

# みんなくりポジトリ

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## Preface

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 to the present. However, when one refers to Bon, various definitions of it have been proposed. Some particularize Bon as a whole body of folk beliefs, including divination, offerings, curses, beliefs in local deities, shamanistic concepts of souls and the cosmos. Some refer to Bon as a religious complex of ancient Tibet led by its priests called Bonpo, who were believed to have supernatural power and conducted the royal funeral rites. And yet some others say that Bon is the later non-Buddhist religion of Tibet embodying all kinds of beliefs and practices that began to appear in the eleventh century and became well established by the fifteenth century. This organized Bon has features that are amazingly similar and sometimes identical to those in Tibetan Buddhism. It has developed a sophisticated system of metaphysics, philosophy, doctrines and cosmology, which the Bonpo people claim to be very distinct from those of Buddhism. It has its own canons consisting of hundreds of volumes. Although the Bonpo were oppressed constantly by the Buddhists before the new China was founded, they were able to keep their religious tradition alive and popular among the people, and even had political potentiality.

Whichever definition we choose, it could be properly said that, in the Bonpo culture, we perceive something essential or basic, that has penetrated Tibetan culture from ancient time to the present day. In fact, some indigenous beliefs held by the Bonpo appear universal to humanity. In order to perceive its cultural complex more clearly, we need a good common basis for Bonpo studies in terms of both research material and a scholarly network together with an interdisciplinary survey from various angles. These were the original reasons of my organizing a Bon project, in close partnership with Dr. Samten Karmay, Directeur de Recherche, CNRS, Paris.

It may be admitted, unfortunately, that Bonpo studies are generally far behind those of Tibetan Buddhism, which are now flourishing worldwide. Particularly in Japan, this tendency seems salient. Despite its long academic tradition concerning Tibetan Buddhism, other aspects of Tibet have long been left unexplored, except for a limited number of distinguished studies on history and linguistics.

In order to promote the neglected parts of Tibetan studies and to keep a sound balance, the Ministry of Education, Japan, and the National Museum of Ethnology encouraged our attempt and supported overseas field research (Field Research grant #08041040) and a joint survey in fiscal years 1996-9.

My sincere thanks go to the government and my present working place, the National Museum of Ethnology. In this project, we endeavored to establish a basis of research on Bon, by collecting the Bonpo canons and newer publications as well as iconographical materials and by conducting a field survey of the Bon monasteries and peoples all over the Tibetan area.

This publication is the first fruit of the project. As is precisely described in Professor M. Tachikawa's Explanatory Notes, we succeeded in getting a systematic set of Bonpo mandalas newly drawn under the supervision of Rev. Lopön Tenzin Namdak, Tritan Norbutse Monastery, Kathmandu. This collection may be *a* system of Bonpo iconography, but I believe that this publication will be of a great help for identifying Bonpo mandalas in the future. I am thankful to the National Museum of Ethnology for providing an opportunity of publication and to Mrs. Yuko Matsumoto, Mrs. Eriko Kan and Miss Tomoe Nakao for their thoughtfully having taken time to arrange the lists and data in Tibetan.

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