

INTRODUCTION

To practising *bonpos*—and nowadays it has become comparatively easy to meet them if one knows where to look among the many tens of thousands of Tibetans who have arrived as refugees in India and Nepal—BON simply means the true religion of Tibet. To the far greater number of other Tibetans, who are not *bonpos*, BON refers to the false teachings and practices that were prevalent in Tibet before Buddhism finally succeeded in gaining a firm hold on the country. *Bonpos* are regarded as pagans—and as such they have suffered serious hostility in the past—and nowadays others take as little account of their existence as possible. By western scholars BON is generally understood as referring to the pre-Buddhist beliefs and practices of the Tibetans. Several scholars have discussed the actual meaning of the term.¹ By the few *bonpos* who know their texts well BON is explained as the Tibetan equivalent of the 'Zan-zun' term GYER which means 'chant'. Textual 'evidence' can be shown for this in the titles of works said to be translated from the language of Zan-zun into Tibetan. Here *bon* is regularly glossed by *gyer*. This is the original meaning they say, for they know that *bon* now covers all the meanings of the Tibetan Buddhist term *chos*. As is well known, *chos* simply translates Sanskrit *dharma* in all its Buddhist meanings. There is no word for 'Buddhism' in Tibetan. Tibetans are either *chos-pa* (followers of *chos*) or *bon-po* (followers of *bon*). They both use the term *sans-rgyas* (literally: 'amply purified') to define a perfected sage, a *buddha*. Thus in translation of *bonpo* texts I continue to use such terms as 'buddha' and 'buddhahood'. Any readers who are new to the subject will therefore assume that BON is a form of Buddhism, and that it has certainly developed as such there is no doubt. In this work I am bound to understand BON in the full *bonpo* sense and that includes all their gradual adaptation of Buddhist doctrine and practice.² They themselves

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¹ See Helmut Hoffmann, *Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Bon-Religion*, Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur in Mainz, 1950, p. 137. See Simon, 'A Note on Tibetan Bon' in *Asia Major*, v, 1956, pp. 5-8. See Uray, 'The Old Tibetan Verb BON' in *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, xvii, 1964, pp. 323-34. This discussion would seem to leave us with at least two homonyms *bon*, (i) meaning 'invoke' and 'invoker' of which Simon (followed by Uray) understands the original meaning to be 'entreat' or 'invite', and (ii) meaning 'seed'. There remains always the possibility of *Bon* as an alternative for *Bod* (Tibet), but this merely invites inquiry into the origin of the term *Bod*, so far attempted by none. See p. 20, fn. 2.

² In his *The Religions of Tibet*, London, 1961, Hoffmann distinguishes between 'The Old Bon Religion' (Chapter I) and 'The Systematized Bon Religion' (Chapter V). Such a distinction is perhaps helpful, so long as we do not think in the clear-cut terms of pure indigenous *bon* and Buddhist-influenced *bon*. The historical development of *bon* has been far more complex. It is a composite growth where native and foreign elements of all kinds are mingled together.

do not acknowledge these Buddhist elements as adaptations. Lacking the necessary historical sense, they persist in claiming that all their teachings and doctrines are the true original BON, partly promulgated direct in Tibet by *gSen-rab*, their founder, but mainly received through translations from the language of *Zan-zun* of ancient western Tibet. The ultimate source of their teachings is *sTag-gzigs*, a country situated rather vaguely still further to the west. They would claim that it is the *chos-pa*, the 'Buddhists' of Tibet, who are the adapters and the plagiarists. Without accepting their claims, we are nevertheless bound to accept their interpretation of terms in presenting an account of their teachings and practices, and this is the primary intention of the present volume. In giving an account of any religion we cannot ignore what the practisers have to say about themselves. Thus in giving an historical account of Buddhism itself, we cannot ignore, for example, the eighty-four *Siddhas*, however different their doctrines and practices may be from those of the early Buddhists. We cannot deny the term Buddhist to the Newars of the Nepal Valley, however much they may seem to be influenced by Brahmanical practice. We can merely observe that their form of Buddhism represents a very special development of this religion. Likewise in the case of the *bonpos* we have to accept them and understand them as they are, while still trying to unravel the historical developments of their religion. An understanding of them on their own terms is all the more important nowadays, because we need the assistance of their few remaining scholars in order to understand something of their early texts. Tibetans who can help with these texts are now very rare indeed. Educated *bonpo* monks are brought up in the *dGe-lugs-pa* ('Yellow Hat') Way, trained in conventional Buddhist philosophy and logic and receiving after examination by debate the academic degree of *dGe-bse*. They know their monastic liturgies and the names of their own *bonpo* gods, but very rarely indeed are they at all experienced in reading the sort of *bonpo* texts in which we most need assistance, namely material which represents 'pre-Buddhist' traditions. This lack of familiarity on the part of present-day *bonpos* with what Western scholars would regard as real *bon* material, may come as a disappointment. It also explains why there still remain terms and ideas not yet properly interpreted in this present work.

Among the three *bonpo* monks who accompanied me to England in 1961 was Tenzin Namdak, once Lopön (*slob-dpon*), best translated as 'Chief Teacher', at *sMan-ri*.¹ Tenzin Namdak, who has now returned to India after three years in England, is a devoted *bonpo*, firm in his doctrines as well as his vows. Initiated primarily in a threefold *bon* tantra, the

¹ The only existing survey of *bonpo* monasteries to date is in Hoffmann's *Quellen*, p. 236. *sMan-ri*, until recently a large monastery with about 200 monks, is not mentioned, but there is reference to the neighbouring *bonpo* monastery *gYun-drun-glin* (p. 238), whose abbot is now a refugee in India.

Ma-rgyud sañs-rgyas rgyud gsum, he was practised in the meditations and teachings of the VIIIth Way. Remaining celibate, he continued to adhere to the rules of the VIth Way, or rather he adhered to them as far as possible in a foreign western setting. We have read through many texts together, and it was on his suggestion that we set to work to produce a concise account of the 'Nine Ways of *Bon*', and it was he who selected the extracts which serve as the substance of the present account.

The source of these extracts is a work entitled *hdus-pa rin-po-che dri-ma med-pa gzi-brjid rab-tu hbar-bahi mdo* 'The Precious Compendium the Blazing *Sūtra* Immaculate and Glorious', in short referred to simply as *gZi-brjid* 'The Glorious'. This work seems to be quite unknown outside Tibet. *gSen-rab*'s 'biography' is written in three versions, one long, one of medium length, and one short. *gZi-brjid* in twelve volumes is the long version. *gZer-mig* in two volumes is the medium version. *mDo-hdus* in one volume is the short one. *gZer-mig* is known of by Western scholars since A. H. Francke edited and translated the first seven chapters, which are published in *Asia Major*, 1924, 1926, 1927, 1930, and 1939. Professor Hoffmann has also used *gZer-mig* for the brief account that he gives of *gSen-rab*'s life in his *The Religions of Tibet* (pp. 85-97). *mDo-hdus* remains unknown in the West, although there may be a copy somewhere in India.

These three works are all classed by the *bonpos* as 'Kanjur' (the term is borrowed from the Buddhists), that is to say as the inspired word of their early sages as translated from the language of *Zan-zun*. *gZi-brjid* is further classed as 'oral tradition' (*sñan-rgyud*). It is believed that *rTan-chen mu-tsha-gyer-med*, a disciple of the sage *Dran-pa nam-mkhañ* (eighth century), transmitted it in a vision to *Blo-ldan sñin-po*, who compiled it in its present form.¹ The 'Great Incarnation' (*mchog-sprul*) *Blo-ldan sñin-po* of *Khyun-po* in *Khams* is a well-known literary figure of the *bonpos*. He was a close contemporary of *Tson-kha-pa*, for he was born about A.D. 1360. He is said to have died in his twenty-fifth year.²

Thus *gZi-brjid* would seem to have been compiled towards the end of the fourteenth century, and the contents of the work bear out this tradition. By that time the *bonpos* had absorbed the vast variety of Indian Buddhist

¹ The *bonpos*, like the *rñin-ma-pas*, were busy 'rediscovering' their 'original' teachings, which had been hidden or lost during the persecutions of the eighth century. The main sources of this process of rediscovery were the 'hidden texts' (*gter-ma*) which were now brought to light (*gZer-mig* belongs to this category), and the visionary revelations through which lost texts were 'passed on orally' (*sñan-rgyud*).

