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1. Introduction

The mendrub (*smān sgrub*) ritual performed on a large scale in a monastic setting represents one of the rarest rituals of the contemporary Bon tradition. It also counts as one of the most important and powerful, especially as perceived by lay people, and as one of the most expensive.¹

Mendrub is a “ceremony for blessing healing medicine”.² Its purpose is to transform medicinal drugs into a powerful substance by bestowing blessings upon it. On the level of high tantric practice the performance as well as the *materia medica* serves as a symbolic support on the path towards enlightenment. The term *smān sgrub* can be translated verbatim as “accomplishment of medicine”, but also as “generating benefit”. *sMān* denotes both “medicine, drug” and “benefit, use, good”,³ whereas the verb *sgrub* comprising the causative superscribed *s* designates an active action effecting it.⁴ Another name for the ritual is *bdud rtsi ’od zer khyil ba* (“The Radiating Light-Rays of Healing Nectar”).⁵

There exists a great variety of mendrub rituals in Tibetan Buddhism and Bon. They differ firstly according to the tutelary deity (*yi dam*) to which they are dedicated.⁶ Secondly, the variations have evolved depending on different ritual traditions. Thus, we might assume dozens of mendrub rituals, most of which are rarely performed. The one dealt with in this thesis comes from the cycle of the main Bon yidam, Trowo Tsochog Khagying (*khro bo gtso mchog mkha’ ’gying*) and the *bru* lineage / tradition (*bru rgyud, bru lugs*).⁷ Furthermore, apart from the big mendrub ceremonies an example of which is presented here, there exists a large

¹ For the highest price it competes with big fire offerings (*sbyin sreg*).

² 25th Anniversary of Founding Triten Norbutse Monastery.

³ Das; BGTC.

⁴ The term *smān sgrub* and its connections to *sgrub thabs* (*sādhana*) is discussed by Garrett, 2009, pp. 209-210.

⁵ 25th Anniversary of Founding Triten Norbutse Monastery.

⁶ Cf. Kind, 2002, p. 46.

⁷ *Bru* tradition represents historically the most successful of the six patrilineal lineages transmitting the teachings of Bon.

number of smaller, more frequently performed mendrub rituals, conducted either occasionally or regularly (often yearly) in village settings and in institutions producing Tibetan medicine. To distinguish the two, the former is generally referred to as *sgrub chen*, “big accomplishment”.

I focus on the specific “material core of the ritual”, the so called medicine (*smān*) or mendrub medicine (*smān sgrub kyi smān*), its preparation, the processes it undergoes in the course of the ritual as well as approaches to understanding it. I intend to show the diverse concepts behind the production of this medicine, and how it is actually produced. The work derives from fieldwork and observance of the ritual as celebrated at Triten Norbutse (*khri brtan nor bu rtse*) monastery in Kathmandu in December 2012, and from textual analysis.

Although there exists a significant number of studies of Tibetan ritual, only a few researchers have dealt with mendrub rituals. The most detailed work is Kind’s book “Mendrub” describing a ceremony taking place in a Bonpo village community in Dolpo, based on its observance. Saxer mentions small-scale mendrub as an event occasionally organized at clinics of traditional Tibetan medicine both in Tibet and in exile “to enhance the potency of the medicine”.⁸ The ritual is also briefly discussed by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and by Donden and Hopkins.⁹ Garrett shows its historical link to alchemy and the *bcud len* practices.¹⁰ Once published, a welcomed contribution will be Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung (*mkhan po bstan pa g.yung drung*) and Millard’s translation of a commentary to the same rite I focus on written by the famous Bonpo scholar Nyo Tsultrim Gyaltzen (*gnyos tshul khrims rgyal mtshan*, 14th century). Kohn presents a study of a healing ritual that is similar to the one studied here in many respects, and performed by Sherpas of the Nyingma Buddhist school in Solo Khumbu and called Mani Rimdu, after the produced pills (*ril bu*) referred to as *sgrub ril*,

⁸ Saxer, 2010, p. 247.

⁹ Bstan ’dzin rgya mtsho et al., 2007, pp. 253-266; Donden and Hopkins, 1997, pp. 214-218.

¹⁰ Garrett, 2009.

“achievement pills”. So far no scholarly attention has been paid to any texts used in a mendrub ritual of any sort and a list of the required ingredients is translated here for the first time.

2. The Ritual Preparations

2.1 Origin and transmission of the ritual

This particular Bon mendrub ritual is dedicated to Trowo Tsochog Khagying, one of the five yidam deities (*gsas mkhar mchog lnga*) of the ‘Father tantras’ (*pha rgyud*).¹¹ The ritual is believed to have originated from the deity Kuntu Zangpo (*kun tu bzang po*), in the context of Bon rituals considered to be the source of all knowledge, who transmitted its practice to the deity Shenlha Ökar (*gshen lha ’od dkar*). The transmission continued through a teacher-student lineage to the great Bon master Drenpa Namkha (*dran pa nam mkha’*), who was very instrumental in protecting Bon during its persecution by the Tibetan Buddhist king Trisong Detsen (*khri srong lde btsan*) in the eighth century. Drenpa Namkha is said to have hidden the mendrub ritual text along with other scriptures in Southern Tibet. Thus, the text itself is a *terma* (*gter ma*), a hidden treasure intended to be rediscovered at the appropriate time in the future. The main text (*’od zer khyil ba bdud rtsi sman gyi bzhung*) was rediscovered in the late eleventh century when it was revealed by treasure discoverer (*gter ston*) Matön Srindzin (*rma ston srid ’dzin*) in Dangra Khyungdzong (*dang ra khyung rdzong*).¹² Moreover, the written work was accompanied by several precious objects, nine boxes of medicine together with nine vessels (*bum pa, ga’u*) containing medicinal mixture which forms the main material of the ritual.

¹¹ Kvaerne, 2001, p. 75.

¹² YR. See also Katen Catalogue, pp. 1026 (168-1), 1308 (230-22, particularly the colophone, p. 503). This account does not fully accord with Kind, 2002, p. 47.

All these items were passed down to the hands of the fourth abbot of the Yeru Wensaka (*g.yas ru dben sa kha*) monastery in Tsang, which had been established by the *bru* lineage in 1072 and formed its centre. Hence the ritual was practised continuously at the monastery once in the lifetime of every abbot. After its disastrous destruction by a deluge in 1386 the tradition was to continue in the new monastery Tashi Menri (*bkra shis sman ri*) founded at a nearby location in 1405. Each abbot of the monastery, gradually becoming regarded as the head of the Bonpos, had to conduct the mendrub ritual as one of the two major obligations of his office, which is also stated in the legal document of the monastery *bca' yig*: “An abbot was free to retire once he had performed two obligatory acts which confirmed his abbacy: the erection of a *mčhod-rten* for his predecessor and the organisation of *sgrub-čhen* and *sman-sgrub* prayers.”¹³ The scarcity of the performances was due the enormous effort and financial investment put into the prescribed substances and the secrecy of the tradition.¹⁴

The fate of the revealed terma (*gter ma*) medicine was rather complicated and seems to have sparked a dispute over precious religious items within the *bru* community. One of the original nine vessels survived and was cautiously kept at Menri monastery. However, later and to the protest of the institution, the precious container was transported to Tagbrosa (*stag bro sa*) monastery in Kongpo. The story might be reconstructed as follows: A Menri abbot, likely the tenth bearing the name Mönlam Tashi (*smon lam bkra shis*),¹⁵ retired into meditation retreat of an announced period of three months. He extended the duration to three years without letting anyone know and this lack of information created the controversy. The confused monastery leadership waiting for their head in vain appointed in the meantime a new abbot. After returning, a disappointed Mönlam Tashi had no chance of reclaiming his former

¹³ Cech, 1988, pp. 69-70, 85.

¹⁴ YR.

¹⁵ According to other information the abbot in question was the sixth one. The issue supposedly led to erasing Mönlan Tashi's name from the list of Menri abbots, therefore dating his life is problematic.

position and thus angrily decided to leave. He did not abandon his former seat with empty hands, but tried to collect as many precious objects as possible. Some of them could not be moved due to a miraculous intervention of deities, as for example the funeral stupa of Shenrab Gyaltzen (*gshen rab rgyal btsan*, 1356-1415), the founder of Menri and key figure in establishing the Bon monastic tradition, which Mönlam Tashi also wished to take. Yet, he managed to take the master's hat, along with other objects. Among them was also the remaining medicine vessel. After the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959, the magical container was carried into exile by a teacher from Tagbrosa and it seems that it was stored in secrecy at the new Menri monastery in Dolanji, India. Subsequently, when the owner moved to the second most important Bon exile monastery, Triten Norbutse in Kathmandu, the vessel accompanied him. The result is that Triten Norbutse presently holds the vessel, still filled with the terma medicine and kept by the Rinpoche in his seat, the Labrang (*bla brang*). Thus, Menri does not hold the item, although it is currently the leading Bon monastery.

The text according to which the ritual is performed was, like many others, carried from Tibet by the refugees, most probably by the Rinpoche Yongzin Tenzin Namdak (*yongs 'dzin bstan 'dzin rnam dag rin po che*) himself from his homeland in Khyungpo.

2.2 Place and Time

Triten Norbutse monastery at the Western edge of the Kathmandu Valley is currently the second most important Bon monastery and educational institution in exile. It was founded upon the initiation of a former preceptor (*slob dpon*) of Menri monastery in Tibet, Yongdzin Rinpoche, in 1987, who also chose the name “Stable Seat of the Jewel Peak”¹⁶ and remains its spiritual head until the present. Built out of scratch, the monastery has successfully expanded

¹⁶ Translation according to *Triten Norbutse Monastery: 25th Anniversary Celebration*, p. 20.

and at the present hosts more than 200 monks. The contemporary abbot, elected in 2001, Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung Rinpoche, comes from Rinpoche's main disciples. Both of them functioned as the main supervisors of the mendrub ritual.

The ritual and education curriculum of the establishment is based on the original Menri monastery, following the *bru lugs*. This naturally also concerns the mendrub ritual. Its first performance outside the Tibetan motherland took place at Menri in India in 1998 and again in 2009. At Triten Norbutse the celebration was first conducted in 1998, the second occasion being in year 2012. All the four performances followed the same text and were virtually the same. As such, they also create a general model of the mendrub ritual having a standardizing impact on its performance in different Bonpo settlements within the scope of influence of the two institutions, *i.e.* in the Himalayas.¹⁷

The decision to celebrate the ritual for a second time at Triten Norbutse derives from two reasons. Initially, Rinpoche and Khenpo intended to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the monastery in a special way, wishing to express their gratitude to all those who have helped in its development. Mendrub due to the high importance and exclusivity it has was chosen as the most appropriate. Secondly, as mendrub is valued for its healing power which extends also to creating universal harmony in degenerated times, its performance was viewed as especially urgent in the contemporary world crisis. It heals any instability, functioning not only as medicine within physical bodies, but also in the overall global environment, which might include the ecological, economic, political, or other sphere. The most pressing problems named were global warming, natural disasters such as tsunami, floods and earthquakes, general ecological instability, financial crisis, political instability in the world leading to wars and violence: particularly the wave of self immolations in Tibet, the again worsening political

¹⁷ The impact on the mendrub ritual observed is discussed by Kind, 2002.

situation in Nepal following the parliamentary elections won by the Maoist Party (2008), and revolutions in the Middle East (since 2011).

Despite the monastery's anniversary falling in the middle of summer 2012, the celebration period was scheduled due to practical reasons. Summer is a problematic time for pilgrims to come due to agricultural labour, whereas winter regularly draws many of the inhabitants of Himalayan settlements into Kathmandu. As the number of Bon adherents in the West is not negligible, their preferences were also taken into account, namely the Christmas holiday. The date was thus arranged from 9th December 2012 until 2nd January 2013, corresponding to 26th of the tenth month – 20th day of the eleventh month, water dragon year 2139 of the Tibetan calendar.

2.3 Preparations of the medicine used in the ritual

2.3.1 List of ingredients

”[O]btaining the precious medical offering substances, as listed in the texts, poses a great challenge”, states Khenpo in the introduction to the monastery's anniversary booklet.¹⁸ Indeed, gathering the required medicinal substances has traditionally been seen as the most demanding part of the whole mendrub ritual. The texts Khenpo refers to is specifically a list of the required ingredients which forms a short part of the main text for the ritual's performance *'od zer 'khyil ba bdud rtsi sman gyi gzhung*, coming from the tantras of Trowo included in the *spyi spungs* part of the “Bonpo Tenjur” (*i.e.* Katen), as listed by Kvaerne.¹⁹ The translation of the list is presented below.

The list itself comprises of seven folios. Three versions of the same text, all manuscripts, were available to me. The first one is the copy used at Tritten Norbutse

¹⁸ *Tritten Norbutse Monastery: 25th Anniversary Celebration*, p. 11.

¹⁹ Kvaerne, 1974, p. 113.

throughout the ritual (MsA), brought from Khyungpo, and extracted from a photocopy of the *gzhung* distributed among the monks. The folios of the *gzhung* were numbered as pages, and I follow this system. The second (MsB) and third (MsC) manuscripts were incorporated along other mendrub texts into the Katen (vol. 168, text 1, pp. 9-15; vol. 230, text 22, pp. 444-449) as catalogued by Karmay and Nagano. All the manuscripts are written in cursive script (*'khyug yig*) in rather distinctive hand-writing and contain many compounded word forms (*bsdus yig*). The literary style is irregular verse. The folios of MsA and MsB have five lines, MsC six lines. There are only minor differences between the versions, noted in the translation. Generally, MsB contains a slightly lower number of contracted forms, but the usage of abbreviated or full spellings of the same words is irregular, in contrast to MsA. Where these forms appear, they are exactly the same abbreviations as in MsA. MsB also contains the same misspellings as MsA. Furthermore, in MsB more recent forms of spelling of some words are encountered, as for instance *'dab* (in *'dab chags*, 'birds') instead of *'dabs* in MsA. The punctuation (*shad*, double *shad*) is the same in both texts. MsC differs from the former two mainly in usage of different abbreviations and in punctuation. In the translation I use the punctuation of MsA and MsB as its comparison is not my focus here. The three manuscripts share the same irregularities in terms of the overall pattern of the text, which suggests their equal corruption.²⁰ My proposed emendations of misspellings and word additions are indicated by an asterisk.

The translation is presented by verses or clusters of verses, which are followed by extracts from a recently written commentary (Comm.)²¹ if it adds something new or sheds light on problematic terms. The commentary is a work of the main amchi in charge of preparations of the mendrub ingredients, Amchi Nyima (*am chi nyi ma*). Several months in

²⁰ See Appendix 4.

²¹ The commentary was available to me in PdF and consists of 12 pages.

advance, he was presented a photocopy of the list and given the task of collecting and processing them. Simultaneously, he received an oral explanation of the text and accompanying traditions (*shes rgyun*) from Yongdzin Rinpoche dictated to him from his memory as he had learned from his teachers in Tibet when the ritual was performed at the original Menri monastery.²² Traditionally, the knowledge of the proper performance of the ritual has been passed from the head of the monastery to his successor. My explanations follow the commentary if necessary (in small letters) and are based on literature and oral explanations given to me. I would like to add that translating the names of Tibetan medicinal substances presents a challenge. Identifying and labelling them is sometimes confusing even for Tibetan doctors themselves, as appellations vary locally, a number of terms might relate to one and the same plant species referring to its different parts, whereas also one plant might be known under a number of names, or one name may indicate more than one biological species.²³ I present how Amchi Nyima understands the terms. Especially when confronted with other amchis and dictionaries, it seems that the medical vocabulary of the text is rather ancient and furthermore that the contemporary and even oral Bon medical tradition tends to preserve it more than the Buddhist.

The text is structured according to a regular fivefold pattern following the spatial organization of the cardinal points in the Bon anticlockwise direction: Centre, East, North, West, South. Furthermore, the five cardinal points once again figure within each of these five sections where they keep the same order but rotate according to the cardinal point in question. Yet, the system is not always observed due to corruptions.²⁴ At the end, eightfold organization reflecting the eight consciousnesses appears.

²² For the Rinpoche, this occasion was the fourth Mendrub he has supervised (once at Menri in Tibet, once at Menri in India, for the second time at Triten Norbutse).

²³ Cf. Meyer, 2007, pp. 36-37.

²⁴ The analysis of the list and corruptions are discussed in Appendices 3, 4.

[I. ANIMAL INGREDIENTS ACCORDING TO THE CARDINAL POINTS]

[Ia. CENTRE]

***glang chen dung gi gtsug phud can la sogs te/ 'bras bu dang/ thig le dang rnam shes la nga
rgyal gnas su dag par zhes bya ste/ rta gro bo shel (83) mig la sogs ste/ rmig zlum mtha' dag
gi 'bras bu dang thig le dang/***

Testicles and semen of unicorns and others to purify the pride in consciousness refers to testicles and semen of all [animals with] undivided hoofs, such as of dark-coloured white-eyed unicorns and others.

Comm.: Amchi Nyima takes this whole section as root medicine (*rtsa ba'i sman*) together with the following one, which contradicts NyTshGy. Amchi gives examples which “all animals” fulfilling the given characteristics are meant: “dark-coloured white-eyed unicorns, donkeys, mules, kiangs, stripped horses or ‘zebras’, etc.” Apart from members of the horse family (*Equidae*) encountered in the Tibetan world, also zebras are mentioned. As AN explained, he had listed a horse with stripes, but was told by someone that the proper name would be ‘zebra’.

rMig zlum (“round hoof”, *i.e.* undivided) designates all animals characterised by this feature, Odd-toed ungulates (*Perissodactyla*), of which only *Equidae* are known in Tibet and thus in fact, according to the Western taxonomy, become synonymous to the whole Order.²⁵ This reading of the term allows us to exclude another possible interpretation of *glang chen dung gi gtsug phud can* as “elephants with white tusks”. Given the corruption of the text the two groups might have also merged in this verse, which is however quite unlikely as the verse looks compact.

There exist different understandings of *gro bo*: a dark colour (AN, NW), bluish grey (AN), reddish grey (NyTshGy, Martin),²⁶ or white and black (*spu kha dkar nag*, BGTC).

Shel means ‘crystal’, in an attributive position functions to describe whitish and glassy colour of eyes (note that *thig le* is of the same colour), sometimes in the more adjectival expression *shel skya*. The word also has the same meaning as *dung* referring to “conch of white colour” and used for ‘white’.

²⁵ BGTC.

²⁶ Martin, 2001.

rnam shes la 'dod chags gnas su dag par zhes bya ste/ lha bya rgod pa la sogs ste/ 'dabs²⁷

****(dab) chags kyi sgong nga sna tshogs dang/***

To purify the desire in consciousness refers to various eggs of birds, such as of vultures and others [are needed].

Comm.: Examples of the sought birds: vultures, snowcocks (for instance Tibetan snowcocks, *Tetraogallus tibetanus*, *sgong mo*),²⁸ peacocks, bearded vultures (*go bo*), poultry, partridges (*srag pa*, probably *Alectoris chukar*), jackdaws (*kyung ka*), *mkha' lding*,²⁹ larks (*co ga*), Black kites (*Milvus migrans*, 'o le), cranes, Eagle owls (*Bubo bubo*, 'ug pa), Little owls (*Athene noctua*, *srin bya*), cuckoos, parrots, pigeons.

Lha serves as an attribute added to names of birds. 'Dabs chags literally means “winged beings”.

rnam shes la 'phrog (*'phrag) gnas su dag par zhes bya ste/ chu srin ma ha'i snying po la sogs te/ gcan gzan gyi sha sna snying rnams so/

To purify the jealousy in consciousness refers to [various] kinds of flesh and hearts of carnivorous animals, such as hearts of crocodiles and others.

