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A View of Mañjuśrī: Wisdom and its Crown Prince in Pāla-period India

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of **Doctor of Philosophy**
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2002

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ABSTRACT

A View of Mañjuśrī: Wisdom and its Monastic Crown Prince in Pāla India

This study seeks to explore some of the complex ways in which particular historical and political contexts of eighth-eleventh century Pāla India may have shaped the way in which Buddhist monks conceptualized and portrayed Mañjuśrī, the Crown Prince of *prajñā*. Special attention is given to the relationships between the production of monastic Buddhist discourses – both literary and artistic -- and of the Pāla state, and with exploring ways in which representations of Mañjuśrī and his *prajñā* may have promoted, mirrored or challenged the State's vitality and legitimation.

The monastically produced texts and artworks of both of these periods were characterized by a marked resurgence of attention to *Prajñāpāramitā* discourse, Mañjuśrī-centric images and Mañjuśrī texts. The portrayals of *prajñā* and Mañjuśrī in these two periods were, however, markedly distinct from one another. These differences are analyzed by positioning them against the backdrop of key political and economic changes in post-Harṣa North India, particularly the rise of the *sāmanta* state – changes which altered earlier patterns of Buddhist monastic patronage, and demanded that Pāla monasteries cultivate particular relationships with the Pāla State. *A View* proposes that monastic portrayals of Mañjuśrī can be seen to mirror the nature and development of that relationship and of the changing fortunes of the Pāla State.

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Acknowledgements:

This project is a testimony to the truth of the Buddha's teaching of interdependent origination, although in this case, it entailed rather more than twelve links. Foremost amongst these was Robert A.F. Thurman, Jey Tsongkhapa Professor of Indo-Tibetan Studies. Dr. Thurman's seemingly boundless erudition and generosity with his time was rivaled only by his patience with me; my only hope of repaying him is to reflect his scholarship, compassion and pedagogic mastery.

Indispensable to this project -- indeed, to my studies at Columbia -- was the unstinting personal and intellectual guidance of Professor Ryuichi Abe. Dr. Abe's own scholarship in Japanese Buddhism has been foundational to my own development as a student, as it has been for so many of my colleagues. His openness to consider and discuss ideas and issues with me went far beyond the call of duty - - I owe him an enormous debt of gratitude.

I have been equally as fortunate in those who initiated and guided me through the beauties and complexities of the Sanskrit language, notably Professors Theodore Riccardi and Gary Tubb. Each has given me invaluable and learned feed-back on this project, and has given more of their time and effort than any student has a right to expect. I thank each one of your knowledge, your generosity and support.

Finally, I must acknowledge and thank Professor Rachel McDermott for her wholly exceptional support and guidance. Her comments and insights have been of immeasurable assistance, as have been her humor, tolerance and generosity with her time.

There are so many other teachers without whom I could not have completed this work. In particular, I think of *lotsawa* extraordinaire Lozang Jamsal; of Kirti Rimpoche, and Tenzin Norbu in Dharmasala; and of Nathaniel Dickson and Gregory Hillis of the University of Virginia. Professor Ronald Davidson was also of great help to me, as were Professors Vesna Wallace and Alexis Sanderson. I would not have arrived here without the friendship and support of Robbie Barnett, Kelly Washburn and Marina Ilich - thank you all for putting me up - -and putting up with me. Last, but definitely not least, I thank my husband Irv for never letting me forget who I was and what I was doing, and little Ori for arriving in time to remind me why.

Introduction:

Towards the end of an extended visit to the Nālandā monastery of Bihar, the seventh century Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang awoke one night from an unsettling dream. He was, he writes, wandering through the grounds of the great *mahāvihāra*. Yet instead of throngs of monks and magnificent courts and classrooms, Hsüan -tsang encountered destitution and desertion; Nālandā's temples had crumbled, the classrooms were bare, and "there was nought but water-buffaloes fastened in them – no priests or followers."¹ In great agitation, Hsüan -tsang scrambled to the top of the Bālāditya temple when he was stopped by a vision: the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī standing on the temple roof, pointing to a fire which raged around the *mahāvihāra*. The conflagration, warned the Crown Prince of Wisdom, bespoke an impending period of anarchy and confusion: Hsüan -tsang should leave India at once. Mañjuśrī then turned his back and vanished into the ruins of the once-great institution.

Hsüan -tsang's foreboding nightmare seems a curiously grim artifact of a man writing at the alleged apogee of Nālandā's career;² it is not clear whether it derives from Hsüan-tsang's years of observation and travel, or from a more local, intimate experience – a "bit of undigested potato" as Ebenezer Scrooge might have it. What is clear, however,

¹ Hsüan -tsang. Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World. Translated by Samuel Beal. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1969, 125 ff.

² Sukumar Dutt, for example, observes that "Nālandā was then at the zenith of prosperity and fame." Buddhist Monks and Monasteries of India. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988, 320.

is the deep personal significance the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī holds for this seventh-century Buddhist scholar. As the oldest and most significant mythic *bodhisattva* of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, Mañjuśrī is, for the monastic Buddhist, the embodiment of *prajñā* -- critical, discriminating wisdom into the nature of reality, and thus tantamount to personal insight into the most profound nuances of the Buddha's teaching. By Hsüan-tsang's time, such an experience of extraordinary certitude is routinely denoted in monastically-produced Buddhist texts as "seeing Mañjuśrī," and connotes the unimpeachable legitimacy of the visionary; it is not difficult to imagine the import Hsüan-tsang's vision must have held for him.

Equally clear are Mañjuśrī's more worldly associations. For Hsüan-tsang -- as indeed, for the typical Indian monk -- Mañjuśrī is the embodiment of the monastic paradigm in all its complexities. Alternately portrayed in Buddhist literature as devout monk and youthful Crown Prince, Mañjuśrī was both symbol of monasticism's loftiest aspirations and barometer of its institutional vitality; we are not surprised to find him at the apex of Nālandā's most famous temple in Hsüan-tsang's dream, nor to see him pointing outwards -- beyond the walls of the monastery -- towards Nālandā's uncertain and dangerous future.

This project is a closer look at Mañjuśrī's "vision" -- at the multiple and complex functions of Mañjuśrī and his *prajñā* internal to Indian Mahāyāna discourse in general, and more specifically, during the so-called "Dark Ages" of early medieval monasticism towards which Hsüan-Tsang's visionary prince of *prajñā* points. As such, it is not a comprehensive history of Indian Mañjuśrī worship, nor of post-seventh century Buddhist monasticism. Rather, this study seeks to explore some of the complex ways in which

particular historical and political contexts of eighth-eleventh century Pāla India may have shaped the way in which its monks conceptualized and portrayed Mañjuśrī, the Crown Prince of *prajñā* -- and, by extension, the ways in which those portrayals may have informed key issues in Pāla monastic thought and practice.

In this context, I am also concerned with thinking about relationships between the “production” of monastic Buddhist discourses and of the Pāla state; in particular, with exploring ways in which representations of Mañjuśrī and his *prajñā* may have promoted, mirrored or challenged the State’s vitality and legitimation. As I will discuss, it is during the Pāla period (8th-12th century northeastern India) that Mañjuśrī worship took on its greatest momentum, as testified to by a new profusion of Mañjuśrī images, Mañjuśrī-centric texts and commentaries, and, intriguingly, the formalization of esoteric Mañjuśrī worship in the monastic universities. Interestingly, Mañjuśrī’s leap to prominence coincided with a number of key changes in northeast Indian political and social life that, I will argue, fueled concomitant transformations in the practices and powers of Buddhist monasteries. It is during this time, for example, that we see the rise of Islamic trade diasporas in India, and the attendant collapse of Buddhist trade guilds, the wide-scale erosion of urban centers, and the formation of regional *sāmanta* or client-states. Concomitantly, this was likewise the time when roughly the whole of Bengal, especially the ancient Varendra tract, came to be densely occupied by Buddhist centers: when a new system arose of granting land and police powers to Buddhist monasteries, effectively transforming them into “landed gentry”; when temples were added to the *stūpas* and monasteries as features of Buddhist sites; that some northeastern Buddhist monasteries assumed the character of internationally-renowned universities, and that the monastic

universities formalized new curricula that sanctioned and integrated esoteric (Tantric) Buddhist science and technology with a vigor unparalleled by any other time in Indian Buddhist history. Clearly the inter-relationship between Buddhist monasteries and Pāla politics and society is critical and, I believe, a sadly under-studied dynamic.

Emphatically, my aim is not to reduce religion to politics or *vice versa*. Such a reduction not only simplifies both phenomena, but presupposes a particular view of the relationship between representation and its politics which infuses and I think hampers much Indological scholarship: This

“theory of representation” as it has been bequeathed to modern human sciences (and I would argue, Euro-American common sense) assumes a prior “real” object to which language refers. The mainstream development of such a relationship between perception and world can be traced to various discourses of mimesis. Marxism’s nineteenth-century intervention in this cozy relationship of “what you see is what you get” politicized it as “ideology” but never challenged its fundamental epistemology. For early Marxists, “ideology” mystified that which was prior and constitutive of social life; the economic and social class base produced a cultural superstructure. In this view, cultural artifacts participate in the lie of masking power.³

In contrast, I draw upon an inter-related cluster of alternative theoretical positions – both modern Euro-American and not-so-modern Indian– that begin by problematizing this assumption. Most fundamentally, I am thinking here of the Madhyamikan Buddhist critique of the notions of “intrinsic identity” (*svalakṣaṇa*) and intrinsic reality (*svabhāva*) which, as I shall discuss in Chapter Two, is elemental to Mahāyāna Buddhist language theory and to the philosophical and social significance of *prajñā* in Pāla discourse. In our own century, one thinks of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s “private language” argument, whose

³ Angela Zito, *Of Body & Brush*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, 14.

Buddhist analogues have been so lucidly analyzed by Robert Thurman,⁴ and of modern theories of ‘signification’ which take “language and expressive, semiotic activity to be productive of the very “reality” in which human beings find themselves.”⁵

Concomitantly, I am guided by Michel Foucault’s well-known notions of ‘power/knowledge’ and of ‘discourse.’ Foucault assumes— as do I – that what constitutes “knowledge” and legitimate “knowers” at a given historical moment is socially articulated, and intimately bound to power relations. “Power produces; it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production.”⁶ Rippling through a complex network of reciprocal social relationships, “power is exercised rather than possessed,” and works with knowledge through the vehicle of discourse. Accordingly, discourse itself is a strategic field, an active force and not simply as a reflection of something already constituted and pre-existent:

Discourse -- the mere fact of speaking, of employing words, of using the words of others (even if it means returning them), words that the others understand and accept (and, possibly, return from their side) – this fact is in itself a force. Discourse is, with respect to the relation of forces, not merely a surface of inscription, but something that engenders effects [*non pas seulement une surface d’inscription, mais opérateur*].⁷

⁴ Robert A.F. Thurman, The Central Philosophy of Tibet: a Study and Translation of Jey Tsong Khapa's Essence of True Eloquence. Princeton Library of Asian Translations. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, pp. 89-111.

⁵ Zito 1997, 14.

⁶ Foucault, Discipline and Punish, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1979, 194.

⁷ Foucault, “Le Discours ne doit pas être pris comme...” Dits et écrits, Volume 3, 1976, 123-124. For a discussion of this specific comment, see Arnold Davidson’s “Structures and Strategies of Discourse: Remarks Towards a History of Foucault’s Philosophy of

For Foucault, every culture in every epoch is characterized and constructed by a web of local discourses – i.e. ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak...and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention’ (Foucault 1974: 49).⁸

I am likewise influenced by analogous debates among historians of science, including Bruno Latour and Sergio Sismondo, on the impact of institutional forms on scientific knowledge:

For a long time, historians’ debates over the propriety of a sociological and a historically ‘contextual’ approach to science seemed to divide practitioners between those who drew attention to what were called intellectual factors – ideas, concepts, methods, evidence -- and those who stressed ‘social factors’ – forms of social organizations, political and economic influences of science, and social uses

Language” in A. Davidson (ed). Foucault and His Interlocutors. Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1997, 1-17.

⁸ Foucault’s theories of both discourse and power have, of course, been trenchantly critiqued: Foucauldian ‘discourse’ is too broadly defined, “almost a short-hand term for social production itself;” (Zito, 57); it fails to “go much beyond a structuralist analysis of linguistic...order”; (Steven Seidman, Contested Knowledge: Social Theory in the Postmodern Era. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Massachusetts and Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell Publishers, 1996, 216); his ‘power’ is an overly diffuse, “unbearably totalizing” principle that “affords no hope for oppositional politics.” (Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner (eds.). Culture/Power/History: A Reader in Contemporary Social Theory. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994, 7). Valid though they are, such concerns do not nullify the value of his work for us. Overly broad it may appear, yet it is the very fluidity of Foucauldian ‘discourse’ that enables us to view through a single lens fields of thought and practice kept separate by more traditional approaches. This conception necessarily highlights the social nature of “the relationships between words and things”, and of the practices whereby such conventions are instituted. As such, a Foucauldian analysis is geographically and temporally local, attentive to and respectful of culture, time and place; from this theoretical standpoint, a de-historicized cultural artifact – be it textual or artistic – is an oxymoron. This observation is equally relevant to the objections to his theories of power which, as Nicholas Dirks, Geoff Eley, and Sherry B. Ortner rightfully argue, “usually do not take into account the strategic character of his analysis. Indeed, Foucault’s reading of power, and of discourses more generally, is always strategic, tactical, polemical, situated” (1994, 7-8).

or consequences of science. That now seems to many historians, as it does to me, a rather silly demarcation...”⁹

This sentiment, so eloquently explored by Bruno Latour, David Bloor and others, neatly summarizes the most basic theoretical premise upon which this project rests: if, to paraphrase Shapin, Buddhism is to be understood as historically situated and in its collective aspect, then that understanding should encompass all aspects of Buddhism, its ideas and practices no less than its institutional forms and social uses. As such, the task for the sociologically-sensitive historian of Buddhism is to display knowledge-making and knowledge holding *as social processes*. Accordingly, I take for granted that monastic Buddhist thought and practices are historically-situated and social activities that must be understood and analyzed in relation to the contexts in which they occur.

My decision to draw from the insights of socially-minded historians of science – those who problematize the Enlightenment opposition of “objective, a-political scientific knowledge” versus religious superstition -- likewise mirrors my debt to anti-Enlightenment scholarship. The works of Michel Foucault, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha have made me more sensitive to the slippage between the discourses of European Enlightenment reason and imperialism, and to the ways in which these overlapping discourses have shaped Euro-American scholarship on Indian history and Buddhist monasticism. Their insights continually remind me to problematize the modern equation of reason, emancipation, and progress, and to be mindful of the ways in which adherence to that equation tacitly informs my own research. My concern is not to reject either the power or benefits of rationality, but rather to ask myself, like Foucault, “*What* is this

⁹ Steven Shapin, *The Scientific Revolution*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 9.

Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its limits, and what are its dangers?"¹⁰

It is with these considerations in mind that I am broadly conceptualizing *prajñā* and the representation of its Crown Prince Mañjuśrī as one of the local discourses that produced power/knowledge in Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist monastic culture. In this work therefore, *prajñā* and its Crown Prince do not connote only historically-conditioned concepts or figures – they are understood to be producers of “truth” in monastic communities which mirrored, perpetuated and/or transformed power relations, particularly those between the monastic institution and the Pāla state. Its goal is, in a sense, to ask of the Pāla scholastics what Foucault asked of the European Enlightenment analogues: “What is this critical wisdom that *you* use? What are its historical effects, its limits, its dangers?”

Towards these ends, this project begins with a discussion of the development of “rationality” in British Enlightenment and colonial rhetorics, and its relationship to Protestant polemics against the ‘irrationality, superstition and despotism’ of Catholic priests and monks. Positing that from at least the late eighteenth century, Hinduism functioned for the English colonialist as a displaced form of Roman Catholicism, I will then suggest some of the ways in which this association colored the shifting ways in which Indian monasticism and Buddhism -- alternately the rival, sister and reformer of Hinduism -- were conceptualized, and lay the ground for my discussion of Pāla scholarship in Chapter Four.

¹⁰ M. Foucault, ‘What is Enlightenment?’ in Paul Rabinow (ed.) The Foucault Reader, New York: Pantheon, 1984, 249.

This discussion lays the ground for Chapter Two's overview of what is arguably Mahāyāna Buddhism's discursive analogue to "rationality": - *prajñā*, discriminating wisdom. In an effort to highlight the ramifications of *prajñā* discourse to Indian Buddhist monasticism, my discussion of *prajñā* treats not only its philosophical but its institutional dimensions, particularly the ways in which the exaltation of *prajñā* intersected with the economic and institutional concerns of early Mahāyāna monastic communities. In Chapter Three, I turn to my attention to Mahāyāna's embodiment of *prajñā*: the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Touching on a selection of Mahāyāna Buddhist works from the first through the early eighth century CE, I highlight a range of associations and values overtly identified with Mañjuśrī in these works: Mañjuśrī as monk-disciple *extraordinaire*; as masculine, monastic analogue to the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā*; as interlocutor and dialogic partner to the Buddha; Mañjuśrī as icon of scholastic legitimacy. I likewise discuss some less evident associations: for example, Mañjuśrī as promoter of *sangha* economic health; as spiritual mentor of a king; Mañjuśrī as emblem of Buddhist identity. The chapter concludes with an overview of selected late- and post-Gupta trends.

In Chapters Four and Five, I turn to the shape and function of Mañjuśrī and *prajñā* discourse in 1) eighth-ninth century and 2) tenth-eleventh century Pāla India. As I will discuss, the monastically produced texts and artworks of both of these periods were characterized by a marked resurgence of attention to *Prajñāpāramitā* discourse, Mañjuśrī-centric images and Mañjuśrī texts, particularly the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti* (*MNS*). The portrayals of *prajñā* and Mañjuśrī in these two periods were, however, markedly distinct from one another. I attempt to make sense of some of these differences by positioning them against the backdrop of key political and economic changes in post-

Harṣa North India, particularly the rise of the *sāmanta* state – changes which, I argue, altered earlier patterns of Buddhist monastic patronage, and demanded that Pāla monasteries cultivate particular relationships with the Pāla State. I argue further that monastic portrayals of Mañjuśrī can be seen to mirror the nature and development of that relationship, and indeed, of the changing fortunes of the Pāla State.

Sources:

My exploration of Mañjuśrī discourse in general, and in the Pāla period in particular, is carefully grounded in primary materials. I am concerned with placing the eighth-eleventh century works under analysis in as close an historical context as possible --with moving away from generalities about “the Pāla period” and towards the historical specifics of their time. Towards this end, I draw on the following body of contemporaneous inscriptional and literary sources.

Inscriptional:

Incidental textual sources, notes epigrapher Richard Salomon, “typically give us little more than tantalizing tidbits of historical information...Far more revealing are the archeological sources, including numismatic but above all epigraphic materials.” Indeed,

something like 80 percent of our knowledge of India before about A.D. 1000 is derived from inscriptional sources...But the importance of epigraphy goes beyond historical studies in the narrower sense of the term, that is political history. The modern study of most aspects of the cultural history of traditional India, such as the arts, literature, religion, and language, are also heavily indebted to inscriptions for their basic chronological and geographical framework.¹¹

Accordingly, this study considers the modest pool of inscriptional remains from the Pāla period, i.e. ‘documents written in ink on such surfaces as clay, wood or skin...as well as inscriptions proper, that is, writing carved into hard stone or metal.’¹² The most famous epigraphic inscriptions are those found on copper-plate grants (*tāmrasāsana*): records composed in Sanskrit which document land gifts to institutions and individuals

¹¹ Richard Salomon, Indian Epigraphy: a Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages. South Asia Research: University of Texas Center for Asian Studies. New York: Oxford University Press. 1998, p. 3.

¹² Salomon 1998, vii-viii.

by individual Pāla monarchs.¹³ Since the late nineteenth century, fifteen such pieces have been recovered and published, the most recent one in 1988.¹⁴ Such grants usually follow a standard format: an invocation (*marigala*) to a deity is followed by a eulogy to the grantor and his ancestors, a description of the gift in question, a description of the recipient, the occasion on which the grant was made,¹⁵ the intention of the grantor and the function of the gift, various injunctions to officials, and the date, expressed in terms of the regnal year of the issuing king.

Of comparable value are the inscriptions found on stone and metal sculptures thought to be Pāla in provenance. At present, approximately 1300 such pieces have been recovered. Among these, approximately eighty contain dates, and three allude not only to regnal years but to “absolute” dates, and so function as fixed points around which to

¹³ Richard Salomon notes that while “the antiquity of the practice of recording land grants on copper plates is also attested to by their description in early *dharmasāstra* texts such as the *Viṣṇu-* and *Yajñavalkya-smṛtis*”, the practice of composing them in Sanskrit dates only from the Gupta period, and in the following centuries became more abundant and more lavish in size and style.” (Indian Epigraphy: a Guide to the Study of Inscriptions in Sanskrit, Prakrit, and the Other Indo-Aryan Languages. South Asia Research: University of Texas Center for Asian Studies. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 114-15.) It is worth noting that the practice of using copperplates continued to the time of the overthrow of local dynasties by Muslim armies in the thirteenth century, and in neighboring areas untouched by Muslim incomers: for example, a copper-plate dated to 1488 that was issued by a female relation of King Vijayamāṅkya in what is now Tripurā; the numerous copper-plates found in Nepal that date from the 14th-18th centuries.

