

The Gama Gazi School of Thangka Art from the 16th to the 18th Century

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Abstract: *The Gama Gazi School of Painting arose in the Kangba region in the early days, due to a variety of reasons, such as geographical location, the fusion of ethnic cultures and the painter's efforts to inherit and innovate. In the 16th century, Nanka Zhaxi founded the Gama Gazi Thangka School, in the 17th century, Dorje developed the innovative Gama Gazi Thangka, and in the 18th century, Situ Queji Jiongnai continued to create a large number of Gama Gazi Thangka. All three have one thing in common, in the development of the Gama Gazi Thangka School, they all learned to innovate and integrate Chinese painting techniques, and became Thangka masters in various periods of the Gama Gazi School. The eclectic artistic connotation makes the Gama Gazi School different from the Miantang School and the Qin Ze School, and has become an obvious art form with regional characteristics of the Chinese nation.*

Keywords: *Gama Gazi School; Thangka; artistic style*

1. Introduction

The unique national culture of Kham has promoted the development of Thangka painting art, and Thangka, as a unique form of painting in Tibet-related areas, reflects all aspects of history, politics, economy, culture and social life, involving folklore, sociology, natural science, aesthetics, history, archaeology and other disciplines, and the rich content can be called an encyclopaedia. The art genres and forms of expression are rich and diverse, with strong local characteristics and rich historical accumulation, which have attracted the attention of academic circles at home and abroad, and have become a splendid cultural treasure house of China.

2. The Gama Gazi school of painting in the Kangba region

Thangka developed from the formation of the Qiwugangba School in the 13th century to the maturity of the 15th century, until the Miantang School of Mian La Don Zhu Jiacao (1440-1510) wrote the "Statue Measurement Ruyibao", which discussed in detail the measurement of painting and sculpture, became the reference standard for character modeling, became the first Tibetan painting measurement theory monograph of Thangka, laid the foundation of the painting theory of the 15th century Miantang School and the Qinze School, and the Gama Gazi School founded by Nanka Zhaxi in the 16th century, at this time Thangka entered a prosperous period. The Gama Gazi Thangka in the Kangba region has been developing for more than 400 years, and together with the Miantang School and the Qinze School are the three most popular Thangka schools. The 16th to 18th centuries was the flourishing period from the formation to the development of the Gama Gazi School, and it was also the support of the Yuan, Ming and early Qing Dynasties to the Dege family and the Kagyu school, so that the Derg family and the Kagyu school flourished as a powerful local force, and the inclusive cultural connotation allowed the Gama Gazi school to take root in this fertile land.

The Gama Gazi school is the most dominant thangka school of painting in the Kham region. During the Yuan Dynasty, tibetans were divided into three regions: Weizang, Amdo, and Kham, and Thangka formed their own styles in the three regions, while the Kham region was located in the eastern part of Tibet, including Changdu in Tibet, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai, Diqing Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Yunnan, Muli in Liangshan, and parts of Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Geographically close to the Central Plains, the Kham region has frequent exchanges with the Han nationality, and has historically been the main transportation route and necessary place to Weizang and foreign regions, such as the Tang Dynasty

Ancient Road, the Tea Horse Ancient Road, and the Southern Silk Road. The geographical location of the Kham region is very important, the traditional folk culture is integrated into different regions, different ethnic cultures and arts, thangka continues to develop, and a unique traditional art school has been formed in the Kham Tibet-related area - the Karma Gaz School of Painting. ^[1]

The word “gama” in the Gama Gazi school comes from the Gamagaju school, and the name of the sect comes from the place name of the temple at the beginning of its founding, “gama” in Changdu, Tibet. The second “Ga” is the meaning of the tent, the early Gaju school held activities to set up the tent, “Zi” in Tibetan is the meaning of writing, painting, painting, “Gama Gazi School” literally means that the Gaju school of painters paint in the tent, in a broad sense the Gama Gazi school is a general term for the development of art in this area of Kangba, Other names have appeared at different times in history (Table 1), For example, Nankazhashi was called the “Gazi School”, Nankazhashi's teacher Gongchoband was called the “Classical Gazi School” when he was founded, Situ Queji Jiongnai was called “New Gama Gazi School” or “Galun New School”, and Gama Danzengele was called “New Galu School”. Words such as “Gazierzi”, “Gaerzi”, “Gaer”, and “Gama Gazhi” also appear in Chinese writings, all of which are also different names translated from the Gama Gazi School.

