

Preface

journal or publication title	Senri Ethnological Reports
volume	95
year	2011-01-11
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/10502/00008527

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This volume is mainly a report of some results of four successive projects conducted under the sponsorship of Monbukagakusho Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research, Japan. These projects are: An International Interdisciplinary Field Survey of the Bon Culture in Tibet (1996-1999, #08041040), Reconstruction of the Zhangzhung Language and Formation of Written Tibetan (1999-2001, #A2-11691050), Linguistic Substratum in Tibet (2004-2008, #16102001), and International Field Survey of the Gyalrongic Languages (2009-2012, #21251007). In close cooperation with Dr Samten G. 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 research basis for the study on Bon culture. Thanks to the generous assistance of my working place, the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, 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. On the basis of those, we have already had three volumes concerning iconography published under Bon Studies series: *Mandalas of the Bon Religion*, Bon Studies 1 (SER 12), *Feast of the Morning Light*, Bon Studies 9 (SER 57), and *Bonpo Thangkas from Khyungpo*, Bon Studies 10 (SER 60).

The present volume contains a detailed descriptive analysis of a set of a thangka collection from Rebkong (青海省同仁), one of the strongholds of Bon culture in northern Tibet, where a different system and style from that of the Khyungpo school is observed. This thangka collection is under the possession of National Museum of Ethnology, Japan. 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 Venerable Bon brgya dGe legs lhun grub rgya mtsho to commission the artists in Rebkong to draw the paintings in accordance with the texts. We have therefore thangka paintings that follow the traditional style of the Rebkong region. I might add that we have also tried to identify the deities in thangkas in parallel with the Bonpo mandalas and thangkas from Khyungpo that we have published (SER 12, 2000 and SER 60, 2005).

I hope this volume will be the impetus for continued interest in Bon studies. Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to dGe bshes Tshul khrims bstan pa 'brug grags and Professor Tshering Thar for their generous assistance

for iconographical text reading and cautious supervision of paintings, and to Dr. Samten G. Karmay and Dr. Madhavi Kolhatkar for their careful editing of the main body of texts.