

The Famous Painter Tong La Zeweng and His Thangka Painting Biography of Kagyu Jinhao

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Abstract: Karma Karzi Painting School, also referred to as "Karzi" or "Karzi School", is one of the three famous painting schools (Menzi, Qinzi and Karzi) in Tibetan areas of China. Tonglaze Weng, whose legal name is Karma Luozhu Ose, was born in Woze Village, Baiya Township, dege county in the summer of 1901. Kagyu Jinhao, the name of which in Tibetan is Kagyu Color Name, is also called Biography of Kagyu School Masters in some Chinese translations. This Thangka painting is a group of scrolls that systematically show the inheritance history of the Kagyu School in the form of painting art.

1. Brief introduction of Karma Gazi painting school

Karma-Gazi Painting School, also referred to as "Gazi" or "Gazi School", is one of the three famous painting schools (Menzi, Qinzi and Gazi) in Tibetan areas of China. This painting school was formed in the 15th century AD, and was founded by the great painter Namkazaxi on the basis of "Menzi", combined with the artistic styles of "copper sculpture" and "Sitang" at that time. Later, his favorite students Qu Zhaxi, Gaxue Gamazaba, Zhaxi Zaba, and Mijue Duoqi inherited the cause of their predecessors. In particular, Mijue Duoqi, based on the theory of their predecessors, combined with practice, wrote the fine art monograph Line Quasi-Sun Mirror, which laid a theoretical foundation for the formation and development of this school.



Fig.1 Two arhats of the 18th century Karma Gazi Painting School

In the 16th century AD, this painting school had a growing influence in Tibetan areas, and a number of famous painters such as Dabogoba, Karma Senzhe and Karma Renqin emerged successively. In 17th century AD, there appeared Aiba Cuba, Holba Chong, Queying Duoqi and so on, and they pushed the painting school art to a more perfect and mature state. In the second half of his life, Ying Duoqi devoted himself to the research and practice of the Garu School of Painting, and made outstanding achievements. He wrote the book Annotation of Garu Art and created many Thangka art works(Fig.1).

In 1728 AD, Situ Quji Jiongnai, the eighth living Buddha who was born in Dege Gongya, rebuilt Babang Temple in Dege. He is a talented, learned and accomplished monk. He is good at painting. He not only devotes himself to the creation of painting, but also attaches great importance to the inheritance and development of the "Gazi" painting school, and attaches great importance to

absorbing such art schools as Qin, Qiewu and Gaba, which greatly enriches the artistic connotation of this school. At the same time, it also pays attention to the cultivation of talents, making Babang Temple an important inheritance place of the "Gazi" painting school in Kangqu. At this point, the two inheritance sites of the "Gazi" painting school have basically taken shape. One base is the area around Karma Township, centered on Karma Dansa Temple, in today's Luwuqi, Qamdo, Tibet Autonomous Region. Another base is Maisu area centered on Babang Temple in dege county, Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Later, a heritage site was formed in Yushu, Qinghai.

Since the reconstruction of Bashang Temple, famous teachers of the "Gazi" painting school have emerged. Apart from their teacher and pupil Qu Ji Jiong Nai, Pi Kong Zhan Xia, Xia Zhu, his teacher and pupil Bai Ma Wang Qiu, contemporary famous painters Tong Laze Weng and Silang Nima are their outstanding representatives.

Why is the "Karma Karzi" school also called the "Karma Karzi" school? The reason is nothing more than two points. First, during the formation and development of this painting school, most of the famous painters in the past dynasties emerged as Karma Kagju monks; Second, the famous Karma Kagyu temple whose main heritage site is also in eastern Tibet.

The characteristics of this school are mainly manifested in compatibility. "According to the summary of Qu Ji Jiong Nai, a teacher and pupil, the pen and color tone of the Karma Gazi painting school absorbed the style of meticulous painting in the mainland, while the layout of the space environment adopted the Indian painting style, inheriting the tradition of the 'sect' and the 'Qin school' in the overall style, and being compatible with the advantages and strengths of the three kinds of paintings." [1] From the perspective of art theory, the "Gazi" painting school has made fruitful exploration and practice in scattered perspective.

