Contents

Acknowledgements 8
Preface: 1
The Newar, their metalwork and local sourcing of raw materials in historical times 15

Part 1 The manufacture of statues of Buddhist deities 21
Specialisations and work stages 23
The cire perdue technique 25
Wax model production 26
Craft and contemplation 26
Modelling 27
Mandatory proportions 27
Focus on the art of the Newar modellers 27
Preparing the wax plates 31
The modeller's tools 31
Constructing a figure from its component parts 31
The actual wax modelling process 33
Solid casting of small statues 37
Hollow casting of larger statues 37
Intricate decoration 38
Casting in sections 38
Determining the amount of metal required 38
How long does it take? 38
Copying from a template 41
“Back-up copy” or second model 41
Serial model making 41
From making duplicates to mass production 41
Taking serial impressions from thäsä-matrices 43
Indirect casting with matrices 47
Casting in bi-valve clay moulds 47
Traditional mould making 48
Clays are a science 48
“High-tech” using natural methods 55
Preparing the clay mould for casting 57
De-waxing to create an accurate hollow body 57
Pre-firing the moulds to make them heat-resistant 58
The actual casting process 58
A well-drilled team 58
Heavy work: casting 59
The big moment 66
Setbacks and disappointments: defective castings and repairs 70
Tradition and innovation 72
The crucible furnaces (bhöcä-gah, fig. 88,B) 74
The kilns for the clay moulds (siyä-gah fig. 88,C) 77
Combination kilns for crucibles and moulds (thâyögya-gah, fig. 88,D) 77
Furnaces with ventilation windows: the kauqhya furnace 77
Supplying air to the furnace with bellows 77
African-style innovation? 78
Casting large bronzes 80
Special dimensions for religious pieces 80
Assembling the casting sections 84
Cold work: trimming, cleaning, chasing, grinding and polishing 86
Trimming and grinding 86
Punching and chasing 89
Cold work techniques 89
Extreme division of labour 89
Characteristics of chased work 91
Not engraving 91
Burnishing 93
Sealing the base 95
Visit to the chasing workshop of Raju and Umesh Shakya 97
Visit to the chasing workshop of Buddha Shakya 97
Visit to the chasing workshop of Subarna Shakya 99
Fire gilding 102
“Gold-rich Himalayas” – “gold-rich Nepal” 102
Fire gilding: the hallmark of Himalayan countries 102
Leaf gilding: the hallmark of Southeast Asia 104
Other gilding techniques 104
The formula for gold amalgam 106
Making the amalgam and preparing objects for gilding 108
Applying the amalgam 108
Poison! 111
Vaporising the mercury 111
“Scratch-brushing” and burnishing 113
Patinating 116
Patinating with ferric oxide 116
Patinating to create an “antique” surface 116
Letting the patinating mixture work its way into the surface 118
Lengthy patination with salt and acid 118
Patinating by burying underground 118
Patinating by staining 122
Patinating by annealing 122
Patinating by rubbing in fat 123
Patinating a fire-gilded surface 123
Further ways of “aging” statues 123
Ju Mi-Pham’s historical patination formula 123
Painting 125
Gilded and painted faces 125
In historical times 125
Present-day colourful acrylics 127
A profession in itself 127
Part 2: The historical and social background

The history of Newar metal casting

Indian sources

Kautilya's Arthashastra

Vishuddharmottara purauna

Varaha Mihira's Brhatasamhitā

Citraśaṃśa

Pratimāśaṃśa

Śāriputra

Kāśyapa-jñānakārakah

Kāraṇāgama

Rasaratna Samuccaya

The Śilpaśāstras

Early examples of the Newar art of casting

The power of iconography and historical sketchbooks

An Insider's View (by Ratna Jyoti Shajya)

