskarī Gośālīputra all of man's actions are predetermined by fate, so there is no free will. These four teachers completely denied karmic retribution. While Nirgrantha Jñātiputra accepted karmic cause and effect, he maintained that self-mortification is the way to release. Finally, Sañjayī Vairādīputra would not commit to any position whatsoever. See Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha*, pp. 93-97.

²¹⁰ Norbu and Lipman, *Primordial Experience*, v.98, v.97, p. 63 (English translation), p. 120 (Tibetan text). Note that in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* the verses are given in reverse order.

1-4. *The conduct of spontaneous completeness*

Here it is mentioned that everything is awakening, without there even being the name of cyclic existence. "Since in all directions there is nothing that is not the action of the Buddha, all conduct is the behaviour [of the Buddha]." ²¹¹

gNubs-chen is careful to point out that the four types of conduct just mentioned are not different in essence; indeed, whether one refers to conduct as one or fourfold is a matter of taste. What is important is that one's conduct should not be fractional (*dum-bu-can-du med*), but rather should be equal. This way, "whether or not one emerges from equality, there is no distinction in one's mode of seeing." ²¹²

Next are mentioned certain deviations of conduct. gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes speaks of certain *mantrins* who merely mouth the view without having properly assimilated it with confidence. He describes them as engaging in various forms of licentious conduct (he mentions sexual union and killing), all the while shouting *PHAT*. His comment is telling: "they are like stones falling to the depths of hell." ²¹³

2. *Proper conduct*

Proper conduct is then described in terms of body, speech and psyche. ²¹⁴

2-1. *The conduct of the body*

In this regard, the conduct of the body is as follows: in the state where all phenomena are equal, there is no cause for one to be on a high stage, so one does not hope to be good through hypocrisy. Since everything is integral being, one is detached from companions and remains alone. Like the elephant, one should act with great prudence and with resplendent stability.

In terms of one's physical conduct, one does not deliberately rectify anything. Constantly staying in the wilderness, any place will be suitable. [...] Throughout the four types of conduct, one restricts ²¹⁵ one's physical actions and is never free from one's purpose. ²¹⁶

²¹¹ C 453.5-6: *phyogs thams cad sangs rgyas kyi mdzad par ma gyur pa med pa'i phyir/ spyod pa ril 'dir mdzad spyod do/*.

²¹² C 454.

²¹³ C 455.

²¹⁴ C 456-462.

²¹⁵ This sense of *skyur-ba*, the perfective form (*bskyur-ba*) of which is given here, is attested in bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje, *Zab-lam mkha'-'gro thugs-thig-gi rim-gnyis-kyi khrid-yig*, in bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje, *The Collected Writings and Revelations of H.H. bDud-'joms Rin-po-che 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje*, vol.16/ma, Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1979-1985, pp. 371-461, esp. p. 404.

²¹⁶ C 457.3-6: *de la lus kyi spyod pa yang chos thams cad mnyam pa'i ngang la bdag mtho sar rgyu med pas tshul 'chos bzang du re mi bya ba dang/ ril bdag nyid chen po yin pas grogs la mi chags par bya ba dang/ gcig pur [pur M 327b.2 : pu C 457.4] gnas pa dang/ glang po che ltar zon bag che bar bya zhing brjid brtan che bar bya ba dang/ lus spyod ci yang ched du bcos par mi bya ba dang/*

gNubs-chen recommends that one cultivate a certain indifference with regard to food, clothing, etc., in order to avoid getting distracted from one's purpose.

2-2. *The conduct of speech*

In terms of speech, one should avoid lies and lax (*'chal ba*) speech, in particular "when there is no requirement, when the time is not right, when assembling with companions of contemplation."²¹⁷ When one speaks using examples, one's speech should meet the understanding of one's interlocutors.

2-3. *The conduct of the psyche*

Here gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes gives a long quote from the *rNal-'byor grub-pa'i lung*, of which an extract will be translated here:

As for the scope of the adamantine psyche,
It is uncontrived, undistracted and free from thought.
It is neither distracted nor lethargic, but is clear and abides.
Being detached from desire, it is free from exaggeration and denigration.
It is without acceptance and rejection, as well as without attachment and hatred.²¹⁸

Concluding the section on conduct, Sangs-rgyas ye-shes reminds his readers that whatever actions the *yogins* engage in, they should refrain from becoming attached to their austerities; rather, their conduct should be natural and without thematic focus.²¹⁹

IV. The fruition

The penultimate section of Chapter VII is devoted to the fruition. gNubs-chen describes the fruition in terms of the warmth of experience (*nyams-drod*), of which there are three phases, called 'wavering', 'attainment' and 'stability'.²²⁰ Such a threefold classification is also alluded to in a gloss in

gnas gang yang rung ba'i dgon par rtag par 'dug pa dang/ [...] spyod lam bzhi kar lus bya ba bskyr zhing don dang ma bral ba dang/.

²¹⁷ C 459.6.

²¹⁸ *rNal-'byor grub-pa'i lung*, in NGM, vol.16/ma, p. 453.1-7; the citation appears in C 460.5-462.3: *rdo rje yid kyi spyod yul ni [ni NGB : nyid C 460.5, M 330a.3] /ma bcos ma yengs bsam dang bral/ /mi g.yeng ma rmugs gsal zhing gnas/ /'dod la ma chags sgro skur bral/ /blang med dor med chags sdang med/.*

²¹⁹ C 462.4-5.

²²⁰ C 464.1.

Chapter IV on the gradual approach,²²¹ and is elucidated in greater detail in the context of Chapter VI on *Mahāyoga*. There, the three experiences are likened to a waterfall, a stream and a lake respectively: during the first experience, the mind is unstable, producing many conceptions; during the experience of attainment, a subtle oscillation of conceptions still occurs, but one remains relaxed and practises the principle of equanimity; finally, during the experience of stability, the mind remains in a clear and non-discursive state, so that there is no need even to implement equanimity.²²² The explanation given in Chapter VI is very close to that provided in the present context, where our author quotes a no longer extant text, the pith instructions of the three *ācāryas* (*A-tsar rnam gsum-gyi man-ngag*). The difference is mainly in terminology: here, the three experiences are referred to as the first, intermediate and final feelings (*tshor-ba*) of the mind.²²³ He goes on to quote from orally transmitted instructions, which describe the unfolding of warmth in terms of the triad outer, inner and secret:

Outer warmth: the outer and inner fluctuations of the breath are no longer felt. Inner warmth: when the actual perception of equality appears, the aggregate of form, like a bale of cotton tossed about by the wind, is no longer seen as having an aggregate. Secret warmth: when the mother Samantabhadri becomes the clear mother-like sky, one experiences the great bliss which is the taste of phenomena's beingness.²²⁴

The fact that spiritual progress should be spoken of in terms of warmth is neither arbitrary nor unique to the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*.²²⁵ For example, a recent text on contemplative praxis by bDud-'joms Rinpoche (1904-1987) states that "having obtained the warmth of stable realization, both the common and supreme accomplishments occur without difficulty".²²⁶ Without doubt, such 'warmth' indicates that the new vista opened up through contemplation is experienced as a feeling-tone of lived embodiment, which goes far beyond mere representational assessment.²²⁷

To illustrate the unfolding of this warmth, Sangs-rgyas ye-shes gives an extensive list of dream omens²²⁸ and indications (*rtags*)²²⁹ as signs of the fruition. Some of these have a more internalized quality: being unaffected by praise or blame, neither considering as good a vision of the Buddha nor

²²¹ C 162.

