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Preface

Yasuhiko Nagano

This volume is mainly a report of some of the results of two successive research projects conducted under the sponsorship of Monbusho Grants-in-Aid for International Scientific Research (08041040 and A2-11691050), Japan. These projects are 1) *An Interdisciplinary Field Survey of the Bon Culture in Tibet* (1996-1998 fiscal years), and 2) *Reconstruction of the Zhangzhung Language and the Formation of Written Tibetan* (1999 - 2001 fiscal years). In close cooperation with Dr Samten Karmay (CNRS, Paris), I led the above-mentioned projects, the results of which are being published under the Bon Studies series in *Senri Ethnological Reports* (SER).

In these projects, I have been making an effort to develop a solid groundwork for research on Bon culture. Thanks to the generous assistance of the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan, I have been able to successfully collect basic research materials, such as *mandala*, *thangka*, and a huge collection of Bonpo canonical works as well as other texts on a wide variety of topics.

The present volume contains a detailed descriptive analysis of a set of a *thangka* collection from Khyungpo, one of the strongholds of Bon culture in northern Tibet. Since, unlike the Buddhist tradition, Bonpo do not have any reference of norms for their *thangkas*, our work started from the iconographical description found in Bon liturgical texts. For this purpose, we requested Rev. Tenzin Namdak and Lopon Tenpa Yungdrung of Triten Norbutse Monastery in Kathmandu to commission the monk artists in Khyungpo to draw the paintings in accordance with the texts. We have therefore *thangka* paintings that follow the traditional style of the Khyungpo region. I might add that we have also tried to identify the deities in *thangkas* in parallel with the Bonpo *mandalas* that we have published (*Mandalas of the Bon Religion*, Bon Studies 1, SER 12, 2000).

I hope this volume will be the impetus for continued interest in research in Bon studies. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Rev. Tenzin Namdak for his deep understanding on our research project and to Mrs Satoko Suzuki for her practical assistance.

