

## Sub-project C02

# Doxographical Organisational Schemes in Manuscripts and Xylographs of the Collection of the Ancient Tantras

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### Description of the Project

The Tibetology sub-project focuses on a particular group of corpus organizers: manuscript and xylograph editions of para-canonical scriptures, known as the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* ("Collection of the Ancient Tantras"). This corpus consists of Tantric scriptures that were excluded (with a few exceptions) from the Tibetan Buddhist canon due to their supposedly spurious, non-Indian, origin. The corpus organizers—which may be regarded as editions produced with great care and at great expense—fall into four groups, which differ greatly in terms of size and the organisation of the subsections and individual texts. The sub-project will study the different schemes used in the organisation of knowledge in this corpus, that is, mainly the organisation into sections and subsections and the history of their emergence. Developed by the compilers and editors responsible for the production of the editions, these doxographical schemes can be seen as attempts to address the need to organise the ever-growing corpus of rNying ma Tantric literature, for which, due to its unique contents, the organisational principles employed for other collections of Tibetan Buddhist literature, such as the Tibetan Buddhist canon, were inadequate.

### Objectives

The objective of this sub-project is to study the causes and motives for the development of the various schemes of organisation of knowledge in the various editions of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* and the strategies developed by the editors to create coherent organisational schemes on the one hand and to fit the individual texts into them on the other. The examination will take place on two levels: (a) The general organisational schemes of each edition—including those of the sections, subsections, and individual texts—will be examined and compared. The finding will then be substantiated by historical and biographical material. (b) The study of the organisation of knowledge in the collection will be taken to a deeper level by a case study of one work, titled *Bodhicittabhāvanā*. This work exists in numerous versions and has been classified in different ways within the organisational schemes of the collection. It lends itself ideally for an in-depth study of the strategies by which a large and ever evolving corpus of esoteric works was organised according to changing demands.

### Manuscript Culture in Tibet

The development of the Tibetan script—according to traditional sources sometime in the 7th century—and the scriptural tradition in Tibet is closely connected with the dissemination there of Buddhism. The copying of texts was regarded as highly meritorious, and thus often sponsored by various religious and political leaders. Since the development of the Tibetan script thousands of texts, whether of Indian origin or autochthonous, have been written down on Tibetan soil, and subsequently reproduced and transmitted. For many centuries this was primarily in the form of manuscripts—be they simple copies in black ink on white paper or special illuminated editions written in gold or other precious materials. With the rapid growth of the number of manuscripts, the need to compile and catalogue them also grew. Over a period of more than one thousand years Tibetans thus developed and refined the arts of compiling, collating, editing, recording, and reproducing manuscript collections. This process has taken place particularly in connection with the production of numerous copies of the Buddhist canon, but soon spread to the corpus of autochthonous works, whose number now grew considerably. By the mid-20th century the number of manuscript and xylographs in Tibetan language, be it of single works or of collections of various sizes, had grown enormously, and despite the immense destruction that a great part of these material has undergone, thousands of manuscripts and xylographs are still available.



Bänder der Sammlung sGang-steng-A auf dem Altar in einer der Hallen des Klosters sGang-steng



Titelfolio eines Bandes der Sammlung sGang-steng-A