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Deities of Tibetan Buddhism: The Zurich Paintings of the Icons Worthwhile to See

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An extraordinary encyclopedia of Buddhist icons. Illustrating the *Rin 'byung brgya rtsa*, the *Nar thang brgya rtsa*, and the *Vajravali*, the book is based on a collection of over five hundred images of Tibetan deities. The images, presented in the book at full scale, were originally created by a master artist in the early nineteenth century to serve as initiation cards (*tsakli*). The original *tsakli* were woodblock prints, hand colored at the request of a Ch'ing Dynasty nobleman who had received the initiations. Such cards are used in ceremonies to introduce the practitioner to the deity and his or her practice. The paintings are housed in the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich.

Deities of Tibetan Buddhism is also an indispensable reference tool for Tibetologists, students of Mahayana Buddhism, and museum curators. Its extensive supplementary materials include English translations of the basic invocation texts; the associated visualization with descriptions of the deities' postures, attributes, and colors; and the dharanis and mantras used in their invocation.

Co-editor Martin Willson spent more than a decade translating and documenting this work. He has provided detailed explanations of technical terms, enlightening explanatory notes, and glossaries documenting the discrepancies in the depictions. The extensive pictorial index, featuring drawings and text by Robert Beer, explains the symbolic meaning behind the deities' implements and adornments. The cross-referenced indices for Tibetan, Sanskrit, Mongolian, and English names and terms provide quick access to vast amounts of information.

Co-editor Martin Brauen and the technical staff of the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zurich have documented the relationship between this and other sets of initiation cards that exist elsewhere, as well as detailing the construction materials and methods involved in producing this set.

Deities of Tibetan Buddhism is a reference book without peer, essential for any serious student of Tibetan and East Asian art and religion.

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