2. Famous painter Tong La Zeweng

Tongzeweng, whose legal name is Karma Luozhu Russian, was born in Woze Village, Baiya Township, dege county in the summer of 1901. According to the master himself, his budding idea of learning painting began at the age of 10. "My uncle Lang Se sent him two prints, one of which is Harmony with Four Ruins, the other of which is the Picture of Six Longevities ...' After seeing these two prints, I had the idea of learning to paint, and decided to learn to paint" [2]



Fig.2 Tongzeweng Thangka Group Painting: Wu Jinba

At the age of 14, Tonglazewon became a monk in Babang Temple, which is close to his hometown. The following year, Tonglazewon studied painting knowledge and basic skills with Zharao. Since then, Tonglazewon has entered the hall of Tibetan painting. Because he is talented, smart and studious, he shows amazing potential. At that time, White Jade Xiatuo Temple, a living Buddha with lights, came to Babang Temple, and found that Tong Laze Weng, a young man, had

unique skills in painting thinking, line, structure and color collocation, so he took him to Xiatio Temple to learn painting with the master painter. Tongzeweng stayed in Xiatio for three years. During this period, while studying, he was diligent in practice, and he was greatly appreciated by his condescension, so he took part in the drawing of the large Thangka group painting in the Biography of the Famous Guru in our temple. It can be said that the three years in Xiatio Temple laid a solid foundation for the development of painting after Tonglazewon. In 1919, Tong La Zeweng returned to Babang Temple, where he devoted himself to practicing Buddhism, while worshipping the painter Wa Ruo to continue painting. In 1922, when the master was in his prime, his talent began to be displayed when the Great Sutra Hall of the temple was being repaired. In the process of drawing thousands of Vajras and other Buddha statues, under the careful guidance of a famous teacher, after three years of cold and heat, he successfully completed the mural painting of the Great Sutra Hall, and was highly rewarded by Baima Wangqiu, the living Buddha and teacher of the main temple at that time. Then, the expansion of Babang Temple came to an end one after another, and the teacher and apprentice Baima Wangqiu invited Xiazhulai Temple, a famous painter in Yushu, Qinghai Province, to take charge of the mural painting of the expansion project, with Tong Lazewon as the deputy to form a capable painting team with more than 40 people. This project lasted for more than three years. After six years' practice and baptism, Tonglazewon not only has profound knowledge and skills of Tibetan painting, but also has superb skills in clay sculpture, wood carving and other artistic categories, and has become a famous painter in Dege area. "Tong Lazeron said in his memory: ' Since the age of 28, he has been painting independently, and the level he has achieved is as good as his own' ". "In 1932, Tonglazeng went to Lhasa to worship, went to Sera Temple to study classics and served as the secretary of the 16th Karmapa Living Buddha. After 1940, Tonglazeng concentrated on drawing Thangka in Babang Temple, and successively completed more than 100 Thangka works (Fig.2), and drew 50 Thangka biographies of Kagyu masters with Qinghai painter SuoLangNiMa. "In the 1940s, the artistic attainments of Tonglazeong reached a very high level, and were widely recognized by all walks of life. Just as the famous living Buddha of Zongsa Temple at that time lowered his support to Qingze Wangbo, he praised: Thangka paintings painted by Tonglazeong can be hung directly without blessing.

Since the 1950s, Tonglazewon has been working tirelessly on his favorite Tibetan painting career, and has successively created more than 40 engraved paintings such as Three Masters and Apprentices of Sakyamuni, Sixteen Arhats, Four Heavenly Kings, and Gesar's Ride-up Map for Dege Printing Academy. These engravings still exist in Dege Printing Institute. "In 1959, Tong Lazeong, as a resident Lama in the temple, served as the leader of the Babang Temple Management Committee, and continued to study painting art and receive apprentices to teach art. After 1978, 70-year-old Tong Lazewon was appointed as the director of the management committee of Babang Temple, a member of Ganzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, dege county CPPCC and the executive director of Ganzi Buddhist Association. He personally presided over the murals of Babang Temple Hall, and completed the repair and redrawing of Tangjia Sutra Hall, Gongya Sutra Hall and Baiyu Sutra Hall in Gengqing Temple.

