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Magic in The Nine Ways of Bon

ABSTRACT

The article begins with a brief overview of The Nine Ways, which is the main method of classifying the doctrine of Bon religion. Later, the author discusses different concepts of magic which are present in the text of Nine Ways. By adopting a broad definition of magic, which is here understood as a religious phenomenon, based on the supernatural relations in the world, the author analyses further doctrinal systems of bon. The article first describes rituals form the first four ways, and then analyses tantra and dzogchen, which are described in the seventh, eighth and ninth ways.

KEY WORDS

Bon religion, Tibet, magic, rituals, tantra, dzogchen

INTRODUCTION

Bon (Tib. *bon*) is the native religion of Tibet. This article aims to analyse various concepts and ideas of magic that can be found in the so called Nine Ways of Bon (Tib. *bon theg pa rim dgu*), which is a summary of the most important doctrinal systems of the Bon tradition. There are different sources for this classification: the most important is the longest hagiography of Tonpa Shenrab (who is considered by Bonpos as the founder of their religion, Tib. *ston pa gshen rab*) called *Hdus pa rin po che dri ma med pa gzi brjid rab*

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tu ḥbar baḥi mdo.¹ An attempt will be made to interpret various concepts of that religion that can be defined as magical. Magic is understood and defined differently in anthropology and religious studies. For the purposes of this article, we can assume that the concept of magic refers to religious phenomena (rituals, meditation techniques of tantra [Tib. *rgyud*] and dzogchen [Tib. *rdzogs chen*]) based on the belief in supernatural relations within the world. In rituals, adepts refer to supernatural beings (spirits, gods and goddesses) and in meditation techniques adepts refer to supernatural beings (tutelary deities), the concept of energy channels and the correlations between specific states of mind and visions. I understand supernaturalism as an opposition to the scientific attitude to the world that entails an attempt to analyse objective phenomena verifiable by means of research.

1. BON TEXTS

The Menri (Tib. *smān ri*) monastery established in the 15th century after the destruction of the Yeru Wensaka (Tib. *gyas ru dben sa kha*) monastery plays the main role in the determination of orthodoxy in the Bon religion. Since that time, Menri has been considered the most important monastic centre and its abbot heads the entire tradition. After the invasion of Tibet by Communist China in the middle of the 20th century and the destruction of the monastery in Tibet, Menri was reconstructed in the north of India, in the community of Dolanji. The current, 33rd abbot of the monastery is Tenpai Nyima (Tib. *bstan pa'i nyi ma*). According to the Menri tradition, the Bon canon consists of:

- the Kangyur (Tib. *bka' ,gyur*) – 175 tomes attributed to the founder of the tradition Tonpa Shenrab. It consists of four parts: do (Tib. *mdo*) – 62 tomes, bum (Tib. *'bum*) – 91 tomes, gyu (Tib. *rgyud*) – 18 tomes, dzod (Tib. *mdzod*) or dzogchen (Tib. *rdzogs chen*) – 4 tomes;
- Tengyur (Tib. *brtan ,gyur*) – 131 tomes of comments to the Kangyur. The current form of the Tengyur was created by the 22nd Menri abbot Nyima Tenzin (Tib. *nyi ma bstan 'dzin*) who edited comments in 131 tomes in 1836.²

Due to the multitude of materials and ideas, the Bonpo needed a system for the codification of their doctrine. The first systematic division of the en-

¹ *Hdus pa rin po che dri ma med pa gzi brjid rab tu ḥbar baḥi mdo*, Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji 1983.

