materiality foremost, addressing efficacy and subject/object distinctions as they are illustrated through the work and career of Sokdokpa as a writer and ritual specialist.

Most usefully, Gentry's approach puts sixteenth- and seventeenth-century debates on the role of objects as mediators and informational agents in Tibetan Buddhism in conversation with the discourse of scholars making sense of this intellectual and material heritage in our own time. This marks a significant and much-needed development in the academic understanding of Tibetan hermeneutics and its historiography, and the author provokes new ways to discuss the logic of Tibetan ritual activity by examining materials within their relational matrix. Throughout, Gentry narrows his discussion to certain volatile substances and their rites, promoted by Sokdokpa and used to liberate, protect, or empower. This is useful both in its historical specificity but also in its elaboration of vocabularies used to discuss the objective aspect to Tibetan ritual practice: concepts of efficacy, phenomenology, valorization, and the implications of a perceived subject/object divide are all given an examination via the writings and priorities of Sokdokpa.

This work inspires several further developments in the study of Tibetan ritual materials, some of which are alluded to by the author directly in his terminology and conclusions. For example, "material", "substance", "object/thing", "instrument", and "representation" are all distinct aspects of and operative categories for Tibetan ritual logic, and each deserves its own investigation. Moreover, the interpretation of materials themselves – not only through literary analysis but through their technological and physicochemical aspects – will be a useful contribution to the study of Tibetan Buddhism and its expressions throughout cultural history. This has been a glaring omission by scholars of what has been called Tibetan "art", where we are working to cultivate a more rigorous concept of how representational objects in particular communicate through their material nature.

Overall, *Power Objects* develops and articulates the general "material turn" of ritual studies – evidence of which seems ubiquitous in academia at present – to provide an informed case study of these topics within Tibetan Buddhism. Building on the recent work found in *Tibetan Ritual* (ed. José Cabezón, Oxford University Press, 2010), where religious activities are treated as a specialized and highly diversified facet of the region's cultural history – and to which Gentry contributed as well – this volume is a rich and inspiring step in our study of and conversation with Tibet's actual and intellectual records.

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EAST ASIA

SAM VAN SCHAIK:

The Spirit of Zen.

xiv, 255 pp. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018 (published in association with the International Sacred Literature Trust). £12.99. ISBN 978 0 300 22145 9.
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The International Sacred Literature Trust has over the years published a good number of titles in English translation that have drawn on most of the major religious traditions of the world. But inevitably the tendency has been to concentrate

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on the better-known works within each tradition, and the broad readership envisaged has discouraged ventures into materials requiring extensive academic annotation. Here, however, the constraints inherent in the aims of the series have been ingeniously circumvented to produce at a reasonable price a work of broad utility that also contains – despite the somewhat anodyne title – an excellent translation of indubitable academic value of a little-known but important text. The *Lengqie shizi ji*, composed in the early eighth century, appears to have had no readers for about a thousand years until it was rediscovered in several copies among the treasure trove of long lost Dunhuang manuscripts that came to light in the early twentieth century. But it gives precious information on the succession of meditation masters who traced their origins back some two centuries to the arrival in China of the meditation teacher Bodhidharma, while at the same time looking forward to much more conspicuous developments, in that it also mentions in passing the existence of Huineng, the obscure provincial master who by the end of the eighth century and ever since has been celebrated as the Sixth Patriarch of Chan, or Zen.

Yet here this difficult but crucial text is cunningly wrapped in the most alluring of disguises, an 80-page description of Zen that offers to explain it all, and indeed provides an overview as helpful as any in what is now a fairly crowded field. The suspicion that writing about the ineffable is pointless is briskly disposed of right at the start with the recommendation that before reading further those who prefer direct experience should get themselves to a Zen teacher, or failing that a self-help manual of Zen meditation, without delay. But this advice is followed rapidly with the caution that Zen in the West is not always quite the same thing as is encountered in Buddhist contexts in Asia; only then is an account of Zen history embarked upon. The full narrative, stretching as it does across half a dozen Asian languages, sometimes suggests that the author is on slightly unfamiliar territory, to judge from occasional lapses such as the appearance of one "Esai" in twelfth-century Japan (p. 42); it is surprising, too, to find D.T. Suzuki described as a "priest" (p. 22). But generally the treatment is both succinct and comprehensive.