² This information concerning the authorship of *gZi-brjid* derives from oral information of my *bonpo* assistants here in London. The date A.D. 1360 is calculated from the *bstan-rtsis* ('Doctrinal Dates') of *Ñi-ma bstan-hdzin*, once abbot of *sMan-ri*. This useful little work has just been published (1964), thanks to Tenzin Namdak, together with a *Zan-zun* word-list, at the Lahore Press, Jama Masjid, Delhi 6.

teachings, and so were able to restate them as the substance of their highest doctrines of the 'Nine Ways' with the conviction that can only come from that experience and knowledge that is based upon well learned lessons combined with practical experience. At the same time they had preserved through their own oral and literary traditions large quantities of indigenous material which goes back to the eighth century and earlier. But by the fourteenth century *bonpos* had long since forgotten the meanings of many of the earlier names and terms. From the manner in which he orders his material in the first two 'Ways', it is clear that the compiler was by no means so sure of himself as when he was dealing with the later Buddhist material.

The copy of *gZi-brjid* used by us came from Samling Monastery in Dolpo.¹ According to its brief colophon, the lama responsible for our manuscript was *Yan-ston Nam-mkhañ rin-chen* and it was written at *Klu-brag*.² Fortunately, he writes more about his family in the 'preface' (*dkar-chags*) to the manuscript. He praises his nephews *Sri-dar rnam-rgyal Rin-chen*, and *hKthro-ba*, and especially his elder brother *Yan-ston Tshul-khrims rnam-rgyal*, who consecrated the finished manuscript. Thus despite the difference in name, these relationships identify him firmly with Lama *Rin-chen rgyal-mtshan*, who is referred to in the genealogy of the lamas of Samling as a great producer of books. *gZi-brjid* is specifically mentioned. 'It was the measure of an arrow (in size), and as a sign of (this lama's) phenomenal powers each time the pen was dipped in the inkpot a whole string of words was written.'³ Unfortunately, the scanty references to dates in this genealogy leave the period uncertain. It is, however, possible to calculate that this *Rin-chen rgyal-mtshan* belonged to the ninth generation from *Yan-ston rGyal-mtshan rin-chen*, the founder-lama of Samling, who must have lived in the thirteenth century.⁴ Thus, our manuscript is

¹ It was brought to England by Geshey Sangye Tenzin Jongdong in 1961. Concerning Samling see my *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, Oxford, 1961, pp. 110 ff. I made a second visit in 1961.

² *Klu-brag* is the name of a monastery and village which is situated up a steep side-valley of the Kāli Gandaki just south of Kāgbeni. It is marked as 'Lubra' on the Survey of India maps of the region (ref. 83° 48' E., 28° 45' N.). Since Samling was founded from *Klu-brag*, it remained the main source for their texts.

³ Folio 39a of the genealogy of the lamas of Samling, entitled *rGyal-gsen Ya-nal gyi bkah-brgyud kyi gdans-rabs* 'Genealogy of the religious line of the noble priests of Ya-nal'.

⁴ The lamas of Samling, like the lamas of *Klu-brag*, are an hereditary line of the *Ya-nal* family. The title *Yan-ston*, which they are frequently given, is presumably an abbreviation of *Ya-nal ston-pa* 'Ya-nal Teacher'. Some of them have been married men, but some have been celibate. Thus the line has passed sometimes from father to son, and sometimes from uncle to nephew. Although so far I have no firm confirmation of this, *Klu-brag* Monastery was probably founded by a certain *bKra-ñis rgyal-mtshan*, who is usually referred to as 'The Man of *Klu-brag* Protector of Sentient Beings' (*hGro-mgon Klu-brag-pa*). He was the son of a renowned *bonpo* lama *Yan-ston chen-po Ses-rab rgyal-mtshan*. Brief biographies are given in the *rnam-thar* section of the *Zan-zun snan-rgyud*, of *Ses-rab rgyal-mtshan*, of two of his sons, *hBum-rje* and *Klu-brag-pa*, and of a grandson *rTog-ldan dbon-po kun-bzan* (of whom more below). No dates of any kind are given, but

probably about 400 years old. It was copied from an existing manuscript at *Klu-brag* and then brought to Samling.

gZi-brjid is an enormous work, totalling in our manuscript 2,791 folios. There are twelve volumes numbered *ka* to *da* with a final volume *a*. The text is arranged in sixty-one chapters, and a list of these chapters will give some idea of the scope of this composite work:

Volume	Chapter	
ka	1	'The Teacher descends from the gods of Pure Light' (<i>ston-pa hod-gsal-lha las bab pañi lehu dan-po</i>) ff. 1b-104b
	2	'The Teacher turns the Wheel of <i>Bon</i> for the non-gods' (<i>ston-pa lha-min la bon-hkhor bskor bañi lehu</i>) -144b
	3	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the coming of the doctrine of the buddhas' (<i>sañs-rgyas bstan-pa chag phebs pañi mdo</i>) -189a
kha	4	'The <i>sūtra</i> of <i>gSen-rab</i> 's taking birth' (<i>gSen-rab kyi skye-ba bzes pañi mdo</i>) -256b
	5	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the young prince's playful sport' (<i>rgyal-bu gžon-nu rol-rtse kyi mdo</i>) ff. 1b-86a
	6	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the prince's enthronement' (<i>rgyal-bu rgyal-sar phyuñ bañi mdo</i>) -137a
ga	7	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the prince's law-giving' (<i>rgyal-bus bkah-khrims stsal bañi mdo</i>) -189b
	8	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the IIrd Way of the Shen of the Visual World' (<i>theg-pa gñis-pa snan-gsen gyi mdo</i>) -212b
	9	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the IIIrd Way of the Shen of Illusion' (<i>theg-pa gsum-pa hphrul-gsen gyi mdo</i>) -235a
	10	'The <i>sūtra</i> explaining the Way of the Shen of Existence' (<i>srid-gsen theg-pa gtan la phab pañi mdo</i>) ff. 1b-47a
	11	'The <i>sūtra</i> that teaches the meaning of the <i>mañḍala</i> of the five universal (buddha-)bodies' (<i>kun-dbyinis sku lña dkyil-hkhor gyi don bstan pañi mdo</i>) -136a

we are told that *Klu-brag-pa* studied in *gTsañ*, where he received vows and consecrations from two well-known *bonpo* lamas, *Ye-śes blo-gros* and *sMan-gon-pa*, for both of whom dates are given in the *bstan-rtsis* of *Ñi-ma bstan-hdzin* (see p. 3, n. 2). According to this *Ye-śes blo-gros* founded the Academy (*gtsug-lag-khañ*) of *Dar-ldin-gser-ngo* in A.D. 1173, and *sMan-gon-pa* was born in A.D. 1123. Thus we may safely deduce that *Klu-brag-pa* was studying as a young man in *gTsañ* in the mid-twelfth century. It is upon this calculation that all my subsequent calculations depend.

The eldest son of *Klu-brag-pa* was known as the 'Tantric Lama' (*bla-ma snags-pa*) and he was the first of the line to go to *Bi-cher* in Dolpo. (This place is variously spelt as *Bi-cher* or *Byi-byer*. It appears on the Survey of India maps as Phijorgaon. See my *Himalayan Pilgrimage*, p. 129.) This 'Tantric Lama' had three children, two sons and a daughter. The elder son died young. The younger son became a monk. The daughter left and married elsewhere. Being anxious to establish a line of illustrious lamas at *Bi-cher*, the 'Tantric Lama' invited from *sTag-rtse* in Upper *gTsañ* a boy of eight who belonged to a parallel branch of the family. This boy was *rGyal-mtshan rin-chen*, who founded Samling Monastery near *Bi-cher*. He himself remained celibate, and the line of Samling lamas descended from his younger brother. *rGyal-mtshan rin-chen*'s teacher was *rTog-ldan dbon-po kun-bzan*, who was the pupil and nephew of the 'Man of *Klu-brag*', for whom we have approximate dates. Thus the son of the 'Man of *Klu-brag*' brought *rGyal-mtshan rin-chen* to *Bi-cher*, and the nephew of this same 'Man of *Klu-brag*' was his teacher. Therefore he must have been active at *Bi-cher* and Samling during the first half of the thirteenth century.