²²² Cf. C 251.

²²³ C 464.

²²⁴ C 464.6-465.2: *de la phyi'i drod ni/ dbugs phyi nang du rgya ba yang mi tshor ba'o/ /nang gi drod ni/ mnyam pa nyid mngon sum du snang tsam nal gzugs kyi phung po shing* [shing M 333b.2 : shil C 465.1] *bal gyi 'dab* ['dab M 333b.2 : 'dam C 465.1] *ma rlung gis g.yengs pa ltar/ phung po yod par mi mthong ba'o/ /gsang ba'i drod ni/ yum kun tu bzang mo yum gyi mkha' gsal bar gyur pa'i dus nal chos nyid kyi ro bde ba chen po nyams su myong ste/*.

²²⁵ See, for instance, Guenther, *Meditation Differently*, p. 16, p. 157.

²²⁶ bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje, *Rim-gnyis-kyi khrid-yig*, p. 400. I have prepared a translation of this text under the direction of Lopon P. Ogyan Tanzin; it is planned for publication with Khye'u-chung Lotsāpa Translations.

²²⁷ Guenther, *From Reductionism to Creativity*, p. 163.

²²⁸ C 470-473.

²²⁹ C 473-483.

being afraid of seeing a female ghost.²³⁰ Others take on a rather dramatic character: being able to transform earth and sand into gold and silver,²³¹ hurling the world over great distances,²³² or being able to teach various beings in their individual languages.²³³

Again, this exposition parallels what we find in the previous chapters.²³⁴ It has already been pointed out by Meinert that, as such, these indications pertain to *Mahāyoga* rather than to *Atiyoga per se*.²³⁵ She bases herself on gNubs-chen's own statement to this effect, who in the introductory section concerning the fruition, writes that such experiences are used in the context of *Mahāyoga* rather than *Atiyoga*,²³⁶ this position is, moreover, repeated later on: at the end of the lengthy exposition of indications, the question is asked whether the vehicle of *Atiyoga*, being in itself essenceless, does not contradict the occurrence of such signs. The answer provided is, on the one hand, that the indications do indeed, as such, pertain to *Mahāyoga* rather than to *Atiyoga*; but, on the other hand, that the enlightened mind (Skt. *bodhicitta*) – here, of course, understood in its specifically *rDzogs-chen* sense of referring to the true nature of mind, intrinsic awareness (*rang-rig*)²³⁷ – does not reject any such indications since it does not relinquish any of the signs pertaining to cyclic existence or transcendence. The unborn beingness of phenomena (Skt. *dharmatā*) is comparable to the ocean, the waves of which are the various miracles and signs²³⁸ that ceaselessly occur upon its realization; elsewhere, the indications and signs are compared to the display of rainbows or to a flash of lightning in the sky:²³⁹ they are beyond referential grasping.

Therefore, it would seem that gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' intent is to relativize the importance of such experiences and indications and to warn against becoming overly attached to them; this is not surprising, since he does so in the corresponding sections for each of the previous chapters

²³⁰ C 475.

²³¹ C 482.1, quoting *rDo-rje bkod-pa*, in NGM, vol.15/ba, p. 432.4.

²³² Cf. Lamotte, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti*, ch.5, §12, p. 253, where the inconceivable release (Skt. *acintyavimokṣa*) enables the *bodhisattva* to throw the third order chiliocosm across a distance of universes as numerous as grains of sand in the Ganges, and then to put it back in its place; all this takes place without the beings inhabiting this world noticing anything.

²³³ C 482f, quoting *rDo-rje bkod-pa*, in NGM, vol.15/ba, p. 436. Of course, the latter feat echoes the famous stanza in the *Bhadracaryaprañidhānarāja*, where the *bodhisattva* vows to teach the doctrine in all languages, whether those of gods, serpent-spirits, humans, etc. See *bZang-po spyod-pa'i smon-lam*, in *sDong-po brgyan-pa'i mdo*, in KD, vol.38, p. 718.5-6.

²³⁴ The corresponding section on dreams of Chapter IV, itself based on the *rMi-lam bstan-pa* of the *Ratnakūṭa-sūtra*, has been dealt with quite extensively in a previous article: Esler, Dylan, 'Note d'oniromancie tibétaine : réflexions sur le Chapitre 4 du *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* de gNubs-chen sangs-rgyas ye-shes', in *Acta Orientalia Belgica*, vol.25, 2012, pp. 317-328.

²³⁵ Meinert, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs-chen-Lehre*, p. 278, p. 279, p. 281, p. 356.

²³⁶ C 463.1. Cf. gNubs-chen's statement in Chapter VI on *Mahāyoga* (C 255.2) concerning the reason to teach such indications: "They are taught so that beginners may cheerfully anticipate them as they proceed onwards." (*de dag bstan pas las dang po pa shin tu brod pas mdun bsu nas grims par 'gyur ba'i phyr rol*).

²³⁷ Cf. Norbu and Lipman, *Primordial Experience*, pp. 9-11, p. 73.

²³⁸ C 483f.

²³⁹ C 484f.

concerning the lower vehicles.²⁴⁰ However, he does not reject the indications as such, since that would be to conceptually delimitate the infinite potentiality of intrinsic awareness.

Having made this clarification, our author further specifies that the fruition is spontaneously accomplished. This is the occasion for him to explain that unlike in *Mahāyoga*, where, in an alchemical process, the obscurations must be transformed into wisdom,²⁴¹ here there is nothing to transform, since the obscurations are intrinsically clear as great wisdom. He writes:

It is not the case that, as in alchemy, what at present are temporarily obscurations are transformed into wisdom. In the knowledge of inherent alpha-purity (*ka-dag*), there is not even the name of that which obscures. Like the limpid ocean, this abode is free from all the seeds of the impregnations.²⁴²

Likewise, the accumulations of merit and wisdom are said to be already completed, and the accomplishments to be spontaneously present. gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes further explains that the accomplishments and the fruition are self-originated,²⁴³ meaning that they cannot be found elsewhere.