¹⁴ I refer here to the Jagajjibanpur copperplate, discovered in March 1987 in the Malda District of Western Bengal. Its discovery threw Pāla studies into quite an uproar; it indicated that Mahendrapāla, a ruler formally thought to be a Pratihāra, was in fact a Pāla king. The successor of the famed Devapāla, he apparently ruled for fifteen years. For further details, see Gouriswar Bhattacharya, “The New Pāla Ruler Mahendrapāla: Discovery of a Valuable Charter.” Journal of the Bihar Puravid Parisad Vol. XI -XII (1987).

¹⁵ For example, several Pāla land grants were announced on astrologically significant occasions, such as eclipses or solar passages (*samkrāntis*).

organize Pāla chronology.¹⁶ Like the copper-plates, the Pāla epigraphs offer insights into the identity of the donor and recipient, as well as the intention of the grantor. Likewise, we find that most characterize the image as a religious donation to a person or institution. Unlike the land grants however. “not a single extant image inscription records the gift of a Pāla king. It may be inferred from the surviving examples that such donations most commonly were made by lay persons or monks.”¹⁷ In addition, there are a few inscribed terracotta plaques, tablets, and seals (*sāccha*).¹⁸ To the best of my knowledge, none is dated, although a handful are especially interesting in mentioning the names of specific monasteries.

Palm-leaf and birch-bark manuscripts are another primary source of data on the Pāla period. Several dozen manuscripts and manuscript fragments have been recovered, of which approximately thirty are dated.¹⁹ All of these texts are, to the best of my

¹⁶ I am referring here to the Sarnath inscription of Samvat 1083, which is identified with Vikrama Samvat and considered equivalent to 1026 CE; the Valgūdar inscription of the Śaka year 1083, considered equivalent to 1161, and the Gaya inscription of the Vikrama era 1232, considered equivalent to 1175 CE. For further information, see the *Appendix of Inscribed Dated Sculptures* in Susan L. Huntington, *The Pala-Sena Schools of Sculpture*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984, nos. 33, 56, and 57, respectively.

¹⁷ Susan L. Huntington and John C. Huntington. *Leaves From the Bodhi Tree: the Art of Pāla India (8th-12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy*. Studies in South Asia Culture. Dayton: Dayton Art Institute, 1990, 78.

¹⁸ Tradition holds that the Sanskrit term for these seals derives from the sound made by the wet clay as it was pressed into a mold. Despite numerous attempts, I have been unable to replicate this effect. Giuseppe Tucci's contention that the term derives from *sāt-chāya*, “true image” or “reproduction,” is as good an explanation as any. See “Stūpa, Art, Architectonics and Symbolism.” *Indo-Tibetica: Vol I* (1988), 54.

¹⁹ I know of no comprehensive published overview of Pāla-period manuscripts. I have arrived at this estimate by supplementing published listings with the most current data I could find on individual manuscript findings. Of particular help S.K. Saraswati's partial and descriptive listing in “East Indian Manuscript Painting in *Chhavi: Golden Jubilee*

knowledge, Buddhist, and all are copies of a pre-Pāla text, usually the *Prajñāpāramitā* or the *Pañcarakṣā*; in fact, “not a single example represents any of the texts or commentaries actually composed in the Pāla period.”²⁰ Importantly, this corpus also contains the earliest known example of illustrated manuscripts in India; in fact, “barring a few illustrated covers of birch bark Buddhist manuscripts from Kashmir-Gilgit area, the earliest surviving records of manuscript painting come from Eastern India (Bihar and Bengal).”²¹ Collectively these manuscripts contain more than three hundred painted miniatures, excluding the images found on the wooden manuscript covers. Interestingly, all of these illuminated texts are dated from 1000-1200 C.E. – a point I will return to later.²²

Artistic remains:

As is by now clear, there is available for analysis a large collection of Pāla-period art objects, including metal, stone and terracotta sculptures. These works are reproduced and

Volume, editor Anand Krishna. Banaras: Bharat-Kala Bhavan, 1971. esp. pp. 244-47); the inscription list compiled by Jhunu Bagchi in The History and Culture of the Pālas of Bengal and Bihar. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1993. 8-35; as well as the publications of Jerimiah P. Losty, especially “An Early Indian Manuscript of the Karandavyuhasutra.” Studies in Art and Archaeology of Bihar and Bengal, editors Debala Mitra and Gouriswar Bhattacharya. Delhi: Sri Satguru publications, 1989, 35-39, and The Art of the Book in India. London: British Library, 1982, especially 18-36.

²⁰ Huntington 1990, 79.

²¹ Saraswati 1971, 243. Actually, Losty alludes to a few Jaina examples from Gujarat and Rajasthan from this period. This is unsurprising in light of the apparent importance of the book to Jains. Speaking of “the earliest archeological evidence for a book in the sub-continent,” he describes a first century inscribed image of Saraswati found in Mathura in which the goddess holds a book that is similar in shape to the Jain manuscripts of Western India, and not to the long narrow palmyra leaves commonly seen in Buddhist texts. (Losty 1982, 19).

²² Ibid. 18-19.

discussed in some detail by a number of excellent art historians, including D.C. Bhattacharya, Claudine Bautze-Picron, Susan Huntington and Sarasi Kumar Saraswati, and will be alluded to in detail in my work. Moreover, as I discussed above, several hundred examples of paintings from the Pāla survive, primarily in the form of miniatures adorning the pages of Buddhist manuscripts. Examples of painted frescoes, like those found in Ellora, are virtually non-existent for the Pāla domain. This study will explore the artistic renderings of Mañjuśrī and *prajñā* in the Pāla milieu. I will attempt neither original art historical analyses nor an exhaustive survey – tasks which lie beyond my training and the scope of this discussion. Rather, I will be documenting and discussing key forms and examples of Mañjuśrī and *prajñā* from this period, and relying on the insights of established art historians, including Frederick Asher, Janice Leoshko, Marie-Therese de Mallmann, Jacob Kinnard and Susan Huntington, as the basis for my own analysis.

General Literary: Indian sources

Because they may post-date the composition of the original work by several centuries, Indian literary artifacts must be used mindfully as windows into Pāla culture. Several of these works allude directly to the Pāla rulers. The fifty-third chapter of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* provides a chronological outline of Indian kings (given by first initial only!) “from the Nāga (ca. 140 A.D.) and Gupta times (350 A.D.) to the beginning of the Pāla period (750 A.D.)”²³ Of special interest is the *Rāmacarita* of Sandhyākaranandī. Composed by a court poet during the reign of Rāmapāla (eleventh century C.E.), the *Rāmacarita* is composed of approximately two hundred verses in *sleśā* (double entendre)

²³ K.P. Jayaswal, *Imperial History of India*. Lahore: 1934, 3.

form. It recounts two stories in deliberate parallel: the epic tale of Rāma's victory over Rāvaṇa (famous from the *Rāmāyana*), and the story of the Pāla King Rāmapāla's defeat of Bhīma, the Kaivarta king "who had occupied a major portion of the kingdom (Varendri) after having killed the chief king (Mahīpāla)." ²⁴ A partial commentary on the first and second cantos amplifies the historical value of this work.

Additional contemporaneous literary sources of particular historical value include the *Subhāṣitaratnaḥa* by Vidyākara; a letter by the Buddhist paṇḍit Aśīsa to King Nyapala entitled the *Vimalaratnalekha* and the *Gitāgovinda* of Jayadeva.

General literary - Non-Indian sources

A number of invaluable non-indigenous sources shed light on the Pāla period. Key Tibetan resources include the biographies of Dharmasvamin and Aśīsa, and the histories by Buston and Tāranātha. Relevant Chinese works available in translation include the record of the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Oukong. Among the relevant Arabic works in translation, the Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri by Maulānā Minhāj-ud-dī Abū' Umar-i-Uṣman ²⁵ and the account of eleventh-century India written by Alberuni color my thinking. ²⁶

²⁴ V.29. From Radhagovinda Basak's translation and revision of Haraprasād Sāstri's 1910 edition: Rāmācaritam of Sandhyākaranandin. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1969, 20. Sāstri based his edition on a manuscript "written in Bengali character of the twelfth century...The scribe to the text was Śīlacandra who...unfortunately...did not know Sanskrit....He often omits verses and portions of verses."(x) A second edition was prepared in 1939 by R.C. Majumdar, R.G. Basak and Nanipopal Banerji.

²⁵ H.G. Raverty, trans. Tabaqāt-i-Nāsiri: a General History of the Muhammadan Dynasties of Asia, Including Hindustan; from A.H. 194 (810 A.D.) to A.H. (1260 A.D.) and the Irruption of the Infidel Mughals into Islam by Maulānā Minhāj-ud-dī Abū' Umar-i-Uṣman. New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1970.

²⁶ H.M. Elliot, The History of India, As Told by Its Own Historians: the Muhammadan Period. 1869. Edited by John Dowson. New York: AMS Press, 1966.

It goes without saying that I also examine a range of Pāla-period scholastic writings, including 8th-12th century commentaries to the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti*, Mañjuśrī *sādhana*s, and select *Prajñā-pāramitā* commentaries. Many of these texts are best understood as partly prescriptive in nature; their main object is not to mirror actual conduct, but to articulate doctrinal concerns and outline religious ideals. As such, for the Indian Buddhist monk, they may be seen as what Foucault calls “practical” texts: “designed to be read, learned, reflected upon, and tested out, and...intended to constitute the eventual framework of everyday conduct.”²⁷ These works ideally enabled Buddhist monks to question and shape both doctrine as well as their own conduct -- in short, to transform themselves into consummate Buddhist subjects – and so are ideal entrees into the ways in which notions of Mañjuśrī and his *prajñā* manifested as historically-specific forms of religious and social practice.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality, Vol. 2*. USA: Vintage Books, 1990, pp. 12-13.

**Chapter One:
Me thinks the lady doth Protestant too much...**

Is it not necessary to draw a line between those who believe that we can continue to situate our present discontinuities within the historical and transcendental tradition of the nineteenth century and those who are making a great effort to liberate themselves, once and for all, from this conceptual framework?

- M. Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory Practice, 120

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, a few years after leaving India to travel to South Africa, Rudyard Kipling wrote a short story entitled *The Bridge Builders*. Like many of his narrative works of this time, *The Bridge Builders* is constructed around the thematic oppositions of personal agency and uncontrollable loss, of triumph over personal adversity and the unquantifiable costs of power and empire.²⁸ Its hero is a British engineer named Findlayson who, after years of back-breaking work designing and constructing a suspension bridge over the River Ganges, is faced with the threat of its destruction by unseasonably early flood waters. In search of the extraordinary fortitude needed to tackle this crisis, Findlayson swallows a dose of opium given to him by his Indian foreman. He subsequently slips into a hallucinatory dream-world in which he watches the gods and goddesses of India debate among themselves the value and future of the British presence. Hours later, Findlayson awakes to discover that the waters have receded; the Indian gods have consented to keep the capricious Mother Ganga "in irons." In a peculiar twist of power relations, European hegemony survives its darkest hour,

²⁸ Unsurprising concerns, in light of the vigorous colonial activity in Africa at this time by Kipling's homeland. Britain annexed Lagos in 1861, before turning to interests in the Niger Basin, the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, Zanzibar, Uganda and Kenya. Kipling's close friend Cecil Rhodes sent armies to Southern Rhodesia in 1890, and liberally greased the wheels of the Boer War with heavy investment in South African diamonds and gold.

thanks to the intervention of the very gods it claims to conquer. As the story concludes, its ambivalence is, in my view, palpable: who has been victorious over whom?

Kipling's uneasy resolution inhibits me from reading *The Bridge Builders* as an unambiguous allegory for empire, an artifact of a nineteenth-century worldview long since made obsolete by twenty-first century, post-Said scholarship. Rather, I find myself lingering in Findlayson's internal shadow-land -- an unsettling twilight, reminiscent of what Homi Bhabha calls "the area between mimicry and mockery, where the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double... as if the very emergence of the 'colonial' is dependent upon its representation upon some strategic limitation or prohibition within the authoritative discourse itself."²⁹

In this discussion, I want to enter and explore this zone of discursive limitations, invisible partnerships, and ambiguous power relationships. Taking as my subject the development of "rationality" -- a source of 'scientific', objective, trans-cultural truth -- in British Enlightenment³⁰ and colonial rhetorics, I will begin by suggesting that its colonialist exaltation has unacknowledged precedents in Protestant polemics against the so-called irrationality, superstition and despotism of Catholic priests and monks -- that the science-religion split is the 'Protestant scientist versus the Catholic monk' opposition

²⁹ Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *October* 28 (1984): 127.

³⁰ Note here that I am dealing primarily with British sources, in recognition of the fact that 18th century Enlightenment thought is not a single, unitary process, but one characterized by a great diversity of self-interpretations, often along nationalist and ideological lines. As Christopher Fox notes, "Even today, the Enlightenment looks different in North America than it does (say) in Europe, where it is often believed to have taken a darker path." See Fox in Christopher Fox, Roy Porter, and Robert Wokler, *Inventing Human Science*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA and London, England: University of California Press, 1995, p. 4-5.

by other means. Locating this sectarian dichotomy within the broader Enlightenment discourse of modernity, I will argue that it functions as “the obscured original of the one Edward Said sees as central to the colonialist and Orientalist mentality, a “‘*positional* superiority’ privileging the European subject over the foreign other that conceals itself in ‘the general liberal consensus that ‘true’ knowledge is fundamentally nonpolitical.”³¹

I will then look at some of the ways in which the Catholicization of the Other apparently shaped British colonial policy, practices, and perceptions of their Indian subjects. Positing that, from at least the late eighteenth century, Hinduism functioned for the English colonialist as a displaced form of Roman Catholicism, I will then suggest some of the ways in which this association colored the shifting ways in which Indian monasticism and Buddhism -- alternately the rival, sister and reformer of Hinduism -- were conceptualized. By historicizing the changing ideological and political contexts of deployment of rationality in British discursive, I hope to suggest how those understandings shaped the study of Buddhist monasticism by European and Indian scholars.

Let us return to Kipling’s story. The key ideological premises that undergird the narrative logic of *Bridge Builders* are easily discerned: Europe is scientifically superior to India; political dominance is the natural concomitant to scientific superiority. This ‘logic’ is extended by a further opposition: the identification of European, “Western” culture with science and civilizing technology, in contrast to non-Western or “Oriental” culture.

³¹ Raymond D. Tumbleson, Catholicism in the English Protestant Imagination: Nationalism, Religion and Literature, 1660-1745. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.12.

which organizes itself around myth, religion and nature. This duality is instantly recognizable vintage Orientalist discourse, i.e. belonging to a Western European system of intellectual domination whereby various Western scholars and administrators constructed definitions and stereotypes of an Other -- "the Orient" -- that implicitly justified and facilitated their imperial enterprise.³² As Edward Said's work has demonstrated, such presentations about the Oriental Other generally presumed Western insights about "the East" to be rational, scientific, and objective, in contrast to the non-Western cultures they studied and colonized, which were deemed illogical and

³² See totality of Edward W. Said, Orientalism. New York: Vintage Books, 1979. Obviously this is a gross oversimplification of Said's thesis. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that Said begins his analysis of the Eurocentrism by tweaking Foucault's understanding of representation. Foucault contends that knowledge is constructed according to a discursive field which creates a representation of the object of knowledge – its structure, its boundaries. As such, any writer who wishes to communicate about this object must conform to this representation in order to be understood. Said, in turn, applies this model to European constructions of knowledge about non-European cultures, arguing that a complex cluster of representations was fabricated which, for Westerners, became 'the Orient.' This cluster determined Western understandings of the Orient, and provided the basis for its subsequent self-appointed imperialist rule.

The way in which I am conceptualizing this cluster, i.e. employing the term 'Orientalism,' comprises Said's conflation of three forms, each of which has a distinct relation to colonial power. David Ludden eloquently summarizes these three strands: "Most narrowly, orientalism is a field of scholarship with a distinct academic genealogy and tradition. I designate only specialists in this field as "orientalists." Most broadly, orientalism is a vast set of images in scholarship, painting, literature, and other media – a sprawling formation in which the works of William Jones, orientalist painters, Rudyard Kipling, and Henry Kissinger mingle in a multimedia text that conjures the essences of the East. This constitutes orientalism for Edward Said. Between these two extremes... there is a third formation: a venerable set of factualized statements about the Orient, which was established with authorized data and research techniques, and which has become so widely accepted as true, so saturated by excess plausibility, that it determines the content of assumptions on which theory and inference can be built." David Ludden, "Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge" Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia. Ed Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, p. 251.

uncivilized: fueled by the tropical heat of religion and superstition rather than the cold reason of scientific analysis.³³

Kipling's story further reminds us that in the nineteenth-century, the conceptual dichotomy that pits science against religion was deployed by many English thinkers to substantiate their decision to colonize India – to “fashion a despotism aimed at developing and exploiting the territory's resources efficiently and systematically.”³⁴ They did this by characterizing British despotism as a civilizing mission: the British presence would, they argued, enlighten the natives, quench their irrationality with the cooling power of rationality, and so rescue them from the tyranny of nature and ignorance. From this perspective, Kipling's bridge was read as the triumph of modern civilization over the fury of the River Goddess, of universal reason over local superstition. It is hard to imagine a more overt expression of the European will to power.

From a post-Saidian vantage point, however, Findlayson's bridge is something more. The British claim that ‘colonization is a policy of moral responsibility’ is, of

³³The applicability of Edward Said's argument to the Indian context has also been critiqued in a number of notable publications. See, for example, the articles by Rocher, Dirks and Appadurai in Carol A. Breckinridge and Peter van der Veer, Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia. South Asia Seminar Series, editors Joan DeJean, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, and Peter Stallybrass. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993, Chapters 7, 9 and 10, respectively; David Kopf's “European Enlightenment, “Hindu Renaissance and the Enrichment of the Human Spirit” in N. Cassels, Orientalism, Evangelicalism and the Military Cantonment in Early Nineteenth-Century India. Queenstown, Canada: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991, and his “Historiography of British Orientalism, 1772-1992” in Garland Cannon and Kevin R. Brine, Objects of Enquiry: the Life, Contributions and Influences of Sir William Jones (1746-1794). New York and London: New York University Press, 1995, pp. 141-160; and Thomas R. Trautman's “Introduction” to Thomas R. Trautmann, Aryans and British India. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997, pp. 19-25.

³⁴ Gyan Prakash, Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999, 153.

course, fundamentally paradoxical. In the final analysis, it is an argument that ‘domination is liberation,’ a policy of “practicing despotism in order to project the ideals of freedom”³⁵ – a rather uneasy ideological resting place for a rational Englishman.³⁶ Positioned at a post-colonial vantage point, the contemporary reader is tempted to see the success of the Kashi bridge as Kipling’s attempt to nullify that paradox: it is trans-cultural, disinterested ‘science’ concretized as the span that connects -- and so attempts to make logical -- the ‘liberation is domination’ paradox.

BACON, CANON LAW AND THE BIRTH OF NATURAL SCIENCE

What is the genealogy of this paradoxical logic? What are the ancestry and hidden presumptions embedded in the notion of objective, scientific rationality as a vehicle of reform? In yoking knowledge and imperial power in this way, Kipling is betraying his discursive debt to the putative “father of modern scientific method.” Francis Bacon (b. 1561), whose works on ‘scientific rationality’ constituted the curricular backbone of both government and missionary schools established by the British in India, and by extension, colonial policies and rhetorics of reform.³⁷ Gauri Viswanathan observes that “(Bacon’s

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁶ Thomas B. Macauley’s remarks in his essay on Warren Hastings is a virtual anthem to this kind of thinking: “Be the father and the oppressor of the people; be just and unjust, moderate and rapacious.” Thomas Babington Macauley, *Prose and Poetry*. Selected by G. M. Young. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967, 373-469.

³⁷ In 1852, for example, the curriculum at Duff’s Free Church Institution included Bacon’s *Moral and Civil Essays*, and *Advancement of Learning*. All students in government-sponsored schools were required to read Bacon’s *Essays*, *Novum Organum* and *Advancement of Learning*. For further discussion of the role and impact of Bacon-

importance) in the literary education of Indian students was so great that it was not uncommon to have students matriculating from schools possessing no knowledge other than that of Bacon's works... James Ballantyne, a great Sanskrit scholar who had himself translated Bacon into Sanskrit, taught English to his Brahmin students, not in the usual elementary spelling-book style followed in England, but by putting Bacon's *Novum Organum* into their hands as soon as they learned the letters of the English alphabet."³⁸ Ballantyne's policy underscores the symbolic weight of Bacon in British colonialist rhetoric, and speaks to how thoroughly Bacon's nationalist, empire-building politics had dissolved into mainstream nineteenth-century conceptions of intellectual genius and scientific rationality.

Bacon, it will be recalled, was writing in the period of social upheaval following the fragmentation of the unity and authority of the Roman church, and the subsequent wars of religion which ripped apart European principalities; Steven Shapin succinctly characterizes this time as as "a state of permanent crisis affecting European politics, society and culture..."³⁹ He notes that challenges to religious belief and institutions, as embodied in Catholic-Protestant tensions, were at the eye of this social hurricane:

mania on colonial education, see Gauri Visvanatham, Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India. New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

³⁸ Gauri Visvanatham, Outside the Fold: Conversion, Modernity and Belief. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, 138.