Table 1: Names of the Gama Gazi School

serial number	Different periods	The name of the Gama Gazi school
1	Nankazhashi	Gazi School
2	Gongchoband	Classical Gazi School
3	Situ Queji Jiongnai	New Gama Gazi School, Galun New School
4	Gama Danzengele	New Galu School
5	Chinese writings	Gazierzi, Gaerzi, Gaer, Gama Gazhi

The development of the Gama Gazi school is closely related to the Gaju school, many of whom are the patrons, organizers, practitioners, inheritors and thangka theorists of the Gama Gazi school, and almost all the painters of the past generations have studied the five masters of the Gama Gazi school, such as the Gama Gazi school master 10th Gamaba Queyin Duoje, Situ Queje Jiongnai and so on. Most of the development of the Gama Gazi school of Thangka is based on the center of the Gaju school, such as the Karma Monastery in Changdu, the Babang Monastery in Dege, the Sangzhou Monastery in Yushu in Qinghai, and the Chubu Monastery in Lhasa, and the main popular centers are also around the Gaju School, such as the Gaxue Village near the Gama Monastery in Changdu, Qinghai Yushu Zangniang County, the Babon Monastery in Dege and the Dege, Diqing in Yunnan, and Lijiang areas, where one side is fertile and one person is raised, and most of the painters are also produced in these central areas.

The Gama Gazi school has its own origin and development process. Most of the founders believe that it is Nanga Zhaxi, and the later masters of the school of painting have been passed down from generation to generation, such as Nanga Zhaxi, Queyin Duoje, Situ Queji Jiongnai, Gama Zhaxi, Laru Guzha Zeren, Danzengele, Baima Raodan, Wuza, Pubu Zeren, TangLa Zewang, Solang Nima, Gama Dele, etc. In the hot land of Kham, the art of Karma Gaz thangka painting was inherited and innovated, forming different styles in different periods, and finally creating a unique style of the Karma Gaz school of painting that is diverse and integrated.

3. Gama Gazi Thangka art features from the 16th to the 18th century

The development of the Gama Gazi Thangka has experienced hundreds of years of history in which countless painters have appeared, to view the changes in its artistic characteristics, this article mainly introduces the 3 masterpieces of art that appeared from the 16th to the 18th century, the art of the Gama Gazi School developed the art style of the period, namely the founder of the Gama Gazi School in the 16th century, Nanka Zhaxi, the tenth Gamaba Queyin Duoje in the 17th century, and the 18th century Situ Queji Jiongnai.

3.1. Nanka zhaxi in the sixteenth century

The Gama Gazi school painter believes that the founder of the school is Nanka zhaxi, but this person is not recorded much, the specific birth and death year is unknown, it is said that the enlightenment teacher of The Nanka zhaxi is called Gongque bande, is a Miantang school painter, the Thangka painting of the Nanka zhaxi is based on the inheritance of the Thangka technique of the Miantang school, and then received the guidance of the fifth Xiamapa ·Gongque yanla (1525-1583 AD), according to the records of the eighth Gamaba ·Queyin Duoje (1507–1554 CE) referred to him as a child^[2], from which

it can be concluded that Nanka zhaxi was a thangka painter of about the mid to late 16th century.

The Gama Gazi school founded by Nanka zhaxi did not appear suddenly, from the Nepalese school of painting that appeared in the 11th to the 13th century, the Qigang school that was popular in the 13th century, to the rise of the Miantang school and the Qinze school in the 15th century, and the eighth Gamaba Mijue Dojie, who was in the same period as the Nanka zhaxi, added another brick to the painting theory of the Gama Gazi school: the monograph on the painting theory of the Line Quasi-Sun Mirror laid a theoretical foundation for the Gama Gazi school. On the basis of the mature period of development of thangka painting art techniques and theories, it was inevitable that Nankha Tashi founded the Gama Gazi School.