V. Distinguishing *Atiyoga* from the other vehicles

The fifth and final section of the chapter presents an interesting attempt to distinguish *Atiyoga* from the other vehicles. Most of the section²⁴⁴ is devoted to a series of questions posed from the vantage point of the lower vehicles (this includes the *Yogācāra Mādhyamika*, *Sautrāntika Mādhyamika*, *sTon-mun*, *Mahāyoga* and *Anuyoga*), which are replied to in due sequence. The series of questions and answers allows the author to draw precise distinctions between each of these traditions and *Atiyoga*, establishing the latter's superiority. He contends that this superiority is established by using the arguments of his challengers.²⁴⁵

Prior to this series of questions and answers, two subsections are specifically devoted to the relationship of *Atiyoga* to the simultaneous approach (*sTon-mun*) and to the *Mantrayāna* (including both *Mahā-* and *Anuyoga*) respectively. This is undoubtedly because these two approaches were, in his day, frequently confused with *Atiyoga*. For instance, Kimura²⁴⁶

²⁴⁰ See C 83 (for Chapter IV), C 177f (for Chapter V) and C 255f (for Chapter VI).

²⁴¹ Cf. Chapter VI (C 270.4, 271.2-4). On the *Mantrayāna* as a path characterized by transformation, see Norbu, *Dzogchen: L'Etat d'Auto-Perfection*, pp. 42-44.

²⁴² C 486.1-3: *da 'phral du gser 'gyur rtsi ltar sgrib pa ye shes su gyur par bya yang med de/ ka nas ngang gis dag par shes pa nyid la sgrib byed ming med de/ rgya mtsho dwangs pa ltar gnas pa nyid la bag la nyal gyi sa bon thams cad dang bral ba'o/.*

²⁴³ C 488f.

²⁴⁴ C 491-493.

²⁴⁵ C 490.2-3.

²⁴⁶ Kimura, Ryūtoku, 'Le Dhyāna Chinois au Tibet ancien après Mahāyāna', in *Journal Asiatique*, vol.269, 1981, pp. 183-192.

and Meinert²⁴⁷ have worked on Dunhuang manuscripts exhibiting a marked syncretism between *Ch'an*, *Mahāyoga* and *rDzogs-chen*. In this regard, it is essential to bear in mind the distinction between synthesis and syncretism. The latter refers to the artificial assemblage of disparate elements, whereas the former proceeds from the inside, as it were, by perceiving the unitary principle behind various appearances.²⁴⁸ In the present text, an example of synthesis would be the ninth view of the ground elucidated above, which includes the other approaches not through syncretism but through unification.

Already at the end of Chapter V, gNubs-chen explicitly says that the lexical similarity between certain expressions of *Ch'an* and the *rDzogs-chen* doctrine have been the cause of deviations in understanding.²⁴⁹ This argument is further developed here; the gist of it is that despite a certain similarity of diction, the *sTon-mun* focus on the ground as being unborn and empty (thereby losing sight of its clarity aspect, represented in *rDzogs-chen* by the notion of spontaneous presence, *lhun-grub*). Moreover, they still are – albeit unwittingly – involved in effort and duality: according to the author of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*, this duality is apparent in that they move discretely between the two truths.²⁵⁰ It may not be without interest to point out that already in Chapter VI, this inability to integrate the two truths and excessive attachment to absolute truth is contrasted with the non-dual enlightened mind of *Mahāyoga*.²⁵¹

As far as *Mahāyoga cum Anuyoga* is concerned, gNubs-chen's verdict is that by generating deities from out of thusness, whether gradually as in *Mahāyoga* or instantaneously as in *Anuyoga*, one loses sight of the "great behaviour of the non-action of self-originated wisdom."²⁵² the difference lies in the fact that for *Mahāyoga* and *Anuyoga*, the generation of deities is necessary in order to accomplish the purposes of self (Skt. *svārtha*) and others (Skt. *parārtha*); in *Atiyoga*, on the other hand, resting in non-discursiveness suffices to accomplish both purposes. Perhaps even more importantly, there is a distinction in the manner of envisaging absolute meaningfulness itself: whereas the tantric approach focuses on non-dual intrinsic awareness as universal luminosity (*kun-tu 'od-gsal*), in *Atiyoga* ultimate thusness is spontaneously complete, so that great non-duality is without dividing.²⁵³

²⁴⁷ Meinert, Carmen, 'Chinese *Chan* and Tibetan *rDzogs chen*: Preliminary Remarks on Two Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts', in Blezer, Henk (ed.), *Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet: Tibetan Studies II*, PIATS 2000, vol.2, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002, pp. 289-307, esp. p. 303.

²⁴⁸ Guénon, *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, p. 9.

²⁴⁹ C 186.

²⁵⁰ C 490.

²⁵¹ Cf. C 281, 283.

²⁵² C 491.2.

²⁵³ C 491.4.

**Distinctive features of Sangs-rgyas ye-shes'
presentation of *Atiyoga***

It may be somewhat anachronistic to portray the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* and other such early *rDzogs-chen* works as belonging to the mind section (*sems-sde*), since, according to van Schaik, the term itself does not occur prior to the 11th century.²⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the texts now known under that rubric do share certain characteristics and are believed to represent the earliest strata of *rDzogs-chen*.²⁵⁵ It is in this sense that we can say that gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' exposition of *Atiyoga* in his *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* follows the perspective of the mind section.²⁵⁶ Typical in this is an approach that focuses on mind's beingness (*sems-nyid*; Skt. *cittatā*), called the enlightened mind (Skt. *bodhicitta*), as being beyond the scope of ordinary mind's representational thought.²⁵⁷ A further characteristic, witnessed quite clearly in Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' text, is the deconstruction of formal categories of practice: the view is said to be without deliberate seeing,²⁵⁸ and the ground, itself ungrounded, cannot be examined, entered or meditated on.²⁵⁹ Whereas much space is devoted to the exposition of different meditative approaches that allow the practitioner to meditatively attune to the ground, it will be clear from our presentation above that these approaches exhibit a marked tendency to undermine any focus on meditative technique in and for itself; rather, they appear as poetic evocations of intrinsic awareness, intended to guide the practitioner to immerse himself in the abiding mode of his natural state.²⁶⁰

Of course, as we have pointed out repeatedly, this rejection of various forms of action and of meditation as something that can be implemented through an act of will does not signify that all religious and ethical structures are to be literally discarded; one might here recall gNubs-chen's criticism of those who take these teachings as an excuse to engage in licentious forms of conduct.²⁶¹ While it can be said that the rejection is, to some extent at least, rhetorical, with the aim of preventing fixation upon particular meditative techniques,²⁶² it is telling that Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' reasoning in his criticism of such misinterpretations is not so much one of moral expediency, but rather that any deliberate rejection of action would itself entail entanglement in a conceptualized view.²⁶³

Looking at the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron's* seventh chapter, we can see that the basic themes of *rDzogs-chen*, such as the universal ground and the manner of meditatively attuning to it, are found here in a highly developed manner. On the other hand, other notions, more typical of the pith instruction section – e.g. the rainbow body (*'ja'-lus*), the practices of breakthrough (*khregs-chod*) and crossover (*thod-rgal*), as well as the visionary anatomy typical of the

²⁵⁴ van Schaik, 'The Early Days of the Great Perfection', p. 167, n.6.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 166f.

