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## Medicinal Mandala: Potency in Spatiality

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# Medicinal Mandala: Potency in Spatiality

Anna Sehnalova

This article explores the complexities of accomplishing potency, *nüpa* (*nus pa*), within a Tibetan healing, rejuvenation, and longevity ritual practice known as ‘medicinal accomplishment,’ *mendrup* (*sman sgrub*). The study is based on the observation and examination of the *Light-Swirled Mendrup* performed in the Tibetan exile Bonpo community in Nepal in 2012. The *mendrup* represents a meditative *sādhana* practice, which involves the production and consecration of ritual *materia medica* derived from the Tibetan medical Sowa Rigpa tradition as well as Buddhist tantric heritage. The article analyzes the generation of potency based on spatiality within the *mendrup* ritual—the potency of the ritual itself and of its main substance, the consecrated ritual *materia medica* referred to as ‘*mendrup* medicine.’ It argues that within its cosmological scheme, the *mendrup* ritual follows a spatial pattern of categorization of substances that impacts their potency based on their pharmacological properties and effects. This categorization reflects the ritual’s categorization of diseases.

The ritual incorporates various spheres of knowledge into its notions of potency, such as medicine, pharmacy, and botany. The organizational cosmological scheme of the ritual, with its central mandala comprising the five directions and the five fundamental elements, structures the space of the ritual, and also its consecrated medicines. The scheme structures and generates the potency of the ‘*mendrup* medicine’ substance. Other aspects co-create the potency: the deities invoked, the acting religious figures and their blessings, suitable medicinal ingredients used, the right ‘fermenting agent,’ the depth of meditation of the performers, proper empowerment practices, and the time and space of the rite. This study shows that it is also the allocation of specific substances into particular spatial arrangements that makes them potent, especially in relation to the whole of the ritual space. The Bonpo *Light-Swirled Mendrup* creates this structure of potency through its fivefold mandalic scheme typical of tantric ritual.

**Keywords:** Sowa Rigpa, medicine, ritual, *mendrup*, Bon.

This article is dedicated to the memory of our beloved teacher, Tsering Gonkatsang (1951-2018), with whom I read parts of the *mendrup* recipe, and whom we lost too early.

## Introduction

In Tibetan religious traditions, rituals play an eminent role and are omnipresent in Tibetan communities and lives. Ritual acts usually involve the use of various paraphernalia and powerful substances that are believed to possess special powers and potencies to enhance or carry the efficacy of the ritual (Gentry 2017). In some instances, ritual substances are also found in the Tibetan medical tradition, Sowa Rigpa (*gso ba rig pa*), and are of medicinal and pharmacological<sup>1</sup> significance as they are incorporated into the ritual practice. In this article, I view ritual as a specific delineated event, both in terms of time and space. Ritual itself has the capacity to structure time and space, for which it commonly employs visual diagrams representing a cosmological order. In this order, numerous phenomena and features, including pharmacological properties, are spatially arranged. This article presents an example of a medico-ritual nexus of potency and efficacy created through spatiality by examining a specific healing, rejuvenation, and longevity tantric ritual practice of the Tibetan world: the *mendrup* (*smān sgrub*)<sup>2</sup> or ritual of ‘medicinal accomplishment’<sup>3</sup> as it is conducted by the Bonpo (*bon po*) exile community in Nepal.<sup>4</sup>

The Tibetan religious school called Bon (*bon*), or more precisely Eternal Bon (*gyung drung bon*), represents a monastic tradition that is distinct from Buddhism. Bon claims its own independent origin and history, venerated masters, scriptures, and practices. It also incorporates significant Tibetan indigenous and pre-Buddhist notions and impacts people’s identity. Yet, Bon also shares many concepts and practices of Buddhism stemming from India, which began to significantly influence the Tibetan Plateau in the seventh century AD. The Bonpo are now recognized as a school of Tibetan Buddhism, while, at the same time, proudly building on their own non-Buddhist heritage (Karmay 1998, 2007; Kværne 1995).

During fieldwork, Bonpo ritual and medical specialists articulated the potency, *nüpa* (*nus pa*), of the *mendrup* ritual as twofold: 1) the *nüpa* of the medicinal substances involved; and 2) the *nüpa* generated by the ritual action (including its ritual objects). The understanding of the former, medical *nüpa*, is similar to the understanding of potency of medicinal ingredients used in drug compounding in the Sowa Rigpa tradition, as explained by Boesi (2006: 68, n. 4; cf. Boesi 2004: 48-50, in French):

The term ‘potency’ (*nus pa*) points out to the action that a substance may originate by means of its features and qualities. In Tibetan medicine this expression designates both particular qualities of medicinal substances, which constitute their therapeutic properties (the eight *nus pa*, [see below]), and their therapeutic effect.

Potency in the medical discourse thus refers to both medicinal properties of substances as well as their therapeutic effects. The proper fulfillment of the ritual practice is its ‘accomplishment’ (*sgrub pa*), by which the ritual ‘accomplishes’ (*sgrub*) another layer of potency generated by correct ritual action. Together, they create the full potency of the *mendrup* ritual, which my informants often called ‘great potency,’ *nüpa chenpo* (*nus pa chen po*). The Bonpo commonly praise the *mendrup* ritual for its known great potency, which they understand as an inherent capacity to generate efficacy. The potency of the rite is, in practice, perceived through its manifested efficacy.<sup>5</sup> The Bonpo perceive the efficacy as the actual visible effects that the ritual is meant to generate, whether it be physical healing, spiritual advancement, or pacifying of natural disasters. In Tibetan, efficacy is also referred to as *nüpa*, which, however, in the context of describing effects and outcomes, typically occurs together with the category of ‘benefit,’ *pentok* (*phan thogs*) in the term *penniü* (*phan nus*). As in fact the ritual potency and efficacy are perceived as a pair, which are conditioned by each other, in certain contexts and expressions, such as *nüpa chenpo*, their distinction can become blurred. *Nüpa chenpo* can thus in some instances also mean ‘great efficacy.’ Yet, if the efficacy is to be explicitly expressed, the word *pentok*, even as ‘great benefit,’ *pentok chenpo* (*phan thogs chen po*), is used. The term *pentok* combined with *nüpa* then expresses augmented ‘efficacy,’ *pentok dang nüpa* (*phan thogs dang nus pa*), or the ‘great efficacy,’ *pentok dang nüpa chenpo* (*phan thogs dang nus pa chen po*) ascribed to the *mendrup*.

One of the prominent features of Indian tantric traditions adopted by Tibetan religion, including Bon, is the organizational principle of the mandala (Skt. *maṇḍala*, Tib. *dkyil ’khor*). The mandala is a spatial scheme of the universe, including the elements, divine realms and palaces, and various other abstract and concrete phenomena. It is prominent in the vast body of Tibetan tantric ritual practices (Brauen 1997; Gentry 2017; Tucci 1969). The *mendrup* ritual is such a tantric rite that centers on the meditative practice of a *sādhana* (Tib. *sgrub thabs*), in which practitioners, through visualizations, seek self-identification with an awakened tantric deity in order to achieve the soteriological aim of awakening (Skt. *bodhi*, Tib. *byang chub*) (Cantwell 2015, 2017; Garrett 2009, 2010).

The second prominent component of the ritual is its consecrational practice. The ritual's assorted substances, referred to as 'medicine,' *men (sman)*,<sup>6</sup> are believed to be empowered and consecrated by the ritual action and the deities invoked to become extremely potent matter (Bentor 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Cantwell 2015). In the Bonpo case examined, the consecrated substances gained their potency based on various aspects of the rite: the deities invoked and their benevolence, the acting venerated religious figures and their blessings (Fig. 1), the right 'fermenting agent' and its capacities (see below), the depth of meditation of the performers, the proper empowerment (*dbang*) practices, as well as the selected auspicious time and space of the rite. The consecrated substances used, their suitability, quality and purity, and the spatial mandalic device on which they are placed during the ritual are important actors in the generation of potency. I agree with Gentry (2017), who argues that the potency and efficacy of the rite of consecration is generated by the interactions between people and objects; both hold agency that generates power in a ritualized setting. As Gentry states, the generation of potency in ritual is multi-layered, evolving from these various actors. Using ethnographic observations, interviews, and Tibetan ritual and medical texts, this article focuses on spatiality as a contributing factor to potency. The consecrated material, the 'medicine' of the *mendrup*, is then consumed by the practitioners in order to attain spiritual progress and awakening, as well as health, well-being, rejuvenation, and longevity.

The scheme of the mandala also appears in the context of Sowa Rigpa. A mandalic organization of medicinal substances dominates the well-known opening chapter of the *Gyüzhi (Rgyud bzhi)*, the major Tibetan medical treatise. Here, the Medicine Buddha (*Sman lha*, Skt. *Bhaiṣajyaguru*) is depicted in the central position, surrounded by his marvelous paradise realm of *Tanaduk (Lta na sdug, 'Magnificent to Behold')* with its abundance of medicinal plants and other healing substances. Each cardinal side furnishes remedies of a certain property, or specific ingredients in a given order. After venerating the Medicine Buddha in the Center, the text proceeds to the South, which produces warming substances, then to the North which provides ingredients of cooling character. The East brings *arura (a ru ra)*, see below) and the West the 'six good substances' (*bzang po drug*; Hofer 2014; Yutok Yönten Gönpö 2006). On the contrary, the equivalent Bonpo *Bumzhi ('Bum bzhi)* treatise (Chébu Trishé 2005; Millard 2002), to my knowledge, does not postulate such a cosmological order of *materia medica*.

The Bonpo *mendrup* ritual presented here likely originated in the Bonpo centers of teachings and power in Central

Tibet in the twelfth and thirteenth century CE. The Bonpo believe that the ritual is of primordial origin and granted by deities, and was rediscovered by the Bonpo as a treasure (*gter ma*) in the eleventh or twelfth century. Its practice was then supposedly transmitted within their main monasteries, *Yéru Wensaka (G.yas ru dben sa kha)*, founded in 1072) and later at *Tashi Menri (Bkra shis sman ri)*, founded in 1405). This is partly testified by written historical sources (Sehnalova 2017).<sup>7</sup> The practice has continued at Tashi Menri monastery until the present. In the Tibetan exile situation after 1959, it has particularly flourished at the newly established (in 1969) Tashi Menri monastery in Himachal Pradesh, India. The second-most important Bonpo monastery in exile, *Triten Norbutse (Khri brtan nor bu rtse)*, initiated in 1986, founded in 1992) in



Figure 1. The monastery's abbot Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung administers the precious powder of the *papta*, the 'fermenting agent' of the *mendrup* ritual, by spoonfuls to the public. The *papta* is consumed during an empowerment practice included into the *mendrup*. Only less than a half of the *papta* can be used up during each *mendrup* performance, to be later refilled by the newly consecrated *mendrup* medicine. Along with the *papta*, the *mendrup* participants receive Khenpo's blessings.

