

3. Nepalese Art: From Modern to Contemporary

In the 20th, there was a significant change in politics and society in Nepal. The rule by the regent Ranas family, which had lasted for 100 years since 1846, came to an end, then the monarchy was brought back in 1950.

Under such circumstances, the artists who did not hail from a traditional Chitrakar painter's background emerged, such as Chandra Man Singh Maskey, who studied in India along with Tej Bahadur, and Anandamuni Shakyas [fig. 9] who brought a significant reform of Paubha painting.*3

Anandamuni learned the traditional paintings from Purna Man Chitrakar. Then, he began to create Buddhist paintings adopting the images and compositions of Western paintings. These non-Chitrakar painters marked the beginning of the Modern Nepalese Art.

Today, art schools and art colleges are increasing in Nepal, and painters with various surnames are already active. It credits the Chitrakars, such as Purna Man and Prem Man, for passing the techniques down the generation regardless of their surnames. Also Paubha painting has been developing itself. The purpose of making Paubhas has been shifting from the religious one to the commercial one aiming to foreign visitors or correctors.*4 Paubha painting has been surviving by its flexibility adopting new aspects in response to the social change and customer demand instead of cling to the tradition.

*3 Chandra Man Singh Maskey was from the upper caste and Anandamuni Shakyas was from the goldsmith's caste.

*4 For more on the development of the modern Paubha painting, see the exhibition catalog Paubha painting in Nepal.



[fig. 9]
Anandamuni Shakyas, *Shiva*,
in the early 20th century,
printed replica.

Conclusion

Through making *Tribute to My Forefather* that depicts his artist father painting the traditional Buddhist paintings, Tej Bahadur, being born into a family of traditional "painters" and a modern painter, reexamined the change of the Nepalese paintings and his artists' role.

Prem Man Chitrakar's *Green Tara* is the work that represents the artist's aim for creating new traditions while accepting new factors, instead of following the tradition. Both Chitrakar's works are a mixture of "traditional painting" and "Western painting."

These works convey the artists' intentions to fulfill their respective positions and roles. In this respect, these two works can be seen as a condensation of the modern and contemporary trends in Nepali painting.

[参考文献]

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Forward

When you look at the artist names of the Nepalese paintings, you may notice that there are many surnames 'Chitrakar.' Is it because many people have the surname of Chitrakar in Nepal? In general, Nepali surnames indicate the occupation their caste would once have held. Chitrakar is one of the caste names of the Newar people, indigenous to the area around Kathmandu. In Sanskrit, Chitrakar indicating the painter caste consists of two words: 'Chitr' (picture) and 'akar' (maker). In this section, we feature the artworks of two Chitrakar artists active since the 20th century.

1. Paubha and Chitrakar

In the Kathmandu valley region including three cities (Bhaktapur, Patan, and Kathmandu), there remains the rich cultural heritages of the Newar people. Since the Buddhist paintings reached Nepal from India in the 11th century, the Newar people have developed it under the name of "Paubha," "pau" means picture and "bha" means sacred, a Buddhist picture painted on cloth. (In Tibet, a similar style of painting has developed as "Tankha.") *1 This is why the people with the surname "Chitrakar" have engaged in the Paubha paintings.

The caste system was introduced by Sthiyimalla King (1382-1395) during the 13th century, the Malla Dynasty (1200-1769). While this system prohibits people from working in different professions, it also protects their rights in each profession (In Nepal, it is now free to choose an occupation). Kesa Raja Chitrakar's Buddhist painting (1409) [fig. 1] is considered the earliest Paubha painting with its sign.

During the Gorkha Dynasty, Nepal experienced the wars against Britain in 1780 and 1814 (The First and Second Gorkha Wars). Although Britain did not colonize Nepal, they resided a British minister in the country. Since then, the relations with Britain and the interest to the West increased.

In 1850, Bhaju Man Chitrakar (dates of birth and death unknown) accompanied Janga Bahadur Rana from the Regent of Ranas on the trip to Britain and France. Under the wings of rulers in those days, some Paubha painters started making portraits of them. No sign except the Chitrakar had been recognized in any artwork, including the portraits until the early 20th. Besides the lack of free choice of occupation, the painting skills were only inherited in the families of Chitrakar. Yet, they were considered as a low caste for a skill-intensive profession.

* 1 Besides to Paubha, there are other forms of traditional painting, such as the picture scroll style horizontal painting "Bilam Pau," but few are made nowadays.