³⁹ Steven Shapin, The Scientific Revolution. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996, 123. The symptoms of that crisis were, he continues, "the breakdown of feudal order and attendant rise of strong nation-states from the thirteenth century onward; the discovery of the New World and of both the cultural and the economic shocks emanating from that expansion of horizons; the invention of printing and consequent changes in the boundaries of cultural participation; and the fragmentation of a unified

Each of these events, but especially the [Protestant Reformation], eroded the authority and effective scope of institutions that had regulated human conduct for preceding centuries. The Roman Catholic papal authority that had – formally at least – unified Western Europe under a single Christian conception of authority gave way to split sources of authority: clashes first between divine and secular notions of political authority, then between different versions of Christianity and their proper relations to secular authority.⁴⁰

Indeed, “The wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants that raged across Europe from the Reformation onwards... were the immediate occasion for changed views of knowledge and its role in ensuring or subverting order”⁴¹— a trend which, in England, would harden into an archetypal opposition between “the rational English observer and ‘ignorant [Continental Catholic] monks.’”⁴² As I will suggest, this conflation of religious and nationalist superiority in a secular coding would bleed into the perceptions, policies and scholarship of British colonialists and scholars in India, ultimately to color rhetorics of scientific and religious reform deployed by colonialists and Indian nationalists alike.

Unsurprisingly, Bacon’s era also engendered the earliest (Western European) attempts to produce a universal definition of religion – one which, “not content with reducing the creed to the minimum number possible of fundamentals... goes beyond Christianity itself, and tries to formulate a belief which shall command the assent of all men as men.” (Asad?) This desire to forge a kind of epistemological Esperanto reflects its larger historical context of European global exploration:

Western European religious order that followed from the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century.” (123-24.)

⁴⁰ Ibid., 124.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Raymond D. Tumbleson, Catholicism in the English Protestant Imagination: Nationalism, Religion and Literature, 1660-1745. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 12.

It must be remembered that the old simple situation, in which Christendom pictured itself as the world, with only the foul paynim outside and the semi-tolerated Jews within the gates, had passed away forever. Exploration and commerce had widened the horizon, and in many writers of the century one can see that the religions of the East, however imperfectly known, were beginning to press upon the European consciousness.⁴³

These early steps towards trans-cultural definition culminated in the creation of what would be called Natural Religion: a universally-shared phenomenon whose lowest common denominators were belief in a supreme power, the practice of ordered worship and adherence to a code of ethics. Within this triad, the emphasis on belief was of great significance: "(I)t meant," notes Talal Asad, "that henceforth religion could be conceived as a set of propositions to which believers gave assent, and which could therefore be judged and compared as between different religions and as against natural science."⁴⁴

The ramifications of the science v. religion bifurcation continued to reverberate. The delineation of religion to the realm of belief implicitly presupposed -- and so relegated -- the newly-emerging "natural science" to the domain of the rational, trans-cultural and passion-free.⁴⁵ In so doing, this movement not only obscured the

⁴³ B. Willey, quoted in Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, 40.

⁴⁴Ibid., 42.

⁴⁵ Thus by 1667, Thomas Sprat claimed in his *History of the Royal Society* that scientific endeavours asserted their "*Advantage and Innocence*...in respect of all professions, and especially of Religion." The scientists in pursuit of "Real Knowledge" were as objective as the "purposeful tryals" they performed: dissecting monsters (usually deformed fetuses), transfusing the blood of dogs to people, and measuring the velocity of a bullet. In short, science "could become a near utopia of 'Advancement' and objectivity, devoted to the sorts of goals that Sprat and his colleagues found congenial -- progress, the

shared historical and ideological ancestry of these disciplinary cousins: it signaled “a wider change in the modern landscape of power and knowledge. That change included a new kind of state, a new kind of science, a new kind of legal and moral subject.”⁴⁶

I’ll return to the birth (and hopefully, the death) of this putative unitary, rational, Enlightenment subject and his “new kind of science.” To set that discussion in context, however, it needs to be noted that it was further precipitated by a host of society-wide debates over the criteria for proper knowledge and, by extension, proper conduct. In the seventeenth century, attention was shifting from God’s words (the Old and New Testaments) to God’s works, Nature, “the real space of divine writing, and eventually the indisputable authority for the truth of all sacred texts written in merely human language...”⁴⁷ Nature was the only divinely written book whose testimony was ubiquitous, universal, and trans-cultural; her proper reading and interpretation thereby ensured right belief and thus social order. With the authority of the Church as Chief Hermeneut under fire, the question of who -- or what -- could produce certain knowledge became paramount. “If social order depended on shared belief, what criteria of right

‘Improvements of the Arts,’ and the championing of England’s ‘Honour’.” See Robert Markley, “Objectivity as Ideology: Boyle, Newton and the Languages of Science” in *Genre*, Volume XVI, No. 4 (1983) 355-56.

⁴⁶ Asad 1993, 42.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 39. Robert Markley notes Frank Manuel’s assertion that the metaphor of the two books underlie the symbiotic relationship of science and religion in the seventeenth-century. “Both are texts to be read, studied and interpreted to reveal God’s design of, and man’s role in, a benevolent, if ultimately mysterious universe. Boyle, for example, uses this metaphor repeatedly to describe the relationships between spiritual and scientific knowledge: ... the book of Grace... doth resemble the Book of Nature; wherein the Stars... are not more Nicely nor Methodically plac’d than the Passages of Scripture.” Cited in Markley 1983, 357.

thinking can be displayed and implemented to ensure such consensus?”⁴⁸ In the early decades of the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon, the lord chancellor of England and court counselor to Queen Elizabeth I and King James I, emerged as a leading voice among British Enlightenment figures beating a path back – or rather, forward – to the lost paradise of unified truth.

What were the key points of Bacon’s thought? For my purposes, it is helpful to remember that Bacon defined the ultimate aim of science as the discovery of natural laws that could be induced from probable facts. Deductive reasoning, hypotheses and imagination were antithetical to Baconian method – monkey-wrenches in the machine which produced reliable and shared knowledge. “The human understanding resembles not a dry light, but admits a tincture of the will and passions, which generate their own system accordingly, for man always believes more readily that which he prefers.”⁴⁹ Indeed, in his concept of the “idols,” imagination and emotion are explicitly condemned as “tribal” tendencies;⁵⁰ it is not surprising that his model is often referred to as a source for the modern concept of ideology.⁵¹ Significantly, the implementation of this method

⁴⁸ Shapin 1996, 124.

⁴⁹ *Novum Organum*. Editor Joseph Devey. New York: P.F. Collier, 1902, i. 49.

⁵⁰ Bacon bemoans the fact that human understanding is not a mechanical engine; rather, we tend to see the world in our own image: “All the perceptions... bear reference to man, and not to the universe, and the human mind resembles those uneven mirrors, which impart their own property to different objects, from which rays are emitted, and distort or disfigure them.” This tendency has four sources: the overall nature of the mind, individual idiosyncrasies, socialization, and the degree to which we are swayed by current philosophical ideas. These are respectively categorized under his famous Four Idols model: The Idols of the Tribe, the Idols of the Den, the Idols of the Market, and the Idols of the Theatre. See *Novum Organum*, i. 39-68.

was not individual reasoning, but organized collective labor. The reform of natural philosophy was to be accomplished by making the method-making machine a tool of state bureaucracy. By so doing, it would implicitly conflate (and divinize) political and epistemological authority.

Bacon develops the prototype for this authoritarian utopia in his New Atlantis (1627) -- a travel tale reminiscent of *Gulliver's Travels*, (or perhaps more appropriately, the opening chapters of *Frankenstein*).⁵² Bacon's narrator is washed up on an obscure island where he discovers a remarkable Christian utopia -- a New Atlantis -- in which all people live in harmony -- free from the multiple evils of crime, poverty, self-assertive women and pre-marital promiscuity. The nucleus of this society is a scientific institute called Solomon's House. The inspiration of the founders of the Royal Society in 1660, Solomon's House was a fantasy of European modernity, a place where all things are made, and "made possible:"

We have... certain chambers, which we call Chambers of Health, where we qualify the air as we think good and proper for the cure of divers diseases, and preservation of health. We have also fair and large baths, of several mixtures, for the cure of diseases, and the restoring of man's body from arefaction: others for

⁵¹ See Mark Goldie's "Ideology" in Political Innovation and Conceptual Change, edited by Terence Bal, James Farr, and Russell L. Hanson, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 275.

⁵² It is of some entertainment value to note that New Atlantis was published the year after Bacon was impeached by the House of Commons for accepting bribes by litigants, in his capacity as Lord Chancellor. Bacon was also under suspicion of torturing prisoners. He was sentenced in 1626 to a large fine, imprisonment 'at the pleasure of the King,' and banishment from the court for life. The sentence was not fully realized, due to Bacon's death in 1627. For some thoughts about the intellectual and moral consequences of extolling a "corrupt judge and an unscrupulous politician" as the prophet of a new science and society, see Jatinder K. Bajaj in Ashis Nandy, Science, Hegemony and Violence: a Requiem for Modernity, 4th ed. Oxford Indian Paperbacks. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996, 25-67, especially 63-64.

the confirming of it in strength of sinewes, vital parts, and the very juice and substance of the body...

We have also large and various orchards and gardens wherein... we practise likewise all conclusions of grafting, and inoculating as well of wild-trees as fruit-trees, which produceth many effects;... furnaces of great diversities, and that keep great diversity of heats; fierce and quick; strong and constant; soft and mild; blown, quiet; dry, moist; and the like.... We procure means of seeing objects afar off; as in the heaven and remote places; and represent things near as afar off, and things afar off as near; making feigned distances. We have also helps for the sight, far above spectacles and glasses in use... to see small and minute bodies perfectly and distinctly; as the shapes and colours of small flies and worms, grains and flaws in gems, which cannot otherwise be seen, observations in urine and blood not otherwise to be seen...

(S)ound-houses, where we practise and demonstrate all sounds...
 (E)ngine-houses, where are prepared engines and instruments for all sorts of motions... (O)rdnance and instruments of war... and likewise new mixtures and compositions of gun-powder... We imitate also flights of birds; we have some degrees of flying in the air. We have ships and boats for going under water, and brooking of seas; ... divers curious clocks, and other like motions of return: and some perpetual motions. We imitate also motions of living creatures, by images, of men, beasts, birds, fishes, and serpents. We have also a great number of other various motions, strange for equality, fineness, and subtilty.⁵³

This futuristic paradise is (quite literally) manned by thirty-six priest *cum* bureaucrats, zealously dedicated to the House's twofold objectives: expansion of natural knowledge ("the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things") and enlargement of Empire ("the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible.") All natural knowledge is, of course, the sole domain of the State, itself powered by the engine of imperialism. Bacon's artful elision of imperialist, moral and 'scientific' values irrevocably sets the tone for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century colonial rhetorics of reform.⁵⁴

⁵³ New Atlantis,

⁵⁴ For a critical view of this interpretation of Bacon, see Ronald Levao, "Francis Bacon and the Mobility of Science" in *Representations*, Volume O, Issue 40 (Autumn, 1992), 1-32.

“When the king had forbidden to all his people navigation into any part that was not under his crown, he made nevertheless this ordinance; that every twelve years there should be set forth, out of this kingdom two ships, appointed to several voyages; That in either of these ships there should be a mission of three of the Fellows or Brethren of Salomon's House; whose errand was only to give us knowledge of the affairs and state of those countries to which they were designed, and especially of the sciences, arts, manufactures, and inventions of all the world; and withal to bring unto us books, instruments, and patterns in every kind: That the ships, after they had landed the brethren, should return: and that the brethren should stay abroad till the new mission. These ships are not otherwise fraught, than with store of victuals, and good quantity of treasure to remain with the brethren, for the buying of such things and rewarding of such persons as they should think fit.

Now for me to tell you how the vulgar sort of mariners are contained from being discovered at land; and how they that must be put on shore for any time, color themselves under the names of other nations; and to what places these voyages have been designed; and what places of rendezvous are appointed for the new missions; and the like circumstances of the practise; I may not do it; neither is it much to your desire. But thus you see we maintain a trade not for gold, silver, or jewels; nor for silks; nor for spices; nor any other commodity of matter; but only for God's first creature, which was Light: to have light (I say) of the growth of all parts of the world."

And when he had said this, he was silent; and so were we all... Whereupon we all rose up, and presented ourselves to kiss the skirt of his tippet: but he would not suffer us; and so took his leave.⁵⁵

One can hardly blame the founders of the Royal Society for succumbing to Bacon's dream; in pursuit of "God's first creature, which was light," he aims for nothing less than "the restitution and reinvesting of man to the sovereignty and power... which he had in his first state of creation." Adam's Fall severed our mind from the world, debasing its gold into "enchanted glass, full of superstition and imposture" such that "the genuine natural light of things" is hardly able to fall on "the mirror of the mind." Redemption resides in Baconian method, wherein rationality is next to godliness, and scientific and imperial advancement merge at the horizon of divine providence.

⁵⁵ (NA, Pt. 1, p.xx)

Given these vivid links between religious salvation and the acquisition of methodologically sound natural knowledge, it is not surprising that Solomon's House resembles nothing so much as a monastery inhabited by consecrated scientist-priests of a new secular order -- intermediaries between the laws of nature and of states. This resemblance does more than highlight the logical connections of European science with monotheism; it enables us to descend to the next lower stratum in the archeology of "universal rationality" by recalling how intrinsic its exaltation was both to the creation of the Enlightenment's legal subject, and to the legal differentiation of the medieval university from the monastery in twelfth-century Europe -- a point which, in light of the importance of monasticism to my larger discussion, deserves elaboration.

CANON LAW

As is well-known, Bacon's England theoretically operated under a system of law and collection of legal structures constructed by Romanists and canonists in the late eleventh century -- a collection of practices which derived from efforts to free papal authority from secular control. By working out a new legal system that placed meaningful restraints on secular authorities, they gave rise to the first modern legal system -- "a revolutionary adjustment" that "gave birth to the modern Western state -- the first example of which, paradoxically, was the Church itself."⁵⁶ These new arrangements, asserts historian Toby Huff, have "govern(ed) early modern life henceforth."⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Toby E. Huff, The Rise of Early Modern Science: Islam, China and the West. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 125.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Huff identifies a number of their consequences. He begins by noting that the recovery of Roman civil law facilitated the construction of a new legal system predicated on universality: “Since (the law) was built in conformity to reason and natural law...it was in principle a universally applicable law that transcended the boundaries of community, ethnic group, and religion.” Significantly, the pivot of this new system was the application of ‘reason and conscience’: a medieval predecessor of Bacon’s, and our own, beloved “rationality.” Huff observes that because these capacities were imputed to men, they became “permanent constituents of Western legal systems... (particularly) in the common-law world of England and the United States...”⁵⁸

Natural reason and natural law were thus produced as the external standards for evaluating legal issues. This movement precipitated the creation of a hierarchy of legal authority and concomitant jurisdictions. The summit was, of course, inhabited by reason. The next steps down the ladder were respectively occupied by divine law, and secular legal bodies headed by monarchs, cities, towns and corporate bodies. The nucleus of this hierarchy was the “idea of legitimate domains, that is, jurisdictions and the implied constitutional limits imposed by the rule of law and enactment.”⁵⁹

This idea of independent legal domains, in turn, presupposed the idea of corporations: the recognition of groups of people as “whole bodies,” corporate entities which were legally endowed with autonomy and jurisdiction, and clusters of legal privileges.⁶⁰ Here is where the monastery and the university begin to part ways, for in the

⁵⁸ Ibid., 145

⁵⁹ Ibid., 146

eleventh century, the university was the foremost example of a corporation whose authority derived, not from church authority, but from the highest principles of reason and conscience. It seems plausible to assume that this legal distinction laid the ground for the emphatic demarcation of science from religion in the seventeenth century.

The elevation of reason by this new canon law was summarized in Gratian's *Decretum* (c. 1142) – a work which, by the fifteenth century, had evolved into the mandatory textbook on canon law employed in medieval universities. The classic example of this viewpoint is found in Part I, in which Gratian denies the church the right to forbid priests from reading profane literature: “He harms the mental acumen on reader, and causes it to wane, who thinks that (priests) should in every way be prevented from reading profane books; for whatever useful things are found in them it is lawful to adopt as one's own. Otherwise, Moses and Daniel would not have been allowed to become learned in the wisdom and literature of the Egyptians and Chaldeans...” In an argument which again resonates loudly with seventeenth-century notions of reason as the new Chief Hermeneut of the Divine Book of Nature, Gratian further notes that “For the understanding of Sacred Scriptures, knowledge of profane writings is shown to be necessary,” and concludes that “ignorance ought to be odious to priests. Since, if in ignorance of their own blindness they undertake to lead others, both fall into the ditch.”⁶¹

Gratian's affirmation of natural reason is lodged firmly within the confines of Christian values. Set against the backdrop of the principle of separate jurisdictions,

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 134-35

⁶¹ From *Decretum Gratiani, Distincto XXXVII*. ed. Lyons, 1580. Reproduced in Arthur O. Norton, *Readings in the History of Education: Medieval Universities*. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1971, pp. 55-75.

however, natural reason also facilitates the emergence of the university as a corporate body independent of church oversight. The ambivalence and instability of this Janus-faced reason is similarly apparent to Bacon, who entrusts the keys of reason to a monastic brethren who are themselves under the higher jurisdiction of the State. It is not entirely surprising that reason hardens into the ideological opponent of religion in eighteenth-century Enlightenment discourse, nor that rationality becomes so deeply imbricated with legal and secular power.

BRITISH ANTI-CATHOLICISM -- SCIENTIFIC ANGLICANISM:

The potentially volatile relationship between reason and church authority implicit in Bacon's scientific/imperialist writings reiterates another opposition elemental to the formation of Britain's idea of itself as an imperial power in Bacon's time: Protestantism and Catholicism. Thomas Metcalfe's observations about British-Irish relations are *a propos*:

The British idea of themselves as an imperial people, charged with the governance of others, had its origins in the discoveries and conquests of the Tudor state in the sixteenth century. As Elizabeth's lieutenants set out in the 1560s and 1570s to subdue Ireland and establish there 'plantations' of their followers, they endeavoured to...justify these expeditions...the English conquerors sought further justification for practices that often involved massacre and appropriation by asserting that the Irish...were, despite their professed Christianity, no more than pagans, or even barbarians. 'They are all', so Edmund Spenser wrote, 'Papists by profession, but in the same, so blindly and brutishly informed for the most part as that you would rather see them atheists or infidels.'⁶²

Spensers's association of Papism and brutishness anticipates historian Linda Colley's contention that the most powerful factor in the making of British identity was war against

⁶² Cited in Thomas R. Metcalf, The New Cambridge History of India: Ideologies of the Raj. The New Cambridge History of India. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 2.

“a powerful and persistently threatening France (which) became the haunting embodiment of that Catholic Other which Britons had been taught to fear since the Reformation in the sixteenth century... Imagining the French as their vile opposites, as Hyde to their Jekyll, became a way for the Britons... to contrive for themselves a converse and flattering identity.”⁶³ As I will suggest, the Catholicization of the Other was a remarkably long-lived British institution, surfacing well beyond the Catholic Emancipation of 1829 which formalized Britain’s domestic transition from a religious to a secular order, or from church authority to the authority of law.

For our purposes, one of the most intriguing periods in the evolution of nineteenth-century Anglican forms of anti-Catholicism was the short-lived reign of King James II (r. 1685-88). The two-pronged threat to the Anglican monopoly of worship and to Parliamentary power represented by the ascendance of a Catholic monarch engendered “an intense propaganda battle between Catholic and Anglican pamphleteers... For the first time, the possibility feared by English Protestants and hoped for by Catholics would be tested, that given encouragement many people would convert to Catholicism, ‘the most conspicuous deviant element in society.’”⁶⁴ These writings testify to the emergence of a new form of religious/scientific discourse -- what Raymond Tumbleson aptly calls “the science of Anglicanism” -- which, I contend, definitively structured the ways in which science and religion were conceptually opposed in British Orientalist thought, colonial policies and rhetorics of reform in the age of the Raj.

⁶³ Linda Colley, Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837. 2nd ed. London: 1994. 368.

⁶⁴ Tumbleson 1998, 98.

Although ‘Scientific Anglicanism’ was predicated on the assumption that scientific rationality is universally self-evident, closer attention to earlier writings as well as to the contours of its political context accentuates its historic particularity. Before the reign of James II, Anglicans attacking Popery had condemned it on religious and political grounds; they characterized Catholicism as a kind of foreign cancer, spread by despotic rulers and self-centered priests, and corrosive to the truth of scripture. With the Catholic King James II in power, however, Catholicism could hardly be considered foreign, and accusations of despotism were imprudent if not actively treasonous. In a dynamic which would, as I’ll discuss, be repeated in nineteenth century England, the presence of James II demanded that the Catholic Other be incorporated into the fabric of English identity.