(Sehnalova, Triten Norbutse, 2012)

Kathmandu, Nepal, has also adopted the *mendrup* practice (Sehnalova 2019, Photo 1).<sup>8</sup> In Tibet, the *mendrup* ritual of Yéru Wensaka and Tashi Menri was conducted rarely (i.e., approximately every sixty years). In contrast, in exile, four performances of the ritual have already taken place since the late 1980s, with two in each monastery.<sup>9</sup>

This article presents the most recent celebration of the Bonpo *mendrup* in exile, which was organized at Triten Norbutse in December 2012.<sup>10</sup> At that time, the monastery housed more than two hundred monks, and was (and still is) headed by its two main authorities, Yongdzin Tendzin Namdak Rinpoche (Yongs 'dzin Bstan 'dzin rnam dag rin po che, born in 1926, Khyung po, Tibet) and the incumbent abbot Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung (Mkhan po Bstan pa g.yung drung, born 1969, Dhorpatan, Nepal). The monks come from Bonpo communities across the Himalayas, mainly from Mustang and Dolpo, and from Tibet in present-day China. The *mendrup* rite performed in 2012 commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the monastery (counted from 1986/87, when the monastery was first initiated). The ritual chosen was the *Light-Swirled Mendrup* (*Sman sgrub 'od zer 'khyil ba*) dedicated to the wrathful deity Trowo Tsochok Khagying (Khro bo gtso mchog mkha' 'gying), the "Wrathful One, Supreme Lord Towering the Sky" (Kværne 1995: 75-77, 88-90).<sup>11</sup> The performance was elaborate and took one month, including other festivities. The *mendrup* ritual alone took fifteen days of uninterrupted recitation.<sup>12</sup> The *mendrup* ritual included the preparation of a very complex compound, the 'medicine.' The monastery's main practitioner of Sowa Rigpa, Amchi Nyima Sampel (Am chi Nyi ma bsam 'phel, born 1969, Jharkot, Mustang, Nepal; Sehnalova 2019, Photo 2),<sup>13</sup> was put in charge of preparing it.

Below, I analyze the generation of potency of the *mendrup* medicine as part of the *mendrup* ritual. I examine both its pharmacological composition and the distinct spatial aspects of the ritual. I argue that the ritual follows a spatial pattern of categorization of substances that impacts their potency, based on the categorization of diseases within its cosmological scheme. Thus, the potency of substances can be modeled upon the concept of ritual space. I argue that it is also the allocation of specific substances into particular spatial arrangements that significantly contributes to their potency, especially in relation to the entire ritual space. In this article, I explore the compounding practices of the medicine by Amchi Nyima, and its arrangement in the course of the ritual. The work presented here is grounded in ethnographic observation of the *mendrup* ritual and close collaboration with Amchi Nyima during one month of fieldwork at Triten Norbutse in December 2012.

Subsequent interviews with Amchi Nyima were conducted in Europe, at the Bonpo Shenten Dargye Ling (Gshen brtan dar rgyas gling) monastery in France, and in Oxford in the United Kingdom. Tibetan texts used throughout the ritual were also consulted, translated, and analyzed.<sup>14</sup>

### The *Mendrup* Medicine

The *mendrup* medicine laid out on the central mandala of the *mendrup* ritual is the focus of the ritual action. I observed at Triten Norbutse monastery that the *mendrup* medicine is attributed with special qualities. As a long-awaited substance, it is ascribed with miraculous properties, such as healing any physical and mental disorders or illnesses, gaining a better rebirth, achieving extraordinary powers, and leading towards awakening. By the current Bonpo community, the *mendrup* medicine is regarded as a panacea, and as such can be consumed for treatment of virtually any human ailment and also given to domestic animals. Moreover, both the *mendrup* rite and medicine are believed to balance the ecological environment, and can therefore assist in preventing natural disasters and human-made environmental disturbances. These conceptualizations of the *mendrup* medicine were shared by the monastic elites, the visiting lay tantric practitioners (*sngags pa*) and the public, as well as Amchi Nyima and other Bonpo Sowa Rigpa practitioners present at the ritual. Monks and especially the highly educated *geshe* (*dge bshes*) tended to stress the spiritual benefits of the ritual and its medicine as a support to awakening. The lay participants mostly appreciated its expected universal healing capacities. Members of the Bonpo community, both lay and monastic, travelled to Triten Norbutse to participate in the ritual and receive the *mendrup* medicine. The day of the distribution of the *mendrup* medicine drew the biggest crowds, including adherents of other Tibetan religious schools and religious denominations (e.g., Hindus and Newari Buddhists). Receiving the potent medicinal mixture from the most venerated masters, Yongdzin Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung, accompanied by their blessings, was the highlight of the entire month of celebrations.

The *mendrup* ritual organized on a large scale, along with its produced medicine, represents an important nexus of Bonpo social, religious, power, and economic encounters. The ritual features on the obligatory ritual curriculum of the leading institutions of Yungdrung Bon, and should be performed once by every abbot in office (Cech 1988). Yet, the currently improving global logistics and economic situation excite the Bonpo to conduct the *mendrup* celebration more often (e.g., every ten to twenty years).

The Bonpo authorities do their best to react to the high demand for the *mendrup* medicine in the community. They also take into account the symbolic cultural, religious, and political capital the rite acquires as a demonstration of power and agency of the school of Bon. Yongdzin Tendzin Namdak Rinpoche and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung carefully planned the *Light-Swirled Mendrup* performance to take place in 2012 to mark the anniversary of Triten Norbutse. They considered the *mendrup* the most appropriate and festive act to express thanks to supporters and sponsors of Bon. They were well aware of the uniqueness of the celebration to Bon to serve as its representative token, at least in the exile situation, and also of its grandiosity to arrange a welcoming event for anyone connected to the monastery throughout its exile history. Another important factor in their judgement was the use of the *mendrup* and its medicine to rectify various unwanted developments in the world (e.g., global warming and natural disasters, self-immolations and the worsening political situation in Tibet, the world financial crisis, wars and violence, difficult inner-state political developments in Nepal, and recent riots and revolutions in the Middle East).

The Bonpo authorities and practitioners considered the *mendrup* ritual as flexible enough to allow for these different interpretations and multiple rationales behind the performance in 2012. The significance of the performance extends beyond Tibetan and Himalayan Bonpo communities and towards global audiences and impacts more generally. Not only is the great *mendrup* celebration the rarest and most demanding event in the standard Bonpo ritual curriculum, but it is also generally the most expensive. The funding of the rite, as well the subsequent distribution of the consecrated medicine, demonstrate and support the ties within the contemporary global Bonpo circles. The transmission of *mendrup* and its medicine (especially in its *papta* form) also represent the continuity of Yungdrung Bon throughout history, its partial transmission from Tibet into Nepal and India, and then further into the global arena.

The medicine of the Bonpo *Light-Swirled Mendrup* is compounded of over one hundred ingredients of animal, plant, and mineral origin, anew for every performance. It follows a very precise prescription found in the core text of the ritual entitled *The Main Text of the Light-Swirled Nectar Medicine* ('*Od zer 'khyil pa bdud rtsi sman gyi gzhung bzhuks lags s+ho*'), which exists only in manuscript and facsimile form.<sup>15</sup> The recipe consists of seven folios. The same scripture also encompasses most of the major recitations of the ritual. The rite itself starts with the offering of its first mandala. In total, the *mendrup* practitioners prepare four

different mandalas from colored sand on wooden boards to offer throughout the rite.<sup>16</sup> They invoke both peaceful and wrathful (*zhi khro*) deities of the individual cardinal points of the mandala, belonging to the retinue of Trowo Tsochog Khagying, through visualization to accomplish (*sgrub*) the medicine. The medicine is placed (on a glass shelf) upon the mandala during a dance performance by eight young monks (*mchod bu lha mo brgyad*, 'the offering boys of the Eight Goddesses'). The monks are dressed as Eight Goddesses (Lha mo brgyad; Sehnalova 2019, Photo 9 and 11).<sup>17</sup> This dance takes place during a lively invocation called *Inviting Medicine* (*Sman spyang drangs*).<sup>18</sup> The Eight Goddesses deliver the *mendrup* medicine in nine vessels (*bum pa* or *ga'u*). Five vessels are placed on the five cardinal points of the mandala, the Center, East, North, West, and South (in the Bonpo order),<sup>19</sup> and bear their characteristics. The lids are in the five colors and decorated with signs of the five Buddha families (see Table 1 and Sehnalova 2019, Photo 5). They contain a particular *mendrup* medicinal mixture for each cardinal point. During the procession of the Goddesses, these five containers are followed by four vessels covered with yellow-colored cloth and filled with a complete blend of the *mendrup* medicine. The four yellow vessels are placed on the intermediate points of the mandala. Moreover, an especially venerated vase preserves the 'fermenting agent' of the entire rite and medicinal mixture, the *papta* (*phabs gta*'), which is placed in the Center of the mandala to accompany the central white vessel. The *papta* and its decorated vase (Fig. 2) are believed to come from the deities, just like the *Light-Swirled Mendrup* itself. The ritual practice and its scriptures, and equally the *papta*, were supposedly rediscovered as treasures in the eleventh to twelfth centuries. The original *papta* medicinal powder, similar to the one being consecrated, is said to contain all the prescribed substances from ancient times, as well as blessings of past Bonpo masters, and minute amounts of previously consecrated *mendrup* medicines. The *papta* epitomizes and guarantees the potency and thus efficacy of the ritual, thus justifying its central position in the mandala. Without the *papta*, the *mendrup* cannot take place.<sup>20</sup>

This arrangement on top of the mandala (see Table 5, also Sehnalova 2019, Photo 10) is supplemented with more ornaments and offerings specific to the deities summoned. The *mendrup* medicine, too, is conceived as an offering. If the entire amount of the medicine cannot fit on top of the mandala, additional bags can be laid around the mandala structure (Sehnalova 2019, Photo 7). The entire structure has to be sealed and is not accessible during the ritual. It becomes the physical and spiritual center of the *mendrup* performance. A 'spell cord' (*byang thag, gzungs thag*), woven



Figure 2. The *papta* 'fermenting agent' of the *mendrup* ritual in its ornamented cloisonné vase. As a sign of respect, it is kept wrapped in a white Tibetan ceremonial scarf, *khatak* (*kha btags*). The *papta* guarantees the potency and thus efficacy of the ritual.