² *Sog sde bstan pa'i nyi ma, bKa' 'gyur brten 'gyur gyi sde tshan sgrigs tshul bstan pa'i me ro spar ba'i rlung g.yab bon gyi pad mo rgyas pa'i nyi 'od*, Delhi 1965.

tire doctrine emerged in the 14th century in the longest hagiography of Tonpa Shenrab whose authorship is attributed to Londen Nyingpo (Tib. *blo ldan snying po*). That division is known as the Nine Ways of Bon. The oldest text of that hagiography available to us today originated in the 16th century and was discovered in the Samling (Tib. *bsam gling*) monastery in Nepal.³ The division into the Nine Ways can also be found in another Bon text called Gabdrel (Tib. *gab `grel*). The Bonpo believe that the text was written in the 8th century by Drenpa Namkha (Tib. *dran pa nam mkha`*) but there is no evidence for it and Tibetologists consider that it is much younger and that it was created after the hagiography. There are three methods for division of the Nine Ways: the Southern Treasure, Northern Treasure and the Central Treasure. Texts found in Digtsem Thakar (Tib. *`brig mtshams mtha` dkar*) in Southern Tibet and in Paro (Tib. *spa gro*) in Bhutan are arranged into the Southern Treasure, materials found in Dangra Khyung Dzong (Tib. *dang ra khyung rdzong*) in Northern Tibet create the Northern Treasure while those found in Samye (Tib. *bsam yas*) and Yerpa Tag (Tib. *yer pa `i brag*) in Central Tibet are called the Central Treasure.⁴ An English Tibetologist David Snellgrove translated and edited fragments of hagiography in the cooperation with representatives of the Bon tradition.⁵ To this day, his work is considered to be one of the most important with regards to that text. In my further analysis, I will also refer to other texts considered important for the understanding of the topic, among others, the edited lectures of one of the most important teachers of Bon: Tenzin Namdak (Tib. *bstan `dzin rnam dag*). His lectures about the Nine Ways were published in an internal print run by the French Yungdrung Bon association.⁶

2. NINE WAYS OF BON

The goal of meditative practices of the Bon tradition is the liberation from the cycle of existence (Tib. *`khor ba*). The Texts of Bon list a few methods (ways) that can lead to that goal: sutra (Tib. *mdo*) whose description in con-

³ D. L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, Boulder 1980, p. 4.

⁴ T. Wangyal, *Cuda naturalnego umysłu*, tłum. J. Grabiak, przedm. Jego Świątobliwość dalajlama, oprac. A. Lukianowicz, Poznań 2002, p. 53. English edition: T. Wangyal, *Wonders of the Natural Mind. The Essence of Dzogchen in the Native Bon Tradition of Tibet*, foreword H. H. Dalai Lama, New York 2000, p. 61.

⁵ D. L. Snellgrove, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, London 1967.

⁶ T. Namdak, *The Nine Ways of Bon*, Association Yungdrung Bon, Blou 2006.

tained in the Fifth and Sixth Ways, tantra– the Seventh and Eighth Ways and dzogchen classified as the highest, Ninth Way. The division of the Bon doctrine into Nine Ways according to the Southern Treasure is as follows: Four Ways of the Cause and Five Ways of the Fruit. The Ways of the Cause are:

- 1) the Way of the Shen of Prediction (Tib. *phya gshen theg pa*) concerned with divination (Tib. *mo*), astrological calculations (Tib. *rtsis*), rituals (Tib. *gto*) and medicine (Tib. *sman*);
- 2) the Way of the Shen of the World of Manifestations (Tib. *snang gshen theg pa*) comprising rituals invoking helpful deities (Tib. *lha*) and expelling demons (Tib. *'dre*);
- 3) the Way of the Shen of Magic Power (Tib. *'phrul gshen theg pa*) containing rituals helpful in agriculture;
- 4) the Way of the Shen of Existence (Tib. *srid gshen theg pa*) containing funerary rituals.⁷

The Lower Ways – as Ways of the Cause are sometimes called – do not directly focus on methods leading to the liberation from cyclical existence but are rather supposed to support the practitioners in their worldly life. They are called the Ways of the Cause because, according to the Bon doctrine, they ensure health and prosperity, which is to support the practices of the Higher Ways. The Ways of the Fruit are divided into:

- 5) the Way of the Virtuous Followers (Tib. *dge bsnyen theg pa*) describes rules of ethics and morality addressed to secular persons;
- 6) the Way of Ascetic Sages (Tib. *drang srong theg pa*) describes rules of self-discipline for monks and nuns;
- 7) the Way of the White A (Tib. *a dkar theg pa*) describes tantric practices in which an adept visualises himself as a meditative deity (Tib. *yi dam*);
- 8) the Way of the Primeval Shen (Tib. *ye gshen theg pa*) describes tantric practices of the generation phase (Tib. *bskyed rim*) and the perfection phase (Tib. *rdzogs rim*);
- 9) the Supreme Way (Tib. *bla med theg pa*) explains the outlook, meditation and conduct of the dzogchen practice.⁸

The Five Higher Ways are called the Ways of the Fruit because, according to the Bon doctrine, they lead to liberation from the cyclical existence. The text of the Nine Ways is hierarchically structured. Rituals, astrology, medicine and divinations are considered the lowest religious methods, with morality practices belonging to the sutra category being considered higher while tantra and

⁷ T. Wangyal, *Cuda...*, op. cit., p. 297–301.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 301–302.

dzogchen are the highest of all. According to the Bon doctrine, the latter two ways make it possible to attain enlightenment in the course of a single life.

3. MAGIC IN RITUALS

We will now discuss the magical concepts that appear in the Nine Ways. We can find elements of magic in all nine ways but they are put in a different context and understood differently in the Ways of the Cause and in the Ways of the Result. Ideas that appear in the sutra also differ from those present in the tantra or dzogchen. As the text is vast and deals with many issues, I will only focus on the key rituals and most important ideas of the tantra and dzogchen.

Some of the most important rituals of the Nine Ways are rituals relating to: the elements (Thrukpa Yoto, Tib. *`khrugs pa`i yo to*), prosperity (Yangug, Tib. *g.yang`gugs*), the removal of obstacles (Geksel, Tib. *gegs sel*) and using ransom (Lu, Tib. *bslu*). Let us examine each of them. In the Thrukpa Yoto ritual, an altar is first prepared and next objects offered to the Eight Dakinis are set on it. Objects set on the altar include the torma (a flour figurine, Tib. *gtor ma*), milk, cheese and yogurt which are called the three white [substances] (Tib. *dkar gsum*). The practitioner recites the text that invokes goddesses and offers objects to them. Ritual with offerings is supposed to persuade the goddesses who reign over the elements to help avoid natural disasters such as floods or earthquakes.⁹ The ritual is based on the belief that spiritual entities are connected to all objects in the world and to natural phenomena. Various classifications of such beings exist; a classic Buddhist division also used in Bon is the existence of six realms of rebirth (infernal realms, the realm of hungry spirits, animals, people, demigods and gods). Each of them can be divided further. For example, spirits of nature include the Sadak (spirits of the earth, Tib. *sa bdag*), Tsen (rocks, Tib. *btsan*) and Lu (water, Tib. *klu*).¹⁰ Another division referred to in the rituals is the division into sansaric and enlightened beings. Local deities, for example deities of mountains, can be protectors of the teachings and the Bonpos but, if they are not enlightened beings, they will be subject to the law of karma, cyclical existence and do not have wisdom (Tib. *shes rab*). As a consequence, rituals can refer to that category of deities because the Bonpos believe that such deities can be helpful; however, adepts have to be careful because the power of such deities can

⁹ T. Namdak, *The Nine...*, op. cit., p. 32–33.

¹⁰ T. Wangyal, *Szamanizm rdzennej tradycji bon*, tłum. D. Misiuna, “Garuda” 2005, nr 9, p. 27.

turn against the practitioner. In turn, the enlightened deities, according to the Bon doctrine, are driven by compassion only and have the wisdom, which is why their actions are entirely focused on helping the adepts. Depending on the circumstances, rituals invoke both categories of beings.