Volume	Chapter		Volume	Chapter
ga	12	'The <i>sūtra</i> explaining the Way of the Virtuous Adherents' (<i>dge-bśñen theg-pa gtan la phab-paḥi mdo</i>)	-210	
	13	'The <i>sūtra</i> explaining the Way of the Great Ascetics' (<i>draññā sroṇ theg-pa gtan la phab-paḥi mdo</i>)	-260	ñā
na	14	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the VIIth Way of Pure Sound' (<i>theg-pa bdun-pa a-dkar gyi mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-50a	
	15	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the VIIIth Way of the Primaeval Shen' (<i>theg-pa brgyad-pa ye-gśen gyi mdo</i>)	-70	
	16	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the IXth and Supreme Way' (<i>theg-pa dgu-pa bla-med kyī mdo</i>)	-103	
	17	'The <i>sūtra</i> explaining the <i>bon</i> of the various translations' (<i>skad-hgyur so-soḥi bon bstan paḥi mdo</i>)	-137	
	18	'The <i>sūtra</i> of spreading the doctrine by converting those who are hard to convert' (<i>gdul dkaḥ btul nas bstan pa spel baḥi mdo</i>)	-175	
	19	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the <i>maṇḍala</i> of the Loving Conqueror' (<i>byams-ldan rgyal baḥi dkyil-ḥkhor gyi mdo</i>)	-194	
	20	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the very firm and precious doctrine' (<i>bstan-pa rin-chen rab-tu brtan paḥi mdo</i>)	-230	
ca	21	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the three tenets taught by the Teacher' (<i>ston-pa pehu-tse rnam-pa gsum bstan-paḥi mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-37a	ta
	22	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the spreading rays that convert sentient beings' (<i>hgro ḥdul ḥod-zer spro-baḥi mdo</i>)	-109	
	23	'The <i>sūtra</i> explaining cause and effect' (<i>rgyu ḥbras rnam-pa ḥbyed paḥi mdo</i>)	-166	
	24	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher drawing beings to salvation' (<i>ston-pas hgro-ba thar-bar dran-baḥi mdo</i>)	-224	tha
cha	25	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the light of the Blessed All-Knowing' (<i>bde-ba gśeḡs-pa kun-rig sgron-maḥi mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-93	
	26	'The liturgy of the All-Good the Ocean of Victory' (<i>kun-bzai-po rgyal-ba rgya-mtshoḥi cho-ga</i>)	-143	
	27	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the washing away of the sins of King Gu-wer' (<i>gu-wer rgyal-poḥi sgrib-pa sbyaṅs paḥi mdo</i>)	-160	da
	28	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher's taking the most glorious of wives' (<i>ston-pas khab-kyi dpal-ḥbar bzes-paḥi mdo</i>)	-247	
ja	29	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher's producing the offspring of the Method and Wisdom' (<i>ston-pas thabs dan ses-rab kyī sras sprul baḥi mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-233	
	30	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher's assumption of royal power' (<i>ston-pas chab-srid ḥdzin-paḥi mdo</i>)	-57	
	31	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the producing of offspring who convert sentient beings' (<i>hgro ḥdul sras sprul-baḥi mdo</i>)	-94	
	32	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher teaching <i>bon</i> to the gods' (<i>ston-pa lha la bon ston-paḥi mdo</i>)	-124	
	33	'The spell of the Fierce Destroyer' (<i>khro-ba rnam-par ḥjoms paḥi gzuris</i>)	-161	
	34	' <i>Maṇḍala</i> of the liturgy of the God of Medicine' (<i>sman-lhaḥ cho-paḥi dkyil-ḥkhor</i>)	-209	a

35	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the pure prayer of good conduct' (<i>legs-spyod smon-lam rnam-par dag-paḥi mdo</i>)	-246a
36	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher teaching <i>bon</i> to the serpents' (<i>ston-pas klu la bon ston-paḥi mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-42a
37	'The <i>sūtra</i> of <i>Māra</i> 's magical display to the Teacher' (<i>ston-pa la bdud kyis cho-ḥphrul bstan-paḥi mdo</i>)	-77b
38	'The secret spell the Destroyer of <i>Māra</i> ' (<i>bdud-ḥjoms gsaṅ-baḥi gzuris</i>)	-92b
39	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher establishing the realm of <i>Māra</i> in salvation' (<i>ston-pas bdud-khams thar-bar bkod-paḥi mdo</i>)	-156a
40	'The <i>sūtra</i> of removing obstructions and subduing <i>Māra</i> ' (<i>bdud btul bar-chod bsal-baḥi mdo</i>)	-186a
41	'The <i>sūtra</i> of producing offspring for continuing the family-line of royal sway' (<i>mi-rje srid-pa gduṅ-ḥdzin gyi sras sprul-baḥi mdo</i>)	-201a
42	'The <i>sūtra</i> for establishing the teaching of the IXth Way' (<i>theg dgu bstan-pa rjes-bzāg gi mdo</i>)	-228a
43	'The <i>sūtra</i> for establishing the teaching about relics' (<i>skugduṅ bstan-pa rjes-bzāg gi mdo</i>)	-274a
44	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the acquisition of the way of salvation of the supreme order' (<i>bla-med go-ḥphaṅ thar-lam sgrub-thabs kyī mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-23b
45	'The Mother <i>Sūtra</i> the Great Way of the Word of the Perfection of Wisdom' (<i>bkah ses-rab kyī pha-rol tu phyin-pa theg-pa chen-po yum gyi mdo</i>)	-205a
46	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the <i>maṇḍala</i> of the Great Way of the Mother' (<i>theg-pa chen-po yum gyi dkyil-ḥkhor gyi mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-66b
47	'The spell of the Sacred Light of <i>Vaidūrya</i> ' (<i>be-du-rgya ḥod dam-paḥi gzuris</i>)	-128b
48	'The liturgy of the basic <i>maṇḍala</i> of (the goddess) Loving Kindness' (<i>byams-ma rtsa-baḥi dkyil-ḥkhor gyi mdo</i>)	-183a
49	'The <i>sūtra</i> in praise of the twenty-one forms of (the goddess) Loving Kindness' (<i>byams-ma ṅi-su-rtsa-gcig gi bstod paḥi mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-51b
50	'The <i>sūtra</i> establishing the three forms of the doctrine' (<i>bstan-pa rnam gsum rjes-su bzāg-paḥi mdo</i>)	-111a
51	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher leaving his home and becoming a religious wanderer' (<i>ston-pas khyim spaṅs rab-tu byuṅ baḥi mdo</i>)	-145a
52	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the perfecting of austerities, the actions of a Shen' (<i>gśen gyi mdzad-spyod dkaḥ-thub mthar-phyin gyi mdo</i>)	-176b
53	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the manifestation of the four-spoked Wheel of <i>Bon</i> ' (<i>bon gyi ḥkhor-lo tshig-bzi bstan-paḥi mdo</i>)	-199a
54	'The <i>sūtra</i> of pure disciplinary rules' (<i>ḥdul-khrims gtsaṅ-maḥi mdo</i>)	-223a
55	'The basic <i>sūtra</i> of the pure regulations of the Shen' (<i>gśen gyi bsruṅ-khrims rnam-par dag-pa rtsa-baḥi mdo</i>)	ff. 1b-34b

Volume	Chapter		
a	56	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the sections of the regulations of the Shen' (<i>gšen gyi bsrui-khrims yan-lag gi mdo</i>)	-88b
	57	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the pure virtuous conduct of the Shen' (<i>gšen gyi dge-spyod rnam-par dag-paḥi mdo</i>)	-114a
	58	'The <i>sūtra</i> of removing the hellish evils of King Kon' (<i>kon rgyal-po na-rag sgrib-pa sbyaṅs-baḥi mdo</i>)	-127a
	59	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher leaving his entourage and practicing in solitude' (<i>ston-pas ḥkhor spaṅs dgon-pa mdzad-paḥi mdo</i>)	-150b
	60	'The <i>sūtra</i> explaining the meanings of the names, marks and qualities of the buddhas' (<i>saṅs-rgyas kyi mtshan dpe yon-tan gyi don bstan-paḥi mdo</i>)	-191b
	61	'The <i>sūtra</i> of the Teacher handing the <i>Bon</i> doctrine over into the care (of others)' (<i>ston-pas bstan-pa bon gyi gtad-gñe mdzad paḥi mdo</i>)	-208b

The titles of these chapters will indicate at once to any (non-Tibetan) Buddhist scholar the dependence of this work upon Buddhist material. Although the study of *gZer-mig* remains incomplete, there has never been any doubt that the inspiration and the framework for the legend of *gSen-rab* have been derived from the life of *Sākyamuni*. Yet this framework has been filled with indigenous Tibetan legendary material which still awaits serious study.