Comm.: Examples of the animals: tigers, Tibetan black bears (*Ursus thibetanus thibetanus*, *dom*), Himalayan brown bears (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*, 'dre mong), snow leopards (*gzig, gsa'*),³⁰ wolves, jackals, lions.

The phrasing of the sentence denotes that hearts and various kinds of flesh, which all can be understood as coming from the same animal, should be used. *Chu srin* also designates the mythical *makara* water creature. 'Dre mong is usually translated as 'yeti', nevertheless in many parts of Tibet implies a subspecies of Brown bear.

[II. ROOT MEDICINE (*rtsa ba'i sman*) (PLANT INGREDIENTS)]

²⁷ MsB: 'dab.

²⁸ The designation applies to *Tetraonidae* family in general.

²⁹ The term denotes different kinds of birds: mythical *Garuda*, eagle or other bird species.

³⁰ Both the terms may refer to the snow leopard, but AN understands the latter as a different animals, which I was not able to indentify.

***de rtsa ba'i sman de yi 'phrad a ru ra*³¹ *rnam par rgyal ba dang*/**

Join this root medicine with fruit of *Terminalia chebula* (chebulic myrobalan),³²

The attribute *rnam par rgyal ba* or *rnam rgyal* ('superior, excellent') refers to the most important of the six types of *a ru ra*, the fundamental remedy of Tibetan medicine and therefore also the attribute of the Medicine Buddha.³³ The epithet is not to be mistaken with the name of another plant *rnam par*.³⁴

***ba ru ra g.yug 'dral dang*/**

fruit of *Terminalia bellerica* (belleric myrobalan),³⁵

The puzzling word *g.yug 'dral* is an epithet to *ba ru ra*.³⁶ Less likely, and as a parallel to the following verse, the two syllables might suggest a name of a separate medicinal plant, which we are not able to identify.³⁷

***skyu ru ra shing kun dang*/**

fruit of *Phyllanthus emblica* (emblic myrobalan),³⁸ *Ferula asafoetida* (asafoetida),³⁹

Comm.: Also spelling variant *shing kha*.

NyTshGy (p. 7) quotes *skyu ru ra shing dkar*, the second half verbatim "white wood" again as an epithet to the first. In the anticipated Zhangzhung language *shing kun* denotes "devil's dung, food of the gods".⁴⁰

***bzang po drug la sogs gsal lo*/**

³¹ MsB: *a ru*.

³² Das; DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

³³ DTMM; MC; ShM. Cf. BGTC: "*sman gyi rgyal po*".

³⁴ Cf. TMPa, DTMM.

³⁵ Das; DTMA; DTMM.

³⁶ AN. NyTshGy (p. 7) cites the name in a different spelling (*g.yug 'dril*) which might be due to a spelling mistake or a different text version used by the author.

³⁷ LST; NW; MC.

³⁸ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa; TMPa.

³⁹ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

⁴⁰ ZZ.

“the six god [substances]”, and others.

bzang po drug is a mixture of six components in this order:⁴¹ bamboo pith (*Bambuseae, cu gang*),⁴² saffron (*Crocus sativus, gur gum*), clove (*Syzygium aromaticum, li shi*), nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans, dzā ti*), smaller cardamon (*Elettaria cardamonum, sug smel*), greater or black cardammon (*Amomum subulatum, ka ko la*).

There exist five types of saffron used in Tibetan medicine, with different appearances, qualities and growing in different regions. The one from Tibet, the one of the worst quality is called simply *gur gum*. In the particular performance of *smān sgrub* we deal with Amchi Nyima added also a second type into the mixture, the one growing in Nepal and of the second worst quality, *bal gur gum*.

The presented four remedies (*a ru ra, ba ru ra, skyu ru ra, bzang po drug*) entitled ‘the root medicine’ are the main ones for Tibetan medicine in general, it can be supposed they would appear in any *smān sgrub*.⁴³

[Ib. EAST]⁴⁴

***sha chen g.yung drung rta (*lta)⁴⁵ me long smān zhes bya ste/ lang tsho dri ma ma phog⁴⁶
pa’i sha chen dang/ [gsang ba gal chen phyi yi sha chen/]⁴⁷ glang po che’i snying sha dang/
gzugs la gti mug gnas su dag pa’o/***

The medicine of *sha chen g.yung drung rta me long* refers to flesh of young virgin girls, human flesh of *sang ba gal chen phyi*, and elephants’ heart flesh, and is to purify the ignorance in the form.

Comm.: *gSang sha gal phyi ba’i sha* meaning “flesh of virgin boys and girls”.

The expression *sha chen g.yung drung rta me long* in the first verse serves as kind of abbreviated title and introduction to the following section of the text, by providing a very brief summary of its content. A synopsis of the same style precedes each of the text sections of its first half.

⁴¹ Also *smān bzang po drug*. Comm.; BGTC; Das; DTMA; DTMM; DK; MPD; NyTshGy.

⁴² Spelling variant *chu gang*, “full of water”. *Cu gang* also means ‘caolin’, but not in *bzang po drug*.

⁴³ MC, Cf. Kind, 2002.

⁴⁴ Section I continues.

⁴⁵ Corrected according to NyTshGy (p. 8), denoting *me long lta bi’i ye she* (Mirror-like wisdom).

⁴⁶ MsC: *phogs*.

⁴⁷ The phrase is added following MsB, MsC (the latter adds *dang* to the end of the phrase).

An obscure term is the *gsang ba gal chen phyi*, which might be very literally put as “the outer secret and important”. NyTshGy cites the phrase as *gsang sha phyi ba'i sha* and explains “There are different views about what it is. Some say a certain part of heart.”⁴⁸

gzugs la zhe spang gnas su dag par zhes bya ste/ rgya stag khra'o/ wa chen ldang 'gyu la sogs te/ gcan gzan sna tshogs gyi snying sha dang/

Purifying the anger in form refers to heart flesh of various kinds of carnivorous animals, such as of striped tigers and quietly walking⁴⁹ foxes and others.

Comm.: *Wa chen ldang 'gyu* as ‘a pair of foxes, a male and a female’. The commentary follows the dual spelling occurring in the manuscript.

lDang 'gyu, spelled as *ldang 'gyur* at its second place in the text (below), is an old Bon term. Tigers’ stripes often feature in epithets.⁵⁰

(shar phyogs rtsa ba dag/)⁵¹

Homoio teleuton, bracketed in the text.

gzugs la nga rgyal gnas su dag par zhes bya ste/ (84) rta ngang pa shel gi mig la sogs rmig zlum sna tshogs gyi snying sha dang/

Purifying the pride in form refers to heart flesh of various kinds of animals with undivided hoofs, such as of white-eyed whitish horses and others.

Comm.: White-eyed whitish horses, donkeys, mules, kiangs.

Ngang pa is another example of Tibetan terms denoting colouration reserved exclusively for animals. It implies white with a tint of another colour: of blue, or in the case of horses of yellow, orange, red or brown. Generally,

⁴⁸ NyTshGy, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Translated according to NyTshGy.

⁵⁰ Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, p. 185.

⁵¹ Not in MsB, MsC.

these dye attributes refer to horses, most of them also to yaks, but only rarely to wild animals. Other examples are: *kyang pa* ‘white’ (without any tint), *rag pa* ‘red’, *gzags pa* ‘brownish’, *gro bo*, *rgya bo*, *rog po* ‘black’ (the last is often used to describe wild birds, such as ravens, crows, jackdaws etc.).⁵²

(gzugs la nga gyal gnas su dag pa'i phyir/)⁵³

Homoio teleuton, bracketed in the text.

***gzugs las 'phrog (*'phrag) gnas su dag pa'i sman ches bya ste/ chu sram lco (*lcong)
bzang la sogs ste/ gcan gzan chu la gnas pa rnams kyi snying sha dang rnams ni/ shar
phyog rtsa ba dag sman gyi bye byag go//***

The medicine purifying the jealousy in form refers to heart flesh of carnivorous animals living in water, such as of otters, good tadpoles; and this is the particular pure root medicine of the East.

Comm.: Fish, *chu byi*,⁵⁴ tadpoles (*lcog mo*), frogs, crocodiles, hippos (*chu phag*). *Chu srin* refers to crocodiles rather than *makāras* here, as Amchi Nyima lists animals of which existence he knows, first or second hand. Again, he includes a non-native animal to the Himalayas and lowlands below, a hippopotamus. As the zebra mentioned above, it comes from Africa.

Interestingly, tadpoles are listed here among carnivorous animals, although the *gcan gzan* class is usually apart from its diet defined by claws.

[Ic. NORTH]

⁵² NW; BGTC. Blondeau in her study on Tibetan hippology (1972, pp. 67-69, 158) cites different colour terms used for horses, which in most cases consist of regular vocabulary.

⁵³ Not is MsB, MsC.

⁵⁴ “Water mouse”, a small rodent (*Rodentia*) living near water.

*dri chen kun 'byung mnyams (*mnyam) pa'i sman ches bya ste/ 'du byed las nga rgyal gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ rta gro mo g.yu rngog la sogs ste/ rmig zlun mtha' dag gi dri chen rgyug 'phro la byung ba dang//*

The medicine of *dri chen kun 'byung mnyam pa* refers to: In order to purify the pride in perception, stool of all animals with undivided hoofs dropped out in run, such as of dark coloured turquoise-maned mares and others [is needed].

NyTshGy cites *rta gro bo g.yu rngog*, which is translated “a horse with a body that is reddish grey with blue tail and man”.⁵⁵ Amchi understands the *g.yu rngog* colour as grey or blue.

*'du byed las zhe sdang gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ 'dam seng sngon po dang ri khyi sngon po dang/ dpyad⁵⁶ (*dpyid) tshugs dpung pa la sogs ste/ gcan gzan sna tshogs kyi sbrun dang/*

In order to purify the hatred in perception, stool of various kinds of carnivorous animals, such as of blue swamp lion and wolf, *dpyid tshugs dpung* [is needed].

Comm.: *'dam seng* as ‘blue lion’.

According to the Tibetan classification of animals, there are three types of lions: the mythical ‘snow lion’ (*gang seng, seng dkar*), ‘forest lion’ living in dry lowland forests (*nags seng*), ‘swamp lion’ of wet lowlands (*dam seng*, literally “mud lion”).⁵⁷ This classification does not reflect the natural reality, as there has been only one species of lion spread across Eurasia. The “mud lion” denotes also a frog, but frogs are generally not counted as *gcan gzan*, as they have no fangs, although they feed on a meat diet as well.⁵⁸ However, in this text a tadpole has appeared among *gcan gzan*.

⁵⁵ NyTshGy, p. 9.

⁵⁶ MsB, MsC: *dpyid*.

⁵⁷ NW; BGTC.

⁵⁸ NW; DTMM.

For ‘wolf’ the idiom “blue mountain dog” is used. The ‘swamp lion’ is also blue. The colour, *sngon po* covering a spectrum of tones ranging from blue to green, would be more appropriate for the “frog” alternative, which is not understood here.

The unclear phrase *dpyid tshugs dpung* either indicates a carnivorous animal or another term not understood at present, or a corrupted verse.

'du byed la gti mug gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ lug dkar po bang mig dang/ g.yag dkar po shel mig la sogs te/ rmig pa kha brag rnams kyi lce (*lci) ril dang/

In order to purify the ignorance in perception, droppings of [animals with] divided hoofs, such as of white sheep with a spot on its flank, white-eyed white yaks and others [are needed].

Comm.: Amchi Nyima is not certain about the term *bang mig* and explains it as “eyes of *rgya bo* colour”. To his knowledge, *rgya bo* is a dark blackish colour, often of dogs’ eyes for instance. Nevertheless, *rgya bo* colour may denote another tone, such as ‘yellow hair with black base’.⁵⁹

As can be seen, different groups of animals require different appellations for their different kinds of stool: *sbrun* (a general designation), *lci ril* (droppings), *lci ba* (dung). The last term refers to animal stool useable as fuel.⁶⁰

'du byed [la] 'dod chags gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ bya dkar (85) ze dmar dang/ khu byug gsung snyan la sogs te/ 'dabs chags sna tshogs kyi sbrun dang/

In order to purify the desire in perception, the stool of various kinds of birds, such as of red-crested white birds, cuckoos with harmonious voice and others [is needed].

Comm.: Red-crested white poultry, cuckoos, peacocks, parrots, snowcocks, jackdaws, *mkha' lding*, partridges, sparrows (*mchil ba*), swallows (*khug rta*), magpies, pigeons.⁶¹

'du byed la 'phrog (*'phrag) gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ ci spyang dang byi la stag ril dod pa la sogs te/ gcan gzan rnams kyi gzugs sbrun rnams so//

⁵⁹ BGTC.

⁶⁰ BGTC.

⁶¹ Cf. the bird list above.

In order to purify the jealousy in perception, stool of carnivorous animals, such as of jackals and cats stripped as tigers [is needed].

Only the cats are described as stripped, not the jackals. *Bi la* or *byi la* stands in older language and still spoken in some dialects for *zhi mi*. Yet, the understanding is quite surprising, as domestic cats do not belong to the category of *gzan gcan*. When questioned, Amchi Nyima was not sure if the cats should be wild or domesticated.

[Id. WEST]

***khrag sna pad ma sor rtogs zhes bya te/ tshor ba las zhe sdang gnas su dag pa'i phyir/
khyi'u dang bu med mdangs dmar gyi khrag dang/***

[The medicine of] *khrag sna pad ma sor rtogs* refers to: In order to purify the anger in sensation, blood of boys and girls with shining red complexion [is needed].

tshor ba la 'dod chags gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ mkha' lding dmar po rnam kyi khrag dang/

In order to purify the desire in sensation, blood of red birds, such as of *mkha' lding dmar po*⁶² [is needed].

***tshor ba la gti mug gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ lug mgo ser la sogs ste/ rmig pa kha brag gi
khrag dang/***

In order to purify the ignorance in sensation, blood of [animals with] divided hoofs, such as of yellow-headed sheep and others [is needed].

Comm.: Yellow-headed sheep, yaks, *dzo*, cattle and goats.

⁶² See above.

***tshor ba la nga gyal gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ rta mtshal bu rting dkar la sogs te/ rmig pa
zlum po'i khrag dang/***

In order to purify the pride in sensation, blood of [animals with] undivided hoofs, such as of vermilion horses with white heels and others [is needed].

Comm.: Vermillion white-heeled donkeys, mules etc.

mTshal is vermilion dye made from stone. It may also, as in this case, indicate a reddish body colour which would however usually be rather *rag pa* or, as Amchi Nyima corrects this verse, *gzags pa*.

***tshor ba la 'dod chags (*'phrag)⁶³ gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ wa chen ldang 'gyur la sogs te/
gcan gzan sna tshogs kyis (*kyi) khrag gsol/***

In order to purify the jealousy in sensation, blood of various kinds of carnivorous animals, such as of quietly walking foxes and others, is requested.

[Ie. SOUTH]

***dri chu las drug bya ba nan tan ches bya te/ lho ru khyi'u smug la gzi byin chags pa dang/
bu med sngo (86) las gzi mdangs chags pa'i dri chu dang/ 'brug kyus pa'i chu la sogs te/
gcan gzan sdir (*sder) chags kyi chu dang/***

[The medicine of] *dri chu las drug bya ba nan tan* refers to urine of glorious brown boys in the South, urine of radiating blue flawless women, and of carnivorous animals with claws, such as of dragons *kyus*.

Comm.: Amchi Nyima reads *kyus* as *skyugs*, vomit of a dragon. Alternatively, in another line of the commentary, he suggests to understand the whole phrase *'brug kyus pa'i chu* as “meat of tigers, domestic cats, and other carnivorous animals.”

⁶³ Emended according to the text pattern (Appendices 3,4).

Kyus is a problematic word. It can be understood in both an ordinative or subordinative (*i.e.* as an attribute) position. Amchi Nyima employs the first option, NyTshGy the second one. In NyTshGy the three ingredients are translated as “1. The urine of a bright brown boy, 2. The urine of a bright blue girl, 3. The urine of a mute (*lkugs*) dragon.” The only translation of *kyus* I have found was in a compound *kyus bur* with the meaning ‘treacle of interior quality’, which would indeed fit with the comprehension of Amchi well.⁶⁴

sNgo could be also rendered as ‘flawless, faultless’,⁶⁵ but as we are dealing with the Southern direction connected to the colour blue, the dye description is more likely here.

'du shes las gti mug gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ chu mdzo sngon po la sogs te/ rmig pa khe (*kha) brag gi chu dang/

In order to purify the ignorance in perception, urine of [animals with] divided hoofs, such as of blue water dzos [is needed].

The ‘blue water dzo’ is a mythical animal which, together with a horse, is believed to dwell under the sea.⁶⁶

'du shes la nga gyal gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ dre'u ngon po ldang tsher (*gdang 'tsher) la sogs te/ rmig pa zlum pa'i chu dang/

In order to purify the pride in perception, urine of [animals with] with hoofs, such as of blue mules of shiny colour [is needed].

'du shes las 'dod chags gnas su dag pa'i phyir/ g.yu bya gong ngon la sogs te/ 'dod (*'dab) chags kyi khrag chu dang/ lho rtsa ba'i phyir⁶⁷ (*bye) brag go//

⁶⁴ ML.

⁶⁵ BGTC; TED.

⁶⁶ NW. Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1996, pp. 13, 185) mentions “blue water-horse” (*chu rta ngon po*), the horse of the *klu* (*klu rta*) that lives in water sources and the underground. The horse is mentioned as a mount in TGS, p. 49.

⁶⁷ MsB: *phyi*.

In order to purify the desire in perception, blood and urine⁶⁸ of birds, such as of cuckoos, *gong ngon* and others [is needed]; and this is the particular root [medicine] of the South.

g.yu bya is a common epithet for the cuckoo bird. Alternatively *g.yu bya gong ngon* might be understood as ‘blue-collared cuckoos’, but this is probably not plausible here.

de nas⁶⁹ phung po rigs su phye ba’o//

Then, the aggregates (*skandhas*) are classified.

[III. NON-ANIMAL, *i.e.* PLANT AND MINERAL,⁷⁰ INGREDIENTS ACCORDING TO THE CARDINAL POINTS]

[IIIa. CENTRE]

de nas⁷¹ gros⁷² (*grogs) su bstan (*bsten) pa ni/ ’byung ba las dbye ste/

Then, as concerns the explanation of joining [the medicine] that is classified according to the [four] elements.

dbus su ’dus pa ldan ba’i nam kha’i sman ces bya ste/ ro ’dus pa a ru ra⁷³ dang/ bcud ’dus pa bzang drug dang/ nus pa ’dus pa’i skyu ru ra dang/ rjes ’dus pa ba ru ra⁷⁴ dang/ gzhan yang sna tshogs par dgos te/ de ni nam kha’i lha mo sems can (*sems) mtshan ma⁷⁵ dang bral sman bya’o/

⁶⁸ *Chu* as a synonym to *dri chu*, *gcin pa* (urine). BGTC.

⁶⁹ MsC: The first two words omitted.

⁷⁰ These three categories compose the Tibetan *materia medica*.

⁷¹ MsB: *yi*.

⁷² MsB: *grogs*.

⁷³ MsB: *a ru*.

⁷⁴ MsB: *rje ’dus pa bstun*. This reading would change the phrase: “in accordance with the assembly of after tastes”.

⁷⁵ MsB: *mtsan*.