In objection to this demand, the voluminous numbers of Anglican anti-Catholic polemical tracts composed in this period introduced a new and enormously influential argument to their existing stock: the Church of England not only had the authority of scripture and antiquity on its side, it had reason itself. Catholicism could therefore be rejected, not on sectarian grounds but because it was, clear and simply, irrational. This fusion of religious and scientific epistemologies was epitomized by Edward Stillingfleet in his *Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion*, when he affirmed “*the judgement of Sense*” as the means to a “*certainty*” independent of the Papal “*Infallibility*” that “*Destroys the obligation to Faith which ariseth from the rational evidence of Christian doctrine.*”⁶⁵ This argument was echoed and deployed by natural scientists, as

⁶⁵ Tumbleton notes: “Stillingfleet’s theological career is paradigmatic for Restoration Anglicanism’s enlistment of reason in sectarian disputes: his 1662 *Originæ Sacrae*, or *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Christian Faith* defends Christianity as rational, then in 1665 *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion* narrows religious

well; thus Boyle asserted in his 1675 *Some Considerations about the Reconcilableness of Reason and Religion* that “I do not think, that a Christian, to be truly so, is obliged to forego his reason; either by denying the dictates of reason, or by laying aside the use of it.”⁶⁶ Anglicanism and sense-based reason merged in a natural and self-evident union defined by -- and defining -- its moral, intellectual and political opposite: superstitious, faith-based Catholicism.⁶⁷

Significantly, this ‘Protestant v. Catholicism’ dichotomy was explicitly characterized in late Restoration Anglican rhetoric as a battle between scientific modernity and traditionalism. Thus, the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation was not only irrational and unscientific – “we are sure,” asserted Samuel Johnson in 1688, “a Divine Revelation cannot contradict the Common Sense and Reason of Mankind”⁶⁸ – but downright uncivilized, akin to the inscrutable barbarisms recorded by European ethnographers in unmapped, malaria-infested jungle villages.

rationality to exclude Catholicism; in the wake of the Exclusion Crisis, the 1681 *The Unreasonableness of Separation* chides Dissenters for being so ‘unreasonable’ as not to conform to the Church of England; and finally in 1687 *The Doctrine of the Trinity and Transubstantiation Compared, as to Scripture, Reason and Tradition* returns to the subject of *A Rational Account*, tightening its 600 learned pages into colloquial propaganda aimed at lay readers.” Tumbleson 1998, 99.

⁶⁶ Cited in Tumbleson, 1998, 119.

⁶⁷ This exaltation of experience and reason so vehemently advocated by Protestant apologists is, of course, recognizable as a central value of the progressive, liberal British enlightenment tradition. It is not surprising that Tumbleson, Goldie and others assert that “(b)efore becoming defined as the antithesis of religion in general, reason was first defined as antithetical specifically to Catholicism.” *Ibid.*, 100.

⁶⁸ Samuel Johnson, *The Absolute Impossibility of Transubstantiation Demonstrated*. London: 1688, iii.

Unsurprisingly, the Protestant deployment of the language of scientific reason and progress at this time was explicitly linked to Baconian method and scientific experimentalism. “Protestantism, like ‘Baconianism,’ is posited as a new beginning, proceeding on first principles disentangled from theoretical encrustations, the ‘corruptions’ and ‘novelties’ of Rome. As Bacon called for a ‘more perfect use of reason in the investigation of Nature...’ so Protestantism would employ a more perfect use of reason in the investigation of God.”⁶⁹ Similarly, the equation of Anglicanism with experimentalism -- which conceived of witnesses as a means of validating and establishing public knowledge -- stood in radical contrast to the doctrine of papal infallibility, which implied dependence upon a final judge to settle controversial questions.

This trumpeting of experimentalism’s epistemological power furthered two unspoken but highly significant aims. First, it implicitly shifted public conceptions of political cosmology from a hierarchy dominated by a king or pope, to a more Parliament-friendly republic of observers.⁷⁰ Second, it *de facto* defined the ideological terms for membership into the politically-empowered: in order to qualify as an observer of this new republic of the mind, “one must subscribe to the inscription of reason as a discourse of power, and,

⁶⁹ Tumbleson 1998, 104

⁷⁰ Steven Shapin notes: “If particular experiences were to serve as {a secure foundation for natural philosophical knowledge}, their authenticity as actually occurring, historically specific happenings somehow had to be guaranteed and made persuasive to a community... Witnesses could be specially mobilized to observe experimental effects and attest to their authenticity... experimental performances were a routine features of the meeting of the Royal Society, and a Register Book was provided for witnesses to testify their assent to experimental results... Boyle influentially recommended that experimental reports be written in a way that allowed distant readers -- not present as firsthand witnesses -- to replicate the relevant reports.” Shapin 1996, 107.

as a complement, to the exclusion from power of all but the gentry.”⁷¹ In short, the exaltation of Baconian/Protestant scientific rationality as axiomatic and self-evident truth served to produce and re-direct public opinion and political power.

The rhetoric of ‘scientific Anglicanism’ was also employed to re-emphasize and amplify Protestantism’s ingrained disapproval of idols and images. “A Picture,” explained William Sherlock in 1686, “informs a man of nothing, but what he was informed of before. The picture of a Crucifix may put a Man in mind of what he has heard or read of Christs dying upon the Cross; but if he knows nothing of the History of Christs sufferings, the bare seeing of a Crucifix can teach him nothing. Children may be taught by pictures, which makes a more strong impression on their fancies than Words, but a Picture cannot teach; and at best this is bit a very childish way of learning.”⁷² The written word is clear, determinate, civilized; an unbrookable basis for communicating unitary, transparent Anglican truth to the rational, literate man. By contrast, images are ambiguous, and so multivalent; in their indeterminacy, they are as likely to foster superstition and immorality as reason-based unanimity. As such, pictures should be reserved for controlled use by children under the watchful eye of a rational caretaker ready to intercede at the first sign of imaginative dissent.

Sherlock’s sentiment throws into sharp emphasis the Protestant conviction that the written text is the locus of ‘true’ religion, that “Christians should not seek religion in

⁷¹ Tumbleson 1998, 102

⁷² From *An Answer to a Discourse Intituled, Papists Protesting against Protestant-Popery; Being a Vindication of Papists not Misrepresented by Protestants*. London: 1686, 116. Cited in Tumbleson, 109.

outward things, but rather in Scripture”⁷³ “Only the Spirit vivifies, and the Spirit works through the Word, not through material objects.”⁷⁴ Calvin likewise saw material images as corrosive to faith, “innumerable mockeries... which pervert religion... (they are not) spiritually ordained by the Word.” Sherlock’s evident mistrust of the idol-worshipping Catholic Church in its role as Biblical hermeneut anticipates the language and the logic of seventeenth century Baconian natural philosophers whose perusals of the Book of Nature must be unmediated by faith or superstition.

The need by Restoration Anglicans to beat a middle path between Catholicism and Dissent also begat a particular yet long-lasting manner of characterizing and valuing church clergy. Nonconformists of this time often likened English bishops to “subtile, treacherous” Catholic priests, as likely to “make mischief” as his Roman counterpart, during the Long Parliament of 1641. radical Dissenters had even proposed, but could not enact, a bill that would have abolished bishops altogether. In 1685, therefore, Anglican supporters of their clergy had a narrow row to hoe: to question the authority of their own bishops was to undermine their claim to Protestant universality, and was tantamount to conceding that the radical Dissenters of the 1640s had been correct. On the other hand, to legitimate the authority of bishops on the basis of traditional hierarchical theoretics reopened the door to faith-based despotism. Obviously, episcopal authority needed to be preserved on a new footing. Late Restoration-era Anglicans did so by espousing a kind of ecclesiastical democracy: a Bishop rules, they affirmed, not by right of hereditary

⁷³ C.M.N. Eire, War Against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin. Cambridge, 1986, 76.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 59.

apostolic succession, but because he has the approbation of his flock. William Sherlock explained in a 1686 publication that if a bishop is suspected of impropriety, it is the

People who depose or exonerate him:

For whoever pronounces the Sentence, (excepting the interposing of Secular power) the People must execute it, and if they will adhere to their Bishop, he may defie his Deposers, and all their power: As the *English* Bishops and People do all the *Anathemas* of the Church of *Rome*... As to whether they do right or wrong in this, their own Consciences must be the judg in this world, and God will judg in the next: This is all that can be said or done in such a broken and divided state of the Church, as we now see.

Sherlock's compromise position is as close as he can come to keeping the baby with the minimum of bath water. Protestantism can have its "priests" without any of the attendant ills of their Catholic analogues. Anglican clergy are democratic, not hereditary: modest, not pompous; scientific, not superstitious: priests, if you will, of a modern secular order.

This logic remained active throughout the next centuries, which saw a flowering of vehement British anti-sacerdotalism grounded upon a knee-jerk distrust of heredity-based authority. Restoration-era hostility and mistrust towards priests thus cannot be dismissed as a short-lived historical quirk, but as a seminal component of British social and political thought. Indeed, Michel de Certeau goes so far as to argue that the open priestcraft under the patronage of James II signifies "the return of the repressed, that is, a return of what, at a given moment, has become unthinkable in order for a new identity to become thinkable."⁷⁵ Rudyard Kipling would undoubtedly have been well-received by Anglican pamphleteers, who, like Kipling,

(C)ast themselves in Lyotard's terms as "operators of scientific knowledge" at whose hands Catholicism became figured as "traditional knowledge" or

⁷⁵ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*. Translated from the French by Tom Conley. New York: Columbia University Press. 1988, p. 2.

“obscurantism” to be dissected by the Protestant rational subject. Michel de Certeau observed that “Modern Western history essentially begins with differentiation between the present and the past. In this way, it is unlike tradition (religious tradition), thought it never succeeds in being entirely disassociated from this archeology, maintaining with it a relation of indebtedness and rejection.” The prototype for this “relation of indebtedness and rejection,” this Western pattern of dichotomizing the discredited past and the progressive present, is the Reformation.⁷⁶

Tumbleson extends this claim for prototypicality with an even more stark contention: “Always figured in these tracts as a medieval relic... the Catholic has become unthinkable in order for the Protestant to become thinkable. **Protestantism, the scientific site of the rational subject, figures as the prototype of the modern.**”⁷⁷ We have arrived at the modern rational Brit who, in Kipling’s time, ‘colonizes to liberate’ in the name of that modernity.

In the early eighteenth century, English anti-Catholic rhetoric again took on a distinctly nationalistic flavor as Britain confronted Catholic France in a succession of major wars which lasted throughout the eighteenth century, encouraging the English, Scots, and Welsh to construct an image of themselves as a single nation, distinctly British, collectively Protestant and vehemently anti-Catholic. Colley contends that “(t)heir common investment in Protestantism fused them together... and helped make Britain’s successive wars with France after 1689 so significant in terms of national formation.”⁷⁸ In this sense, British anti-Catholicism is deeply imbricated in myriad

⁷⁶ Tumbleson 1998, 100-101.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 101. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁸ Colley 1994, 368.

dimensions of England's processes of state formation; "though it had obvious points of similarity with European expressions of ideological objection to Catholic beliefs and practices, {it} was quite unique. It was peculiarly related to popularly subscribed precepts about the ends and means of the British state; it was chauvinistic and almost general."⁷⁹

In anti-Catholic polemic of this time, the identification of Protestantism as scientific reason was expressed as rabid anti-sacerdotalism -- the pitting of rational Protestant 'Englishness' against "Roman Catholicism (which) stood for a sacrificial priesthood that thrust itself between God and humankind, and an overweening spiritual domination condemned in the apocalyptic Scriptures."⁸⁰ This Calvinist objection presupposed, of course, the "nature as text" metaphor, whereby superstition prevents the rational man from understanding God's divine book through reason, just as Catholic priests constitute a barrier between the reader and his Bible.

Nationalist/anti-sacerdotal rhetoric further represented Roman Catholicism as "a religion of charms, magical rituals, fraudulent miracles and exorcisms, winking statues and swarms of saints. Its cardinals lived amid wealthy, comforts and pomp, and its priests denied the sacraments and other religious rites to those who could not pay for them."⁸¹ In *Tinturn Abbey*, Martin Tupper gloats over the ruins of a monastery as a wrongfully-condemned prisoner might dance in the broken bricks of the Bastille:

So hold these glorious abbeys grim control

⁷⁹ E.R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England. London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968, 20.

⁸⁰ D.G. Paz, Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992, 2. See also Norman 1968, 20 ff.

⁸¹ Ibid., 61.

Over men's Heart and Mind, enslaving both
 To crafty monk and superstitious rite:
 Therefore, to find them crush'd be little loth,
 But note their ruins with new delight.⁸²

Importantly, David Hume naturalized this association of monkhood with irrationality and despotism in his highly influential Natural History of Religion. For Hume, monotheism was the culmination of rational civilization, impossible and unheard of in “primitive” civilizations. Even among the European literati, however, it was a precarious ideal under constant siege by the tendency of the “vulgar, ignorant, uninstructed” masses to slip ever-deeper into polytheistic thought. In Hume's vision, the history of mankind was neither a fall from monotheistic grace, nor a steady forward march toward the light of rationality. Rather, it was marked by on-going tension between polytheism and theism, and by extension, between idolatry and rationality, the vulgar and the elite, the monk and the intellectual:

It is remarkable that the principles of religion have had a flux and reflux in the human mind, and that men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism to idolatry... Where the deity is represented as infinitely superior to mankind, this belief... is apt... when joined with superstitious terror, to sink the human mind into the lowest submission and abasement, and to represent the monkish virtues of mortification, penance, humility and passive suffering, as the only qualities which are acceptable to him.⁸³

Indeed, the association of crafty monks with “overweening spiritual domination” flowed into a more global identification of Roman Catholicism as despotism in a range of forms:

⁸² Martin Farquhar Tupper, The Complete Poetical Works of Martin Farquhar Tupper. New York: John W. Lowell Co., 185.

⁸³ Natural History of Religion, 334, Section X. It is instructive to note that A.N. Wilson characterizes Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire and Hume's Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion as “the two books in the English language which have done more than any other... to undermine faith...” See A.N. Wilson, God's Funeral, London: John Murray Publishers, Ltd., 1999, 19.

thus Catholicism evoked the arbitrary rule of absolute monarchs, unquestioning allegiance to a Pope whose authority exceeded even that of the State, and the concomitant absence of religious and civil freedoms.

From the 1770s, this conviction was increasingly couched within the theory of the Norman Yoke -- the idea that the Saxons had governed themselves in idyllic 'primeval democratic folkmoths' until the Norman invaders robbed them of self-government by imposing foreign kings and landlords.⁸⁴ Yet even the barbarian Normans could not defeat providence; British political and economic power testified to the fact that "God willed Protestantism." Sir Thomas Smith explained the invasion of Ireland on the ground that God had given the English responsibility to "inhabite and reform' this 'barbarous' nation: to educate the uncivilized Papists 'in virtuous labour and in justice, and to teach them our English laws and civilite and leave robberyng and stealing and killing one another."⁸⁵ Smith's remarks suggest how deeply entangled the notion of the European legal subject was in Protestant British notions of civilized man, and anticipates the language of reform that nineteenth-century British theorists and administrators would use to characterize their presence in India.

Edward Gibbon, a self-proclaimed *bon protestant*, elevated anti-monastic derogation to the level of historical fact in his hugely-popular Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776-1780) – a work which is, as J.G.A. Pocock reminds us, "very largely about the conflict between Greco-Roman polytheism moderated by Stoic philosophy, and Christian

⁸⁴ Paz notes that this theory "blended into the debates over Roman Catholic Emancipation during the thirty years before 1828." See Paz 1992, 3.

⁸⁵ Cited in Metcalf 1994, 2.

monotheism moderated by Platonic metaphysics. The latter helps bring about the decline of a skeptical and tolerant magistracy and its replacement by a monasticism founded upon the idea of a spiritual elite pursuing an inner religion.”⁸⁶ Clearly influenced by Hume’s vision of dyadic opposition, Gibbon asserts that

the imagination, which had been raised by a painful effort to the contemplation and worship of the Universal Cause, eagerly embraced such inferior objects of adoration as were more proportioned to its gross conceptions...the simple theology of the primitive Christians was gradually corrupted, and the monasrchy of heaven... was degraded by the introduction of a popular mythology which tended to restore the reign of polythesism.⁸⁷

The fall of the rational theist thus enabled the rise of the craven monk:

The actions of a monk, his words, and even his thoughts, were determined by an inflexible rule or a capricious superior... A blind submission to the commands of the abbot, however absurd, or even criminal, was the ruling principle... The freedom of mind, the source of every generous and rational sentiment, was destroyed by the habits of credulity and submission; and the monk, contracting the vices of a slave, devoutly followed the faith and passions of his ecclesiastical tyrant... The monastic studies have tended, for the most part, to darken, rather than dispel, the cloud of superstition...

Their discipline was corrupted by prosperity... every age of the church has accused the licentiousness of their degenerate monks; who no longer remembered the object of their institution, embraced the vain and sensual pleasures of the world, which they had renounced... The repose which they sought in the cloister was disturbed by tardy repentance, profane doubts, and guilty desires; and, while they considered each natural impulse as an unpardonable sin, they perpetually trembled on the edge of a flaming and bottomless abyss...

The monastic saints... excite only the contempt and pity of the philosopher... (Their stories) have seriously affected the reason, the faith, the morals of the Christians. Their credulity debased and vitiated the faculties of the mind; they corrupted the evidence of history; and superstition gradually

⁸⁶ J.G.A. Pocock, “Gibbon and the Idol Fo: Chinese and Christian History in the Enlightenment.” In Sceptics, Millenarians and Jews, edited by David S. Katz and Jonathan I. Israel. Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1990, 58.

⁸⁷ Edward Gibbon, The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: Volume III. Edited by David Womersely. London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1994, 225.

extinguished the hostile light of philosophy and science... (A)ll the manly virtues were oppressed by the servile and pusillanimous reign of the monks.⁸⁸

Significantly, Gibbon extends his condemnation of monasticism to its Buddhist forms. In Chapter 64, in which he outlines the decline and fall of the Mongol Yuan dynasty in the fourteenth century, Gibbon criticizes Kubilai Khan for departing from the dedicated monotheism of his illustrious predecessor, Genghiz: “Yet this learned prince declined from the pure and simple religion of his ancestor... he sacrificed to the idol *Fo*; and his blind attachment to the lamas of Thibet and the bonzes of China provoked the censure of the disciples of Confucius.”⁸⁹ Needless to say, Kubilai’s dynasty was earmarked for destruction from this time on. Gibbon continues by appending an intriguing footnote, published in 1788:

The attachment of the khans, and the hatred of the mandarins, to the bonzes and lamas (Duhalde, *Hist. de la Chine*, tom. 1. p. 502, 503) seems to represent them as priests of the same god, of the Indian *Fo*, whose worship prevails among the sects of Hindostan, Siam, Thibet, China and Japan. But this mysterious subject is still lost in a cloud, which the researches of our Asiatic Society may gradually dispel.⁹⁰

Gibbon’s note is remarkable, not only as an indication that he was dimly aware of something called Buddhism – an entity whose “imaginative creation” was allegedly not meaningfully established until the first half of the nineteenth century⁹¹ -- but for

⁸⁸ Gibbon, 1994, 418-28. For Gibbon’s full treatment of monasticism, see pp. 411-451.

⁸⁹ Gibbon 1994, 440. Pocock notes that the name of “*Fo*” may represent a Chinese attempt to render the first syllable of the name “*Buddha*” or the last syllable of the name *Amitabha* in the Chinese form. (Pocock 1990, 59.)

⁹⁰ Gibbon 1994, 440.

⁹¹ See Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 4.

universalizing monasticism's inherently corrosive effects. Just as the Roman magistracy had been displaced by an elite corps of Christian naval-contemplators, so too did the bonzes, lamas and priests of the *religion de Fo* erode the Confucian magistracy, though this attrition was not deemed entirely disastrous.⁹² His confidence in the powers of "our Asiatic society" to dissolve its enveloping cloud of mystery anticipates the 'scienticization' of moral reform characteristic of nineteenth-century British Indian rhetoric – a logic firmly entrenched as patriotism and plain old common sense in British popular literature by 1847:

Man's scientific conquest of nature must be one phase of His Kingdom on Earth, whatever else is not. I don't deny that there are spiritual laws which man is meant to obey – How can I, who feel in my own daily and inexplicable unhappiness the fruits of having broke them? But I do say that those spiritual laws must be in perfect harmony with the every fresh physical law which we discover: that they cannot be intended to compete self-destructively with each other... unless God is a deceiver and His universe a self-deception. And by this test alone will I try all theories, and dogmas, and spiritualities whatsoever – Are they in accordance with the laws of nature? And therefore when your party compare sneeringly Romish Sanctity, and English civilisation, I say 'Take your Sanctity, and give me the Civilisation!'...

When we 'draw bills on nature,' as Carlyle says, 'she honours them' – our ships do sail; our mills do work; our doctors do cure; our soldiers do fight. And she does not honour yours; for your Jesuits have, by their own confession, to lie, to swindle, to get even man to accept theirs for them. So give me the political economist, the sanitary reformer, the engineer; and take your saints and virgins, relics and miracles. The spinning jenny and the railroad, Cunard's liners and the electric telegraph, are to me, if not to you, signs that we are, on some points at least, in harmony with the universe; that there is a mighty spirit working among us, who cannot be your anarchic and destroying Devil, and therefore may be the Ordering and Creating God.'

Which of them do you think, dear reader, had most right on his side?⁹³

⁹² Pocock notes that Gibbon makes a number of derogatory remarks about the Chinese and Confucian philosophy; it is a screen for despotism adhered to by patient and pusillanimous people, lacking civic and military virtue. See Pocock, 33.

Gibbon's cross-cultural observations underscore the simultaneity and mutuality of England's demarcation of its domains of nation, empire and natural science. His is, of course, the age in which, as Edmund Burke so famously remarked in 1777, "the Great Map of Mankind is unrolled at once" for European examination. If the seventeenth century is identified with the birth of natural science, the diverse examples of humanity coming to light in the course of eighteenth century global exploration may have occasioned 'the science of man.'⁹⁴ "Human nature," wrote David Hume in 1740, "is the only science of man; and yet has been hitherto the most neglected. 'Twill be sufficient for me, if I can bring it a little more in fashion." Since "there is no question of importance, whose decision is not compriz'd of in the science of man," he adds, in explaining "the principles of human nature, we in effect propose a compleat system of the sciences, built on a foundation almost entirely new."⁹⁵

Humes's airy reference to "human nature" points to a paradoxical yet key function of the new human sciences, highlighted by Foucault: the construction of the concept of humanity as an essentially unitary, common essence; the idea of 'Man' as the basis and active force producing knowledge, society and history is the creation of the human sciences. If the main task of Solomon's House brethren was "to give us

⁹³ Charles Kingsley, Compleat Works. New York: Abingdon, 1847, 77-78.

