

# RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

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***The Place of Provenance: Regional Styles in Tibetan Painting,*  
Explores the Challenges of Attributing Place of Origin  
In Ancient Tibetan Artworks**

**The Fourth in a Series of Eight Exhibitions  
By Tibetan Buddhist Painting Scholar David Jackson at the Rubin Museum of Art**

**October 12, 2012 – March 25, 2013**

New York, NY –The *Place of Provenance*, the fourth exhibition in an eight-part series at the Rubin Museum of Art, continues scholar David Jackson's research on the history of Tibetan painting. Featuring more than forty paintings and sculptures from the 14<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, the exhibition addresses the challenges of distinguishing among Tibetan regional styles and highlights Jackson's approach to identifying ancient artworks. By translating inscriptions and identifying depictions of religious symbols from Tibetan primary sources, including thangka paintings in the collection of the Rubin, Jackson is able to reconstruct a historical narrative that supports the accurate identification of regional styles. On view from October 12, 2012 through March 25, 2013, the exhibition presents some of Jackson's most ground-breaking discoveries about Tibetan art history, methods, and techniques.

In a *Place of Provenance*, and its accompanying catalog, Jackson challenges art historians and future scholars to more exhaustively and accurately pinpoint the places of origin of thangka paintings and explain the basis of their attributions. Created for religious purposes, thangka paintings frequently reflect differences in style or subject matter, including specific deities or teachers. Using manuals of living artists, lineage histories and their depictions, inscriptions, iconographic conventions, and comparisons

with wall paintings and local monuments, Jackson has identified tell-tale markers of regional identity. Among his many discoveries are the subtle stylistic variations in features of landscape, skies, and clouds.

After 35 years of research, and with a mastery of the Tibetan language, Jackson's series will complete an extensive, scholarly resource on Tibetan painting and its historical significance. Combining research on literary sources with visual culture, Jackson can be considered a successor to the pioneering Italian scholar Giuseppe Tucci (1894-1984), often considered the father of Tibetan studies. In fact, Jackson's work builds on and greatly refines Tucci's ground-breaking research as published in *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (1949). Tucci's work and legacy will be the focus of another major exhibition at the Rubin Museum in 2014. It will be undertaken in cooperation with the Museo Nazionale d'Arte Orientale 'Giuseppe Tucci'.

Fostering a greater understanding of the art and culture of Himalayan Asia and expanding scholarship in the field are integral aspects of the Rubin Museum's mission," said Patrick Sears, the Rubin's Executive Director. "David Jackson's groundbreaking research contributes immeasurably to the study, knowledge, and experience of Tibetan art and we are pleased to present the fourth exhibition and publication, *Place of Provenance*, in this eight-part series for our diverse audience."

Jackson compares the difficulty of attribution of time and place to the experience of trying to identify the subject of a faded daguerreotype in a family attic. "From his uniform and other details, certain clues of an almost iconographical nature can be extracted from the picture regarding time of service, military branch, rank, and decorations... Similarly, the study of Tibetan thangka paintings is to restore the lost identities of the teachers and patrons portrayed sometimes through relatively clear identifying inscriptions and sometimes through more cryptic clues of iconography. When we investigate a richly inscribed painting with a complete lineage from a well-known tradition, the provenance and dating may solve themselves."

"While scholars have resolved most problems in understanding the complicated iconography of Tibetan painting, there is still a long way to go in determining a painting's age, style, origin, and religious affiliation," said Jan Van Alphen, Chief Curator at the Rubin Museum. "David Jackson suggests valuable tools and techniques for researchers to establish a place of provenance, which reveals a diverse range of significant data. His work is invaluable to the challenging study of Tibetan ancient works."

*A Place of Provenance* includes Jackson's identified characteristics of the following primary local styles:

### **Ü Province (Central Tibet)**

Main style: Uri or Eri

Typical features: Light blue skies and three-lobed light blue and light green cumulus clouds with a large dark "cloud eye" recess and perfectly balanced compositions.

### **Tsang Province (West-Central Tibet)**

Main style: Tsangri of Tashilhunpo Monastery

Typical features: Solid deep blue skies and more colorful clouds, including reds and oranges, and more asymmetrical compositions.

### **Southeast Tibet (Kham Province)**

Main styles: Khamri and Karma Gardri

Typical features (Khamri): Relatively dark skies and landscape, using solid coats of color on body nimbuses more than in the Karma Gardri. One highly distinctive feature is its dramatic whorls of mystic "rainbow lights" in the sky.

Typical features (Karma Gardri): See-through body nimbuses, very light skies and distinctively shaded clouds. Those clouds have four easily recognizable fingernail-shaped, darkly shaded, indigo indentations where the main cloud lobes of the stylized cumulus clouds come together and with faint indigo back-shading of clouds in sky behind them.

### **Catalog**

*The Place of Provenance: Regional Styles in Tibetan Painting* by David P. Jackson with a contribution by Rob Linrothe, 288 pp., 240 color illustrations (\$75 hard cover), is available in the Rubin Museum of Art shop and is distributed by the University of Washington Press. [Washington.edu/uwpress](http://Washington.edu/uwpress), ISBN 978-0-9772131-0-8

David Jackson is a curator with the Rubin Museum of Art and former professor of Tibetan in the Asia and Africa Institute of Hamburg University. Rob Linrothe is an associate professor of art history at Northwestern University.

## Support

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### **ABOUT THE RUBIN MUSEUM:**

The Rubin Museum of Art provides an immersive environment for the exploration of Himalayan art and culture and its connections to contemporary life and ideas through innovative exhibitions, dynamic programs, and diverse educational opportunities. The only museum in the U.S. dedicated to the art of Himalayan Asia, the museum holds one of the world's most important collections of the paintings and sculptures of Tibet, Nepal, Mongolia, and Bhutan, and provides a bridge between the cultures of the region and other cultures worldwide. In addition to exhibitions, the Rubin's programming encompasses dialogues, films, performances, and more, offering multiple entry-points for understanding and enjoying the art of the Himalayas. The shop and café at the Rubin are also inspired by the varied cultures of the region, completing the visitors' experience. For more information, including hours and location, visit [www.rmanyc.org](http://www.rmanyc.org).

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