Another ritual that appears in the Nine Ways is the Yangug. It can be performed for a specific person and also for a region or an entire country. The goal of the ritual is to improve the well-being and prosperity of a person or a place. As in the previous ritual, everything starts with the preparation of an altar. An object that symbolises prosperity has to be placed on the altar; for example, it can be an object belonging to a rich person or even the nail of a person who is a very good thief and has never been caught.¹¹ Referring to the classical division of magic by James Frazer, who distinguished homeopathic and imitative magic, the ritual of prosperity is based on homeopathic magic, which is understood as the law of similarity.¹² The Bon tradition ascribes the quality of prosperity both to a rich person and to an effective thief and that quality can be magically represented by an object belonging to one of them. After that, the offering is made to the Prosperity Deities. According to the Bon tradition, the deities are also associated with abstract concepts such as prosperity; thanks to them, it is possible to prolong one's life and improve prosperity (in farming societies, greater prosperity can entail, for example, more crops or the ownership of more animals).

Another ritual – Geksel – is supposed to remove obstacles. Obstacles in the Bonpo tradition include various life issues such as diseases or accidents. Tibetans divide diseases into two categories: diseases related to a disturbance of three elements (bile, phlegm and wind) and diseases caused by spirits.¹³ The first category of diseases is treated with natural means such as herbal medicines made of plants, massage and appropriate dietary instructions. In the case of the second category, an appropriate ritual has to be conducted. Tibetan doctors are trained to recognise whether a disease is caused by spirits by checking the pulse, analysis of the patient's dreams and observation of the urine. If the doctor believes that the disease is related to spiritual beings, a divination (Tib. *mo*) is usually made to learn what spirits are causing the problems and what rituals should be conducted. The invisible beings supposed

¹¹ T. Namdak, *The Nine...*, op. cit., p. 33.

¹² J. G. Frazer, *Złota gałąź. Studia z magii i religii*, tłum. H. Krzeczkowski, Kraków 2012, p. 16.

¹³ The detailed explanation of various topics related to Tibetan medicine can be found in Y. Dhonden, *Healing from the Source*, New York 2000.

to cause most problems are called demigods: Dud (Tib. *bdud*), Mamo (Tib. *ma mo*), Tsen (Tib. *btsan*) and Gyalpo (Tib. *rgyal po*).¹⁴ Their negative influence can result from the fact that people took or changed something that belonged to them, for example by cutting trees or polluting water. Tibetans believe that water pollution enrages the previously mentioned water beings Lu and, as a consequence, they cause diseases such as, for example, dermatological complaints. This is why the Bonpos try to care for the environment and believe that if some construction work or tree-cutting is planned, one has to conduct rituals first in order to offer certain objects to the spirits in exchange for the taking or use of something that belongs to them. To heal illnesses, the Bonpos offer food to the demigods or prepare amulets (in the form of necklaces) to protect them from the influence of demigods.¹⁵ Some spells which are associated with the tutelary deity can be written and put together with a painted image of the deity into a small box and such an object is a form of protection. Such practices are called Geksel.

Rituals that are very popular in Tibet include: Sang (Tib. *bsang*) – a smoke offering for spiritual beings, Sur Chöd (Tib. *gsur gcod*) – the offering of burnt food, Chutor (Tib. *chu tor*): the offering for water beings and Chöd (Tib. *gcod*) in which the offering of one's own body is visualised.¹⁶ All of these four rituals are based on offering food and objects to different classes of spirit. The hanging out of prayer flags based on the belief that the blowing wind carries with it the prayers written on the flags and these prayers bless the spiritual beings is also popular with Tibetans.¹⁷ Flags in five colours symbolising the five elements are hung and they are believed to have the power to harmonise these elements in the given place (for example restrain earthquakes or floods).

