Bonpo Studies
The A Khrid System of Meditation

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the present work is to provide a basis for a more detailed study of the nature and history of the system of meditation and spiritual realization peculiar to the Bonpo lamaist tradition, called A khrid, i.e. “The teachings (khrid) concerning the Unconditioned (a)”.

I have made use of two texts, both published in the volume entitled “A-TRI THUN-TSHAM CHO-NA DAN CHA-LAK CHE SHUK-SO”¹ (Tibetan Bonpo Foundation, Delhi 1967, 224 p.):

A. rTogs ldan šams brgyud kyi rnam thar rin chen phriṅ ba (p. 5-64).
B. Man ŋag khrid kyi rim pa lag len thun mchams dañ bčas pa (p. 64-117).

The English foreword to the “A-TRI THUN-TSHAM” gives a few basic facts concerning the history of the A khrid system:

“The A khrid collection is one of the most important compendia of the “Great Perfection” (Rdzogs chen) teachings of Bon. The Rdzogs chen doctrine, shared by the Rnying-ma-pa and the Bon-po, is the basis of a profound system of meditative philosophy. The original teachings of the A khrid are attributed to the great Dgongs-mjød Ri-khrod-chen-po (b. 1038), who extracted them from the Khro rgyud and added to them from his own dgongs gter (teachings concealed in the superconscious mental state of a great religious teacher for rediscovery at a future time). These teachings were later arranged into a religious system by Bru-chen Rgyal-ba-kyung-drung (b. 1242).”

Text A gives the biographies of 21 lamas, from -rMe’u dGoṅs mjod ri
khrod čhen po² (1038-1096)³ to 'Gru Ńi ma' od zer (1562-1637). The text thus deals with a considerable stretch of time, almost exactly six hundred years. However, it has been thought most fruitful to concentrate on the period between dGoṅs mjod and Bru čhen rGyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ (1242-1290), for two reasons:

(a) It is this period which is formative as regards the A khrid system, Bru čhen being responsible for its final codification, contained in text B.

(b) It seems evident, judging from its structure, that text A originally concluded with the biography of Bru čhen; the following biographies (which are referred to as lo rgyus, the preceding ones being referred to as rnam thar) are simply added one by one without any attempt at integration with the structure of the first part of the text. This is clearly shown by the table of contents preceding the translation.

Accordingly, I have given a translation in extenso of the biographies of dGoṅs mjod, his disciple and successor sGom čhen 'bar ba, and of Bru čhen. The position of Bru čhen, however, is complex. According to the colophon of text B he is the author of this text and thus responsible for the codification of the A khrid system. The colophon runs as follows⁴:

"Thus this (text, bearing the title) ‘Man nāg khrid kyi lag len go rim thun mchams daṅ bčas pa’⁵—which contains the practice⁶ of the Venerable Hermit and the disciples of his lineage—has been composed in order to obtain the Example and Meaning⁷ in accordance with scripture (luṅ) and oral instruction and elucidated by personal experience (nams myon), at the monastery of mKhar sna, (which is similar to) a heap of jewels, in accordance with the instruction and practice of the peerless 'Dul ba rin po čhe⁸ who is the spiritual essence of 'Gro mgon g-Yor me and the illustrious bLo gros rin po čhe⁹, the worthless Bru sgom rGyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ having been exhortcd by 'Dru sgom sByin pa 'od zer whose spiritual effort is without distraction."

However, the Bonpo tradition also includes a second system of rJogs čhen, called Žaṅ žuṅ sšan (b)rgyud. A comparison between the A khrid and the sÑan brgyud remains to be undertaken, but as a first step in this direction I have given (Part II, App. 1) an analysis of the contents of the first 80 fol. of a text entitled “sÑan brgyud kyi sšon 'gro'i rim pa rnams” (Bonpo Foundation,
New Delhi 1964, 119 fol.)

The first 80 folios constitute a complete work, concluded by a colophon in which it is stated that the work has been composed by *Brui bcan pa rGyal ba g-yei dru* at the repeated request of the *(kalyan-)mitra (bshes gnen) bKra shis rin *chen* at the monastery of *g-Yas ru dBen sa kha*11. Thus *Bru *chen* is connected with the *sNan brgyud* as well as *A khrid*. However, in fact he belongs to the very lineage of *sNan brgyud*, as well as to that of *A khrid*. The “rJogs pa *chen* po Zan yun *sNan rgyud* kyi *brgyud pa’i bla ma rnam thar*12, a collection of biographies of the lamas of the spiritual lineage of *sNan brgyud*, includes that of *Bru *chen* (fol. 49b-52b).

A comparison between the latter text and text A is instructive13. The first section, which deals with the background, childhood and youth of *Bru *chen*, is, with a few occasional and insignificant exceptions, identical in both texts. The “*sNan rgyud*” then has a long passage of almost two and a half pages which deals with how he was instructed in the doctrines of *sNan brgyud*. This passage is entirely omitted in text A, which merely states that he studied, among other works, texts concerning “rJogs pa *chen* po *sNan rgyud*”. The remainder of both texts have approximately the same length, and are, to a large extent, identical. Text A, however, devotes several lines to the composition of the “*A khrid*” (=text B), while the “*sNan rgyud*” simply gives the title in an enumeration of the various texts he composed14.

We can therefore conclude that there must have existed a biography of *Bru *chen* previous to the composition of either text and made use of by both authors; for it is not likely, in view of the considerable differences wherever the texts do not coincide, that the author of the one has copied from the other; for the same reason, it is clear that the two traditions of *A khrid* and *sNan brgyud* were considered as quite distinct, despite the fact that *Bru *chen* belonged to both lineages.

The biographies of the *A khrid* lamas in text A are, on the whole, rather disappointing. We learn nothing of possible contacts with other lamaist sects, and next to nothing regarding their social and religious background. However, a few facts can be gleaned, in particular concerning the geographical location of the system. The *A khrid* is traditionally connected with the *Bru zha* family (*Bru cha*), in spite of the fact that *dGo ni* belonged to *rMe’u cha*15. However, *Bru *chen’s* predecessor ‘*Dul ba rgyal mchan* (=’*Dul ba rin po *che*) belonged to *Bru cha*, as did, of course, *Bru *chen* himself; succeeding the latter, the next four lamas all belonged to *Bru cha*. The fifth, however,
Rin Chen blo gros⁴⁶, was connected with Bru chaṅ only through his mother, Bru ža za rGyad mo. He was succeeded by his pupil Šes rab rgyal mchan (1356-1415), who was a native of rGyal mo ron⁴⁷. Šes rab rgyal mchan was the founder (1405) of the monastery of sMan ri in gCaṅ and thereafter the spiritual lineage of A khrid was passed on through the abbots of sMan ri; the last abbot who belonged to the A khrid lineage was sGa Kun bzaṅ rgyal mchan (abbot 1464). The line of sMan ri abbots and the A khrid lineage thereupon diverge.

It is also evident that the A khrid system—at least to the extent that text A permits us to grasp its history—originated in gCaṅ, where it was developed and finally codified by lamas native to the region. With Šes rab rgyal mchan this tradition is broken, and of the following six lamas, at least four were, like him, natives of the eastern part of Tibet. The above outline will become clearer when compared with App. 1 in Part I.

At this stage I would like to make a few remarks concerning the relations between the Bonpos of the period in question (11th—17th century) and another contemporary lamaist tradition, that of the Nyingmapas. The English Introduction quoted above states that rJogs Chen teachings are “shared by the Rnying-ma-pa and the Bon-po”, but leaves it at that. That we are here dealing with a problem which is, in fact, of the greatest importance to a fuller understanding of the nature not only of rJogs Chen, but also of the very nature of the Bonpo tradition, is, I think, evident, and Professor Snellgrove very rightly states: “Fundamental to this interesting problem (viz. the difference between bonpos and rMi-h-ma-pas) is a comparative study of the tantras and the rDzogs-chen (‘Great Perfection’) literature of these two oldest ‘Tibetan Buddhist’ groups.”¹⁸

In a larger perspective, the study of the rJogs Chen literature may hold the clue to a fuller understanding of the troubled centuries following the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet (8th—11th cent.); this is precisely the period in which the Bonpo as well as the Nyingmapa sects were formed. Professor Tucci (“Die Religionen Tibets”, Stuttgart 1970, p. 19) points to the importance of the hitherto unexplored rJogs Chen literature: “The development of Tibetan Buddhism in its initial phases is by no means as uncomplicated as the orthodox tradition would have us believe. Only systematic research in the history and beginning of the rDzogs c’en may permit one to judge the extent to which the tradition must be revised as regards these events.”
1. dGons mjod ri khrod pa
2. rNam rgyal ka ra
3. Ses rab rgyal mchan
4. Rin chen rgyal mchan
I do not at present dispose of material for a full treatment of this problem. However, it is clear that the A khrid system did, in fact, develop in contact with the Nyingmapa school. A study of volume KA ("gTer ston rnam thar" of the "Rin chen gter mchod"); i.e. the volume which contains the biographies of the principal Nyingmapa ‘Treasure-Discovers’ (gter ston), shows that a number of Bonpo ‘Treasure-Discovers’ are included. Among them is A ya bon po Lha 'bum alias Gu ru rnon rce who is characterised as bon snags, "a Bonpo tantricist", and who was a considerable ‘Treasure-Discoverer’ in gCar where he was born, according to a Bonpo source, in 1136\(^9\). Thus he would seem, both geographically and historically, to be fairly close to the milieu we are studying.