In this present work we have made a very restricted use of *gZi-brju*, extracting excerpts relevant to the *bonpo* doctrines of the 'Nine Ways'. The Tibetan term *theg-pa*, as all Buddhist scholars of Tibetan will know, simply represents the Sanskrit Buddhist term *yāna*, and I translate it sometimes as 'Way' and sometimes as 'Vehicle'. However, there are very few Tibetans, however well educated, who know the original meaning of *theg-pa* (as connected with the verb *ḥdegs-pa* and its various roots, meaning 'raise' or 'sustain'), and who thus understand it in the meaning of 'vehicle'. No Tibetan Buddhist would think of accusing the *bonpos* of having appropriated terms that were originally Buddhist. To all Tibetans, whether Buddhist or *bonpo*, their religious vocabulary is just part of their own language to be used as they please. But the non-Tibetan Buddhist scholar readily recognizes those terms which were once specially coined as the Tibetan equivalents of Indian Buddhist technical terms. He is thus able to pass judgement on *bonpo* material in a way which no Tibetan has yet thought of doing.

The brief extracts here edited have been taken from Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16.

In editing we have not hesitated to emend the text as seemed desirable. The original manuscript spellings are shown in the case of all 'main word

(*mi*) changes, but we have not recorded every 'particle' (*tshig-phrad*) emendment. Connecting particles (*kyi*, *gyi*, etc.) are often written instead of the corresponding instrumental particles (*kyis*, *gyis*, etc.) and vice versa. The particles *te*, *ste*, *de* are sometimes used incorrectly (e.g. *yin-ste* instead of *yin-te*), and *la* is written for *las* and vice versa. It would be tedious and misleading for any student to follow the text from the translation if such corrections were not made.

The text is written in *dbu-med* and abbreviated compounds are quite frequent. Numerals are normally written in figures and not in letters, and since I have spelt out the numerals in every case, it will no longer be obvious how for example 'eight' may be safely corrected to 'two'. Written as numerals, only the top hook distinguishes Tibetan 2 from 8. After final vowels (not only after *a*) *ḥ* is regularly added, as in *gtoḥ*, *dbyeḥ*, etc. In conformity with later Tibetan practice, I have omitted *ḥ* except after final *a*.

Generally, the manuscript is clear and remarkably accurate. Some 'mistakes' tend to be regular. For example *gñan* 'a fury' is regularly written as *gñen*; *klun-rta* (= *rlun-rta*, see note 10 of the text) is regularly written as *sruis-rta*. Certain spellings, which may appear unusual to other scholars, we have, however, preserved, for example, *sgra-bla* for *dgra-lha* (see note 20 of the text).

From the mistakes he makes, the scribe was clearly far less sure of himself when dealing with the material of the first two 'Vehicles', and this bears out what was said above concerning the unfamiliarity of later generations of *bonpos* with the really early material.

I present the translation in the hope that interested readers will assist me in identifying the associations that may be apparent to them in much of the material, for I do not pretend to have solved all the problems. A brief survey of the 'Nine Ways' may assist comprehension.

I. THE WAY OF THE SHEN OF THE PREDICTION (*phyva-gšen theg-pa*)

This describes fairly coherently four methods of prediction:

- (a) sortilege (*mo*)
- (b) astrological calculation (*rtsis*)
- (c) ritual (*gto*)
- (d) medical diagnosis (*dpyad*).

II. THE WAY OF THE SHEN OF THE VISUAL WORLD (*snan-gšen theg-pa*)

This is the longest and most difficult section of our work. It is concerned with overpowering or placating the gods and demons of this world, but I suspect that even the original compiler of the work was already unfamiliar with many of the divinities and rites to which he refers. Thus the account

is not really coherent, but it makes quite sufficient sense. The various practices are arranged into four parts:

1. The lore of exorcism (employing) the 'great exposition' of existence. (I have written on 'exposition' *smrañ* in note 9 of the text. The manner of the rite is clearly described on pp. 49-51.) The text then goes on to describe various types of divinities, the *thug-khar*, the *wer-ma*, and others. Some are described in great detail, and some, such as the *cañ-sen* and *jug-mgon*, scarcely mentioned except by name. Finally, we are told the 'lore of the stream of existence' (*srid-paḥi rgyud gžun*). This is presumably all part of the 'exposition' (*smrañ*) of the officiating priest.

2. This deals with demons (*hdre*) and vampires (*sri*), their origin, nature, and the ways of suppressing them.

3. This deals with ransoms of all kinds. Their extraordinary variety testifies to their importance in early Tibetan religion. Tenzin Namdak can identify very few of them, and I doubt if any other living Tibetan can do much better. My translations of the many unfamiliar terms are as literal as possible, but they do not pretend to be explanatory.

4. This deals with fates (*phyva*) and furies (*gñan*) and local divinities generally (*sa-bdag*, *gtod*, *lha*, *dbal*, etc.), and the offerings due to them.

III. THE WAY OF THE SHEN OF ILLUSION (*hphrul-gšen theg-pa*)

This is concerned with rites for disposing of enemies of all kinds. The rites described here are to be found in the *bon* tantras, e.g. those of *dBal-gsas* and the *khro-baḥi rgyud drug*, which we have on microfilms. Similar practices are referred to in Buddhist tantras, e.g. *Hevajra-Tantra*, I. xi.

IV. THE WAY OF THE SHEN OF EXISTENCE (*srid-gšen theg-pa*)

This deals with beings in the 'Intermediate State' (*bar-do*) between death and rebirth, and ways of leading them towards salvation.

V. THE WAY OF THE VIRTUOUS ADHERERS (*dge-bsñen theg-pa*)

dge-bsñen is the normal Tibetan term for *upāsaka* which in India referred to the Buddhist layman. Similarly, here it refers to those who follow the practice of the ten virtues and the ten perfections, and who build and worship stūpas.

VI. THE WAY OF THE GREAT ASCETICS (*drañ-sroñ theg-pa*)

drañ-sroñ translates *ṛṣi* which in India refers to the great seers of the past. *drañ-sroñ* is used by *bonpos* to refer to fully qualified monks, corresponding to the Buddhist term *dge-slon* (= *bhikṣu*). This is the way of strict ascetic discipline. The whole inspiration is Buddhist, but many of the arguments and even the substance of some of the rules are manifestly not Buddhist.

VII. THE WAY OF PURE SOUND (*A-dkar theg-pa*)

This deals with higher tantric practice. It gives a very good account of the tantric theory of 'transformation' through the *maṇḍala*. (I have already summarized these ideas in my introduction to the *Hevajra-Tantra*, pp. 29 ff.) It then goes on to refer briefly to the union of Method and Wisdom as realized by the practiser and his feminine partner. This anticipates VIII. The section ends with concise lists of nine 'reliances', eighteen 'performances', and nine 'acts'. The 'reliances' comprise a list of primary needs, the 'performances' resume the whole process of ritual of the *maṇḍala*, and the 'acts' represent the total power that accrues to one from mastering all the Nine Vehicles.

