



Karmapa with his Footprints

Date

late 12th-early 13th century

Medium

Pigments on silk

Description

This votive painting is the simplest and perhaps earliest-known painting of a founding master of Karma Kagyu tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, the Karmapa, who wears a black hat, his distinctive badge of office. It pays homage to the black-hatted master shown above the footprints, who is presumably the First Karmapa, Dusum Khyenpa (1110–1193). The painting was simply executed with thin

washes of color on silk, so it lacks most of the expected features of a fully colored painting. Still it exemplifies devotional paintings of the late twelfth century, based on worship of the lama's footprints. The painting also pays respect to the master by depicting him under a broad parasol and surrounded by auspicious objects placed within the undulating vine that grows from below. The parasol is an ancient Indian Buddhist iconographic element of Buddha depictions and a way of auspiciously paying homage. Fold marks on this image indicate that it was likely once inserted into a sculpture or reliquary as part of the consecratory contents.

Dimensions

20 3/4 × 18 5/8 in.