

Conference

**Manuscript and Xylograph Traditions in the Tibetan Cultural Sphere
Regional and Periodical Characteristics**

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University of Hamburg
Khyentse Center for Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship (KC-TBTS)

Khyentse Center for
Tibetan Buddhist Textual Scholarship



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Abstracts

Wednesday, May 15

Styling syllables to think the world Inquiry into the art of studying Tibetan manuscripts

Cristina Scherrer-Schaub
(EPHE, Paris)

While in recent time several medieval collections of Tibetan manuscripts have surfaced that call into question the history of textual transmission and, occasionally, change our perspective upon the diachronic conspectus of manuscript culture in Tibet, the survey of the wealth of Tibetan material still demands to be selective and done in stages.

As said on another occasion each manuscript, in a way, represents an unicum, and cannot but rarely be seriously studied out of its context. And this is one of the problem (and paradox) posed to the historian, that will be here tentatively questioned and critically examined by way of practical examples and theoretical considerations.

Thursday, May 16

Varieties of Tibetan Manuscripts and Xylographs from Khara-khoto and Etsin-gol

Tsuguhito Takeuchi
(Kobe)

Although the Tibetan manuscripts and xylographs housed in the Stein and Kozlov collections have not been paid due attention, they are extremely rich in variety. Their dates range from the late 11th to the 20th centuries. Some are written in the Old Tibetan style, some in the Classical Tibetan style, some include Mongolian texts (bilingual texts), and some are prints. Their forms also vary, including *poṭhi*, scroll, concertina, and codex. In this paper, I wish to introduce these manuscripts and xylographs and discuss their periodical characteristics.

**Manuscripts as Practices
Reflections on early Tibetan manuscripts from Central Asia**

Sam Van Schaik
(The British Library)

Divisions between academic disciplines mean that a variety of artefacts discovered in the same place and originally used by the same people (e.g. manuscripts, art objects, and other artefacts such as weapons and clothing) will be studied in different academic departments by different people using different methods. In this paper I suggest that one way to elide these embedded cultural divisions is through the study of practices. Here the term 'practices' indicates the forms of life in which all of these objects once functioned. In the case of manuscripts and xylographs, this entails a movement away from the dominant paradigm of textual scholarship. I give some examples of how this might be achieved by attention to the processes of production, distribution, use and discard in the context of the early Tibetan manuscripts, art objects and other artefacts from Central Asia.

**A Tree that Gives Testimony on its Own Growth Rings
Arboreal and Other Metaphors for the Underlying Spatio-Temporal Organization
of the Zhijé Collection with its *ca.* 1240 CE Manuscript**

Dan Martin
(Jerusalem)

Even if the just-given title supplies good reason to imagine a presentation on dendrochronology, this is true only by analogy. The particular manuscript I will discuss, while I have never seen it directly, is probably the one I know the best, even while I feel I have much to learn from it. A bibliographic reference for its only published version is supplied below. I have long ago delivered an unpublished paper about the 1240

manuscript dating and (early production and post-production) provenance. Now I would like to continue against that background while taking a different approach asking somewhat different questions about the pre-1240 history. I will find evidence from both titles and stories — by which I mean evidence found [1] in the metaphors used in the titles of texts and sections of texts and [2] narratives told within the collection itself — for the prior physical-textual states of particular texts and sections. Following these lines should at the very least supply us with reasonable ideas about the former states of the various parts before they went together to form the collection. This ought to lead to a conclusion of some kind or another, I suppose, if not now, in the near future. For more early Zhijé collection manuscripts have been found, and while we await their publication, we may wonder how they may fit within — or alter — our picture of the tree and its growth.