In the Centre the medicine of *'dus pa ldan ba'i nam kha* refers to: the assembly of tastes – *a ru ra*, the assembly of nourishment – the “six good [substances]“, the assembly of potentials – *skyu ru ra*, the assembly of after tastes – *ba ru ra*, and various others are also needed. This is the medicine of the goddess of space without characteristics.

The verse enumerates the four main characterising categories of Tibetan medicinal remedies: *ro* taste, *bcud* nourishment, *nus pa* potency, *zhu rjes* after taste. Each of them is perceived as concentrated in one of the four root medicine flora ingredients.

[IIIb. EAST]

(87) shar gyi sman gyi grogs su/ bskyed cing dag pa'i sman ces bya ste/

In joining the medicine of the East, the purifying and generating medicine refers to:⁷⁶

mang ther nu zhes bya ste/ du rum skad phyad dang/

Euphorbia sp. (spurge),

The name is understood as a synonym to *thar nu che ba*, “big thar nu”, appearing below.⁷⁷

In the present and the subsequent two couplets, plants are first indicated by their Zhangzhung name, which is then translated into Tibetan by the immediately following verse. Generally speaking, many plant substances used in Tibetan medicine bear a Zhangzhung designation.⁷⁸

du nu phro ces ste*⁷⁹/*sngon bu g.yu sna dang/

Cyananthus sp.,⁸⁰

⁷⁶ If species identification is difficult, I restrict myself to genera identification. I provide variant spellings if they appear in Comm. For other variants and different species identified I refer to literature. I provide English names where possible and if they do not cause ambiguity.

⁷⁷ Cf. *du ru ka* as a synonym for *thar nu*, DTMM. Alternatively, *du ru ka* denotes a tree resin incense. Das, BGTC.

⁷⁸ MC.

⁷⁹ MsC adds: *dang*.

mang bu phrum ces bya te/ ther nu zhes chen dang/

Euphorbia sp. (spurge),⁸¹

Comm.: *Thar nu che ba*.

skyes bu phrum zhes chen dang/ thar nu chung ba dang/

Euphorbia sp. (spurge),⁸²

Comm.: *Thar nu chung ba*.

gzhan yang 'khur mang dang/

And also others, [as] *Taraxacum* sp. (dandelion),⁸³

Comm.: *Khur mang*.

mtshe dang shug pa dang/

Ephedra sp. (ephedra),⁸⁴ *Juniperus* sp. (juniper),

Comm.: *mTshe ldum*.

chud bu dang/

Amchi Nyima did not understand the term, so omitted the substance.

lcam bur li do ka la sogs pa ni/

⁸⁰ DTMM; MPD. In AN's village Jharkot, where he collected a great part of the mendrub ingredients, *sngon bu mchog* or *sngon bu g.yu shing* refers to *Cyananthus microphyllus* (TMPI). TMPa understands *sngon bu* differently (*Lactuca lessertiana*).

⁸¹ DTMA; DTMM; TMPIG; TMPa.

⁸² DTMM; MPD.

⁸³ DTMA; DTMM; MPD; TMPI; TMPa.

⁸⁴ DTMA; DTMM; MPD; TMPIG; TMPa. Its usage in rituals *cf.* NWB, p. 37; Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, p. 346.

Malva sp.,⁸⁵ *Geranium sp.*,⁸⁶ and others.

Comm.: *lCam bur, li ga dur*.

The first is a synonym for more common *lcam pa*, the second for *ga dur*.⁸⁷

de ni sa'i lha mo sha gdos pa bral pa'i sman ces bya'o//

This is called the immaterial medicine of the earth goddess.

[IIIc. NORTH]

***byang gi sman gyi grogs su btang pa ni/ 'deg (*'degs) shing yangs (*yang) pa rlung gi
sman ces ste/***

In joining the medicine of the North, the lifting and light medicine refers to:

du ru ska na dang/

Euphorbia sp. (spurge),

Comm.: *Du ru ka*.

The same substance appears for the third time, according to the reading of Amchi Nyima.

so 'cha'⁸⁸ dang/

the fruit (long thin legumen) of *Sesbania grandiflora*,⁸⁹

Comm.: *Po so 'cha'*.

⁸⁵ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

⁸⁶ DTMA; MPD; TMPI; TMPIG. Only TMPa takes *ga dur* differently (*Coleus amboinicus* / *Rhodiola wallichiana*).

⁸⁷ AN; MC; DTMA; DTMM; TMPI; MPD; TMPa; TMPIG.

⁸⁸ MsB: *so 'chal*.

⁸⁹ ML; Das; DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

'bu ta pa 'dren⁹⁰ dang/

Fragaria sp. (strawberry),

Amchi Nyima understands this as *bu ta sa 'dren* or *dri rta sa 'dzin* which both can mean different species of wild strawberries. The expression is unusual and for other Tibetan amchis consulted, obscure. Strawberry is generally known as *'bri (r)ta sa 'dzin* or *sa 'dzin*.⁹¹

rtsi snga srin gyi 'bras dang/

Not understood by Amchi Nyima and omitted.

shing kyi ba'i 'bras bu dang/

the fruit of *Sophora davidii* (wild indigo),⁹²

Comm.: *Nang gser sgong*.

rgya skags dang/

red lac,⁹³

Red lac or shellac is extracted from an insect (Lac insect, *Kerria lacca*). This means that even the flora compounds of the mendrub medicine are not vegetarian in a biological sense, but are from the perspective of traditional classification.

spang ma dang/

Gentiana sp.,⁹⁴

⁹⁰ MsC: 'dran.

⁹¹ DTMA; MPD.

⁹² DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

⁹³ *rGya skag* is a corruption of *rgya skyegs*. Das; BGTC; TMPa.

⁹⁴ DTMM; MPD. The term *spang ma* also refers to blue vitriol and malachite, but not in this context.

sbrang rtsi dang/

honey,

a ma bi la la len la sogs/

root of *Fritillaria sp.*,⁹⁵ and others.

According to Amchi Nyima the refers to *a bi ka*, *a bi kha*, more usually know as *a bi sha*.⁹⁶

***'deg (*'degs) pa'i rnam (*rnam) pa ni/ rlung gi lha mo dbug (*dbugs) la gnas su dag pa'i
sman ces bya'o/***

As concerns the aspect of lifting, this is the purifying medicine in the breath of the air goddess.

[IIIId. WEST]

(88) sman las lce⁹⁷ (*lci) ba me'i sman bya ste//

From the medicine, the heavy fire medicine refers to:

spos snag gsum dang/

three kinds of incenses,

Comm.: *rGya spos*, *spang spos*, *brag spos*; which are, in the order: *Valeriana officinalis* (valerian) / *Melilotus suaveolens* (sweet clover), *Nardostachys grandiflora* (valerian), *Lepisorus soulieanus*.⁹⁸

tshā snag gsum dang/

⁹⁵ DTMA.

⁹⁶ ShM; TMPIG.

⁹⁷ MsB, MsC: *lci*.

⁹⁸ Das; DTMM; TMPa.

three kinds of salt,

Comm.: *rGya tshā*, *rgyam tshā*, *kha ru tshā*; Sal ammoniac, rock salt, black salt (natural halite, *Halitum violaceum*).⁹⁹

bu ram dang/

Saccharum officinarum (molasses),

gzhi mo dang/

Not understood and omitted.

ma nu dang/

Inula racemosa,¹⁰⁰

Comm.: *Ma nu ru rta*.

la la phud dang/

Trachyspermum copticum (ajowan caraway),¹⁰¹

The same term may also denote another plant (*Foeniculum vulgare*)¹⁰² of the same family (*Apiaceae*).

shing kun dang/

Ferula asafoetida (asafoetida),

This item is repeated here if we do not take the first occurrence of the term (p. 14) as an attribute.

⁹⁹ Das; DTMM; TMPa.

¹⁰⁰ AN; ShM (as *ma nu pa tra*).

¹⁰¹ AN; TMPI; TMP.

¹⁰² DTMA; DTMM; TMPIG; ShM.

ra sa ya na dang/

mercury,¹⁰³

gzi ma byin tshor dang/

Xanthium sp.,¹⁰⁴

Comm.: *gZi ma byin tsher*.

nyi shing snum can dang/

Asparagus sp. (asparagus),¹⁰⁵

Comm.: *Nyer shing*.

bal bu sur bu dang/

Rhododendron sp. (rhododendron),¹⁰⁶

ga sho dang/

I was not able to indentify this term, although I know it is a plant collected in Dhorpatan, Mustang.

ma nu dang/

Inula racemosa,

Repetition.

lcam thod dkar dang/

¹⁰³ A synonym for *dngul chu*. Das; DTMA.

¹⁰⁴ DTMA; DTMM; TMPIG; ShM.

¹⁰⁵ DTMA; DTMM; TMPI; TMPa; TMPIG; MPD.

¹⁰⁶ DTMM; MC; MPD.

*Malva sp.*¹⁰⁷

sgog pa dang/

bulb of *Allium sp.* (garlic)¹⁰⁸

mu zi la sogs pa rnams ni/

sulphur¹⁰⁹ and others, these are

Comm.: *Mu zi.*

me yi lha mo drod gnas su dag pa'i sman ces bya'o/

the purifying medicine of the heat of the fire goddess.

[IIIe. SOUTH]

drang zhing bsil ba chu yi sman ces byas ste// lho yi sman gyi grogs ni//

The cold and cooling water medicine refers to: joining the medicine of the South.

ga pur dang/

Camphor,

sro ma ra tsa dang/

seeds of *Abelmoschus moschatus*,¹¹⁰

Comm.: *So ma ra dza.*

¹⁰⁷ DTMA; DTMM.

¹⁰⁸ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa; MPD.

¹⁰⁹ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

¹¹⁰ AN; DTMM; TMPa.

The name may also refer to *Cannabis sativa* (hemp),¹¹¹ or *Psoralea corylifolia*,¹¹² however was not the case here.

***ba sha ba le*¹¹³ dang/**

Justicia adhatoda (malabar nut),¹¹⁴ stalk of *Aristolochia* sp. (birthwort),¹¹⁵

Comm.: Two plants are understood *ba sha ka* and *ba le ka*.

There is another plant called *ba sha ka* which is, in contrast to the one mentioned, native to Tibet and found also in Amchi's residence Jharkot (*Corydalis hookeri*).¹¹⁶ Thus, we deal with two plants of the same name, from different families, not resembling each other, one Tibetan, one Indian.

***g.yu shing* dang/**

resin of *Myricaria* / *Tamariscus* sp.¹¹⁷

***rgun 'bum sda ru* dang/**

Juniperus sp. (juniper),

Comm.: *rGun 'brum sda ru*.

Surprisingly, the expression does not indicate wine grapes (*Vitis vinifera*)¹¹⁸ as it usually does, but as Amchi Nyima understands a ground Juniper species growing at very high places, collected in Mustang.

***gla rtsi* dang/**

¹¹¹ NW; DTMM; TMPa.

¹¹² DTMA; TMPIG.

¹¹³ MsB, MsC: *ba sha ba le ka*.

¹¹⁴ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa; TMPIG.

¹¹⁵ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

¹¹⁶ TMPI. MPD gives another species native to the Himalayas: *Lagotis kunawurensis* / *Gymnandra kunawurensis*.

¹¹⁷ The name is synonymous to *'om bu. g.Yu shing* denotes more species (DTMM; MPD; TMPa). Not to be confused with *g.yu gu shing*.

¹¹⁸ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

I was not able to identify the plant which in this mendrub substituted the originally intended substance, deer musk (*Moschus moschiferus*). The herb pronounced *dum gla tsi* functions as a homophone to the required substance and was collected in Mustang. The reasons for substitution were economic.

ha li ka dang/

An obscure term, substance not found and omitted.

sum cu¹¹⁹ tig tig dang/

Saxifraga sp. (saxifrage),¹²⁰

Comm.: *Sum cu tig ta*.

ka ta ka ri¹²¹ dang/

Rubus sp.,¹²²

Comm.: *Kan dha ka ri*.

sle tre dang/

stalk of *Tinospora sinensis* (moonseed),¹²³

The plant name is said to belong to the Zhangzhung language, the common Tibetan spelling is *sle tres*.¹²⁴ Amchi Nyima uses the same spelling as in the text.

brag zhun dang cong zi dang sho sha rta dang/

bitumen and calcite, root of *Aucklandia lappa*,¹²⁵

Comm.: *Sha pho ru rta*. Bitumen was omitted, only calcite included.

¹¹⁹ MsC: *bcu*.

¹²⁰ DTMA; DTMM; TMPa.

¹²¹ MsC: *ra*.

¹²² DTMA; DTMM; TMPIG; TMPa; MPD.

¹²³ DTMA; DTMM; TMPIG.

¹²⁴ DTMM.

¹²⁵ AN; DTMM.

Bitumen and calcite often come in pair.¹²⁶

u dpal la sogs pa ni/

*Meconopsis sp.*¹²⁷ and others, these are

The Indian name of a token Hindu and Buddhist plant has come to designate an indigenous emblematic species of the Himalayas.¹²⁸ The blossom of *Meconopsis spp.* is mostly of blue colour, as that of Indian water lily (*utpala*).

chu'i¹²⁹ lha mo khrag las¹³⁰ (*la) gnas su dag pa'i sman ces bya'o/

the purifying medicine of the water goddess in blood.

de rnams na¹³¹ (*ni) thabs she rab rtsi ba'i bye brag go//

These are particular for the nectar of means and wisdom.

[IV. INGREDIENTS ACCORDING TO THE EIGHT CLASSES OF CONSCIOUSNESS]

yan lag brgyad ni rnams la dbye ste/

Classification into eight branches:

(89) sems can gyi mig sna tshogs pa dang/ mar la sogs snying po lnga dang/

Various kinds of animals' eyes and five essences, such as butter.

¹²⁶ DTMA; DTMM.

¹²⁷ DTMA; DTMM; TMPI; TMPIG; TMPa; MPD.

¹²⁸ „The Sanskrit names of Indian medicinal plants were kept for reasons of prestige and sometimes used to indicate local medicinal plants altogether different from the original Indian ones.” Cf. Lo Bue, p. 94.

¹²⁹ MsC: *chu yi*.

¹³⁰ MsC: *la*.

¹³¹ MsC: *nas*.

The five essences are: molasses, melted butter, honey, sesame oil, salt.¹³²

rna ba sna tshogs pa dang/ khug ches la sogs sgra byung ba'i me tog dang/

Various kinds of ears and flowers producing sound, such as *Incarvillea compacta*.¹³³

The blossom of *Incarvillea compacta* (usually spelled *ug chos*) is a popular children's toy, producing noise when blown. As such it is nowadays utilised at least in Dolpo, but grows also in other parts of Tibet and the Himalayas.¹³⁴

sems can gyi sna dang/ spos sna tshogs rnam pa lnga dang/

Animals' noses and five kinds of various incenses.

Might refer to the five odours: white and red sandalwood, camphor, saffron, and musk.¹³⁵

ne rtsa la sogs lce sna tshogs/ sman sna tshogs pa lnga dang/ rngam pa'i stag sha la sogs sha sna tshogs/

Various kinds of tongues, such as of parrots, five kinds of various medicines, and various kinds of flesh, such as flesh of ferocious tigers.

The components of the five medicines (*sman lnga*, *sman sna lnga*) slightly vary according to source. Those included in the mendrub: ¹³⁶ *Orchidaceae* sp. (*dbang lag*), ¹³⁷ *Rubus* sp. (*kan Da kā ri*), *Tinospora sinensis* (*sle tres*), bamboo pith (*Bambuseae*, *cu gang*, one of *bzang po drug*), *Acorus gramineus* (*shu dag dkar po*).¹³⁸ Some of them have appeared above.

¹³² BGTC; TED. Beyer (1987, p. 290) gives a slight variation: sesame, salt, butter, molasses, honey.

¹³³ NW; DTMA; DTMM; MPD; TMPa.

¹³⁴ NW.

¹³⁵ Beyer, 1987, p. 290.

¹³⁶ In accordance with DK. For variant lists cf. BGTC; Beyer, 1987, p. 290.

¹³⁷ *Gymnadenia* sp. (DTMA; ShM), *Orchis* sp. (MPD; Meyer, 2007).

¹³⁸ DTMM; TMPIG; ShM.

shi shon la sogs dar ba dang/

Silk, such as brocade.¹³⁹

drag bo'i (*po'i) sgri (*sgrib) na snubs la 'byung ba zhe bya ste/

This is the element of extinguishing strong defilements.

glo ba dang/ 'og ma dang/

Lungs, throats.

mdud sna tshogs dang/

Various kinds of knots.

mkha' lding u pal la sogs me tog sna tshogs dang/

Various kinds of flowers, such as *Meconopsis sp.*

The appellation indicates a variety of *u pal*. As the attribute literally means “soaring in the sky”, its colour should be blue.¹⁴⁰ There exist several blue species of *Meconopsis*.

mang bar la sogs snying po sna tshogs dang/

Various kinds of essences, such as *mang bar*.

According to Amchi Nyima, the phrase implies hearts of animals and humans. Both ‘heart’ and ‘essence’ are encompassed in *snying po*, which designates the inner core or kernel of ideas, organisms and things: heart for

¹³⁹ *Shi shon* is a Zhangzhung word implying “cloth, clothing” in general, but specifically ‘silk brocade’. ZZ.

¹⁴⁰ AN; LST.

animals, pith for plants, yolk for eggs, seed syllable for divinities, essence for intellectual concepts and materials.¹⁴¹

Might be linked to *snying po lnga*: molasses (*bu ram*), melted butter (*zhun mar*), honey (*sbrang rtsi*), sesame oil (*til mar*), salt (*lan tshā*).¹⁴²

nas dang khye'u la sogs 'bru lnga dang/

Five kinds of grains, such as barley and peas.

Might refer to the five grains: husked and unhusked barley, rice, wheat, and peas.¹⁴³

srog rtsa dang sha shan¹⁴⁴ sman bu dang/

Life channels,¹⁴⁵ flesh and glands.

Amchi explains that these body parts of animals and humans are meant.

gser la sogs rin chen lnga sna lnga dang/

Five kinds of the “five precious [substances]”, such as gold.

Again, there exists a variety of quintuples which can make the unit. The listed gold always appears as the first component: 1. gold, silver, copper, coral, pearl;¹⁴⁶ 2. gold, silver, copper, iron, tin;¹⁴⁷ 3. gold, silver, turquoise, coral, pearl;¹⁴⁸ 4. gold, silver, copper, brass, iron.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴¹ BGTC; TED; ZZ.

¹⁴² BGTC; TED. KC presents a different composition.

¹⁴³ Beyer, 1987, p. 290.

¹⁴⁴ MsC: *dang* inserted.

¹⁴⁵ Translation according to AN and DTMA, literally “life-roots” (Das, Nebesky-Wojkowitz) from the medical point of view implying “blood vessels of the central nervous and circulatory system” (DTMA). In the Zhangzhung language *sha shan* means “memory, one-pointedness, concentration” (ZZ) involving the term *shan* ‘consciousness’, *rnam shes* in Tibetan.

¹⁴⁶ DK.

¹⁴⁷ DK; BGTC.

¹⁴⁸ BGTC; Beyer, 1987, p. 290.

¹⁴⁹ Kohn, 1988, p. 158.

The numeral appellative can also be understood rather symbolically and the mixture can contain an unspecified and unlimited number of precious stones. The mixture mostly comes already ground, and thus its ingredients are unrecognizable. The one put into the mendrub medicine was brought from Tibet, with no one knowing its specific components.

***rnam shes yan lag gi sman zhes bya ste/ mtshams bzhi sman gyi bye brag go/ bye brag dang
go rim gyis dbye ba'o//***

The medicine of the [eight] branches of consciousness is classified as medicine of the four cardinal directions, according to its particular characteristics and sequence.

