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Explanatory Notes

In 1999, a collection of Bonpo Mandala paintings was collected in Kathmandu under the guidance of Lopön Tenzin Namdak, Tritan Norbutse (WT khri brtan nor bu tse) Monastery, Kathmandu. The collection of one hundred thirty-one mandalas named “the Tritan Norbutse Collection” is now kept in the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan.

This book is intended to present a reproduction of the collection in a reduced size. The original size of most of the mandalas included in the collection is 63 x 63cm, with some exceptions of a larger size (80 x 80cm).

Each mandala of the Tritan Norbutse Collection was painted in accordance with the ritual text explaining the theory and practice of the mandala. The title of the text of each Mandala is found on the list (pp. xxvii ~ xxxix). Most of the texts of the one hundred thirty-one mandalas are included in the Bonpo Kangyur, while those of some mandalas are in the Bonpo Tangyur, which was published in 1998. Now that we have both the Kangyur and the Tangyur in hands, we might have had to first locate each text in the Kangyur and/or the Tangyur. However, the complete catalogue of the Kangyur is not available at this moment and a title list of the Tangyur is now being attempted under our Bonpo studies project. Therefore, at this stage it is almost impossible to identify each text exactly. The task of identification is expected in the near future.

The Mandala Collection is divided into five groups:

- I. The vehicle of primordial Bon purifying activities (bya ba gstang spyod ye bon gi theg pa),
- II. The vehicle of miraculous power of many sorts (rnam pa kun ldan mgon shes kyi theg pa),
- III. The vehicle of the playfulness of compassion producing real results (dngos bskyed thug rje rol pa'i theg pa),
- IV. The vehicle of the completion endowed with supreme profits (shin tu don ldan kun rdzogs kyi theg pa), and
- V. supplementary mandalas.

The third group is subdivided into three sections, but no special name is given to each of the three sections.

The way of dividing the Bonpo mandalas into the first four groups seems to have been influenced by Buddhist Four Tantras: Kriyā, Caryā, Yoga, and Anuttarayoga. That is, one can say that each of the Bonpo four vehicles corresponds respectively to each of the Buddhist Four Tantras up to a certain degree. Of course, Bonpo Mandalas are not imitations of Buddhist Mandalas,

but at this moment little is known about the theory and practice of Bonpo mandalas. In order to understand clearly between Bonpo mandalas and Buddhist ones, we must wait for further studies.

Here we would like to express our sincere gratitude to those who played main role in completing the Tritan Norbutse Collection: Slob-dpon bsTan-pa g-yung-drung, dGe-bshes gYung-drung rgyal-mtshan, sMon-lam dbang-rgyal, Nyi-ma rgyal-mtshan, Kun-bsang lhun-'grub, and bSam-gtan gtshug-shud.

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