PART TWO
CHAPTER TWO

THE ANCIENT DOCUMENTS ON RDZOGS CHEN FROM TUN-HUANG

Among the Tun-huang Tibetan manuscripts of Sir Aurel Stein preserved in the India Office Library in London, I was able in 1973 to discover three works relevant to rDzogs chen. Two of them are texts which one might call prototypes of the later literature of the rDzogs chen tradition. The third one is merely a list of different successions of religious masters including some of the rDzogs chen tradition in three different places in Tibet in the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. I used these works as sources for my lectures on rDzogs chen at the Sorbonne in 1973 and 74.1 The existence of these manuscripts has not previously been noted by any of the Tibetologists writing on the rNyin-ma-pa in general or on rDzogs chen in particular.2

Fortunately, unlike many of the Tun-huang manuscripts, these are complete and sufficiently clear so that there is no difficulty in reading them. In the catalogue of de la Vallée-Poussin, the manuscripts bear the following numbers: 594, 647 and 689/2 respectively.3

Tun-huang document No. 1 (IOL 647)

IOL 647 will be treated here at first since it contains one of the fundamental texts of the rDzogs chen tradition. It consists of five folios in the ordinary Tibetan format. Each of the folios has six lines from left to right and the folios are paginated in the usual way from 1a to 5b. Folio 1b, however, does not contain any part of the actual work, but a list of teachings associated with prajñāpāramitā.4 It is scribed in an obviously different hand from the rest of the manuscript. In spite of this textual interpolation, the text is continuous from folio 1a to 2a judged in the light of the grammatical structure and also from the point of view of the subject-

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4 See the Tun-huang documents reproduced at the end of this book.