

there remains ever less time to document them. Vinding has described a rapidly-changing Himalayan society, and in so doing has made a lasting contribution to anthropology. *The Thakali* is at once refreshingly personal and pleasingly traditional, a truly rare combination in modern ethnography.

Kathmandu Valley Painting—The Jucker Collection by Hugo E. Kreijger. London: Serindia Publications, 1999. 128pp., 97 ills. (84 colour, 13 b&w). Glossary, bibliog., index. ISBN 0906026520.

Reviewed by Julia A.B. Hegewald

This publication is a descriptive and interpretative catalogue of the Newar paintings and drawings in the private ownership of the Swiss collectors Mischa and Angela Jucker. The catalogue contains 39 religious paintings on cloth (*paubhās*) (32 Buddhist, 7 Hindu), four works on paper, four bookcovers, and seven artists' sketchbooks. Most of the paintings have not been previously published. The main catalogue section is preceded by a short introduction to the geography and cultural history of Nepal, the artistic milieu of the painters, and a brief commentary on the stylistic development and religious context of the paintings in the collection.

Kreijger's book is an especially valuable contribution to our knowledge of the wealth, beauty and development of Newar painting and its relation to the painting traditions of India and Tibet. Despite the current proliferation of illustrated publications on the arts of Tibet and the Himalaya, it is rare for a study to focus on Nepal and in particular on the Newar paintings of the Kathmandu Valley. This publication provides a wide audience with access to an unpublished collection through high quality reproductions. It successfully portrays and describes individual items in the collection, but also provides a solid overview of the pattern of development and change which has taken place in the painting tradition of the Newars over eight centuries.

The paintings are arranged in chronological order with the earliest dating from circa 1200 and the latest from 1912. The individual *paubhās* are described in minute detail, and with every new picture the reader is invited to consider the paintings closely, following register by register and scene by scene, details which are easily identifiable on the photographs. Kreijger also provides useful and informative interpretations of certain colours, mudras, and symbols specific to the Newar painting repertoire, and narrates many of the stories depicted on the *paubhās*, thus drawing attention to the important narrative quality of the

paintings. Unfortunately, only two of the many substantial inscriptions incorporated in the paintings and translated by Ian Alsop and Gautamvajra Vajracharya are published in the book.

Whilst Kreijger provides a mass of detailed information on individual works, this does not detract from a comprehensive presentation of Newar painting in general. Of particular interest are those sections in which he traces the development of specific recurrent motifs over the centuries from one painting to another, and in doing so outlines innovations and stylistic developments in the Newar *paubhā* tradition. Examples illustrating such stylistic changes are the roundels containing flying *vidyādhars*, the garments of the patron and his family, and decorative motifs such as flowers or the shapes of the headdresses worn by certain divine beings. A considerable amount of helpful dating is done through the examination and relative sequencing of such motifs. In this context, Kreijger is also able to show that the collection contains several groups of representations of one and the same deity dating from different periods. The fact that important stylistic developments in the Newar painting tradition can be identified in the paintings contained in this collection without any need to refer to examples elsewhere highlights the comprehensive significance and importance of this private collection.

Particular attention has been paid throughout this monograph to the dates of the scrolls. However, whilst the age of a painting and its location in a secure chronology is both desirable and helpful, the precision implied by dating based on stylistic comparisons alone requires caution. Such 'precise' dating coupled with frequent assurances that many paintings, compositions and subject matters are 'most unusual', 'extremely rare', 'relatively unknown' and 'uncommon', may mislead the reader. Kreijger's understandable eagerness to promote the attributes of the collection occasionally gives the impression of sales-room persuasion—a metier which is familiar to the author. In his preface, Kreijger briefly draws attention to the fact that many pieces are without precedent (p.9), but it might also have been valuable to consider the question of why it is that such a large number of paintings in this collection are unusual in so many respects. On the one hand, the collection might simply reflect the collector's eye for atypical works whose availability confirmed their unorthodoxy. On the other, might the paintings in this collection reflect a previously unrecognized extent of individual expression and interpretation in a very conservative painting tradition? The lack of answers to such questions should not distract from the considerable contribution which this book makes to the study of painting in Nepal.

The catalogue's short introduction might have achieved more without being longer. On the other hand, it is extremely helpful that, where possible, individual paintings of the collection have been directly related to historical periods and developments. In his account of the artistic milieu, the author comments on the "low caste status presently held by the painting profession in Nepal" (p.15). Here, it might have been helpful to have differentiated between the traditional *paubhā* painters of the Chitrakar caste, and painters who have been more experimental in terms of their choice of media, techniques, and subject matter and may be referred to as 'modern painters'. Most of these come from higher

castes, and although they work as painters, have a high position in society. Although the catalogue contains several examples of painting manuals (p.16), the Introduction provides little or no information on such sketchbooks, or on the texts used by painters, such as manuals and guidelines. It would also have been helpful if this section had included some information on the substance of the colours and materials used.

While the stylistic overview of the paintings provides valuable general information on the collection, the opportunity to provide a bold summary and interpretation of Newar painting has not been taken. Kreijger stresses that Newar paintings are noticeably different in style from both the Indian and Tibetan painting traditions, but makes little attempt to identify these differences and to delineate clearly the distinctive features of Newar painting and their development over time. While certain typical Newar characteristics such as representations of a deity's vehicle in pairs (p.42) are pointed out in the catalogue text, more general tendencies could have been outlined to prepare the reader at the beginning of the book. The final section of the Introduction provides a useful commentary on Nepalese religious practice, though there are several passages where useful information has been omitted, such as the identification of the "holy lake where devotees of Shiva bathe" (p.21) as Gosainkund. In addition, the use of broad generalizations occasionally obscures whether a statement refers to specific items in the collection or to the whole genre of Newar painting.

In its totality, this well illustrated and documented catalogue of the previously unpublished Jucker collection provides an extremely valuable and detailed contribution to the study of Newar painting between the 13th and 20th centuries. Kreijger sets out to remedy the lack of material available on the arts of the Kathmandu Valley, to provide a study which is of interest and an aid to all students of Nepalese art, and which serves as an introductory text on the subject. His enthusiasm for the subject will inspire readers both familiar and unfamiliar with the Newar painting tradition.

Earth . Door . Sky . Door: Paintings of Mustang by Robert Powell with an introduction by Roberto Vitali. London : Serindia Publications, 1999. 108 pp., col. ill., maps. ISBN 0906026539.

Reviewed by Clare Harris

In 1992 the Nepalese government allowed a partial opening of the restricted area of Mustang, a decision which enabled a number of Himalayas and Tibet specialists to begin research projects in the region. Among them was the Australian artist Robert Powell. He joined a team of historians, architects and photographers (led by Niels Gutschow) who aimed to study and document the architecture of Mustang. Gutschow made an inspired choice when selecting his colleagues for this project, the results of which can be appreci-