Pāṭān's importance as a centre of metals crafts

Trade and market of the statues some generations ago

The economic importance of Pāṭān's metal crafts for Nepal

The growth of Newar's artistic economy after
the revival of Tibetan culture

Problems of unemployment and the trend
towards job-seeking abroad

The worker's situation regarding health,
welfare and insurance

Traditional work versus modern high-tech

The Nepalese ethnic group of the Newar and
the Shakya clan

The Shakya's Buddhist art work after the downfall of
Tibet and in their exile in India

The Shakya's involvement in Buddhist metal
Craftsmanship today

The profound relationship between religious art,
crafts and divinities within Buddhism

Family, training and newcomers to the trade

Family tradition and the influence of "outsiders"

Training and teaching

Part 3: The other metal-processing crafts in Nepal

Sand casting

Workshop visit

Production steps

Processed alloys

Casting everyday items

Household items

A repertoire of traditional designs

Case study: water jugs (karuwa)

Competition and tradition

Bells

Pealing and jingling all over the land

Vajra and ghanta: the thunderbolts and bells of the abbots,
lamas and monks

Loot

Visit to a workshop making large bells

The production of the "ghanta" handbells

Coppersmithing

A clan of its own: the Tamrakar

The techniques of the coppersmiths

Workshop visit

Copper hammering in "repoussé" technique

Technology and terminology

Two different techniques that go hand in hand

The technique of hammering "en repoussé"

Making pieces in sections and assembling them

Ductile sheets of copper and precious metals

An age-old craft of the highest quality

Mixed casting and repoussé technique

The professional groups of repoussé specialists
In the family workshop of a Tamrakar repoussé artist 213
In the large enterprise of a Shakya repoussé artist 217
The studio 217
Rough hammering on a stake anvil 219
Fine chasing with a punch on a pitch bowl 223
Other moulding and casting techniques 223
Assembly 223
Case studies: repoussé works 226
Selected examples 226
Repoussé bowl with the eight glorious Buddhist emblems 226
Making singing bowls 238
Workshop visit to a singing-bowl foundry in Thimi 239
Material analyses 239
Preparing the sand moulds 239
Casting 243
Turning and burnishing 245
Case study: large singing bowl with six images of Buddha 245
The bowl and how it was made 245
Adding the images of Buddha 247
Decoration and symbolism 247
Material analyses 250
Silversmiths and silver casters 251
In the silversmith’s workshop 251
Silversmithing, hammering and punching 251
Obtaining silver blanks 251
Hammering 253
Soldering 253
Chasing and assembling 255
Fire gilding and mounting gems 255
Acid-cleaning, “scratch-brushing” and patinating 255
Silver-casting 259
Finishing and chasing 265
A look at Nepal’s blacksmiths 268

Part 4: Sources and prices of raw and work materials 269
Local suppliers 271
Metals 271
Alloys 272
Early alloys, based on object analyses 272
Traditional alloys in the twentieth century 273
The frequently cited “eight-metals” alloy “asta dhātu” 276
The alloys used today for representations 279
Hardness properties of alloys used in Nepal 280
Copper 283
Brass 284
Zinc 284
Brass alloys 285
Recycling and scrap metal 285
Bronze 287
Tin 287

Silver 287
Gold 288
Mercury 288
Price trends 290
Copper 290
Brass and zinc 290
Silver 292
Gold 292
The clays and their preparation 293
“White clay” (mesim-cä) 293
“Yellow clay” (mahāsy-cä) 295
“Black clay” (gathi-cä) 295
Other clays (e. g. gicha) 295
Crucibles 297
Industrial crucibles today 297
The old crucibles made of “black clay” 297
Crucibles for processing gold 299
Types of fuel 301
Charcoal 301
Wood 301
Fossil fuels 301
Black coal 301
Diesel 302
Beeswax and other modelling materials 302
Modelling wax for the model 302
Additives and thinners 302
Sources of supply for beeswax 303
Other materials and auxiliary supplies 305

Part 5: Summary and lists 307
Outlook 309
Summary 311
Zusammenfassung 312
Appendix: pXRF analyses of Buddhist metal objects 313
Alloy? 313
Gilding? 315
Patination? 330
Abbreviations 321
List of references 321
List of photographic credits 328