

49 moments of bardo THE ART OF LIFE, DEATH AND DYING in the Tibetan Buddhism

The Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw, Asian Gallery,
5 Freta Street
October 30, 2008 – February 2009

October in Poland has always atmosphere of preparations to the Catholic All Saints Day. In a hurry we are arranging graves of our relatives, sometimes giving that task to someone else due to the lack of time. During the routine shopping we are buying ever-burning fires, bowls of chrysanthemum… Following free days are passing by. Later we are back to our daily bustle. Less and less time is left for a thoughts but yet All Saints Day is related to the greatest mystery of our existence: mystery of death and dying.

I do hope that the exhibition “49 moments of bardo. THE ART OF LIFE, DEATH AND DYING in the Tibetan Buddhism” inaugurated at the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw just before that day, will induce us to start thinking about that mystery. I deeply believe in that. Death and the process of dying are the important parts of our life. Outstanding psychologist Wojciech Eichelberger wrote about that in the exhibition’s catalogue.

I have been always interested how people of other cultures and religions perceive the death and dying. I had many interesting discussions about the Buddhism with my friend Tadeusz Skorupski, professor of the University in London, director of the Buddhist Studies Institute in Tring, whom I hosted during the 70-ties at the time when I represented Poland in the Kingdom of Nepal. He talked about the journey of our consciousness (in Buddhism the individual spirit does not exist like it is in Christianity) and about bardo visions from the Tibetan Book of Dead. Prof. Skorupski accepted my invitation to write a few word to our catalogue about the life, death and dying in Buddhism. It effected in almost scholar dissertation. Please become acknowledged with that interesting and deep lecture.

When I for the first time saw tsakli – Buddhist miniatures depicting bardo deities, I knew how they are important for Buddhists. Lamas with a help of the tsakli safely brought dead through the bardo in order to release them from the circle of life and death. A set of that miniatures was a rareness but I solicitously collected them during my stay in Nepal and in other countries and now I can present them to the public. Beside tsakli for the first time the thankas with jidams – our personal protectors will be exhibited. They are like guardian angels, emerging in a difficult moments of journey through bardo, but only if we are ready to accept their help.

The exhibition is enriched by the sculptures and ceremonial masks from Tibet, Mongolia and Nepal. We become liberated from bardo through the hearing as it is written in the Tibetan Book of Dead. I have a real pleasure to present an audio record with a voice of an outstanding actress Maja Ostaszewska who reads that sacral book.

I would like to thank all the people who helped us in organization of that exhibition.

Andrzej Wawrzyniak Director/Curator-in-chief