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## Preface

Yasuhiko Nagano

This volume contains the results of our field research concerning Bonpo monasteries, hermitages and people in Tibet and the Himalayas, supported by the Ministry of Education, Japan.

Bon is one of the pre-Buddhist religions in Tibet. By the term 'pre-Buddhist' here I mean that it existed in Tibet before Buddhism was imported into the area and that it has survived till the present time. Although various definitions of Bon have been proposed, it could properly be said that, in Bonpo culture, we perceive something essential or basic, that has pervaded Tibetan culture from ancient times to the present day. Bon is therefore an important cultural substratum in Tibet.

Unfortunately, however, the study of Bon culture has lagged far behind that of Buddhism. This tendency is salient all over the world, especially in Japan. To improve this situation, a Bon culture research project was launched in 1996 with funding for joint research from the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan, and a subsidy from the Ministry of Education for overseas survey. Most of these funds were allocated to the development of the groundwork for research, to a field survey of the actual conditions of Bon culture, to an interim symposium and to publication of our results.

The development of groundwork for research included the Bonpo Canon (the Kangyur and Katen texts, plus rare texts not included in the Kangyur or in the Katen), iconographical materials, F. W. Thomas' research notes on the Zhangzhung language kept in the British Library, and so on. An interdisciplinary symposium was held in the summer of 1999 at the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, and leading scholars from a wide range of fields attended it, presenting papers on various topics related to Bon religion. Those who participated in fieldwork for the research project were also invited to attend the symposium so that they could present their findings. Most of the papers read at the symposium were published in 2000. It is my hope that the publication of those papers has set a new standard in the study of Bon.

The results of the field survey of the actual conditions of Bon culture are presented in this volume. Such concrete and detailed descriptions of the Bonpo monasteries and people, based on extensive fieldwork, have never before appeared since the beginning of Tibetology, and it is my belief that this publication will prove to be a significant milestone for future studies of Tibetan culture.

In the autumn of 1995, Dr. Samten G. Karmay and I consulted together on how to carry out field research into the Bon religious establishments and drew up a careful questionnaire. That framework is described in Dr. Samten Karmay's "Introduction".

Needless to say, the history and present conditions of monasteries, temples and hermitages are included. The framework also includes the exact location of each monastery and its economic state as well as its relationship to local society. Many monasteries involved do not in fact appear on maps and, even if they do, we often find discrepancies between the actual locations and their names. We determined, therefore, to locate the places by GPS measurement. The actual economic state of a monastery and its ties with the locality and/or the lay world have keenly interested scholars, but these matters are extremely difficult for non-Bonpos to approach.

Five authors spent a lot of time and exerted themselves both academically and physically in doing fieldwork on each monastery. Many of monasteries are not easily accessible because of poor transportation; others are not constantly occupied by anyone and the authors had to make several trips to complete their fieldwork and obtain information. Almost all areas have been covered, but particular parts of the southeastern TAR were left unstudied.

The field survey of the actual conditions of Bon culture was conducted in TAR, Tibetan areas in China, India and Nepal. Thanks to the positive support of the China Center for Tibetan Studies, Beijing, the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences, Lhasa, and the Triten Norbutse Bonpo Educational Centre, Kathmandu, many valuable descriptions were collected, previously unknown to scholars. Without their generous consideration, this volume would never have seen the light of day.

After several rounds of editing, the descriptions included in this volume have come to be of great use to students of Tibetan culture.

I would like to offer my deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Education, Japan, and the National Museum of Ethnology, my present working place, for their continued support of this project.

The following is a list of publications issued or soon to be issued in the same series as this volume (Senri Ethnological Reports):

**Bon Studies 1**

*Mandalas of the Bon Religion*

Editors: Tenzin Namdak, Musashi Tachikawa and Yasuhiko Nagano

**Bon Studies 2**

*New Horizons in Bon Studies*

Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano

**Bon Studies 3**

*New Research on Zhangzhung and Related Himalayan Languages*

Editors: Yasuhiko Nagano and Randy LaPolla

Bon Studies 4

*A Catalogue of the New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts*

Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 5

*A Catalogue of the New Collection of Bonpo Katen Texts --- Indices*

Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano

[A revised version of Bon Studies 4 and 5 is available on CD-ROM.]

Bon Studies 6

*The Call of the Blue Cuckoo*

Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 7     The present volume

Bon Studies 8

*A Catalogue of the Bonpo Kangyur* (tentative title)

Editors: Per Kvaerne, Dan Martin, Namgyal Nyima, Tsering Thar, Dondrup Lhagyal,  
Tseyang Changngoba, Donatella Rossi and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 9

*The Khyungpo Collection of Bonpo Thangkas* (tentative title)

Editors: Musashi Tachikawa, Per Kvaerne, Tenzin Namdak and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 10

*Research Notes on the Zhangzhung Language* (tentative title)

Author: F. W. Thomas

Editors: Tsuguhito Takeuchi, B. Quessel and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 11

*The Bon Tradition in Gyalrong*

Editors: Samten G. Karmay and Yasuhiko Nagano

Bon Studies 12

*The Amdo Rebkong Collection of Bonpo Thangkas* (tentative title)

Editors: Alag Bongya, Musashi Tachikawa and Yasuhiko Nagano

It should also be noted that Saujanya Publications, Delhi, have generously offered a reprint plan and that this publisher has already reprinted Bon Studies 1. Since this series is a governmental publication and its circulation is rather limited,

this offer seems very helpful in accelerating Bon studies.

Finally, let me express my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Samten G. Karmay, who has consistently been encouraging me in Bon studies and cooperating as a general editor, and to Mrs. Satoko Suzuki for her practical help.