

attribute other objects with similar alloys and/or impurities to Ghazna also? Could it not be another, slightly inferior, vessel from a workshop in Herat? The analyses of several objects give conflicting results. For example, the inkwell (no. 17) is linked to Ghazna by its copper inlays and to Herat by its silver inlays (see p. 66). Two similar ewers (nos 7 and 8) have copper inlay impurities linking them to objects from Herat, but their silver inlay relates to that on an inkwell found in Ghazna (no. 12) and attributed to that city. The authors regret (p. 95) the current impossibility of analysing copper ores from mines in Khurasan that would “allow precise determination of its sources”. One possible way forward is the analysis of dated copper coins from known mints. Without some fixed comparisons, technical studies can inform but cannot yet replace traditional art historical methods.

After the technical analyses, the objects are presented in catalogue format according to their provenance, as defined by the previous chapter (this arrangement has the unfortunate result of beginning with no. 2, as no. 1 is illustrated with a brief caption in the section on alloys some 50 pages earlier). Nos 2–11 are attributed to Herat, nos 12–24 to Ghazna, nos 25–37 to non-identified sites in Khurasan/Afghanistan. The remaining objects, nos 38–84, are presented in the final section which discusses the context of the objects, and how they were perceived and used. Despite the authors’ protestations, this substantial part of the book (more than 50% of the total) is as thorough a catalogue of the objects as one could wish for. Each entry includes an excellent summary of the object’s manufacture and decoration, including its inscriptions in Arabic, transliterated Arabic and English, discussion of its provenance and history where called for, and relationship to similar objects in the Louvre and other collections. X-rays and fabulous details illustrate the entries and clarify the technical descriptions. The microscopic examination and illustrations take you way beyond what it would be possible to see even if you had the objects in your hands. For example, the two pouring vessels, nos 60 and 61, are very similar in appearance, but microscopic examination reveals that one had most of the decoration executed on the wax model with limited cold-working to finish, whereas the decoration on the other was entirely cold-worked.

The volume must have been challenging to edit, translate and produce but Gingko has done a magnificent job. *Precious Materials* is a superb achievement and has set a very high standard for future books and catalogues of Islamic metalwork. I look forward to volume 2.

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## **Matthew T. Kapstein (ed.): *Tibetan Manuscript and Early Printed Books. Volume I: Elements***

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With this publication a first comprehensive overview of Tibetan book studies is delivered to students of Tibetan literary traditions. The flourishing interest in Tibetan written



artefacts, including their material aspects, was raised only about two decades ago, spurred by studies of Old Tibetan documents. The first volume of this two-volume publication maps the developments in the approaches to Tibetan written records, covering fields from palaeography to digital technologies, but also humbly pointing to numerous gaps in our knowledge.

The introduction sets the context for the more detailed topics of the following chapters by providing the historical background to modern studies of Tibetan books. Despite the fact that one leaves this section without really knowing how “book” is to be understood in the Tibetan cultural context, the arguments convince of the multidimensional nature of the problematics that require concerted, in-depth research to enable further progress.

The first chapter “The material basis” is devoted to the materiality of the Tibetan book. Agnieszka Helman-Ważny introduces the reader to material supports in use for Tibetan writings, with special attention given to the primary material – paper – its composition and manufacture that has remained almost unchanged for centuries. Indispensable items such as inks, pigments, and writing instruments complement the description of material objects related to text composition.

We stay with the material aspects of written artefacts in the chapter “Format and layout”, in which Brandon Dotson and Agnieszka Helman-Ważny discuss the five most common formats of Tibetan books: scrolls, concertinas, codices, single sheets, and the most notable, *dpe čha*, also called *poti*. In addition to their outer characteristics and construction details, the reader learns about differences in layout bound to or imposed by the specific format.