Bibliography for the *Zhijé Collection*:

The Tradition of Pha Dampa Sangyas: A Treasured Collection of His Teachings Transmitted by T[h]ug[s]-sras Kun-dga', "reproduced from a unique collection of Manuscripts Preserved with 'Khrul-zhig Rinpoche of Tsa-rong Monastery in Dingri, edited with an English introduction to the tradition by B. Nimri Aziz," Kunsang Tobgey (Thimphu 1979), in 5 volumes, available to the general public as PDFs thanks to the TBRC at the following URL: http://www.tbrc.org/#library_work_Object-W23911. NGMPP also has microfilms of the original manuscript, including material lost in the process of publication, most pertinently a number of vanishing titles. The list of titles in the TBRC outline was supplied by myself, based more on the NGMPP microfilms than on the publication itself.

Preliminary Remarks on a Collection of Kanjur Pages from Western Tibet

Matthew T. Kapstein

(École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris and the University of Chicago)

In 2011 an American collector with whom I am acquainted transmitted to me high quality scans of a collection of roughly 500 Kanjur folios from Western Tibet. Many of the pages in question had been obviously separated from the volumes in which they were originally contained owing to the value of their illustrations. The only nearly complete text we find in the collection is a copy of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Moreover, on the basis of the stylistic variations in the illustrations, it seems that the bulk of the folios derive from a variety of Kanjur volumes executed over a period of several centuries, probably 12th – 16th. For manuscript studies, however, part of the interest of the collection is due the occasional annotations and markings accompanying the texts portions, which provide evidence of inventories of the Kanjurs to which they originally belonged. In the present communication, I will introduce the collection with particular reference to the annotated pages.

The Manuscripts of Bicher, Dolpo: An Assessment

Amy Heller
(CNRS, Paris)

In 2000 my initial inventory of 642 volumes of manuscripts in the remote hamlet of Bicher (Dolpo) allowed a preliminary record of the contents of the library. Subsequently art historical analysis complemented by radio-carbon analysis of four sheets provided a framework of four principal periods, late 11th-early 12th, ca. 1220-1240, ca. 1320-1350, and 1440-1520 (see A. Heller 2009). In 2012 fibre analysis of two sheets was performed. In this presentation I would like to examine the pertinent codicological characteristics of each period of manuscripts conserved in this library and attempt to identify the geographic and historic provenance of the manuscripts.

A. Heller, *Hidden Treasures of the Himalayas, Tibetan manuscripts, paintings and sculptures of Dolpo*, Serindia Publications, Chicago, 2009.

The National Archives' (Kathmandu) *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* Manuscript Edition Distinctive Features as Clues for Its Origin and History of Transmission

Orna Almogi
(University of Hamburg)

The editions from the Tibetan-Nepalese borderlands have been studied by Franz-Karl Ehrhard on several occasions. In 1979, Ehrhard, while cataloguing three hundred and forty microfilms (Reel Nos. A 635–836 and B 543–682) containing images of Tibetan texts from the National Archives taken by the NGMPP in 1973/74, identified seven volumes of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* (Reel Nos. A 832/2–A 836/1). In 1989 he managed to gain access into the collection in the Archives and located there thirty-two volumes of an almost complete *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* set, which has been so far believed to have originally consisted of thirty-seven volumes. The entire collection was then microfilmed by the NGMPP in the same year (Reel Nos. AT 1/1–AT 25). As already noticed by Ehrhard, some of the volumes are stamped by a seal of Śrī III Mahārāja Bhimsaṃser Jangbahadur Raṇa, who was the prime minister of Nepal from 1929 to 1932.

In 1992, during an NGMPP expedition to Ros (Samagaon) in the Nubri valley, Ehrhard discovered a complete manuscript set of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection in thirty-seven volumes, the last two volumes of which were identical to those of the collection found in the Archives (which contained rDzogs chen *tantras* not included in the gTing skyes edition). Ehrhard notes, on the basis of the catalogues of this manuscript collection, that the set was prepared at the behest of Brag dkar rta so sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He further refers to a statement in one of the catalogues according to which another set was made shortly afterwards by a disciple of Brag dkar rta so sprul sku named O rgyan 'phrin las bstan 'dzin, who belonged to the Nyang clan of gZhung in Rong shar (the family responsible for the founding and upkeep of the main temple of Junbesi in Solu Khumbu). Ehrhard suggests that this must be the copy that was given to the Prime Minister Bhimsaṃser and is now located at the Archives.

