



# A Revolutionary Artist of Tibet: Khyentse Chenmo of Gongkar

*David P. Jackson*

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In *A Tibetan Artistic Genius and His Tradition*, David Jackson's focus is the Khyenri style, the least known among the three major painting styles of Tibet, dating from the mid-fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries.

The painting of Khyentse Chenmo, founder of the Khyenri style who flourished in the 1450s–1490s, was significant for his radical rejection of the prevailing classic Indic (especially Nepalese-inspired) styles with formal red backgrounds, enthusiastically replacing them with the intense greens and blues of Chinese landscapes. Khyentse was famed for his fine and realistic looking work, both as a painter and sculptor. His painting style has often been overlooked or misunderstood by scholars, but is a missing link in the history of Tibetan painting as it has often been misidentified as early examples of the Karma Gardri style.

The Khyenri style is now most closely linked with a small sub-school of the Sakya school, the Gongkarwa. The most important in-situ murals of the Khyenri style survive at the Gongkar Monastery in southern Tibet, south of Lhasa near the Gongkar airport. There we find murals by the hand of Khyentse Chenmo himself, many of them were covered by a layer of whitewash and thus escaped destruction during the Cultural Revolution. Dr. Jackson recently discovered several of Khyentse's paintings in museums outside Tibet, some of which had been unrecognized for over a century.

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