VIII. THE WAY OF THE PRIMEVAL SHEN (*ye-gšen theg-pa*)

This deals with the need for a suitable master, a suitable partner, and a suitable site. The preparation of the *maṇḍala* is then described in detail together with important admonitions not to forget the local divinities (*sa-bdag*). The process of meditation (known as the 'Process of Emanation'—in Sanskrit *utpattikrama*) is recounted.¹

The last part of this section describes the 'Process of Realization' (Sanskrit *niṣpannakrama*), which is the 'super-rational' state of the perfected sage. His behaviour might often be mistaken for that of a madman.

IX. THE SUPREME WAY (*bla-med theg-pa*)

This describes the absolute, referred to as the 'basis' (*gži* corresponding to Sanskrit *ālaya*), from which 'release' and 'delusion' are both derived. 'Release' is interpreted as the state of fivefold buddhahood, and 'delusion' as the false conceptions of erring beings in the 'Intermediate State' (*bar-do*). The 'Way' is then described as mind in its absolute state, as the pure 'Thought of Enlightenment'. The 'Fruit' or final effect is then finally described in terms of the special powers of the perfected sage. The whole subject-matter is then resumed under the four conventional headings of insight, contemplation, practice, and achievement.

The categories and ideas elaborated in this IXth Vehicle are usually referred to as the teachings of the 'Great Perfection' (*rdzogs-chen*).

What is remarkable about these 'Nine Ways of BON' is the succinct manner in which they resume the whole range of Tibetan religious practices: methods of prediction, to which Tibetans of all religious orders and

¹ This whole passage from pp. 102-7 describes at the same time the normal course of worship of the great beings as it is performed in any Tibetan temple of any religious order, *bon* or Buddhist. See my comments on the relationship between ritual and meditation in *Buddhist Himālaya*, Cassirer, Oxford, 1957, p. 234.

of all ranks of society are addicted; placating and repelling local divinities of all kinds of whose existence all Tibetans, lay and religious, are equally convinced; destroying enemies by fierce tantric rites, practices in which Buddhists and *bonpos* are equally interested; guiding the consciousness through the 'Intermediate State', powers claimed equally by the older orders of Tibetan Buddhism and by the *bonpos*; moral discipline of devout believers and strict discipline of monastic orders, ways that have followers in all orders of Tibetan religion; tantric theory and ritual, fundamental to the iconography and the worship of all Tibetan religious communities; tales of perfected wonder-working sages, typical again of the older orders of Tibetan Buddhism as well as *bonpos*. All that is missed out of this list is the religious life of academic learning which is now typical of educated monks of the *dGe-lugs-pa* ('Yellow Hat') order. This is only omitted because when the list of 'Nine Ways' was elaborated, the *dGe-lugs-pa* way had not yet come into existence. But nowadays the *bonpos* have this, too, with their scholars of philosophy and logic and their academic honours and titles. Nor are they just dressed in others' plumes. They really have developed the practices of all these diverse ways over the last thirteen centuries or so, and they have produced a very large literature of their own in support of all the various ways of their practice. Much of this literature, e.g. some of their *sūtras* and especially the 'Perfection of Wisdom' teachings, has been copied quite shamelessly from the Buddhists, but by far the greater part would seem to have been absorbed through learning and then retold, and this is not just plagiarism.

In classing the four lower ways as 'BON of cause' and the five higher ways as 'BON of effect', they were trying sincerely to relate the old ways of magic ritual to the new ways of morality and meditation. If one practises even the rites of the Ist Way intent on the 'Thought of Enlightenment', benefit will come to all living beings (see p. 29). Likewise the IInd Way 'is something for delighting living beings with benefits and happiness, but it is important to have as basis the raising of one's thoughts (to enlightenment)' (p. 97). The IIIrd Way, if practised properly, reaches out towards the VIIth Way, achieving the effect where Method and Wisdom are indivisible (p. 113). The practiser of the IVth Way, concerned as he is with rescuing others who wander in the 'Intermediate State', is effectively preparing himself for buddhahood. Conversely, the rites of the lower ways are still indispensable even when one has reached the higher ones. 'Fertile fields and good harvests, extent of royal power and spread of dominion, although some half (of such effects) is ordained by previous actions (viz. karmic effect), the other half comes from the powerful "lords of the soil"—so you must attend to the "lords of the soil", the serpents and the furies' (p. 199). Now every Tibetan, whatever his religious order, believes this,

but—to my knowledge—only the *bonpos* have formulated this belief as doctrine.

Buddhist ideas certainly pervade BON throughout: the definition of truth as absolute and relative (this was a useful idea for the *bonpos* as it could provide a justification for the lower ways of magic ritual, e.g. see p. 27 and p. 101); the realization of the 'Thought of Enlightenment' as the coalescence of Method and Wisdom; the whole conception of living beings revolving through the six spheres of existence; the notion of buddhahood as five-fold and the whole gamut of tantric theory and practice. Some might be tempted—when there is still so much else of interest in Tibetan civilization that awaits investigation—to neglect this developed and elaborate BON as mere second-hand Buddhism. But there have been also serious scholars who conversely would regard Buddhism in Tibet as little more than demonological priestcraft. Waddell's remarkable book, *Lamaism*, which contains so much precise information about Tibetan Buddhist practices of all kinds, provides evidence enough that BON and Buddhism in Tibet are in their theories and practices one and the same.¹ What Waddell perhaps failed to appreciate is that Tibetan Buddhism—and for that matter *bon* too—is often sincerely practised by Tibetans as a moral and spiritual discipline.

We are thus concerned not only with pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion, but with Tibetan religion regarded as one single cultural complex. The *bonpos* merely pose the problem nicely for us by having arranged all types of Tibetan religious practice within the framework of their 'Nine Ways'. Regarded in this way, BON might indeed claim to be the true religion of Tibet. Accepting everything, refusing nothing through the centuries, it is the one all-embracing form of Tibetan religion. Its few remaining educated representatives seem to be still motivated by its spirit. Western scholars of Tibetan well know how difficult it is to persuade an indigenous Tibetan scholar to take any interest in forms of Tibetan literature that lie outside his particular school. Normally a *dGe-lugs-pa* ('Yellow Hat') scholar would be ashamed at the idea of reading a work of any other Tibetan Buddhist order, let alone a *bonpo* work. Yet educated *bonpo* monks clearly have no such inhibitions. They will learn wherever they can, and given time they will absorb and readapt what they have learned.

Regarded in this way BON is a strange phenomenon, and what we really want to know is how it began to develop in its early stages. The *bonpos* themselves concede that their religion as practised in Tibet consisted in the

¹ In a recent book *Religious Observances in Tibet*, which is concerned with Tibetan religion as it is practised nowadays, Robert B. Ekvall makes the most misleading statements about BON and its relationship to Buddhism. He writes nothing of the 'higher ways' of BON and nothing of the 'lower ways' of Buddhism.

first place of little more than ritual magic, and they believed that *gSen-rab* himself established these practices there. A clear account is given of the story in Chapter XII of *gZer-mig*, which recounts how the demon *Khyab-pa lag-rin* sends his followers who steal the seven horses of *gSen-rab* from the sacred city of *hol-mo luñ-rin*. In the previous chapter it was related how this demon had carried off *gSen-rab*'s daughter *gSen-bzah ne-chun* and forcibly married her. Their two children were then abducted by *gSen-rab* and concealed at *hol-mo luñ-rin*. At the beginning of Chapter XII the demon sends his followers to see where the children are. They cannot be found, so he gives orders for the theft of the horses as a form of reprisal. Rather than keep the horses in his own realm (*bdud-yul mun-pahi glin*), he plans to keep them in *rKoi-po*, and he sends messengers to make arrangements with the two rulers of *rKoi-po*, named *rKoi-rje dkar-po* and *rKoi-rje dmar-po*. *gSen-rab* himself together with four followers comes after them, not (as he explains) in order to get the horses only, but because the time has come to spread the doctrine in *Zai-zun* and Tibet. The demons block his way with snow, then fire, then water, and then sand, but he disperses them and reaches *Zai-zun*.