A far more important indication, however, concerns dPon gsas Khyuṇ thog rcal, who likewise is styled ‘a Bonpo tantricist’ (bon gyi shags 'chaṅ). The “gTer ston rnam thar” also calls him Rig 'jin rgod ldem and states that he is called dPon gsas Khyuṇ rgod by the Bonpos. He is thus at once identifiable with dByil ston dPon gsas Khyuṇ rgod (text A gives his name as Khyuṇ rgod rcal, p. 39 1. 21) alias Rig 'jin rgod kyi ldem 'phrul (b. 1175)\(^9\), the teacher of 'A Ḫa bLo gros rgyal mchan; the latter belongs to the A khrid lineage.\(^{21}\) A nephew of dPon gsas, dByil ston Nam mkha’ bsod nams, was one of the teachers of rGyal ba g-yuṅ draṅ himself (text A, p. 40 1. 1). On the other hand, dPon gsas Khyuṇ thog is of considerable importance in the Nyingmapa tradition, being the author of ‘Treasures’\(^{23}\), and is even considered to have incarnated himself in a later lama, dPal ldan 'jam dbyaṅ bla ma\(^{28}\). We thus see a lama, important both in Nyingmapa and Bonpo traditions, playing a significant part in the development of the A khrid system.

Another case, directly relevant to this study, is bsTan gnis giṅ pa Padma che dbaṅ rgyal po (second half of the 15th century)\(^{34}\), of whom the “gTer ston rnam thar” says: “He brought to light the Great, Medium, and Small ‘Oral Transmissions of Ta pi hri ca’ and other Bonpo works.”\(^{25}\) Ta pi hri ca, however, is a quasi-historical Ḫaṅ Ḫuṅi lama belonging to the Bonpo sNaṅ rgyud tradition of rJogs Ḫen\(^{46}\); he lived in the 8th century, being the guru of Gyer spuṅs Ḫen po sNaṅ bzer lod po, a contemporary of king Khri sroṅ lde bcān\(^{37}\). We have already noted the close contact between the A khrid and sNaṅ rgyud systems; it is therefore interesting to note that sNaṅ rgyud texts were accepted as authoritative by Nyingmapas.\(^{28}\)

As regards text B, I have translated the mūla (dḥos gzi) (p. 79-100), i.e.
Ch. 5—10 inclusive. This section deals with the actual obtaining of liberation once the preliminaries—contemplation of impermanence, the bodhisattva's vow, acquiring of merit, etc.—have been accomplished. I have tried to give a translation as close as possible to the Tibetan text, without taking into account the general background of Buddhist thought as it presented itself to the Tibetans of the 13th century. To take this background into consideration would necessitate a much more comprehensive study. As for the immediate sources of text B, the only other work mentioned in text A and explicitly qualified as A khrid is the “g-Yas ru'i A khrid ēhen mo” by 'Gro mgon g-Yor po me dpal, born in 1134. This text, like text B, is stated to have been composed in accordance with the practice of dGoṅs mchod. The A khrid system must therefore, in fact, have been codified in the second half of the 12th century, i.e. a century before the composition of text B by Bru ēhen.

The ultimate sources of the A khrid system cannot be clearly discerned at this stage. However, the English Introduction quoted above states that dGoṅs mchod Ri khrod ēhen po extracted the teachings from the “Khro rgyud". This is certainly identical with the “Khro bo rgyud kyi skor" which together with the “Zi ba don gyi skor" forms the “SPyi spuṅs yan lag gi skor", one of the collections of texts which are included in the tantric section of the Bonpo bKa' 'gyur. The teachings of the “Khro rgyud" are thus ultimately attributed to sTon pa gShen rab himself.

The “bKa' 'gyur brten 'gyur" (p.8 1.21 et seq.) states that although “The Six Tantras" of the gShen-Treasure (gShen gter rgyud drug), which were hidden as ‘Treasures' when the ‘Knowledge-Holders’ flew to the West, disappeared due to a curse, they are, according to mKhas grub sKyabs ston rin po čhe, identical with “The Six Great Tantras" (rgyud čhen drug) found by Khu cha Zla 'od 'bar in the Earth-Male-Tiger Year (i.e. 1038) at sPa gro phug gchal. The context makes it clear that “The Six Great Tantras” correspond to the “Khro rgyud".

dGoṅs mchod being born in the same year that the “Khro rgyud" was discovered (1038), there would seem to be no reason why he should not, as the Introduction states, have based his A khrid system on it. It is also interesting that this text was found at sPa gro phug gčal, a site which, as mentioned in note 28, is of considerable importance to the Nyingmapas as well as the Bonpos.

The text published in New Delhi and on which the present study is based is stated (p. 117) to have been edited on the basis of three copies:
(a) A copy of A khrid included in a collection entitled gSañ rgyud.
(b) A copy originating from Dol po (Nepal).
(c) A copy from sTod Tre pa dgon pa.

As I have not been able to consult these three copies, I have felt that it is preferable to postpone a full philological discussion of a number of difficult passages.

Both texts A and B have been read together with the Bonpo dge bšes (now abbot of sMan ri gsar pa in Himachal Pradesh) Sangye Tenzin Jongdong (ST) during the autumn of 1968, in Oslo. His patient help has been indispensable for a full understanding of the text. A number of difficult passages have been translated with the help of dge bšes Samten Gyaltsen Karmay (SG) during a visit to London in June 1969. Both Tibetan scholars have given invaluable assistance for which I am deeply grateful. I am also indebted to Mme. A. Macdonald, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, who has read the first two biographies and provided a number of valuable suggestions, as well as much encouragement. Finally I must thank my teacher, Professor Nils Simonsson, Oslo, who from the start has encouraged my studies and given freely of his time and advice.

Oslo, November 1969

“Bonpo Studies” was presented at the University of Oslo in 1969 for the degree of magister artium. Since then, several important works have been published, among which particular mention must be made of Samten Gyaltsen Karmay’s, excellent book “The Treasury of Good Sayings, A Tibetan History of Bon”, London, 1972. A number of useful texts have also been published by the Bonpos themselves. However, as it is hoped that at the present study has retained its usefulness, it is reprinted without any significant additions or alterations.

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Notes to Introduction

1. I.e. A khrid thun mchams bco lha dar cha lag bchas b brag s so.
2. I have adopted the spelling dGons mjad which is the one found in text A; however, text B, like the foreword, has (twice) the spelling dGons mjad.
3. All dates are based on information found in “SaHs rgyas kyi bstan rci s mno mchur nor bu’i phreab ba” published (p. 23-40) in “Tibetan Zang Zung Dictionary” (Tibetan Bonpo Foundation, New Delhi 1965). A translation of this text (“A Chronological Table of the Bonpos: The bstan rci of Ri ma bstan ’jin”) has been accepted for publication by Acta Orientalia, Copenhagen.

4. The colophon has the following text (p. 115 1.4-11):
   “de lta nr man nag khris gyi lag len go rim thun mcham das bka’ pa’i ni/ rJe Ri khrod pa yab sras bryud par bka’ pa’i mchod srol lo/ ’Gro mgon gYor me das mchan Idan bLo gros rin po che’i thugs bSud m’ham med ’Dul ba rin po che’i ’Zal gdams phyag len Yi lta ba la/ luhn da nh man nag gi skabs sbyar flams myo’h gis gsal btab nas ’zhin zad gsal ’zhin go bde bar dpe’ thob don thob gyi chul du snyigs ma’i Bru bsgom rGyal ba g-yun’u dui la rce gZig gi flams len pa ’Dru sgom sByin pa ’od zer gyis bskul nas rin Chen spu’ns la mKhar sna’i dgon du bkod pa’o/”

5. A slight variation from the title as given on p. 64: “khris kyi rim pa lag len thun”.

6. mJod slo l is erroneous for mjad slo, cf. p. 41 1. 2 where text B—as in the colophon—is stated to have been composed in accordance with Ri khrod pa yab sras kyi mjad slo; precisely the same words are employed to qualify the “A khris Chen mo” by g-Yor po me dpal, p. 26 1. 1.

