My interest in Buddhism goes back to my high school days when I was introduced to a Bhutanese commentary on a small text popularly known by its abbreviated title rGyal sras lag len (‘Deeds of a Bodhisattva’). The basic text was authored by the Tibetan scholar dNgul-chu Thogs-med-bzang-po (1295–1369), who is believed to have been the incarnation of the Indian teacher Asaṅga. The commentary by the Bhutanese scholar mGon-po-bstan-'dzin, written in a very elegant rDzong-kha (the national language of Bhutan), was prescribed, however, as a textbook on the Bhutanese language, not on Buddhism. The theme of these texts, the bodhisattva ideals, fascinated me, so much so that it became increasingly clear that what I wanted to study after my high school graduation was Buddhist philosophy (in the broadest sense of the term).

Given the poor prospects back then of pursuing an academic study of Buddhism in Bhutan, the only viable alternative seemed to be to go to India. In the olden days, Tibetans travelled to India and Bhutanese to Tibet to study Buddhism, both of which were precarious undertakings. Ironically, Tibet’s tragedy enabled Bhutanese like myself easy and unrestricted access to the intellectual world of Tibet. The Tibetan Buddhist monastic seminaries that made this possible for me is my traditional alma mater, Ngagyur Nyingma Institute (NNI), a stronghold of rNying-ma academia at Bylakuppe (Mysore District, Karnataka State, South India). It was established and is still being administered by His Holiness Padma-nor-bu (or simply Pad-nor) Rin-po-che (b. 1932), one of the leading rNying-ma masters of our time. My study in India would not have been possible had it not been for His Excellency Jigme Thinley, the then director general of the Department of Education, Ministry of Social Services, Royal Government of Bhutan, who in 1987 granted me a Government scholarship to study Buddhism at the Ngagyur Nyingma Institute. Until this day, I remain grateful to the
Bhutanese Government and His Excellency Jigme Thinley, who is currently the minister of Home and Cultural Affairs.

I have incurred an unrepayable debt to Pad-nor Rin-po-che, who, in his infinite graciousness and compassion, allowed unrestricted access to the spiritual, intellectual, and material resources that abound in the monastic academy founded by him in 1978. I am also indebted to my astute and compassionate teachers at the NNI including mKhan-po Padmashes-rab, mKhan-po rNam-grol-tshe-ring, mKhan-po Tshe-dbang-rgya-mtsho (alias mKhan-po Gu-ru), mKhan-po dBang-phyug-bsod-nams, mKhan-po Tshe-ring-rdo-rje, mKhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs-tshe-ring (alias mKhan-po Kātyāyana), mKhan-po 'Jigs-med-skal-bzang, mKhan-po bKra-shis-tshe-ring (alias mKhan-po Nub-ri), mKhan-po Padma-chos-'phel (alias mKhan-po Ajita), mKhan-po Sangs-rgyas-rang-byung, mKhan-po rDo-rje-dpal-bzang, mKhan-po Kun-bzang-bde-chen, and others who have been instrumental in introducing me to the major Indian treatises translated into Tibetan, centring on Vinaya, Abhidharma, Pramāṇa, Yogācāra, Madhyamaka, Prajñāpāramitā, Tathāgatagarbha, and Tantra, together with their Tibetan commentaries, and a wide range of other traditional fields of knowledge and texts of different literary genres. My gratefulness also extends to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, mKhan-po 'Jigs-med-phun-tshogs (1933–2004), sMyo-shul mKhan-po (1931–1999), Mmes Bla-ma bSod-bams-bzang-po (1892–1983), sTag-lung rTse-sprul Rin-po-che, sMin-gling Khri-chen, gDung-sras Phrin-las-nor-bu, and Bla-ma Ser-po, from whom I have had the fortune to occasionally receive initiations, teachings, or transmissions, and with whom I could establish the so-called 'Dharma connection' (chos 'brel).