* *gSen-rab* gave to the *bonpos* of *Zai-zun* as *bon* (doctrine) the 'inspired teaching' (*luñ*) about bombs¹ and spells, and as ritual items he instructed them in the 'Divine Countenance of the Celestial Ray'² and in black and white 'thread-crosses'.³ Then he went on to *Bye-ma lu-ma dgu-gyes* ('The Ninefold Spreading of the Desert Spring') in *gTsan*, where he pronounced this prayer: 'Now it is not the occasion for establishing the doctrine among all the *bonpos* of Tibet, but may "Bon of the Nine Stage Way" spread and be practised there some time!' As he said this, a group of demons was subjected to him. *gSen-rab* gave to the *bonpos* of Tibet as *bon* (doctrine) the 'inspired teaching' concerning prayers to the gods and the expelling of demons, and as ritual items he showed them various small aromatic shrubs, the use of barley as a sacrificial item⁴ and libations of *chang*. Nowadays the *bonpos* of Tibet, summoning all gods and demons by means of *bon*, get their protection, and by worshipping them send them about their

* *gSen rab kyis zan zun gi bon po la bon du btso¹ dan snags kyi luñ phog / yas stags su mu zer lha zal² dan / nam mkah³ dkar nag bstan / de nas gTsan⁴ bye ma lu ma dgu gyes su byon nas / zal nas smon lam btap pa / bod kyi bon po thams cad la bstan pa bzag pahi da ruñ gnas med pas / nam zig theg pa rim dguñi bon dar nas spyod par šog gsuñs nas / bdud kyi hkhor bcom / gSen rab kyis bod kyi bon po la bon du lha gsol ba dan / hdre bkar ba gnis kyi luñ phog / yas stags su rtsi šin ban bun dan / žug šan⁴ dan / gser skyerns bstan / da lta bod kyi bon pos lha hdre thams cad kun / bon gyis bos na hgon la / mchod na hgro žin brduñs na thub pa / ston pahi žal mthoñ bañi dus su dbañ du bsdus pahi rtags yin /*

¹ Concerning *btso* 'bomb' see note 5 to the text.

² This refers to the patterning of the threads to correspond to the countenance of the divinity.

³ Concerning *nam-mkah* and not *mdos* as the primary term for 'thread-cross' see note 11 to the text.

⁴ A mixture of lightly roasted and black roasted barley grains, used as an offering. According to Tenzin Namdak it makes the same as *sel-tshigs* (Chos-kyi-grags-pa's Dictionary, p. 885).

tasks, and by striking them prevail over them. This is the proof of *gSen-rab*'s having subdued them when they beheld his countenance.

In historical terms this account simply means that before Indian religious ways spread to Tibet, Tibetan religion consisted of magical rituals (of the kind enumerated in the Second Way of BON) performed by priests known as *bon* and as *gSen*.¹ The full doctrine (referred to as the 'BON of the Nine Stage Way') came later and—except for the rituals that were already practised in Tibet—through translations. The *bonpos* were certainly impressed by the need for translations. Thus BON teachings, they claim, were translated into 360 languages and taught throughout the known world, which for them consisted of India generally, the states of north-west India in particular, Central Asian states and peoples, Nepal, and China.² Lastly, it reached Tibet, again from the west through translations from the language of *Zai-zun*.

This BON that spread west and south and north of Tibet was of course Buddhism, and it is quite conceivable that the Tibetans of western Tibet, whose ancestors first made contact with the forms of Buddhism popularly practised in Jalandhara (*za-hor*) and Kashmir (*kha-che*), in *Uddyāna* (*o-rgyan*) and Gilgit (*bru-ša*), were unaware of its direct connexion with the Buddhism officially introduced into Tibet in the eighth century by King *Khri-sron-lde-btsan*. The *bonpos* are insistent that their teachings came from the west, and there are good reasons for believing that Buddhist yogins and hermits, and probably Hindu ascetics as well, had already familiarized the villagers of western Tibet with Indian teachings and practices before Buddhism was formally introduced by the Tibetan religious kings. Moreover, these 'informal' contacts continued over several centuries. Perhaps the main original difference between *bonpos* and *rñin-ma-pas* (Tibetan Buddhists of the 'Old Order') consists in the fact that the *rñin-ma-pas* acknowledged that their doctrines, despite their earlier promulgation, were nevertheless Buddhist, and that the *bonpos* never would make this admission. Fundamental to an elucidation of this interesting problem is a comparative study of the tantras and the *rDzogs-chen* ('Great Perfection') literature of these two oldest 'Tibetan Buddhist' groups.

¹ It is generally agreed that the story of *gSen-rab*'s life is a deliberate fabrication, for which the inspiration was the life of *Sākyamuni*. *gSen-rab* just means 'Best of *gSen*'. But a study of the local traditions and legendary material from which the story has been pieced together would be a worth-while literary task. The story of the 'religious hero' *gSen-rab* is in effect another great Tibetan epic, comparable in importance with the great epic of Gesar, which thanks to the intensive studies of R. A. Stein, is now far better known. Yet *gSen-rab*'s legend is supported by a whole complex system of religious practices, altogether an extraordinary phenomenon.

² The countries given in the *srid pa rgyud kyi kha byan chen mo* (Richardson's MS., f. 7a^s onwards) are: *zan-zun*, *stap-gzigs*, *phrom*, *rgya-gar*, *rgya-nag*, *kha-che*, *za-hor*, *o-rgyan*, *hdan-ma*, *bal-yul*, *sum-pahi yul*, *a-zañi yul*, *bskor-yul*, *hjañ*, *ti-yul*, and *me-ñag*.

The organizing of their religious practices into 'Nine Ways' must have come somewhat later, perhaps by the tenth century. The *rñin-ma-pa* set of nine begins with the three 'ways' of conventional Indian Buddhism, the *śrāvakayāna*, the *pratyekabuddhayāna*, and the *bodhisattvayāna*. The other six 'ways' are ever higher stages of tantric practice, viz. *kriyātantra*, *upāyatantra*, and *yogatantra*, and finally, the *mahāyogatantra*, *anuyogatantra*, and *atiyogatantra*. Thus the *rñin-ma-pas*, recognizing their connexions with the newly established official religion, were content to organize themselves as tantric adepts of Buddhism. The *bonpos*, despite their ever increasing cultural and literary contacts with the official religion, persisted in claiming that this religion had really been theirs from the start. Driven very early, certainly already in the eighth century,¹ into a position of opposition, they set to work to organize a full-scale religion of their own, using all their own remembered indigenous resources and all they could acquire from their opponents. The magnitude of the task was really astounding, if judged only by the vast bulk of literature which they so speedily accumulated. The 'Nine Ways of BON' is a mere summary of their achievements.

The *bonpos* often refer to their full complement of doctrines and practices not only as the 'BON of the Nine Stage Way', but also as the BON of the 'Four BON Portals and the Treasury as Fifth':

bon sgo bzī mdzod lia dan theg pa rim dguhi bon.