7. “Example” (dpe) and “Meaning” (don) would seem to refer to the triad dpe rtags don which is dealt with on p. 52.

8. One of the gurus of Bru Chen and his predecessor in the A khris lineage.

9. Two lamas of the A khris lineage (12th cent.); the latter was the guru of ’Dul ba rin po che, cf. Part I, App. 1.

10. This title is, in fact, simply that of the first section (vol. KA) of the work which is in a printed letter from the Tibetan Bonpo Foundation (Jan. 2nd, 1966) is referred to as “rJogs Chen shan bryud rgyal ba’i phyag khris”, which surely is the correct title.

11. The text (vol. ZA fol. 10a-10b):
   “de lta nrjogs pa Chen po ’Zan ’Zan sphan bryud kyi phyi na’u gna’ ba ya’u gna’ da’u bka’ pa’i gnad bsdu’/ zab mo’i gdams pa du ma’i bSud dril ba’ grub Chen go’a ma’i rnam kyi ’Zal gdams mthar thug pa’i ni/ Bru’i bcun pa rGyal ba g-yun’u dui la/ [unclear] . . . pa’i b’i sphan bKra’ gis rin Chen gya’ na’u nas ya’u du bskul ba’i don du/ lag len go rims,bZin du/ g-Yas ru dBen sa kha’i dgon du sbyar ba’o/”

12. Published in “History and Doctrine of Bonpo Nispanna-yoga”, Satapitaka Series No. 73. New Delhi 1968.


14. Id.

15. Bru chen is one of the five chen of the Bonpos. the others being rMe’u, sPa, Zu, and gSen (ST). On p. 5 1. 13-14 A khris is qualified as Bru chen gi; it is further stated to form one of the three sections of gDams pa skor gsum, the other two being Bon Zig gi Lhan skyes and rMe chen gi Khris rim gsal sgron. Thus systems similar to A khris have been associated with the family lineages of Bon Zig and rMe’u. This information is contained in an interlinear note.

16. All the Bru chen lamases, including Rin chen blo gros are stated to originate from g-Yas ru dBen sa kha. This can hardly be the monastery of dBen sa kha, but presumably the region surrounding it.

17. He is frequently given the title rGyal ba gZils pa, i.e. he is considered almost equal to sTon pa gTen rab. It is remarkable that he was not only almost exactly contemporaneous with gCon kha pa (1357-1419) but also, like him, a considerable scholar inclined towards scholastic systematization rather than yogic mysticism, an ecclesiastic renovator and the founder of the monastery which thereafter became the centre of the sect.
18. "Nine Ways of Bon" p. 15.
19. "gTer ston nram thar" fol. 43a-43b3. "Ri ma bstan 'jim" (96) gives his year of birth as 1136, while the gTer ston nram thar" states that he was contemporary with 'Brom ston (1008-1064).
20. In this case, too, there is a problem of chronology. "Ri ma bstan 'jim" (103) gives his date of birth as 1175. The "gTer ston nram thar" fol. 227a, however, states that he was a contemporary of Lha bcun Byan chub 'od (active 1042) and Yo bo Di'pam ka ra (i.e. Affa). His biography is found on fol. 50a-51a4.
22. "gTer ston nram thar" fol. 78a5 et seq.: "Maṅ yul Ri bo che dbal 'bar nas Rig 'jin rgod ldem gwis yas gter du'sbas pa'i Phag mo za brgya'i skor rnam's..."; fol. 91b4 et seq: "dPon gsas Khyun thog gi Che srgbu ye ges srog thig..."
23. Id. fol. 124b3.
24. Id. fol. 78a5-82a1. He is stated to have lived in the 7th rab byun (fol. 228b), i.e. AD 1447-1507.
25. Id. fol. 81a3: "Ta pi hri ca'i sgel bgyud ye 'briṅ Chhuṅ gsum sogs bon sde... spyan draṅs..."
26. "Bon-po Niṣpanna Yoga" p. 15.5-15.6, p. 26.5-27.4 (where the name is given as dPon Chen Ta pi ra ca).
27. Id. p. 27.4-31.5 gives an abridged version of the two episodes translated from the "Zan sūṇ sūṇ sūṇ rgyud" by Professor Snellgrove in "A Cultural History of Tibet" p. 101-102 and p. 103-104.
28. A fuller representation of the information contained in the "gTer ston nram thar" would exceed the scope of the present study. However, it should be mentioned that not only are a number of gter ston-lamas stated to have been born as Bonpos (which would, in fact, in no case be surprising), but a considerable number either discovered Bonpo 'treasures', studied Bonpo texts, or had Bonpo pupils. It is interesting that one of the most important 'treasure'-sites of the Nyingma, sPa gro ḡaṅ is likewise of some importance in the Bonpo tradition, and particularly in the formation of the A khris system. Cf. "Ri ma bstan 'jim" (76, 108); "bKa' gyur brten 'gyur" p. 4 l. 11, p. 7 l. 8, p 8 l. 23.
29. Cf. note 6. The text is considered by S.G. to have been rare in Tibet, if, indeed, it has at all survived to the present day.
30. "bKa' gyur brten 'gyur" p. 8 l. 16 et seq.
31. This refers to the expulsion of the Bonpos from Tibet during the reign of king Khri sron lde bcan, according to "Ri ma bstan 'jim" (54) in 749. Cf. "A Cultural History of Tibet" p. 107.
32. "The Six Great Tantras" are as follows ("bKa' gyur brten 'gyur" p. 8 l. 25 et seq.):

1. iTa ba khyuṅ ēhen g-yun
drum
gsan
dr
gyal
t 4 le'u
2. rJu 'phrub dra ba
g-yun
drum
gsan
dr
gyal
t 30
t
3. dBal mo las kyi thig le
g-yun
drum
gsan
dr
gyal
t 33
t
4. 'Gu ya srog 'jin
g-yun
drum
gsan
dr
gyal
t 29
t
5. gSaṅ ba dgu 'phar
g-yun
drum
gsan
dr
gyal
t 19
t
6. gSaṅ ba thabs Žabs
g-yun
drum
gsan
dr
gyal
t 16
t
33. "Ri ma bstan 'jim" (76).
PART I

THE TRANSMISSION OF THE A KHRID SYSTEM

rTogs ldan šams brgyud kyi rnam thar rin čhen phriṅ ba

p. 5-64 in “A-tri thun-tsham cho-na dañ cha-lak”

The complete contents, with page numbers, of the text in “A-tri thun-tsham” from which excerpts are here translated, are:

Introduction
I. dGoṅs mjod ri khrod čhen po (A)
   A. bla ma
   B. dḥos
      1. sku'i khruṅs lugs
      2. lam la dka' ba spyad chul
      3. gžan don šes rgyud grol chul
      4. dbyiṅs su mya ſan 'das chul
      5. rje bžag bstan pa spel chul
      6. ma 'oṅs luṅ bstan 'jin chul
   C. sras bḍi
      1. sKye med draṅ sroṅ
      2. Pho sgom
      3. sGom 'bar gyi rnam thar (B)
         (a) dḥos
         (b) sras drug
            1. sNa Phar phyin
            2. dBu brag pa
            3. gNam mcho do pa
            4. Jo gduṅ
            5. Jo g-yuṅ

p. 5—8
p. 8—14
p. 8
p. 8—14
p. 8
p. 8—11
p. 11
p. 11—12
p. 12—13
p. 13—14
p. 14—42
p. 14
p. 14
p. 14—42
p. 14—19
p. 19—42
p. 19
p. 19
p. 19
p. 19—42
The following are excerpts in translation, with page references (in parentheses) to the original Tibetan text in “A-tri thun-tsham”:

A.

(RME’U DGOŃS MZOD RI KHROD PA)

(p. 8) The biography of that saint has three topics :

(a) his gurus,  
(b) himself,  
(c) his four sons.  
(a) As for the first (topic) :  
the great Žu skyid mkhar ba (Žu skye se ba),  
rmE’u Lha ri gñan po,  
Bru rje bcu drg-Yuñ druñ bla ma,
\[ \begin{align*}
\text{\v{Z}u sGrol ba g\ddot{\text{y}}en rgyal,} \\
m\text{Cho bcun Nam mkha' rgyal mchan,} \\
g\text{-Yu sgro legs pa,} \\
\text{the adept Tre ston sGo cha,} \\
\text{the venerable Khro cha\=n ('Brug lha)} -
\end{align*} \]

in all eight; those lamas were indeed the manifestations of Buddhas come for the welfare of beings.

