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A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Tibetan Painters and Their Traditions, Beitrage zur Kultur- und Geistesgeschichte Asiens Nr. 15. By David Jackson. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996, 432 pages; includes 70 color plates, 210 line drawings, and a black and white fold-out map, ISBN 3-7001-2224-1, US \$140.00.

Reviewed by

Ian Harris

Lancaster, England

i.harris@lancaster.ac.uk

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This beautifully produced and important work provides the reader with an historical investigation of painting styles in Tibet on the basis of indigenous categories. Jackson starts with a helpful and fairly comprehensive survey of previous treatments of the subject in both Western and Tibetan language sources, making it clear that few Western scholars, with the exception of E. Gene Smith in his English introduction to the *Shes bya kun khyab* of Kong-sprul (1970), have really begun to get to grips with Tibetan historical materials.

Jackson's concern is with the truly Tibetan painting styles (*bod ris*) that emerged around the middle of the fifteenth century. Certainly the earlier period, from around A.D. 1200, when the Newar style (*Bal-bris*), a *Pala*-influenced Indo-Tibetan style with its characteristic red/orange and blue backgrounds reigned largely unchallenged, is well-documented elsewhere. Named Tibetan painters such as Bu-ston (1290-1364), who painted murals at Zhwa-lu and is known to have written a manual on iconometry, were active at this time. However, figures in this formative period are mainly celebrated by tradition for their mastery of religious doctrine and practice, not for their artistry.

Jackson's coverage is chronological. The first professional painter to stand out in the historical record was Bye'u (literally "Little Bird," because of his peripatetic lifestyle) of Yar-stod, who was active in gTsang in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. Probably responsible for a mural in the great *stūpa* of the dPal-'khor complex at Gyantse, Bye'u is among the first painters to have received the appellation *sprul-sku* for his artistic skills alone. Ordinarily the term denotes a reincarnate lama, but in the terminology of Tibetan religious art it came to designate any outstandingly inspired artist. Eclipsing Bye'u by far, however, and given considerably more attention by Jackson, is sMan-thang-pa sMan-bla-don-grub. Born sometime in the mid-fifteenth century in the sMan-thang district of Lho-brag near the border with Bhutan, this infant prodigy seems to have learned his initial technique by studying the artwork at Gyantse. However, he was also exposed to items of Chinese Ming silk scroll painting, Chinese art first having appeared in Tibet during the Sakya/Yuan period (mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth centuries). Indeed, sMan-bla-don-grub seems to have regarded himself as a reincarnation of a Chinese painter and he incorporated Chinese landscape devices and the blue/green backgrounds characteristic of Chinese painting at that time into his mature style, the *sMan-ris*. He also wrote a number of standard works on painting and iconometric technique and was patronised by dGe'-dun-grub-pa (posthumously regarded as the First Dalai Lama), creating a number of important murals between 1458 and 1468, including depictions of Vajradhara surrounded by eighty Siddhas

and Sakyamuni and the sixteen Elders (both miraculously still extant) at the latter's monastery of Tashilhunpo. Incidentally, Jackson also (p. 128ff.) indicates that differences between early painting in Tibet and the later styles were not just confined to murals and *thangkas*. A distinction between the *Bal-bris* and *sMan-ris* is maintained in block-print illustrations of the period, the latter clearly possessing a range of Chinese-inspired landscape forms in their backgrounds.

The second great Tibetan style is the *mKhyen-ris*. Jackson argues (p. 139) that its originator, mKhyen-brtse, from the Lho-kha district of dBus south of Lhasa, was a rough contemporary of sMan-bla-don-grub. In terms of technique, mKhyen-brtse employed thicker colors and was less expressive than the *sMan-ris*. According to the Thirteenth Karma-pa, he specialized in the depiction of Tantric deities and had a special, though not exclusive, connection with the *Sa-skyapa* school. Very few identifiable examples, with the exception of the murals at the old Gong-dkar monastic complex, of the *mKhyen-ris* are extant today. E. Gene Smith has suggested that this fact may be linked to the decline of the *Sa-skyapa* schools from the seventeenth century, but Jackson (p. 159) disagrees, pointing to the fact that the *mKhyen-ris* is attested as a living tradition down to the early eighteenth century. Indeed, the style is known to have been revived at Gong-dkar itself by Ye-shes-bstan-'dzin (1916-1971).

A third major Tibetan painting style arose in the mobile headquarters of the Karma-pa hierarchs in the second half of the sixteenth century. Known as the "encampment style" (*sGar-bris*), its most prominent representative is Nam-mkha'-bkra-shis, who was believed to have been an emanation, with special powers over the creation of sacred images, of the Eighth Karma-pa, Mi-bshyod-rdo-rje (1507-1554). According to Tibetan sources quoted by Jackson (p. 171), the *sGar-bris* showed "the greatest Chinese influence of any of the Tibetan schools," particularly in the depiction and layout of landscape, and Nam-mkha'-bkra-shis seems to have worked directly from Chinese models using thin washes and dilute colors. The simplicity of background detail when compared with the *sMan-ris* is immediately noticeable. Unless it be assumed that painting styles were specific with regard to geography and sectarian affiliation, it should be noted that Nam-mkha'-bkra-shis's major patron was the Ninth Karma-pa, dBang-phyug-rdo-rje (1556-1603), who also supported *sMan-ris* artists and metalworkers from Nepal.

The middle part of the book is a discussion of a number of prominent sixteenth and seventeenth century *sMan-ris* artists including 'Phreng-kha dPal-ldan-blo-gros-bzang-po, an intimate disciple of both the Second and Third Dalai Lamas. According to a Tibetan source quoted by Jackson (p.