Another ritual is called Lu or ransom. As a part of this ritual, a figurine is made to represent the person for whom the ritual is conducted. It can also be made for a location, farm or a region. In such a situation, representations of the place are prepared in the form of drawings and figurines (for example of animals and houses). After that, various types of food and drinks are added to the completed images. If the ritual is conducted for a specific person a piece of that person's clothing is also added. Such a representation is then offered

¹⁴ T. Namdak, *The Nine...*, op. cit., p. 35. John Reynolds mentions 33 categories of spiritual beings, see J. Reynolds, *Lista istot egzystujących równolegle w świecie według tradycji bon*, tłum. K. Niemczyk-Sielimowicz, "Garuda" 2005, nr 9, 2002, p. 32.

¹⁵ T. Namdak, *The Nine...*, op. cit., p. 35.

¹⁶ See N. Dakpa, *Mądrość Tybetu*, red. T. Szymoszyn, Poznań 2002.

¹⁷ Idem, *Bon jako źródło kultury tybetańskiej*, red. A. Kołodziejczyk, J. Szukalski "Garuda" 2005, nr 9, p. 21.

to demigods in a belief that they will accept the offering and, in exchange, will leave the person or the place in peace. This ritual is based on both homeopathic and imitative magic. The figurine may represent a particular person and the drawings may represent a place – this is a type of homeopathic magic. But in the same ritual after preparing figurine adept adds a piece of clothing which represents this person. This is imitative magic. This kind of magic assumes that clothes which have been in contact with a person can always represent this person.

This ritual is linked to the concept of the soul (Tib. *bla*); the Bonpos believe that spirits can steal the soul of a person and such a person will feel very weak and ill. An image of the person can be offered by way of the ritual so that the spirit can satisfy its desires and the person may recover their soul. Buddhists do not believe in the existence of a permanent soul that would wander in a cyclical existence. Similarly, the Bonpos explain, under the influence of Buddhism, that the soul does not represent the spiritual component passing from one life to the next but rather represents a collection of karmic traces.¹⁸ However, it is not known how the concept of the soul was presented in Bon before Buddhism was introduced to Tibet. The Bonpo texts explain the concept of the soul in the context of two related ideas: thoughts (Tib. *gid*) and the mind (Tib. *sems*).¹⁹ In the Bon tradition, turquoise can symbolise the soul. In another Bon ritual of the soul recovery (Tib. *bla bslu*), a magical arrow or dadar (Tib. *mda`dar*) is prepared. That object consists of a bamboo stick to which five ribbons in five different colours are attached (white, green, blue, red and yellow) to represent the respective elements of space, air, water, fire and earth. A mirror – melong (Tib. *me long*) and a turquoise are also added to that stick. When reciting the text of the ritual, the person for whom the ritual is conducted makes circular movements with that object above his or her head. The Bonpos believe that this method can help recover the lost life force (Tib. *srog*) and strengthen the five elements comprising the human body.²⁰

Bonpo rituals are based on the idea of magical, supernatural relations between objects in the world, which are connected with homeopathic and imitative magic. The Bonpos also refer to the relations between people and

¹⁸ S. Karmay, *The Arrow and the Spindle*, Vol. 1, Kathmandu 1998, p. 310–318.

¹⁹ T. Yungdrung, *Wywiad z Khenpo Tenpo Jungdrungiem Rinpoce*, wywiad przeprowadził P. Wasyl, “Garuda” 2006, nr 10, p. 40–43.

²⁰ The detailed description of one of the forms of this ritual can be found in S. Karmay, *op. cit.*, p. 326–335.

spirits. Their worldview assumes that the world is filled with spiritual beings that exist everywhere (in every mountain, lake, tree, plant, etc.). Another important component of the Bon doctrine is the belief that all animals, insects and alike have awareness and are classified, as people, within the category of sentient beings. Plants are not included in that category and, according to that religion, they have no awareness. However, all plants and objects of nature are inhabited by spirits; this is why one has to treat the nature with respect and carefulness so as not to irritate these spirits.