(Sehnalova, Triten Norbutse, 2012)

from five strings of the colors of the cardinal points, leads from the sealed mandala to the throne of the presiding performer of the ritual, the abbot of the monastery. The cord is meant to transmit the powers and blessings of the deities summoned by the practitioners to the *mendrup* mandala and medicine, creating an active link between the different actors: the deities, the practitioners and active religious masters, the mandala, the *mendrup* medicine and *papta*. Fifteen days of unceasing recitations, involving specific mantras and liturgical music, constitute the rite to 'accomplish' its potency. They also generate the potency of the medicine. Only after the completion of the ritual and a concluding empowerment can the medicine be ceremoniously administered to the public.

This entire undertaking is preceded by a lengthy and demanding process of preparation of the *mendrup* medicine, which lasts several months. The individual herbal,

mineral, and animal ingredients are collected following the written *mendrup* medicinal recipe (Sehnalova 2019, Photo 3). They have to be dried, mixed, and powdered, according to common Sowa Rigpa *menjor* practice. Then, they can be included in the ritual and become the most potent substance.

### Sowa Rigpa Principles of the *Mendrup* Recipe

The *mendrup* recipe also follows the fivefold cosmological organization of a mandala, complemented by a few verses of an eightfold arrangement symbolizing the eight classes of consciousness (*rnam shes brgyad*).<sup>21</sup> All of the more than one hundred items are thus listed as belonging to a certain cardinal point or class of consciousness. The vast majority of the ingredients are found in the extensive fivefold section of the recipe, whereas a much smaller final eightfold section lists only a few items. The fivefold section consists of two parts: (1) human and animal ingredients derived from the tantric concept of the five nectars (*bdud rtsi lnga*), i.e., semen, flesh, stool, blood, and urine;<sup>22</sup> and (2) plant ingredients, largely common Sowa Rigpa *materia medica*, which also include a few minerals and animal body parts.<sup>23</sup> Both these divisions of the recipe are each organized into five groups or units assigned to the five directions of the mandala, starting in the Center and gradually proceeding through the East, North, and West, to the South. Amchi Nyima skipped all the components of the animal group. He included only the second, essentially herbal, group and a few ingredients representing the eight classes of consciousness. The exclusion of almost half of the items in the recipe was not thought to affect the potency or efficacy of the medicine. Both Amchi Nyima and the monastic authorities considered the *papta* to be enough to represent the missing ingredients. I was told that, even if none of the substances would be available, the *papta* could stand for all the required ingredients. Before I turn to the fivefold organization of the second substance group and the ritual structuring of their ingredients according to the Bonpo *Light-Swirled Mendrup*, some fundamental pharmacological principles of Sowa Rigpa have to be addressed.

In Sowa Rigpa, every substance is characterized by its properties, which then determine its potency. Any material can be used for healing (or on the contrary harming) one's condition. Sowa Rigpa practitioners consider taste (*ro*) as the fundamental property of substances. Six different tastes are recognized (Table 2). Amchi Nyima would carefully taste substances on his tongue to evaluate their suitability for the *mendrup* medicine. From the taste, all the other characteristics are inferred. Based on the specific taste combination of the ingredient, its qualities



Direction ( <i>phyogs</i> )	Center ( <i>dbus</i> )	East ( <i>shar</i> )	North ( <i>byang</i> )	West ( <i>nub</i> )	South ( <i>lho</i> )
Colour ( <i>tshon mdog</i> )	White ( <i>dkar po</i> )	Yellow ( <i>ser po</i> )	Green ( <i>ljang khu</i> )	Red ( <i>dmar po</i> )	Blue ( <i>sngon po</i> )
Sign of the Buddha family	A ma syllables	Swastika ( <i>g.yung drung</i> )	Dharma wheel ( <i>'khor lo</i> )	Lotus ( <i>pad ma</i> )	Jewel ( <i>nor bu</i> )
Medicine vessel material	Glass/ Crystal ( <i>shel</i> )	Gold ( <i>gser</i> )	Turquoise ( <i>g.yu</i> )	Copper ( <i>zangs</i> )	Iron ( <i>lcags</i> )
Element associated	Space ( <i>nam mkha'</i> )	Earth ( <i>sa</i> )	Wind/Air ( <i>rlung</i> )	Copper ( <i>zangs</i> )	Water ( <i>chu</i> )

Table 1. Arrangement of the Five Main Vessels of the *Mendrup* Medicine on top of the Mandala

	Elements	Taste	Post-digestive taste	Enhances ( <i>skyed</i> ) <sup>25</sup> <i>nyépa</i> (created by elements)	Subdues ( <i>sel</i> ) <sup>26</sup> <i>nyépa</i> (created by elements)
1.	earth, water	sweet ( <i>mngar</i> )	sweet	<i>béken</i> (earth, water)	<i>lung</i> (wind), <i>tripa</i> (fire)
2.	earth, fire	sour ( <i>skyur ba</i> )	sour	<i>tripa</i> (fire)	<i>lung</i> (wind), <i>béken</i> (earth, water)
3.	water, fire	salty ( <i>lan tshwa</i> )	sweet	<i>tripa</i> (fire)	<i>lung</i> (wind), <i>béken</i> (earth, water)
4.	water, wind	bitter ( <i>kha ba</i> )	bitter	<i>lung</i> (wind), <i>béken</i> (earth, water)	<i>tripa</i> (fire)
5.	fire, wind	hot ( <i>tsha ba</i> )	bitter	<i>tripa</i> (fire)	<i>béken</i> (earth, water)
6.	earth, wind	astringent ( <i>bska ba</i> )	bitter	<i>lung</i> (wind), <i>béken</i> (earth, water)	<i>tripa</i> (fire)

Table 2. The Element Combinations of Tastes and Post-digestive Tastes, and their Influence on the Three Bodily Forces *Nyépa*

Medicinal Potency <i>Nüpa</i>	Opposite <i>Nüpa</i>	Enhances <i>nyépa</i>	Subdues <i>nyépa</i>
heavy ( <i>lci</i> )	light	<i>béken</i>	<i>lung</i>
light ( <i>yang</i> )	heavy	<i>lung</i>	<i>béken</i>
oily ( <i>snum</i> )	rough	<i>tripa, béken</i>	<i>lung</i>
rough ( <i>rtsub</i> )	oily	<i>lung</i>	<i>béken</i>
hot ( <i>tsha</i> )	cool	<i>tripa</i>	<i>béken</i>
cool ( <i>bsil</i> )	hot	<i>lung, béken</i>	<i>tripa</i>
sharp ( <i>rno</i> )	blunt	<i>béken</i>	<i>béken</i>
blunt ( <i>rtul</i> )	sharp	<i>béken</i>	<i>tripa</i>

Table 3. The Eight Medicinal Potencies *Nüpa* Influencing the Three Bodily Forces *Nyépa*

	Element	Qualities	Enhances <i>nyépa</i>	Subdues <i>nyépa</i>	Opposite element
1.	earth	heavy ( <i>lci</i> ), stable ( <i>bstan</i> ), blunt ( <i>rtul</i> ), smooth ( <i>jam</i> ), oily ( <i>snum</i> ), dry ( <i>skam</i> )	<i>béken</i>	<i>lung</i>	wind
2.	water	fluid ( <i>sla</i> ), cool ( <i>bsil</i> ), heavy, blunt, oily, flexible ( <i>mnyen</i> )	<i>béken</i>	<i>tripa</i>	fire
3.	fire	hot ( <i>tsha</i> ), sharp ( <i>rno</i> ), dry, rough ( <i>rtsub</i> ), light ( <i>yang</i> ), oily, mobile ( <i>g.yo</i> )	<i>tripa</i>	<i>béken</i>	water
4.	wind	light, mobile, cold ( <i>grang</i> ), rough, non-oily ( <i>skya</i> ), dry	<i>lung</i>	<i>béken</i>	earth

Table 4. The Elements Influencing the Three Bodily Forces *Nyépa* by their Qualities

are calculated. The eight potencies or *nüpa gyé* (*nus pa bryad*) are presented in four oppositional pairs (see Table 3, the pairs are represented by numbers 1. and 2., 3. and 4., 5. and 6., 7. and 8.). Along with them, Amchi Nyima inferred the post-digestive taste (*zhu rjes*), which reveals the effects of the ingredient after its digestion.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, Amchi Nyima evaluated the overall medicinal character, called ‘nature’ (*rang bzhin*) or ‘essence’ (*ngo bo*), of the substances—which is either ‘cooling’ (*bsil*), ‘warming’ (*drod*), or ‘neutral’ (*snyoms*). Moreover, as Amchi Nyima related especially in the context of the

*mendrup* ritual, the basis of all matter is formed by the ‘five elements’ (*byung lnga*): space (*nam mkha*), earth (*sa*), wind / air (*rlung*), fire (*me*), and water (*chu*). The first element of space is perceived as all-pervasive and does not play a determining role in pharmacology. A combination of two elements forms a certain taste, from which the medicinal properties can be inferred. The potencies also derive from the elements. Furthermore, each of the tastes and characteristics based on the elements influence the three bodily forces called *nyépa sum* (*nyes pa gsum*), which constitute the organism: *lung* (wind), *tripa* (bile), and *béken* (phlegm) (see

Table 4). Each force is responsible for certain functions of the body. For instance, *lung* is for breath, movement, speech, thoughts, and activity; *tripa* for bodily temperature, digestion, eyesight; and *béken* is for general stability.<sup>27</sup> The three bodily forces are also formed by the four (or five) elements and their characteristics (Table 2).

In Sowa Rigpa, drugs are almost exclusively compounded as multi-ingredient mixtures (Tidwell and Nettles 2019), balancing the problematic prevailing *nyépa* and enhancing the diminished *nyépa* in the body. Drugs are principally divided into two groups: those curing ‘hot diseases’ (*tsha nad*) and those tackling ‘cold diseases’ (*grang nad*) (Glover 2005). For instance, a disorder hot by nature caused by the element of fire and excessive *tripa* (bile), such as headache, inflammation, or fever, requires cooling remedies bearing the qualities of the other elements. In the same way, malfunctions of a cold nature, such as a cold sensation in the body or problems with digestion, have to be treated with warming applications. Diagnosis of patients based on the opposition of ‘hot’ and ‘cold,’ and the therapeutic evaluation of substances according to the categories above, lie at the heart of Sowa Rigpa *menjor* and clinical practice.<sup>28</sup> The above parameters also determine Sowa Rigpa classifications of medicinal substances and diseases (*nad*) (Boesi 2007; Glover 2005). Amchi Nyima relied on all these parameters in his interpretation of the *mendrup* recipe and when evaluating the qualities of substances for the compounding of the *mendrup* medicine.