I cannot help looking back with a sense of joy and gratitude at my friends, colleagues, and students from monastic academia, too numerous to mention by name, who made my indulgence in the arts of exposition, disputation, and composition a stimulating, enriching, and memorable experience. I take this opportunity to thank dGa'-rab Rin-po-che, sPrul-sk'u 'Jam-dpal, Karma-sku-chen Rin-po-che, Gyang-khang sPrul-sk'u, Rag-mgo mChog-sprul, sMin-gling mKhan-chen, sMin-gling gDung-sras, Sher-pa sPrul-sk'u, Zhi-ba sPrul-sk'u, among other incarnate masters, for their friendship and inspiration. I also owe thanks to my friends and colleagues at the NNI, most of whom now live or work in widely different parts of the world—including Byang-sems bKra-shis, Lung-bstan-rgya-mtsho (Lungtaen Gyatso, who is currently the principal of the Institute of Language and Cultural Studies, Royal University of Bhutan), mKhan-po bsTan-'dzin-nor-rgyas (the current Ram-sbyar Bla-ma), mKhan-po Sangs-rgyas-dbang-'dus, mKhan-po 'Gyur-med-kun-bzang-bstan-'dzin, mKhan-po mKhyan-brtse-dpal-ldan, mKhan-po bSkaI-bzang-nyi-ma, mKhan-po rTa-mgrin-sri-thub, Shing-khar Bla-ma dNgos-grub, Dr. Karma Phuntscho (now a Spalding Fellow, Cambridge), Slo-bdon Phrin-las-rdo-rje (Thinley Dorjee), Slo-bdon Klong-yangs-seng-ge, and Bla-ma Byang-chub-rdo-rje—for their help and friendship.

Just as my desire to study Buddhist philosophy took me to India, so too did my desire to trace the Indian roots of Tibetan Buddhism bring me to the University of Hamburg, Germany, in 1997. In the course of my ten-year interaction in the NNI with Tibetan Buddhism, it became increasingly clear to me that the best way to deepen my understanding of this subject is to read the original Indian Buddhist texts in Sanskrit (from which most Tibetan translations were made) and to analyse Buddhist ideas by employing western academic approaches. The road to western academia has been, however, by no means smooth. Nonetheless, the kindness and assistance of several key individuals made my studies in Germany possible. First and foremost is Prof. Dr. Lambert Schmithausen (now Professor emeritus), my Doktorvater, without whose support I in all likelihood would not have had the privilege to study in Hamburg in the first place. My gratitude to him is profound for his having accepted me as his student, for guiding me, and for helping me to surmount a series of seemingly insurmountable bureaucratic hurdles. I feel honoured to be the last doctoral student of this legendary Buddhologist.
I am also indebted to Prof. Dr. David Jackson who supported me in various ways, among others by enabling me to teach the Tibetan language and Tibetan Buddhism at the University of Hamburg from early on, and for being my second supervisor for both the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees. Moreover, I express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Harunaga Isaacscon (University of Hamburg) for his support and guidance, and to Prof. Dr. Michael Friedrich (University of Hamburg) and Dr. Martin Delheye (University of Hamburg) for their invaluable suggestions.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank a number of other persons for rendering their help in different ways: Prof. Dr. Albrecht Wezler (Professor emeritus), Prof. Dr. Katsumi Mimaki (University of Kyoto), Prof. Dr. Florin Deleanu and Prof. Dr. Hubert Durt (both of the International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies, Tokyo), Prof. Dr. Karin Preisendanz (University of Vienna), Dr. Anne MacDonald (University of Vienna), Dr. Felix Erb (University of Hamburg), Prof. Dr. Tatiana Oranskaia (University of Hamburg), Prof. Dr. Michael Zimmermann (Stanford University), Mr. Burkhard Quessel (British Library, London), Dr. Mudagamuwe Matirimurthi (University of Heidelberg), PD Dr. Klaus-Dieter Mathes (University of Hamburg), Prof. Dr. Jan-Ulrich Sobisch (University of Copenhagen), Dr. Kazuo Kano (University of Kyoto/Hamburg), Dr. Achim Beyer (previously at the University of Hamburg), Dr. Barbara Schuler (University of Hamburg), and Ms. Ayako Nakamura (Ph.D. candidate, University of Hamburg). My thanks also go to the other staff and students at the Department of Indian and Tibetan Studies, Asia-Africa Institute, University of Hamburg, for their encouragement.

I am also grateful to Philip Pierce, who despite having a long waiting list of editorial work, not only corrected my English but also made valuable comments and suggestions pertaining to content, which often made me rethink, refine, or reformulate my thoughts. I also express my thanks to Prof. Dr. Junkichi Imanishi (Director, International Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo) and Mr. Shin’ichiro Hori (Acting Director, International Institute for Buddhist Studies, Tokyo) and other members of the Steering Committee including Prof. Dr. Florin Deleanu and Prof. Dr. Hubert Durt for consenting to publish this book, a slightly revised and reorganised version of my dissertation, in the Studia Philologica Buddhica Monograph Series. Above all, I am indebted to my wife Dr. Orna Almogi (University of Hamburg) for standing by me in all walks of life, both academic and non-academic, and for being my first and foremost critic. My thanks are due also to relatives and friends in Bhutan, particularly to my brother bSod-nams-phun-tshogs and sister-in-law Chos-nyid-dbang-mo for their unrelenting support. I should also like to express my thanks to my non-academic German friends, particularly Klaus and Inga Brücken, for their support and help.

