Presenting, Handling and Treating Sacred Thangkas According to Western Standards and Respecting Their Cultural Context – An Achievable Common Purpose?

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ABSTRACT: Using examples of treatments on thangkas, this paper aims at building a goal-oriented multidisciplinary network of experts that are engaged in thangkas and other sacred objects. Networkers and sponsors are in demand! In the exchange of specialized knowledge, there is a chance of promoting international understanding which will help in finding the best way to a problem when dealing with, working on or presenting this cultural property. For Tibetans, thangkas are powerful articles of daily use. Their renewal has an equal, or (as a way to spiritual fulfilling) even higher value than preserving historic relics. For western cultures, cultural possessions as for example, thangkas collections, should be protected to the best of our knowledge and belief. The different value systems may at times present a dilemma for conservation. However, finding sustainable methods for working with relics and ritual objects that take into consideration the different value systems must be given priority.

BIOGRAPHY: Ute Griesser is an independent paintings conservator from Cologne, Germany. She obtained her conservation diploma in 1994 from the University of Applied Science in Cologne, Germany. From 1995 to 2000, she worked as a conservator at the Art and Exhibition Hall in Bonn, Germany. In 2002, the author carried out conservation work for the Tibet Heritage Fund (THF) in Eastern Tibet. She specializes in the conservation of thangkas and other sacred objects.

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