[V. CONCLUDING INSTRUCTIONS]

sman snod dang/ dar khep dang/ gzungs thag ni/ phyogs kyi kha dog dang sbyar ro/

The medicine containers, their silk covers [and] the strings [should] match the colours of the cardinal directions.

Although *gzung thag* (or *byang thag*) often implies a five-coloured thread encompassing all the colours of the five directions, it is not the case here, as the colours of each thread has to specifically match the colour of only one direction.

bdud rtsi sman gyi bye brag bstan pa'o/

This is the explanation of the particular characteristics of the nectar medicine.

2.3.2 Stages of making the medicine

The presented translation comprises exactly the text the amchi is given to collect. Once knowing the “recipe” of the mendrub medicine, the preparations start. As has been mentioned, one person was appointed to supervise the process, the main amchi of the monastery and its Medical school Bumzhi (*'bum bzhi*)¹⁵⁰ Amchi Nyima. At the clinic he teaches about fifteen pupils. All the staff had to take part in the mendrub preparations, sometimes helped by monks. Also, a wide network of relatives and acquaintances participated in searching for the items. Amchi Nyima had the responsibility to organise them, be present at every processing stage, and also most of the matter was acquired by him. Everyone referred to him as the only person who understood what had to be done. His position was further strengthened by the fact that he had been granted explanations from the Rinpoche.

All the mendrub ingredients are substances used in traditional Tibetan medicine and also throughout the ritual are conceived as *materia medica*. Thus, they have to be collected and treated as if they were intended to be used for standard medical treatment. A second set of rules derives from the sacredness of the mendrub medicine. The medicine preparation takes several stages:

I. Gathering the ingredients

The ingredients come from several sources, as listed below. Neither the ration nor the volume or weight of the components is prescribed and considered as important. Some of the Indian ingredients were bought in large quantities. The wild plants were collected in rather small

¹⁵⁰ The school is called according to the main Bonpo medical treatise (the Buddhist is in its content very close and called *rGyud bzhi*).

numbers to be represented in the mixture, depending on the amount found and convenience of transporting them down the mountains.

a) Wild flora collected by the amchis and students.

The clinic staff members were sent to bring plants from different parts of the Nepalese Himalayas. Amchi Nyima was collecting at his home place in Lower Mustang and other people in Upper Mustang, Dolpo, Dhaulagiri and Western Nepal. Picking the plants is bound by a set of rules ensuring the sought medical properties for the particular substance, but also reflecting Tibetan ideas of special power of sacred places and aesthetic or geomantic criteria. Preference is always given to *materia* unaffected by fertilisers.

Firstly, remedies with cooling effects (*bsil sman*) should come from cold places, as shadowed locations and northern slopes of mountains, and likewise be dried in shadow. On the contrary, warming effects of substances (*drod sman*) is enhanced by the opposite, collecting at hot and sunny spots and drying in the sun.¹⁵¹

The best locations to collect them are *gnas*, ‘holy sites’ or ‘power places’ which are themselves empowered by deities residing in them and thus any material acquired there exercises special properties. In the mendrub the most sacred places of the Bonpos as well as more local, and usually easily accessible, sites were represented. Naturally, from some the matter had to be sent from the People’s Republic of China. Plants were collected from the three most important sites:¹⁵² Kongpo Bonri (*khong po bon ri*), Mt Kailash (*gangs ti se*), Ritsedrug (*ri tse drug, ri bo rtse drug, also shel le rgya skar*);¹⁵³ further from locations in Nepal: Shelri (*shel ri bo ’brug skra*) the most sacred mountain of Dolpo, Mukhtinath (*chu mig brgya rtsa*) and Drenpa Namkha’s cave near Lubra in Lower Mustang, Damdokunda in Upper

¹⁵¹ As other substances of Tibetan medicine, plants are used in dry form.

¹⁵² At the first place I use names under which the locations are mostly known.

¹⁵³ Cf. Ramble, 1999, p. 14.

Mustang,¹⁵⁴ Dhaulagiri (*mu le gangs, mu li gangs ri*), in the Kathmandu Valley at Pharping (*yang le shod, a su ra'i phug, pham ting*),¹⁵⁵ Swayambhunath (*'phag pa gshen sku, 'phag pa shing kun*)¹⁵⁶ and Nagarjuna forest (*glang ri lung bstan, klu sgrub ri bo, ri bo 'bigs byed*) near to the monastery.

Furthermore, whether at a holy place or not, the best spot for picking is high and clean, and such from which the triad of a mountain, forest and river (*mthong ba gsum ldang*) is seen.¹⁵⁷

Thus, to conclude, the order preference of picking locations is: 1. holy place, 2. high and clean place, 3. clean place, 4. any place.

b) Substances bought at the local market.

These mainly represent the medicinal components which originally come from Indian traditional medicine. As such in vast majority of cases they do not occur in Tibet and historically have been always traded from the South.

The market for Indian and Tibetan *materia medica* in Kathmandu is found at near New Road where it is sold by Nepali traders, themselves not understanding the subject.¹⁵⁸ As Amchi Nyima admits, here it is impossible to check whether the medicine contains fertilisers and has been kept in appropriate conditions for the purpose of the ritual.

c) Substances passed on by the Rinpoche.

¹⁵⁴ I have not been able to find out the Tibetan name. To reach the location a demanding three-day journey across unpopulated land has to be undertaken.

¹⁵⁵ Two different locations near the Newar village for which the Tibetan spelling is the third word.

¹⁵⁶ The first toponym is Bonpo, the second Buddhist.

¹⁵⁷ Similar conventions apply to usual medicinal remedies, TMPI, p. 12. Kind (2002, p. 57) lists also other criteria: places of harmony with local deities and spirits.

¹⁵⁸ Kind (2002, p. 57) mentions a different place in Kathmandu (Chetrapati).

In pure economic terms the most priced component comprises of a ground mixture of various precious stones (*rin chen lnga*). The mixture was brought from Tibet personally by the Rinpoche, 200 to 300 grams were used.

d) Substances gathered by others at various places.

Sea water was brought from India (see below), the localities and their number is not important. This point partly overlaps with the first one (a), *i.e.* plants from holy sites in China.

Other included substances

Apart from the prescribed list, other substances were included by Amchi Nyima himself, according to the oral teaching from Yongdzin Rinpoche. These were:

Various kinds of water: rain, snow, spring, pond, sea, ocean, mineral, tap water.¹⁵⁹

Amchi Nyima collected samples of water from sources situated in the four directions around the monastery. East: a spring at Swayambhunath and a small pond below the monastery, North: a spring at Nagarjuna forest, West: a small reservoir at the back side of the monastery, South: a small reservoir southward from the monastery.

Snow water was brought from the Himalayas, sea and ocean water carried from India. Mineral water is considered very important and very good for the mendrub, since it is said to be bestowed with different properties (“energies”). Amchi Nyima went around a number of shops in Kathmandu and bought all types of mineral water he was able to find, which due to the current global market came from various places around the world. The higher their number, the better. Tap water was drawn from the Kathmandu water supply network.

¹⁵⁹ With other liquids, including alcohol, are also presented as offerings. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, p. 344.

Different kinds of water constitute one of the traditional thirteen divisions of Tibetan *materia medica*.¹⁶⁰

Various kinds of alcohol: wine 6-7 litres, spirits 2-3 litres (“Western expensive”, as for example Royal Stag).

Any types of wine and spirits can be used.

Various kinds of oils: sesame, sunflower, mustard, olive; in total 25 litres.

Neither dictionaries nor Amchi Nyima give a particular set of oils (*snum*), any sorts available are welcomed.

Various kinds of eggs: hen, goose, partridge.

Similarly to oils, no specific set is meant.

mNgar gsum, “three sweet [substances]”: crystallised sugar (*shel ka ra*), molasses (*bu ram*), honey (*sbrang rtsi*);¹⁶¹ 3 x 2 kilograms.

dKar gsum, “three white [substances]”: curd (*zho*), milk (*'o ma*) and butter (*mar*).¹⁶²

Different kinds of milk and butter were included, all sorts found: sheep, yak, cow, goat; 2-3 litres of milk from each, in total 25 kilograms of butter.

Excluded substances

¹⁶⁰ DTMM.

¹⁶¹ AN; BGTC; TED; Nebesky-Wojkowitz, p. 345.

¹⁶² AN; BGTC; TED; Nebesky-Wojkowitz, p. 346.

On the other hand, a great part of the prescribed ingredients was excluded. Amchi Nyima skipped all those which he was not able to find. This in practice means he omitted several plant and mineral ingredients which he could not collect for impossible access or high price, appellations of which were unknown to him or he did not understand them as written in the text. Secondly, all the tantric substances such as bloods, sperm, flesh, excrement and urine, as a whole, and then textiles and knots were omitted although some of them would not be that difficult to gather. These represent almost half of the list.

Substituted substances

A second method of dealing with obscure *materia* or items difficult to get is to substitute them with another substance sharing certain characteristics, either internal and natural or external and attributed to it by humans. The substitution can be done on the basis of two criteria: 1. same medicinal properties according to the traditional medical system, 2. phonetic accordance or similarity of the name. Deer musk (*gla rtsi*), thus an animal part, was for purely economic reasons substituted with a plant of a resembling name (pronounced “*dum gla tsi*”).

II. Cleaning

All *materia medica* has to be properly sorted and cleaned from unwanted particles. This was done by the Medical clinic at the monastery.

III. Grinding

Grinding was completed also at the Kathmandu medical market at a big mechanical grinding machine, it took three days. The powdered substances were packed into bags by sorts, still unmixed, and transported back to the monastery. Grinding one kilogram cost 20 NPR.

Originally, preceding the modern technologies, the medicine was crushed by amchis by hand with a pestle in a mortar. According to the conventions of Tibetan medicine, a drug comprises of several components and the whole mixture is powdered at once.¹⁶³ Furthermore, the mechanisation has enabled the production of a previously unimaginable amount of mendrub medicine, on this occasion approximating to 1000 kilograms! Similarly, it leads to a new ritualistic arrangement: instead of grinding the whole mendrub medical mixture at a certain stage of the ritual one third of the way through¹⁶⁴ and not beforehand, at the present only a little is left unground to symbolically undergo the prescribed stage of the ritual. This volume measured about two kilograms in 2012, and ten kilograms in 1998.

IV. Mixing

The mixing itself consists of several phases. All took place in a small roof-top chamber (about 3 x 5 metres) on the top of the main temple (*lha khang*, *'du khang*, *tshogs khang*, *gtsug lag khang*), where the medicine is from this point on stored. The prominent place, one of the highest of the whole monastery, was rather set by coincidence than by a seemingly sacredness-holding intention. Activities also took place on the roof around.¹⁶⁵

a) Dry ingredients

The whole powdered medicine was spread on a big plastic sheet covering the floor of the chamber. The sheet was then repeatedly lifted and folded from the sides and monks mixed with their hands as far as they could reach from the edges.

¹⁶³ TMPI, p. 13. On this matter, including a discussion on shortcomings of new methods, see Saxer, 2010, p. 118-123.

¹⁶⁴ See Chapter 3.

¹⁶⁵ During the mendrub in 1998 the medicine was kept at the Medical school which is situated in the lowest part of the monastery's area.

b) Wet ingredients

To the mass of powder, having been mixed through and through, liquid ingredients were added. These were all poured together into a big container and constituted in total approximately 200 litres. Around 25 kilograms of the medicine were added into this pool and stirred. Subsequently, the fusion was gradually poured into the whole medicine mixture. About thirty monks then rubbed the mixture to distribute the liquids equally. This stage required one day of work.

c) “Yeast” *phabs gta’ (phabs rta)*

Into the liquids also a very special component is added which in fact represents the most important bit of the whole mendrub material mass. This “essence” is referred to as “yeast” and exactly the same effects are ascribed to it. Concretely, its capacity inheres in the potency to transfer a property it contains in a tiny pinch into a great amount of material and enhance the whole with it. The property here is both blessing (*byin brlabs*) and healing power, and the “yeast” is the content of the terma vessel of the revealed mendrub medicine.

The terma medicine is believed to embody all the substances prescribed by the text, without any exception. This is either ascribed to its supernatural origin, or to the idea that in ancient times gathering them did not represent for humans an impossible task. The continuity embraced in the ancient terma medicine is dual, material and spiritual. Mendrub medicine in general is mostly distributed from the hands of a venerated figure along with the master’s blessings.¹⁶⁶ Therefore, as the tradition of this particular mendrub and its terma medicine were previously kept at Menri monastery in Tsang, the *phabs* is empowered by all its previous

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Kind, 2002; Kohn, 1988.

abbots (by *phyag dbang*, ‘hand blessing’) and as such represents a *byin rlabs kyi tshan kha* (“the potency of blessings”). Also passed masters’ relics are said to have been mixed in over the generations. Each mendrub ritual, differentiated according to its yidam and tradition, has its own special catalyst. Kohn describes a material similar to the *phabs* added into *sgrub ril* and called *byin brlab*.¹⁶⁷

Moreover, mendrub medicine in general gradually accumulates more and more of the described material and spiritual constituents, the higher the count of both the better. The medicinal product of any mendrub ceremony conducted within the Bon religious school¹⁶⁸ is very welcomed to be incorporated into other Bon mendrubs. Menri monastery in India and Triten Norbutse regularly exchange sachets of the medicine after every drubchen, pilgrims bring bits of medicinal powder from mendrub rituals organized at other Bonpo communities and also distribute the mixture obtained at Triten far and wide into other mendrubs.¹⁶⁹ Medical mixtures produced at small yearly mendrub ceremonies at Triten Medical clinic were also added. Thus, there exists an idea of interconnection between Bon mendrubs, which all create a link to old venerated masters.

The “yeast” is regarded as the crucial ingredient initiating the production process which is usually likened to making *chang* (only rarely to yogurt), including the following fermenting phase.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, the process is de facto the same. The “yeast” is mixed with liquids and then

¹⁶⁷ “‘Blessing’ (*byin brlab*) here refers to the hard dark brown granular substance that lamas regularly give to those who seek audience with them. Each lama compounds his own blessings. They are also called ambrosia (*bdud rtsi*), or ambrosial religious medicine (*bdud rtsi chos sman*).” In contrast to the mendrub medicine, the *sgrub ril* studied here do not compound of medicinal substances. Kohn, 1988, p. 158-159. On the contrary, Kind does not mention any “yeast” material.

¹⁶⁸ The „mendrub denomination“ always has to be observed even in areas where Bon to a certain degree mixes with Nyingma, for instance in Dolpo.

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Kind, 2002, p. 74.

¹⁷⁰ The same parable was recorded by Kohn (1998, p. 160) although directed towards the transformation process of the material during the ritual itself and not initiated by one added component: “The grain itself has no power to make you drunk, but after the work of brewing is done, it does.” Das lists the spellings *phab* and *phabs*, and a synonym *chang rtsi*. The term might be derived from the verb *phab pa*, to “bring down”. Cf. Gayley, 2007, p. 473: *phabs* as ‘catalyst’ referring to a ‘mother’ or other previously consecrated pill.

poured into the mixture. I have received different information regarding the quantity of the ferment, it was probably about one or two handfuls. To be sure that the old terma medicine and its properties are preserved, always only less than a half of its volume can be used as *phabs* and the rest is stored. After the mendrub ritual has finished and new mendrub medical mixture made, the missing proportion is refilled.

The concept of *phabs gta'* is more complex. The second syllable *gta'*, best translated as “pledge, pawn”, is in this context derived from the term *gta' chen* (“great pledge”), originally coming from *gta' ma*, a general term for “pawn, pledge”.¹⁷¹ *gTa' chen* is a substance figuring in every big ritual in which it functions as a separate offering.¹⁷² The matter is specific for every ritual. Such mixtures are kept in small bags by individuals and institutions, and always only a small bit is used. In this sense *gta' chen* is synonymous to *ru ma*, which can be used to denote the substance, but is borrowed from the process of making yogurt. Secondly, its meaning can be equal to *phud gta'*, ‘sacramental pledge’,¹⁷³ encompassing *phud* as the first portion selected for offerings to deities, or to *phud gta' sman phab* including all the terms discussed.¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, the alternative and less frequent spelling *phabs rta* is connected to the medical term *sman rta* (rarely *sman gta'*) denoting a “vehicle in which medicine is taken” (a solution of hot water and honey, sugar or molasses) in drug mixtures. The idea of a horse as a mount or carrier of the healing substance is implied.¹⁷⁵ To conclude, all these terms refer to the same “yeast” quality in a broad sense applicable to food fermenting processes as well as

¹⁷¹ BGTC; also NWB, pp. 34-35, 110-111.

¹⁷² NW. Cf. Snellgrove's explanation of *gta'* and *gta' chen*: “a ritual bowl made from a skull and called ‘the great pledge’.” NWB, pp. 212-213, 266.

¹⁷³ NWB, pp. 213, 278; TGS, p. 135.

¹⁷⁴ TGS, pp. 135, 297.

¹⁷⁵ AN; BGTC; Meyer, 2007, pp. 185-186. „The diseases are compared to a battlefield where the medications act as the fighting army. The carrier which transports the medications to the disease is therefore called the medicinal horse.” TMPI, p. 354.

medical remedies and ritual items (mendrub represents the last two).¹⁷⁶ Might the term be etymologically related to the rituals of the *gto* category, translated by Snellgrove as ‘pledge rituals’?¹⁷⁷

The transmission of the *phabs* for this particular mendrub can be traced also in the historical work *The Treasury of Good Sayings*. It records passing down the mendrub text along with its paraphernalia: “‘Dzi-bon ‘Phan-rgyal entreated the Teacher [Shenchen Luga] to impart the Khro-wo dbang-chen to him. The teacher gave even the (master) copy to him. He also gave him the cup containing the lees of the elixirs (*bdud rtsi ga’u dang ru ma*). He gave him the name of dBang-gi rGyal-mtshan. ... Then, dPal-mchog met ‘Dzi-bon and requested the texts, the medical specimen of the ‘pledge’ (*phud gta’ sman phab*) which had been used by the teachers from ‘Chi-med gTsug-phud up to the ‘Four scholars’. ‘Dzi-bon also gave dPal-mchog the ‘Dance-spear’ and the cup (*gar mdung dang bsve’i ga’u*) and appointed him to be in charge of the Tantric Teachings.” As the interpreter expounds, the cup “is supposed to be a cup containing the medicinal specimen of the ‘pledge’.”¹⁷⁸

d) Fermentation *nyal* (“sleeping”)

The mixture is very wet, and left for five days without any interventions in the chamber completely closed. Again, the nomenclature of the processing stage conforms with *chang* preparation.

e) “Kneading”

¹⁷⁶ Cf. BGTC; Martin (1994, p. 301) describes ‘yeast starters’, *phab rgyun*, containing “hair, tooth, bone and clothing relics of an impressive array of saints.”

¹⁷⁷ NWB.

¹⁷⁸ TGS, pp. 135, 297. For the spear used in the ritual see Chapter 3.

When smell comes out from the fermenting matter, it indicates that it is the right time to continue. The material is kneaded by a number of people into a dough-like consistence, the work lasted four days.

f) Drying

The mass was still wet. This preparation stage is critical, attentive care has to be taken to prevent rotting and thus spoiling of the whole ritual. The medicine heap was regularly raked and moved around the sheet and air circulation by opening windows was necessary. The drying lasted one month.