(b) The second (topic): the biography of the saint himself has six parts:

(1) first, the manner in which he was born;
(2) how he experienced difficulties on the Way;
(3) how for the welfare of others he set free their consciousness (\textit{\=yes rgyud});
(4) how he passed beyond sorrow in the Unconditioned (\textit{dbyi\=ths})
(5) how his disciples to whom he had given the Word were set free;
(6) how prophecies were fulfilled.

(1) First, the manner in which he was born:

At \textit{\=Sa\=n s kyi Gur \=zogs} in \textit{g-Yas ru}, he is said to have been the eldest of four sons of \textit{rMe'u Sag bstan}, the father, and \textit{rDo rje mcho}, the mother. Now, although he had from his childhood on without effort remained free from the evil defilement of being visibly present (in the world)—the power of actions performed in previous lives being good—his parents forced him to marry when he was eighteen; having become separated from his wife—being disgusted with (being) a worldly person—by means of numerous ways of escape like (absention from) sexual union etc., he went forth in order to cut off (Ignorance) in one (life): the first (part).

(2) Secondly, how he experienced difficulties on the Way:

Thereafter, having brought a few goods, undertaking a course of studies (\textit{thugs sbyo\=n mjad}), he requested numerous precepts concerning \textit{tantra} and (precepts) concerning Mind (\textit{s\=nags sems kyi bon ma\=n du \=zus}) from his guru \textit{\=Zu sKye se}. His guru having at that time said: "You must study under \textit{Bru g-Yu\=n dra\=n bla ma} and the noble (\textit{sras}) (\textit{\=Zu} sGrol ba g\ddot{\text{y}}en (p. 9) rgyal whose mental capacities and skill in explanation are greater than mine!" he heard the "\textit{Gab pa}" and the minor precepts of "\textit{Sems phran}" from the lamas
of Bru and Žu respectively, and learnt tantric rituals from these two (gñis bar nas).

Thereafter, when having joined those two he heard the science of logic from ṇaṅ stod sTag pa kha ćhe, reflecting carefully he thought: “As for those two, they will exercise the abbatial function (mkhan sa), so the teaching of the Word is firmly established. However, in this there is no profit for me; I require the spiritual realisation (dge sbyor) resulting from the full comprehension of the (esoteric) Sense of the Word.” Having requested a consecration and the vow of an upāsaka from the two acāryas of Žu and Bru (respectively), he was given the name of g-Yuṅ druṅ rgyal po.

Having thereafter gone to dKar po brag, he saw and understood the precepts and mind-issued instructions of Tre ston Go cha and the venerable Khro chaṅ; the instant traversal (of all the stages of meditation) (thod brgyal) having arisen in his mind through intense effort in meditation for a few years, a limited number of insights (rtogs pa sna ‘ga’) arose.

Having at that time thought, “As my insight and reflection (lta dgoṅs) thus are excellent, it will be of greater benefit to beings if I become a monk (rten bcun pa žig byas na)”, he went to dBus, bringing two loads of molasses which he offered to the acārya Jo g-yuṅ; the acārya said: “In general, weariness (with worldly life) in a strong youth among those called ‘men’ is overhasty. As from among them you people from (gCaṅ) profess the greatest faith but have least faith in your hearts, you will not obtain monkhood; go back!”

As he entreated him again and again, he said: “Well, as the upādhyāya lives in retreat, ask him to come!” As he was going to the (hermitage of the) upādhyāya, the latter said to his servant-disciple that evening: “As I had an auspicious dream last night, whoever comes today, bring him to me!” When he (i.e. Ri khrod ĝhen po) arrived, the servant-disciple reported his request and brought him (to the upādhyāya). (The latter) leaving his solitary seclusion, the acārya said when (p. 10) he and the upādhyāya met: “There is no reason for you to live in seclusion (as you leave it) every other day!” The upādhyāya said: “Do you not see? He will become a saint who upholds the spiritual lineage of the vinaya.” As the acārya said : “Tell me a sign (that occurred) at that time (in support of your claim)!” (the upādhyāya replied): “As in my dream I dream that a tree, a so ma plant, growing by my door became higher than my dwelling, spreading out with leaves and
fruit and flowers, he will become an upholder of the spiritual lineage of the vinaya and a propagator of the Doctrine.” Later, the meaning (of the prophecy) being fulfilled, he became one who upheld the ‘life’ of the Doctrine.

At that time, at the age of 24, he took a monk’s vows. The name which had been given to him by (the lamas of) Bru and Žu was not changed. The acārya thereupon gave him the injunction: “Live as a hermit in gCaṅ and strive towards sainthood and success in meditation!” Having accordingly gone up (to gCaṅ), he visited the hermitages of g-Yas ru dkar po brag etc.; through doing away with every doubt and through study, mind and insight (ñams rtogs) became united without distinction, and spiritual delusions were dissolved in the Unconditioned (bon ṇid).

Thus that holy saint had eight gurus, transmitters of the Word, full of grace:

full of grace regarding training of consciousness and (instruction in) mantras and Mind—the great Žu Skye se and rMe’u Lha ri gñan po;

full of grace regarding the opening of the Way, the preaching of the Doctrine and the giving of consecrations—Žu sGrol ba (gšen rgyal) and Bru g-Yuṅ druṅ bla ma;

full of grace regarding the guarding of vows and the vinaya—the upādhyāya and the acārya;

full of grace regarding the precepts of the Oral Transmission (śhan rgyud), giving their blessing although he did not meet them personally—Tre ston Go ćha and Khro chaṅ ’Brug lha: in all eight or six.

As, saluting the feet of the above lamas, he studied and (p. 11) mastered the entire Bon of Cause and Effect, excellent insight arose in his mind:

Thus, at sKyor mo luṅ he saw the faces of (the gods of) the rNam dag (cycle, complete) with sons, mothers, chief gods and their entourage, and having in one instant ascended all the Stages, he strode forth in the sky, went through mountains without being impeded, and, firm stone becoming like mud, the master left clear imprints of his hands and feet at Brag spyaṅ thag mo. He also showed other signs of spiritual perfection and feats of magic. He boasted many shining accomplishments. He established the tradition of attainment in meditation (sgom sgrub). He propagated the Doctrine of Mahāyāna so that it spread.
Thirdly, how for the welfare of others he set free their consciousness:

When the Saint accordingly went to bLon po steḥs in Šaṅs, his entourage, lay patrons and disciples, gathered in great numbers; his four special spiritual sons, his two ‘wives’, his eight ‘younger brothers’, etc. gathered in the four groups:

in general (spyir gyi), the entourage of masters of meditation, who have obtained the Sense (of the Scriptures), inseparably connected with insight and contemplation;
the entourage of practitioners of tantras, who reach sainthood through adoration and realization;
the entourage of pure monks who reach sainthood through the rules of the vinaya, through renunciation and insight;
the entourage of those who, having taken the bodhisattva’s vow of prayer and of entering¹⁰ (on the bodhisattva’s course), pray for those who suffer and are poor.

Further, as for the instruction left behind, composed by himself, he composed:

“sGom rim ḍhe ’briṅ ḍhuṅ gsum’,
“Gegs sel’,
“gČod’,
“sPyir gdamṣ’,
“bKa’ ’khor chig bŽi pa’,
“Sems la grol ’debs’, and many other works.

Further, the excellency of his greatness (sku ḍhe ba’i yon tan), the deeds (’phrin las) he performed etc., what he did by means of many activities (mjad spyod rnam thar du ma), are known from his Detailed Biography.

Fourthly, how he passed beyond sorrow in the Unconditioned:

Having reached his 59th year, (he performed) his last (deed) for the welfare of beings while being visibly present (in this world.) When he was invited by Khro chaṅ rGyal mchan (p. 12) to Byaṅ ’Dab (’Dam) in order to consecrate (a new copy of the) “Khams ḍchen”, he said to his attendants:
“Although I do not wish to go at this time, I must go.” Giving for one summer many sermons and admitting many to the state of monkhood, a feeling of indisposition taking a turn for the worse (ma dag pa’i snañ ba log tu byuñ nas), the lama said when he was offered sweet and savoury food by Khro chañ bsTan pa’i yõ mo: “It is not proper that I drink this!” Repeating this three times, he is said to have said (to himself), the food being offered (again): “When somebody wants (one to eat), one should be indifferent to the taste; (therefore) I should do that (i.e. accept the food)”\textsuperscript{11}. Thereupon he said: “As I will soon wish to go, let me terminate the final rites connected with my instructions!”

Going to sNiñ druñ bon gnas, having said while on his way: “I shall make this my burial-place,”\textsuperscript{12} a votive cairn (tho) is said to have been erected in a valley meadow. He rode round (the cairn) three times, saying: “The expanse (dkyus) of the Unconditioned (bon ŋid) has been utterly cut (thag chod)! The attachment of saṁsĀra has been utterly cut! The illusion of bar do has been utterly cut!”