It is said that Nanka zhaxi saw at Chubu Monastery a scroll-style Chinese painting given by the Ming Emperor in 1407 to the Fifth Gamaba Deyin Xieba, which was a painting of the “Yelega Venerable” of the Sixteen Arhats brought back from Chang'an to the Han style. Therefore, the style of the Gama Gazi school founded by Nanka zhaxi is based on the techniques of the Miantang school, with the “Line Quasi-Sun Mirror” written by Juemi Duoje as the character measurement standard, influenced by the Chinese painting during the Ming Dynasty to absorb the Chinese painting brush heavy color technique, learn the green landscape in the background and color of flowers and trees, refer to the Indian Buddha statue model, and form the Thangka style of the Karma Gaz school.

Kang Gesang Yixi's “The Art of The Thangka of the Tibetan Gama Gazi School” records that Gama Dele and the monks of Gama Monastery believe that the figure murals painted in the apse of the Great Sutra Hall of Karma Monastery are written by Nankha Tashi. There are painted murals on the front and left and right front walls of the temple, some of the walls of the murals are badly damaged, the rain erosion, the fresco figures are distributed in two layers, each figure is a separate picture, multiple figures continuously surround the temple for a week, each figure is about twice the size of the real person, all are Gaju master figures, such as: Gaju patriarch Tabo Lajie, Diluoba, I Gamaba Dusong Qinba, II Gamaba Baxi Quejie, Bangzaba, Zhizha Wujinba, Naroba, fifth Gamaba Deyin Xieba, etc. forming a style of group painting. ^[3]

Only from the image of the mural, each mural is mainly based on a central figure, dressed in Buddhist clothes, sitting on a bed with his legs crossed, painted in the middle of the picture, the central figure accounts for a large area, and there are also some small Buddha statues, Buddhist offerings, clouds, animals, plants and so on. The mural painting is neat, the shape structure of the characters, clothes and ornaments is mainly supported by lines, the lines are delicate and smooth, mainly for iron line drawing, with changes in thickness and depth; The color is mainly mineral flat coating, less part of the use of pastel gradient blending, so the picture has a strong sense of plane, higher color purity, strong contrast, such as cinnabar, vermilion, gold, stone blue, stone green painted red, orange red, gold, green, navy, light blue, pure white, black ink line to separate the color blocks, bright and colorful; The face of the character is mostly front and three-quarters of the side, the facial skin color is painted by flesh color or white flat, in addition to the eyeballs and lips are rendered with black and red respectively, the facial features are flat painted flesh color and white on the basis of outlining lines, such as the white drawing in the Gongbi character, the facial features of each figure are similar, but the eyebrows, lips and earrings, face contours and shapes are slightly different, so that the appearance and demeanor of the characters on each mural are somewhat different.

The biggest difference between the characters is the hairstyle, hat, and clothes: the difference between hair volume and hairstyle, the difference in the shape, color, and pattern of the clothes, distinguishing the different character identities of the Gaju gurus; The figure shapes are all seated postures, the hands and legs are placed differently, so that each character shape has its own characteristics, but the overall figure statue refers to the Indian Sanskrit bronze Buddha statue, the same measurement ratio makes the figure statue in the mural relatively stiff, the shape is stylized, coupled with the flat painting method of clothing jewelry, it appears tough, and the mural is decorative; Most of the background color of each figure in this mural is flat painted, with some natural landscapes, such as mountain stones and clouds, and Buddhist artifacts, jewelry, a small number of flowers and animals, the painting method and form are very similar to the Ming Dynasty Gongbi heavy color flowers and birds, especially the two birds and dragons in the mural, a small number of mountain stones can also glimpse the shadow of Chinese green landscape painting.

The author of this series of combined murals is passed down orally, whether it is the real work of Nanka zhaxi remains to be considered, but as an early appearance of Gama Gazi thangka can be used as a reference, roughly glimpses the style of the Gama Gazi school of thangka founded by Nanka zhaxi in the 16th century, the figure shape is similar to the Indian Buddha statue, integrated into the green

landscape, the style of heavy brushwork, combined with the three styles of the three places to become the style of the Gama Gazi school of thangka.