V. Treating the mixture

In 2012 the total mendrub medicine weight exceeded 900kg and cost slightly over 436 630 NRP.¹⁷⁹ A strong, nice smell was coming out of the roof-top store room. Given the quantity, the medicine was not made into pills, as might be done, but left in the powder form.¹⁸⁰ The mixture was stored in large cotton bags used for keeping and transporting medicine. It filled 53 big, over 10 medium-sized and 103 small bags.

Once the mixture is ready, it has to be treated according to certain rules. It cannot be stepped on, kept in an unclean place or otherwise polluted. If for some reason the medicine has to be thrown away it is disposed of in a nice clean place, which at the monastery was a spot a few metres behind and above the main temple. For example, the medicine “dust” left on the ground of the store room after packing was eaten by those handling it and the very tiny swept bits carried to this place and left there for “insects to eat”.

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix 5.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. Kind, 2002.

3. Performance of the ritual

The mendrub ritual was included in a one-month long “set of rituals” starting with the monastery’s yearly *’bum tshogs* (100 000 offerings) to Drenpa Namkha and ending with Geshe exams and a degrees ceremony. An academic conference on Bon, in which mostly Western scholars presented, took place before the very beginning. At the end, His Holiness Menri Tridzin Longtok Tenpa Nyima (*khri ’dzin lung rtogs bstan pa’i nyi ma*), the head of the exile Menri monastery and the Bon school arrived to meet the mendrub pilgrims.¹⁸¹ The mendrub ritual itself lasts fifteen days and was conducted from 14th until 28th December, corresponding to 1st-15th of the eleventh month of the Tibetan calendar, culminating with the final empowerment on the full moon.¹⁸² According to the *bru* tradition, the rites of the Namdag and Longyas (*rnam dag* and *klong rgyas*, abbreviated as *rnam klong*) cycles to pacify the space are included in the preliminary practices of all big rituals. Others are: water purification (*chu gtor*), earth *sa bdag* ritual (*sa len*), ransom *glud* rituals, making *tswa tswa*. As has been mentioned, the drubchen of the *bru* tradition is dedicated to the yidam Trowo Tsochog Khagying (“excellent chief man, voice of heaven”), also called *dbang chen*.¹⁸³

Three main phases of the ritual can be recognized. The second represents the mendrub performance itself:¹⁸⁴

1. Preliminary activities (*ngon ’gro*)

¹⁸¹ Calendar of Rituals and Events in Appendix 2.

¹⁸² Kohn (1998, p. 238) observed exactly the same duration, whereas Kind (2002) shorter.

¹⁸³ On the deity see Kvaerne, 2001, pp. 75-77.

¹⁸⁴ Based on NyTshGy, p. 4. Explanations in brackets are mine. English translation partly follows the monastery’s programme of the ritual. Cf. Kohn 1988, p. 200: “For Tibetans a ritual should have preparatory practices, the ritual itself, a concluding ceremony.”

1.1 Outer preliminaries: Practices directed towards the lama, Practices directed towards the community, The selection of a suitable place.

1.2 Inner preliminaries: Collecting the ritual objects (*rdzas*) (including the medicinal substances), Offering to the local deities and obstructers (includes *sa len* or *sa'i cho ga, glud*), Placing the ritual spears (the deities' weapons installed above the mandala).

1.3 Preliminary activities: Setting up the ritual for the principal protectors (*rgyal po bzhi, 'tshams bcad*), Constructing the mandala, Opening the doors and taking vows and commitments.

2. The main activities

2.1 Blessing the raw medicine (*sman*): Blessings of the peaceful deities (*zhi ba'i khrol sgrub*), Blessings of the wrathful deities (*khro ba'i khrol sgrub*)

2.2 Blessing the powdered medicine (*sman phye*): Blessings of the peaceful deities (*zhi ba'i khrol sgrub*), Blessings of the wrathful deities (*khro ba'i khrol sgrub*)

2.3 Blessing the accomplishments (*dngos grub*)

3. Bestowing the empowerment (*dbang*) and distributing the medicine

The medicine occupies literally the central place of the whole ritual. On the day preceding the beginning the medicine was finally prepared to undergo the ritual. It was carried from its storage place on the roof of the *'du khang* inside and loaded in piles in its centre below and around a four-pillared metal structure of the *gzhi* ("basis, base"). *Gzhi* as a general term designates central spots of rituals on which the ritual activity particularly focuses and where all the most important implements are installed.¹⁸⁵ In the case of *mendrub* the individual shelves of the *gzhi* contain, in downward succession: 1. the medicine containers,

¹⁸⁵ Kohn (1988, p. 167) records the term *dkyil 'khor* ('mandala') for the same object.

deities' weapons (*rgyan rdzis*), sacrificial cakes (*gtor ma*), 2. sand mandala (*maṇḍala*, subsequently four mandalas were used), 3. the mendrub medicine on the floor. *Gzhi* stood exactly in the middle of the four central pillars supporting the temple. The cardinal points of the mandala roughly corresponded to the actual ones. Furthermore, one of the most important elements of the ritual, in which the medicine itself features, is prepared. Reminiscent of the original nine terma vessels (*bum pa, ga'u*), eight vessels full of medicine are arranged, as described in the translated text. In the ritual they will be completed by the surviving terma piece kept at the monastery. The terma will be put in the middle of the upper shelf and the newly prepared containers will occupy the eight remaining directions. Those placed in the four cardinal points contain raw unground medicine and carry corresponding colours and symbols. The four intermediate directions are of yellow colour and for the sake of time contain already powdered mixture, exactly the same mixture as in the bags on the floor. The containers used are mostly big glass bowls, along with bowls of different materials, as they were found in the monastery and the Kathmandu market, not as the text states. Each is covered with cloth and bound with string of corresponding colour, on top the symbol of the particular direction is drawn.¹⁸⁶

The vessels are installed into the *gzhi* on the very first day of the mendrub ritual (17.12. / 5.11. Tibetan calendar) in a short ceremony called 'Invitation of the medicine' (*smangyi spyad 'dren*) immediately following marking the borders of the four kings. Eight small monks impersonating eight goddesses (*mchod bu lha mo brgyad*)¹⁸⁷ carry the bumpas in a procession dancing three koras around the *gzhi* (*nang skor*). They are preceded by a spear (*gar mdung*) with ribbons in five colours and the terma carried by the offering master (*mchod*

¹⁸⁶ Appendix 3.

¹⁸⁷ The goddesses represent the eight classes of consciousness, and are also linked the eight branches of medicine and the eight celestial goddesses of medicine (NWB, p. 53).

dpon). The order of the eight vessels in the procession is rather random. Every goddess in dancing steps places the *bumpa* inside the *gzhi* on the glass shelf above the mandala and once all have been installed, the *gzhi* is covered by curtains of the cardinal points' colours set around the four pillars, and then sealed. Entering and looking inside is forbidden, only the appointed *mchod dpon* is permitted.¹⁸⁸ A five-coloured thread 'spell cord' (*byang thag*, *gzungs thag*) leads from two Bon sceptres (*phyag shing*) placed on thrones of the two leading monks on each side of the 'du *khang* to the mandala. The thread helps to concentrate the powers and energies of the deities on the mandala and the medicine.

Another turning point of handling the medicinal matter comes after the raw medicine blessing stage has finished and the medicine needs to be ground (21.12. / 9.11.). Again, in the procession of the eight goddesses the vessels and the heaped bags full of medicine are taken out of the temple to the courtyard. The contents of the all cardinal *bumpas* are poured out and in sequence ritually ground (*sman brdung*, "beating the medicine") by pestle in a mortar. Each participant should beat the medicine three times, starting with the Khenpo, the *mchod dpon* and the goddesses. The monks performing *mendrub* chant prayers of mixing, purifying and grinding medicine as the congregation chant the medicine mantra (see below), while Amchi Nyima supervises the process. The crowd, including many pilgrims, moves as a procession headed by the *terma bumpa* and the eight goddesses. Each of the goddesses carries a vessel of already ground medicine, their sequence reflects the Bon order of the cardinal points: East, North, West, South. *Mendrub* sponsors carry all the medicine bags. The procession circumambulates one time the big *kora* (*gling skor*) encircling the monastery.¹⁸⁹ After, the medicine is placed back into the *gzhi* under the mandala, and the nine vessels, now refilled with powdered medicine, are sealed and returned. Originally, the whole medicine mixture was

¹⁸⁸ Cf. Kohn, 1988, p. 168.

¹⁸⁹ Appendix 1.

ground at this stage of the ritual, but at the present as electric appliances have replaced human power the medicine is processed before hand. However, as the ritual rules have to be observed, the medicine of the principle four points is still treated according to the tradition.

Almost the whole mendrub ritual takes place in the *'du khang* literally around the medicine in its centre, some of the dances (called simply *'chams*) around a big coniferous tree functionally replacing a flag pole (*phya dar, cha dar*)¹⁹⁰ in the main courtyard in front, the empowerments on a spacious platform next to the monastery enclosure. In addition, three koras encompassing the monastery (*gling skor*) over the course of the ritual are performed. The central performers of the ritual consist of twenty-four monks seated in rows of twelve at both sides of the *'du khang*. The settled number is derived from doubling the original count of twelve in the *bru* drubchen tradition, therefore the performers are still referred to as *a mchod bcu gnyis* (“the twelve performing priets”). The performance includes many specific mudras, mantras and dancing steps which the *a mchod bcu gnyis* had to learn in advance from the Rinpoche. The sound of recitation cannot be interrupted for the whole duration of the ritual. Therefore, during interludes or when the twenty-four monks need a break for meals and scarce sleep the main mendrub mantra (*smān 'dzab*) is chanted by appointed young monks in daily shifts of triplets. The melody of the mantra is characteristic for the *bru* lineage and said to go back to Yeru Wensaka monastery.¹⁹¹ The lyrics read: “*bsvo ōm ba bā de na ra sa ya na g.yu 'brang bdud rtsi bsvo tha*”.

Apart from the appointed *a mchod bcu gnyis* responsible for the mendrub ritual, the rest of the monks as well as visiting tantrics (*ngag pa*) perform other rituals to support the main one. A great number of lay people come day and night to perform koras inside and around the main temple (*nang skor, bar skor*) reciting and singing the mantra.

¹⁹⁰ Kohn, 1988, pp. 232-233; Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1976, p. 67.

¹⁹¹ On local mantra melodies (*yul glu*) Kind, 2002, p. 55.

3.1 Distribution of the medicine and the community present

The envelopes of mendrub medicine packages read (subsequently in Tibetan and English):

“*spyi spungs zhi khro'i sgrub sman 'od zer 'khyil ba bzhugs//*”

Mendrub

(Blessed nectar)

This envelope contains a blessed herbal medicine, considered as *negya menchik* (one medicine for 100 diseases). It is composed of over 100 ingredients and blessed through an extensive ritual called *dutsi öser khyilwa* (radiating light rays of healing nectar), which transforms the medicine, giving it the power to heal on more than just a biological level as it infuses it with spiritual energy. Without any side effects, it can be used by anyone at anytime and as often as needed to heal and prevent all kinds of diseases as well as purify any internal of (*or) external pollution.

Indications: Place a small amount in a glass of hot water, cover the glass and wait for it to dissolve. Stir the solution and drink it when it is warm. Swallow any remains at the bottom of the glass. Wait at least half an hour before eating any meat.”

This powerful substance along with the final empowerment, receiving blessing (*byin brlabs*) and seeing (*mjal*) the Rinpoche and Khenpo represent the most sought and attended component of the whole mendrub ritual. The produced mendrub medicine was distributed to

the monks and public during a lengthy festive event on the New Year Day of 2013, along with Geshe degree certificates to candidates who had recently passed the exams. In order to incorporate more festivities into one the mendrub medicine was not distributed on the full moon accompanying the concluding empowerment of the ritual,¹⁹² but four days later. Usually the number of pilgrims and attendants at the ritual counted around 300, however for the conclusion it rose to as much as 800 to 1000, according to different estimates. About half of the regular 200 Tibetan attendants came from Dolpo, a great many of them from Mustang, some from Kathmandu, India (Manali, Dharamsala, Dehradun, Sikkim) and a few living overseas. Several monks from Menri monastery participated and also one from Bhutan. All the main social groups were represented: monks, household priests, tantrics, laity. Interestingly, a remarkable part came from outside the Bonpo community, mostly from the Nyingma school, but also from Kagyu. To my knowledge, there were two reasons for this: Bon mendrub enjoys fame and is viewed as very powerful also by Tibetans of other denominations. Also, Bon and Nyingma traditions closely co-exist in Dolpo where Bon has been historically strong, and Bonpos and Buddhists (Nyingma, Sakya) are close also in Mustang. Furthermore, among frequent visitors was also a Drigung Kagyu lama from a nearby small monastery. For the mendrub celebration in 1998 Tibetan pilgrims from China were permitted to come, which was not possible at the 2012 occasion due to the worsening situation in Tibet and strengthening of ties between the Chinese and new Nepali governments. Still, four Buddhist businessmen from Amdo staying in Nepal on business visas arrived. The other significant group of pilgrims was formed by the so titled “Western sangha”, although several of its members did not come from the West.¹⁹³ The group counted around 100, with one third formed by Mexicans. Their main objectives to come was in most cases progress in

¹⁹² As observed by Kohn, 1988, p. 215; and similarly by Kind, 2002, p. 71.

¹⁹³ See Appendix 5.

their spiritual practice. Individual members of other religious and ethnic communities in Nepal and India arrived to see the ritual and most importantly to obtain the medicine: Gurungs, Tamangs, Sherpas, Magars – from those ethnic groups that are adherent of Tibetan Buddhism only the families of Nyingma and Kagyu schools were interested; also a few Newars (most of them from the highest Buddhist *Vajrācārya* caste who feel close to Tibetan tantric religion, furthermore members of the Buddhist *Śākya* goldsmith caste in Patan that produces sculptures for the monastery), a lesser number of Nepalis (publishers of the monastery's Beltam magazine, a Brahman family of Mustang Bonpo origin) and an Indian family (friends of a Geshe candidate).

The mendrub medicine was given from the hands of the Khenpo.¹⁹⁴ Sponsors of the monastery were given 300 grams' packages, others received 50 grams. Apart from the people present, mendrub is carried and dispatched to individuals and institutions around the world, officially by the monastery's office and by the pilgrims themselves.¹⁹⁵ Menri monastery in India, Bon monasteries in Eastern Tibet, Shenten Dargye Ling (*gshen brtan dar rgyas gling*) in France receive big bags for further distribution. In accordance with the *phabs gta'* concept, a hint of the mixture will be added to other mendrub ceremonies happening at various places. However, also keeping the medicine is of high importance. Some has to always remain at the monastery to be preserved over a long time period, practically until the next mendrub performance which will again produce new medicine.¹⁹⁶ This time about ten big bags were put aside. The stock is used slowly, being given to pilgrims seeing the Rinpoche, new sponsors, prominent visitors etc.

¹⁹⁴ Blessing of a lama generally accompanies medicine, *Cf.* Lo Bue, 1981, p. 95.

¹⁹⁵ *Cf.* Kind, 2002, p. 42.

¹⁹⁶ On the contrary, the storage period of usual medicinal remedies ideally should not exceed one year. TMPI, p. 13; Saxer, 2010, p. 103.

3.2 Understanding the mendrub medicine

The medicine generated by the mendrub ritual is viewed as a kind of universal drug for humans and animals, the environment and the universe as a whole. Its power is both curing and preventative. Its potency emerges from the medicinal components as well as the masters' blessings as the substance represents "blessing and medicine in one (*byin brlabs dang sman gnyis ka yod red*)."¹⁹⁷

Lay people take the substance as a basic general drug for any bodily discomforts, diseases and illnesses, mental and physical. The "100 diseases" advertised in the monastery's prescription roughly reflect the number of ingredients included, although according to the Tibetan medical classification there exist 4 x 10¹ illnesses. By far the most common usage is for minor ailments as cold and influenza and body pains, headache, stomach ache and digestion problems. Many respondents confirmed that mendrub was particularly very effective for easing the pulmonary airway and nasal cavity.¹⁹⁸ It also helps "if you don't feel well for any reason" by bringing strength and potential (*nus pa*). In remote areas where no other medicaments are available, mendrub is taken to cure anything and is viewed universally as Paracetamol or Aspirin is in the West.¹⁹⁹

The mixture is also used for prevention, as such it is regularly given to small children for example, or in time of ailment. It is especially recommended to be digested every morning on an empty stomach, a small lick dissolved in a glass of warm water. Some people recommend its application after every meal. The water may also be cold, but never boiling as the heat would damage the medicinal properties. Some prefer to simply throw a hint of the

¹⁹⁷ The same perception of "empowered [medical] substances" (*byin rten*) is recorded by Samuel, 2007, p. 217.

¹⁹⁸ Similarly Kind, 2002, p. 57.

¹⁹⁹ This usage is also noted for example by MPD, p. 3.

powder directly into the mouth. Basically, mendrub medicine can be taken any time, either with water or without. It can never cause any harm. It always has to be taken orally. Always only a very small bit is taken, thus a packet of mendrub lasts in one family for a very long time, often over decades until the next opportunity to receive a new one.²⁰⁰ The storage place has to be “clean and nice”, for example the home altar. As has been mentioned, non-human sentient beings are not excluded from the benefits. Amchi Nyima explains:

“The *sman* works for all sentient beings without any difference. It brings blessing, peace, happiness. For instance, insects also need peace. No, no, it’s not only for humans. If a tiny bit is thrown into the ocean, all the creatures inside will receive it.”

On the other hand, some being less universal and more practical have different ideas which probably better reflect the lived daily reality and concerns for cattle that is often treated with mendrub. Lama Shenrab Tenzin answering my question about which animals mendrub might be given warned me:

“All people who receive the medicine will eat it in time of disease and pain, and also give it to animals, it is good for all animals, but not to give it to carnivores. When you get it, don’t give it to a dog, because a dog eats a lot of meat and has got sharp teeth. Maybe, [you can give it] to a cat. Humans eat meat just a little bit.”

²⁰⁰ This stands in contrast to *ril sgrub* described by Kohn (1988, p. 251): the pills are eaten immediately or later, but do not function as a long-term stock. I have not seen the mendrub medicine being eaten instantly after obtaining it.

There exists a certain concern of mixing the mendrub medicine with meat which is however not often articulated. Generally speaking, a vegetarian diet is understood to be a way of causing less suffering to sentient beings. The mendrub represents a substance too pure to come into contact with such a morally bad deed and source of ritual pollution (*sdig pa*) as killing.

Yet the monastic community offers a different interpretation, even though all questioned monks admitted, sometimes rather reluctantly, taking the mendrub medicine when ill as any lay person would do. However, the view of the educated elite significantly differs from the general population.²⁰¹ Here, I present how the perception was usually presented to me, which still forms a kind of link to the tantric and philosophical background and explanation shown in the following chapter.

The right motivation is the most important thing and the actual medicine represents only an external material support on the way to the highest spiritual goal, enlightenment. The substances that require transformation is our mind and body – the medicine functions as a support for this change. We resemble to patients infected by five poisons (anger, ignorance, pride, desire, jealousy) who need to be cured. Mendrub is of no use for people who are not prepared, who have not gone far enough in their practice. Firstly, they do not see and understand the concepts behind the ritual performance, secondly they are not ready to take another step on their path. As I was told by Geshe Dangsang Namgyal (*dge shes drang srong rnam rgyal*):

²⁰¹ A similar “division” is observed by Kind, 2002, pp. 79-81. It might be interesting to note that the perception of the “Western sangha” is close to the monks.

“Mendrub *sman* has got a big usage. It is medicine both for mind and body (*bsam blo yi sman, lus kyi sman*), it is of great power (*nus pa*). Ignorance is a disease (*ma rig pa ’di na tsha red*). Therefore, mendrub is similar to sutras, as it leads to enlightenment. The material of the *sman* itself is not that important.”