On the basis of further examinations of the National Archives *rNying ma rgyud ṽbum* edition, which mainly consist in cataloguing it and comparing its contents with that of the Nubri edition, new evidences surfaced which, in my view, shed new light regarding its origin and its possible relationship to the set from Nubri. It is also hoped that preliminary results of the examination of this collection by way of several scientific methods carried out in cooperation with the manuscript laboratory's team of the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures located at the University of Hamburg could be presented.

External and Internal Forms Relating to Documents as Means to Identify the Provenance of Tibetan Diplomatic Sources

Peter Schwieger
(Bonn University)

Since more than three decades we have been studying Tibetan legal and social documents at Bonn University. Especially thanks to the comprehensive digitalization of Tibetan archival material from Lhasa, Dharamsala and elsewhere, we have now a comparatively large pool of documents at hand, which allow representative studies on a larger scale. Currently we analyze the material especially as a source for Tibet's social and political history. In the course of our research, questions about identifying regional and periodical characteristics of various manuscripts have been raised every now and then. Except for Tibetan seals, there are until now no larger studies which analyze such characteristics systematically on the basis of Tibetan archival material. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to outline some of the criteria, i.e. the external and internal forms, which might help us to identify the provenance of Tibetan diplomatic sources. Thus, the paper will touch upon some of the typical auxiliary sciences of history, especially diplomatics, sigillography and paleography and demonstrate what these sciences have to offer for the research on Manuscript Traditions in the Tibetan Cultural Sphere.

Friday, May 17

Buddhist Hagiographies from the Borderlands Further Prints from Mang-yul Gung-thang

Franz-Karl Ehrhard
(Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich)

Blockprinting projects realized in Mang yul Gung thang in Southwestern Tibet constitute a valuable source for the study of the production and transmission of Buddhist texts. Although a number of printing projects dating to the years 1514-54 and 1555-80 have been documented on the basis of biographical data and printing colophons, previously unknown works continue to appear, located in archives and library collections.

The present contribution will present Buddhist hagiographies, including those of Dwags po lha rje sGam po pa bSod nams rin chen (1079-1153) and lCags zam pa Thang stong rgyal po (d. 1485), all executed as xylographs within a short time span in the Himalayan valleys of Yol mo Gangs [kyi] rwa [ba], Glang 'phrang, and La [l]de[bs]. These prints were all supported by a powerful minister of the kings of Mang yul Gung thang and realized by a close group of artists and craftsmen active in the royal domain.

Mang yul Gung thang Xylographs: Distinctive Features

Michela Clemente
(University of Cambridge)

This paper will focus on Mang yul Gung thang early xylographs and their distinctive features. The beginning of the 15th Century was a time of political stability for this small kingdom. It became an important centre for the printing of Buddhist texts thanks to the support of its rulers. The Gung thang court established spiritual ties with several religious schools. While working on the Tucci Tibetan Collection at the ISIAO Library in Rome, I discovered about 40 Gung thang xylographs. I could notice some features that distinguish them from other editions. Thanks to the international project “Transforming Technologies and Buddhist Book Culture: The Introduction of Printing and Digital Text Reproduction in Tibetan Societies” (managed by Cambridge University in cooperation with the British Library) in which I am involved, I had access to some original Gung thang xylographs kept at the National Archives of Kathmandu. I could also examine many texts microfilmed by the Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project. This led me to notice further minor peculiar characteristics. Each xylograph coming from a printing house located in that area seems to have its own slight distinctive features. Through an analysis of the style of the editions (front page, layout, *ductus*, orthographic peculiarities, woodcut representations) and an accurate study of colophons of the numerous extant Gung thang xylographs collected by the above-mentioned project, it seems possible to identify their origin, that is to say, the printing house where each of them was printed. A further step for their identification would be an analysis of materials (paper, ink, pigments) by experts from different disciplines. However, my paper will be restricted to a presentation of the observable features of the various prints supplemented with information extracted from colophons.