3.2. *Queyin Duojie in the Seventeenth century*

Queyin Duojie (1604-1674 AD) was a painter who had a great influence on the Gama Gaziz school after Nanka zhaxi, and his painting art was called “New Karma”, which pushed the Thangka art of the Gama Gazi school to a new realm. At the age of 8, he became the most prosperous Gamaba, and in 1640, the regime changed and fled from Lhasa to Yunnan, where he lived in exile for nearly 25 years, bringing Gama Gazi thangka art to Lijiang. He was extremely talented in art, an artist who combined painting, sculpture, embroidery, and painting theory, Queyin Duojie studied with the master of the Miantang School, Chiqin Migu Ciren, studied Keshimier gold and bronze statues, and later studied Chinese painting during his time in Yunnan, exposed to coarse silk and water-based pigments, and learned boneless painting and freehand painting techniques, forming a later style of Queyin Duojie.

There are three main types of Thangkas in Queyin Duojie:

The first category is the traditional Gama Gazi school of thangka. For example, the colorful silk painting “Shakyamuni Buddha and the Second Disciple” collected by the Lijiang Museum in Yunnan, and the “Shakyamuni Buddha” collected by the Dege Babang Temple are all traditional thangka themes, the central composition, the Buddha statue and the offerings of Hanfu, the background is Yunnan-style utensils, but the Thangka lines such as Ying Dorje are delicate like spring silkworms, and the colors on the silk appear light and elegant.

The second category is the cute Han Luohan diagram. For example, the Silk Color Tang Group Painting “Sixteen Luohan Figures” collected by the Lijiang Museum in Yunnan Province, a total of 6 paintings, most of which have 3 Luohan gathered together, with rockeries and trees, the background is blank, the facial features of the characters are small and cute, the Luohan posture is round, and the characters wear Han-style monk clothes, dynamic and natural. The Luohan in the painting is more like the life of ordinary people: warm wine, painting appreciation, drinking water, eating food, picking mushrooms with monkeys, shoes are placed at will, and the scenery is all Yunnan utensils, animals and plants. “Sixteen Arhats” also uses silk, ink and water-based pigments, the color is thin, the character brush stroke method is delicate and elegant, the rock use is boneless, the flowers and trees are dotted and written, the freehand technique is skilled, and the painting method of part-time work belt writing is relaxed and natural.

The third type of story thangka formed by the influence of Yunnan customs. For example, the group painting Thangka collected by Dege Babang Monastery is 8 paintings, narrating the story of Shakyamuni's life, the rounded face and posture of the characters are full of pictures, green grass, wrestling in the sea of clouds, archery, music, clothing, architecture, plants, animals, utensils are all Characteristics of Yunnan, and the picture is colorful. ^[4]

However, Queyin Duojie 's paintings are deeply influenced by Chinese painting, skillfully using ink freehand, boneless, and brushwork flower and bird techniques, using Han Chinese silk, ink, and Chinese painting pigments, using Chinese painting composition, integrating Yunnan customs and personal feelings into the painting style, and creating real life portrayals in Thangka, the painting style is elegant, beautiful, and heavy. Unlike The conspicuous black wire drawings of Nanka zhaxi and the heavy color flat paintings differ from the same standards of portraiture, Queyin Duojie 's paintings appear more relaxed and natural, bland and casual, and more humane.

3.3. *The 18th century Situ Queji Jiongnai*

Situ Queji Jiongnai(1700-1774 AD), the eighth Situ of the Gama school, formerly known as the Danbani Xie, was born in the “Semogang” area of the upper reaches of the Jinsha River and the Lancang River, became the successor of the 7th Situ of the Changdu Dansa Monastery at the age of 3, began to learn Tibetan at the age of 5, and he was good at medicine, language, writing, and painting. At the age of 15, he began to study painting, and studied under the 12th Gamaba Jiangqu Dojie, the 8th Gamaba Quejie Dunzhu, Tanzeng Pengcuo to learn traditional thangka painting techniques, and personally saw many paintings by painting masters, such as those seen in Gongga Duoji Temple, and paintings by the master of the Qinze School, Qinze Qinmo. At the age of 27, Queji Jiongnai re-built the Eight Clams Temple with the help of Dege Tusi and chose the site for himself. He had three trips to Lijiang, Yunnan, in 1727, 1737 and 1759, visiting the Yunnan experience of the 10th Karmapa Queyin Duojie, two trips to Nepal,

two trips to India, five trips to Qianzang, two visits to Houzang, study, exchange, and monastery in Kangba, Amdo, Yunnan and other places, went to the Central Plains to conduct Chinese language, almanac, medicine, and painting, and completed the publication and engraving of Dege's "Gangzhuer" in 1733.^[3]