[fig. 1]
Kesa Raja Chitrakar, *Manjushri Tara*, 1409.
(ref. Hugo Freiger, "Kathmandu Valley Painting" ,
Jucker Collection), p.37

2. The Two Chitrakars



[fig. 2]
Tej Bahadur Chitrakar
(ref. Madan Chitrakar
“Icon of Trasition” ,
2004, p.30

Tej Bahadur Chitrakar (1898-1971)
[fig. 2]

Teji Bahadur was born in Patan as a son to Shiva Das Chitrakar, a painter, in 1898. When Tej Bahadur and his cousin Dirgha Man, the first Photographer in Nepal, were working for a studio making theater curtains, Tej Bahadur caught the eyes of Chandra Shunshere (1863-1929), who was a prime minister of Nepal from 1901-1929 [fig.3]. Then Chandra offered him an occasion to study at the Government College of Art & Craft in Kolkata, India.

Chandra is known for his advancement of the modernization of the country and development of the higher education system. He also encouraged many young people to study abroad

Tej Bahadur studied oil painting at the college from 1922 to 1929.*2 After returning to Nepal, he made a lot of oil painting works with the academic style, which he learned in India. Since in 1940, Tej Bahadur started to work for the Durbar High School where he graduated from as an art teacher. Then he taught at the first art school in the country, Juda Art School and became active as a chairman of the Nepal Association of Fine Arts (NAFA) established in 1965.

*2 This extended period of study was made possible when Sir Percy Brown, Principal of the School of Fine Arts, advised Chandra Shunsherem to extend Tej Bahadur Chitrakar's studies.



[fig. 3]
Tej Bahadur Chitrakar, *Chandra Shunshere*, 1939,
Madan Chitrakar, *Icon of Trasition*, 2004, p.270
Collection: National Museum, Chhauni, Kathmandu., 2017,



[fig. 4]

Tribute to My Forefather, 1966,
oil on canvas [fig. 4]

Using the western oil painting technique, the artist portrayed the scene of his farther, Shiva Das, depicting a traditional Paubha painting.

Akshobhya's image on a wooden frame, a carpet on the floor, and various brushes and paints are depicted in the picture. On the right side of the screen, a hand-crafted Buddhist Altar by the wall, a cabinet along with a candlestick, and a Buddhist painting are also depicted. These objects indicate the modest life of the Newar people at that time.

The number “2020” at the bottom left indicates the Nepalese calendar, which corresponds to the year 1966 AD. This artwork was made when Tej Bahadur was 68 years old.

Tej Bahadur, born and raised in the traditional painter caste, depicts his father painting the Buddhist paintings in a modest room with the new oil painting technique learned in India. Also, the title appears to show his respect, not only his father but also his ancestors. Although many of his works are portrait, the artist seems to confirm his family lineage as a painter, his personal history and role as an oil painter, by



[fig. 5]
Prem Man Chitrakar
(ref. “Paubha Painting in
Nepal” , 2010)

Prem Man Chitrakar (1944-) [fig. 5]

Prem Man, born in Kathmandu, continues to work as a painter since he graduated from Tribhuvan University in 1966. He is one of the oldest Paubha painters at work.

His grandfather, Bakhat Man Chitrakar (1871-1945), and his uncle, Manik Man Chitrakar (1908-1987) [fig.6] are, also known as painters.

Prem Man learned painting techniques from his father, Prithivi Man Chitrakar [fig. 7] .

Prem Man has trained many talented painters such as Deepak Kumar Joshi (1963-2019) and Mahendra Dangol (1971-). Also, he has involved in a large Buddhist painting at Lumbini Monastery and a restoration of Bhimsensthan Temple. Prem Man is said to be the painter who spread the Paubha techniques beyond family lines or caste system, because he taught its technique to the other painters outside the Chitrakar caste



[fig. 6]
Manik Man Chitrakar, Title Unknown, in the early 20th.
(ref. “Being Chitrakar”)



[fig. 7]
Prithivi Man Chitrakar, *Green Tara*, 1947.
(ref. “Being Chitrakar”)



[fig. 8]

Green Tara, 2005
pigment with gold and silver on canvas [fig. 8]

In this painting, the form of Green Tara is placed in the center and surrounded by the Five Tathagatas (Amoghasiddhi, Vairocana, Amitābha, Akshobhya, and Ratnasambhava) and White Tara. Green Tara is a famous female deity in Nepal and Tibet. While the traditional composition follows in a symmetrical arrangement, in this work, a sense of depth is created by depicting a pagoda in the back right corner. The uplifting feeling is also expressed through placing the Five Tathagatas on the upper left and the lower right of the screen with altering the size of them.

Instead of depicting Green Tara with the frontal and static form, Prem Man invented a new Paubha painting by adopting Western art techniques, a realistic representation, a spatial depth, and the experimental placing gorgeous and active images of the goods and the Buddha. Also, his disciples have developed the dynamic images of the gods and Buddha. Such change is considered to have been taken place by Ananndamuni Shakya and his uncle, Manik Man.