Legends remember ancient Bon masters who did not have to eat usual food, since instead they nurtured themselves on mendrub medicine. By doing so, they achieved physical strength and health, and spiritual qualities such as the rainbow body. Mendrub is also likened to *rtsa rlung* practice, as it affects bodily channels: it opens wisdom channels and blocks poison channels. Taking mendrub for attaining a clear mind and wisdom is also said to be recommended by the scriptures. By protecting one’s body, slowing down the aging process and sharpening the senses, it allows the individual to make a better use of the precious human existence.

A noteworthy issue is the mendrub’s connection to death. The mendrub medicine is given to humans on their death bed as well as to animals before slaughter in places where members of the Tibetan population have to perform this otherwise condemned act, for instance in Dolpo. The medicine is believed to be powerful on the spiritual path, and thus is considered especially appropriate for the moment before entering the bardo (*bar do*), be it humans or animals. Furthermore, the mendrub ritual evokes peaceful and wrathful deities which are to be encountered in the bardo state. Knowing them in advance and establishing a connection with them facilitates the passage. The mendrub ritual and hence its medicinal matter is sometimes even paralleled to the bardo. This belief is also expressed in economic terms, it can be estimated that about sixty percent of the Mendrub sponsorship was donated to help a deceased relative. In this way, the deceased person is believed to accumulate merit for

the future rebirth and also to become linked to the bardo deities. Nevertheless, nobody mentioned to me the notion that even big sinners if eating mendrub medicine escape a low rebirth, noted by Kind.²⁰² With these assumptions are linked the mendrub medicine's effects of rejuvenation, in a teaching to the Western sangha Khenpo suggested everyone would become around 10 years younger, to the great joy of the audience.²⁰³

4. Complexity of the ritual

As can be seen, in Tibetan thought there exists no division between the 'mind' and the 'body' of an individual, both the concepts are perceived as intertwined.²⁰⁴ In the West this dualistic understanding has hugely influenced the perception of ourselves to the extent that healing and medicine is perceived as directed either towards the spiritual immaterial mind or the physical body. On the contrary, mendrub has developed in a non-dualistic discourse and as such is apprehended as a substance affecting and curing the individual as a whole – to be translated into the Western patterns: both physically and mentally. This concerns also religious practice and achievements. “The ‘root cause’ (*rgyu*) of disease is the fundamental ignorance which leads to the three mental poisons and the three humours in the psychophysical continuum of the human constitution.”²⁰⁵ Based on these precepts, treatment in the Tibetan medical tradition “requires somatic, psychiatric and religious approaches”²⁰⁶

²⁰² Kind, 2002, p. 59. Cf. Garrett, 2009, p. 220. The liberation through tasting (*myong grol*) in Gayley, 2007, p. 460.

²⁰³ See the connection of mendrub to alchemy and its quest for immortality in Garrett, 2009.

²⁰⁴ Discussed for example by Millard, 2007.

²⁰⁵ Millard, 2007, p. 270. Cf. Appendix 3; Cuomu, 2012, p. 10; and NWB, p. 117: “Things of flesh, linked in a series of birth and death, in their ignorance their affliction take the form of disease. They are distressed with the suffering of 404 types of disease.”

²⁰⁶ Vargas, 2010, p. 385. Cf. Karmay, 1975, p. 231: “Tibetan medical system (*gso rig*) as an indispensable part of the Buddhist religious practices.”

employed at once and this exactly is what mendrub does. It provides both actual medical remedies and the Dharma teachings (*chos*, and *bon chos* in the case of Bon).

It is drawing a parallel to the Buddha personified as a healer. Preaching the very foundations of Buddhism adopted by Bon, the Four Noble Truths, he employs the Indian medical examination pattern: recognition of illness (suffering), diagnosis (the cause and necessity of eradicating it), prescription of remedies (the Eightfold Path).²⁰⁷ A parallel is found in the life story of Shenrab Miwo (*gshen rab mi bo*) where the founder of Bon heals by teaching and introducing medical knowledge to “turn the wheel of the 2,000 kinds of the ‘Diagnosis’.”²⁰⁸ Mendrub adds another dimension to the exposition by expressing the remedy materially and its composition by medical discourse, placing it directly also into the sphere and concepts of Tibetan medicine.

Mendrub is a “means of illuminating, purifying, transforming negative emotions” of the whole environment and universe as well as on the level of an individual.²⁰⁹ Mendrub and its medicine help to transform poison (*dug*) into nectar (*bdud rtsi*) by purifying (*dag*) it. According to Buddhist and consequently Bon philosophy, five poisons (*dug lnga*) cause the sentient beings to suffer and turn in the cycle of *saṃsāra* (*'khor ba*): anger (*zhe sdang*), ignorance (*gti mug*),²¹⁰ pride (*nga rgyal*), desire (*'dod chags*), jealousy (*'phrag dog*).²¹¹ The primary cause of all of them as of interdependent origination (*rten 'brel*), *saṃsāra* and thus the whole of suffering is the initial ignorance *ma rig pa*.

²⁰⁷ Cf. TMPa, pp. 2-3; NWB, pp. 37-39.

²⁰⁸ TGS, p. 24. Borrowing the Buddhist *cakravartin* idea is more than obvious.

²⁰⁹ YR.

²¹⁰ Alternatively translated as ‘mental torpor’ (Snellgrove) or ‘closed-mindedness’ (TMPI).

²¹¹ BGTC. Enumerated in the Bonpo order, reflecting the anti-clockwise succession. The older threefold system involves anger, ignorance and desire. Cf. Wayman, 1873, p. 155; Snellgrove in NWB, p. 260 (note 48); Snellgrove, *Hevajra tantra*; Snellgrove, 1995, p. 65.

A necessary preparation for taking part in the mendrub ritual is realising one's suffering and its causes and the determination to abandon them. Each of the poisons is associated with a cardinal point, an element, a colour, a *skandha* (*phung po*), a buddha family, its sign and mount *etc.*, and particular wisdom overcoming it. To fit into the structure, mendrub medicine follows the fivefold division and offers specific substances for each direction and poison in order to confront it, harmonising each of the five elements manifested within the physical body by its corresponding parts and functions. The mendrub components therefore represent a very complex unit reflecting many aspects ascribed to the particular fifths.²¹²

The ritual is embedded in philosophical, tantric and medical discourses and thus its ingredients derive from all of them. The first formulates the overall framework and articulates the main purpose. The second adds for instance the concept of the five impure substances, also called 'five nectars' (*bdud rtsi lnga*, flesh, sperm, blood, excrements, urine).²¹³ The third supplies the *materia medica*. The corresponding fivefold division for Buddhist and other (Hindu, Taoist, Confucian for example) philosophical as well as medical traditions in both India and China.²¹⁴

Many of the components serve as offerings to deities at various rituals, as the offerings of the five senses, the five sweet and white substances, five kinds of medicines, five kinds of incense, five kinds of essences, grains, precious gems, fine silks, animal blood, different kinds of flesh, various liquids.²¹⁵ Also, some medicinal plant species often serve as offerings,

²¹² Appendix 3. NWB, p. 261 (note 59).

²¹³ Snellgrove, 2002, pp. 160, 163; Snellgrove, *Hevajra tantra*, pp. 99-100. As *bdud rtsi*, they correspond to 'elixir of immortality' (ambrosia, *amṛta*). Beyer, 1987, p. 158; Kohn, 1988, p. 159.

²¹⁴ For instance Snellgrove, 2002; Meyer, 2007.

²¹⁵ Cf. Beyer, 1987, pp. 272, 290; Snellgrove, 2002, pp. 161, 163, 224 Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, pp. 344-347; NWB, p. 91.

Ephedra (*mtshe*) included in the mendrub medicine may serve as an example. The same counts for vessels.²¹⁶ Mendrub functions as an offering upon which blessings are bestowed.

The word *smān* itself has a wider meaning apart from “medicine” as it is usually comprehended and translated. It can also be understood more generally as “benefit, use, good”²¹⁷ denoting anything beneficial as a synonym to *phul* and *phan*. Likewise, medicine and medical diagnosis can be defined as “the knowledge of beneficence” (*phan shes smān dpyad*).²¹⁸ Mendrub is perceived as “benefit to mind and body, to everything”.²¹⁹ The direct opposite of *smān* is *dug*, poison. *Dug* in a broad sense represents anything harmful to sentient beings and “covers a wide range of meaning from philosophical interpretation to general principles and detailed health problems, whilst discussing negative effects both to our emotional and physical conditions.”²²⁰ Actually, it is poison which arises from ignorance and through which the ignorance gives cause to life and dependent origination as well as to disease.²²¹ The main ways to overcome poison is by purification *dag pa* or exorcism which may include the use of medicine *smān*.²²² Mendrub represents the first and is often referred to as a great purificatory rite.

Another apparent antidote in the mendrub nomenclature is that of *bdud* and *bdud rtsi*, literally ‘demon’ and ‘nectar’, the latter comprising from the words which might be translated as “demon + juice”.²²³ Karmay explains the term as follows: “The term *bdud rtsi* seems to

²¹⁶ “Jars are often used both as offerings to the various divinities and as instruments of consecration.” Snellgrove, 2002, p. 225.

²¹⁷ Das, Cf. BGTC.

²¹⁸ TGS, pp. 31, 218. Here medicine appears as one of the twelve kinds of knowledge of the ‘Bon of Cause’ (*rgyu’i bon*).

²¹⁹ Geshe Gelek.

²²⁰ Cuomu, 2012, p. 2, Cf. TMPI, p. 145.

²²¹ Cuomu, 2012, p. 2.

²²² In BGTC *smān* is defined as *dug joms*, the “the suppresser of poison”. Cf. TMPI, pp. 144-145. For a description of an exorcist rite involving medicine see Jardins, 2010.

²²³ Kohn, 1988, p. 114.

convey the notion of the poison which grew in the land of demons. As an antidote to this, the goddess produced medicinal substances, thus the demon's crop.²²⁴ Therefore, the term might be interpreted as the *rtsi* of *bdud*, coming from *bdud* by overcoming them. Mendrub itself is called *bdud rtsi*.

Moreover, the two presented antidotes seem to draw upon a third relation of opposing poles, *bdud* and *smān*. *bdud* is a name of a class of harmful and evil supernatural beings, which is, as shown above, usually translated as 'demons'. In general they are "opposed to Buddhist practice and will do their best to block it."²²⁵ Nebesky-Wojkowitz presents several of their classes, one categorised according to the elements and five cardinal points: *sa bdud*, *rlung bdud*, *me bdud*, *chu bdud*, *lha bdud*,²²⁶ whereas *smān*, *smān mo* or *smān ma* (alternatively *smān btsun*) refers to a class of female deities, often consorts of the deities *lha* and more specifically distinguished according to their habitats.²²⁷ As was explained to me, these two groups behave "like angels and devils in the West". To be overcome the *bdud* have to be subjugated or subdued (*'dul*), hence we then find many deities still bearing their former main designation *bdud* in their name.²²⁸ The word *bdud* was also chosen by Tibetan translators to substitute the Indian name of the chief representative of demons *Māra*, the main tempter and enemy of the Buddha. Also he was tamed and the Buddha received the epithet *bdud kyi dgra*, "the enemy of demons".²²⁹ This relates to the Tibetan idea of spirits as causers of ill-being, when different kinds of evil spirits are responsible for different illnesses and diseases.²³⁰ As *bdud* and other various spirits, also illnesses can be subdued and exorcised.²³¹

²²⁴ Karmay, 1975, p. 145. Cf. the alchemic connotations Garrett, 2009, p. 211.

²²⁵ Samuel, 1993, p. 174.

²²⁶ Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, pp. 273-277.

²²⁷ *gNam smān*, *mtsho smān*, *sa smān*, *rtse smān*. Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996, pp. 198-201, ZZ.

²²⁸ Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1996.

²²⁹ BGTC. *Māra*'s name is actually derived from the word root denoting 'death'. Cf. *amṛta*, the ambrosia of eternity.

²³⁰ Meyer, 2007, pp. 75-76; Samuel, 2007, 213-224.

²³¹ Cf. NWB, p. 73.

Similarly, suppressing demons and the ability of appropriately dealing with poison are listed among the skills characteristic of advanced religious practitioners, by whom both abilities are employed as means of subjugation and destruction of enemies of the Doctrine.²³²

Thus, we find these sets of oppositions incorporated in the mendrub ritual, each consisting of a problem and a remedy:

dug X sman

bdud X bdud rtsi

bdud X sman

The three pairs represent a synonymous relationship, the first and second members being respectively interchangeable.²³³ The first represent harmful and negative phenomena, the second beneficial and positive ones. The first might be represented for example by material poisonous substances and demons, *Māra* and *Yama* as well as by the five mental afflictions (*kleśa*, *nyon mongs*), or the five aggregates (*skandha*, *phung po*);²³⁴ the second by *materia medica* and deities as well as the five wisdoms (*ye shes*) and Teachings propagated by the Buddha or Shenrab Miwo.

The poles are not isolated from each other. On the contrary, they transform each into the other and represent two possible outcomes of one and the same process, as expressed by the expression *sman dug la 'babs* (colloquial with the meaning: “goddess descends as wrathful causing evil to someone”, or “medicine turns into poison”), or similarly *sman du mi*

²³² TGS, pp. 47-48, 56. See also formulations as “destroyed the bodies of his antagonists with a ‘bomb of poison’; he would eat poison as food” (*dug zas ltar gsol ba dang*); “he made the *ma*, *bdud* and *bstan* to serve him.” Cf. Snellgrove, 2002, p. 163.

²³³ Cf. NWB, p. 149; Wayman, 1973, 156.

²³⁴ Cf. BGTC.

*'gro dug du 'gro.*²³⁵ “The (five) Evils and the (five) Wisdoms exchange place.”²³⁶ *sMan* may also appear as an euphemism for *dug*: *smān chen pos thag bcad* (“decided by means of powerful drugs, *i.e.* by the test or ordeal of poison”).²³⁷ The notion of transformation is also incorporated already in the names of tantric substances: ‘the five impure substances’ are called ‘the five nectars’ (*bdud rtsi lnga*). This process of transforming is very common in tantric contexts in general. Similarly, it is the very aim of the *mendrub* ritual, applicable to any of the opposition pairs. Again, the means by which one produces the second state from the first is purification (*dag*), taming or subjugation (*'dul*) and exorcism (different terms).²³⁸ *Mendrub* employs the first technique.

Another concept worth pointing at is the idea of a “golden age”. I was repeatedly explained that in the good ages of the past, “very, very long time ago”, it was simple to observe the ritual appropriately word for word following the required list of the *mendrub* medicine ingredients. In those times also all the animals mentioned in the text existed and man had access to them. However, nowadays it is possible to collect only a selection of the substances, and the *phabs gta'* coming from the past has to substitute the missing ingredients. I was never given an explanation when this period of abundance actually occurred. In Tibetan cosmological thought, it is understood that the universe undergoes stages of gradual deterioration, similar to that of the four yugas in Indian mythology.²³⁹ In the Tibetan Bon context, the ideal era could be situated in the time of the primordial harmonious state predating the commencement of humanity’s disharmony with the natural environment caused

²³⁵ NWB, p. 41: “If your skill and cleverness of method have not been perfected by practice, you will not produce medicine, but poison.”

²³⁶ NWB, pp. 173-183. *Cf.* Samuel, 2007, p. 222.

²³⁷ Das.

²³⁸ *Cf.* exorcism names in Jardins, 2010, pp. 194-197.

²³⁹ *Cf.* TGS, p. 117.

by their discords with gods and its other supra-human inhabitants;²⁴⁰ then into the lifetime of Shenrab Miwo, the legendary founder of Bon; or into the early Tibetan royal period before Buddhism was established as the state religion and Bon began to be suppressed. In the first and third cases poisons (*dug*) are recorded in scriptures to have increased and spread after the situation worsened and are also regarded as the very cause of the degeneration.²⁴¹

Whenever this era supposedly occurred, the link to the perfect state is present, visible and tangible. The *phabs gta'* medicine powder incorporates its parts and essence. Passed on by generations of masters accumulating their blessings as well as samples of other mendrub rituals, the *phabs gta'* represents a continuum, connecting to the original epoch and reflecting the subsequence of generations, as it was put into action once in each (approximately once in sixty years by each abbot of the Menri monastery). As such, it functions as a material lineage – might we thus deal here with the concept of *rgyud* expressed in material terms?²⁴² Is the initial state of harmony recalled or re-enacted by the mendrub ritual through this substance?²⁴³

The structuring principle of mendrub and its medicinal matter is cosmological encompassing of all the five cardinal points segmenting space, the five elements producing all entities and other sets of fives in order to comprise and present the whole of existence.

The whole produced from these individual parts creates a balanced unit – this is valid for the cosmos, for mendrub medicine as well as for an individual. The cosmological organisation and balance is reflected by the body of an organism.²⁴⁴ The aim of Tibetan medicine is to restore the equilibrium of the organism, since “the definition of disease is when

²⁴⁰ Karmay, 2010, p. 55; Vargas, 2010, p. 379; Aris, 1990, p. 90.

²⁴¹ TGS, p. 61; Vargas, 2010, p. 379.

²⁴² Cf. BGTC: *snga phyi bar mi 'chad pa'i dkyus gcig gam star gcig*.

²⁴³ Cf. Karmay, 2010, p. 56.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Finckh, 1979, p. 104: “[T]he body with its anatomical-physiological psychic and intellectual functions acts as a mirror of the macrocosmos”; and Meyer, 2007.

this harmonized state of our body has been lost”.²⁴⁵ This is what mendrub medicine does, by providing remedies applicable to all classes of disorders, representing all categories of Tibetan medicine and being composed of ingredients from a set of the all-encompassing five. Similarly, the macro and micro cosmological relationship finds a clear expression in religious practice of which mendrub is a part: the cosmic conception of buddhahood is fivefold and “the external world (macrocosm) comes to be identified in tantric theory with the body of the practising yogin (microcosm)”.²⁴⁶

Thus, mendrub medicine works as a balancing and harmonising element both in terms of medical and religious practice both of which aim to establish a harmony in the human body and mind which mirrors the cosmic equilibrium. The goal is therefore physical health as well as enlightenment.

Also in the actual performance of the mendrub ritual its encompassing intention and potential is obvious. The more substances representing a certain category, the better, as expressed by finding the different kinds of waters, gems etc., although by their appellative they always refer to and rely on the fivefold structure. It seems as if all classes of worldly entities, encompassed already by the structuring pentads are to be gathered. They become ground and mixed, contextualised and oriented into the cosmos by being “mandalised”.²⁴⁷ Then they are distributed to be eaten. The individual consuming the substance is thus very materially correlated as to the macrocosmos.

²⁴⁵ Cuomu, 2012, p. 10. *Cf.* Finckh, 1979, p. 104; Samuel, 1993, p. 192.

²⁴⁶ Snellgrove, 2002, pp. 170, 200, 208.

²⁴⁷ *Cf.* Brauen; mandalisation of medicine in Meyer, 2007, p. 11-12.

5. Conclusion

The notion of mendrub ritual and its medicine is very universalistic. Its performance and the produced healing substance is perceived as a remedy bringing benefit to all the sentient beings of the universe. On the worldly level the benefit is articulated as health, whereas on the philosophical as a subsidy to the highest spiritual goal of every sentient being, enlightenment. This concept is made possible by the Tibetan perception of ‘mind’ and ‘body’ as undivided. The implied cosmologising principles of the ritual and its medicine are evident. Therefore, mendrub also represents an all-encompassing order imposed on the natural world and universe, classifying categories of entities: material as well as intellectual concepts.