This term *sgo bzī mdzod lia* has no easy explanation. The four 'portals' are *dpon-gsas*, *chab-nag*, *chab-dkar*, and *hphan-yul*. The first, *dpon-gsas*, may be safely translated as 'Master Sage'. It is the term used for the hermit sages of the *zan-žun śnan-rgyud*. As one of the four 'portals' of *bon* it refers to their teachings of the 'Great Perfection' (*rdzogs-chen*). As for *chab-dkar* and *chab-nag*, *chab* remains uncertain in meaning. Tenzin Namdak accepts these names as technical terms without any proper meaning, and so, while he and other educated *bonpos* know what the terms refer to, they remain quite uninterested in the origin of the terms themselves. *Chab* has two different meanings: (i) royal sway or power and (ii) the honorific term for water. The compound *chab-sgo* means an 'imperial portal' and perhaps this might encourage us to choose the first meaning. The 'White Sway' and the 'Black Sway' would make quite good translations. But in our selected texts (p. 42, line 33 onwards) *chab* is clearly

¹ Perhaps the oldest version of the story of how *Khri-sroñ lde-btsan* arranged for the assassination of *Lig-mi-rgya*, king of *Zan-žun*, occurs in the *Zan-žun śnan-rgyud*, chapter entitled *bstan pa dar nub kyi lo-rgyus*. The story is retold from this source in the *rGyal-rabs bon gyi hbyuñ-gnas* edited (abominably) by Sarat Chandra Das, Calcutta, 1915, p. 58. The story of *Khri-sroñ lde-btsan's* persecution of the *bonpos* is also told in the *srid-pa rgyud kyi kha byañ chen-mo*, Chapter 5 (Richardson's MS., ff. 29b ff.).

interpreted as though it meant 'water'. I have therefore taken the term provisionally in this meaning. The term is used only as a label in any case. The 'White Waters' refer to higher tantric practice and the 'Black Waters' to magic rites of all kinds. European writers have often referred to 'White Bon' and 'Black Bon', but clearly without any intended reference to *chab-dkar* and *chab-nag*.

hPhan-yul is a well-known place-name in Central Tibet, but once again my *bonpo* helpers insist that this term which refers to their 'Perfection of Wisdom' teachings, has nothing to do with the *hPhan-yul* Valley. But I think they are mistaken. The name *hPhan-yul* often occurs in *bonpo* texts both as a place-name¹ and as a term referring to particular doctrines. Before the 'Teacher *gSen-rab*' spread the teachings in the world of men he is supposed to have taught *hPhan-yul* texts in the realms of the serpents (*klu*), furies (*gñan*), mountain-gods (*sa-bdag*), and rock-gods (*gtod*).² One wonders if there is some connexion here with the well-known story of *Nāgārjuna's* visit to the *nāgas* (= Tibetan *klu*) to obtain his 'Perfection of Wisdom' teachings. There is no doubt that in *bonpo* usage *hPhan-yul* means 'Perfection of Wisdom' texts, and therefore it might have seemed suitable to give this name to texts which *gSen-rab* was supposed to teach to serpents and others. I mention this possibility merely since I suspect that it is just such a haphazard association of ideas that often accounts for the use of many terms in *bonpo* material, and we may well be wasting our time looking for more scholarly associations. As for the special meaning that the *bonpos* gave to *hPhan-yul*, perhaps it was here in this place, which was certainly important in the early spread of Buddhism in Tibet, that they first learned and studied 'Perfection of Wisdom' literature. It is perhaps fair to add that Tenzin Namdak discounts such an idea altogether. As for the special *bonpo* meanings of these terms, he has kindly drawn my attention to some very good definitions occurring in *gZer-mig*:

The 'Master Sage' belongs to the BON of precepts and inspired teachings. It purifies the stream of knowledge, avoids words and concentrates on the meaning.³

The 'Black Waters' belong to the BON of the stream of existence. It purifies the stream of knowledge. By means of the many verbal accounts which arise there, much is accumulated for the good of living beings under three (headings):

¹ In the *rGyal-rabs bon gyi hbyuñ-gnas* it is listed as one of the thirteen centres of *bon* in Central Tibet, viz. Das, p. 37: *hphan yul chab* (Das writes *grab*) *dkar bon gyi gnas*. In the *srid-pa rgyud kyi kha byañ chen-mo* it is clearly referred to as *yul hphan-yul* (p. 28a³). In this context it refers to a group of three sets of teachings, *hphan-yul rgyas-pa*, *dpon gsas gsañ-ba*, and *a-bo gsañ-ba*. Is *a-bo* connected with Sanskrit *āpaḥ* 'waters', thus corresponding to Tibetan *chab* in *chab-dkar* and *chab-nag*?

² *srid-pa rgyud kyi kha-byañ chen-mo*, Richardson's MS., f. 7^a.

³ *gZer-mig*, vol. *kha*, f. 97a⁴ onwards: *dpon gsas man nag gi bon du gtogs pa ni / śes rab rgyud sbyañs tshig bor don la sgom paḥo /*

the outer stream of death rites and funeral rites, the inner stream of sickness rites and ransom rites, and the middle stream of diagnosis rites and rituals.¹

The vast *hPhan-yul* belongs to the BON of the Hundred Thousand (Verse Text) in the *Sūtras*. It purifies the stream of knowledge. It tells of monastic discipline and vows. This BON has two aspects, as a series (Skr. *parivarta*) and as recitation. Again the series has two aspects, the series of the phenomenal world and the series of passing from sorrow (Skr. *nirvāṇa*). The recitation is of two kinds again, recitation that enunciates and originates in the words of enunciation, and enunciation that is consecrated to the good of living beings and serves for ceremonies. Being read and recited, it accumulates much (merit) for living beings, and it should be used for ceremonies.²

The 'White Waters' belong to the BON of potent precepts and spells. It purifies the deep stream of knowledge. It embraces the profound 'reliance' and 'performance'. As for this BON, when one has been consecrated, one becomes of the self-nature of fivefold buddhahood. As effect one has in the Body the five symbolic gestures of the self-nature (of buddhahood): as effect in the Speech one recites spells continuously: as effect in the Mind one practises the profound meditation of the 'Process of Emanation' and the 'Process of Realization'. As effect in one's Accomplishments one accumulates and delights in ritual items. As effect in one's Acts one praises the buddha-names in recitation.³

Defined in this way, the 'Four Portals' cover all the types of religious practice included in the 'Nine Ways'.

The 'Master Sage' Portal represents the Ninth Way.

The 'Black Waters' Portal represents the First, Second, and Fourth Ways.

The *hPhan-yul* Portal represents the Fifth and Sixth Ways.

The 'White Waters' Portal represents the Seventh and Eighth Ways. It also includes the Third Way in so far as this is directed towards the 'Bon of Effect'.

Thus these 'Four Portals' seem to represent an earlier and quite coherent attempt by the *bonpos* to arrange their accumulated religious materials into four groups:

1. Precepts and teachings of sages and hermits, e.g. *zān-žun śān-rgyud* and other *rdzogs-chen* literature.
2. Ways of prediction, death ceremonies, and magical rites of all kinds (viz. the 'original' *bonpo* material).

¹ chab nag srid pa rgyud kyi bon du gtogs pa ni / śes rab rgyud sbyaṅs tshig gi lo rgyud mañ po skeyes pas phyi rgyud śi thabs ḥdur thabs dañ / nañ rgyud na thabs glud thabs dañ / bar rgyud dpyad thabs gto thabs gsum / sems can don du mañ po tshogs par sgyur /

² ḥphan yul rgyas pa mdo khuṅs ḥbum gyi bon du gtogs pa ni / śes rab rgyud sbyaṅs ḥdul khirms sdom pa gsuñ baḥo / bon ni ḥgres dañ tshig bsād gñis / ḥgres la rnam pa gñis / ḥkhor baḥi ḥgres dañ / mya nān las ḥdas paḥi ḥgres / tshig bsād la yañ rnam pa gñis / ḥdon tshig ḥbyuñ khuṅs ḥdon paḥi tshig bsād dañ / mchod sbyin sems can don du bsāo baḥi tshig bsād gñis / sems can don du mañ po ḥtshogs sar bklaḡ dañ bsrag ciñ mchod sbyin gtañ /

³ chab dkar man ṅag drag po snags kyi bon du gtogs pa ni / śes rab zab moḥi rgyud sbyaṅs bsñen sgrub zab mo dañ du blañ baḥo / bon ni byin gyis brlabs nas bdag ṅid bder gśegs lñaḥi rañ bzin ni lus kyi las su rañ bzin phyag rgya lña / ṅag gi las su ḥdzab grañ ma chad par bgrañ / yid kyi las su tiñ ḥdzin bskeyed rdzogs bsgom / yon tan las su yo byad bsag bsod bya / ḥphrin las kyi las su tshig bsād mtshan bstod do /

3. Texts and practices connected with monastic religion. (One may observe that the reading of 'Perfection of Wisdom' literature as a meritorious rite was as popular then as now.)
4. Texts and practices of the tantras.