⁹⁴ Consider, for example, the anthropological data about South Pacific peoples alone, derived from the exploratory voyages of George Anson, John Byron, Samuel Wallis, Philip Cartaret, Louis Antoine de Bourgainville and, of course, the three famous trips of James Cook. Similarly, new plant and animal materials flooded Europe; the number of known plants quadrupled between 1550 and 1700.

⁹⁵ Cited in Fox, Porter, et al. 1995, 2.

knowledge of the affairs and state of those countries to which they were designed,” the task of the British Enlightenment scientists, as consecrated priests of the new secular order, was to categorize and then hierarchize their inhabitants in accordance with objective, universally-applicable and empire-friendly taxonomies.⁹⁶

Nor surprisingly, a central concern of many British Enlightenment thinkers was the ‘scientization’ of moral philosophy. Having purged scientific method of the taint of human bias, Hume and many of British contemporaries felt authorized (and perhaps nostalgic) to “account for moral as for natural things.” In his Treatise on Human Nature, Hume asserts his desire to determine whether “the science of man will not admit of the same accuracy which several parts of natural philosophy are found susceptible of.”⁹⁷ Consequently, emerging forms of imperial knowledge as diverse as ethnology, philology, and geography, produced -- and were produced by -- ‘objective,’ scientifically-established moral judgments. In the nineteenth century, the very affirmation of scientific judgments as objective and universal would itself be a way “to position science as a sign

⁹⁶ Actually, the formation of a natural history of the human species in the eighteenth century is conceptualized as three consecutive phases. Phillip Sloan’s summary is helpful: “First, there was the development of classificatory systems in which human beings for the first time were arranged, as a taxonomic group, with the rest of organic nature. Such systems implied a rational classificatory framework into which existing varieties of human beings could be systematically ordered and organized in a form similar to that employed for other organisms. Second, one can follow a reinterpretation of the meaning of those classifications, in which they ceased to be logical arrangements of forms and were assumed to display instead temporal and geographical relationships of human beings. Third, this “natural history” of the human species was drawn into contact with the greatly-expanding fund of information on the range and diversity of human beings made available in the latter-half of the eighteenth century by the great expansion of exploratory voyages to the more report regions of the world. By the end of the eighteenth century geographical ethnography would become a primary problem facing the human sciences.” Sloan in Fox, Porter, et al. 1995, 118.

⁹⁷ Cited by Fox in Fox, Porter, et al. 1995, 2-3.

of modernity and a means of colonial rule.”⁹⁸ Ironically, by 1900 the rhetoric of scientific objectivity would come full circle, and be deployed by Indian nationalists in protest of the British regime.

This gradual movement toward religiously-neutral rationality as a source of political and cultural authority manifested in a qualified softening of anti-Catholic rhetoric and legislation -- a trend best understood as both a reflection and strategy of the great English secularization movements of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century from which, notes Peter Van de Veer, “that hyphenated phenomena, the nation-state,” takes its present form.⁹⁹ Gauri Viswanathan likewise notes that the period between the Gordon riots against Catholic emancipation in 1780 and the disempowerment of ecclesiastical authority following the Gorham judgment of 1850 encompassed dramatically shifting understandings of national allegiance which were mirrored and facilitated by altered relations between church and state:

This drama unendingly complicated itself by questioning and rethinking the possibilities of dual allegiances brought on by such things as – in England, for instance – legislation to enfranchise religious minorities in the wake of national union and dismemberment. Could an Englishman be both English and Catholic, Jewish, non-conformist?... (T)he concept of nationality, which had hitherto relied on an unquestioned equation of Englishness with mainstream Anglicanism, had necessarily to undergo drastic transformation. No longer characterized by formal oaths of allegiance to doctrine and creed, Englishness accretes in significance as a function of the incorporative logic of law, administrative rationality, and constitutional principles of liberty... a new order of citizenship is called forth based on criteria of legal rather than religious inclusion.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Prakash 1999, 19.

⁹⁹ Peter Van der Veer and Hartmut Lehmann, Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Viswanathan 1998, 9.

In short, England's movement toward religious neutrality "substituted 'Englishness' for 'Christianity' as the defining principle of subjecthood, even while retaining the moral foundations of Christianity."¹⁰¹

Significantly, the need to incorporate the Catholics into the British body politic was a primary impetus driving this policy of religious toleration. From 1800 onwards, Roman Catholicism in England underwent tremendous expansion – an outgrowth of an increase in English Catholicism and an influx of Irish immigrants.¹⁰² In a situation reminiscent of the reign of James II, circumstances demanded a virtual about-face: to realize the larger objective of forging a united kingdom, Britain had to domesticate and incorporate England's fearsome Catholic Other.

This demand gave rise to new English representations of Catholicism. This time, a new twist was given to the image of the Catholic as divided subject: instead of emphasizing Catholic attachment to a foreign Roman Pope, the discourse of divided loyalty now emphasized Catholic commitment to the Irish Catholic hierarchy. This emphasis thus allied the growth of Irish identity with the resolution of the Catholic question, which was itself expressed by Irish revolutionary demands for social and

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 12. Note, for example, that the Catholic minority had been denied many civil rights, including that of serving in Parliament, owning certain kinds of property, attending Oxford, Cambridge and other major universities that functioned largely to train Church of England clergy. Not until the 1850s did Oxford cease to require submission to the Thirty-Nine articles as a condition of matriculation.

¹⁰² Roman Catholicism in England had its strongest native proponents among the Tractarians, who emphasized the Catholicity of the Church of England. Likewise, Ireland saw an upswing in Catholic activity at this time, as seen in the establishment of an Irish priest-training college at Maynooth in 1795.

economic justice.¹⁰³ As such, the relaxation of anti-Catholic legislation, epitomized by the Catholic emancipatory legislation of 1829, sought to defuse political dissension, and to unify what was not yet a united kingdom.¹⁰⁴ By couching this shift in policy as a ‘liberalizing attitude’ -- a movement towards a kinder, gentler, more inclusive nation of religious tolerance -- England could downplay its own anxiety about the Irish question, and attempt to ease the national absorption of an entrenched cultural enemy.¹⁰⁵

This thin patina of tolerance among those of “educated opinion” alternated with continued “No Popery” agitation throughout the nineteenth-century. Thus in 1833-34, a Party Possession Act was passed for Ireland which prohibited celebration of religious differences, and so prevent Orange and Green demonstrations from devolving into violence. The Act lapsed in 1843, and was renewed in 1850 after a bloody shoot-out between Orangemen and Catholics in the summer of 1849. It was repealed in 1872. More famous was the question of an increased and on-going grant to Ireland’s Maynooth

¹⁰³ Viswanathan 1998, 10

¹⁰⁴ For the text of the Act, see Norman 1968, 131-139.

¹⁰⁵ By the mid-nineteenth century, this movement towards secularization facilitated a differentiation between political and civil society which, predictably, reiterated the seventeenth-century fault-line between religion (as private belief) and publicly self-evident natural science. “(C)ivil society emerged as the privatized domain onto which were displaced a variety of religious distinctions which had no place in political society... Secularization not only polarizes national and religious identity; it also privatizes belief and renders it subordinate to the claims of reason, logic and evidence. Henceforth all these claims are identified with the rationality of the state and its institutions.” By the time the Crown seized control of India from the private East India Company in 1857, British nationalism was being constructed, not around “a single unifying framework of ecclesiastical or missionizing doctrine, but by the absorption of racial and religious ‘others’ into a secular framework” – a belief made flesh by “a centralized administrative machinery... whose legislative capacity displaces the authority of religious bodies to determine the criteria for membership in the community.” See Viswanathan 1998, 12-13.

College, which consumed Parliament from the 1830s until 1845. How could a country “essentially Protestant... educate a Romish priesthood?” The Maynooth controversy spawned deep divisions among the Protestant establishment, making clear that opposition to Popery “could not confine itself to Roman Catholics alone;” expressions of anti-sacerdotalism and anti-Catholicism were vehicles for the discussion of significant alterations to the religious office of the State, the role of education in shaping public perceptions of British identity, and larger issues of constitutional reform.¹⁰⁶ In the late 1870s (on the heels of the addition of Papal Infallibility to the first Vatican Council in 1870), the expansion of private monasteries and convents within the Church of England heightened Protestant abhorrence of monasticism. The mood of rabid anti-ritualism and anti-sacerdotalism crystallized in the Public Worship Regulation Act of 1875, and culminated in the trial of the Tractarian Bishop of Lincoln for illegal ritual acts, such as lighted candles on the altar, and the mixing of water and wine in the chalice during services. The Bishop admitted defeat in 1890 – an act which only underscored the weight of anti-sacerdotalism in British political and civil life through the end of the nineteenth century.

Summary:

Produced within -- and by -- the context of British imperial expansion, Bacon’s writings contain a cluster of values that suffuse British Enlightenment characterizations of modernity and rationality as vehicles of reform: most notably, the yoking of scientific knowledge and state expansion, and the mechanization of knowledge-making by imposing rules of method that sought to regulate the production of knowledge by

¹⁰⁶ See Norman 1968, 21-51; 144-161.

banishing the influence of human passions. In Bacon's century, the tainting emotions that were extracted from the "true knowledge" of natural science were transplanted to the newly-emerging domain of natural religion: the superstitious monk was displaced by the objective scientist, the priest of a new, post-Reformation order. This allowed scientific knowledge to (apparently) float free of its epistemological and religious moorings, even as it tacitly and paradoxically become identified with Protestantism.

The late seventeenth century emergence of "the science of Anglicanism" solidified this association. Deploying the language of scientific reason and progress, Anglican apologists openly linked Protestantism to Baconian method and scientific experimentalism. Reason was exalted as the arbiter of disputes; as such, both Protestantism and scientific fact were universally and indisputably self-evident. This privileging of the status quo reiterated the logic of demoting the crown within the polity, emphasizing the mutuality of religious, scientific and political paradigms. Likewise, this identification with experimentalism *de facto* set the terms for membership in the politically-powerful elite; inclusion was confined to literate gentry who subscribed to the inscription of reason as a discourse of power.

This putatively rational, democratic Protestantism was forcefully promulgated as the archetypal opposite of superstitious, despotic 'un-British' Catholicism in the context of the eighteenth-century articulation of a distinctive British imperial identity. The symbol and incarnation of Britain's barbaric nemesis was the Catholic priest: the corrupt and venal interloper between reasoning man and nature, and whose spiritual domination of untutored peasants flowed seamlessly into full-scale political despotism. But by the early nineteenth-century, the need to incorporate Catholics into the British body politic had

prompted the British government to adopt a policy of religious toleration. Religiously-neutral rationality was showcased as a source of political and cultural authority as Britain “substituted ‘Englishness’ for ‘Christianity’ as the defining principle of subjecthood, even while retaining the moral foundations of Christianity.”¹⁰⁷ These “moral foundations” remained resolutely Protestant; anti-Catholic agitation continued through the end of the nineteenth century, often functioning as a vehicle for discussion of significant alterations to the religious office of the State, the role of education in shaping public perceptions of British identity, and larger issues of constitutional reform

In late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British India, the Protestant-influenced mythology of rational (and national) science would be pressed into the service of specific moral, social and political ends, i.e. Britain’s “reform” and colonization of India. It is in the cracks of these processes – the intersection of various strains of Enlightenment scientific discourses with the British imperial project and the construction of a Protestant-Catholic British national identity -- that the field of Indology, and the sub-field of Buddhist Studies, were born.

¹⁰⁷ Viswanathan 1998, 12. Note, for example, that the Catholic minority had been denied many civil rights, including that of serving in Parliament, owning certain kinds of property, attending Oxford, Cambridge and other major universities which functioned largely to train Church of England clergy. Not until the 1850s did Oxford cease to require submission to the Thirty-Nine articles as a condition of matriculation.

Orientalist period (1770-1835): Reading the Book of God

Britain's processes of self-articulation as a industrializing, Protestant anti-Catholic empire and then modern nation-state is the domestic backdrop for England's period of colonial growth in India; as Van der Veer succinctly remarks, "while Britain was colonizing India, England was colonizing Great Britain."¹⁰⁸ Thus, the anti-Catholic sentiment that erupted into the Gordon riots of 1780 is both contemporaneous with – and an inescapable ideological colorant of -- the evolution of the British presence in India from mercantile agency to governing body. E.R. Norman asserts that the "No Popery" tradition... was extended overseas to those areas of the World – the United States, Canada, Australia – where British people and British institutions enabled its parallel development."¹⁰⁹ His thesis should, I think, be extended to include Britain's non-Western colonies as well. As I will suggest, anti-sacerdotalism, fantasies of papal aggression and conviction of priestly despotism were also imported to India, where they filtered colonial perceptions of Hinduism -- the "Roman Catholicism of South Asia" -- and the colonial administrative policies derived from British understandings of "Hindu" culture.

The origins of Britain's transformation from trading company agency to governing body are generally traced to the conquering of Bengal by the East India Company in 1757. The East India Company (EIC) had won a series of protracted struggles against French Catholic competitors, and emerged as the most militarily powerful state in India. The Company's peculiar position as a national power within India's own state system

¹⁰⁸ In Van der Veer & Lehmann 1999, 19

¹⁰⁹ Norman 1968, 20

derived from the Mughal Emperor who appointed it to be *diwan* (chief civil officer) of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in August 1765 – “the truly inaugurative moment of the Raj” which, asserts Ranajit Guha, “brought together in one single instance all the three fundamental aspects of colonialism in our sub-continent, namely its origin in an act of force, its exploitation of the primary produce of the land as the very basis of a colonial economy and its need to give force and exploitation the appearance of legality.”¹¹⁰

Guha’s assertion notwithstanding, the EIC was initially reluctant to assume direct administration of its possessions. It was not until 1770, when a devastating famine decimated one-third of the population -- and revenue collections -- of Bengal.¹¹¹ that the EIC’s board of directors in London insisted that the Company ‘stand forth as Diwan.’¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Ranajit Guha, An Indian Historiography of India: A Nineteenth-Century Agenda and Its Implications. Sakham Ganesh Deuskar Lectures on Indian History, 1987. Calcutta and New Delhi: K.P. Bagchi & Company, 1988, 4.

¹¹¹ The various causes attributed to the Bengal famine of 1770 are a study in competing histories. EIC administrators trace it to the ‘backwardness’ of the Bengali people. Historian Ranbir Vohra posits that “it was the illegal activities of the EIC’s servants that milked the province of its surplus, leaving much less for the company than the directors expected. The terrible famine of Bengal... underscored the degeneration of the administration of the province under the company’s indirect rule.” He concludes by citing John Strachey: “In their blind rage for enrichment {the company’s servants} took more from the Bengali peasants than those peasants could furnish and live. And the peasants duly died.” See Vohra, 1997, p. 62. For a discussion of some of the critiques of ‘Orientalist’ histories, as well as an overview of key post-war theories of history, see Robert Young, White Mythologies: Writing History and the West. London and New York: Routledge, 1990, especially pp. 1-21, and 119-141.

¹¹² This is not to say, however, that British ambivalence about proclaiming their assumption of direct rule ends here. In 1803, under the leadership of Lord Lake, the Company captured the Mughal capital of Delhi. Rather than deposing and supplanting the Mughal emperor, however, the British acted on the instructions of governor general Lord Wellesley and offered him ‘every demonstration of reverence, respect and attention.’ As ‘protector’ of the Mughal emperor, the East India Company would, he hoped, ‘come into nominal authority of the Mughal,’ and so indirectly reap the benefits of the Emperor’s

In 1772, Warren Hastings assumed the governorship, the transformation of a private trading company into a colonial power, marked by a distinctive combination of politics, economics and law “which provided the emerging colonial state with a node for structural developments in its apparatus at both the administrative and the ideological levels.” (Guha, 1981, 4) The transformation to Company rule thus inaugurated the production of qualitatively new forms of knowledge deemed scholarly or colonial in intent.

Despite their putatively differing motivations, however, these forms of knowledge had shared influences. Each, for example, was bound by political patronage, and so reflected the larger context of power struggles between the EIC and Parliament. As Company territory spread, centralization became a policy imperative: Parliament strove to control the EIC, which, in turn, sought to subordinate Indian provinces to Calcutta, and districts to provincial capitals. Intellectual projects were caught up at the heart of these concentric circles; accordingly, we find that the scholarship produced by the fathers of Orientalism in India “furthered colonial centralization by subordinating Indian intelligentsia to English epistemological authority.”¹¹³

British Orientalist knowledge was further structured by the Protestant-influenced, Enlightenment esteem for scientific rationality, tempered by a kind of Baconian logic.¹¹⁴

cultural authority. See Wellesley to Lake, 27 July 1803, quoted in Bernard Cohn’s “Representing Authority in Victorian India.” In *The Invention of Tradition*, editors Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

¹¹³ Ludden in Breckinridge & van der Veer 1993, 253

¹¹⁴ David Ludden notes succinctly: “Additions to knowledge about India were understood as scientific discoveries whose veracity was based on methodologies authorized by scientific standards of the day. Orientalism as a body of knowledge drew material

“(E)very accumulation of knowledge,” announced Hastings, “and especially such is obtained by social communication with people over whom we exercise a dominion founded on the right of conquest, is useful to the state: it is the gain of humanity.” We are back on the sandy shores of the New Atlantis, an incubator for Hasting’s “overt and unabashed rationalization of the ‘dialectics of information and control’ that Edward Said has characterized as the basis of academic Orientalism.”¹¹⁵ Hasting’s Baconian logic underscores how directly the acquisition of rational, inferential knowledge about the Orient overlapped with British processes of nation-state formation, and highlights the critical fact that this process involved Britain and India simultaneously.

Note the intriguing wrinkle in Hastings’ paternalist vision of the state. For Hastings, knowledge that is advantageous to the state is *de facto* beneficial to humanity. The India-Britain power relationship allows for such a leap, but, as Gauri Viswanathan points out, more telling and peculiar is the role Hastings’ state plays as alchemical filter between scholarship and politics. “For Hastings, it was not merely that the state had a vital interest in the production of knowledge about those whom it ruled: more important, it also had a role in actively processing and then selectively delivering that knowledge up to mankind in the guise of ‘objective knowledge.’” Hasting’s logic is made of the same stuff as Kipling’s bridge over the River Ganges. The drive to dominate which fuels the Orientalist acquisition of knowledge is, courtesy of the state, anointed as “humanistic” scholarship, and thus rendered a-political, beneficent and objective. Accordingly, “(t)he

sustenance from colonialism but became objectified as a set of factualized statements about a reality that existed and could be known independent of any subjective, colonizing will.” *Ibid.*, 252.

¹¹⁵ Vishwanathan 1989, 28-29.

disinterestedness and objectivity that this now shared and therefore 'true' knowledge purports to represent help to confirm the state's 'right of conquest,' which duly acquires the status of the sine qua non of knowledge production. What therefore appears on the surface as a rhetorical leap is in fact the carefully controlled effect of a self-fortifying dialectic."¹¹⁶

In fact, Hastings state-fortifying leap reproduces a strategy of scientific Anglican discourse, wherein the identification of Protestantism with scientific experimentalism was legitimated by the 'common sense' of putatively objective witnesses. Anglicanism is science, and science is self-evident, public truth: *vox populi*, the people have spoken. As did the apologists' under James II, so too does Hastings' argument help shift public conceptions of the locus of political power -- in this case, from a hierarchy dominated by a self-interested outside government to a native-friendly republic of observers. Like his Anglican predecessors, Hastings also sets the terms for political empowerment, for inclusion in the ruling elite: in order to qualify as an observer of this new republic of the mind, one must subscribe to the inscription of reason as a discourse of power.

The state-serving scientization of foundational Orientalism is epitomized by the intellectual projects of William Jones (1746-94), often characterized as an a-political Renaissance man¹¹⁷ whose contributions comprised the scholarly foundations for long-

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 29

¹¹⁷ In fact, Jones was radically pro-American in 1782 and 1783 -- a trait which had compromised his chances for a coveted judgeship in the Bengal Judicature. By April 1783, however, Jones had secured the position, and left for India on the frigate *Crocodile*, in hopes of "returning to England... with thirty-thousand pounds in my chest..." In so doing, Jones the English liberal abruptly became an agent of the colonial state -- a fact which, as Rosane Rocher comments, "is crucial to his attitude and to his role in India.

standing government policies as well as modern Indological studies. On 12 July 1783, enroute to a judgeship in Calcutta, Renaissance Jones composed an ambitious sixteen-part outline of his "Objects of Enquiry during My Residence in Asia." Covering the map of human knowledge as conceived by Bacon, Jones' list began with 'the laws of the Hindus and Mahomedans, the history of the ancient world, proofs and illustration of scripture (and)...the best mode of governing Bengal.'" ¹¹⁸ With that under his belt, Jones then planned to move on to topics as diverse as botany, geometry, sciences, medicine, and anatomy. "In short," observes David Brine, "the inquiry was universal, grounded in the ... new science emergent in Europe since the Renaissance, the anatomy of John Hunter, the chemistry of Joseph Priestly, and the botany of Linnaeus." ¹¹⁹ Jones' memo is indeed remarkable for its succinct demonstration of how thoroughly British commercial and administrative concerns overlapped with a-political intellectual interests -- the broader logic supporting a scholarly game-plan that spanned the 'Poetry, rhetoric and morality' of all of Asia as well as India's '(t)rade, manufactures, agriculture and commerce.'