The recitation of texts with ceremonial behaviour, gestures, words and the special use of objects in the Bonpo rituals can influence the relationship between humans and the spirits. As a consequence, one can take magical actions to heal, reinstate the balance in the environment or prevent natural disasters. Rituals have to be conducted in a proper manner, according to the text and with the use of appropriate objects. The Bonpos believe that such texts were written not by ordinary people but by spiritual masters. Such masters, allegedly thanks to their supernatural powers, could know the relations between people and spirits and how to restore the balance between the human and spiritual worlds. The teachings contained in the Nine Ways are attributed to the founder of the Bon tradition: Tonpa Shenrab. The Bonpos base the belief in the effectiveness of the mentioned rituals on the enlightened wisdom of the founder of that tradition. As a consequence, they try to recreate faithfully the magical formulas written in holy texts.

4. MAGIC IN TANTRA

Tantra is a complex phenomenon; it is not possible to exhaust or precisely describe all the topics belonging to this category in this short article; this is why I will focus on the presentation of key magical concepts of Tibetan tantrism contained in the texts of the Nine Ways. In the Bon canon, tantra consists of 18 tomes with the Mother Tantra (Tib. *ma rgyud*) considered the most important. According to the Southern Treasure whose classification was given above, tantra belongs to the Seventh and Eighth Way. In turn, the Central Treasure divides tantra into external (Fifth and Sixth Way) and internal (Seventh and Eighth Way).²¹ According to that division, the Fifth Way is the Way of the Shen of Primordial Conduct and Ritual Activity (Tib. *bya ba gt-sang spyod ye bon gyi theg pa*) classified as kriyatantra (Tib. *bya rgyud*) in

²¹ T. Wangyal, *Cuda...*, op. cit., p. 303–305.

which the adept visualises the meditative deity (Tib. *yid dam*) as external and higher than himself.²² The practice begins with the entering of the so called natural state of mind defined in the tantras as the clear light (Tib. *`od gsel*); after that, the adept executes ritual activities: gestures, prayers, recitation of holy syllables, visualisations aimed at the purification of the mind stream of the person and acceptance of the blessings from the deity. The Sixth Way is the Way of Clairvoyant Knowledge that possesses all the Aspects (Tib. *rnam pa kun ldan mngon shes kyi theg pa*) classified as charyatantra (Tib. *spyod rgyud*) where the meditation deity is visualised external to but not more important than the practitioner, but rather as his equal. The seventh one is the Way of the Visibly Manifesting Compassion in terms of the Actual Generation Process (Tib. *dbogs bskyed thugs rje rol pa`i theg pa*) where the generation stage of the transformation into a deity is carried out. According to this way, which is considered higher than the other two, the adept visualises himself as a deity. The main stress is put on the gradual visualisation of the deity with its retinue and palace. The eight one is the Way wherein Everything is Completely Perfect and Exceedingly Meaningful (Tib. *shin tu don ldan kun rdzogs kyi theg pa*) where the main stress is on the perfection stage. This form of tantric practice focuses on the imagined manipulation of energy (Tib. *rlung*) into visualised channels (Tib. *rtsa*) in order to combine the feminine energy (represented by a red drop, Tib. *thig le*) with the masculine energy (a white drop).²³ Tantras are classified slightly differently in Tibetan Buddhism but the goal and key rules remain the same.

Summing up, the goal of the tantra is to attain the illusory body (Tib. *sgyu lus*) involving the adept's transformation into a meditation deity with which the adept practices. In the tantras, that transformation process is defined as the transformation of the impure vision into a pure one or the transformation of five poisons of the mind (anger, envy, ignorance, desire and pride) into five wisdoms (the mirror-like, all-fulfilling, equality, all-fulfilling wisdom and the wisdom of emptiness). The transformation has two stages: the generation and the perfection. The Bonpos believe that, during the first stage, the adept transforms himself into a deity and its environment into a pure realm through the recitation of holy syllables, gradual visualisation of the deity and special gestures. The next stage is based on the belief that energy channels through which

²² N. Norbu, *Kryształ i ścieżka światła. Sutra, tantra i dzogchen*, tłum. I. Zagroba, Kraków 2006, p. 193.