Thereafter, at the end of fourteen days’ halt during which he was ill, in the Fire-Male-Rat Year (1096)\textsuperscript{13}, at the appearance of the first light of dawn on the fourth day of the second winter month, sound, light and rays, (those) three (signs of death) having appeared\textsuperscript{14}, he passed beyond sorrow in the Unconditioned.

(5) Fifthly, how the Doctrine was spread through his disciples:

Although in general his flock (gāul bya) and his disciples were numerous beyond comprehension, those particularly noble ones who, having good karma, strove for the welfare of beings were: his four Spiritual Sons to whom he had entrusted his Word; his two ‘Wives’; his eight ‘Younger Brothers’; and his two ‘Youngest Sons’.

Thus, as for the four Spiritual Sons:

he gave the unborn Word of (right) action to gNal sKye med drañ sroñ in the west;
he gave the miraculously formed Word of insight to Žabs (bŽag) sGom čhen ’bar ba in the east;
he gave the meditation-Word of samādhi to Pho sgom Žig po in the north;
he gave the Word of power over the illusion of literal sense and real sense to Yar 'brog Me ston in the south. (p. 13).

As for his two ‘Wives’ they were:

Jo mo rgyal mo of ‘O yug sgo luṅ and bCun ma Dar sgron of ‘O yug.

As for his eight ‘Younger Brothers’ they were:

the devaputra rGya Ye šes sṅiṅ po of Khoṅ lam, sTag lo ‘dul ba of sTod luṅ
‘U zaṅs (saṅs) sgom dkar of Gram, Laṅ ‘Gro’i jo gšen,
the devaputra Cog lha jo dad of Lha steṅs, the abbot Chul khrims ’od zer of Šaṅs,
sTon pa grub pa of rGyaṅ ro, and Dam pa pho bcun of rJiṅ mo čhe.

As for the two ‘Youngest Sons’ they were:

gNas rten Jo sogs of rJiṅ mo čhe and the devaputra Tor rjin (ga rji) jo sras of sPra ba lun.

In addition to these, 508 siddhas. Generally staying in the hermitages, about 300 followers-in-attendance appeared. Being like a lamp of the Doctrine—all the (subsequent) hermit adepts spreading from him—he was extremely gracious towards his followers. As for those from among his disciples who, striving for the welfare of beings, being particularly noble ones endowed with good karma, were like lamps of the Doctrine, (they were): sGom (čhen) ‘bar(ba) and Yar (‘brog) Me (ston).

(6) Sixthly, from the events foretold by prophetic utterances (will here be mentioned):

(a) From the “‘Dul ba gliṅ grags’:
“As for the manifestation of gSer thog lče ‘byams, he will belong to the family of rMe’u and bear the name of ‘Dul ba. The (continued) power
of actions performed in previous lives becoming active, on his accepting
the monk's rules, a prophecy will be made. Having obtained spiritual
instruction from mCho (bcun Nam mkha' rgyal mchan) and (Bru rje
bcun) g-Yuṅ (druṅ bla ma), the monastic rules will be spread every-
where." Thus it is said.

(b) Further, from the "Gro mgon gyi 'phrul lde":
"As for the manifestation of Sad ne ga'u, the 'lifetree' of Bon will be
firmly planted by rMe'u g-Yuṅ druṅ rgyal mchan (i.e. Ri khor ḍchen po)
through his meditating in g-Yas ru Śaṅ on the Sense of Ultimate Nature
(gnas lugs don). For him Māra, creator of impediments, will be turned
into a disciple. Thereafter he will guard the doctrine of the rMe'u
(lineage) for three generations (p. 14). Thereupon he will become
one who does not return (to saṃsāra)."

(c) From the "gNad byaḥ drug ču pa" by rKyāḥ 'phags:
"As for the manifestation of the mind of Chad med 'od ldan—(he will
be called) 'rMe ston Dam pa ri khor'. His bodily stature will be small,
his eyes bright. His skin will be dark and of an even hue. He will
possess the spiritual insight Kun tu bzaṅ po. Hundreds of disciples will
obtain buddhahood. His ten lineage-holders will work for the welfare
of beings. His lineage will last to the end of the world. Those who
bow down before his feet will obtain buddhahood in the course of one
rebirth. He has opened the way to salvation for five hundred thousand
(beings)."

As it is thus written, that holy lama accordingly was a mahāsattva, come
for the welfare of beings.

* * * *

B.

(SGOM ČHEN 'BAR BA)

The biography of his Spiritual Sons has four parts:

1. sKye med draṅ sroṅ;
2. Pho sgom;
   — their biographies are found elsewhere.
3. sGom 'bar;
—his biography has two parts:
(a) himself
(b) that of his six Sons.

(a) Firstly, as for the biography of sGom 'bar himself:

(As for) the adept (?) gCaṅ gi Se bo¹⁶: His native land was Ñaṅ ro rGyaṅ mkhar ba; his family were bonpos of (the lineage of) Žabs (bŽag); he was the second of three brothers.

Being from his childhood full of faith, he is said to have heard the Doctrine explained by Lha rje rgyal mchan (chab). Upon growing up, he travelled to India and all the border areas to trade. Once, when together with one called Žug dkar the two went trading, enemies (i.e. robbers) appeared and they became miserable (i.e. destitute); accordingly they both swore an oath to turn towards religion. Thereafter Žug dkar requested the Hermit Lama for (instruction in) meditation.

sGom 'bar, however, went trading again and obtained about fifty strings of coins¹⁶; (p. 15) as he went to trade them, at that time the venerable Saint, having met his guru, the great sKye se, at sKyi mkhar, was on his way (home); at that time desire for deliverance (ḥes 'byuṅ gi dad pa)¹² was born in the man from gCaṅ (i.e. sGom 'bar).

As he begged: “O Saint! I too will come in the entourage of your holiness,” the Saint said: “How much food have you got? Make preparations (for travelling)!” Replying: “I will go just like this,” he came.

Upon arriving at the bank of the (river) Ñaṅ chu, violent disgust (with saṁsāra) was born, and he threw his trousers and (bamboo) carrying-frame¹⁸ in the water and said: “Go down from here! I will go upwards—our period of companionship has been (too) long!” Thereafter, acting as servant to the Saint at ’U yug yor po, he asked for (instruction in) meditation, and a wonderful (feeling of spiritual realization) arose.

At that time, all (the disciples) went to beg alms. As the man from gCaṅ, having asked for permission to go, also went (begging), spiritual realization (dge sbyor) did not arise in the way it had done before. Abandoning the alms-begging, he returned to the Saint and said: “I have not had spiritual realization!” He answered: “That is the result of begging.” As he (i.e. sGom 'bar) became angry, saying: “Very well, you did not say that the other
day!” the Saint replied: “I will let you have instruction.” But although he gave him a few precepts (gdams ṇag ‘ga’ zuñ), (spiritual realization) did not arise; although, further, he even gave him the instruction contained in the “mThar tḥug rgyas bṣi” and other volumes, it did not arise.

Then sGom čhen (‘bar ba) said: “Those who have some wealth, perform religious offerings (chogs 'khor); I have no wealth to perform religious offerings.

Those who have insight and meditation retain spiritual experience (ţams myoñ); I have no realization to retain spiritual experience.”

This is called ‘The Lament of sGom ‘bar’. At that occasion sGom ‘bar (really) said that as absolute non-existence (of spiritual realization) did not exist, there existed (spiritual realization), (but only to a certain degree) like the sun (from time to time appearing) between the clouds. In this manner he passed three years at that very place in indolence and indifference.

Thereafter, one autumn as all (the disciples) were dispersing, on his asking the Saint for a consecration (p. 16), he (i.e. the Saint) said, placing a vase on the top of his head: “sGom ‘bar! As you are very loud in your laments, you are one in whom the rust (which covers the mirror of your mind) and the obscuration of forming the concept of object and subject must now disappear. See whether there (in your mind) is clinging to the (notion of) ego or not!” At that time his spiritual realization is said to have increased.

Again, having gone to dBus to procure food, and having stayed a few years as a servant at mCho sman lha khañ, he (again) went up (to gCañ). Coming to his guru, he said: “When one’s guru’s grace is great, one meets with spiritual realization; (even) when it is small, he gives (his disciples) sacrificial cakes to eat; as you do not act thus towards me who ask to be firmly placed in the retaining of spiritual realization, my realization, having now vanished, does not exist.”

As he wept, the venerable one said: “For seeking spiritual realization which has been lost, there is advice.

“For making manifest that which is hidden, there is advice.

“For breaking that which is hard, there is advice.

“For giving birth to faith if you do not believe, there is advice.”

Having spoken, he gave religious discourses for a few days.
Thereafter, having said one day: "Come up from here!" and having brought him to a grassy bog, he said: "’Bar ba! As you are said to have been very strong when you were young, make a leap here!"