Brine's evocation of Jones' intellectual mentors is equally useful as a reminder of the profound Eurocentricity of eighteenth-century notions of rationality. Jones' beloved

Jones motivation to go to India was simply money...the judgeship in Calcutta was something he had long lobbied for; he did not just accept the offer, he lobbied for this appointment. He was out to prove that he was not the radical he was in England." See Cannon & Brine 1995, 9-10.

¹¹⁸ Jones 1807, 2: 3-4. For discussion of objects organized around Baconian categories, see SN. Mukherjee, Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1987, 69.

¹¹⁹ Little wonder that he deems the list "an important landmark in the origins of Orientalism." Cannon & Brine 1995, 10.

Linnaean taxonomy, for example, is predicated upon the superiority of the European over the Asian on the basis of his superior reason (*sapien*), the defining mark that distinguished men (*homo*) from other primates: “But there is something in us, which cannot be seen, whence our knowledge of ourselves depends – that is, reason, the most noble thing of all, in which man excels to a most surprising extent over all other animals.”¹²⁰ In fact, Linnaeus differentiated *homo sapiens* into four varieties – *europaeus albus*, *americanus rubescens*, *asiaticus fuscus*, and *africanus niger* -- which delineate a path of graduated reason, a clear line of descent from the rational European to the lowly *sapiens africanus*, only a step away from the tailless *Simia papio* and the two-toed sloth.

¹²¹ By marginalizing non-Europeans on the basis of their alleged non-rationality.

Linnaeus’ taxonomy provided British Indologists such as Jones with a form of scientific reasoning which could not but help produce ‘objective truths’ that were congruent with colonialist concerns.

Jones’ codification of Indian law is probably the most vivid and self-contained example of scientific Protestantism in action. From 1772, when Hastings assumed the

¹²⁰ Linnaeus, *Fauna Suecia*, 17

¹²¹ This is based on Linnaeus’ classification of *Anthropomorpha* of 1735. He would publish thirteen editions of this classification until 1788, each of which contained some variations. However, the order of these four varieties remained constant. Interestingly, Linnaeus’ conflation of what we might consider internal and external geographies was further informed by his adherence to the classical theory of humours, which attributed distinctive temperaments and personality characteristics to various peoples of the world. Thus, “Aristotle... taught that those burned by immoderate heat (in Africa) or oppressed by excessive cold (in northern Europe) were intemperate, barbarous and cruel. For him, superiority lay with the people of temperate regions who blended the wisdom of the south with the fortitude of the north.” Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1993, 186. This starkly pre-modern presumption would have an enormous impact on British studies of Indian religion, ethnography, geography and, by extension, strategies of colonial rule.

governorship, to Jones' death in 1794, the foremost products of Orientalist knowledge for government purposes were translations of Indian law texts. This concern with legal matters hardly needs explanation; the East India Company had to create a state through which it could administer its rapidly-expanding colonial territories, and thus ensure smooth trade and the collection of revenues – the heart of British legal culture. To date, Britain had administered law second-hand, through the mediation of native commercial, judicial and legal specialists. The pressure to centralize, however, demanded changed relations between the British scholar-administrators and their Indian associates, i.e. the intermediaries that stood between the Court of Directors and Indian subjects. The British rulers needed to subordinate their native informants, to have unmediated control over the legal knowledge locked away in the minds of Indian specialists; in short, to end its dependence upon native experts. For Jones, this meant codifying a system of Indian law that could be universally applied by British representatives of EIC territory without reference to local customs and native legal specialists.¹²²

¹²² The tone for doing so was set by Hastings who, in his renowned Judicial Plan of 1772, proclaimed that “in all suits regarding inheritance, marriage, caste, and other religious usages, or institutions, the laws of the Koran with respect to Mahometans and those of the *Shaster* with respect to the Gentoos shall be invariably adhered to.” Subsumed in this policy statement were a number of key decisions, the foremost of which was to apply Indian rather than common law to its Indian subjects. This sweeping resolution was somewhat tempered by a caveat confining the application of native law apply only to what were understood to be religious usages or institutions. See Derrett: “... corresponded to subjects that in Britain fell under the purview of ecclesiastical law or the Bishop’s courts.” Finally, subsumed in Hasting’s Plan was the conviction that the source of Indian law lay, not in local customs but in written texts – a presumption which, in light of the privileging of case law in India and in Britain, was anything but logical. Accordingly, two treatises on Hindu law were created at the behest of the government. The first, entitled A Code of Gentoow Laws, was commissioned by Hastings in 1773, and published in English translation by Nathaniel Halhead in 1776. The second was proposed by Jones to Cornwallis in 1788 and published in English translation by Henry T. Colebrooke

This would be no easy task for, as he explained in a letter to Cornwallis, “the Hindu and Muselman laws are locked up in the most part in two very difficult languages, Sanscrit and Arabic, which few Europeans will ever learn.”¹²³ Jones was forced to rely on native interpreters, who were manifestly untrustworthy. “I can no longer bear to be at the mercy of our Pundits, who deal out Hindu law as they please, and make it at a reasonable rates, when they cannot find it ready made.” The English judge “must be a check upon the native” or “the country will soon be rendered worse than useless to Britain.”¹²⁴ The solution?

If we had a complete digest of Hindu and Mohammadan laws, after the model of Justinian’s inestimable Pandects, compiled by the most learned of the native lawyers, with an accurate verbal translation of it into English; and if copies of the work were repositied in the proper offices of the Sedr Divani Adalat and the Supreme Court, that they might occasionally be consulted as a standard of justice, we should rarely be at a loss...and should never perhaps be led astray by the Pandits or Maulavi’s (sic), who would hardly venture to impose on us, when their impositions might so easily be deceived.¹²⁵

Jones’ resolution is classicism and Protestantism at its best. Locate the source of “true law” in foundational written texts, and become thine own hermeneut. By mastering “the language of the Gods, as the Brahmens call it,” Jones could free himself from the tyranny of the Brahman intermediary -- who clearly could not be trusted to rise above his own

(1796-98) after Jones’ death: A Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Successions. Both were supported by government funding at all stages of production.

¹²³ S.N. Mukerjee, Sir William Jones: A Study in Eighteenth-Century British Attitudes to India. Bombay: Orient Longman, 1987, 118

¹²⁴ Ibid. Indeed, so distrustful was Jones that he “instituted an obsessive quest for the strongest possible form of Hindu oath.” Not only laypeople but Pandits were made to swear to their opinions, which was unheard of and which they justly resented as an attack on their status.” Rosane Rocher in Cannon and Brine 1995, 55.

¹²⁵ Cited in Ludden, 255.

interests to ensure a just reading -- and so place Indian law on an objective, rational footing.¹²⁶ Jones' text-centricity thus loudly resonated with the arguments of Protestant reformers concerning the locus of "true religion," even as his mistrust of "the Brahmins" evoked the time-worn Protestant rejection of Catholic priests as Biblical intermediaries. Indeed, Jones is quite explicit about who and what the Brahmins are; in an error which would reverberate through decades of Indological scholarship, Jones identifies them from the perspective of the consummate Protestant British nationalist: these venal Brahmin intermediaries are none other than priests.

"Should a series of Brāhmens omit, for three generations, the reading of MENU, their sacerdotal class, as all *Pandits* assure me would be strictly forfeited..." So suffused with priestly sanctity is the text that "(Brāmens) may explain it only to their pupils..." Luckily for the scholar-judge, however, every superstitious priest has his price: "the Brāhmen who read it to me, requested most earnestly that his name may be concealed," though he would never have read it "for any consideration on a forbidden day of the moon, or without the ceremonies prescribed..." Having established *The Laws of Menu* as a Brahmanic/priestly preserve, Jones may now render his scientific, and by now predictable, evaluation:

¹²⁶ J. Majeed rightfully notes that : "what was being applied by the name of Islamic and Hindu law was in fact, a new form of law with roots in both Indian and British culture... Jones' project to legitimize British rule in an Indian idiom was also evident in his nine hymns to Hindu deities, which tried to define a nascent Hinduism which could be compared and contrasted with other cultural idioms. His Indo-European thesis of the affinity between Sanskrit, Greek and Latin, enabled such intercultural comparisons to be made on a firmer foundation than ever before..." "James Mill's 'The History of British India' and Utilitarianism As a Rhetoric of Reform." *Modern Asian Studies* 24, no. 2 (1990), 210

The work... contains abundance of curious matter... with many beauties, which need not be pointed out, and with many blemishes, which cannot be justified or palliated. It is a system of despotism and priestcraft, both indeed limited by law, but artfully conspiring to give mutual support... it is filled with strange conceits in metaphysics and natural philosophy, with idle superstitions, and with a scheme of theology obscurely figurative.¹²⁷

Idle superstition, despotism, artfully conspiring priestcraft – Jones’ reading of Menu is saturated and structured by British anti-Catholic, anti-sacerdotal clichés, which, significantly, reinforce and dovetail into parallel European categories of understanding, such as the infamous and time-honored Oriental Despotism.¹²⁸ Though Alexander Dow’s contention that Asia is at once “the seat of the greatest empire” and the “nurse of the most abject slaves”¹²⁹ is generally traced back to Aristotle’s condemnation of Persian government, the eighteenth-century British conviction that “Asian countries have no laws or property, and hence its people no rights” resonates equally loudly with Protestant denunciations of Catholics. ‘Artfully conspiring’ with colonial convenience, it is anti-sacerdotalism which fuels the notion – and the British enactment – of the “despotization”

¹²⁷ Sir William Jones: A Reader. Edited with Introduction and notes by Satya S. Pachori. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993, 202.

¹²⁸ A category of thought widely employed by the eighteenth century British administrator, Oriental Despotism described a style of governance in which the relationship between a legitimate sovereign and his subject was tantamount to that between master and slave. Franco Venturi notes that this model dates back to Aristotle and Plato’s description of Persians, and that the belief in despotism as a general form of Oriental political organization became especially widespread in the fifteenth century, when, for example, Nicolas Oresme, echoing Lucan in his commentary to Aristotle, “spoke of the peoples of the East who are accustomed to slavery and in consequence submit to a ‘princely despotique.’” See Franco Venturi, “Oriental Despotism.” Journal of the History of Ideas 24.1, 1963, and Metcalf 1994, esp. 6-15.

¹²⁹ Alexander Dow, The History of Hindostan: Volume One. Second Revised, Corrected and Enlarged Edition ed. New Delhi: Today & Tomorrow’s Printers & Publishers, 1973.

of the Indian subject;¹³⁰ Jones is echoing Spencer's denunciation of the Irish as much as Dow when he writes that "[Hindus] are incapable of civil liberty... They must (I deplore the evil, but know the necessity of it) they must be ruled by an absolute power; and I feel my pain much alleviated by knowing... that they are happier under us than they ever were or could have been under the Sultans of Delhi or petty Rājās."¹³¹

As luck would have it, Jones's apparent identification of Brahmins as Catholics was a long-lived legacy, a thread running through the works of influential writers and administrators including Thomas Macaulay,¹³² James Mill¹³³ and John Stuart Mill.¹³⁴ More than fifty years later, Horace Hayman Wilson was still trying to undo the damage when he stressed that

¹³⁰ The pleasure and relief Jones feels from his extrication from priestly despotism has an unarguably colonial taste to it. Rocher describes an instance in which a court case "was decided on the basis of Jones' quotation from the Laws of Manu. As of the summer of 1786, Jones' knowledge of Sanskrit and of an antiquarian text was being used to decide the merits of the court pandits' opinions and thereby to subvert their authority as contemporary sources of Hindu law... This first experience of deciding on a point of Hindu law independently from the pandits' opinion was a defining moment in the development of Jones' colonial identity." Rocher in Cannon and Brine. 1995, 57.

¹³¹ Jones 1807, 2:712-13. It is not only his legislative efforts that feel the anti-Brahmanic and anti-sacerdotal sting; Jones' writings are littered with such references. In 1793, he finds himself increasingly capable of discriminating between "truly learned Brahmins," whom he admired, and "sordid priestcraft," which he abhorred;" Letters, 2:856.; he hires a Sanskrit teacher "who, though not a Brahmin, has taught grammar and ethics to the most learned Brahmins, and has no priestly pride, with which his pupils generally abound" (Letters 1970, 2:687) -- a decision which Rocher contests "fostered an antibrahmanical stance." Rocher argues that Jones' works in fact reveal a deep-seated ambiguity towards Brahmins -- "Til his last days, Jones's judgement of the Indian scholars alternated between praises and criticisms." Rocher in Cannon & Brine 1995, 69.

¹³² See his essay on Warren Hastings, in Macaulay 1967, 404.

¹³³ Mill, History of British India, Book II, p. 127 ff.

¹³⁴ See Public Dept. Dispatch 16 April 1828, E/4/935, para 8 IOLR: (LD. p.292).

A very mistaken notion prevails generally amongst Europeans of the position of Brahmans in Hindu society, founded on the terms in which they are spoken of by Menu, and the application of the expression 'Priesthood,' to the Brahmanical Order, by SIR WILLIAM JONES. In the strict sense of the phrase it never was applicable to the Brahmans, for although some amongst them acted in ancient times as family priests, and conducted the fixed or occasional ceremonials of household worship, yet even MENU holds the Brahman, who ministers to an idol, infamous during life, and condemned to the infernal regions after death, and the Sanscrit language abounds with synonymes for the priest of the temple, significant of his degraded condition both in this world and the next... The Brahmans as a caste exercise little real influence on the minds of the Hindus beyond what they obtain from their numbers, influence or rank... that they are still of great importance in the social system of British India, is unquestionable, but it is not as a priesthood.¹³⁵

Jones' unconscious conception of the Hindu Brahmin as displaced Catholic priest likewise shaped his perception of Hinduism's putative adversary, and so laid the ground for yet another long-lived discursively-opposed couple in the British imagination --

Hinduism and Buddhism:

If the metaphysics of the *Vedantis* be wild and erroneous, the pupils of the *Buddha* have run, it is asserted, into an error diametrically opposite; for they are charged with denying the existence of pure spirit, and with believing nothing absolutely and really to exist but *material substance*: a heavy accusation which ought only to be made on positive and incontestable proof, especially by the orthodox Brahmans, who as *Buddha* dissented from their ancestors in regard to *bloody sacrifices*... may not unjustly be suspected of low and interested malignity... The *Pandit* who now attends me, and who told *Mr. Wilkins* the *Saugatas* were atheists, would not have attempted to resist the decisive evidence

¹³⁵ Horace Hayman Wilson, Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus. 1833 17th Volume, 310-311. Wilson's comment is interesting at a number of levels. He has kept alive a now canonical contempt for priests and their "degraded condition," and put a respectable distance between those inferno-bound idolaters and Brahmans. The result, however, is curiously disadvantageous to that newly distinguished upper caste. Fifty years of British rule and political centralization have positioned him to further discount and diminish their contributions --- it is not only priests whose condition is degraded. Wilson is not merely correcting an erroneous bit of scholarship, he is drawing attention to the fact that Indian society lacks any valid source of indigenous intellectual leadership. The priests are degraded, the Brahmans have "little real influence over the mind" -- there seems nowhere to turn but West.

on the contrary...if his understanding had not been blinded by an intolerant zeal of a mercenary priesthood.¹³⁶

Buddhism, a more civilized, dissenting branch of Hindu thought, is maligned by the resentful, and manipulative Brahmin priest. By the end of the nineteenth century, Jones' Anglican polarization will graduate to social scientific fact: Buddhism will be trumpeted as the Protestantism of India, Siddhartha as Asia's Luther.

Anglicizing Orientalism Reading the Book of Nature

Jones' associations both presupposed and perpetuated some curious and highly influential European assumptions about Indian culture. For example, the existence of a discrete entity known as 'Hinduism,' which constituted a "coherent religious system possessing such established markers as sacred texts and priests";¹³⁷ in short, a 'proper' religion insofar as it resembled a form of Christianity, albeit of the primitive, pre-Reformation variety. The implied identification (and validation) of Hinduism as a kind of Asian Catholicism necessarily located India in Europe's past, and so prepared the ground for the further assumption that India must inevitably retrace the steps of Europe's journey to Enlightenment modernity, i.e. reiterate Christian Europe's Reformation experience in an Indian idiom. Finally, Jones' exhaustive research of Hindu manuscripts in search of shared European-Indian origins and resemblances (epitomized by his famed Indo-European language thesis) reflects his desire to "scientifically demonstrate" that India

¹³⁶ Jones, "Discourse the 11th, on the Philo of the Asiatics delivered 20th Febr. 1795." Vol. 4 of *Asiatic Researches – Comprising the History and Antiquities, the Arts Sciences, and Literature of Asia*. New Delhi: Cosmo Publications 1979 (1807), pp. 165-66.

¹³⁷ Metcalf 1994, 10-11.

was indeed Europe's past. His methodology also presupposed, of course, that India has a history that resided in, and could be recovered from, the pages of her texts.

The Jonesian/Orientalist sacralization of Indian tradition as exemplified by a foundational text was allied to a conservative and paternalist political program spearheaded by Edmund Burke, whose vituperative condemnation of EIC depravity and rapacity fueled a movement in Parliament to reform, protect and revitalize Indian culture. This movement would lead to a new era of Anglo-Indian relations, and delineates the next incarnation of reason as a means of colonial rule.¹³⁸

Burke was convinced that the Company's government was "one of the most corrupt and destructive tyrannies, that probably ever existed in the world" and constituted one of the "great occasions" for Parliament to take drastic moral measures;¹³⁹ his prolonged pursuit of Warren Hastings as EIC whipping-boy is well-known. In British India, the push for a newly reformed -- and reforming -- EIC was played out in a passionate policy debate between the so-called Orientalists, who argued that the EIC should continue to support native religious and educational institutions, and the Anglicists, who countered that there was little of value to salvage from the muck of India's superstitious and effete culture, and that reform resided in the inculcation of England's more civilized institutions through the medium of the English language.

The issue was further complicated by Parliament's insistence upon an administrative policy of religious neutrality -- a strategy originally manufactured, as we

¹³⁸ Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink. Colonial Subjects: Essays on the Practical History of Anthropology. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999, 86-87.

¹³⁹ Fox's bill, 446.

saw, to defuse Irish Catholic dissent at home, and imported to Britain's Asian colonies to work its pacifying magic on restless natives. This policy was fervently contested by Evangelical missionaries, for whom moral reform and Christianization were synonymous. Ironically, it was also opposed by a handful of pragmatic government administrators such as Francis Warden, who saw Christian education as an effective means of creating reliable, industrious servants of the Empire: "If education should not produce a rapid change in their opinions on the fallacy of their religion, it will at least render them more honest and industrious subjects."

The Anglicist faction, led by Thomas Babington Macaulay and Charles Trevelyan, carried the day. President of the Committee for Public Education, Macaulay had long extolled "the diffusion of European civilization" among "the vast populations of the East", even to the far-distant point of Indian self-rule, for its monetary benefits to "a great trading nation" could scarcely [be] calculated: "[F]ar better for us that the people of India ... be ruled by their own kings, but wearing our broadcloth, and working with our cutlery, than that they were performing their salams to English collectors and English magistrates, but were too ignorant to value, or too poor to buy, English manufactures. To trade with civilized men is infinitely more profitable than to govern savages."¹⁴⁰ In 1835, Macaulay set the direction for Indian education and reform with his infamous *Minute on Education*, which blithely dismissed the totality of the "native literature of India and Arabia" as inferior to "a single shelf of a good European library." Noting that "the dialects commonly spoken among the natives ... contain neither literary nor scientific

¹⁴⁰ In his *Government of India*, 1833. See Macaulay 1967, 717.

information,”¹⁴¹ Macaulay concluded that the only way to teach Indians the benefit of civilization in general, and science in particular, was through the medium of English. To do otherwise was irreconcilable “with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which should, as we all agree, be sacredly preserved... [C]an we reasonably and decently bribe men out of the revenues of the state to waste their youth in learning how to purify themselves after touching an ass, or what texts of the Vedas they are to repeat to extirpate themselves after the crime of killing a goat?”¹⁴² Macauley’s decision epitomized the peculiar British project of constructing semi-Brits, i.e. “a class of persons Indian in blood and color but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” -- Homi Bhabha’s “not-quite/not white” phenomena.