²³ T. Wangyal, *Tummo*, Wilga 2007, p. 138. See also: J. Reynolds, *Tantra Matki*, tłum. W. Radziszewska, Warszawa 2002.

energy flows exist in the human body. The channel considered the most important is the central one with the female energy in the form of a red thigle at its base and the masculine energy in the form of a white thigle on its top. When the adept unifies these energies by way of the introduction of energy to the central channel, the illusory body is realised. There are many different tantras in Bon, varying with regards to the leading deity, syllables, visualisations and gestures but they generally agree upon the principal stages of the practice. The tantra puts lesser stress on the compliance of the practice with the holy texts but the role of the oral transmission and of the teacher (Tib. *bla ma*) is stressed.

5. MAGIC IN DZOGCHEN

According to the Nine Ways, dzogchen is believed to be the fastest method leading to the liberation from cyclical existence. This is due to the lack of division into development stages of the practice; a direct attempt is made to recognise the nature of the mind (Tib. *sems nyid*), which is also called natural state (Tib. *gnas lugs*). The natural state has three qualities: awareness (Tib. *rig pa*), emptiness (Tib. *stong pa nyid*) and their inseparability (Tib. *dbyer med*).²⁴ Dzogchen maintains that all phenomena are primordially pure (Tib. *ka dag*) and assumes that the natural state is the foundation of the entire reality, not only of sentient beings. An adept of that doctrine tries to differentiate the dualist mind (Tib. *sems*) from the nature of the mind, which is supposed to lead him to the attainment of the rainbow body (Tib. *ja lus*). According to that path, that realisation makes all aspects of the human being, including the physical body, transform into natural state. The canon of the Bon tradition contains four tomes of dzogchen with the cycle of Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu (Tib. *zhang zhung snyan rgyud*)²⁵ considered the most important one. There are also non-canonical dzogchen texts, for example Heart Drops of Dharmakaya (Tib. *kun tu bzang po'i snying tig*) written by the most important Bon teacher of the turn of the 20th century Shardza Tashi Gyaltzen²⁶. There are three main series of dzogchen teach-

²⁴ T. Namdak, *Dzogchen bonpo teachings*, Kathmandu 2006, p. 27.

²⁵ sPa bsTan-rgyal bzang-po, *rDzogs pa chen po zhang zhung snyan rgyud kyi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, [in:] *Sources for a history of bon, a collection of rare manuscripts from Bsam-gling monastery in Dolpo*, ed. bsTan-'dzin rnam dag, Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji, India 1972.

²⁶ Shardza Tashi Gyaltzen, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya. Dzogchen Practice Of The Bon Tradition*, New York 2002. Polish translation: Shardza Tashi Gyaltzen, *Kropki Serca Dharmakaji. Praktyka Dzogetzen Tradycji Bon*, tłum. A. Sokołowska, Warszawa 2003.

ings: Semde (Tib. *sems sde*) focusing mainly on the emptiness of the nature of the mind, Longde (Tib. *klong sde*) stressing the clarity of the nature of the mind and Menngagde (Tib. *man ngag sde*) – the series of secret instructions regarding the indivisibility of emptiness and clarity. The cycle of Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu belongs to that third series.