**Early Tibetan Printing in Southern La stod
Remarks on a 1407 Print Produced at Shel dkar**

Hildegard Diemberger
(University of Cambridge)

Setting out from a newly-discovered 1407 Tibetan print (so far the earliest extant print produced in Tibet) I explore the link between Buddhist patronage and technological innovation. Produced as a merit making funerary deed in honour of the ruler of Southern La stod Situ Chos kyi rin chen under the aegis of Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal, this early print, and especially its colophon, elicits a range of general questions. What was the connection between religious and political aspirations of Tibetan local rulers and the introduction and promotion of printing technologies? Why did printing start to flourish in Tibet in the 15th century at a time of political fragmentation after the demise of the Yuan Empire? What was the significance of the materiality of these literary artefacts? This presentation addresses these questions looking at Tibetan early printing in a comparative perspective, against the background of studies of Buddhist patronage and of printing as an agent of social and cultural change.

**Reprinting the Buddhist Classics
On the Production and Circulation of Blockprints in the 16th cent.**

Marta Sernesi
(Ludwig Maximilians University Munich)

Between the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th cent. the blockprinting technique became increasingly popular in Central and Western Tibet, as its value in granting the oeuvres greater textual stability and wider circulation became recognized and sought-after. During this period, collections such as the *Mi la'i rnam mgur*, the *Maṇi bKa' 'bum*, the *Dwags po'i gsung 'bum*, and the *Sangs rgyas kyi skyes rabs (Jātakamālā)* were printed for the first time. Moreover, all these "Buddhist classics" were reprinted at least once in the middle of the 16th cent., hence shortly after their first edition. Comparing different early blockprints of the same texts—in their material aspect and contents—, it is possible to shed light on significant features of their modes of production, and to investigate the circumstances of their transmission and circulation.

**Tibetan Accounts of Manuscripts
Written with Liquid Lapis on Golden Tablets**

Dorji Wangchuk
(Hamburg)

Of the legends surrounding the origination and transmission of some famous Buddhist scriptures, the accounts of scriptures written on golden plates or tablets (*gser gyi glegs*

bu/bam: suvarṇapatra) with liquid lapis (*bai dūrya yi zhun ma*) seem to be the most intriguing ones. They possibly inspired rich and influential people across the Tibetan cultural sphere to commission their own deluxe editions of scriptures to which great sanctity has been attributed. The most esteemed type of deluxe editions in Tibet, however, seems to be a reverse of the mythical one inasmuch as the Tibetans rather produced manuscripts written with gold ink on dark-blue paper than ones written with lapis on golden support (of whatever kind). Regardless of whether lapis was indeed used by Tibetans for making deluxe editions, these legends—associated with the origin of several scriptures—seem to be as old as Tibetan Buddhism itself. This paper seeks to trace some of the earliest Tibetan textual sources of these accounts.

Technologies of the Production of Buddhist Books among the Mongols

Vesna A. Wallace
(University of California, Santa Barbara)

The Mongols' rich tradition of the book production consists not only of the books written by hand, xylographs and lithographs, but also of books written with gold on pages made of silver, and books embroidered with multicolored threads of silk on cloth. The books produced as xylographs and lithographs are classified into three main categories, according to the type of printing blocks or plates used in their production, such as wood blocks, stone blocks, and metal plates. Among the three types of blocks, wood blocks were most popular for several reasons. They were not only less costly than other block plates, but also it was easier to erase and amend typographical errors on them and to engrave annotations.

In addition to various materials and methods in which Buddhist Tibetan language-based books were recorded by hand and printed in Mongolia, this presentation will also address the Mongols' manner of decorating books, shaping, and storing them. It will also address the Chinese and Tibetan influences on the book production in Mongolia, printing houses, and the like.

mThing shog: The Blue Black Manuscripts of Tibet

James Canary, Conservator
(Lilly Library, Indiana University)

This paper will examine the methods of making a variety of mthing shog. We will look at printed descriptions and recipes and compare to actual materials found in the manuscripts. Topics covered will be paper fibers, lamination of sheets, surface

preparation, preparation of inks and colors, calligraphy and page layout. These manuscripts tend to have illuminations and these too will be commented on. After presenting the techniques of making these manuscripts some conservation problems peculiar to them will be shown and methods of possible treatment discussed. A modern maker of mthing shog in Lhasa will be shown with his tools and techniques.