With the chapter “The written text”, we turn to the medium of script – the backbone of all written artefacts. Sam van Schaik, Hanna Schneider, and Matthew T. Kapstein guide us through various styles of Tibetan script, beginning with the most pervasive distinction between the *dbu čan* “headed” and *dbu med* “headless” styles. The authors propose taxonomy of Tibetan styles as displayed in various periods of Tibetan written history, but also across different genres, especially of administrative documents. Since Tibetan palaeography remains a much-understudied field, time and again the reader is cautioned that the various styles should not be projected on the chronological scale, leading to unwarranted conclusions on the age of a manuscript.

The chapter “Marking the text: interventions of scribes, editors, and readers” by Matthew T. Kapstein continues the thread on palaeographical features with a presentation of scribal and editorial conventions, such as punctuation, foliation, abbreviation, rubrication, or corrections. The author also draws our attention to the fact that the life of a book starts rather than ends with its being committed to paper; readers’ notes, annotations, or doodles add colours to its history, making the object an artefact of social circumstances.

Heretofore, social aspects of book production have been mainly restricted to the studies of colophons, to which the chapter “Colophons”, by Brandon Dotson and Matthew T. Kapstein, is also dedicated. Colophons, like script styles or editorial conventions, may contain information crucial to the identification of persons involved in the production process. Accordingly, their study has the potential of informing our understanding of Tibetan social history in this sector of knowledge preservation and dissemination.

Another important index of provenance can be sought in book illuminations, studied in the chapter “Manuscript illumination” by Amy Heller and Matthew T. Kapstein. The chapter provides an overview of the most important styles of book ornamentation and illustration that appear to have derived from trends prevailing in visual arts.

In the chapter “The xylographic print”, Michela Clemente guides us through the history and technicalities of Tibetan block printing. The technique, despite its earliest attestations going back to the twelfth century, gained momentum only in the seventeenth century, when it spread rapidly throughout the Tibetosphere.

All we know today about Tibetan books and manuscripts results from the obvious fact that the objects have been preserved despite often difficult circumstances. In “Conservation, storage, and cataloguing”, Agnieszka Helman-Ważny and Matthew T. Kapstein give us a glimpse not only of the techniques applied to enhance preservation (such as the use of insecticidal substances in paper and pigment production), but also how collections have traditionally been catalogued and stored.

With Jeff Wallman’s contribution “Digital technologies and the study of Tibetan manuscripts”, the leap into the twenty-first century materializes. The digital era offers new possibilities for Tibetan studies, especially in the domain of text criticism and corpus studies. For these to be properly applied and understood in their advantages but also limitations it seems now necessary to include digital technologies in the curriculum of Tibetan studies.

Finally, I have to mention two bad habits burgeoning in Tibetan studies, into which the authors of this otherwise excellent publication unfortunately also fall. The first one is the unconcerned “use of the term “transcription” for both “transcription” and “transliteration”: འོ་ལོ་ཡོ་གོ་ can be rendered letter-by-letter (transliteration) as *bod yig*, or, for instance, its modern Lha-sa pronunciation can be approximated in the International Phonetic Alphabet as p<sup>h</sup>øji (transcription). The second bad habit is the apparently irresistible temptation to help everyone pronounce Tibetan by providing a walking stick of English-based transcription. Giving modern pronunciation to terms written down centuries ago, however, gives the misleading impression that the words were pronounced the same way 1,200 years ago as they are today. Moreover, favouring one particular modern variety, Westerners have chosen to be “the standard”, disregards the linguistic diversity of Tibetan languages; a Ladakhi author of the twelfth century is quoted in a way a Lha-sa citizen would pronounce the word today. This is not only ahistorical, but may also be regarded as disrespectful.

These critical remarks aside, this publication will prove indispensable for everyone interested in Tibetan literary culture. A significant factor contributing to the professional impression the book makes is the rich visual documentation comprising over 300 high-quality photos and illustrations that allow the reader to participate in the materiality of the objects discussed.

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## **Vincent Goossaert: *Making the Gods Speak: The Ritual Production of Revelation in Chinese Religious History***

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The ongoing nature of divine revelation in China has produced a bewildering array of texts and sects emanating from a variety of gods. This work aims to navigate the nature