The teachings of Zhang Zhung Nyen Gyu divide the spiritual path into a few stages: preliminary practices (Tib. *sngon 'gro*), the practice of contemplation of the nature of the mind –Trekchö (Tib. *khregs mchod*), practices removing obstacles in the contemplation – Tsa Lung Trul khor (Tib. *rtsa rlung 'phrul 'khor*) and the practice of vision – Thogal (Tib. *thod rgal*). I will discuss in more detail the latter practice in which light plays a significant role. The doctrine of dzogchen describes the world as comprised of five elements (space, air, fire, water and earth) that, in their most subtle aspect, are five lights (respectively: white, green, red, blue and yellow). When the dualist mind observes the five lights, they manifest as an impure vision; however, if the practitioner recognises the nature of his mind the five lights will manifest as a pure vision (perfect objects, deities, pure realms). As a consequence, dzogchen practitioners first spend some specific time practicing the ability to distinguish the ordinary mind from the natural state so that they can later engage in the Thogal practice. As a part of that practice, the adept gazes at the sunlight or clear sky in a special way or stays in the darkness. These external circumstances are supposed to encourage the appearance of pure visions for the adept. Dzogchen texts describe four stages of visions: the first stage includes the thigle (rainbow spheres) and glowing lines; the second stage involves the appearance in the thigle: deities, chortens (Tib. *mchod rten*), eight auspicious symbols or other symbols representing the pure vision.²⁷ As a part of the third stage, the adept is supposed to see all the one hundred and eight peaceful and wrathful deities (Tib. *zhi khro*). This is the same category of deities that was described in the Tibetan Book of the Dead (Tib. *bar do thos grol chen mo*).²⁸ As of that moment, the visions no longer develop but rather replace the impure vision and, according to that doctrine, the adept slowly starts to disappear. If the full exhaustion of the impure vision takes place during the life of the adept that phenomenon is called the great transfer (Tib. *'pho ba chen mo*); if it takes place upon the death of the adept the phenomenon is called the rainbow or light body.²⁹ The

²⁷ T. Namdak, *Dzogchen...*, op. cit., p.194–201.

²⁸ *Tybetańska Księga Umarłych*, tłum. i oprac. I. Kania, Kraków 2002.

²⁹ T. Wangyal, *Cuda...*, op. cit., p. 258.

term rainbow body originates from the belief of that doctrine that the adept absorbs his body transforming it into five lights and the process is supposed to be accompanied with the appearance of rainbows. The five colours of the rainbow are supposed to correspond to the absorption of the five elements.

Dzogchen does not focus on rituals or the visualisation but rather recognises the magical role of the light believing that, through the practice of the nature of the mind and the light practice, one can absorb the body to the level of five lights. That tradition puts less stress on the role of the holy texts and teachings are frequently exclusively oral. However, the importance of the transfer of experience from the teacher to the student by way of oral explanations and symbols is great.

CONCLUSIONS

The Bon canon contains many varied texts that are traditionally classified as Nine Ways. All these ways are permeated by magical thinking according to which the adepts refer to supernatural beings and relations in the world. However, the ways significantly vary when it comes to methods and explanations of magical correlations. In rituals of the Way of the Cause, the adepts try to restore the balance between the world of people and spiritual beings that inhabit the world of nature. For that purpose, they use special ritual objects such as a dadar or a melong, specific gestures, repeatable words and behaviours. Bonpo rituals are based on idea of homeopathic magic (as in Yangug ritual), both homeopathic and imitative magic (in Lu ritual), magical role of words, which can be written and used as protection (in Geksel ritual) or the possibility to offer food and different objects (like tormas) to goddesses to receive back their help (as in Thrukpa Yoto ritual). Everything has to be done exactly in line with the text in order for a specific effect to be attained. Texts describing rituals explain in detail the magical relations between objects used in the course of the ceremony and the external world, for example an object of a rich person that can represent and support the invocation of prosperity by way of the ritual. Magic in the rituals of the Way of the Cause is based on supernatural relations in the external world while the tantra focuses on the internal world of an adept. At this stage of the Ways of the Result, the Bonpos describe the existence of energetic channels in the human body, where meditation deities dwell. The tantra is based on the belief that an adept can transform himself into a specific meditation deity thanks to appropriate visualisations and energy manipulation. The soteriological context of the practices is more

highlighted in this part of the Nine Ways. In turn, the dzogchen recognises the magical role of five lights that, according to that doctrine, constitute the entire reality. That way lays the main stress on the observation of the mind itself and the perception of special lights. Dzogchen has a different metaphysical context of meditative practices with the belief that all the phenomena come from the nature of the mind. According to this doctrine through the recognition of that nature, it is possible to dissolve the impure vision, develop the pure vision and attain liberation from cyclical existence.

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