’Bar ba, acting accordingly, having slipped, fell, and his body tumbled down very violently. Spiritual realization arising at that instant, he cried and laughed without stopping.

The Saint said: "Has spiritual realization dissolved ‘hardness’ (dge sbyor 'thas pa bṣig pa 'am)? If you seek that which has been lost, act in this way. You (now) know the precept given by Se thuṅ pa.” By then his spiritual realization is said to have been without interruption.

Thereupon the Saint is said to have said: "Until I die, you shall stay here. When I have died, Khyuṅ po bon po'i dgon pa at sNi mo phag pu will be given to you. (p. 17) Go there! Through you there will be welfare for living beings."

As he himself thus had had many hindrances and faults in his own realization, he was skilled in setting things aright when faults arose in the spiritual realization of others.

Later, when his guru had died, (sNi mo) pha(g pu ?) was given to him by g-Yuṅ (druṅ) rdo (rje); at sNi mo ša sni'i dgon pa, Jo mo gaṅs and several other hermitages he made his meditation (thugs dam) like the flow of a river; his contemplation (ñams rtogs) becoming manifest, he was endowed with many miraculous powers, namely:

When g-Yuṅ (druṅ) rdo (rje) came to meet him, not finding his wealth through gain by means of . . . 20, he said: "Go to sleep without numerous unfulfilled wishes!"

Further, as he was staying at Ra maṅs, on his saying: "Here in the direction of our country there issues a great clamour of people being driven out from their country—see (what it is)!" (his disciples) looking, saw a beggar shaking off lice and dust. As he heard the sound of the insects, he had the clairvoyancy of sound.

His mind being free from anxiety, further, as he was staying at Phag zer, a nāginī actually listened to his instruction.

Further, as he was staying at gDoṅ ėchuṅ, as a demon (bcan) was going up and down the country-side, it made an oblique salutation in the direction of the ācārya; having bound the demon of ėchu ma phug in an oath, (it promised to perform) whatever (the lama) wished, (merely) on hearing
(the wish). This and many other stories are told of his binding ghosts (*mi ma yin*) by an oath.

Further, whatever was given to him of food and goods, he gave it to the blind, to beggars and to the helpless. He performed no rude act; not sitting on yellow cushions (himself), he is said to have showed great respect to the monks.\(^{21}\)

In reality, although that lama had the appearance of a tantric adept (*sṅags pa*), he was adorned by the Triple Vow. Thus (p. 18) there were many deeds arising from his innate nature (*gśis 'byun gi rnam thar*); they may be found in his detailed biography.

Finally, having reached the end of his life, in his 77th year, showing the manner of the passing away of that which is impermanent, he said: “By disease the body is weakened, by discursive thought the mind. As for the pain of illness, it is without self-nature. As for the quiescent (*spros bral*) mind, it cannot die. I am one who has realized the Void. Carry my corpse on the mountain. Even if it is burnt, no miraculous signs will appear.”\(^{22}\)

In short, as he had obtained control over his mind and contemplated *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* without distinguishing between the two, he obtained buddhahood in the Unconditioned (*dbyiṅs*), with rainbowlight as sign of realization.

As for his followers and disciples, although there were many adepts (*rtogs ldan gaṅ zang*) in all directions, from among them the most eminent were the six spiritual sons of *sGom 'bar*:

- in Khams, *sGa Pha rol tu phyin pa* and *dBu brag pa*;
- at the border between *dBus* and (*g-Yas*) *ru, Zaṅ gNam mcho do pa* and *Khyūṅ sgom Ṣo g-yuṅ*;
- in *gCaṅ, Mar ston rGyal legs (sMan goṅ ba)* and the siddha *Ṣo gduṅ*.

Although (there were these) and many others, the ones who effected the welfare of beings and carried on the lineage through their instruction in philosophy and meditation (*lta sgom*) were the Precious *sMan goṅ ba* and *Khyūṅ sgom Ṣo g-yuṅ*.

Further, as for the events mentioned in prophecies:

(a) The “‘*Gro mgon gyi 'phrul lde’*” says:

“To the place called *sNi mo Ṣa šiṅ*, one bearing the name of *sGom Ŷen 'bar ba* will come. Through the Sense of Mahāyāna he will guide
living beings. The doctrine of Ri gsum will spread somewhat. Thereupon for three rebirths he will effect the welfare of beings in the land of Urgyan. Thereafter, not taking birth in the Palace of Knowledge-Holders, he will attain perfect buddhahood.” Thus it is said.

(b) The “lDe mig 'briṅ po” of dbYil (ston Khuy n rgod rcal) says:
“One who will carry on the lineage of his doctrine, called sGom pa 'Od khyim 'bar ba, will appear on the borders of dBus and gCaṅ (p. 19). He will cause the doctrine of Ri gsum to spread.” Thus it is said.

This lama, who by natural disposition had become a yogin through the power (of former acts) as he was a saint, free from the rejecting (of sin) and amassing (of virtue), the hindrance (of evil) and the realization (of good), was a manifestation of the sugata, come for the welfare of beings.

C.

(BRU ČHEN RGYAL BA G-YUŅ DRUŅ)

(p. 39) Sixthly, as for the biography of the excellent rGyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ:

His native land was g-Yas ru dBen sa kha; he was born as the son of Bru za bSod nams rgyal mchon; he was the third (tha ltag) of four brothers.

Now, being an incarnation come for the welfare of beings, from his youth onwards he possessed many excellent qualities. At the age of eight he expounded the “mChan niid srīd pa'i mjod phug”. Thereafter he took the pure vows of a draṅ sroṅ from 'Dul ba rin po čhe. Being given the name of rGyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ, he acted in conformity with the substance of the teachings of the discipline.

Further, requesting the external, internal and secret texts (bon sde) together with their initiations, ritual texts, and benedictions, he purified his mind (thugs rgyud sbyaṅs). Requesting in particular (initiation into) the Great Vehicle of Ultimate Nature (gnas lugs theg čhen), he exerted himself spiritually—one-pointedly and without wavering.

The lama himself has said: “Firstly, having requested the teachings concerning the vows of discipline, I kept them without either secrecy or ostentation; intermediately reflecting on the boon of studying, I wholly did
away with all doubts; finally, having requested the immaculate Ultimate Nature, knowledge of the Self arising, this entering, too, into the midst of men both in this (life) and the next—(all this is) the blessing of the holy lama (whose activity is) threefold[27].

Further, from dByil ston Nam mkha’ bsod nams, (p. 40) the nephew of dByil ston Khoyun rgod rcal; from Luṅ sgom bKra Ḿis rgyal mcchan, of the lineage of Luṅ bon Lha sMan; from rMa ston Draṅ sroṅ, of the lineage of rMa ston srid ’jin, and others, he requested initiations, ritual texts, precepts, and benedictions. In particular, having requested—bowing down at the feet of rTogs ldan Dad ȳes of La stod[28], and of Žan ston bSod nams rin Ḿchen of ’Jad, and other lineage-lamas—the cycle of “The Oral Transmission of the Great Perfection” (rJogs pa ḿchen po sMan rgyud kyi skor rnam) together with its initiations, conferring of ritual texts, benedictions, spiritual attitude (?) (ṃams), lineage, and permission (to practice the instruction received), he performed the chief of spiritual exertions (i.e. the Great Perfection).

Thereafter he studied (ṃams len mjad) at g-Yas ru mKhar sna’i brag, Ra goṅ yon po, and various other hermitages.

The lama himself has said: “Through the grace of showing adoration and respect towards the exalted siddhas, a sensation of faith and unshakeable resolution arose (yid ches thag chod spros mtha’ chod pa chig byuṅ)[29]. Accordingly, the basis of knowledge without discrimination appearing from within, the stream of the defilement of distinguishing between subject and object was cut off; the Foundation, Spontaneous Luminosity, appearing without interruption, the Way, characterised by Sound, Light and Rays, was set free (dissolved) on its own plane (raṅ sar); Liberation, the Fruit of the Three Kāyas becoming manifest, the Great Bliss, the very plane of the Dharmakāya[30], was grasped; further, he beheld the entourage of his chief tutelary deities; the meditation (dgoṅs pa) consisting in the projection and reabsorption of utpatti(krama) and niṣpanna(krama) was set free (dissolved) on its own plane—the setting free (i.e. dissolution) of these and countless other mental experiences was born in his mind.