²⁵⁶ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 17.

²⁵⁷ Cf. Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, vol.1, p. 321.

²⁵⁸ C 310.

²⁵⁹ C 382.

²⁶⁰ Germano, 'Architecture and Absence', p. 229, p. 240.

²⁶¹ C 455.

²⁶² Germano, 'Architecture and Absence', pp. 227f.

²⁶³ C 351f.

latter – are absent.²⁶⁴ This of course is not surprising, given the orientation (that of the mind section) of this text.

This is not to say, however, that such visionary elements need be lacking in the approach of the mind section: Achard has already signalled that this is a wrong impression that distorts our understanding of the cycle's literature.²⁶⁵ While the visionary practices are certainly less prominent than in the pith instruction section, the instructions for the moment of death translated above are valuable in showing that vision-based practices are to be found in the mind section too.

Moreover, apart from its contents, there are formal elements that justify this classification of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* as a text belonging to the mind section: gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes cites almost all of the eighteen texts of the mind section (*sems-sde bco-brgyad*), the transmission of which he received mainly from gNyags Jñānakumāra and his disciple, the Sogdian dPal-gyi ye-shes.²⁶⁶ Here is a list of these eighteen texts, though it should be noted that there are variations in their appellations, and indeed that several of these texts exist in multiple recensions:²⁶⁷

(1) *Rig-pa'i khu-byug*; (2) *rTsal-chen sprug-pa*; (3) *Thig-le drug-pa*; (4) *Khyung-chen ldings-pa*; (5) *Mi-nub rgyal-mtshan*; (6) *Yid-bzhin nor-bu*; (7) *rJe-btsun (/ btsan) dam-pa*; (8) *Yid-spyod rgyal-po*; (9) *Rin-po-che kun-'dus*; (10) *bDe-'byams*; (11) *Srog-gi 'khor-lo*; (12) *Nam-mkha'i rgyal-po*; (13) *bDe-ba 'phra-bkod*; (14) *sPyi-bcings*; (15) *rDo-la gser-zhun*; (16) *rTse-mo byung-rgyal*; (17) *rMad-du byung-ba*; (18) *rDzogs-pa spyi-gcod*.²⁶⁸ Except for the *Mi-nub rgyal-mtshan* and the *Yid-spyod rgyal-po*, all of these texts are quoted in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*; this shows that already in the early 10th century these texts formed a coherent corpus.²⁶⁹

The notable exception is of course the *Kun-byed rgyal-po'i mdo*, considered by later tradition to be the main *tantra* of the mind section, which is nowhere quoted in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*; since many of the chapters of the *Kun-byed rgyal-po* are constituted by the eighteen mind section texts – for example, the *Rig-pa'i khu-byug* (cited in C 347), also known as the *rDo-rje tshig-drug*, constitutes chapter 31 of the *Kun-byed rgyal-po*,²⁷⁰ whereas chapter 30 is composed of the *Nam-mkha'-che*²⁷¹ and chapter 22 is made up of the *Khyung-chen ldings-pa*²⁷² – it is more than likely that the *Kun-byed rgyal-po* was compiled after the redaction of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*.²⁷³

²⁶⁴ This was already noted upon by Guenther in his seminal article on the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*; see Guenther, Herbert V., 'Meditation Trends in Early Tibet', in Lai, Whalen, and Lancaster, Lewis R. (eds.), *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Berkeley: Buddhist Studies Series 5, 1983, pp. 351-366, esp. p. 353.

²⁶⁵ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 247, n.40.

²⁶⁶ Meinert, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs chen- Lehre*, p. 241.

²⁶⁷ Cf. Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 26.

²⁶⁸ The first five belong to the five early translations (*snga-'gyur lnga*) made by Vairocana. The other thirteen texts belong to the thirteen later translations (*phyi-'gyur bcu-gsum*). See Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, pp. 23f.

²⁶⁹ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 25.

²⁷⁰ Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, pp. 47f.

²⁷¹ For an English translation see Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, pp. 168-173.

²⁷² See Hillis, Gregory, 'Khyung-chen ldings-pa in the *rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum'*, in Eimer, Helmut, and Germano, David (eds.), *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism, Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Leiden 2000*, Leiden: Brill, 2002,

Another oddity (though it does not specifically concern Chapter VII) is the mention of a text called the *Klong-drug* in Chapter II²⁷⁴ as being one of the books that can be relied on by the adept of the Eminent *Yoga* (*lhag-pa'i rnal-'byor-pa*; Skt. *adhiyogin*);²⁷⁵ this is explained in the context of the four compatible reliances (*mthun-pa bsten-pa bzhi*) required by the *yogin*.²⁷⁶ This is most probably a reference to the *Kun-tu bzang-po klong-drug-pa'i rgyud*, an important *tantra* of the pith instruction section.²⁷⁷ Although van Schaik considers it unlikely that the text mentioned in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* is the same as the *Klong-drug* of the pith instruction section, given the late date he assigns to the *sNying-thig tantras*,²⁷⁸ Achard's research, by focusing on the visionary practices of crossover (*thod-rgal*), has tended to show that the texts of the pith instruction section are earlier than hitherto supposed by scholars.²⁷⁹ Furthermore, whereas the *Klong-drug* is mentioned without being quoted, Vimalamitra's commentary to the *Klong-drug*, the *Kun-tu bzang-po klong-drug rgyud-kyi 'grel-pa*,²⁸⁰ is cited three times in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*.²⁸¹ Hence, corroborating this hypothesis would require systematic comparison of Vimalamitra's commentary with the citations found in gNubs-chen's work; given the length of Vimalamitra's commentary, I have not been able to do this so far.