In addition to these acknowledgements, I have also some apologies to offer: to my Tibetan Buddhist teachers for my failure to live up to their expectations—for theorising about Buddhist teachings instead of practising them and for investigating the idea of bodhicitta instead of generating it; and to my teachers in the west and all other perfectionists for not always being able to meet the high standards of scholarship set by them, and for the major and minor mistakes that certainly abound in this work (for which I am solely responsible).

For the sake of transparency, I should perhaps venture a few words about my intellectual background and the methodological guidelines I have attempted to follow. For several reasons, it is not feasible to pursue the study of Buddhism in a western academic setting the same way it is done in a Tibetan monastic seminary, and vice versa. It goes without saying that the priorities and methods of monastic and western academic training differ, although the objective of both may be to gain knowledge of Buddhism. Ideally, the priority of a Tibetan monastic seminary is to train monks and nuns in such a way as to equip them with qualities of erudition, personal integrity, and conscientiousness (mkhas btsun bzang gsum); and with the competence to engage in exposition, spiritual practice, and beneficial tasks (bshad sgrub las gsum). Erudition is attained through learning, contemplation, and meditation (thos bsam sgom...
gsum); personal integrity through the practice of the three trainings (bslab pa sgum), namely, higher ethical-moral discipline, higher concentration, and higher insight; while a scholar with conscientiousness can be expected to carry out the tasks of exposition, disputation, and composition ('chad rtsod rtsom gsum), and thus contribute to the preservation and propagation of the Buddhist teachings so as to put salvific means at the disposal of other sentient beings. The pursuit of knowledge for knowledge’s sake, permissible in western academia, would probably be seen as inadequate, although here too there are several Buddhist (particularly Mahāyāna) concepts with which one could legitimise one’s unquenchable thirst and quest for knowledge. Perhaps one could say that for traditional Buddhist scholars, knowledge of Buddhism is desirable primarily for its instrumental value (i.e. good as a means), whereas for western academics it is primarily sought for its own intrinsic value (i.e. good as an end).

One of the methodological strengths of the monastic academic system, I find, is the intensiveness and extensiveness of training it can offer in a relatively short period of time. One of the weaknesses of the traditional system of investigation, however, seems to be its tendency to regard texts and ideas as though they were static entities with no history of their own. The strength of the western academic system, by contrast, as exemplified at the University of Hamburg, is its cultivation of historical-philological skills and tools, based on the presupposition that ideas, articulated and transmitted to us in the form of written texts, have a history of their own, just like persons—that they originate and evolve; and that the authors of texts, analogously to ourselves, wanted to convey definite (and not just any) ideas, and that researchers, regardless of religious or ideological affiliations, or other personal predilections, should attempt to determine the authorial intent of a given text by employing historical-philological tools and skills (without, however, ruling out the usefulness of any other tool that bids to bring us a step closer to the goal).

There have been other individuals like myself who studied first in a traditional monastic academy and later pursued their studies in a western university, and there may be many more in the future willing to do the same. For better or worse, such individuals are in a unique position, and thus also face unique challenges, including overcoming inner conflicts—perhaps a natural consequence of the tension generated between tradition and innovation, religion and science, subjective faith and objective reason, and even between Orientalism and Occidentalism—and having often to cope with such preconceived notions as that a Buddhist can never be an objective Buddhologist (or even that only a Buddhist can be a competent Buddhologist!). Surely individuals deal with such challenges in their own unique way.

My ten years in a Tibetan Buddhist seminary in India and now another ten years in Europe have imparted to me knowledge and values which I would have otherwise remained ignorant of. Far from regretting, there are reasons for rejoicing over having had both the privilege to study Tibetan Buddhism as a Tibetan Buddhist monk and the freedom to give up monkhood and pursue further studies in Germany. The information gathered during study in a monastic seminary can indeed be reassessed with the aid of western academic tools. Methodological precision and the reliability of findings may differ owing to several factors, but at least for me, one of (if not the most) reliable ways of gaining knowledge of Buddhism transmitted in the form of written texts seems to be the use of historical-philological tools and methods, which are not, by the way, completely unknown, at least in some form, in the Tibetan tradition. I would go so far as to say that if there were one western method that a judicious traditional Buddhist scholar is likely to find appealing and worth adopting when analysing Buddhist ideas and textual sources, then that would be the historical-philological one. Moreover, if we assume that the goal of western scientific enquiry is to determine states of affairs as precisely as possible, that is, without underplaying or overplaying any factor, I would argue that it is very much in conformity, at least in theory, with the traditional Indian and Buddhist notion of knowing things or reality without superimposition (adhyāropa/samāropa: sgro 'dogs pa) or depreciation (apavāda: skur ba 'debs pa).
Preface