His paintings include murals, thangka and white drawings, of which a large part of the thangka's works are combined with Chinese painting styles, such as 23 ink sketches "Sixteen Arhats", 19 painted thangka "Sixteen Arhats", painted thangka "Daxing Qinbo", painted thangka "Shijiamuni Ten Honghua", 20 paintings of "Bunsen biography", "Eight Achievements" group paintings and "Six Solemnities" group paintings given to Dege Tusi, 20 "Ruyi Vine" group paintings created before his death, and various murals, which are rich in production.^[5]

The Himalayan Museum in New York, USA, has a collection of painted thangka works by Situ Queji Jiongnai, "The Eighty-Four Achievers", with many characters, including sitting on pedestals, caves, under trees, meadows, rocks, clouds, and riding tigers, using different backgrounds to support the character of the characters. The characters are connected by mountains, cliffs, meadows, and rivers, the background is green and green, the light and dark smudges change naturally, with flowers, trees, bamboo, stones, animals, delicate drawing, animals, plant workers brush realistic painting method. His thangka is similar to the traditional Gazi painting style as a whole, the most eye-catching is that the background is set with illumination, stone blue, stone green color, absorbing the painting method of "golden and blue landscape painting" in Chinese landscape painting, using illumination to outline mountains, cliffs, meadows, rivers, rainbows, palaces, pavilions, etc. This decorative method makes Thangka more magnificent on the basis of delicate and heavy color painting, which is different from the thangka painting style of Nankazhaxi and Queyin Duo jie, and has become a representative figure of the new generation of Gama Gazi painting school.

Because of his proficiency in the Chinese language, he studied Chinese painting techniques in depth and integrated into the style of the Gama Gazi school. His paintings absorb the chiaroscuro and shading techniques of Chinese Gongbi paintings, changing orchid leaf drawings and fine gossamer drawings, delicate realistic depictions of figures and objects, and gorgeous colors.

4. Conclusions

Both Nanka zhaxi and Queyin Duo jie learned the artistic styles of the surrounding ethnic groups and integrated into the thangka, becoming a new generation of painting leaders. On the basis of the MianTang School, Nanka zhaxi integrated the techniques of heavy color and green landscape in Chinese painting, and learned from Indian statues to establish the Gama Gazi School; However, Ying Queyin Duo jie further integrated Chinese freehand, boneless, and brush flowers and birds into his paintings, expressing Han Customs. In the early stage of the development of the Gama Gazi School, the two painters mainly integrated the painting techniques of Chinese painting to form a special Thangka style, which made the Gama Gazi Thangka different from the Miantang School and the Qinze School. Geographically, the Gama Gazi Thangka that arose in the Kham region is close to the Han Dynasty, and the integration of economic and cultural exchanges and the tolerance of national culture have made the Gama Gazi Thangka a treasure of Chinese national art with regional characteristics.

In the 16th century, Nanka zhaxi and the 17th century Queyin Duo jie to the 18th century Situ Queji Jiongnai all studied Chinese painting and the surrounding ethnic art styles and integrated them into Thangka, becoming the new generation of Gama Gazi Thangka painting leaders. Nanka zhaxi integrated the techniques of craftsmanship and green landscape painting into Chinese painting on the basis of the Miantang School, and studied Indian statues to establish the Gama Gazi School; But Queyin Duo jie further integrated Chinese freehand, boneless, and gongbi flowers and birds into his paintings, expressing Han customs; Situ Queji Jiongnai continued to integrate Chinese Gongbi painting, green landscape painting, and Jinbi landscape painting techniques into the Gama Gazi Thangka style.

In the early development of the Gama Gazi School, the three painters all drew on the painting techniques of Chinese painting, combined with the Gama Gazi Thangka's own style, and integrated innovation through their own wisdom, making the Gama Gazi Thangka different from the Miantang School and the Qinze School, becoming one of the three major Thangka schools from the 16th to the 18th century. Geographically, the Gama Gazi Thangka that emerged in the Kangba region is close to the Central Plains, and the economic and cultural exchanges and cultural exchanges and cultural tolerance make the Gama Gazi Thangka an artistic treasure of the Chinese nation with regional characteristics.

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