PART ONE
rDzogs chen is considered to have been introduced into Tibet by Vairocana in the eighth century from India. It is therefore important to examine first the various existing accounts of this illustrious figure in later and early Tibetan Buddhist and Bonpo sources. Without having some idea of the activities of Vairocana which are woven into the development of rDzogs chen thought, we can make no way in this uncharted territory of Tibetan religious studies.

Vairocana is said to be one of the first of seven Tibetans ordained by Śāntarakṣita as a Buddhist monk following the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition at the newly founded first monastery of bSam-yas and was given the name Vairocanarakṣita.

Later in the rNying ma pa tradition, he appears as a pupil of Padmasambhava and so figures among his twenty-five prominent disciples. He is often considered even as of equal status to Padmasambhava himself. However, above all, he is known to have been a great lo-tsā-ba. This role of his in establishing Buddhism is acknowledged by all later Tibetan Buddhist schools. Thus, in the eleventh century the bKa’ gdam pa master, rNgog lo-tsā-ba Blo-ladan shes-rab (1059–1109), who himself was also renowned as a lo-tsā-ba, eulogizes him in these words:

“Vairocana is equal to the sky. sKa-ba dPal-brtsegs and Cog-ro Klu’i rgyal-mtshan are like the sun and moon, Rin-chen bzang-po (958–1055) is simply like the great star in the early morning (Venus), I am merely a glow-worm.”

However, it is not only in Buddhist tradition that Vairocana possesses such an aura of prestige, but also in the Bonpo tradition in which he is presented as an eclectic figure upholding both faiths. This particular role which he plays at a time when Bon is said to have been under persecution is an important factor in later eclectic spiritual movements in the nineteenth century.

Vairocana’s activities, however, are not confined to religion only, if we