Readers may wonder why I chose to study the concept of *bodhicitta* (i.e. the resolve to become a *buddha*) in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. The existential significance of the *bodhicitta* concept in tantric and non-tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism, which I hope will become sufficiently clear in due course, is what motivated me to study it. Given the vastness of the literature on *bodhicitta* (it is in fact overwhelming), I had to be selective in the choice of my materials. Whenever possible I have based myself primarily on Indian texts (in their original, if available, or else in their Tibetan translation). I have also resorted to a great deal of indigenous Tibetan sources, particularly when these discuss *bodhicitta* from a tantric perspective, but also when the Tibetan tradition has attempted to systematise various positions found in Indian sources. Indigenous Tibetan sources have often been very helpful, and at times even indispensable, in several respects. Unrestrictive use of indigenous Tibetan material on *bodhicitta* would have been impossible, and I have hence tried to limit myself to the early sources, and drawn on later ones only when I could find no earlier source on a given topic. Two of my criteria for choosing sources have been the accessibility of a given work during the time of writing this thesis and my familiarity with it. In any case, I have tried to present Indian ideas and Tibetan ones (be they of the rNying-ma or gSar-ma schools) as objectively as possible. I have avoided presenting Tibetan ideas as Indian, or rNying-ma ideas as universally valid for all Tibetan schools. Although I have resorted to more Indian sources than Tibetan ones and, in the case of the Tibetan sources, employed more rNying-ma than gSar-ma literature, I believe that this study is, as far as the major issues are concerned, fairly representative of both Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, and hence can rightly be called a study of *bodhicitta* in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.

This study contains eleven chapters of varying length. In chapter one, I try to provide a general background on the concept of becoming a *buddha*, against the backdrop of the relevant Buddhological, soteriological, ontological, epistemological, gnoseological, and axiological concepts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. I also try to bring the major themes addressed in this book within the compass of these concepts. The second chapter provides an overview (and when deemed necessary also an assessment) of previous studies done by modern scholars on the theme of *bodhicitta*. The third chapter seeks to explore the prehistory of the *bodhicitta* concept and discusses doctrinal foundations that may have contributed to its conception. Chapter four is devoted to the idea of the resolve to become a *buddha* purportedly made by the historical Buddha for the first time in one of his previous existences. The fifth chapter discusses three concepts that are closely related to each other, namely, Mahāyāna, the soteriological means of awakening, *bodhisattva*, a sentient being who strives for awakening; and *bodhicitta*, the resolve to strive for awakening. Chapter six examines the two traditions of Mahāyāna Buddhism found in India and systematised by Tibetan scholars—particularly their views of issues related to the generation of *bodhicitta*. The seventh chapter presents a typology of *bodhicitta*, namely, ethico-spiritual, gnoseological, ontological (or metaphysical), psycho-physiological, and semiotic (or symbolical) *bodhicitta*. Chapter eight brings together various traditional classifications of *bodhicitta* found in Indian and Tibetan sources. The ninth chapter takes a look at the causes and conditions pertaining to *bodhicitta*. The tenth chapter thematises the observances of Mahāyāna, and particularly the maintenance of *bodhicitta* as the foundation of a *bodhisattva*'s ethico-spiritual discipline. The eleventh and last chapter deals with the relapse or loss of *bodhicitta* and the methods for restoring it. Since I have made profuse use in this study of *Bodhisattvabhūmi* 1.2 (i.e. the Cittotpādāvatata, the chapter on the generation of the resolve to become a *buddha*), which is one of the earliest pieces of Mahāyāna literature that deals with the theme, and so is an important textual witness to the development of the concept of *bodhicitta*, I have also included a critical edition of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts of this chapter as, respectively, appendices A and B.

Given the pervasiveness of *bodhicitta* in Mahāyāna Buddhism and the amount of material found on it, this study cannot claim to have done full justice to the theme. Perhaps I
have been naïve in venturing to take a flight into the domain of Mahāyāna that is said to be as vast as space itself. To use a simile employed by Candrakīrti, a bird in flight must finally land, not because there is no sky left to traverse but because it has exhausted all its energy.

Similarly, my study comes to an end not because materials on bodhicitta have been exhausted and everything that needs to be said on the subject has been said, but because a limit has had to be set so that the deadline for submitting the dissertation can be met. Nonetheless, I do hope that the present work will be a small contribution towards understanding the concept of bodhicitta, the élan vital of tantric and non-tantric Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Dorji Wangchuk

February, 2007, Hamburg

---

2 See, for example, Ratnagunasamcaya 1.21.

3 Madhyamakāvatāra 11.32ab:
   nam mkha’ med pas ’dab chags ldog par mi ’gyur gyi ||
   ’di ni rang mthu zad pas ldog par ’gyur de bzhin ||.