It is also significant that the text most quoted in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron's* seventh chapter is the *rNal-'byor grub-pa'i lung*, a text later classified as pertaining to *Anuyoga* rather than *Atiyoga*; this would suggest that gNubs-chen sought to impose an order on a still disparate body of texts, and that this order was in a state of flux.²⁸²

From the point of view of philological and philosophical analysis, gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' exposition of *Atiyoga* is as interesting for what it contains as for what it does not. In the pith instruction section, the ground is described in terms of essence (*ngo-bo*), nature (*rang-bzhin*) and compassion (*thugs-rje*). These are collectively termed the 'three wisdoms which abide in the ground' (*gzhi gnas-kyi ye-shes gsum*). They are not three distinct things, but rather represent the triadic mode of the ground's expression.²⁸³ While the three terms are found in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*, they appear separately and nowhere as a triad with the same weight of significance attached to them in

pp. 313-334, esp. p. 316, p. 330. For an English translation see Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, pp. 158-161. Note that the spelling *Khyung-chen ldings-pa* is that corresponding to *Khyung-chen ldings-pa*, in NGT, vol.1/ka, pp. 419-423, whereas *Khyung-chen lding-ba* is found in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* (except on C 319.2).

²⁷³ See Germano, 'Architecture and Absence', p. 235; and van Schaik, 'The Early Days of the Great Perfection', p. 196.

²⁷⁴ C 33.4.

²⁷⁵ Note that the term *Adhiyoga* is frequently used as a synonym for *Atiyoga* in the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*.

²⁷⁶ These are a master, a consort, books and a servant; they are detailed in C 30.1-34.2.

²⁷⁷ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 240.

²⁷⁸ van Schaik, 'The Early Days of the Great Perfection', p. 196, n.88.

²⁷⁹ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, esp. pp. 240-247.

²⁸⁰ Vimalamitra, *Kun-tu bzang-po klong-drug rgyud-kyi 'grel-pa*, in *bKa'-ma shin-tu rgyas-pa*, Edited by Kaḥ-thog mKhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs, vol.109/dze, Chengdu: Kaḥ-thog, 1999, pp. 5-930.

²⁸¹ C 9, C 276, C 456.

²⁸² van Schaik, 'The Early Days of the Great Perfection', p. 199.

²⁸³ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 104.

the pith instruction section. When one knows that in the *Kun-byed rgyal-po* the order of the first two of the three wisdoms is reversed²⁸⁴ and that, as mentioned above, the compilation of the *Kun-byed rgyal-po* is probably subsequent to gNubs-chen's work, it is clear that during this early period the description of the ground as a triad had not yet gained foothold, at least as far as the mind section is concerned.

Similarly, whereas the terms alpha-purity (*ka-dag*) and spontaneous presence (*lhun-grub*) are found frequently throughout the text, they are juxtaposed only once. The passage in question concerns the proper comprehension of the second view of the ground, that of spontaneous presence: Sangs-rgyas ye-shes explains that unmistakable alpha-purity is the spontaneous seeing when one no longer looks at, thinks of or pursues anything.²⁸⁵ The association of alpha-purity with the essence and of spontaneous presence with the nature, typical of the pith instruction section,²⁸⁶ is clearly absent here. This becomes evident when one compares gNubs-chen's view of spontaneous presence with Klong-chen-pa's discussion of the homonymous view from the perspective of the pith instruction section. Whereas Klong-chen-pa treats alpha-purity and spontaneous presence as a natural pair which complement each other, Sangs-rgyas ye-shes does not share this concern. For him, spontaneous presence is to be taken in its primary sense as implying the futility of any attempt to accomplish enlightenment through effort.

Concluding remarks

These remarks should suffice to demonstrate gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' genius in his exposition of *Atiyoga*. His *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* is unique in the history of *rDzogs-chen* literature in that it is the first doxography to treat *Atiyoga* as a distinct vehicle (*theg-pa*),²⁸⁷ rather than a mere mode (*tshul*) of practice.²⁸⁸ The detail of Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' presentation and the rigour of his arguments clearly show that he inherited a tradition that was already rich in nuances.

What transpires through his work is a tireless concern to organize the teachings he had received and to present them in such a way that the distinctions between the various contemplative approaches of his time would not be lost sight of. This may well be in reaction to various syncretistic movements of his time, that sought to blend *rDzogs-chen*,

²⁸⁴ Norbu and Clemente, *The Supreme Source*, p. 275, n.149.

²⁸⁵ C 327.5-6.

²⁸⁶ Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, pp. 109-112.

²⁸⁷ van Schaik, 'The Early Days of the Great Perfection', p. 178.

²⁸⁸ The latter approach is witnessed, for example in Padmasambhava, *Man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba*, in NKD, vol.23/'a, pp. 159-175, which Sangs-rgyas ye-shes quotes several times in his *Mahāyoga* chapter: C 192, C 196, C 207, C 238 (gloss). For a critical edition and translation, see Loseries, Ulrich, *Guru Padmasambhavas „Instruktion ‘Die Kette der Anschauungen’“ (Man-ngag lta-ba'i Phreng-ba) erläutert durch Methoden der Auslegung des „die Essenz des Geheimen“ lehrenden Tantras (gSang-ba'i sNying-po'i rGyud)*, PhD thesis, Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, 1989, pp. 175-190 (critical edition), pp. 191-202 (German translation).

Mahāyoga and *Ch'an*.²⁸⁹ In this respect, his task is facilitated by the parallel arrangement of the four main chapters, which has been repeatedly signalled in this article. The fact that these chapters mirror each other in their structure enables the author to present each of the four doctrines independently according to a coherent framework, while at once making comparison of individual elements relatively straightforward.

Many of the categories he uses, such as the four meditative approaches themselves, the nine views concerning the ground, etc., failed to become normative for the later *rNying-ma* school, and gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' masterpiece was neglected for centuries, until its publication in 1974 by the late Chhimed Rigdzin Rinpoche. This is precisely why delving into the deep waters of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* can offer us such a unique glimpse into the fairly uncharted territory of early Tibetan formulations of *rDzogs-chen* doctrine and practice.



Appendix: A remark concerning the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*'s glosses

The Tibetan text is interspersed with many interlinear notes. It is unlikely that these are the work of the author himself. Meinert has shown, for instance, that the second gloss in the text (C 2.3) is grammatically incorrect,²⁹⁰ and many more such examples could be adduced. This is not to say that the glosses should be rejected, but merely that one must treat them with a certain caution.

One of the glosses in particular (C 15.4) gives a hint about the date of composition of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*, since it alludes to Glang-dar-ma's religious persecution:

At the time of Glang-dar-ma, because of the obstacles which came towards the venerable Ye-shes dbang-po, the lineage of the instructors of dialectics declined.²⁹¹

This gloss occurs in the context of the advice to obtain the lineages of the various approaches (Chapter I, §5.2), where it is explained that the Tibetan branch of the lineage of the simultaneous approach (which had belonged to the [Tibetan] emperor and monks) had declined by gNubs-chen's time.

