



## **A catalogue of the thangka collections of the Tarap Valley**

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The presenter organized a research team in the summer of 2000 to photograph, analyze iconography, and catalogue the thangka collections of the lha khangs and gompas of the Tarap Valley, Lower Dolpo, Nepal. Over seventy scroll paintings from the Ribum Gompa, Gakar Gompa (Labrang and Lhakhang), Jampa Gompa, Mekhyim Gompa, Shipchok Gompa, and Chuktso Gompa collections were photographed and catalogued. Several of these works may in fact be very old. According to local historiography (the Gakar Gompa Lo rgyus), one of the paintings (Sangye Tongu in the Gakar Gompa Lhakhang) is 900 years old. A very fragile mandala thangka showing saints of the bKa' brgyud Order could be from the thirteenth century.

In our monograph on the paintings, we sought to relate current anthropological data to traditional histories of the Tarap Valley. Basing ourselves on a study of the styles of Western Tibetan and other "border" and regional styles, we also responded to questions posed by David Jackson about the provenance of several thangkas in Western collections.

Our research provides a survey of Buddhist Vajrayana and Bon po collections in the valley. We attempted to identify most of the deities and historic figures in the paintings. In addition, our informants provided the identity of known historic artists, including such still-active painters as Lama Ngawang Chopel. The monograph is to be published by the Lumbini International Research Institute, which funded the project.