### The *Mendrup* Medicinal Recipe and its Practice: Reading and Identifying Substances

In order to untangle the Sowa Rigpa intricacies of the *mendrup* recipe, I have listed the medicinal properties of its ingredients based on the second part of the recipe (Table 6). I have omitted the few ingredients added that are based on the eight consciousnesses, which do not conform to the mandalic framework, and also the first group of human and animal ingredients that were not included at Triten Norbutse in 2012. I present the components in Tibetan as they are recorded in *The Main Text of the Light-Swirled Nectar Medicine*. Furthermore, I provide their translations, or more precisely, their renditions into English and/or Latin. The practical implementation of the recipe depended on Amchi Nyima.<sup>29</sup> He approached the recipe as if it was meant for treating his patients, and therefore applied the same selection criteria and processing techniques for the ingredients as for Sowa Rigpa remedies. The ingredients were either bought or collected in the wild, then cleaned, dried, mixed, and powdered (most were actually first powdered and then mixed). The *mendrup* medicine can be

produced either in the form of pills (*ril bu*), or alternatively powder (*phye ma*) in the case of mass production or time constraints, as was done in Triten Norbutse.<sup>30</sup> According to the Bonpo, some of the items of the *mendrup* formula appear in presumably ancient spelling and are difficult to understand. Therefore, Amchi Nyima had to employ his own understanding and rely on oral transmissions by Yongdzin Rinpoche, who witnessed the *mendrup* rite and received its oral explanations (*shes rgyun*) at Menri monastery in Tibet and is regarded as the main Bonpo authority on the ritual in exile.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Amchi Nyima consulted a renowned Bonpo Sowa Rigpa practitioner in Kyungpo in Tibet by phone. Still, two of the ingredients could not be identified and had to be excluded.

The order of the ingredients appears as in the recipe and follows the five cardinal quarters. Each of the quarters in the recipe is introduced by an epithet characterizing its respective ingredients, which Amchi Nyima understood as the name of the given medicinal unit (see the third row of the Table 6, and below).<sup>32</sup> Despite the exact spatial delimitation of the five medicinal units in the *mendrup* recipe, in actual composition of the medicine the units were not that strictly differentiated—an ingredient listed for a certain cardinal point could be placed into vessels of several points, depending on Amchi Nyima’s judgment (Sehnalova 2019, Photo 4). Thus, one ingredient could in practice appear in several directions of the mandala. This diversion from the formula and the ritual scripture was not perceived to diminish the potency of the *mendrup* medicine and ritual. Also, in 2012, a few additional ingredients not found in the recipe were included into the *mendrup* medicine, following oral teachings of Yongdzin Rinpoche, to further enhance the overall potency and efficacy (ibid, Photo 4).

A caveat has to be added here. The classification and derived nomenclature of the Sowa Rigpa system does not easily correspond to the ‘Western’ scientific and modern Linnaean binomial system. Therefore, linking a certain Tibetan name of a Sowa Rigpa substance to an entity defined by a Latin binomial term proves very problematic (Clark 2000; Glover 2005; van der Valk 2017). Frequently, the identification of a Sowa Rigpa substance is determined regionally by distinct flora or fauna, with variation across dialects, individual usage, and education (Boesi 2007: 6-7; Schwabl and van der Valk 2019). Different Sowa Rigpa practitioners would thus identify some *materia medica* differently from the point of view of the Western system. The rendering of the *mendrup* recipe presented in Table 6 reflects its reading by Amchi Nyima for the *Light-Swirled Mendrup* performance in 2012.

## The Mendrup Medicinal Mandala

The *mendrup* formula is clearly structured into five functional units based on the five elements and associated with the five cardinal points. Each unit itself is titled ‘medicine’ and exercises specific characteristics and potencies. Each unit also acquires its own name which reflects some of its characteristics (Table 6). ‘The root medicine’ (*rtsa ba’i sman*) appears in the Center, ‘the purifying and generating medicine’ (*skyed cing dag pa’i sman*) in the East, ‘the lifting and light medicine’ (*’degs shing yang pa rlung gi sman*) in the North, ‘the heavy fire medicine’ (*lci ba me’i sman*) occupies the West, and ‘the cold and cooling water medicine’ (*drang zhing bsil ba chu yi sman*) is found in the South. The ‘medicine’ of each unit is in accordance with the particular element and properties of the cardinal point it is associated with, and is *de facto* their produce. Each of the five units of the recipe contains substances of similar therapeutic effects aimed at balancing a certain element or elements and the ensuing *nyépa* in the body.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, in the soteriological discourse of the *mendrup* ritual, the medicine of each cardinal point is also supposed to eliminate one of the five mental poisons that draw sentient beings into the cycle of rebirth, or *samsara* (Skt. *saṃsāra*, Tib. *’khor ba*). As the recipe explicitly states, the central medicine removes anger (*zhe sdang*), the eastern ignorance (*gti mug*), the northern pride (*nga rgyal*), the western desire (*’dod chags*), and the southern jealousy (*’phrag dog*).<sup>34</sup>

### The Center

The ‘root medicine’ of the all-pervasive element of space in the Center exercises the three myrobalan fruits (*’bras bu gsum*), which are the supreme and fundamental ingredients of Sowa Rigpa.<sup>35</sup> They are used in many medicinal formulas, are regarded as extremely efficacious, and are an active triple compound understood to equilibrate all the three *nyépa*. Among them, the most valued is chebulic myrobalan (*a ru ra*), the tradition’s panacea, taken to embody all the possible properties of all existing substances and medicines. In the *mendrup* text, together with belleric myrobalan (*ba ru ra*), emblic myrobalan (*skyu ru ra*), and the ‘six good substances,’ it represents all of the central Sowa Rigpa parameters: six tastes, three post-digestive tastes, eight medicinal potencies, as well as all characters: cooling, neutral, warming. Therefore, this group also suggests all desirable therapeutic effects elicited by them.

According to Sowa Rigpa *menjor*, the three myrobalan fruits in combination mainly balance the bodily forces of *tripa* and *béken*, blood, and lymph disorders. The bodily force of *lung* is covered by chebulic myrobalan, and also by the adjoined *shing kun* (*Ferula asafoetida*, *asafoetida*),

a typical medicine for excess of the wind element and particularly ‘heart wind’ (*snying rlung*). In clinical practice, the ‘six good substances’ are typically applied to treat the five vital organs: *cu gang*, on this occasion read as kaolin, is supposedly good for the lungs; *gur gum*, here likely saffron and safflower for the liver; nutmeg for the heart; lesser cardamom for the kidneys; and greater cardamom for the spleen. The sixth, clove, is included to support blood vessels and nerves (Cardi 2005-2006: 104), and is also supposed to treat the ‘central channel’ (*srog rtsa*; Gawé Dorjé 1995). If the medicinal properties of the six substances are taken into account, half of them are sweet and cooling, the other half hot and warming, by which they comprise a balanced whole similar to ‘the three fruits.’ Thus, the *materia medica* at the center of the mandala is fundamental and covers all major disease categories and vital organs. The central position is further accentuated by the ritual mandalic pattern, both visual and textual, in which the Center is always principal and initial. In practice, if possible, this key part of the recipe should always be fulfilled and should not be omitted or substituted. It is perceived to guarantee the efficacy of the entire *mendrup* medicinal mixture.<sup>36</sup>

### The East

The mandalic direction of the East boasts its ‘purifying and generating medicine’ of predominantly bitter and sweet, and thus cooling and neutral ingredients, to treat the imbalance of the heating bodily force of *tripa* invoked by the element of fire. It contains the three types of *thar nu* (*Euphorbia sp.*, spurge), which become very strong once combined, causing diarrhea and cleansing the organism.<sup>37</sup> Purgation is also a cleansing technique for the excess of *tripa*, as is *’khur mang* (*Taraxacum sp.*, dandelion) a valued medicine for the same.<sup>38</sup> The element of the East is earth, and its associated *nyépa* is therefore *béken* composed of earth and water. The eastern medicine of the *mendrup* bears their cold characteristics, and can therefore overcome disorders of hot nature caused by fire and *tripa*.

### The North

The ‘lifting and light medicine’ of the North is similar to that of the East by being mostly sweet and bitter in taste and cooling or neutral in character. However, it is also close to warming. The medicine of the East associated with *béken* is cold, whereas the medicine of the North is linked to *lung*, and is a bit warming, reflecting the *lung*’s neutral nature being both cool and warm, with a prevalence of coolness. By its light and cooling qualities, the northern *mendrup lung* medicine treats the disequilibrium of the hot *tripa* caused by fire, as well as of the heavy *béken* generated

by earth and water.<sup>39</sup> Honey and the additional *a'u rtsi* (*Fritillaria spp.*, fritillary) are moreover understood to overcome poison (*dug*),<sup>40</sup> which is also one of the generally articulated benefits of the *mendrup* medicine.

### The West

In the West, the element of fire ignites 'the heavy fire medicine' that is related to the hotness of *tripa*. The medicine is mainly of salty and hot taste and thus of a warming character, healing the forces of *lung* and *béken*, stabilizing the elements of wind, earth, and water, and reinforcing the 'digestive heat' (*me drod*, literally 'fire heat').<sup>41</sup> The several cooling ingredients in the list are virtually all perceived to cleanse poison: the *spang spos* valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*),<sup>42</sup> mercury (*ra sa ya na*),<sup>43</sup> *gzi ma byin tshor* when read as *byi tsher* (*Morina alba*; however, once read as *gze ma*, *Tribulus terrestris*, the ingredient is warming, see Table 6), (Gawé Dorjé 1995; Lozang Dorjé 2007). and *ga sho* (*Cremanthodium sp.*) (Gawé Dorjé 1995: 193-194). To these substances, warming garlic (*sgog pa*, *Allium sp.*) is added, also supposed to help overcome poisoning (ibid: 194). Three kinds of incense bearing a cooling character can also be inserted to represent the element of space in the West, in order to comply with the inner organization of the remedy. The western field of the mandala hosts a larger number of ingredients than the other points.