²⁸⁹ Cf. van Schaik, Sam, and Dalton, Jacob, 'Where Chan and Tantra Meet: Tibetan Syncretism in Dunhuang', in Whitfield, Susan (ed.), *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*, London: British Library Press, 2004, pp. 63-71, esp. pp. 69f.

²⁹⁰ Meinert, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs chen- Lehre*, p. 238, n.599.

²⁹¹ C 15.4: *Glang dar ma'i ring la btsun pa Ye shes dbang po bar chad du gyur pas mtshan nyid kyi slob dpon brgyud pa nub/*.

One of the problems with this gloss concerns Ye-shes dbang-po, who is presumably identical to dBa' Ye-shes dbang-po, the first abbot of bSam-yas and successor of Śāntarakṣita; however, dBa' Ye-shes dbang-po (whose secular name was dBa' gSal-s nang) is generally believed to have passed away before the death of Khri-srong lde'u-btsan in 797 CE, thus far predating Glang-dar-ma (r. 836-842 CE).²⁹²

A further question arises as to why Ye-shes dbang-po, who is generally referred to as a master of the gradualist approach,²⁹³ should be mentioned in the context of the decline of the simultaneous approach. Of course, the term 'dialectics' (*mtshan-nyid*; Skt. *lakṣaṇa*), which is found in the expression 'vehicle of dialectics' (*mtshan-nyid-kyi theg-pa*; Skt. *lakṣaṇayāna*), can be said to refer to the *sūtra* vehicle in general, and hence to englobe both the gradualist and simultaneous approaches.²⁹⁴ Nonetheless, it is clear from the context that it is the decline of the simultaneous approach that is being referred to.

The impression one gains from all these factors is that the text (or, at the very least, this gloss) was written quite some time after the events here alluded to. That is why Ye-shes dbang-po is wrongly made a contemporary of Glang-dar-ma, and perhaps also why his death is associated with the decline of the simultaneous approach.

Furthermore, the very mention of the sobriquet Glang-dar-ma seems odd, since this nickname is not found in the Dunhuang documents; this would point to the fact that the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron's* glosses are insertions by a later hand.²⁹⁵

It is likely that these glosses were written down by a disciple of the author, probably an immediate one. Indeed, several indications point to the fact that the glosses incorporate fragments of an oral commentary to the text. The lack of grammatical rigour alluded to above (which contrasts with the main text) and the fact that many of the glosses are obviously incomplete²⁹⁶ indicate that they were written down hastily as notes taken during an oral teaching. It is true that two of the glosses contain the self-reference 'small venerable',²⁹⁷ a sobriquet which gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes uses in the main text of Chapter VIII;²⁹⁸ while this could be interpreted to mean that they were written by the author himself,²⁹⁹ it seems more likely, given the above considerations, that the disciple noting down gNubs-chen's oral explanations is here quoting the master verbatim.

²⁹² See Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 101; cf. the *sBa-bzhed's* mention of dBa' Ye-shes dbang-po's death in Wangdu, Pasang, and Diemberger, Hildegard, *dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet*, Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000, p. 90.

²⁹³ Cf. Wangdu and Diemberger, *dBa' bzhed*, p. 78, p. 88.

²⁹⁴ On the dialectical nature of *Ch'an*, see Faure, Bernard, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991, pp. 29-31.

²⁹⁵ Karmay, *The Great Perfection*, p. 94, n.44.

²⁹⁶ For example, cf. some of the glosses to the dreams in Chapter IV, e.g. C 90.2, C 92.2-3; in these cases, the problem can be remedied by referring to the corresponding passages in the *Ratnakūṭa-sūtra*. However, see also Chapter VII, C 419.4-6: this gloss is a particularly good example in that it preserves but fragments of an originally continuous structure of thought and hence is untranslatable and, to some extent at least, unintelligible.

²⁹⁷ C 375.6, C 419.2.

²⁹⁸ C 497.5; the stanza is repeated in the colophon, C 502.5.

²⁹⁹ van Schaik, 'The Early Days of the Great Perfection', p. 197.

Moreover, the fact that some of these glosses contain phonetic renderings of Chinese terms (such as *'bu-ta*³⁰⁰ and *bo-de*³⁰¹ for Buddha and *bodhisattva* respectively), typical of Chinese Buddhist translations, renders it probable that the glosses go back to a time when Chinese Buddhist translations still circulated in Tibet. Such a use of Chinese phonetic terms is not limited to the glosses, as is witnessed by the word *Par-na-pan-gyi mdo* for *Parinirvāṇa-sūtra* in Chapter V.³⁰²

We can conclude by saying that whereas the glosses are unlikely to have been written by the author himself, they do probably go back to an early redaction of the text, and were perhaps even noted down by one of gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes' immediate disciples.



Bibliography

Abbreviations: editions of the *bSam-gtan mig-sgron*

C: gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes, *rNal-'byor mig-gi bsam-gtan or bSam-gtan mig-sgron: A treatise on bhāvanā and dhyāna and the relationships between the various approaches to Buddhist contemplative practice*, Reproduced from a manuscript made presumably from an Eastern Tibetan print by 'Khor-gdong gter-sprul 'Chi-med rig-'dzin, Smarntsis shesrig spendzod, vol.74, Leh: Tashigangpa, 1974.

M: gNubs-chen Sangs-rgyas ye-shes rin-po-che, *sGom-gyi gnad gsal-bar phyeba bsam-gtan mig-sgron ces-bya-ba*, in *bKa'-ma shin-tu rgyas-pa*, Edited by mKhan-po Mun-sel, 110 Volumes, vol.97/je, Chengdu: Kaḥ-thog, n.d.

Baroetto [critical edition of Chapter 7]: Baroetto, Giuseppe, *La dottrina dell'atiyoga nel bSam gtan mig sgron di gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes*, vol.2: Edizione critica del settimo capitolo, Lulu, 2010.

Abbreviations: Collections

³⁰⁰ E.g. C 91.1, C 102.4, C 107.6, etc.; cf. *butsu*, the Chinese transcription of Buddha; see *Hôbôgirin: Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d'après les Sources Chinoises et Japonaises*, pt.3, Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1974, p. 190.

³⁰¹ E.g. C 88.3, C 91.1; cf. *bosatsu*, the Chinese transcription of *bodhisattva*; see *Hôbôgirin*, pt.2, Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1930, p. 136.

³⁰² C 138.2.