As for the works (bk’ā’ brten) composed by himself:
the “Lag len pod chuṅ”, a summary of external, internal, and secret ceremonies;
the “gZuris bsdus”, a precious summary of all ‘essences’;
the "Guide to the Ceremonies (lag len dmar khrid) of the Oral Transmission of the Great Perfection";
further, the "Manual (lag khrid) of the (Worship of the) Fierce Deities (dbal gsas)";
"Precepts Concerning Psychic Veins, 'Wind' and Bindu";
various epistles (yig sna) concerning relative truth and the physical world (snod bchod);
"Instruction in the Recitation of (the mantra styled) 'The Emptying of the Pit of the States of Woe'");
"The Volume of Songs of Spiritual Instruction";
"Prayers to the Lineage-Lamas", and other works. (p. 41)

In particular, as regards this jewel-precept, the cycle of texts dealing with "A khrid", he composed the "Thun mchams bco lha pa" and the "rGyab skyor rin chen gsal 'debs" in accordance with the spiritual practice (thugs dgoṅs) of 'Gro mgon g-Yor po Me dpal and the illustrious bLo gro's.

The above works were not proclaimed as if to tamper with (the Doctrine) or from a (vain) delight in scholarship, but only to aid his own memory and to arrange (the teachings) in order to facilitate the understanding (of them) for inferior minds.

Being thus simultaneously scholarly, noble, and good, he obtained the dignity of the abbacy (bla ma gdan sa bzuṅ), and having turned the wheel of the Word of listening, explaining, meditating, realization etc., he effected the welfare of beings beyond reckoning; being a lamp of the precious Doctrine, he established beings beyond reckoning who were to be converted on the way of ripening and (ultimate) liberation.

Finally, at the age of 49, he displayed the manner of passing beyond sorrow and transitoriness. As for the signs of his siddhi, he left behind many relics—rin srel, rainbow-light etc.

As for his disciples, although there are, nowadays, many kālyāṇamitrās and adept-saints in Upper, Middle and Lower (Tibet), there are (in particular) the (veritable) essence of the Doctrine, (namely) his younger brother Bru Nam mkha' 'od zer and his nephew Bru ston bSod nams rgyal mchen and many others.

As for the events foretold by prophetic utterances:
(a) the “gNad byaṅ drug ču rca gčig” of rKyaṅ ’phags says:
“As for the emanation of the mind of sNaṅ ba mdog čan, there will be one called Brū za yje bcun. The fourteen svastikasattvas of his spiritual lineage will guide living beings. rGyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ, the manifestation of all the sugatas, the noble healers, (p. 42) will come for the welfare of beings. Those who bow down at his lotus-feet, being freed from the five skandhas of birth, will be established on the path of liberation. He will open the door of liberation for three hundred thousand beings.”
(b) The “Naṅ rgyud gling bsgrags” of rMa says:
“Thereafter, as for the members of the family of Brū, there will be many bearing the name of g-Yuṅ druṅ nam mkha’38 who will spread the Doctrine.”
Accordingly, the distinguished lama, his brother and his nephew thus were all manifestations of the sugatas, come for the welfare of beings.

[Part II of this article, “The Essential Teachings of the A Khrid System” will appear in the next issue of Kailash—Ed.]

Notes to Part I

1. dbYin is used in the sense of chos dbYin (bon dbYin) (dharmadhātu), or boṅ rdul (dharmatā), cf. p. 18, 1. 7: grub rtags gza’ od dan bchas nas dbYin su sāṅs rgyas pa lags so.
2. dṇos snan ‘being visibly present’ (ST), cf. p. 11, 1. 21: dṇos snan ’gro don tha ma.
3. The meaning of mje bsdū would seem to be ‘sexual union’, but this only makes sense in the present context if one supposes that a negative has been lost, i.e. *mje mī bsdū, ‘abstention from sexual union’.
4. I follow ST’s explanation of the somewhat elliptical gšig ḍhod du thon pa.
5. Thugs sbyoṅs/ blo sbyoṅs is said to be a technical term particular to the bk’a’ gdam pa, cf. Blue Annals p. 926, and TPS p. 98-99 where blo sbyoṅ however is defined as a “particular class of mystic handbook of the Kadampa” and as precursors of the later lam rim literature. According to my Tibetan informants however, the expression simply means “to study”.
6. For bon in the meaning of ‘precept’, cf. Snellgrove “Nine Ways of Bon” p. 226 1. 9 where bla med theg pa’i bon ’di dag is translated “the religious truths of this Supreme Way”.
7. sras is used as an honorific title for young laymen (SG). That it cannot mean “son” is obvious as Grol ba gšen rgyal belongs to Zu chaṅ while g-yuṅ druṅ bsa ma belongs to Brū chaṅ.
8. The “Gab pa” has been published by the Bonpo Foundation; the other text might be the “Sems phran sde bdun” (SG).
9. Thod brgal is not, as Snellgrove seems to suggest (“Four Lamas of Dolpo”, p. 139), a specifically rjogs čhen term. It translates sk. vyuṭkrāṇa in the term vyuṭkrāṇa-saṃādiḥ, tib. thod (b)rgal gyi shoms par ’jug pa. It likewise translates viṣkanda in viṣkanda-saṃādiḥ, tib. as above. See Hobogirin p. 353, 1, (fasc. IV, Paris 1967) where J. May translates the entire phrase by
'Accès à l'Egalité en Sautant’. In the light of this article, which provides a full discussion of the term and numerous references, Ruegg's translation of the sentence "sras rabs thod rgal pa rnam s su mi chug pa," “they must be attentive inasmuch as his supreme knowledge was superb” (thod rgal seems to be translated by 'superb') (“The Life of Bu ston rin po che” p. 76), can now be corrected. Thod rgal is dealt with by Tucci, “Die Religionen Tibets” (Stuttgart 1970), p. 103-5.

10. Sems bskyed smon yug. Sems bskyed pa has two stages: the prayer (smon lam) that one may effect the welfare of beings, and the actual entering (yug pa) on a bodhisattva's course (ST).

11. 'Dod dus zas kyi ro snyoms de la gyis] Is there an allusion to the eka-rasa (ro snyoms) doctrine?

12. ‘Cher sa: the interpretation “burial-place” is given by my Tibetan informants. Might there be some confusion with mched “place for burying the dead” (Das p. 1041)? The Dag yig has "mches dur du mchod" with the interlinear note: “'si dur mchod pa" (p. 101, 1. 2). However, I am indebted to Mme Macdonald for another interpretation “dwelling-place, encampment” with the following references: S tu bka’ chems fol. 144a: cher sa ‘résidence’; gCan smyon rnam thar fol. 28b: 'cher du 'chez lui’. Cf. Ch. gr. p. 716, 1: 'cher sa—mcher sa ‘brog sa’am; p. 711, 2: mcher sa—ba lañ gnas sam thas rva dañ sdoñ sa ‘brog sa. The translation given by Jà. p. 460 (an old deserted settlement or dwelling') is clearly quite insufficient.

13. The same year is given in “R ma bstan 'jin” (89).

14. sGra, 'od and zer are treated (separately) in Bras bu rañ sa buz ha sku gsum dmari thag bød pa'i khrid (publ. Delhi 1966), fol. 3a - 4a.

15. Don rtags kyi is possibly a mistake for don rtags. sGom 'bar is commonly known as Don rtags gCan pa se bo (SG).

16. Duñ 'phrel ‘a string on which are threaded a certain number of coins of small value' (ST). Cf. doñ ce ‘coin . . . esp. a small coin’ Jà. p. 258.

17. Nes 'byuñ gi dad pa “a feeling of sadness resulting from the contemplation of the misery of samsāra.” (SG).

18. Tog ma ‘trousers'; phu lu ‘carrying frame’ (SG).

19. The reason for inserting an explanation which seems both unnecessary and erroneous, is probably an unwillingness to admit that this famous lama was entirely bereft of spiritual realization, even at this early stage in his career.

20. Does sel nags mean ‘forest’, thus: “gain by means of (the produce of?) the forest”? Or is there a reference to catttle, cf. nag chags ‘cattle’? The whole passage is obscure.

21. Thus explained by ST. However, the translation: “(although) he did not sit on yellow cushions, his share of (the) homage (shown by the lay community) was greater than that of the (other?) monks” would seem to be more accurate.

22. The “sRan rgyud” adds: “His family (gduñ rus) was Bru.”

23. Interlinear note: “Also called Srid thub.”

24. ST.

25. Found as a Treasure in 1108. Published by Tenzin Namdak, Delhi 1966 (“Mdzod phug: Basic Verses and Commentary by Dran pa nam mkha” 125 p.) Further information concerning the text is found in the introduction to this edition (on the pages marked 127—129, but actually p. 3—5).


