

Lineage holders of *bsnyung gnas* (“fasting”) and the cult of sPyan ras gzigs (10th–12th century)

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bsNyung gnas is a system that was transmitted to Tibet in the 11th century as part of the religious movement focused on sPyan ras gzigs which was popular during bstan pa phyi dar. The transmission of bsnyung gnas had several features typical of bstan pa phyi dar: the Indian origin; sngags gsar ma; Bal po as a land through which it was diffused to Tibet; the individual, rather than collective, endeavour of Tibetan masters to establish it on the plateau; its early Tibetan exponents being part of the scholastic network of the time; the foundations of temples; and the involvement of great Indian masters and even of important yon bdag-s. Highly Tantric in India, more monastic and sdom pa-oriented in Tibet, bsnyung gnas was never to evolve into one of the established religious schools which took shape during the 11th and 12th centuries, nonetheless continued to be practised in the subsequent periods.

I will devote my attention to the biographies and the related gdung rabs material in order to trace the late 10th century lineage holders of bsnyung gnas from India who transmitted it to Tibetan masters. The significance of a few of the latter has not been fully acknowledged because the evidence concerning them is fragmented in the literature due to their belonging to other religious systems. I will try to show that different biographies of some of them provide different records of their activity and religious inclinations. Collating these biographies helps to assess these masters with a more all-round perspective.

I plan briefly to deal with: dge slong ma dPal mo, the incestuous daughter of a king of Kashmir; her disciples Ye she bzang po and Zla ba gzhon nu; dPe nya ba, a proponent of bsnyung gnas from the heart of the Kathmandu Valley; Byangs sems Zla ba rgyal mtshan and Ba ri lo tsa ba who each introduced different aspects of the cult.