After 1986, while studying painting and spreading art, Tong Lazewon presided over many Buddha statues in temples, and completed the production of the giant Maitreya statue in Babang Temple. In 1987, the works of Tong La Zeweng and his disciples were exhibited in Beijing and Hong Kong, which caused a great sensation and attracted the attention and admiration of the art circles. Dege was known as "the birthplace of traditional Tibetan paintings of Kangba", and Tong La Zeweng won the reputation of "the magical painter of modern Thangka paintings" for his high painting attainments. "[3]

In 1989, Tong Razeon finished his life and died at the age of 89. People miss him very much. In his whole life, he was a scholar who learned to be rich and wise [4]. He has written such books as History of Tibetan Painting, History of Tibetan Medicine, Interpretation of Difficulty by Poetry Mirror, Examples of Poems, Figures of Animals in the Twelve Heavens, Movement Chart of Celestial Bodies, Sun, Moon and Stars, Grammar Annotations, and History of Falun Temple of Eight Sacred Churches in Karma Kagju [5]. Throughout his life, he was a much-loved teacher. "The

apprentices trained by Tong La Zeweng personally and successively said in his memory that there were no less than 1,000 apprentices. Among them, 188 have been trained since the 1980s ... He is a master of peach and plum, courteous to teachers, and gives everything to others ... For example, painters with great influence in painting are: Gongsu Jiangba of Dozza Temple, Zhuosun Daji of Babang Temple, Nima Zeren of the 10th Panchen Lama, Lang Puyandeng of the provincial Tibetan language school, Zewenggacuo, Bude, Babang Temple painters. The influential Tibetan scholars are Tudeng Pengcuo, a professor at the School of Tibetan Studies of the Central University for Nationalities [6], Magen Sejia, a teacher at the China Advanced Buddhist Institute, and Karma Jiangcun, a professor at the Tibetan Language Department of Kangding Teachers College for Nationalities. The chief physicians in Tibetan medicine are: Deng Dou, former president of Dege Tibetan Medicine School, Luozhu Pengcuo, director of Zongsa Temple Management Committee, and so on [7].

In his whole life, he was a brilliant and fruitful master of the "Gazi" painting school. Throughout his life, Tongzeweng has collaborated with others and completed thousands of murals, prints and Thangkas by himself, many of which are excellent products in the world [8]. "According to the memories of his disciples, he has talked about many representative works painted in his life many times, mainly more than 10 kinds:" Thousand-Zun Vajrasas "painted in the Great Sutra Hall of Babang Temple around the age of 25; Around 30 years old, the series of murals of King Kong Da Zhi painted on the top floor of Babang Temple Hall and the Four Heavenly Kings of the gate, as well as the reincarnation of life and death; 15 group paintings of "The Change of Sakyamuni God" drawn around the age of 37; A series of group paintings, such as "Kagyü Jinhao" [9], painted around the age of 45; A set of 23 prints, such as "Ocean's Sixteen", painted by Dege Institute of Printing and Classics at the age of 52. Among nearly 3,000 prints collected and supplemented by the Institute of Printing and Classics [10], this print was recognized as a rare edition by the national cultural department. "The list goes on and on.

3. About "Kagyü Jinhao"

Kagyü Jinhao, the name of which in Tibetan is Kagyü Color Name, is also called Biography of Kagyü School Masters in some Chinese translations. This Thangka painting is a group of scrolls that systematically show the inheritance history of the Kagyü School in the form of painting art. It is not only the most influential work among the three major painting schools in Tibetan areas, but also a remarkable artistic masterpiece in Tibetan painting. At present, the earliest time and creator of "Gaju Jinhao" has not been revealed in the academic circles. In the process of investigation and interview, according to the introduction of religious and academic circles, the painting of "Kagyü Jinhao" prevailed in the 18th-20th century. The earliest works were 23 pieces (a group), and later there were 35 pieces (a group) and 50 pieces (a group) (Fig.3). The reason why group paintings with the same content, the same theme, the same style and different numbers appear is that with the passage of history, some important inheritors and historical sites of this sect have appeared in the process of continuous development, and later authors have continuously supplemented them on the basis of previous lives.