A Survey of Tibetan Paper

Agnieszka Helman-Wazny, Ph.D.
(University of Hamburg)

This study explores papermaking tools and technology in Tibet, their development over time with attention to important regional differences, and plants native to the Himalayas used as raw material that distinguish Tibetan paper from Chinese and other paper types of Central Asia.

The history of Tibetan paper is discussed in the context of the earliest preserved Tibetan manuscripts on paper found in Dunhuang, selection of manuscripts from Western and Central Tibet and Nepal approximated to the 11th – 15th centuries, and the early Tibetan prints.

Paper analysis helps to identify provenance and reveals links between groups of objects with the same distinguishable features. By identifying fibre composition and studying variations in production methods, raw materials, and treatment of the paper surface, it is to some extent possible to determine the time and place of production and understand the technologies involved in a regional and periodical perspective.

Saturday, May 18

Comparing Character Shapes in Tibetan Manuscripts

Rainer Herzog & Arved Solth
(University of Hamburg)

In recent years, many different approaches have been proposed for the task of writer verification or identification in historical documents. We will present a new way for comparing writing styles within manuscripts or sections of manuscripts based on stroke analysis.

In a first step, a user selects a stroke pattern suitable for comparison. This might be a character or only a part of it, a syllable or ligature, a short word or a partial word. Our word spotting algorithm then finds stroke patterns which are visually similar to the query pattern. This way, each section can be characterized by a collection of stroke patterns corresponding to the query.

In a second step, the retrieved stroke patterns are segmented in single strokes. Each stroke can be described in terms of various features, e.g. length, orientation, curvature, width profile. The mean and variance of the feature values for each stroke within each section are determined and can be compared with the respective values from the other sections. By statistical evaluation, one can determine the likelihood of whether two sections are similar enough suggesting they have the same origin or not, based on the comparison of the user selection.

Although our algorithm is aimed to perform independent from any specific writing system, the printed form of the Tibetan script seems to be especially suited, as one can expect reliable stroke segmentation and informative features.

Recovering Lost Writing in the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* Collection of Tibetan Manuscripts

Boryana Pouvkova & Clair MacDonald
(University of Hamburg)

The Z01 service project for the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures at the University of Hamburg recovers erased or damages writing using nondestructive multi-spectral imaging methods. Our system uses specially designed high resolution camera, a set of lights extending between ultraviolet and near infrared and a set of filters to produce a wide range of images we can then utilize further with digital processing techniques.

Both writing lost to damage and to corrections were present within the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection at the National Archives in Kathmandu. We will discuss some of the successes and challenges specific to the Tibetan manuscripts we imaged and what kind of results can be expected by using this technique.

X-ray Fluorescence Spectroscopy and Other Techniques in the Material Studies of Manuscripts

Emanuel Kindzorra, Ira Rabin, Oliver Hahn
(BAM Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing, Berlin / University of Hamburg)

Recent technological developments in the field of non-destructive testing and growing interdisciplinary collaborations are leading to the broadening of the field of the textual analysis to include experimental characterization of drawing and writing materials.

X-Ray fluorescence (XRF) technique is commonly used for elemental analysis of various objects in the field of cultural heritage. This technique benefits from the availability of a variety of transportable instruments ranging from single spot to high-resolution scanning equipment, as well as from a wealth of knowledge and experience that have been accumulated in the characterization of historical inks via this technique.

In addition other techniques such as infrared-spectroscopy (FTIR) or visible spectroscopy (VIS) contribute essential information especially for the investigation of coloured inks and book illumination.

This presentation offers an overview of the methods we are employing for non-invasive characterization of inks and pigments. In particular, we will discuss the latest results of our analysis of the inks and pigments of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* collection. The experiments were conducted with three mobile spectrometers and a mobile three-color microscope.