27. gSum ldan gyi bla ma, i.e. a lama whose threefold activity is as follows (ST):

(a) dbañ bskur ba — “conferring of initiations”
28. His biography is found on p. 94.2–98.2 of “Bon-po Niṣpanna Yoga”.
29. The varia lectio given here found in “Niṣpanna Yoga” (p. 102, 4) is preferable.
30. It is fair to underline that my Bonpo informants objected to the translation ‘dharmakāya’, pointing out that dharma translates chos. As bon is, nevertheless, synonymous with chos (as far as Buddhist metaphysics is concerned) I have retained the translation, the term ‘dharma-kāya’ having, after all, won for itself a place in Western idiom.
31. A part of which is translated in Part II of the present study.
32. I.e. the “No spro d rim Chen gsal ’debs rgyab skyor gyi gdams pa”, p. 117–185 of the “A-TRI THUN TSHAM CHO-NA DAN”. On p. 184 1. 13–20 of this text we find the following colophon:

“Da (emend : de) ltar “No spro d rim po che’i gsal ’debs rgyab skyor gyi gdams pa”/ bla ma dam pa rnam kyi dgra chul dān/ mcham med ’Dul ba rin po che’i zla' i gdams/ phyag len dān mi ’gal bar/ dus shigs ma’i Bru sgom rGyal ba g-yun drun la/ phyogs med kyi ’nam len pa/ ’Bru sgom sByin pa ’od zer gyis bskul te/ gab pa bton/ sbas pa bshigs/ bsküns pa phyuṅs te/ chig don gsal bas spros nas/ Rin Chen spuṅs pa mKhar sna’i dgon par sbyar . . .”
34. The texts were, of course, dictated to his pupils.
35. Acc. to ST, ra chod means ‘to tamper with, emend, (the scriptures)’ and thus carries a strong pejorative sense (bka’ la ra chod—ST).
36. Presumably the abbacy of g-Yas ru dBen sa kha is meant; cf. p. 26 l. 10–14 (speaking of g-Yor po Me dpal):

“de nas Bru ston Ni rgyal gyi gdan sa / g-Yas ru dBen sa khar lo ’ga’ bzung te/ mkhas pa gNos Chul khrims rgyal mchan daṅ gnis/ bstan pa’i rgyal thebs mjad chün/ bka’ gzun bṣad nan gyi ’khor lo rgya Chen po bskor bas/ gdan sa rin po che la yaṅ bka’ drin sin tu che ba lags so’”; p. 29 l. 16–17 (“A Za bDud rci rgyal mchan”); “khoṅ gi bstan pa’i rgyal thebs mjad chün/ bka’ luṅ ’nan bṣad kyi ’khor lo bskor. . .”; p. 32 l. 12–16 (“A Za bLo gros rgyal mchan”); p. 36 l. 13.
37. If the din san (the passage is found only in the A khrid version) should, in fact, as SG suggests, be translated “nowadays”, this would seem to indicate that the present biography, and indeed probably the entire text A up to this biography, is written by a pupil of Bru Chen, i.e. in the first half of the 14th century. Needless to say, it would be extremely important for a correct evaluation of the information text A contains if its date of composition could be fixed.
38. g-Yun druṅ nam mkha’ is probably to be understood, or has at least been interpreted as, (rGyal ba) g-Yun druṅ and (his brother) Nam mkha’ (’od zer).
Appendix I

The spiritual lineage of A khrid

Yul

Khro chañ 'Brug lha rMe'u Lha ri gñan po
(b. 956) (1024—1091)

rMe'u dGoñs mjod ri khrod pa
(1038—1096)

sGom čhen 'bar ba

Khyuñ sgom Jo g-yuñ

Žañ Dam pa chul šes

gNos Chul 'Gro mgon g-Yor po
khrims me dpal (b. 1134)
rgyal mchan
(b. 1144 ?)

'A ža bDud rci rgyal mchan
dbYil ston
dPon gsas
Khyuñ rgod rcal
(b. 1175)

'A ža bLo gros rgyal mchan
(1198—1263)

Bru ža 'Dul ba rgyal mchan
(b. 1239)
gCañ smad g-Yas ru dBen
sa kha
Bru ža rGyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ
(1242—1290)
Bru ža Nam mkha’ ’od zer
(younger brother of GY)
Bru ža bSod nams rgyal mchan
(nephew of GY, 1268—1321)
Bru ža bSod nams blo gros
(1277—1341)
Bru ža rNam rgyal ka ra
( ? Bru ža ?) Rin čhen blo gros
mNam med Šes rab rgyal mchan (sMan ri)
(1356—1415)
Go Rin čhen rgyal mchan (sMan ri)
(b. 1360)
gNa’ Nam mkha’ ye šes (sMan ri)
(abbot 1446)
sGa Kun bzaṅ rgyal mchan
(ab. 1464)
sGo jo ba bLo gros rgyal mchan
’Gru bsTan pa ’od zer
’Gru Ŧi ma ’od zer
(1562—1637)
g-Yas ru dBen sa kha
rGyal roṅ gi chu čhen
rGyal mo dḥuḷ čhu
mDo khams Lha thu
rMa pom ra’i smad/čhu
’khrug (rMa čhu khrug)
sTa ’u mdo skya
rGyal roṅ stod kyi Sogs
tiṅ spo za
dGe sdiṅ bon groṅ
dGe sdiṅ gnas snaṅ
Appendix 2

Specimen of the Text of the Biography of Bru čhen Compared with the Version Found in the rJogs pa čhen po Žaṅ Žuṅ sñan rgyud kyi brgyud pa’i bla ma’i rnam thar ("Bonpo Niśpanna-Yoga", p. 98 1.4 et seq.)

The beginning of the Biography of Bru čhen as found in text A and in the "Bonpo Niśpanna Yoga", the variants found in the latter text being given in the notes. This short passage will suffice to show the near-identity of the two texts.

(p. 39 1.6 et seq.)... drug pa mchan ldan rgyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ gi rnam thar la¹ yul ni g-Yas ru dBen sa khar² yab Bru-ža bSod nams rgyal mchan (interlinear note: Srid thub yaṅ zer) gyi sras su/ sku ’khruns te/ sku mchel bzi yod pa’i tha ltag yin³ de yaṅ sprul sku ’gro ba’i don la byon pa yin pas/ chuṅ nas yon tan⁴ du ma daṅ ldan te/ dguṅ lo brgyad la⁵ mChan ņid⁶ "Srid pa’i mjod phug⁷" bṣad/ de nas ’Dul ba rin po čhe’i druṅ du/ dag pa draṅ sroṅ gi sdom pa blaṅs te/ chul miṅ rGyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ du mchan gsol žiṅ/ bslab pa chul khrims kyi⁸ don daṅ ldan par mjad/ gzan yaṅ phyi naṅ gsaṅ gsum gyi bon sde la/ dbaṅ luṅ byin rlab daṅ bcas pa žus śiṅ/ thugs rgyud sbyaṅs/ khyad par gnas lugs theg čhen gyi ’no sproṅ žus pas⁹/ re gcig yeṅs med kyi thugs dam mjad de/ bla ma ņid kyi gsaṅ las kyaṅ/ bdag gis kyaṅ daṅ po sruṅ sdom gyi bslab pa žus nas ’no lgog¹⁰ med par bsrũṅs/ bar du thos bsam kyi bka’ drin mnos nas sgro ’dogs¹¹ legs par bṣad/ tha ma¹² yaṅ dag pa’i gnaś lugs žus nas¹³ raṅ ’no śes pa cam byuṅ¹⁴ bas/ ’di phyi gnis kar¹⁵ mi khyur chud pa cam byuṅ ba ’di yaṅ¹⁶/ gsum ldan gyi bla ma dam pa de’i bka’ drin lags so/ žes gsaṅs so/ gzan yaṅ dByil ston Khyun rgod rcal gyi dbon po dByil ston Nam mkha’ bsd nams sam¹⁷/ Luṅ bon Lha găn gyi brgyud pa Luṅ sgom bKra śis rgyal mchan nam¹⁸/RMa ston Srid ’jin gyi brgyud pa/ rma ston Draṅ sroṅ las sog srams las kyaṅ¹⁹/ dbaṅ luṅ gdams pa byin rlab daṅ bcas pa žus/

1. Bru čhen po rGyal ba g-yuṅ druṅ gi lo rgyus la lña/ daṅ po gcaṅ ma mi lus thob pa yab daṅ yum gyi lo rgyus ni/
2. kha/ gduṅ rues Bru yin/
3. yab ... rgyal mchan la/ sras sku mchel .../
4. sbyaṅs pa’i yon tan
5. brgyud pa la
6. mchan nid omitted
7. phugs
8. kyi omitted
9. žus nas
10. mhon lkog
11. sgros 'dogs
12. tha mar
13. žus nas omitted
14. byas
15. gnis ka
16. ... cam byas pa 'di ni/
17. ... bsod nams dañ/
18. ... dañ
19. la yañ

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“History and Doctrine of Bonpo Niśpanna-yoga”, Satapitaka Series No. 73, New Delhi 1968.

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