Fig.3 Kajin passed on the set of cards to Loba, the emperor and the venerable one

In the early 1940s, Kagyu Jinhao was painted by Tong Lazewen, a famous monk and great painter in Dege Babang Temple, together with his fellow brother Suolang Nima, a painter from Yushu, Qinghai. This group of paintings was painted by Tong La Zeweng at the behest of Qinze Russian fever, the living Buddha of the Second Gongzhu of Babang Temple. This group of Thangkas consists of 50 pieces. Unfortunately, in more than half a century, due to various reasons (mainly refers to the serious damage suffered during the "Cultural Revolution"), after several transfers and twists and turns, 40 Thangkas have survived. Although this set of Thangka paintings is called the Master Inheritance of Kagyu School, it is actually the Master Inheritance of Karma Kagyu. The name of each Thangka is named after the ancestor, guru living Buddha and so on in that Thangka.

The author thinks that in Kagyu Jinhao, besides the above founders, gurus and living Buddhas of various systems, at least the following founders and related living Buddhas are still missing.

First of all, Tapola Jie, the founder of Quetabu Kagju and a disciple who came to Razhba. He is one of the most important founders of the Kagyu Sect; Secondly, the first living Buddha Zaba Sangge, the third living Buddha Chabeiixi, the fourth living Buddha Chayixi, and the ninth living Buddha Chajinima in the red hat system of Karma Kaju; Third, the eighth living Buddha Situ Quji Huinai and the eleventh living Buddha Situ Baima Wangquejiebo of the Karma Kagju Eight-State Living Buddha System. In addition, there are three other pictures, which may be Cai Ba or Xiang Cai Ba (also known as Zun Zhuizha), the founder of Ba Rong Gaju, Dama Wangqiu, and the founder of Pa Zhu Gaju, Palai Zhuba (also known as Dorje Jiebo). These have yet to be further confirmed.

There are two reasons why two Thangkas of Gongzhu Living Buddha I and II in Babang Temple were created in the whole set of Thangkas. First, the dharma wish of drawing this set of Thangkas was initiated by Gongzhu Living Buddha II, and second, all expenses were borne by the second Gongzhu Living Buddha.

It should also be noted that there are four living Buddha systems in Babang Temple. They are Situ Living Buddha System, Qinze Living Buddha System, Gongzhu Living Buddha System and Wengen Living Buddha System. Among them, Situ Living Buddha System is the most famous living Buddha system outside the two living Buddha systems of Karma Kagju, Black Hat and Red Hat, and its influence is also great. From the Karma Dansa Temple, the living Buddha system was spread for twelve generations before liberation. Its inclusion in this group of paintings should be

beyond reproach. The other two living Buddha systems, Qinze and Wengen, and Gongzhu living Buddha systems, have not been passed down for a long time, and have little influence in the whole sect. But why are there two living Buddhas of Gongzhu living Buddha system in the group paintings? The reason is very simple. As mentioned earlier, the donor of this Thangka group painting is Gongzhu II Living Buddha. To be precise, it appears in the group painting as a donor.

Looking at the "Kagyü Jinhao" Thangka group paintings, we are deeply impressed by the following two aspects: First, its artistic achievements. The whole Thangka group has a fresh style; The layout is dense and just right; The most prominent feature is that the techniques of inland landscape painting are integrated into Tibetan painting, which is the best attempt and embodiment of this feature of the "Gazi" painting school, giving people the feeling of harmony between man and nature and the unity of man and nature; It is to fully grasp the characters' personalities and external characteristics, with vivid shapes and outstanding personalities. Second, its historical value reproduces the history and inheritance of the Karma Kagyu School through the form of painting art, and through the depiction and connection of important figures in various historical periods.

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