### The South

The South arises from the element of water, and hence is chilling. It produces 'the cold and cooling water medicine' related to *béken* and its qualities. The *mendrup* substances here are clearly prevalently cooling in nature, as exemplified by camphor (*ga pur*, also *ga bur*). They primarily balance the hot *tripa* and fire, as well as the light *lung* bodily force and wind element.<sup>44</sup> Pomegranate (*sda ru*, *Punica granatum*) is warming mainly for the desirably strong 'digestive heat,' and not for the body as such (ibid), which might explain its presence in this quarter. It is considered a very important and effective medicine for this application, and thus its inclusion into the *mendrup* comes as no surprise. The two possible alternative readings of two items (*sro ma ra tsa*, *g.yu shing*) proposing the involvement of *Cannabis sativa* (hemp) and *Cyananthus spp.*,<sup>45</sup> do not accord with the southern cardinal point and its cooling properties, so are likely inaccurate. Amchi Nyima did not even consider such readings. The South displays the highest count of ingredients among the directions. In this respect, the West and the South seem to act as the strongest forces in harmonizing the overall character of the *mendrup* medicine as a whole: the West brings in warmth and the South coolness.

### The Five Elements

The association of the five directions of the *mendrup* mandala with the five elements distinctly determines the properties of their five medicines,<sup>46</sup> and at the same time the relevant bodily force similarly formed by the element. For instance, the fire in the West provokes both a warming remedy and the hot *tripa* force. In this case, the medicine associated with *tripa* is in the given context colloquially referred to as simply 'tripa medicine.' It does not denote a cooling medicine for the treatment of *tripa* as is common in the Sowa Rigpa discourse and in Amchi Nyima's usual clinical understanding, but *materia medica* sharing the properties of *tripa*. In the *mendrup*, the five medicinal units of the cardinal points are named after the *nyépa* that they share properties with, rather than those which they should heal. For example, the 'tripa medicine' of the *mendrup* comes from the element of fire and is hot by nature, exactly as the bodily force of *tripa*. This wording seems to be specific to the *mendrup*, and causes confusion among Sowa Rigpa practitioners not familiar with it. For instance, in order to balance excessive *tripa*, the medicines of the cardinal points bearing opposite properties have to be applied: the cooling medicine of the South and East connected to *béken*, and of the North derived from *lung*.<sup>47</sup>

Notably, the element of space, fundamental to the *mendrup* mandala and medicine, is usually not of practical importance in conventional Sowa Rigpa *menjor*. In the *mendrup*, it acquires its important position due to the ritual's fivefold pattern in which it finds its place along with the four elements crucial to Sowa Rigpa, moreover, due to its centrality in the ritual pattern: the element space occupies the Center of the mandala. Furthermore, its substances are crucial to the ritual and embody all its potencies. As Amchi Nyima explained, they also constitute a balanced unit of their own that can work independently without additions, for example, in case other *mendrup* ingredients cannot be acquired. In Sowa Rigpa, the space element is perceived as all-pervasive, infusing the body and thought.<sup>48</sup> It can treat disorders triggered by the imbalance of all three *nyépa* combined. The space element similarly appears in the *mendrup*, being placed in the Center and pervading the other cardinal points, of which each has certain *materia medica* of the space element placed among its other ingredients. This feature is not explicitly stated in the *mendrup* text, yet is presented in the chief commentary on the ritual composed by the important Bonpo master, Nyö Tsültrim Gyeltsen (Gnyos Tshul khri ms rgyal mtshan) in the fourteenth century.<sup>49</sup> According to this work, the respective spatial ingredients are chebulic myrobalan in the Center, *du rum skad phyad* (spurge) in the East, *du ru ka* and *po so 'cha'* in the North, three types of incense in the

West, and *ga pur* (camphor) for the South. As the unit of the medicine of space is principal to the *mendrup* mixture, these substances of space occupy the primary position within their clusters (see the third row of Table 6). This hierarchical distribution further strengthens the significance and potency of the element of space.

### Conclusion: Potency in Spatiality

The Bonpo *Light-Swirled Mendrup* organizes phenomena, such as the five elements, into the structuring cosmological fivefold device of a mandala. Correspondingly, based on the five elements, Sowa Rigpa concepts and pharmacological parameters—such as taste and potencies of substances which are associated with the three bodily forces *nyépa*, and their therapeutic effects—are allocated into the respective five areas of the mandala. The mandalic cosmological scheme governs the internal structure of the *mendrup* ritual and its ritual *materia medica*. All these features are well apparent in ethnographic observations of practical conduction of the rite, in texts used during the practice, as well as in interviews with the participants. The article has aimed at demonstrating this spatial element of the ritual practice as an important agent in constructing potency.

The groupings of the *mendrup* substances within the mandala imply a certain ritual classification of *materia medica*. The mandalic model itself is a classificatory system by principle, employed in ritual to encompass, represent, and structure the cosmos (Brauen 1997; Martin 1994). Classifications of the natural world depend on cultural, social, and environmental contexts (Berlin 1992; Boesi 2007; Ellen 1986; Glover 2005), as well as the utility of the recognized entities (Ellen 1993; Glover 2005; Hunn 1982; Morris 1984). In the case of *mendrup*, the context of structuring the universe is ritual, religious, and cosmological. The distinguishing criteria of categorization in the *mendrup* are the five elements. From these elements, the entire universe and the five distinct units of *mendrup* medicine of the mandalic cardinal points are perceived to originate, along with their resulting tastes, properties, and healing potential. The groupings are therefore based on their medicinal effect and potency. It is the therapeutic benefits of the substances and their five units, generated by the underlying cosmological principles of the five elements, that separate them into their categories. The *mendrup* classificatory organization follows the fundamental Sowa Rigpa principles, with the actual categorization of diseases inherently derived from the elements and the three *nyépa*. The individual *nyépa*, evolving from the elements, in a state of imbalance give rise to distinct diseases, according to which remedies are then grouped. Likewise, the *mendrup*

ritual forms units or classes of medicines applicable to treating disorders induced by the elements. The medicinal units of the *mendrup* stabilize the elements and subsequent disorders opposed to the element of its own. The central medicinal unit then exerts all possible medicinal potencies, and therefore has universal therapeutic effects.

The classification of *materia medica* according to their potency and overall character is the most common in current Sowa Rigpa practice (Glover 2005), and is also probably the oldest among other possible classifications, already occurring in the *Gyüzhi* around the twelfth century (Boesi 2006: 70; Glover 2005: 183-184). The *Light-Swirled Mendrup* can be dated to roughly the same period, and interestingly shares this aspect with the *Gyüzhi*. Moreover, the *Gyüzhi* also organizes the classification based on potency spatially and in the framework of a mandala. The Bonpo *Bumzhi* treatise also shares the *materia medica* classification according to potency (Chébu Trishé 2005; Millard 2002). Nevertheless, to my knowledge and in contrast to the *Gyüzhi*, it does not postulate such a cosmological order of *materia medica*. Even so, in the Bonpo tradition, the *mendrup* ritual does expose how Sowa Rigpa categories are mapped onto ritual cosmologies. The *mendrup* further perfects this medical ritual interface to reveal the various layers of potencies that co-exist in this practice.

In the *mendrup* ritual, the categories of *menjor* properties, their medicinal *nüpa*, and hence derived medicinal categories, are also spatially visualized and defined. The aspect of spatiality is preeminent in the ritual and the organization of its medicinal blend. The entire ritual action is focused on the mandala and the medicine it contains. The substances of the *mendrup* medicine are physically situated into the distinctive cardinal points according to their properties. However, since in practice they can be placed into several points, it is also the symbolic value of the mandala that contributes to their potency rather than their strict actual spatiality within the mandala. Some substances are represented rather symbolically and perceived to be physically present in the ‘fermenting agent,’ when they are excluded from the preparation of the medicine. The potency and efficacy of the *mendrup* medicine and rite would increase were they included. Nevertheless, their absence can be balanced by the other ritual actors. It is also balanced by the inclusion of additional unlisted substances. The potency of the medicine and rite is a fragile matter of balancing and layering the different holders and activators of potency in play.

The core of the mandala is its Center, associated with the all-extending element of space, bearing all the medicinal potencies and therapeutic effects with the potential to heal

all disorders. The fifth element of space, accompanying the other four elements, occupies the central position to comply with the fivefold arrangement. Yet, its position also reveals its importance. The central unit of the *mendrup* medicine is the hierarchically highest and holds the primary place in the formula. The precious treasure vessel carrying the *paṭa* ‘fermenting agent’ occupies the Center, too. Both the central medicine and the *paṭa* are absolutely crucial to the conduct of the ritual and guarantee its efficacy. In the ritual mandalic scheme, the point of the Center is the axis of the universe; in the *mendrup* medicine the Center is its pivotal constituent. The Center and the element of space also maintain their ritual importance and leading role by pervading the four subordinated lateral cardinal points and their medicines. In each point, certain ingredients are supposed to derive from the element of space. The potency of the *mendrup* ritual thus evolves from the Center of the mandala, similar to the medicinal potencies that derive from the Medicine Buddha in the Center of his mandalized realm as described in the beginning of the *Gyūzhi*. Both instances illustrate the ‘centrality of the Center’ and hence of spatiality in the construction of both medical and ritual potency.

The space element, therefore, plays the main role in the potency and efficacy of the *mendrup* ritual and medicine. This somehow stands in contrast to the Sowa Rigpa conception of potency and the overall character of substances found in the *Gyūzhi* and *Bumzhi* treatises. Accordingly, only the four elements of earth, wind, fire, and water (without the space), form the six different tastes, from which the post-digestive tastes are subsequently induced. By their qualities, only the four elements constitute the eight medicinal potencies. In the Sowa Rigpa discourse, the four elements are sufficient to cover all medicinal characteristics and thus healing benefits. However, space then underlines the four elements by pervading them. Similarly, in the *mendrup*, it is the Center of the mandala and its space element that encompasses all: all of the tastes and potencies. The lateral points and their mixtures, in the same manner respectively, stem from the four elements of earth, wind, fire, and water, and are firmly distributed within the points. From the emic Bonpo perspective, the pharmacological properties and healing effects of the substances in all points depend on their spatial arrangement within the ritual. This particular spatial representation of *materia medica* seems to be unique to the *mendrup* ritual. When comparing the *mendrup* with the *Gyūzhi* and *Bumzhi*, the elements have different positions in relation to potency. The *mendrup* ritual context embraces its own arrangement of spatial distribution in generating potency. Moreover, the classification of *materia*

*medica* of the *mendrup* achieves a more detailed and universalistic spatial visualization of potency and *materia medica* than both the treatises.