The ritual is a very complex unit consisting of several components coming from different fields of knowledge, discourses and cultures. We deal with “medicine, alchemy and tantra in a Buddhist philosophical and cosmological framework”. Thus, in practise there does probably not exist an individual who would comprehend all the concepts it encompasses. However, this broadness also enables the ritual to function within those multiple discourses and be valid on different levels. The ritual is compounded from ideas autochthonous to Tibet and derived from other cultural milieu finding influence on the Tibetan Plateau (India, China, Central Asia) within the Euro-Asian space of cultural sharing and exchange. In Tibet these concepts became skilfully fixed upon indigenous elements from the so called “popular” (Bell) or “nameless” (Stein) religion. As such, the ritual represents a result of contributions from people of diverse expertise and background, hence must have developed through a lengthy gradual process. All the discourses become expressed in the ingredients’ *materia*.

The actual performance of the ritual is subject to change in different settings and conditions. Similarly, its timing and justification may be versatile, even in the case of such a specific and traditionally restricted ritual as mendrub. Furthermore, in the modern world

technology, easier logistics, accessibility of information, global travel, market and sponsorship play their role. Likewise, the composition of its medicine, the central paraphernalia actor of the ritual performance, depends on the transmitted tradition, but to a certain extent also on the understanding of the individual in charge. One person was responsible for preparing the mixture, into the task he projected his own medical knowledge and notions of various principles, he decided what to involve and “what was too difficult to find”. Thus, the tradition generously allows a great amount of flexibility and employment of innovation. The medicine, even though specifically prescribed, differs being confronted with individuals who have different levels of enterprise, and who, moreover, always rely on the given conditions of the time and place.

Nevertheless, this fluidity does not by any means affect the ritual’s efficacy. For each of the participating parties the ritual and the medicinal substance is effective in a particular way fulfilling the sought aims that are most relevant for the respective groups’ lives: the lay population is concerned primarily for health and well-being, monastic community for spiritual achievements. Even so, each also shares the ideals of the other.

Appendix 1

Plan of Triten Norbutse monastery²⁴⁸

Legend:²⁴⁹

I.

0F. Storage room (*mdzod khang*, 1)

1F. Main temple (*lha khang*, *'du khang*, *tshogs khang*, *gtsug lag khang*), a small temple (*bka' gyur lha khang*, 2), Protectors' chapel (*sgrub khang*, 3)

2F. Meditation room (*sgrub khang gsar pa*)

3F. Roof-top chamber (4)

5. Bells / gongs (*dril bu*)

6. Big coniferous tree (functions as *phya dar*, *cha dar*)

7. The four stupas (*mchod rten bzhi*), and another single stupa

8. Fumigation place (*bsangs sa*)

9. Main butter lamp house (*rgyal mtshan khang*, *mar me khang*)

10. Matri stones (inscribed with the main Bon mantra: *Om ma tri mu ye sa le 'du*)

11. Rinpoche's residence (*bla brang*)

12. Khenpo's residence (*mkhan po'i bla brang*), Library (*dpe mdzod khang*)

II. "New Dwelling of Happiness" (*bkra shis shag gsar*)

0F, 3F, 4F. Monks' accommodation

1F. New temple (*tshogs khang gsar pa*)

2F. School of Philosophy (*bshad grwa*)

5F, 6F. Monks' residence (*bla brang gsar pa*)

13. Monks' accommodation (called "the Corner House", *mtshams khang*)

14. School of Philosophy (*bshad grwa*), monks' accommodation

15. Butter lamp house (*mar me khang*)

16. Flagpoles with prayer flags (*dar lcog*)

17. Meditation cells (*sgom rgyab sa*)

18. Big prayer wheel (*'khor lo khang*)

III.

0F. Editor's house of the Beltam magazine (*rtsom sgrig khang*)

1F. School of Meditation (*sgom grwa*)

IV.

²⁴⁸ The plan is based on a cartographic survey of the monastery, which was for the first time carried out in detail in March 2013.

²⁴⁹ Roman numbers indicate buildings consisting of several parts. They are ordered in the Bonpo anticlockwise direction. The English terms used are either translations, or English names of the buildings (which might differ from a literally translation), or rather descriptive. Abbreviation: F = floor.

0F. Office (*las khung*, 19)
1F. Geshe's dining hall (*dge shes kyi mchod sa*)

20. Kitchen (*thab tshang*)

V.

0F. Monastery's shop (*tshong khang*, 26), storage room (*mdzod khang*)
1F. Guests' dining hall (*mgron khang*)
2F. Kitchen (*thab tshang*)

VI.

0F. Monks' accommodation
1F. Monks' accommodation, Old Library (*dpe mdzod khang rnying pa*, 21), Bonpo Foundation office (22)
2F. Monks' accommodation

VII. Bumzhi clinic (*sman khang*, 'bum bzhi'i sman khang)

VIII.

0F. Restaurant (*za khang*)
1F-3F. Guesthouse (*mgron khang*)

23. Main gate (*sgo chen*)
(24. A Sakya stupa, *sa skya'i mchod rten*)

IX., X. Plateaus in the hill slope

25. Cairns of the Four protector kings (*phyogs kyi mtho bzhi*):
25E (East), 25N (North), 25W (West), 25S (South)

Kora circumambulations:

Inner circle (*nang skor*)
Middle circle (*bar skor*)
Outer circle (*gling skor*)

Calendar of Rituals and Events²⁵⁰

West. date	Tib. date	Day time ²⁵¹	Rituals and events
7.12.	24.10.		Cleaning the monastery, preparing tormas (<i>gtor ma</i>) and mandalas (<i>dkyil 'khor</i>).
8.12.	25.10.		Cleaning finishes, relaxing day.
9.12.	26.10.	M	Opening ceremony: a big festive event with speeches by the highest representatives of the monastery, a representative of Menri monastery in India, and Tibetan (Government in Exile) and Nepali politicians.
		A	Mendrub teaching for Tibetans and foreigners by Yongdzin Rinpoche.
10.12.	27.10.	M	International Symposium on Bon.
		A	Mendrub teaching for Tibetans and foreigners by Yongdzin Rinpoche.
11.12.	28.10.	M	International Symposium on Bon.
		A	Mendrub teaching for foreigners by Yongdzin Rinpoche.
12.12.	29.10.		Big cleaning day of the whole monastery, making <i>tsa tsa</i> . Preliminary practice of mendrub (<i>sman sgrub kyi sngon 'gro</i>) begins.
13.12.	30.10.	M	Mendrub medicine packed.
		A	Purifications and ransom offering (<i>glud</i>).
14.12.	1.11. (new moon)	M	Water (<i>chu gtor</i>) and fumigation (<i>bsangs</i>) offerings, earth ritual (<i>sa len / sa'i cho ga</i> , X) which includes one <i>gling skor</i> procession with soil. Main rituals of Namdag and Longyas (<i>rnam klong</i>) cycles begin (I). Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs begins (<i>dran pa nam mkha'i 'bum tshogs</i> , III).
		A	Preliminary empowerment of Namdag and Longyal (<i>rnam klong gnyis kyi sngon 'gro'i dbang</i>) by Yongdzin Rinpoche (IX).
15.12.	2.11.		Namdag and Longyal cycle continues (I). Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II) and begins (VI). ²⁵²
16.12.	4.11. ²⁵³	M	Main empowerment of Namdag and Longyal (<i>rnam klong gnyis kyi dngos gzhi'i dbang</i>) by Yongdzin Rinpoche (IX). Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
		A	Preliminary practice of mendrub concluded. Mendrub medicine prepared into the vessels (<i>bum pa / ga'u</i>), and packages placed into the <i>gzhi</i> (I).

²⁵⁰ Partly based on programme of the ceremony issued by the monastery. The bracketed Roman numerals indicate the place of the ritual (plan in Appendix 1).

²⁵¹ Abbreviations: M = morning, A = afternoon. Absence of a letter indicates that the activities listed concern the whole day.

²⁵² One part of the rites was performed by monks (in II, 1F), one part by ngagpas (in VI, 1F, 21).

²⁵³ The third day of this month was omitted in the Tibetan calendar.

- Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
- 17.12. 5.11. M Consecration of the external supports for protective deities (*dbal mdung sogs phyi rten*), Four protector kings' (*rgyal chen sde bzhi*) ritual of establishing boundaries (*mtshams gcod*) in which their four cairns (*phyogs kyi tho bzhi*, 25E-25S) are visited in a *gling skor* procession, at each 'chams dance is performed, and *gser skyems* and *gtor ma* is offered.
Invitation of the medicine (*smān gyi spyad 'dren*): medicine vessels placed in the *gzhi*. Blessings of the peaceful deities (*zhi ba'i khrol sgrub*) on the raw medicine begin (I).
Preliminary empowerment of peaceful and wrathful deities (*zhi khro gnyis kyi sngon 'gro'i dbang*) by Yongdzin Rinpoche (IX).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
- A Teaching for foreigners.
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
- 18.12. 6.11. Blessings of the peaceful deities on the raw medicine concluded (*zhi ba'i khrol sgrub pa tshar*) (I).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
- 19.12. 7.11. Blessings of the wrathful deities (*khro ba'i khrol sgrub*) on the raw medicine begin (I).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
- A Teaching for foreigners by Khenpo.
20.12. 8.11. Blessings of the wrathful deities on the raw medicine concluded (*khro ba'i khrol sgrub pa tshar*) (I).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
- A Teaching for foreigners.
21.12. 9.11. M Ritual grinding of the medicine (*smān brdung*), *gling skor* procession with the medicine. Blessings of the peaceful deities (*zhi ba'i khrol sgrub*) on the powdered medicine begin (I).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
- A Teaching for foreigners by Geshe Gelek.
22.12. 10.11. Blessings of the peaceful deities on the powdered medicine concluded (*zhi ba'i khrol sgrub pa tshar*) (I).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs continues (II, VI).
- 23.12. 11.11. Blessings of the wrathful deities (*khro ba'i khrol sgrub*) on the powdered medicine begin (I).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs and continues (II, VI).
- A Teaching for foreigners by Geshe Kalsang.
24.12. 12.11. Blessings of the wrathful deities on the powdered medicine concluded (*khro ba'i khrol sgrub pa tshar*) (I).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs concluded (II) and continues (VI).
Preparations for Geshe candidates' presentations, cleaning (II).
- 25.12. 13.11. M Practice of accomplishments (*dnagos grub kyi sgrub pa*), rituals of both peaceful and wrathful deities, begins (I).
Geshe candidates' presentations (II).
- A Teaching for foreigners by Geshe Gelek.
Namlong (*rnam klong*) cycle continues (II).
Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs concluded (VI).

26.12.	13.11. ²⁵⁴		Practice of accomplishments continues (I). Geshe candidates' presentations (II). Rituals of <i>sngon rtogs rig pa'i rtse 'bum</i> (VI).
27.12.	14.11.		Practice of accomplishments continues (I). Rituals of <i>tshe sgrub</i> (VI).
28.12.	15.11. (full moon)	M	Empowerment of peaceful and wrathful deities and medicine practice (<i>zhi khro gnyis dang sman bcas kyi dbang</i>) by Yongdzin Rinpoche (IX). The terma medicine distributed.
29.12.	16.11.		Geshe debate exams (II). A free day after a long time, no special rituals going on.
30.12.	17.11.		Geshe debate exams (II). Medicine is packed into packages for distribution.
31.12.	18.11.		Geshe debate exams (II).
1.1. 2013	19.11.	M	Concluding ceremony: distribution of the medicine and Geshe degree certificates.
2.1.	20.11.		Thanksgiving and festivities (mainly Tibetan songs and dances), conclusion.
4.- 14.1.	22.11.- 3.12.		Visit of HH Menri Trindzin, includes one empowerment (II).

Appendix 3

²⁵⁴ The thirteenth day was doubled in the Tibetan calendar.

The fivefold division in the mendrub ritual²⁵⁵

Direction	Centre	East	North	West	South
phyogs	dbus	shar	byang	nub	lho
Buddha	<i>kun snang</i>	<i>gsal ba</i>	<i>dge lha gar</i>	<i>bye brag dgos</i>	<i>dga' ba don</i>
sangs rgyas	<i>khyab pa</i>	<i>rang 'byung</i>	<i>phyug</i>	<i>med</i>	<i>grub</i>
Element	Space	Earth	Wind / Air	Fire	Water
'byung ba	<i>nam mkha'</i>	<i>sa</i>	<i>rlung</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>chu</i>
Colour	White	Yellow	Green	Red	Blue
tshon mdog	<i>dkar po</i>	<i>ser po</i>	<i>ljang khu</i>	<i>dmar po</i>	<i>sngon po</i>
Poison	Anger	Ignorance	Pride	Desire	Jealousy
dug	<i>zhe sdang</i>	<i>gti mug</i>	<i>nga rgyal</i>	<i>'dod chags</i>	<i>'phrag dog</i>
Aggregate	Consciousness	Form	Mental	Feeling	Perception
phung po	<i>rnam shes</i>	<i>gzugs</i>	formations <i>'du byed</i>	<i>tshor ba</i>	<i>'du shes</i>
Nectars	Sperm	Flesh	Stool	Blood	Urine
bdud rtsi	<i>thig le</i>	<i>sha</i>	<i>dri chen</i>	<i>khrag</i>	<i>dri chung</i>
Inga					
Secret names of special medicine²⁵⁶	“Thought of enlightenment” <i>byang sems gab pa</i>	“Secret flesh” <i>gsang sha gal chen</i>	“Incense of great smell” <i>zhim phod dri chen</i>	“Lotus blood” <i>pad ma rak ta</i>	“Scent of sameness” <i>mnyam nyid dri chu</i>
Wisdom ye shes	Wisdom of emptiness <i>stong nyid ye shes</i>	Mirror-like wisdom <i>me long ye shes</i>	Equalising wisdom <i>mnyams nyid ye shes</i>	Discriminating wisdom <i>sor rtogs ye shes</i>	Accomplishing wisdom <i>bya grub ye shes</i>
Sign of the Buddha family	<i>A dang ma</i> A and ma syllables	Swastika <i>g.yung drung</i>	Dharma wheel <i>'khor lo</i>	Lotus <i>pad ma</i>	Jewel <i>nor bu</i>
Mount of the Buddha family	Lion <i>seng ge</i>	Elephant <i>glang chen</i>	Horse <i>rta</i>	<i>Garuḍa</i> ²⁵⁷ <i>khyung</i>	Dragon <i>'brug</i>
Medicine of space	Chebulic myrobalan <i>a ru ra</i>	Spurge ²⁵⁸ <i>du rum skad phyad</i>	Spurge <i>du ru ka</i> , <i>Sesbania grandiflora</i> <i>po so 'cha'</i>	Three incenses <i>spos sna gsum</i>	Camphor <i>ga pur</i>
Properties of medicine				Warming <i>drod sman</i>	Cooling <i>bsil sman</i>

²⁵⁵ The table is compiled and terms translated according to mendrub observance, Mss A-C, Khenpo and Millard's translation of Nyo Tsultrim Gyaltzen's commentary (NyTshGy); Snellgrove's translation of NWB; Snellgrove, 2002; Meyer, 1992; Tsepak Rindzin, 1993; TMPI. Many more categories could be added, I focus only on those most relevant to the discussed mendrub ritual.

²⁵⁶ According to (including the translation) NWB, pp. 178-179.

²⁵⁷ The position of *Garuḍa* and dragon is sometimes switched in the Bon tradition: the dragon in the West, *Garuḍa* in the South.

²⁵⁸ NyTshGy notes a plant “durji” here. Is it a variant of the term *du ru ka* for spurge? Amchi Nyima understands ‘spurge’ also as *du rum skad phyad*.

Medicine pot material	Glass / Crystal <i>shel</i>	Gold <i>gser</i>	Turquoise <i>g.yu</i>	Copper <i>zangs</i>	Iron <i>lcags</i>
Body functions and organs	Mind <i>thugs</i>	Flesh and Bones <i>sha rus</i>	Breath <i>rlung</i>	Heat <i>drod</i>	Blood circulation <i>khrag</i>
Humour <i>nyes pa</i>		Phlegm <i>bad kan</i>	Pneuma <i>rlung</i>	Bile <i>mkhris pa</i>	Phlegm <i>bad kan</i>
Title of the medicine in the text	<i>'dus pa ldan pa'i nam mkha'i sman</i>	<i>sha chen g.yung drung lta me long</i>	<i>dri chen kun 'byung mnyam pa'i sman</i>	<i>khrag sna pad ma sor rtogs</i>	<i>dri chu las drug bya ba nan tan</i>

Classification of animals according to the mendrub text (*'od zer 'khyil ba bdud rtsi sman gyi gzhung*)

As has been shown, each buddha, cardinal point and the phenomena it comprises, is associated with a particular animal mount (*vāhana*). I would like to argue that in the case of the mendrub text presented the fivefold cosmological ordering aims to serve also as a tool of animal classification. If we analyse the animal mendrub ingredients, we come to the following structure:²⁵⁹

	Animal ingredients for particular cardinal points				
The basic order	Centre	East	North	West	South
Centre (C)	*C: Human Lion (C)	E: Human(C) Elephant (E)	N: Undivided	W:Human(C)	S: Human(C) Carniv.(S)
East (E)	*E: Divided	C: Carniv.(S)	C: Carniv.(S)	C: Birds (W)	*C:Carniv.(S)
North (N)	N: Undivided	N: Undivided	E: Divided	E: Divided	E: Divided
West (W)	W: Birds	*W: Birds	W: Birds	N: Undivided	N: Undivided + Divided(E)
South (S)	S: Carniv.	S: Carniv.	S: Carniv.	S: Carniv.	W: Birds

Despite few irregularities (discussed below) it is clear that each of the cardinal points is linked not only to a particular animal, but to a whole classification group the animal represents:

C: Human (variant appellations: *sha chen, khyi'u, bu med, lang tsho*)

E: Divided hoofs (*rmig pa kha brag*)

N: Undivided hoofs (*rmig zlum*)

W: Birds (*'dab chags*)

S: Carnivores (*gcan gzan*)

The animals are perceived through four categories: Hoofed – 1. with divided hoof and 2. with undivided hoof, 3. Carnivores, 4. Birds. Further subclasses are: aquatic carnivores, carnivores with claws, aquatic animals with divided hoofs. The criteria employed are the animals' living space (air or ground), its diet and lastly its type of the terminal portion of the limb. As the fifth category the human is added. The dividing structure therefore is:

Western classification		Tibetan classification
Class	Order	
Mammals (<i>Mammalia</i>)	Even-toed ungulate (<i>Artiodactyla</i>)	<i>rmig pa kha brag</i>
	Odd-toed ungulate (<i>Perissodactyla</i>)	<i>rmig zlum</i>
	Carnivores (<i>Carnivora</i>)	<i>gcan gzan</i>
Birds (<i>Aves</i>)		<i>'dab chags</i>

The system is thus in accordance with Western science. Likewise, Herbivores are anticipated as opposed to Carnivores, but no special class is created for them. Here they

²⁵⁹ The asterisks mark the reconstructed missing parts of the text.

would include Odd-toed ungulate and Even-toed ungulate. The animals represent those that humans mostly come into contact with and that are the easiest and most needed to be conceptualized. Fishes, reptiles, insects and all Invertebrates (*Invertebrata*) are omitted. The classification is not to be found in texts only, but is commonly used at least in some parts of Tibet.²⁶⁰

The human would make a fourth Order of the Mammals, the Primates (*Primates*). However, he does not figure as a group. In my opinion he has been added to create the fivefold structure and then because of the frequent usage of tantric substances found in his body. Therefore, it is a question if the human forms an intended part of the classification or not. In the first case, he would form one independent class of the five conceptualized animal classes, in the second case he would function as a kind of supplement to the four animal classes.