Thereafter, though the last half dozen pages of the volume are devoted to a brief vocabulary explaining the most important Buddhist technical terms used, the bulk of the remainder consists of the first annotated translation into English of the *Lengqie shizi ji*, a translation given added authority by the fact that the translator – unlike any predecessor anywhere – has already rendered into English a Tibetan translation of the Chinese original that seems to have been carried out at a date much earlier than any of our other manuscripts. No one working on the early stages of the Zen tradition or indeed on East Asian Buddhism of the seventh and eighth centuries will now be able to ignore this painstaking yet readable version of what is despite its long obscurity a key source. If at some time in the future scholarship moves beyond the point represented by this work, it will only be because the background of the *Lengqie shizi ji* in the seventh century and earlier will have come into somewhat sharper focus. Meanwhile I hope that Sam van Schaik's book more than meets the sales expectations of his publishers and encourages them in similar ventures. With a possible revised edition in mind, the following small points of translation may benefit from some attention.

On p. 222, n. 40, the confusing character *shan* 山, "mountain", may have a simple explanation. Unlike the generally excellent edition of the Chinese text by Marcus Bingenheimer and Po-Yung Chang used in this book, the edition accompanying the 1971 translation by Yanagida Seizan takes the word as modifying the following noun "stick", but I would suggest that this means not a stick from a mountain but

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a staff forming the character for "mountain", i.e. a trident. Note also *Journal of Chinese Studies* 61 (July 2015), p. 316, n. 2, for what looks like a similar usage.

On p. 234, n. 45, the phrase *shouyi* 守一 is in fact a very general term for meditation with a long history in Chinese Buddhism and a yet longer history before then: cf. Benjamin Penny (ed.), *Daoism in History* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 42; it cannot be said to derive from Daoism, even if used in Daoist circles.

On p. 238, n. 19, the term *hunyi* 渾儀, which seems to have stumped even Yanagida, means quite precisely an armillary sphere. As to why such an object should have been used as a metaphor for Buddhist practice, a very full explanation is given in Antonino Forte, *Mingtang and Buddhist Utopias in the History of the Astronomical Clock: The Tower, Statue and Armillary Sphere Constructed by Empress Wu* (Rome: ISMEO, and Paris: EFEO, 1988).

On p. 242, n. 45, the term *chongxuan* 重玄 here may be purely rhetorical, but it does have two technical meanings in Chinese Buddhism of this period, and Yanagida reads it as a specific reference to one of them: cf. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1982/1, pp. 38–40.

A revised edition or lightly corrected reprinting might also dispose of some minor errors – on p. 253 for example Daoxin has unaccountably turned into Daoxuan. I do hope Sam van Schaik's work here gains the attention it deserves and merits rapid reprinting, and yet more I hope that it inspires others who read it to take up the demanding yet important study of the Dunhuang manuscripts that is so well exemplified here.

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DOROTHY KO:

The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China. (A William Sangki and Nanhee Min Hahn Book.) xii, 315 pp. Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2017. $45. ISBN 978 0 295 99918 0.

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Inkstones have long been considered one of the four treasures of the Chinese scholar's studio, and yet they have often been overlooked as art objects within existing scholarly literature. These carved stone basins, in which ink is prepared for use in writing or painting, are intimately tied to the very nature of imperial-bureaucratic rule and to the construction of Chinese Han literati culture. And yet, despite this, as Dorothy Ko tells us in her impressive new book, *The Social Life of Inkstones: Artisans and Scholars in Early Qing China,* Chinese culture's tendency to privilege mental over manual labour has meant that both the materiality of the inkstone and the creativity of the craftsmen and women who made them has been overlooked. Ko's effort to redress this by focusing her book on the artisans who made the inkstones rather than just the scholars who used them results in a fascinating confluence of material culture and intellectual history, and reminds us that no matter how far removed elites may see themselves from the world of objects, cultural capital is always, in part, material.

The first chapter fits somewhat awkwardly with the rest of the book, but is, in itself, convincing. Our understanding of Qing history has changed drastically over

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