Yet it was not only English language that was to be privileged; the heart of Britain’s new policy of Indian education was the study of English literature -- a decision which, as Vishwanathan shows, was a compromise between the desire to Christianize and the administrative commitment to religious neutrality. After all, as a writer for the *Calcutta Review* observed, “who will succeed in robbing Shakespeare of his Protestant common sense, Bacon and Locke of their scriptural morality, or Abercrombie of his devout sentiment?”¹⁴³ Education in India would be overtly secular, yet the study of the great works of English literature and science would covertly predispose and prod the native toward rational Christianity. In short, secularization and the rhetoric of science functioned as state-serving Protestantism by other means: “Christianity in India had of

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 722-23.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 728

¹⁴³ Vishwanathan 1989, 81

necessity to build into itself the activity of ratiocination... validating belief by the techniques of modern knowledge.”¹⁴⁴ The secular nature of British education and rule rapidly became an important medium of self-presentation, generating “an image of the Englishman as benign, disinterested, detached, impartial and judicious. Indeed, British authority depended vitally on the stability of the image and on the consistency with which it was preserved and relayed to the native mind.”¹⁴⁵

Yet implicit in the Anglicist decision is both a reiteration of and departure from a characteristic, if by now familiar, orientation to foundational texts. The initial logic of the policy is clear, and resonates loudly with the discourse of scientific Anglicanism: shift the focus of the native mind from the Brahmin-dominated texts of India’s inferior literary and scientific traditions to those of Britain, and so enable the native to access the scientifically-objective truths suffusing Baconian inference and Adam Smith’s moral sentiments. Reason, osmosed and internalized, will gradually awaken the Indian from the despotizing spell of Brahmanic priestcraft. Dazzled by the self-evidence of Shakespeares’s Protestant common sense, propelled out of timelessness and into historicity, the Indian will inevitably recognize Hinduism to be primitive nonsense. Universal rationality will render India and Britain comrades in the same theoretical domain; cultural and historical difference will be effaced. The newly-reformed and modernized Indian will enter the folds of Empire as a productive servant – a member by virtue of his adherence to the shared discourse of ‘world-ordering rationality’ and science.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 98

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 107

Implicit in this shared scientific discourse, however, is an elemental if subtle challenge to Protestant bibliolotry. Evocative of (but not identical to) the seventeenth century shift in emphasis from the Book of God to the Book of Nature, the colonialists of the post-Hastings era began to locate truth, not in the text but in the origins and organization of bodies in the world. Clearly drawing on Foucault, Peter Pels notes:

the mission of science implied a critical, “judging” epistemology that broke with the representations of oriental texts. Dominated by the model of natural history, science sought to reach behind everyday phenomena by comparing specimens of species, languages, or forms of civilization and establishing their basic units and relations between them. Botany, zoology, and comparative anatomy dissected everyday appearances to get at organs and the structures that made them move; philology reached behind the surface of language and words to their phonemic units and the inflections, prefixes and suffixes that held them together; and political economy sought behind the everyday realities of history, property and wealth the legal and administrative structuring of land and labor... Science ruptured the link between classification and naming, by insisting that true classifications should rely on the primordial cause – the “origin” – that determined the development of the object, rather than the superficial names under which it was presently known...¹⁴⁶

For Pel, the Anglicist victory manifested a kind of epistemic rupture between the Classical and modern mode of conceptualization as defined by Foucault, which presumed a break with everyday representations. “Representation has lost the power to provide a foundation... for the links that can join its various elements together. No composition, no decomposition, no analysis into identities and differences can now justify the connections of representations one to another.” The power of representations to connect were instead sought “outside representations, beyond its immediate visibility, in a sort of behind-the-scenes world even deeper and more dense than representation itself.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, the “grid of

¹⁴⁶ Pels & Salemink 1999, 87-88.

identities and differences” which constituted the table upon which Linneaus laid his taxonomy, and Burke unrolled his map of mankind, was “from now on shattered; there will be things, with their organic structures, their hidden veins, the spaces that articulate them, the time that produces them; and then representation... in which those things address themselves (always partially) to a subjectivity, a consciousness, a singular effort of cognition, to the ‘psychological’ individual who from the depth of his own history, or on the basis of the tradition handed to him, is trying to know.”¹⁴⁸

In Calcutta, the modern quest for India’s hidden veins and organic structures reshaped the work of colonial administrators and scholars. The Orientalist in pursuit of ‘India’s truth’ was less inclined to scrutinize the landscape of the indigenous text; his focus was the Indian himself, analytically filtered through the paradigm of natural history. After 1830, Jones’ lawbooks and EIC revenue surveys “became situated side-by-side within one empiricist epistemology in which they could be integrated into a unified construction of India. Authoritative sources produced diverse types of data that became factualized and located in a unified empirical domain where they could be formed into verified statements about Indian reality... In short, once the authority of colonial knowledge was established in its power over English-language understandings of India, {it became} freed from politics...”¹⁴⁹ Orientalists thus played a more meaningful role in the construction of official colonial knowledge about India, as their conclusions ascended through the

¹⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, The Order of Things: an Archeology of the Human Sciences. [Le Mots Et Les Choses]. New York: Random House, 1973.

¹⁴⁸ Foucault 1973, 239-240.

¹⁴⁹ Ludden in Breckinridge & van der Veer 1993, 259.

mustiness of humanistic speculation to the pristine air of scientific fact.¹⁵⁰ And it is upon this uneven and shifting ground -- this changing of the guard from Classical/Orientalism to modern/Anglicist empiricism -- that Buddhist Studies began to coalesce into an academic discipline.

The peculiar kind of hybrid nature of early Buddhist studies research is best exemplified by the work of its putative founding father, Brian Houghton Hodgson. Surveying the field in the late nineteenth century, Max Muller affirmed that “the real beginning of an historical and critical study of the doctrine of the Buddha dates from the year 1824. In that year, Mr. Hodgson announced the fact that the original documents of the Buddhist canon had been preserved in Sanskrit in the monasteries of Nepal.” Muller’s start-date is echoed by Donald Lopez and others, for whom the discoveries of Brian Hodgson signaled the moment when Indian Buddhism, previously known only second-hand from the equally suspect descriptions of Brahmins or non-Indian Buddhists, achieved a valid voice of its own – its legitimacy, of course, grounded in its derivation from a scientifically-analyzable text, and not from naïve reliance upon a native informant.

What Lopez and company omit to note, however, is that it is not only Buddhologists who cite Hodgson as founding father; he is similarly renowned as a foundational colonial ethnographer, statistician and natural historian, famed for his rigorous empirical research on “Indian aborigines”.¹⁵¹ As such, Hodgson in many ways personifies the larger “book

¹⁵⁰ And, as David Ludden remarks, was fortified by “Parliament and the political economy [which] provided independent authority for the determination of truths about the “real” India. *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁵¹ To the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* alone, Hodgson contributed 125 papers of which only 13 can be classified “Orientalist.” The remaining deal with ethnography.

to body” shift characteristic of the Anglicist production of colonial knowledge in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Hodgson, it will be recalled, began his career in the pattern of the archetypal old-school, Company Orientalist. He graduated from the EIC’s Haileybury College before attending the Company’s Fort William College in India, where he studied Sanskrit and Persian before moving to Kumaon, a frontier tract amid the outer ranges of the Himalayas which had come under British rule in 1815. There, he apprenticed under its first commissioner, George William Traill, a zealous proponent of modern empirical methodologies engaged in a study of Indian aborigines and their relationship to the dominant Hindu presence. In search of empirical truths about the native populations, Traill taught Hodgson “the paternalist mode of rule, the settlement of revenue and its accompanying statistics...[S]corning the ‘vague traditions and conjectures of his informants,’ Traill relied instead on personal observation (of physical appearance, religion and language), adding some observations of his own on the (nearly extinct) ‘aborigines’ of the region.”¹⁵² Hodgson’s Orientalist training was thus filtered by the Anglicist/empiricist passion for essentialization and quantification: the subsuming of the *Puranas* by the Panopticon.

It is after the apprenticeship with Traill that Hodgson’s research in Buddhism began. Transferred to Kathmandu to serve as Assistant Resident for Great Britain at the Court of

natural history and zoology. Hodgson’s contributions to natural history led to his acceptance as a corresponding member of the Zoological and the Linnean Societies in 1832 and 1835, respectively.

¹⁵² Pels in Pels & Saleminck 1999, 91-92.

Nepal in 1823, Hodgson spent the next six years collecting and transmitting¹⁵³ hundreds of Buddhist Sanskrit texts, and publishing a number of articles on Buddhist philosophy and history which became foundational for subsequent European scholarship.¹⁵⁴ “Feeling his want of language skills,” Hodgson initially leaned heavily on the interpretations and input of a Nepalese Buddhist informant, Amṛtananda. However, echoing the *modus operandi* of Jones and other colonialist thinkers, he soon found that his “possession of the books led to questions respecting their relative age and authority; and tried to the test the *Bauddha*’s quotations were not always so satisfactory.”¹⁵⁵ He therefore cultivated a two-pronged approach: make note of Amṛtananda’s attempts to explain “the interminable sheer absurdities of the Bauddha philosophy and religion,”¹⁵⁶ but give primacy to the scientific analysis of the text over the informant on concrete, historical questions

¹⁵³ Most of the texts were procured for Calcutta, and shipped to the Librarian of the College of Fort William, and then to the Asiatic Society, London and Oxford. They were “utterly neglected” by all concerned for many years. Those sent to France “met with a far different reception”; (see following footnote on Bournouf.) Brian H. Hodgson, Essays on the Language, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet Together With Further Papers on the Geography, Ethnology and Commerce of Those Countries. New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 1991, Pt. I, p. 35.

¹⁵⁴ Hodgson’s articles were widely acclaimed by scholars of his generation. Sir. G. Haughton wrote to him that “a world of Chinese and Mongolian enigmas have been solved by means of your general and consistent outline system...” Eugene Burnouf dedicated his translation of the *Lotus Sūtra* to Hodgson (who had provided him with the Sanskrit manuscript)... Upon his death in 1894, *The Times* wrote, “to him the world still owes the materials for a knowledge of the great proselytizing faith which was the one civilizing influence in Central Asia.” See Donald S. Lopez Jr., Curators of the Buddha: the Study of Buddhism Under Colonialism. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 3. Hodgson received the Gold Medal of the Societe Asiatique de Paris and the Legion d’Honneur in 1838 for his contributions to the study of Buddhism. Pels & Salemink, 92.

¹⁵⁵ Hodgson 1991, 35

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 99.

concerning dating and origins. In this way, Hodgson the Orientalist could temper Amṛtananda's quaint exotica with the modern, empirical research of Hodgson the ethnographer and scientist, and so "separate Buddhism *as it is* (in Neapul) and Buddhism *as it ought to be...*"¹⁵⁷

What, then was "true" Buddhism for Hodgson? How "ought it to be"? Fresh from his apprenticeship on aborigines, Hodgson naturally sought for Buddhism's "essence" in its origins and classifications. Thus, careful scrutiny of the "physiognomy, language, architecture, civil and religious, their notions with regard to women, and several less important traits" of the Nepalese, buttressed by philological investigation, made clear that "the earliest propagators of Buddhism in Neapul came to the valley direct from India"¹⁵⁸ – an observation designed to quash any lingering malcontents who still proposed Egypt as a candidate for Buddhism's birthplace. Moreover, scrutiny of the "mass of direct evidence that we now possess" through the lens of ecclesiastical history conclusively proved (to Hodgson) that Brahmanism predated Buddhism; in fact, "Buddhism... is monastic asceticism in morals, philosophical skepticism in religion; and whilst ecclesiastical history all over the world affords abundant instances of such a state of things resulting from gross abuse of the religious sanction, that ample chronicle gives us no one instance of it as a primitive system of belief. Here is a legitimate inference based on sound principles. But that Buddhism was, in truth, a reform or heresy, and not an original system, can be proved by the most abundant direct evidence both of friends and

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

enemies...”¹⁵⁹ At last, through the application of sound Baconian reasoning fused with the cutting-edge, value-free sciences of comparative physiognomy, philology and ecclesiastical history, Hodgson has discerned the defining trait of “true” Buddhism: casteless, monastic asceticism:

Mr. Upham, I find, has deduced from Remusat’s interpretation, the inference... that I am in error in denying that Buddhism, in its first, and most characteristic form, admits the distinction of *Clerus et Laicus*. It is difficult expressly to define that distinction; but it may be seen in all its breadth in Brahmanism and in Popery; whilst in Islam, and in the most enthusiastic of the Christian sects, which sprang out of the Reformation, it is wholly lost. According to my view, Apostolic Christianity recognized it not; the congregation of the faithful, the Church, was a society of peers, of brethren in the faith, all essentially equal, in gifts, as in place and in character. On earth, there were no indispensable mediators, no exclusive professional ones; and such alone I understand to be priests. Again, genuine monachism all over the world I hold to be, in its own nature, essentially opposed to the distinction of clergy and layman, though we all know that monastic institutions are no sooner rendered matters of public law and of extensive popular prevalence, than, ex vi necessitates, the distinction is superinduced upon them... and who that has glanced an eye over ecclesiastical history knows not that in proportion as sects are enthusiastic, they reject and hate (though nothing tainted with monachism) the exclusive pretensions of clergy! Whoever has been able to go along with me in the above reflections can need only to be told that primitive Buddhism was entirely monastic, and of an unboundedly enthusiastical genius, to be satisfied that it did not recognize the distinction in question.

But if, being suspicious of the validity of argumentative inferences, he demand of me simple facts, here they are. In the Sata Sahasrika, Prajna Paramita, or Raksha Bhagavati, and also in the nine Dharmas (the oldest and highest written authorities), it is affirmed more or less directly, or is clearly deducible from the context, in a thousand passages (for the subject is not expressly treated), that the only true followers of Buddha are monks... The first mention of an exclusive, minister of religion, or priest, in the Bauddha books, is in those of a comparatively recent date, and not of scriptural authority... [H]is character is anomalous, as is that of everything about him; and the learned Bauddhas of Nepal at the present day universally admit the falling off from the true faith.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 68-70.

Hodgson's candid equation of Brahmanism with Popery, and of "primitive" Buddhism with both uncorrupted, Apostolic Christianity and post-Reformation Christianity, reverberates with the logic of scientific Anglicanism: the authenticity of priest-free Protestantism is confirmed by the authority of scripture,¹⁶¹ antiquity and reason, and is reiterated in the Indian idiom with the trans-cultural inescapability of gravity. For Hodgson, the "true," aboriginal Buddhist is the monk of the text:¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ One is reminded here of Lopez' characterization of the Buddhism of Victorian scholars as "an historical projection derived exclusively from manuscripts and blockprints, texts devoted largely to a 'philosophy,' which had been produced and circulated among a small circle of monastic elites." (Lopez 1995c, 7). Lopez' remark is valid, yet tends to obscure the hybrid nature of his discipline's ideological, methodological and geographical origins. Focusing only on the putatively unitary heritage of Orientalist bibliolotry, Lopez' analysis glosses over the changing ways in which the text was valued and read by "post-Jonesian" scholars conditioned by the non-representational paradigms of natural history and bio-physiology, rather than classical literature. In so doing, the very real social and political dimensions of post-Classical, empiricist paradigms are similarly thrown into shadow; we lose sight of "science's work as a metaphor" in India, "what Gyan Prakash calls its "functioning beyond the boundaries of the laboratory as grammar of modern power." Concomitantly, he also overlook the ways in which the political and administrative concerns of colonial thinkers continued to shape the discipline, however indirectly.

¹⁶² Philip Almond's remarks: "The creation of Buddhism took place in two more or less distinct phases. The first of these coincided with the first four decades of the nineteenth century. During this period, Buddhism was an object which was instances and manifested 'out there' in the Orient... This would subtly change in the first twenty-five years of the Victorian period. Originally existing 'out there' in the Oriental *present*, Buddhism came to be determined as an object the primary location of which was the West, through the progressive collection, translation, and publication of its textual *past*. Buddhism, by 1860, had come to exist, not in the Orient but in the Oriental libraries and institutes of the West, in its texts and manuscripts, at the desks of the Western savants who interpreted it. It had become a textual object, defined, classified, and interpreted through its own textuality." Philip C. Almond, The British Discovery of Buddhism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, 12-13. Schopen affirms: "Textuality overrides actuality. And actuality – as expressed by epigraphical and archeological material – is denied independent validity as a witness... Embedded, for example, in apparently neutral archeological and historical method might very well be a decidedly neutral and narrowly limited Protestant assumption as to where religion is actually located." "Archeology and Protestant Presuppositions in the Study of Indian Buddhism" in Gregory Schopen, Bones,

casteless, perched before the abyss of institutionalized hierarchy and future annihilation by jealous Brahmanic despots: “tonsured, subject to the universal vows, (nature teaching to all mankind that that wealth, women and power, are the grand tempters), resident in monasteries (*Vihara*) or in deserts, and essentially peers;” reminiscent, in fact, of his idealistic conception of pre-Catholic Christians, as well as of the democratic, non-hereditary Anglican clergy of his own time.

Hodgson develops his tacit association of Indian aboriginality with pre-Catholicism in his later ethnographic papers (several of which were published in the thick of the Anglicist-Orientalist education controversy). Language, he proclaimed, was an historical constant, and the prime arbiter of race; “large and careful induction” told Hodgson that ‘all the Tamulians of India have a common foundation and origin, like all the Arians.’¹⁶³ Applying the physiological discourse of “race,” “specimens, etc. to construct a natural history of grammar and vocabulary, Hodgson moved next to an explicit politics of aboriginality:

All those conversant with ethnology are aware that the pagan population of India is divided into two great classes, viz., the Arian...and the aboriginal, and also, that unity of the Arian family, from Wales to Assam, has been demonstrated in our own times by a noble series of lingual researches...these primitive races are the ancient inheritors of the whole soil, from which they were wrongfully expelled by the usurping Hindus.¹⁶⁴

Stones, and Buddhist Monks: Collected Papers on the Archeology, Epigraphy, and Texts of Monastic Buddhism in India. Studies in the Buddhist Translations. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, 7, 13.

¹⁶³ Cited by Pels in Pels & Salemink 1999, 95-96.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 96.

In Hodgsonese, Catholicism and Hinduism are cross-cultural manifestations of despotic, unreformed Arianism; dissipation of Papal and Brahmanic authority returns the whole soil to its rightful, original owners, i.e. members of “societies so needful of improvement, and whose archaic status, polity and ideas offer such instructive pictures of the course of human progression.” Here, the rhetoric of science is explicitly linked to anti-Hindu, anti-Catholic sentiments – and, obliquely, to the idealization of the ancient Buddhist as a displaced “apostolic Christian” or scientific Protestant: aborigines of the past and present.

Hodgson’s positivist concern for origins, his portrayal of the “true” Buddhist as casteless monk, and his tacit positioning of Buddhism as a democratic, proto Protestantism, set the tone for subsequent British scholarship in the nascent field of Buddhist Studies. These assumptions are evident, for example, in the methodological assumptions embedded in importance placed on the biography of the Buddha by Thomas W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922), perhaps the most influential scholar of Buddhism of the last century. Rhys Davids declared that “The only proper course is to go back, behind (contemporary, vernacular) documents, to the actual texts of the Three Pitakas themselves, to collect whatever is said incidentally about the life, family and personal surroundings of the Buddha, and to piece them together into a connected whole.” By so doing one could, as Charles Hallisey aptly notes “rescue texts from their conditions of misunderstanding and reveal their objective meaning for the first time by applying the critical methods of ‘scientific history’ which could disclose the intentions of the author. Thus, knowing the biography of the Buddha was an essential part of any attempt to

understand Buddhist texts which were attributed to him.”¹⁶⁵ By extension, the beliefs and activities of later Buddhists could be valued – or belittled – in accordance with how closely they mirrored that authorial intent. “True” Buddhism, therefore, resided only in the earliest texts, rather than in the beliefs and practices of actual Buddhists, which were simply manifestations of a prolonged process of doctrinal deviation.

The Buddha’s dual affinity with both Jesus and Luther is likewise assumed by Rhys Davids.¹⁶⁶ As was Jesus among the Jews, “the Buddha was the greatest and the wisest and the best of the Hindus... Many of his chief disciples, many of the most distinguished members of his Order, were Brahmins.” Fundamentally democratic and opposed to sacerdotal despotism, “He admitted equally... men from all other castes ... Throughout the long history of Buddhism, which is the history of more than half the people in the world for more than two thousand years, the Buddhists have been uniformly tolerant; and have appealed, not to the sword but to intellectual and moral suasion. We have not a single instance, throughout the whole period, of even one of those religious persecutions which look so largely in the Christian Church. Peacefully the Reformation began; and in peace, so far as its own action is concerned, the Buddhist church has remained to this day.”¹⁶⁷

Predictably, as David Hume’s two-tiered model foretold, “in the century or two after the death of Gotama,” the rot of Churchly institutionalization set in, and “heretical

¹⁶⁵ Hallisey in Lopez 1995c, 36.

¹⁶⁶ “Like Luther, he protested that religion is not the affair of the priest alone, but is the care and concern of every man who has a reasonable soul... as Europe bestirred herself at the voice of Luther, so India answered heartily to the call of Gautama.” See Almond 1988, 75.

¹⁶⁷ T. W. Rhys Davids, History and Literature of Buddhism. 5th ed. Calcutta: Susil Gupta (India) Pvt. Ltd., 1962, 75.

opinions” arose over particulars “which seem to us now to be very trumpery; just as the disputes between the Irish and the Romish sections of the Christian Church... seem to us moderns to be concerning matters of little moment.”¹⁶⁸ Yet in its pre-corrupted form, primitive Buddhism was, for Rhys Davids, implicitly rational, scientific, and so necessarily hostile to superstition and ritualism. “[T]he Buddhist teachers held, and rightfully held, it impossible before the rubbish had been cleared away from the site, to build the Palace of Good Sense.”¹⁶⁹ “Entirely free from the idolatries and superstitions of the day,”(91) Buddhism was a “course of reasoning... analogous to that by which the modern European philosopher seeks to find the explanation of life”(103) -- an “attempt to give a scientific explanation of the great fact of the existence of evil, and certainly the most consistent, if not the most successful of all efforts that have been made in that direction.”¹⁷⁰

In short, by the close of the nineteenth century a roadmap to – and image of – the ideal Buddhist had emerged . His essence was located in Buddhism’s origins, which were congruent with the beliefs of founder Śakyamuni Buddha. These beliefs, in turn, could be recovered through scientific investigation of a carefully-defined body of classical texts – a conviction grounded in “the post-Reformation location of religion in the printed word,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 127.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 28.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 82.

the literary and philological roots of Orientalist scholarship, and Christian assumptions about the nature of religion and the importance of a canon of authoritative works.”¹⁷¹

Once these texts had been purged of stray mythological and ritual references, the true Buddhist was revealed: he was an ascetic monk, a Hindu convert who had cast off the shackles of caste, priestly despotism and empty ritualization and reasoned his way to a kind of godless nihilism. Disengaged from worldly matters such as property, money or family, this authentic Buddhist was entirely preoccupied with Nirvāṇa and philosophical concerns, elevated beyond religious superstitions, death rituals, image-making or prayers to local deities -- the activities of vulgar, lay practitioners. The opposite of Brahmin despotism and ritualism, he was, by contrast, a kind of proto-scientist – paradoxically incarnate as the anti-scientific monk. The Buddhist bhikku was, to say the least, an ambivalent and highly-charged figure.