As is read in the first table, the order of the animal groups within one cardinal point change place according to the direction in question. The representative of the given direction always appears at the first place. The remaining places follow the regular Bonpo anticlockwise sequence of the cardinal points. In the same way the five poisons (*dug lnga*), each linked to a certain direction and thus also its fauna group (C: Human / Anger, E: Even-toed ungulate / Ignorance, N: Odd-toed ungulate / Pride, W: Birds / Desire, S: Carnivores / Jealousy)²⁶¹ turn their positions in the relation to the five aggregates (*phung po*).

Each of the five animal groups provide mendrub ingredients of the relevant impure substance or 'nectar' (sperm, flesh, stool, blood, urine), according to the cardinal points. Moreover, the sought animals acquire other characteristics of the particular direction: for example we see blue girls, turquoise cuckoos, blue mules and dzo in the South associated with blue colour and the element of water. On the contrary, in the red West represented by blood we find girls of radiating skin, red mountain birds, vermilion horses and foxes.

The regular pattern of the text enables us to estimate its missing parts, as shown in the table. Likewise, we can see mendrub ingredients of which characteristics have disappeared from the list due to these corruptions. For instance, the text opens with a corruption, starting with the attributes of North instead of the Centre. This hypothesis is supported by Nyo Tsultrim Gyaltzen's commentary in which he lists "1. The sperm of a young white boy with bright eyes, 2. The sperm of a sengye togal, a kind of lion"²⁶² as the special medicine of the central direction, which should have been the first ingredients appearing in our text.

The first ingredient position of each cardinal point comprises from body parts of either 1. humans (W), or 2. the representative animal group (N), or in most cases 3. of both (C, E, S). The last option seems to be the pattern. The animal group representative of the direction in question occupies within the direction the central position, along with the human who is associated with the Centre. The addition of the Divided animals to the Undivided group is probably a mistake.

Alternatively, if we take the human not as a separate class but solely as a provider of necessary tantric substances, each cardinal point would be represented by its animal at the first position and the human simply added to it (with the exception of the West where Birds occupy the second place). Secondly, lion and thus again Carnivores would stand for the Centre. This understanding would explain the frequency of Carnivores on the second positions. The fivefold pattern would then be:

²⁶⁰ NW. A little similar classification in a ritual text is found by Blondeau, 2000, pp. 259, 271.

²⁶¹ Cf. Animals as removers of the five poisons in NWB, p. 207.

²⁶² Translation by Millard and Khenpo, NyTsGy, pp. 7-8.

- C:** Carnivores (*gcan gzan*)
- E:** Divided hoofs (*rmig pa kha brag*)
- N:** Undivided hoofs (*rmig zlum*)
- W:** Birds (*'dab chags*)
- S:** Carnivores (*gcan gzan*)

The classification notion might have been determined already by the Indian choice of the animals of the five buddhas' families. In any case, in Tibet the animals have been seen as categories structuring the fauna and filled in with Tibetan material, *i.e.* indigenous Tibetan species. These stand beside a few Indian species as well as mythological creatures. Interestingly, the Indian elephant (associated with the East) has been in Tibet included among the "Divided hoofs" (*rmig pa kha brag*). Indeed, an elephant distributes its weight on three toes of each limb and therefore its foot is in a way split, and thus it has not got a round hoof (verbatim *rmig zlum*). Therefore, in Tibet the elephant within the class it represents has been joined by yaks, sheep, dzos *etc.* In the Western system the elephant does not belong to either of the hoofed groups, but forms a separate Order of Elephants (*Proboscidea*) of the Mammals.

Economics of the Ritual: Donations and Expenses

As has been stated, mendrub ritual counts as one of the most expensive Bon rituals performed. Therefore, collecting the resources at Triten Norbutse started as soon as the performance and the date was decided, which was two years in advance. The monastery did not make any plans how to finance the ritual, but was hoping that Bon followers would help. In case only little money was gathered, the plan was to buy the medicine ingredients and then support the ritual performance itself, and save money on food for the monks and pilgrims. However, in the end the response for the call for money was answered with much greater generosity than anticipated. All the ritual was successfully covered by donations.²⁶³

Funding drubchen has traditionally been regarded by both monastics and laity as extraordinarily beneficial for generating merit. Apart from the power of the ritual itself, the event is considered especially auspicious since it is rare and people have to await it. For the Bon communities of Nepal this was the best opportunity for sponsoring since the last mendrub in 1998. Therefore, many of the pilgrims had been collecting and saving money for this occasion for a long time, usually for about the two years. Even poor families sought to find financial resources, by selling their yak for example.²⁶⁴

There are two categories of contributors differentiated: sponsor (*sbyin bdag*) and donor (*dad ldan*, “faithful”). A sponsor is someone either inscribing money on a regular basis or at least once donating a significant amount, which for the mendrub was set to be the price of catering for monks and pilgrims for one day (106 395 NPR, see below). Both of the contributors are rewarded by great religious merit they are believed to receive. In more overt terms, the most notable people of a particular day are listed every morning on blackboards which are visibly displayed at the monastery. More importantly, the chant master (*dbu mdzad*) of the main mendrub performers (a *mchod bcu gnyis*) utters a short prayer for them in which he actually mentions their names. The Mendrub chant master fulfils this task every day whenever he has time between the Mendrub practice, for instance over the lunch break. The sponsors are furthermore rewarded by being able to personally participate in the ritual’s performance. They are asked to carry the medicine packages in the kora circumambulation (*gling skor*) during the mendrub ritual (21.12. / 9.11.) and later to deliver the accomplished mendrub medicine from the *'dus khang* to the place of distribution.²⁶⁵ Asking about this custom, I was told: “we need them to feel like they do something”.

A common practice for deceased family members is to dedicate money in their name, which leads to the improvement of both the deceased’s and the donor’s *karma* and rebirth. Some families had waited two to three years to make such offering, some donated money for relatives who had passed away even eight years ago. Probably around sixty percent of the mendrub funding was offered with this intention.²⁶⁶

²⁶³ Apart from the construction of three ramps on the northern side of the monastery, dug into the hill slope. The plateaus were used for the *sa len* ritual, the empowerments and some of the accompanying festivities. The area is intended for new buildings of the monastery.

²⁶⁴ A yak would make around 40 000 NPR.

²⁶⁵ As the weight of some packages was close to twenty kilograms, the task was not easy for everyone and the received merit was compensated by back pains.

²⁶⁶ This is thus the only occasion when names of deceased people can be uttered when *dbu mdzad* utters the prayer. Such practice is otherwise forbidden, at least in some of the Himalayan Bon communities (Dolpo).

The members of the so called Western sangha²⁶⁷ usually have more general objectives to provide sponsorship. As they visit the ritual performance in order to deepen their practice achievements, they also donate finances to support the school of their faith and the institutions maintaining its tradition in general rather than for securing a good rebirth, which, from their point of view, depends mainly on the practice anyway. Both new-comers and long-time members who have been sponsoring Bon for decades and worldwide contributed. Nevertheless, I was told that some foreigners also donated for their dead. A potential contributor can choose from a variety of commodities to support: mendrub medicine ingredients, every day donations to monks, and meals and tea (*mang ja*) distributed throughout the day and served to everyone present (mostly around 500 people, see 3.1). For this, the monastery issued a list of costs of the daily meals (see below).

Different groups of Bon adherents have different preferences for sponsorship. Tibetans expect to receive religious merit and therefore they mainly donate money only for rituals and constructions of primarily religious objects, such as temples and stupas. Whereas foreigners usually do not care for how their money will be used. They entrust the decision to the establishment, although they often like to hear that the monastery is planning to enlarge their school or otherwise promote education of its members and especially of children. An interesting case are the Chinese who, as I was told, like things being visibly done and built and therefore like to support constructions of buildings which do not have to serve a religious purpose. For the same purpose finances of the foreigners are often used since they are addressed to any particular goal and the monastery needs development and building reconstruction.

Apart from paying one day meals for the community another popular means for generating merit among the Tibetans is direct sponsorship of monks performing rituals. At mendrub this was also done on daily basis. As the Drenpa Namkha's 'bum tshogs rite accompanied the mendrub, every monk was employed in a ritual for the whole period. People gave various amounts of money, which were usually counted from the sum they intended to reserve for every single monk of the monastery.

Let us suppose someone wants to give 10 NPR to every monk. The figure is multiplied by 200 (the rounded number of the monks), plus the twenty-four main performers of mendrub (*a mchod bcu gnyis*) have to receive at least double the amount than other monks and are counted separately. We then come to: $(10 \times 200) + (20 \times 24) = 2480$ NPR. For instance, on the the of the earth ritual (14.12. / 1.11.) each monk of the monastery received 1700 NPR, the twenty-four main performers of mendrub (*a mchod bcu gnyis*) 4000 NPR. From the former sum 1400 to each monk was donated by the family of one monastery's monk in Tibet in China, and the remaining 300 NPR by a Bonpo family living in Boudhanath, the biggest Tibetan settlement of the Kathmandu valley. For the *a mchod bcu gnyis* the amount was raised even more than twice. Supposing this increase was paid by the second sponsor, the figure of the first one was calculated: $(1400 \times 200) + (2800 \times 24) = 347\ 200$ NPR.

The money is often accompanied by a khatag (*kha btags*) for every monk. These donations were placed in the charge of one appointed monk who distributed them at the end of ceremonies, usually in the evening of every day as a kind of compensation for the monks' work. If no one donates for a particular day, nothing would be distributed, which however during the mendrub did not happen as far as I know. Besides the regular monks of the monastery, also ngagpas and householder priests (including Amchi Nyima) and visiting

²⁶⁷ They counted around 100 and came from these countries: Mexico (the majority, around 30 people), United States of America, Canada, Great Britain, France (around 10), Belgium, Netherlands, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Israel, Japan, China, Taiwan.

monks from other Bonpo monasteries (mostly from Menri) taking part in the rituals are presented these offerings.

Generally speaking a big portion of the mendrub finances came from the monastery's monks' families. Relatives of the new Geshe candidates were especially active. The biggest sponsorship arrived from Bonpo settlements in Eastern Tibet, from where many of the monastery's monks originally come. Here the money was collected by local monasteries and then sent to Kathmandu via money transfers. The involvement of Western sangha was also very visible. Thus, the mendrub ritual sponsorship was global.

Sponsorship:²⁶⁸

Currency	Tibetans	Western sangha	Nepalis	Total
NPR	7 511 714	508 871	11 710	8 032 295
USD	1405	3656		5061
EUR	200	3240	1000	4440
INR	2250			2250
CAD	50			50
CNY		6400		6400

Number of donating bodies (individuals, families, monasteries, other institutions):²⁶⁹ 622.

In total, there were 43 sponsors, donating for meals and tea of one day 106 395 NPR.²⁷⁰ The biggest donation was 191 770 NPR (from a family of a Geshe), the others contributed more or less the stated sum. Among them were only three Westerners (or members of the Western sangha in general): one donated 1000 Euro, one 100 005 NPR, one joined a Nepali and they gave the given amount together (here the money is counted into the Western sangha). One sponsor was Nepali (giving 1000 Euro).

The funding raised during the two empowerments given by the Rinpoche is not included here. Usually, a big empowerment makes in average around two lakhs (200 000 NPR). Furthermore, a third empowerment was bestowed by HH Menri Trindzin.

Cost of the mendrub medicine:

²⁶⁸ This accounting is based on the monastery's official final list of sponsors and donors. One person was missing in the list, I was told. In 2012 the nominal Gross domestic product per capita in Nepal was 626 USD, the Gross domestic product per Purchasing power parity was 1308 USD. (According to the International Monetary Fund.) Exchange rate: USD bought for 86,90 NPR, sold for 87,50 NPR (Nepal Rastra Bank, 1.12.2012).

²⁶⁹ A few bodies donated twice *etc.*, so were counted twice.

²⁷⁰ The sum divided by the average number of people present (500) shows the average cost of food per person a day: 212,79 NPR.

416 630 + 20 000 (grinding) = 436 630 NPR

The presented figure shows the price of medicinal plant ingredients bought in Kathmandu. The amount would slightly rise if all bought ingredients are included.²⁷¹

To give an example of the amount and cost of the main ingredients, the ‘root medicine’:²⁷²

Name	Cost per kilogram (NPR)	Weight included (kg)	Price (NPR)
<i>A ru ra</i>	80	131	10 480
<i>Ba ru ra</i>	65	95	6175
<i>sKyu ru ra</i>	125	75	9375
<i>Shing kun</i>	1500	0,5	750
<i>Chu gang</i>	250	7	1750
<i>Gur gum</i>	per gram 325	0,5	162 500
<i>Bal gur gum</i>	900	20	18 000
<i>Li shi</i>	1400	12	16 800
<i>Dzā ti</i>	1600	12	19 200
<i>Sug smel</i>	1300	12	15 600
<i>Ka ko la</i>	1400	12	16 800
			Total <u>277 430</u>

Appendix 6

²⁷¹ However, there exists no evidence of this. The calculation is based on an accounting list in Amchi Nyima’s Commentary.

²⁷² They are listed as the first plant ingredients in the translated text, section II.

Profiles of the main informants²⁷³

Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche (born 1926, Khyungpo, Tibet)

The second most important figure of the present Bonpos. One of the biggest scholars of the contemporary Tibetan world who has taken part in many research projects and himself is author of many valued works. For the West firstly discovered by David Snellgrove.

Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung (1969, Dhorpatan, Nepal)

Present khenpo (abbot) of Triten Norbutse monastery since 2001, is one of Rinpoche's main disciples. Also, a renowned scholar working with many researchers on Bon and very supportive of Western science.

Amchi Nyima (1969, Jharkot, Mustang, Nepal)

Doctor of traditional Tibetan medicine (amchi). Born into a family of hereditary householder priests who have also functioned as medicine practitioners. Trained by his father and later at medical schools at Menri and Triten Norbutse monasteries. Currently the main amchi of Triten Norbutse and the Bumzhi Clinic.

Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortsang (1976, Tra, Dolpo, Nepal)

Geshe of Menri monastery, one of the most renowned Bonpo scholars, chief editor of the Bonpo Bongo magazine and former assistant to HH Menri Trindzin. Currently pursuing his PhD studies in Dolpo history at Charles University, Prague.

Geshe Yungdrung Gyamtso (Tra, Dolpo, Nepal)

Geshe of Triten Norbutse monastery, chief editor of the Bonpo Beltam magazine, employed in the finance office of the monastery.

Geshe Takla Tarwa (1984, Bicher, Dolpo, Nepal)

Geshe of Triten Norbutse monastery.

Lama Shenrab Tenzin (Samling, Dolpo, Nepal)

Yangal lineage lama of the famous Bonpo monastery in Samling, Dolpo, also an amchi.

Mingji Cuomu (Lhasa, Tibet)

Doctor of Tibetan medicine practicing in Tibet and the West, where she joins both the traditions by her studies of Medical Anthropology, University of Oxford.

Appendix 7

²⁷³ The informants are listed in order of their significance (for the Bonpos and for my research), not alphabetically. I mention dates of birth only in cases I know them.

List of abbreviations

Personal names

AN	Amchi Nyima
LST	Lama Shenrab Tenzin
MC	Mingji Cuomu
NW	Geshe Nyima Woser Choekhortsang
YR	Yongdzin Tenzin Namdak Rinpoche

Dictionaries and written works

BGTC	Zhang, Yisun. <i>Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo</i> . Min dzu chu ban shi, Bei jing, 1993.
Das	Das, Chandra. <i>Tibetan-English Dictionary</i> . Delhi, Book Faith India, 1998.
DK	bLo bzang 'phrin las, Dung dkar. <i>Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo</i> . Krung go'i bod rig pa'i dpe skrun khang, Pe cin, 2002.
DTMA	Tsering Thakchoe Drungtso and Tsering Dolma Drungtso. <i>Bod lugs sman rtsi kyi tshig mdzod bod dbyin shan sbyar: Tibetan-English Dictionary of Tibetan Medicine and Astrology</i> . Drungtso Publications, Dharamsala, 2005.
DTMM	Arya, Pasang Yonten (ed.). <i>Dictionary of Tibetan Materia Medica</i> . Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1998.
ML	Monlam dictionary (Electronic, curated by Lobsang Monlam.)
MPD	Lama, Yeshe Choden. <i>Medicinal plants of Dolpo: Amchis' knowledge and conservation</i> . WWF Nepal Program, Kathmandu, 2001.
NyTshGy	gNyos tshul khriims rgyal mtshan. 'Od zer 'khyil pa bdud rtsi yon tan gyi phyag bshes gsal byed me long 'zhug so: <i>Mendrub Oser Kyilba – The Light Infused Medicine Blessing Ritual</i> . Millard, Colin and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung (trls.). (Forthcoming)
NWB	Snellgrove, David (ed.). <i>The Nine Ways of Bon: Excerpts from the gZi-brjid</i> . London Oriental Series vol. 18. Oxford University Press, London, 1967.
ShM	dGa' ba'i rdo rje. <i>Khrungs dpe dri med shel gyi me long</i> . Chab mdo sa khul sman rtsis khang, Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995.

- TED Skorupski, Tadeusz, Tudeng Nima and Gyurme Dorje (eds.). *An Encyclopedic Tibetan-English Dicitonary: A Revised Version of Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, I. The Nationalities Publishing House, Beijing and School of Oriental Studies, London, 2001.
- TGS Karmay, Samten G. (ed.). *The Treasury of Good Sayings: A Tibetan History of Bon*. Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, 1972.
- TMPa Parfionovitch, Yuri, Gyurme Dorje and Fernand Meyer. *Tibetan Medical Paintings: Illustrations to the Blue Beryl treatise of Sangye Gyamtso (1653-1705)*, I-II. Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1992.
- TMPIG Dakpa, Tenzin. *Tibetan Medicinal Plants: An Illustrated Guide to Identification and Practical Use*. Delhi, Paljor Publications, 2007.
- TMPI Kletter, Christa and Monika Kriechbaum. *Tibetan Medicinal Plants*. Medpharm, Stuttgart, 2001.
- ZZ Karmay, Samten G. and Yasuhiko Nagano. *A Lexicon of Zhangzhung and Bonpo Terms*. Bon Studies 11. National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, 2008.

Currency

CAD	Canadian dollar
CNY	Chinese yuan
EUR	Euro
INR	Indian rupee
NPR	Nepalese rupee
USD	United States dollar

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MsA: *'od zer 'khyil ba bdud rtsi sman gyi gzhung lags sho*. (A manuscript in the possession of Tritten Norbutse monastery.)

MsB: *'od zer 'khyil ba bdud rtsi sman gyi gzhung bzhugs pa lags sho*. Sog sde sprul sku bstan pa'i nyi ma, Lha sa, 1998. In: *Katen Digital*, vol. 168, text 1.

MsC: *'od zer 'khyil ba bdud rtsi sman gyi gzhung bzhugs pa'i dbus phyogs legs sho*. Sog sde sprul sku bstan pa'i nyi ma, Lha sa, 1998. In: *Katen Digital*, vol. 230, text 22.

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dPal ldan khri brtan nor bu rtse dbu brnyes nas mi lo nyer lnga 'khor ba'i dus chen dang 'brel bdud rtsi 'od zer khyil ba'i sgrub pa chen mor sbyin bdag dang mchod 'bul zhal 'debs byung ba gsham gsal. (A statement of account on funding the ritual.)

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