KD: *bKa'-gyur*, Facsimile of the sDe-dge 1733 edition prepared by Si-tu pañ-chen Chos-kyi 'byung-gnas, 103 Volumes, Delhi: Karmapae Chodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partrun Khang, 1976-1979.

NGM: *rNying-ma rgyud-'bum*, mTshams-brag edition, 46 Volumes, Thimphu: Royal National Library, 1982.

NGT: *rNying-ma rgyud-'bum*, gTing-skyes edition, 36 Volumes, Thimphu: Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, 1973-1975.

NKD: *rNying-ma bka'-ma rgyas-pa: A Collection of Teachings and Initiations of the rNying-ma-pa Tradition, passed through Continuous and Unbroken Oral Lineages from the Ancient Masters*, Edited by bDud-'joms Rinpoche, 58 Volumes, Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1982-1987.

TD: *bsTan'-gyur*, Facsimile of the sDe-dge 1737-1744 edition prepared by Tshul-khrims rin-chen, 213 Volumes, Delhi: Karmapae Chodhey Gyalwae Sungrab Partrun Khang, 1982-1985.

Tibetan Language Works

Kun-'dus rig-pa'i mdo = rDo-rje bkod-pa = De-bzhin gshegs-pa thams-cad-kyi thugs gsang-ba'i ye-shes don-gyi snying-po/ khro-bo rdo-rje'i rigs/ kun-'dus rig-pa'i mdo rnal-'byor bsgrub-pa'i rgyud, in NGM, vol.15/ba, pp. 321-672.

Kun-byed rgyal-po, in NGM, vol.1/ka, pp. 2-192.

Khyung-chen-gyi rgyud, in NGM, vol.1/ka, pp. 537-560.

Khyung-chen ldings-pa, in NGT, vol.1/ka, pp. 419-423.

Klong-chen-pa, Tshig-don rin-po-che'i mdzod, in *Klong-chen mdzod-bdun*, vol.ca, Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltzen and Khyentse Labrang, 1983.

Klong-chen-pa, Theg-mchog rin-po-che'i mdzod, in *Klong-chen mdzod-bdun*, vols. ga - nga, Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltzen and Khyentse Labrang, 1983.

sKyogs-ston rin-chen bkra-shis, *brDa-gsar-rnying-gi rnam-gzhag li-shi'i gur-khang*, Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 2000.

Khyung-chen ldings-pa, in NGT, vol.1/ka, pp. 419-423.

Chos-kyi grags-pa, dGe-bshes (attributed to), *brDa-dag ming-tshig gsal-ba*, Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1995.

'Jam-mgon kong-sprul, *Thun-mtshams rnal-'byor-la nye-bar mkho-ba gsar-rnying-gi gdams-ngag snying-po bsdus-pa dgos-pa kun-tshang*, in 'Jam-mgon kong-sprul, *rGya-chen bka'-mdzod*, vol.12, Paro: Ngodup, 1975, pp. 289-367.

gNyan dpal-dbyangs, *Man-ngag rgum-chung = rNal-'byor spyod-pa'i lugs nges-pa'i don-la don ji-bzhin bsgom-thabs*, in TD, vol.211 / no, pp. 769f.

Don-drug-pa = sGom-pa don-grub = 'Khor-ba rtsad-nas gcod-pa'i nyi-zla-dang myam-pa dri-ma med-pa'i rgyud, ch.3, in NGM, vol.1/ka, pp. 697f.

bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje, *Zab-lam mkha'-'gro thugs-thig-gi rim-gnyis-kyi khrid-yig*, in bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje, *The Collected Writings and Revelations of H.H. bDud-'joms Rin-po-che 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje*, vol.16/ma, Kalimpong: Dupjung Lama, 1979-1985, pp. 371-461.

Nam-mkha'-che = rDo-rje sems-dpa' nam-mkha'-che'i rgyud, in NGM, vol.3/ga, pp. 165-191.

Nam-mkha'i rgyal-po, in NGM, vol.1/ka, pp. 601-606.

Norbu, Namkhai, *sBas-pa'i rgum-chung: The Small Collection of Hidden Precepts: A Study of an Ancient Manuscript of Dzogchen from Tun-huang*, Arcidosso: Shang-Shung Edizioni, 1984.

rNam-rgyal tshe-ring (ed.), *Bod-yig brda-rnying tshig-mdzod*, Beijing: Krung-go'i bod-rig-pa dpe-skrun-khang, 2001.

rNal-'byor grub-pa'i lung = De-bzhin gshegs-pa thams-cad-kyi thugs gsang-ba'i ye-shes/ don-gyi snying-po rdo-rje bkod-pa'i rgyud/ rNal-'byor grub-pa'i lung/ kun-'dus rig-pa'i mdo, in NGM, vol.16/ma, pp. 2-617.

Padmsambhava, *Man-ngag lta-ba'i phreng-ba*, in NKD, vol.23/'a, pp. 159-175.

rMad-du byung-ba, in NGM, vol.2/kha, pp. 774-856.

bTsan-lha ngag-dbang tshul-khrims, *brDa-dkrol gser-gyi me-long*, Beijing: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1997.

bZang-po spyod-pa'i smon-lam (Bhadracaryapranidhānarāja), in *sDong-po brgyan-pa'i mdo*, in KD, vol.38, pp. 716-723.

g.Yu-sgra snying-po, *Bai-ro'i rnam-thar 'dra-'bag chen-mo*, Chengdu: Si-khron mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1995.

Rin-po-che'i spyi-bcings-kyi le'u bcu-pa, in *sKu'i rgyud padma 'khyil-ba*, in NGM, vol.9/ta, pp. 363-367.

Srog-gi 'khor-lo, in NGM, vol.1/ka, pp. 598-601.

Western Language Works

Achard, Jean-Luc, 'La base et ses sept interprétations dans la tradition rDzogs chen', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no.1, Octobre 2002, pp. 44-60.

Achard, Jean-Luc, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret: Recherches philologiques et historiques sur l'origine de la Grande Perfection dans la tradition rNying ma pa*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1999.

Achard, Jean-Luc, 'Le Mode d'Emergence du Réel: L'avènement des manifestations de la Base (*gzhi snang*) selon les conceptions de la Grande Perfection', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no.7, April 2005, pp. 64-96.

Arguillère, Stéphane, *Profusion de la Vaste Sphère: Klong-chen rab-'byams (Tibet, 1308-1364): Sa vie, son œuvre, sa doctrine*, Leuven: Peeters Publishers & Oriental Studies, 2007.

Baroetto, Giuseppe, *La dottrina dell'atiyoga nel bSam gtan mig sgron di gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes*, 2 Volumes, Lulu, 2010.

Burckhardt, Titus, *Alchimie: Sa signification et son image du monde*, Milan: Arché Milano, 1979.

Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger's Thought*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978.

Conze, Edward, *Buddhist Thought in India: Three Phases of Buddhist Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962.

Conze, Edward (tr.), *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary*, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1994.

Cornu, Philippe, *La Liberté Naturelle de l'Esprit*, Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994.

Dalton, Jacob P., *The Uses of the dGongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo in the Development of the rNying ma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, PhD thesis, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002.

Dorje, Gyurme, and Kapstein, Matthew, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History*, vol.2: Reference Materials, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1991.

Dowman, Keith, *Old Man Basking in the Sun: Longchenpa's Treasury of Natural Perfection*, Kathmandu: Vajra Books, 2006.

Eckehart, Meister, *Schriften und Predigten*, Aus dem Mittelhochdeutschen übersetzt und herausgegeben von Hermann Büttner, 2 Volumes, Jena: Eugen Dietrichs, 1923.

Esler, Dylan, 'Note d'oniromancie tibétaine : réflexions sur le Chapitre 4 du *bSam-gtan mig-sgron* de gNubs-chen sangs-rgyas ye-shes', in *Acta Orientalia Belgica*, vol.25, 2012, pp. 317-328.

Esler, Dylan, 'The Origins and Early History of rDzogs chen', in *The Tibet Journal*, vol.30:3, Autumn 2005, pp. 33-62.

Faure, Bernard, *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Hillis, Gregory, 'Khyung Texts in the rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum', in Eimer, Helmut, and Germano, David (eds.), *The Many Canons of Tibetan Buddhism, Proceedings of the Ninth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Leiden 2000*, Leiden: Brill, 2002, pp. 313-334.

Karmay, Samten Gyaltzen, *The Great Perfection: A Philosophical and Meditative Teaching of Tibetan Buddhism*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2007.

Germano, David, 'Architecture and Absence in the Secret Tantric History of rDzogs-chen', in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol.17:2, 1994, pp. 203-335.

Germano, David F., *Poetic Thought, the Intelligent Universe, and the Mystery of Self: The Tantric Synthesis of rDzogs-chen in Fourteenth Century Tibet*, PhD thesis, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1992.

Guénon, René, *Le Symbolisme de la Croix*, Paris: Editions Vega, 2007.

Guenther, Herbert V., *From Reductionism to Creativity: rDzogs chen and the New Sciences of Mind*, Boston: Shambhala, 1989.

Guenther, Herbert V., *The Life and Teaching of Nāropa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1975.

Guenther, Herbert V., *Meditation Differently*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1992.

Guenther, Herbert V., 'Meditation Trends in Early Tibet', in Lai, Whalen, and Lancaster, Lewis R. (eds.), *Early Ch'an in China and Tibet*, Berkeley: Buddhist Studies Series 5, 1983, pp. 351-366.

Guenther, Herbert V., *The Teachings of Padmasambhava*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996.

Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time*, Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006.

Higgins, David, 'Non-mentation Doctrine in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism', in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol.29: 2, 2006, pp. 244-303.

Hôbôgirin: Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Bouddhisme d'après les Sources Chinoises et Japonaises, 8 Parts, Tokyo: Maison Franco-Japonaise, 1929-2008.

Kimura, Ryūtoku, 'Le Dhyāna Chinois au Tibet ancien après Mahāyāna', in *Journal Asiatique*, vol.269, 1981, pp. 183-192.

Lamotte, Etienne, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti (Vimalakīrtinirdeśa)*, Louvain-la-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1987.

La Vallée Poussin, Louis de, *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, Traduction et Annotations, 6 Volumes, Bruxelles: Institut Belge des Hautes Etudes Chinoises, 1971.

Levin, David Michael, *The Body's Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism*, London: Routledge, 1985.

Levin, David Michael, *The Opening of Vision: Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation*, London: Routledge, 1988.

Liljenberg, Karen, 'On the history and identification of two of the Thirteen Later Translations of the Dzogchen Mind Series', in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no.17, Octobre 2009, pp. 51-61.

Loseries, Ulrich, *Guru Padmasambhavas „Instruktion ‘Die Kette der Anschauungen’“ (Man-ngag lTa-ba'i Phreng-ba) erläutert durch Methoden der Auslegung des „die Essenz des Geheimen“ lehrenden Tantras (gSang-ba'i sNying-po'i rGyud)*, PhD thesis, Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, 1989.

Meinert, Carmen, 'Chinese Chan and Tibetan rDzogs chen: Preliminary Remarks on Two Tibetan Dunhuang Manuscripts', in Blezer, Henk (ed.), *Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet: Tibetan Studies II*, PIATS 2000, vol.2, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002, pp. 289-307.

Meinert, Carmen, *Chinesische Chan- und tibetische rDzogs chen- Lehre: eine komparatistische Untersuchung im Lichte des philosophischen Heilskonzeptes ‚Nicht-Vorstellen‘ anhand der Dunhuang-Dokumente des chinesischen Chan-Meister Wolun und des Werkes bSam gtan mig sgron des tibetischen Gelehrten gNubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes*, PhD thesis, Bonn: Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms Universität, 2004.

Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, *Knowledge and the Sacred*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

Norbu, Namkhai, and Clemente, Adriano (trs.), *The Supreme Source: The Kunjed Gyalpo: The Fundamental Tantra of Dzogchen Semde*, Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1999.

Norbu, Namkhai, and Lipman, Kennard (trs.), *Primordial Experience: An Introduction to rDzogs-chen Meditation*, Boston: Shambhala, 2001.

Partridge, Eric, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

Rahula, Walpola, 'Wrong Notions of *Dhammatā* (*Dharmatā*)', in Cousins, Lance, et al. (eds.), *Buddhist Studies in Honour of I.B. Horner*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1974, pp. 181-191.

van Schaik, Sam, 'The Early Days of the Great Perfection', in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, vol.27: 1, 2004, pp. 165-206.

van Schaik, Sam, and Dalton, Jacob, 'Where Chan and Tantra Meet: Tibetan Syncretism in Dunhuang', in Whitfield, Susan (ed.), *The Silk Road: Trade, Travel, War and Faith*, London: British Library Press, 2004, pp. 63-71.

Schaya, Léo, *L'Homme et l'Absolu selon la Kabbale*, Paris: Editions Dervy, 2009.

Schuon, Frithjof, *Treasures of Buddhism*, Bloomington: World Wisdom Books, 1993.

Spearing, A.C. (tr.), *The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, London: Penguin Books, 2001.

Walshe, Maurice (tr.), *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995.

Wangdu, Pasang, and Diemberger, Hildegard, *dBa' bzhed: The Royal Narrative concerning the Bringing of the Buddha's Doctrine to Tibet*, Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000.