The mandalic model in the case studied follows the Bonpo order and characterization of the cardinal points, which is different from that of Buddhist ritual. In the Buddhist context, the procession of the points would be clockwise: from the Center to the East, and then to the South, West, and North. Concerning the characteristics of the points, for instance, the South would usually be of yellow color and warming (Brauen 1997; Hofer 2014). Further comparative research with other Bonpo and Buddhist *mendrup* rites and related practices, such as consecrations of precious pills and practices of ‘essence extraction’ (*bcud len*), might reveal different ideas of potency and spatiality. The different cases of spatial ritual patterns of cosmological representations arranging *materia medica* and related ritual power objects suggest they are closely interlinked in various ritual practices in Tibet, especially those related to healing and longevity. It also suggests a likely close relationship between medical practice, ritual, and tantric teachings in Tibet in the period of origin of the Bonpo *mendrup* studied here—in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries—and Buddhist *mendrup* rites (Cantwell 2017; Garrett 2009, 2010), and the *Gyūzhi* treatise. The spatiality and mandalic conception of potency in the opening pages of the *Gyūzhi* might be similarly derived from the same pool of knowledge merging the given different fields of expertise. It can also be pointing to a possible ritual background of the Sowa Rigpa.

The Bonpo *Light-Swirled Mendrup* seems to have constructed this structure of potency through its fivefold mandalic scheme typical of tantric ritual. In the ritual, the medical and ritual tantric discourse have merged into one unique complex, exemplified by the pattern of the mandala into which Sowa Rigpa concepts and pharmacology are allocated. Amchi Nyima arranged the consecrated medicines into the mandala based on his experience of clinical practice and the medicinal potencies of the substances (*ngo bo, rang bzhin*). The abbot Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung then led the congregation of practitioners to visualize the ritual’s cosmological space, its deities and the particular medicines associated with them. The mandalic space was also physically extended by the dance of Eight Goddesses of the mandala, each brandishing a specific part of the *mendrup* medicinal blend. The ritual space is one of the contributors to the spiritual and healing potency of the *mendrup* rite and medicine. The substances of Sowa Rigpa and other ritual objects used, each with their own potency (*rdzas kyi nus pa*), are

correlated to the cosmological pattern of the rite, the mandala, thus enhancing the potency. The potency and efficacy of the ritual and its medicine are further dependent and enhanced by the other various actors and the act of 'accomplishment.' The Bonpos articulate that their combination of the medical and ritual produces a joint, greater potency simply called 'great potency.' The *mendrup* medicinal mixture acts as a whole, as a total of different layers of potency and their actions centered around the particular units of the five directions of the mandala. Due to this ritualized encompassing universal pattern, the *mendrup* ritual and medicine are believed to be extremely potent and heal on mental, physical, and soteriological levels leading towards awakening.

The article has demonstrated the varied actors of ritual potency, with the focus on ritual space, as well as the interdisciplinary entanglements these actors may depend on. Various spheres of knowledge, such as philosophy, medicine, botany, and pharmacy, can overlap within ritual frameworks, both in their theory and practice, and in great expertise, minute and exact detail. They become fully integrated into the inner structure of the ritual. The Bonpo *Light-Swirled Mendrup* is embedded in Tibetan tantra, yet borrows heavily from medical and philosophical traditions. In its rather intriguing medicinal recipe every item has its place and justification, following the mandalic organizational scheme and the conventions of the given integrated disciplines. The practical handling and application of the recipe for the composition of the ritual medicine opens issues of (ritual) knowledge transmission within Bonpo lineages of teachings specifically, and in general. It reveals the considerable flexibility of interpretation of the ritual formula, and the agency of innovation and alternation the ritual practitioners exercise. It also reveals the instantiability and changeability of the practice and its medicine, and the space for individual authority and momentary invention in this process. This thus unveils the versatility and adaptability of ritual practice in general, and the necessity of looking at actual ritual practice when working with ritual texts. Every performance of a ritual is a specific fluid instantiation of its rather rigid scriptures in practice.

The 'interdisciplinary leaping' within composed ritual practices, such as in the *Light-Swirled Mendrup*, might be more common than is usually acknowledged in academic literature. We ought to consider viewing rituals as potential troves of varied fields of knowledge to gain better understanding not only of ritual practices but also of these fields themselves along with their historical developments. In this case, the *mendrup* suggests likely strong ritual aspects of the Sowa rigpa tradition in the times of its

formation, or at least its strong ties to ritual practice. The *mendrup* example proves that ritual organizational frameworks and schemes of ritual potency exercise great ability to absorb and incorporate multiple fields of knowledge at once and in different arrangements. This ability also becomes reflected in ritual paraphernalia and produced, empowered, and consecrated substances, and in their internal organization. Since we deal with complex unities of knowledge spheres, we also deal with complex unities of potency and efficacy derived from these knowledge spheres. This article contributes to the understanding of spatiality, ritual space, and ritually organizational schemes for potency within these unities.



Table 5. Diagram of the *Mendrup* Medicinal Mandala



The main encompassing circle symbolizes the mandala of the *Light-Swirled Mendrup* ritual. The smaller circles represent the medicinal vessels of the respective cardinal and intermediate points of the mandala. The vessels in the five main points bear the colors of the cardinal directions and their associated elements: the white vessel is in the Center, the yellow in the East, the green in the North, the red in the West, and the blue occupies the South. The medicinal containers in the four intermediate directions are of yellow (here light orange) color and hold the complete mixture of the *mendrup* medicine. Each vessel accommodates its prescribed substances according to the *mendrup* recipe text. Only those understood and included into the observed *mendrup* ritual are listed here; for more details, refer to Table 6. In some cases, several Tibetan ingredients were identified with the same Latin botanical scientific name. The receptacle of the *papta* 'fermenting agent' is placed into the Center. The overall layout featuring the West at the top follows the norms of Tibetan visual depictions of mandalas.

Table 6. Cardinal Points of the *Mendrup* Mandala and their Medicinal Ingredients and Potencies

Center <i>dbus</i>	East <i>shar</i>	North <i>byang</i>	West <i>nub</i>	South <i>lho</i>
The root medicine: The assembly of tastes, the assembly of essence ( <i>bcud</i> ), the assembly of potencies, the assembly of after tastes:	The purifying and generating medicine:	The lifting and light medicine:	The heavy fire medicine:	<i>béken</i> (earth, water)
<i>a ru ra nram par rgyal ba</i> : <b>chebulic myrobalan</b> ( <i>Terminalia chebula</i> ) all six tastes, all eight potencies, all post-digestive tastes, potentially all characters: cooling, neutral, warming	<i>mang ther nu / du rum skad phyad</i> : <sup>50</sup> <b>spurge</b> ( <i>Euphorbia</i> sp.) taste: sweet to hot; character: cooling	<i>du ru ska na / du ru ka</i> (Comm.): <b>resin of olibanum tree</b> ( <i>Boswellia</i> sp.) sweet; warming	<i>spos snag gsum</i> : <b>three kinds of incenses</b> i. <i>rgya spos</i> (Comm.): <b>valerian</b> ( <i>Valeriana officinalis</i> ) bitter, bitter to hot; cooling ii. <i>spang spos</i> (Comm.): <b>valerian</b> ( <i>Nardostachys grandiflora</i> ) bitter; cooling iii. <i>brag spos</i> (Comm.): <b>Lepisorus soulieanus</b> bitter; cooling	<i>ga pur</i> : <b>camphor</b> bitter, hot, astringent; cooling
<i>ba ru ra g.yug 'dral</i> : <b>belleric myrobalan</b> ( <i>Terminalia bellerica</i> ) astringent, little sour; neutral	<i>du nu phro / sngon bu g.yu sna</i> : <b>Cyananthus spp.</b> sweet to hot; warming	<i>so 'cha' / po so 'cha</i> (Comm.): A plant I could not identify. <sup>51</sup>	<i>tshwa snag gsum</i> : <b>three kinds of salt</b> i. <i>rgya tshā</i> (Comm.): <b>sal ammoniac</b> salty to bitter and hot; warming ii. <i>rgyam tshā</i> (Comm.): <b>rock salt (halite)</b> salty, sweet; warming to neutral iii. <i>kha ru tshā</i> (Comm.): <b>natural halite</b> ( <i>Halitum violaceum</i> ) salty; warming	<i>sro ma ra tsa / so ma ra dza</i> (Comm.): <b>musk okra</b> ( <i>Abelmoschus moschatus</i> ) hot, sweet; cooling Alt.: <i>sro ma ra tsa</i> : hemp ( <i>Cannabis sativa</i> ) sweet; neutral
<i>skyu ru ra</i> : <b>emblic myrobalan</b> ( <i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> ) sour and astringent to sweet; cooling	<i>mang bu phrum / ther nu zhes chen / thar nu che ba</i> (Comm.): <b>spurge</b> ( <i>Euphorbia</i> sp.) sweet to hot; cooling	<i>'bu ta pa 'dren / dri rta sa 'dzin</i> (Comm.) / <i>bu ta sa 'dren</i> (oral): <b>strawberry</b> ( <i>Fragaria</i> sp.) sweet, bitter; cooling A: <i>'bu ta pa 'dren</i> : <i>Lagotis brachystachya</i> (?) <sup>52</sup> sweet; cooling	<i>bu ram</i> : <b>sugarcane molasses</b> ( <i>Saccharum officinarum</i> ) sweet; warming	<i>ba sha / ba sha ka</i> (Comm.): <b>malabar nut</b> ( <i>Justicia adhatoda</i> ) bitter; cooling

Table 6. (cont.)