As for the 'Treasury which makes the fifth', this is the 'Pure Summit' (*gtsaṅ mtho thog*), which once again is best defined by a quotation from *gZer-mig*:

As for the 'Pure Summit', it goes everywhere. As insight it belongs to the BON which is a universal cutting off. It purifies the stream of knowledge in all the 'Four Portals'. It simply involves that insight into the non-substantiality of appearances. It understands the deluding nature of the 'outer vessel' as relative truth. It knows, too, the empty atomic nature of the 'inner essences'. In terms of absolute truth non-substance, too, is an absurdity.¹

Thus 'BON of the Nine Stage Way' and the 'Four BON Portals with the Treasury as Fifth' are simply two different ways of grouping the different types of BON practice. It has already been observed (p. 13 above) that the practices and doctrines described in these groups might with very little change serve equally well as a description of Tibetan Buddhism. BON and Buddhism have pervaded one another completely, yet each persists in denying the debt it owes to the other. The *dGe-lugs-pas* ('Yellow Hats') would be most offended if one suggested that the Great Oracle of *gNas-chuñ*, to whom the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Cabinet would so often resort, really belonged as a religious practice to BON Way I, the 'Way of the Shen of Prediction'. The writer of the *rGyal-rabs bon gyi ḥbyuñ-gnas* observes that as a result of *Khri-sroñ-lde-btsan*'s persecution of the *bonpos* 'some agreed to be Buddhist monks, but in their mind they reflected on BON, and in word and act they performed CHOS (*dharma*)'.² But even this has proved an understatement, for most Tibetans are still *bonpos* at heart and they have recourse to BON of all kinds, not only in their minds, but in words and acts as well.

It is noteworthy that so far as their activities are concerned, the *bonpos* have seemingly preserved little of the 'original BON' which has not also been incorporated by other Tibetan Buddhists in the many rites and ceremonies and strange practices which form part of Tibetan social and religious life. But in their texts they have preserved quantities of early legendary material and of ritual utterances. They still hold to the legends,

¹ gtsaṅ mtho thog spyir rgyug lta ba spyi gcod bon du gtogs pa ni / sgo bzi la śes paḥi rgyud sbyaṅs / snañ la rañ bzin med paḥi lta ba gcig tu ḥjog paḥo / kun rdzob bden par phyi snod sgyu maḥi rañ bzin du rtogs / nañ bcud ṅid kyañ stoñ paḥi rañ bzin ḥphra rab ḥdul du go / don dam bden par dños med cir yañ ma yin paḥo / (*gZer-mig*, vol. *kha*, f. 98b² onwards).

² kha cig ban deḥi chad byed ciñ / yid la bon bsam ziñ / kha dañ lus ni chos la spyod / (*Das*, p. 50).

certainly those that have been associated with the life of *gSen-rab*, but the ritual utterances would seem to have little significance to the *bonpos* of today. These ritual utterances were proclaimed originally as an 'exposition' (*smran*) of the 'archetype' (*dpe-srol*), and it was this exposition which gave validity to the rite (see page 50, line 6). The Gurungs of Nepal, a people of early Tibetan origin, still practise these kinds of rites, as we now know from the interesting oral material collected by the late Bernard Pignède.¹ Their recitations of the 'archetype' are known as *pé*, pronounced like the Tibetan word *dpe*, still used in the meaning of 'example'. Some 'original BON' survived in oral traditions, and it was just such ancient oral traditions that *bonpo* scholars of ten centuries ago were incorporating into their new composite works.

Although BON has often been understood by Western scholars as referring primarily to certain (never clearly specified) pre-Buddhist religious practices of the Tibetans, vaguely described sometimes as animism or shamanism, the term BON is in fact never used in early Tibetan works with any such meaning. The *bon* were just one class of priests among others, whose practices and beliefs are covered by the general term of *lha-chos*, which may be translated perhaps as 'sacred conventions'.² The term BON, as referring to a whole set of religious practices, would seem to have come into use at a latter stage in deliberate opposition to the new use of CHOS which now had the meaning of Sanskrit *dharma* limited specifically to the religion of *Śākyamuni*.³ Thus there is probably no such thing as pre-Buddhist BON, for from the start the followers of BON were anxious to accept and readapt religious teachings and practices of all kinds, whether indigenous or foreign. It was not Buddhist teachings that they objected to, but rather the claim that all these teachings had first been taught by the Indian Sage *Śākyamuni*. Nor were they entirely wrong, as we know well now, for the Buddhism that reached Tibet more than a thousand years after the death of its founder comprised a whole range of teachings and practices that he would have found very strange indeed. If one understands the term BON as the *bonpos* understand it, one will not be surprised or

disappointed to discover that *bon* literature includes a very large amount of material that is normally regarded as Buddhist.

Western scholars have been misled to some extent by the non-*bonpo* Buddhists of Tibet (the *chos-pa*), who have identified the BON which they knew as their only serious rival in later centuries as the same rival against which the first Buddhists had to fight in Tibet, while the (later) *bonpos* have merely added to the confusion by assuming that they were not only the original rivals of the *chos-pa*, but that they already possessed in the earlier period all the developed (Buddhist) teachings which they had in fact only gradually incorporated in the course of the eighth to thirteenth centuries. *Bon* (meaning 'priest who invokes') is one thing, and *bonpo* meaning 'follower of BON ("Tibetan religion")' is another. The early Buddhists certainly came into conflict with the *Bon* ('priests who invoke') who were active in Tibet long before Buddhist doctrines were introduced, but their real long-term rivals were the *bonpos* who were busy constituting their BON ('Tibetan religion') while the Buddhists (*chos-pa*) were busy constituting their CHOS (*Dharma*). The development of BON and CHOS were parallel processes, and both *bonpos* and *chos-pas* were using the same literary language within the same cultural surroundings. It would be naïve to expect *bonpo* literature to be totally different from Buddhist literature. On the contrary, it is rather remarkable that *bonpo* texts contain so much comprehensible pre-Buddhist material, and it is not surprising that *bonpo* composers of texts (even perhaps as early as the eighth or ninth century) were already uncertain of the meanings of many names and terms of the indigenous (entirely oral) tradition. Some indigenous material, especially the beliefs and practices associated with the early kings, may be better preserved by the Buddhists than the *bonpos*, for the Buddhists were able to claim in retrospect the whole line of historical kings, except *Glang-dar-ma*, as Buddhist. But for information concerning the whole range of pre-Buddhist Tibetan religion, it is better to investigate *bonpo* literature rather than Buddhist, for even when Buddhist writers are not trying deliberately to denigrate their rivals, their accounts are slipshod and often unintelligible.⁴

¹ See his work, *Les Gurungs, une population himalayenne du Népal*, Mouton, The Hague (École Pratique des Hautes Études), 1966, especially pp. 323-4, 363-5.

² I would not hesitate to connect *bon* in the sense of 'priest' with the verb *hbod-pa* 'to invoke' (see p. 1 fn. 1). Such a *bon* ('invoker') would have been competent in the all-important ritual of the 'exposition of the archetype' (see p. 256). BON in the sense of 'Tibetan religion' is probably connected with *Bod* (even occasionally written *Bon* in early texts) meaning 'Tibet', and possibly with *bon* as in *sa-bon* 'seed'. The original meaning may be 'autochthonous', and so was used for the 'people of the homeland' in much the same way that the Germans refer to themselves as 'Deutsch', a term which simply means originally 'the people (of the homeland)'. See also Marcelle Lalou, 'Tibétain Ancien BOD/BON', *Journal Asiatique*, 1953, pp. 275-6.

³ The term *chos* I would connect with the verb *hchah-ba/bcas*, etc. 'make or construct' and with such cognate terms as *chas* 'things or requisites', and *bcos-pa* 'modified or affected'.

⁴ As an example of this see the brief survey of BON teachings in the *Blon-po bkahi than-yig*, edited and translated by Hoffmann in his *Quellen zur Geschichte der tibetischen Bon-Religion*, pp. 249 ff. and 348 ff. On the other hand the *rGyal-po bkahi than-yig* contains an interesting chapter (ff. 39a-40b) describing the attendance at the royal tomb of *Sron-btsan-sgam-po*. This clearly belongs to the same context as the 'Rituel Bon-po des funérailles royales' as presented by Mlle Marcelle Lalou in the *Journal asiatique*, 1952, pp. 339-61.