



The manuscripts of gNas gsar Gompa, Pijor village, Dolpo: 11th–14th century cultural history

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In May 2000, as Tibetologist of the Pijor Library Project, I was responsible for inventory of the library of this remote village comprising 650 Tibetan manuscripts while photographers documented the architecture of the gompa and photographed all illuminations in the Buddhist manuscripts. The existence of this library has been known for some time. Both Snellgrove and Jest mention its existence in their writings of more than a decade ago but no one had studied its contents. Subsequently it was walled up due to theft. The Pritzker-Roncoroni expedition in 1999 visited and, at the request of the villagers, initiated a restoration project, including the inventory of the library and architectural renovation of the monastery. The 1999 visit indicated several wooden capitals which could stylistically be dated to circa 13th century and contemporaneous illuminated manuscript pages. From the May 2000 inventory, it is confirmed that the library in its present state dates from the 13th/14th century; the prefaces of several texts situate the role of this remote village as an intermediary between two larger kingdoms in western Nepal and central Tibet. In addition, we also learned that the bKa' 'gyur was given to gNas gsar during the reign of Punyamalla, a king of the Khasa Malla Kingdom to the west of Dolpo. In this presentation, we will examine how the Pijor manuscripts inform us about dedicatory ritual practices, the architecture of the gompa, Buddhist iconography, political history and trade routes of this region.