<p><i>shing kun</i>: <b>resin of asafoetida</b> (<i>Ferula asafoetida</i>) hot; warming</p>	<p><i>skyes bu phrum / thar nu chung ba</i>: <b>spurge</b> (<i>Euphorbia sp.</i>) sweet to hot; cooling</p>	<p><i>rtsi snga srin gyi 'bras</i>: Not understood by Amchi Nyima and omitted.</p>	<p><i>gzhi mo</i>: Not understood and omitted.</p>	<p><i>ba le / ba le ka</i> (Comm.): <b>birthwort</b> (<i>Aristolochia sp.</i>) bitter; cooling</p>
<p><i>bzang po drug</i>: <b>six good [substances]</b> i. <i>cu gang</i>: <b>kaolin</b> sweet; cooling Alt.: <i>cu gang</i>: bamboo pith (<i>Bambusoideae</i>) sweet; cooling ii. <i>gur gum</i>: <b>saffron</b> (<i>Crocus sativus</i>)<sup>53</sup> sweet; cooling A: <i>bal gur gum</i>: <b>safflower</b> (<i>Carthamus tinctorius</i>)<sup>54</sup> sweet; cooling iii. <i>li shi</i>: <b>clove</b> (<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i>) hot; warming iv. <i>dzā ti</i>: <b>nutmeg</b> (<i>Myristica fragrans</i>) hot; warming v. <i>sug smel</i>: <b>cardamom</b> (<i>Amomum compactum</i>) hot; warming vi. <i>ka ko la</i>: <b>greater cardamom / black cardamom</b> (<i>Amomum subulatum</i>) hot; warming</p>	<p><i>'khur mang / khur mang</i> (Comm.): <b>dandelion</b> (<i>Taraxacum sp.</i>) bitter; cooling</p>	<p><i>shing kyi ba'i 'bras bu dang / nang gser sgong</i> (Comm.): <b>wild indigo</b> (<i>Sophora davidii</i>) bitter; cooling</p>	<p><i>ma nu</i><sup>55</sup> / <i>ma nu ru ta</i> (Comm.) / <i>ma nu pa tra</i> (oral): <b>Inula racemosa</b> sweet and bitter to hot; warming to neutral</p>	<p><i>g.yu shing / 'om bu</i> (oral): i. <b>tamarisk</b> (<i>Myricaria</i>) astringent; cooling Alt.: ii. <i>g.yu shing / sngon bu</i>: <i>Cyananthus spp.</i> sweet to hot; warming Alt.: iii. <i>stab seng</i>: <i>Fraxinus spp.</i><sup>56</sup> bitter to astringent; cooling</p>
	<p><i>mtshe / mtshe ldum</i> (Comm.): <b>ephedra</b> (<i>Ephedra sp.</i>) bitter, astringent; cooling</p>	<p><i>rgya skag / rgya skags</i> (Comm.): <b>red lac</b> bitter; cooling</p>	<p><i>la la phud</i>: <b>fennel</b> (<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>) sweet, hot; warming</p>	<p><i>rgun 'bum / rgun 'brum</i> (Comm.): <b>wine grapes</b> (<i>Vitis vinifera</i>) sweet; cooling A: <i>rgun 'bum / rgun 'brum</i> (Comm.): juniper (<i>Juniperus sp.</i>) bitter; cooling</p>

Table 6. (cont.)

	<p><i>shug pa</i>: <b>juniper</b> (<i>Juniperus sp.</i>) bitter; cooling</p>	<p><i>spang ma</i>: <b>juniper</b> (<i>Juniperus sp.</i>) bitter; cooling Alt.: ii. <i>spang ma</i>: malachite<sup>57</sup> sweet; cooling Alt.: iii. <i>spang ma</i>: (<i>spang rgyan</i>),<sup>58</sup> gentian (<i>Gentiana spp.</i>) astringent, bitter; cooling Alt.: iv. <i>spang ma</i>: (<i>spang spos</i>),<sup>59</sup> <i>Pterocephalus</i> <i>spp.</i> bitter; cooling</p>	<p><i>shing kun</i>: <b>asafoetida</b> (<i>Ferula asafoetida</i>) hot; warming</p>	<p><i>sda ru / sda ru</i> (Comm.) / <i>se 'bru</i> (oral): <b>pomegranate</b> (<i>Punica granatum</i>) sweet or sour; warming</p>
	<p><i>chud bu</i>: A plant I could not identify.</p>	<p><i>sbrang rtsi</i>: <b>honey</b> sweet; neutral to warming</p>	<p><i>ra sa ya na</i>: read as <b>mercury</b>, detoxified mercury ash (<i>brtso bkru</i>) included hot; cooling</p>	<p><i>gla rtsi</i>: musk<sup>60</sup> bitter; cooling S: <i>ldum gla rtsi</i>: <b>Delphinium sp.</b> bitter, hot; cooling</p>
	<p><i>lcam bur</i>: <b>mallow</b> (<i>Malva sp.</i>) sweet, astringent; cooling</p>	<p><i>a ma bi la la len / a bi ka</i> (oral) / <i>a bi kha</i> (oral): <b>fritillary</b> (<i>Fritillaria sp.</i>) sweet; cooling A: <i>a ma bi la la len / a'u rtsi</i> (oral): fritillary (<i>Fritillaria sp.</i>) bitter, sweet; cooling</p>	<p><i>gzi ma byin tshor / gzi ma byin tsher</i> (Comm.) – Alt.: alternative readings (the first two by Amchi Nyima, the third based on dictionaries<sup>61</sup>): i. <i>byi thur</i>: porcupine pines S: ii. <i>byi tsher</i> (oral): <b>Morina sp.</b> bitter; cooling Alt.: iii. <i>gze ma</i> (oral): <i>Tribulus terrestris</i><sup>62</sup> sweet; warming</p>	<p><i>ha li ka / ha lo</i> (oral) / <i>ha lo lcam pa</i> (oral) / <i>me tog ha lo</i> (oral) / <i>ha lo ldum bu</i> (oral): <b>mallow</b> (<i>Althaea sp. / Malva sp.</i>) sweet, astringent; cooling</p>
	<p><i>li do ka / li ga dur</i> (Comm.) / <i>ga dur</i> (oral): <b>geranium</b> (<i>Geranium sp.</i>) sweet, astringent; neutral</p>		<p><i>nyi shing snum can / nyer shing</i> (Comm.): <b>asparagus</b> (<i>Asparagus sp.</i>) sweet, bitter, astringent; warming</p>	<p><i>sum cu tig tig / sum cu tig ta</i> (Comm.): <b>saxifrage</b> (<i>Saxifraga sp.</i>) bitter; cooling</p>

Table 6. (cont.)

			<i>bal bu sur bu</i> : <b>rhododendron</b> ( <i>Rhododendron sp.</i> ) sweet, astringent; warming	<i>ka ta ka ri / kan d+ha ka ri</i> (Comm.): <b>black-berry</b> ( <i>Rubus sp.</i> ) sweet, astringent, hot; cooling
			<i>ga sho</i> : <b>Cremanthodium sp.</b> bitter to hot; cooling	<i>sle tre / sle tres</i> (oral): <b>moonseed</b> ( <i>Tinospora sinensis</i> ) sweet, bitter, astringent, hot; cooling
			<i>lcam thod dkar</i> : <b>mallow</b> ( <i>Malva sp.</i> ) sweet, astringent; cooling	<i>brag zhun</i> : <b>bitumen</b> bitter, sweet, astringent; cooling to neutral
			<i>sgog pa</i> : <b>garlic</b> ( <i>Allium sp.</i> ) hot; warming	<i>cong zi / cong zhi</i> (Comm.): <b>calcite</b> sweet; neutral
			<i>mu zi</i> : <b>sulfur</b> sweet; warming	<i>sho sha rta / sha pho ru ta</i> (Comm.) / <i>ru ta</i> (oral): <b>Aucklandia lappa</b> bitter to hot; warming
				<i>u dpal</i> : <b>Meconopsis sp.</b> sweet, astringent; cooling A: <i>u dpal / lug mig</i> (oral) / <i>me tog lug mig</i> (oral): <i>Asteraceae sp.</i> <sup>63</sup> bitter; cooling

The items have been identified by Linnaean names mostly by *genera* together with Amchi Nyima, either through plant samples *in situ* or later by photographs, and often by both.<sup>64</sup> Each box of Table 6 indicates one item listed in the *mendrup* recipe. The item can cover multiple substances, such as the six good [substances], the three kinds of incenses, or the three kinds of salt; or can be by the Amchi in practice fulfilled by several substances, as for instance *'bu ta pa 'dren* or *a ma bi la la len*. In cases where one ingredient has several distinctive appellations, either in the *mendrup* text or in Amchi Nyima's reading, all have been listed. For each ingredient, its two Sowa Rigpa medicinal characteristics, taste and character, are stated as identified by Amchi Nyima and his favored medicinal simples work (*trungpé, 'khrungs dpe*), *The Stainless Crystal Mirror* (Gawé Dorjé 1995).<sup>65</sup> Apart from the case of chebulic myrobalan, in all instances these two categories (taste and character) were considered sufficient to demonstrate the key properties.

#### Abbreviations of Table 6:

Comm.: Identification based on Amchi Nyima's commentary (Nyima Gurung 2012).

Oral: Identification orally conferred by Amchi Nyima.

A: Addition: Substances added by Amchi Nyima in cases where he interpreted one listed item with two substances, i.e. a substance name to have two possible meanings.

S: Substitution.

Alt.: Alternative understandings of substances in other texts.

Spp.: Cases in which Amchi Nyima explicitly expressed the inclusion of potentially more species, as collection of the given plant at more locations and not a batch of the same specimen. This does not apply to examples of alternative readings based on dictionaries (such as *Gentiana spp.*, *Pterocephalus spp.* below).<sup>66</sup>