182), Sarasvat revealed herself to him after he experienced difficulty in depicting her according to the iconographical and iconometric treatises then available; hence his alternative name, “the artist ‘Look at Me’” (*sprul sku nga la gzigs*). By this time painting had come to occupy a central position in Tibetan Buddhism, Taranatha (1575-1634), for instance, going so far as to devote an entire chapter to painting and sculpture in his famous history of Buddhism in India. In this context the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag-dbang-blo-bzang-rgya-mtsho, emerges as a major patron of the arts, employing enormous teams of *sMan-ris* painters and their assistants, especially at the White Palace (Pho-brang-dkar-po) of the Potala and the Lhasa Ra-mo-che. Detailed lists of expensive pigments and gold used in his renovation of the Jo-khang from 1671 and are also extant. He also wrote extensively on all aspects of the arts, including a treatise on the iconography of members of the Dalai Lama incarnation series.

A New *sMan-ris* (*sman bris gsar ma*), in contrast to the Old *sMan-ris* (*sman ris rnying pa*) previously discussed, is associated with the mid-seventeenth century *sprul-sku* Chos-dbyings-rgya-mtsho of gTsang who was mainly active at Shigatse, and more particularly at Tashilhunpo, although as a relatively young man in 1648 he also helped on the murals of the White Palace of the Potala. Some of his paintings at Tashilhunpo are still extant and we hear that he played an important role in the design and creation of the *stūpa* and chapel of the First Pa'-chen Lama on his death at the age of ninety-five. Jackson disagrees with the recent Tibetan historian Shakabpa over the precise characteristics of the New *sMan-ris*. For the latter, this new style represents a fusion of the earlier *sMan-ris* with the *mKhyen-ris*. Jackson's view (pp. 222-223), supported by reference to some primary sources, is that it represents “a continuation of the *sMan-ris*..though partially transformed by his own genius and...also influenced by Chinese compositional and coloring ideas.”

The Tenth Karma-pa, Chos-dbyings-rdo-rje (1604-1674) claimed to have “come into the world to paint paintings.” (quoted by Jackson, 247), starting to paint from the age of eight. He learned the *sMan-ris* but was also influenced by Kashmiri traditions, particularly in statuary, and by Chinese silk scroll painting. As well as painting, he carved images from sandalwood and rhino tusk, cast objects from metal alloys, and is said to have completed a painting of the *lokapalas* from gold and blood derived from his own nosebleed. From Jackson's discussion, it is clear that the Tenth Karma-pa worked in a variety of styles, including the *sGar-bris* (Jackson (p. 256) is a little uncertain about this) as well as producing a number of well-attested works in an entirely idiosyncratic manner. Another great Karmabka-orgyud-pa scholar/artist, Si-tu Pa'-chen Chos-kyi-

byung-gnas (1700-1774), founder of dPal-spungs monastery on the Derge, like the Tenth Karma-pa, appears to have been eclectic with regard to style. However, the *sGar-bris* predominates in much of his work and we know that he patronized the style heavily. Kar-shod Karma-bkra-shis, a disciple of Si-tu Pa'-chen, was active in Khams, where he established a painting school that survived until the twentieth century. Although influenced by the style of his master, the Kar-shod-pa did not continue in the tradition of minimalist backgrounds characteristic of him. By contrast, the central figure in a painting, often a Karma-pa hierarch shown in partial profile, tends to be large in relation to the overall size of the piece and is set against a richly ornate and detailed background showing some Chinese landscape elements and resulting in some of the most gorgeous pieces, at least from my point of view, in the history of Tibetan painting. In the penultimate — and the only slightly unsatisfactory — chapter of the book, Jackson examines regional painting styles, largely affiliated to the *sMan-ris*, dating from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries. However, as the author himself admits (p. 317), he is forced to rely on rather scanty information relating to a few artists active in Amdo, Khams, 'Bri-gung, Ladakh, gTsang, and so on over the last two centuries. Jackson concludes by noting the need for further detailed research on *thangka* inscriptions, and on datable and attributable murals, as means of clarifying the origins and development of indigenous painting styles in Tibet. He also calls for the further study of written descriptions of specific paintings, the practice of copying exemplary works, and the use of images in xylograph blocks. Despite these obvious desiderata, Jackson's *A History of Tibetan Painting: The Great Tibetan Painters and Their Traditions* represents a very considerable advance on our knowledge of the evolution of Tibetan painting styles and is set to be the standard work on the subject for some little time to come.

I would conclude with one small point which is not intended to compromise the very considerable merits of the work under review. Jackson (p. 183) makes a tantalizing reference to the fact that at least some artists of his period employed painting as a “meditative device,” a detail perhaps underscored by the dual application of the term *sprul-sku* mentioned above. That Tibetan art served a variety of religious purposes goes without saying, yet it has become commonplace of late to attempt a stylistic assessment of such works detached from the wider context, Singer's *Introduction to Tibetan Art: Towards a Definition of Style* (1997) being a case in point. It seems to me that, no matter how important the technical details of date, style and provenance, we should also endeavor to interrogate the original intent of those who created these works both as objects for others' ritual appropriation and as an expression of their own religiosity. In this context,

one hopes that Jackson or some other competent commentator will be in a position to provide more detailed information in due course.

David Jackson and his publisher the Austrian Academy of Sciences should be congratulated for producing such a beautifully made and solid contribution to the study of the history of Tibetan Buddhist art.