

Preface

This book is a revised version of my PhD dissertation, which was defended at the Centre for the Study of Manuscript Cultures (CSMC) of the University of Hamburg in January 2016. It is also the outcome of the sub-project ‘Dividing Texts: Conventions of Visual Text-Organization in North Indian and Nepalese Manuscripts up to ca. CE 1350’ (B04) of the ‘Sonderforschungsbereich 950 *Manuskriptkulturen in Asien, Afrika und Europa*’ supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) from 2011–2015.

The present volume focuses on the study of the visual organisation of manuscripts primarily from Nepal (particularly those originating in the Kathmandu Valley) and North-India (regions of Eastern, Western India), which were produced, largely on palm-leaves, between ca. 800–1300 CE. However, a few examples of birch-bark and paper manuscripts as well as inscriptions from the same regions or other regions, prior or later, to the aforementioned time-frame are also included. Most of those examples not belonging to the ‘core’ corpus of manuscripts analysed in this book have largely been recorded in the footnotes. Visual organisation is a significant aspect of any manuscript culture and its study helps obtain a broad knowledge of those artefacts, spanning from their production process to their usage. The study also takes into consideration the various techniques for dividing texts into sub-section and the practices used by scribes in the course of the manuscript’s production, such as symbols, blank spaces, gaps, colours etc.

This book consists of six chapters. In the first chapter the introductory matters of the study are briefly mentioned providing notes on its methodology and the conventions that have been employed. The second chapter deals briefly with the overall layout of the manuscripts providing two examples for each manuscript from the ‘core’ corpus that has been analysed. The third chapter, the most significant of this volume, studies the use of symbols found in manuscripts. Chapter four examines, in detail, the use of space(s) in manuscripts as dividing devices. Chapter five focuses on the use of colours followed by preliminary results from scientific examination of manuscripts. The examination of selected manuscripts was carried out in cooperation with scientists affiliated to the Project Area Z of the CSMC at the National Archives, Kathmandu in 2013. The sixth chapter discusses possible conclusions. The latter, however, are to be taken as preliminary findings, for many questions remain unanswered and call for further research.

A caveat is in order here as the number of manuscripts focused on in this study represents a mere fraction of the enormous corpora of manuscripts that may be deemed pertaining to ‘Indic’ manuscript cultures. It is hoped this study will contribute some new insights into the studies of visual organisation and, possibly, inspire readers to undertake further research in the field. At the same time, remarks and suggestions may help improve the scope and content of this work.