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## Endnotes

1. I use the terms 'pharmacology' and 'menjor' as defined by Gerke (2018: 186): "'pharmacology' refers to *menjor rikpa* (*smān sbyor rig pa*), a large field of knowledge comprising the study of *materia medica* (pharmacognosy) or *trungpe* (*khrung dpe*), as well as the compounding of medicine or *menjor* (*smān sbyor*)."
2. At first use, Tibetan phonetic terms are followed by their Wylie transliteration. Names of *materia medica* substances and other specialized terms are only given in the Wylie transliteration (Wylie 1958).
3. The etymology and other possible translations of the ritual's name can be found in Garrett (2009: 209) and Sehnalova (2018: 24-26).
4. The *mendrup* ritual is an elaborate and large monastic celebration categorized as a *drupchen* (*sgrub chen*), an extended communal tantric practice. For a *mendrup* in the Buddhist Nyingma (*rnying ma*) context see Cantwell (2015, 2017) and Garrett (2009, 2010). It is to be distinguished from smaller *mendrup* rites (Blaikie 2013, 2014; Blaikie et al. 2015; Craig 2011, 2012). For a *mendrup* in a Bonpo context see Cech (1987, 1988). Kind (2002) provided the first ethnographic study of a Bonpo *mendrup* in Dolpo, Nepal, which was also likely a *drupchen* celebration.
5. On efficacy in Sowa Rigpa see Adams (2010) and Craig (2012). On Tibetan ritual efficacy, see particularly Gentry (2017).
6. Alternatively, the 'medicine' can be referred to more explicitly as '*mendrup* medicine' (*smān sgrub kyi smān*) or also simply '*mendrup*' (*smān sgrub*). On the broad meaning of the word *smān* see Das (1902); Garrett (2009: 209); Sehnalova (2017: 144).
7. The same period of origin was attested for the *mendrup* rites of the Tibetan Nyingma Buddhist school (Cantwell 2017; Garrett, 2009, 2010).
8. On the monasteries mentioned, see Karmay and Nagano (2003: 29-33, 731-735, 736-740); Yamaguchi (2000).
9. In Menri in 1988 and 2009, in Tritten Norbutse in 1998 and 2012.
10. A more recent performance, in 2013, took place at the Bonpo Yungdrung Ling monastery (G.yung drung gling, founded 1834) in Central Tibet (A Pelzang 2013a, 2013b).
11. Among the various *mendrup* rituals of Bon, this one is typical of the teachings of Tashi Menri monastery and related institutions (Sehnalova 2018: 26-27).
12. Description of the ritual and preparations of its medicine can be found in Sehnalova (2015, 2017), and in more detail in Sehnalova (2013, 2018).
13. His civil name is Amchi Nyima Gurung. Amchi Nyima and his father have featured in academic studies: Gerke (2013: 125-126); Millard (2002, 2015); Sehnalova (2013, 2018). The term *amchi* (*am chi*) is a commonly used title and honorific address of Sowa Rigpa practitioners in Tibet.
14. See Sehnalova (2013, 2018).
15. To my knowledge only three versions exist, containing minor differences: 'Od zer 'khyil ba bdud rtsi smān gyi gzhung bzhugs lags s'ho (manuscript used at Tritten Norbutse monastery, also in 2012); 'Od zer 'khyil ba bdud rtsi smān gyi gzhung bzhugs pa lags sho (Karru Drupwang Trülku Tenpé Nyima 1998, vol. 168, text 1); 'Od zer 'khyil ba bdud rtsi smān gyi gzhung bzhugs pa'i dbus phyogs legs sho (Karru Drupwang Trülku Tenpé Nyima 1998, vol. 230, text 22). For comparison of these versions see Sehnalova (2013, 2018).
16. Cf. their depictions in Pönlop Rinpoche Tsangpa Tendzin et al. (2014). The main and concluding *mendrup* mandala can be seen in Namdak, Nagano, and Tachikawa (2000: 101).
17. The Goddesses are interpreted by the Bonpo as the Eight Offering Goddesses. The same concept appears in Buddhist *mendrup* and other tantric healing rites (Cantwell 2017; Garrett 2009: 213; Stablein 1976: 210).
18. Translated into English in Sehnalova (2015, 2018).

19. The sequence of the cardinal points in the Bon tradition proceeds anticlockwise, being an inversion of the Buddhist clockwise sequence (Center, East, South, West, North).
20. For further details on *papta* see Sehnalova (2013, 2018).
21. The concept of the eight classes of consciousness derives from the Indian Buddhist Yogācāra philosophical school (cf. Bowker 1997; Snellgrove 1987 (2002)).
22. Their role in Buddhist *mendrup* was studied by Garrett (2010).
23. For a full translation of the recipe, see Sehnalova (2013, 2018).
24. In practice, there are a number of exceptions. In Table 6 these are: *sbrang rtsi* (honey), *gze ma* (*Tribulus terrestris*), *nyi shing snum can / nye shing* (*Asparagus sp.*, asparagus), *bal bu sur bu* (*Rhododendron sp.*, rhododendron), and *mu zi* (sulfur).
25. Literally “generate, produce.” Das (1902). The tables follow Yutok Yönten Gönpo (2006: 62-63, 65-66).
26. Literally “cleanse, remove.” Das (1902).
27. The English rendering of the three bodily forces is not accurate, therefore I adhere to the Tibetan terms (Gerke 2014; Glover 2005). This section follows Gerke (2014); Hofer (2014); Meyer (1995, 2007); Yutok Yönten Gönpo (2006). For an explanation of the three bodily forces see Gerke (2014); Meyer (2007); Parfionovitch et al. (1992).
28. See for example Cardi (2005-2006: 103); Gerke (2014); Hofer (2014); Meyer (2007); Yutok Yönten Gönpo (2006).
29. For details on Amchi Nyima’s background and education see Millard (2002), Sehnalova (2013, 2018).
30. On the categories see Cardi (2005-2006: 92).
31. The importance of oral knowledge accompanying medicinal formularies of Sowa Rigpa was emphasized by Boesi (2006: 67). Adaptations of Sowa Rigpa medicinal formulas to actual conditions was as a historical practice mentioned by Cardi (2005-2006: 99).
32. The only exception is the point of the Center, where its epithet follows, and not precedes, the ingredients. However, in Table 6 I inserted it at the head of the column of the Center.
33. The same arrangement of common Sowa Rigpa formulas consisting of several units, which are aimed at respective particular targets in the body, was analyzed by Cardi (2005-2006).
34. The threefold set of mental poisons common in Sowa Rigpa, Tibetan ritual, and ontology (anger, ignorance, and desire), is extended in the *mendrup* to comply with the fivefold framework. This is a common practice in Tibetan tantric ritual.
35. Fenner (1979: 84) noted the same for the tantric alchemical *rasayana* (*ra sa ya na*) practices, as did Cantwell (2015: 64) for the Nyingma *mendrup* described.
36. In its centrality, the ‘root medicine’ corresponds in some aspects to the role of the chief functional unit of Sowa Rigpa remedies called ‘King’ (Cardi 2005-2006: 102).
37. Amchi Nyima, personal communication (Triten Norbutse, 2012; Oxford, 2013).
38. Jan van der Valk, personal email communication (March 2017).
39. Amchi Nyima, personal communication (Oxford, 2013); Gawé Dorjé (1995).
40. Ibid.
41. Amchi Nyima, personal communication (Oxford, 2013); Gawé Dorjé (1995).
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid: 43.
44. Gawé Dorjé (1995). However, if used in excess, *ga pur* is a typical example of a substance that increases *lung*. Jan van der Valk, personal email communication (March 2017).
45. The alternative readings are suggested based on Arya (1998); Gawé Dorjé (1995); Parfionovitch et al. (1992).
46. Cantwell (2015: 64-65) also noted the association of tastes with particular cardinal points in the *mendrup* she studied. In the Buddhist context, their distribution differs from the one here.
47. Amchi Nyima, personal communication (Oxford, 2013; Shenten Dargye Ling, 2014); Amchi Geshe Yungdrung Tashi (the main Sowa Rigpa practitioner in Menri monastery, India), personal communication (Menri, 2016).
48. Cf. Gerke (2014); Hofer (2014); Meyer (2007); Yutok Yönten Gönpo (2006).
49. Nyö Tsültrim Gyeltsen. *’Od zer ’khyil pa bdud rtsi yon tan gyi phyag bshes gsal byed me long bzhugs so*, MS Kathmandu, Triten Norbutse monastery, no number (attribution of the work in its colophon); Millard and Khenpo Tenpa Yungdrung (unpublished), provide an English translation.

50. For this and the four following plant names the *mendrup* recipe text provides two alternative names. In each case, the name on the first position was by Amchi considered the older, and possibly of Bonpo and acclaimed Zhangzhung origin. On Zhangzhung see Karmay 2007; Karmay and Nagano 2008; Kværne 1995.

51. As Amchi Nyima explains, there exist two types of *so 'cha'* or *po so 'cha'*: 1. the fruit (long thin legumen) of vegetable hummingbird (*Sesbania grandiflora*), a tree growing in hot places of lowland South Asia, 2. the root or tuber of a small parasitic plant of dark blue colour growing in South Himalayan mountain forests. Amchi Nyima collected the latter to include into the *mendrup* mixture.

52. Apart from strawberry, Amchi Nyima defined the term as denoting different kinds of small creeping plants, and pointed at *Lagotis brachystachya* in the Gawé Dorjé (1995) (this identification is in accordance with Parfionovitch et al. 1992).

53. The identification of *gur gum* as saffron remains problematic. The ingredient was bought as the most expensive of all (325 Nepali rupees/3,76 USD per gram, rate in December 2012) and its price suggests that it could have been real saffron. However, *gur gum*, unless specified as *kha che gur gum*, does not usually refer to *Crocus sativus* (Boesi 2007; Czaja 2018).

54. Identification based on Amchi Nyima's description and Jan van der Valk (personal communication, September 2018), also cf. Boesi (2007: 18); Czaja (2018).

55. The ingredient called *ma nu* is listed twice in the recipe, for the second time a few lines below. In this translation it is included only once.

56. Gawé Dorjé (1995).

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Fragrant substance extracted from the glands of musk deer, *Moschus moschiferus*.

61. Dakpa (2007); Zhang (1993).

62. Gawé Dorjé (1995).

63. The identification of *u dpal* as *Asteraceae* sp. is typical for the northern Byang school of Sowa Rigpa, and has been recorded also for the region of Dhorpatan (Boesi 2006: 93), where Amchi Nyima studied at the Bonpo exile medical school. Millard (2002) presented a study on the school.

64. Other works and dictionaries consulted: Arya (1998); Dakpa (2007); Das (1902); Meyer (2007); Lama, Ghimire and Aumeeruddy-Thomas (2001); Parfionovitch et al. (1992); Tsering Thakchoe Drungtso and Tsering Dolma Drungtso (2005). The identification itself was based on Amchi Nyima showing me the plants he used and then the main Western botanical field guide for the Himalayas (Polunin and Stainton 2009); a Western binomial ethnobotanical field guide focused on local Mustangi knowledge, in whose preparation Amchi Nyima took a significant part (Kletter and Kriechbaum 2001); further on my botanical knowledge (based on training for university students of Biology in the Czech Republic); a few cases were consulted (with the help of photographs) with botanist Dr. Magdalena Kubešová (Czech Academy of Sciences and Charles University, Prague). English names provided are based on Zicha (1999-2018) and "The International Plant Names Index" (2004).

65. This work represents the most commonly used modern Tibetan medical simples work. See Glover (2005: 191-194, 197-217); Hofer (2014: 244); and also Lozang Dorjé (2007).

66. For a detailed analysis of the *mendrup* recipe and its terms see Sehnalova (2013, 2018).

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