Resonating alternately with Victorian images of the apostles and the rational Protestant triumph over superstitious Catholicism,¹⁷² the primal Buddhist was, in fact, an

¹⁷¹ Richard King, Orientalism and Religion: Post-Colonial Theory, India and the Mystic East. New York and London: Routledge, 1999, 146.

¹⁷² Predictably, this tendency to Protestantize Buddhism functioned as a form of commentary on the religious issues of the day which was recapitulated and naturalized by British popular as well as scholarly writers. Thus in 1869, while England debated the issue of papal infallibility, Buddhism was proclaimed the “Protestantism of the East.” Despite the outer symptoms of monks and malas, Buddhism was, at heart, an anti-ritualistic, rational response to priestly despotism -- Asia’s dress rehearsal for the Protestant Reformation:

One might say, ‘Why not rather the Romanism of the East?’ For so numerous are the resemblances between the customs of this system and those of the Romish Catholic Church, that the first Catholic missionaries who encountered the priests of the Buddha were confounded, and thought that Satan had been mocking their sacred rites... We answer: Because deeper and more essential relations connect Brahmanism with the Romish Church, and the Buddhist system with Protestantism. The human mind went through, in Asia, the same course of experience afterward repeated in Europe. It

unstable mix of rhetorical opposites: a scientist-monk, an Enlightenment apostle, conceived against the backdrop of Protestant England's ambivalent incorporation of the Catholic Other, and produced within historical relations in the field of colonial modernity. This Janus-faced Buddhist monk thus embodied a tacit ambivalence in nineteenth-century British colonial discourse. While the long-dead ideal *bhikku* evoked the 'loss of Indian greatness' bemoaned and celebrated by Orientalist writers, he could also be understood as evidence of ancient India's glory defined by Britain's own terms; he was an Indian embodiment of Western reason which "made the ignominy of India's contemporary subjection to British rule all too evident."¹⁷³ The Buddhist monk thus comprised colonized and colonizer and, by extension, evoked the not-quite/not white Western-educated Indian, who was being deliberately ushered into the domain of Britain's world-ordering rationality by colonial educational policies.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the experience of latent yet lost rationality would, ironically "became the fertile ground for the proliferation of strategies designed to regain the fullness of the ancient nation," the discursive basis for appropriating the cultural power and prestige of Western science, and so "bringing into existence

protested, in the interest of humanity, against the oppression of a priestly caste. Brahmanism, like the Church of Rome, established a system of sacramental salvation in the hands of a sacred order. Buddhism, like Protestantism, revolted, and established a doctrine of individual salvation based on personal character... Buddhism and Protestantism accept nature and its laws, and make a religion of humanity as well as of devotion... like Protestantism in Europe, [it] is a revolt of nature against spirit, humanity against caste, of individual freedom against the despotism of an order, of salvation by faith instead of salvation by sacraments... Mr. Hodgson, who has long studied the features of this religion in Nepaul, says: 'The one infallible diagnostic of Buddhism is a belief in the infinite capacity of the human intellect.'" James F. Clarke, *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1869, 712, 715.

¹⁷³ Prakash 1999, 107.

retroactively what was now assumed to be already present.”¹⁷⁴ This movement would, as we’ll see, have subtle but important repercussions for the study of Indian Buddhist monasticism.

20th Century Legacies

The Rhys-Davids vision of Buddhism and its monks, though shaped by forces as dated as the forging of a unified Great Britain, and the demands of colonial administration, has had a remarkably long legacy. Its most influential components are undoubtedly methodological: the post-Reformation convictions that 1) “true” religion resides solely in texts, and that 2) the ideals expressed therein are descriptive of actual practice: as Richard Gombrich notes, “the Vinaya as it stands is of a piece, and if we refuse to believe its own account... as of course we can – we are left with no certain knowledge of the subject.”¹⁷⁵ From this perspective, the cerebral, world-renouncing Vinaya ideal is understood by Rhys-Davids and others to be a mirror of actual Buddhist thought and practice –and a sobering contrast to the evident degradation and corruption of later, necessarily “illegitimate” Buddhist forms, such as the Buddhism of the Pāla period.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Richard Francis Gombrich, Buddhism Transformed: Religious Changes in Sri Lanka. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988, 93.

¹⁷⁶ “Not only had India failed to appreciate the Buddhist contribution to its own culture but even contemporary forms of Asian Buddhism failed to pass muster when compared to the textual paradigm of ‘pristine’ or ‘original’ Buddhism. This radically ahistorical and textualized Buddhism, located in and administered from the libraries of Europe rather than in Asia, now provided the normative standard by which all particular examples of Buddhism could be both defined and (negatively) assessed.” King 1999, 148.

In fact, Rhys-David's ritual-spurning mendicant contemplative posed a far sharper challenge to what was known about Buddhist monasticism from non-textual evidence. For example, the time-honored conviction (inferred from *Vinaya* proscriptions) that Buddhist monks neither owned property nor dealt with money was radically problematized by epigraphs found by Bühler in Sāñcī, Lüders in Bhārhut, and Spink in Ajanṭā which record dozens of donations by apparently wealthy monks and nuns. Likewise, as early as 1854, Alexander Cunningham's findings on the Central Indian monastic sites of Sāñcī documented the presence of the elaborate housing and worshipping of the remains of the dead by Buddhist monastics which dated well before the common era. Added weight to this evidence of early and wide-spread ritual activity by "true" Buddhist monastics was provided by West's 1862 description of a monastic cemetery at Kānheri in western India, and by Burgess' 1833 descriptions of the monastic cave complex at Bhājā. This data, though available to Rhys Davids and other scholars, had little impact on their constructions of Buddhism and the Buddhist monk. "Texuality" notes Gregory Schoen, "overrides actuality. And actuality – as expressed by epigraphical and archeological material – is denied independent validity as a witness."¹⁷⁷

The myth of the cerebral, anti-ritualistic ascetic monk likewise saturates the work of the great Louis La Vallee Poisson, who asserts that

Buddhism has been, from the beginning, a religion, a religion properly so-called; that is, there have been, from the beginning, Buddhists for whom Buddha was a god, and who did not hope for a better state than rebirth in Buddha's heaven; but this Buddhist religion had nothing or little to do with the most authentic teachings

¹⁷⁷ Schopen 1997, 7. For further examples of the ways in which material evidence counters the characteristics of the textual Buddhist ideal, see "Archeology and Protestant Presuppositions" in its entirety.

of Śākyamuni. Old Buddhism is essentially a discipline of salvation... If we were asked to characterise in a word the old Buddhist discipline and the old Buddhism as a whole, we should say it was a form of rationalism. Every idea and every practice made use of by Śākyamuni... have been freed from any tinge of mysticism...¹⁷⁸

Evident here is the Huguenot La Vallee Poussin's adherence, not only to the textually-derived Vinaya ideal, but to the Protestantized, two-tiered model which pits the "authentic, original" doctrine, adhered to by the religious elite, against the corrupted, vulgarized practices of the laity. As La Vallee Poussin explains,

There are and there have been in India, since the beginning, a number of religions, religions properly so-called. They present an endless variety... But although some are polytheistic, some monotheistic, and a larger number tinged with pantheism: although some are pagan, dishonest, superstitious and magical, and some lofty and pure in every respect, all of them nevertheless come under the concept of religion... all were 'made' to meet... the needs of Man living in society, needs supernatural, moral and secular... they have prayers or formulas, sacrifices, sacraments. They are concerned with the welfare of the dead; they have devices and ceremonies for the work and anxiety of everyday life...

Side by side with the religions properly so called, there arose in India from about the seventh century B.C – to last for many centuries, attracting thousands of adherents and exercising a strong influence on the Indian religions – a number of disciplines with special character of their own. They are 'disciplines' that is bodies of doctrines and practices together with a rule of life aiming at a practical end... In contrast with religion, the disciplines are made for ascetics, for ascetics only. Further they are purely personal or individualistic, that is they do not care for their neighbor or the dead. They are unsocial and often antisocial... As a rule, they originate sects or orders and it may be churches... [T]hey are not concerned with mundane ends at all.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Louis de. La Vallee Poussin, The Way to Nirvana: Six Lectures on Ancient Buddhism As a Discipline of Salvation. Delhi: Śrī Satguru Publications, 1982, 30-31.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 1-5.

This elusive monk-scientist similarly inhabits the work of Etienne Lamotte who, in what is arguably the most influential Western-language overview of Indian Buddhism, draws our attention to

The increasing success of the propaganda [which] had the effect of transforming Buddhism from the philosophico-mystical message which it was to begin with, into a true religion including a god (more exactly, a deified Buddha), a pantheon, holy ones, a mythology and a worship. This religion soon infiltrated the monasteries and influenced, though only slightly, the learned scholars... the learned monastics who, at the beginning of the Christian era, compared the ancient doctrine of the sūtras with ideas that were current in the four-fold assembly, could not help noticing the changes undergone by the Good Law under the influence of the lay sphere, both Indian and foreign...

As Hume and Gibbon had made clear centuries earlier, the siren call of popular superstition is irresistible. Later Buddhist texts, redolent with mythological images, *stūpa* worship, and bodhisattva cults, speak to Lamotte of the ultimate and unfortunate “victory of the laity.” Under the weight of laity ignorance, unspeakable esoteric practices and Muslim fanaticism, “true” Indian Buddhism ultimately sank into the mud of its homeland where it remained undiscovered until the arrival of British scholar-excavators.

Likewise, Lamotte’s penchant for distinguishing “original,” textual Buddhism from its ‘irrational’ popular dimensions necessarily conceived of “authentic” Buddhism as trans-cultural and a-historical. “True” Buddhism bore a greater resemblance to science than to pagan religious superstition, and so could be conceptualized in much the way that science could -- objective, self-evident, trans-cultural, and a-political. By wrapping Buddhism in Bacon’s cloak of scientific objectivity, “Buddhism could be construed as a transhistorical and self-identical essence that had benevolently descended on various cultures over the course of history, its instantiations, however, always imperfect. This hypostatized object, called ‘Buddhism,’ because created by Europe, could also be

controlled by it...”¹⁸⁰ Needless to say, such scholarship tacitly perpetuated the colonialist myth of India as a land without history – an interpretative *tabula rasa* waiting to be given form by European scholars - -even as it reiterated the tendency by conservative, “Whiggish” orientations to European science to distinguish and privilege “intellectual factors” – ideas, concepts, methods –over “social factors,” such as forms of organizations, political and economic uses of science, social consequences and uses.¹⁸¹ Such connections continue to be perceived as vulgar, unfortunate detractions from the “true dharma.” Steven Batchelor’s recent comments epitomize this position; Batchelor’s determination to lift ‘real Buddhism’—and ‘real Buddhists’ -- above the troublesome vulgarity of political involvement would make Thomas Macauley proud.

Historically, Buddhism has tended to lose its agnostic dimension through becoming institutionalized as a religion (i.e. a revealed belief system valid for all time, controlled by an elite system of priests.) At times, this has been challenged or even reversed...But in traditional Asian societies this has never lasted long. The power of organized religion to provide sovereign states with a bulwark of moral legitimacy while simultaneously assuaging the desperate piety of the disempowered swiftly reasserted itself...Dharma practice has become a creed (‘Buddhism’) much in the same way scientific method has degraded into the creed of ‘scientism’.¹⁸²

The academic construction of Buddhist monks and monasticism has also, ironically enough, been shaped and deployed by Indian writers in pursuit of anti-colonialist.

¹⁸⁰ Lopez 1995c, 7.

¹⁸¹ Indeed, Steven Shapin notes that “the very distinction between the social and the political, on the one hand, and “scientific truth,” on the other, is partly a cultural product” of seventeenth century Europe. See Shapin 1996, 10.

¹⁸² Steven Batchelor, *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1997, 16-17.

nationalist agendas, whose research findings about Buddhist monasticism have become common wisdom in the Euro-American academy. Sukumar Dutt's classic studies of Buddhist monasticism, the source of perhaps the most important and influential models concerning the nature and evolution of the early *sangha*, is perhaps the most overt example. According to Dutt, the early ideal for the *bhikku* life was a "free, unsocial, eremitical one." This ideal was transformed, however, by the tendency of the monks to group together for the "two periods of Vassa," the three-four month rain-retreat.¹⁸³ "Regularly in a certain season of the year, the wanderer was forced to take up a local habitation. As this habit emerged to a self-conscious stage, a collective custom was born. The original purpose came to be lost sight of more and more and the custom itself gained a corresponding accession of sanctity..."¹⁸⁴ For Dutt, the emergence and subsequent growth of the *sangha* into a pan-Indian phenomenon was the outgrowth of a primal, inchoate and very "Indian" urge toward collective behavior, even as Buddhist monasticism as a whole testifies to the innate and deeply "Indian" propensity for self-governing.

Subsequently, Dutt explains, that deep-seated urge to collectivism blossomed into full-blown, institutional monasticism; its centuries of influence on the Indian sub-

¹⁸³ Dutt's "rainy season" model has been subject to trenchant critique. Collins notes that it is founded on only a handful of *Vinaya* passages, and is not supported by a judicious reading of the primary texts. Mohan Wijayaratna suggests that Dutt's vision fuses three quite distinct and controversial issues: living alone or with others, traveling or staying in one place, and living far or near to other human communities. See entirety of Mohan Wijayaratna, Buddhist Monastic Life According to the Texts of the Theravada Tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

¹⁸⁴ Sukumar Dutt, Early Buddhist Monachism. 2nd ed. New Delhi: Munshiram Monoharlal, 1984, 101-102.

continent testified to by “vestiges scattered all over the land in what are now ‘archeological remains.’¹⁸⁵ By the Gupta Age (300-550 CE), due to causes too “complex and obscure” to relate, Buddhism began to decline. This apparent loss, however, masked a larger and more significant shift, namely, Buddhism’s rediscovery of its true, distinctive character. Demonstrating its innate urge to both collectivism and congruence with Enlightenment values, Buddhism moved from faith to knowledge: “This traditional learning of the monasteries... was progressively liberalized – extended and enlarged in its scope and contents and made available, not to monks alone, but to all seekers after knowledge”¹⁸⁶ a shift he characterizes as “a matter of natural evolution in the culture of the monasteries.” (324) The culmination of this natural growth was the transformation of *mahāvihāras* into universities – prototypes of Oxford and Cambridge. The “last splendid efflorescence of monastic learning, these “late autumnal blooms of Sangha life and its cultural tradition” were “reduced by Turāṣka ravages.”

Evoking the experience of India’s latent yet lost rationality, Dutt’s work emerges as a classic example of the proliferation “of strategies designed to regain the fullness of the ancient nation.”¹⁸⁷ By imbuing the Buddhist monks with cultural power and prestige of Western rationality, Dutt maximizes the ambiguity of the Buddhist monk: a pious ascetic who dominated Indian cultural life for centuries, he “naturally evolves” into a scientist – adapting, as it were, to a changing cultural ecosystem. This adaptation is, in reality, a

¹⁸⁵ Dutt 1988, 19.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 319.

¹⁸⁷ Prakash 1999, 107.

return to his own inner rationality, as embodied in the true, original teachings of its Founder.

Significantly, unlike the safely-buried rationalists of the Rhys-Davids model, Dutt's Buddhists are alive and well in contemporary India: "The culture Buddhism had 'taught' and the monkhood and monasteries it propagated undoubtedly survived: in fact, it remains to this day a vital functioning part of our cultural heritage." (20) In fact, the Buddhist *sangha* is, for Dutt, a model for Indian nationality, a means of returning to the "traditional relationship between the State and the people" which had been disrupted by the British¹⁸⁸ Indian history, he explains in The Problem of Indian Nationality (1926),

is essentially the history of corporate activities. They linger on, even into the present era, self-suppressed and little noticed, with a vitality that refuse to be crushed out. Researches have proved that in the ancient period of Indian history they had evinced extraordinary vigour of life, perhaps because of the influence received by the state: in the medieval period, evidence *ex silentio*... seems to point to an ebb...perhaps because of the withdrawal of state influence; while in modern times they are threatened with extinction under the pressure of the idea of state-sovereignty. This explains why the poet of India laments...that 'to-day we are striving of our own accord to place in the hands of the Sarkar the whole duty of our Samaj.'¹⁸⁹

Communalism, corporate activities – these are the hallmarks of India's golden age, when State rule was indigenous. And what was the exemplar of this lamented trend? "The religious Sangha," for "...it used to provide for the educational and intellectual needs of the people. The monasteries that were established all over India under the auspices of the Buddhist Samgha developed into great centers of learning..." Indeed,

[T]he University of Nalanda has been immortalised by Houen-Tsang... in the same strain of endearment as Matthew Arnold used to speak of Oxford... All these

¹⁸⁸ Dutt, Problem of Indian Nationality. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1926, 195.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 176.

educational institutions were brought into existence by the urge of the intellectual life of the people, and not by charters and acts of legislation. Similarly affairs related to the material welfare of the people were initiated and regulated by local self-governing bodies throughout India, irrespective of all the prevailing diversities of life.¹⁹⁰

Dutt's nationalist model has, ironically enough, assumed the role of received wisdom over the years, segueing neatly into the largely nineteenth-century orientation of general and specialist narratives of Indian history and Buddhist monastery, including those of A.K. Warder, Akira Hirakawa, and Patrick Olivelle.¹⁹¹ As I will discuss in a later chapter, the ideological suppositions of this mainstream scholarship has had a particularly detrimental impact on the exploration of early medieval Buddhist monasticism in India, especially the Tantrism associated with the Pāla-period.

More recent and notable exceptions to this trend, however, are seen in the works of scholars such as Paul Williams (1989), Mohan Wijayaratna (1990), and Robert Thurman. Each adopts a self-consciously critical stance towards "Western modernity" and its tacit Orientalism and anti-monasticism, articulates key findings from alternative research trajectories, and suggests a range of explanatory models susceptible to on-going challenge and adaptation. Equally helpful is relevant contributions in the fields of Indian economic and social history. The works of James Heitzman, R.S. Sharma and Himanshu Ray help illuminate the economic dimensions of Indian Buddhist monasticism by exploring its impact on the development of India's urban centers, on domestic and

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 176-177.

¹⁹¹ Akira Hirakawa, A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna. 1990. Translated and edited by Paul Groner. Buddhist Tradition Series 19. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1993, esp. p. 68; Patrick Olivelle, The Origin and the Early Development of Buddhist Monachism. Colombo: Gunasena, 1974. esp. p. 22.

international trade in India, and on long-term cultural exchange between India and other Asian civilizations, including those of Tibet, China, Central Asia, and Indonesia.

Likewise, a recent work by Robert Thurman is especially helpful in highlighting many less-recognized social dimensions on Indian Buddhist monasticism:

The monastic community also served a number of mediating functions that were incidental to its main ones but that probably were important for its rapid and successful expansion throughout northern India. Its openness to women, to people of low-caste, and to ex-slaves made it an important avenue of social mobility as well as a mechanism of social cohesion. It is perhaps for this reason that the rising mercantile classes of Indian society, some of whom came from the lower rungs of the traditional hierarchy and from the outsider castes, found their needs and aspirations satisfied by the monastic community and were its most important and enthusiastic backers.¹⁹²

The work of Thurman and others thus represents a much-needed antidote to the nineteenth-century legacy to characterize “true” Buddhist monasticism as “scientific,” cerebral and other-worldly, detached from its social moorings. Their commitment to conceptualizing Buddhist monasticism as a fundamentally social institution likewise underscores the importance of considering the impact of institutional concerns on monastically-produced writings, and epitomizes the most basic theoretical premise upon which this project rests: if early medieval Buddhism is to be understood as historically situated and in its collective aspect, then that understanding should encompass all aspects of Buddhism, its ideas and practices no less than its institutional forms and social uses. Accordingly, I take for granted that Pāla monastic Buddhist thought and practices are historically-situated and social activities that must be understood and analyzed in relation to the contexts in which they occur.

¹⁹² Robert Thurman, Inner Revolution: Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Real Happiness. New York: Riverhead Books, 1998, 102.

**Chapter Two:
A Pearl beyond Price: *Prajñā*, Power and Patronage in Pre-Pāla India**

Introduction

Wisdom is the jewel of human beings.

- ◆ *Samyutta Nikāya*

Mara, even though the whole world...cannot beat that army of yours, I will destroy it with the power of wisdom, like an unfired clay pot with a stone.

- ◆ *Sutta Nipāta*

All of these practices were taught by the Mighty One for the sake of wisdom (*prajñā*). Therefore, those who wish to pacify suffering should generate *prajñā*.

- ◆ Śāntideva

Wisdom as it was conceived by Śākyamuni is not gnosis, some intuition of vague and imprecise content which might satisfy superficial minds. It is indeed clear and precise insight, the object of which consists of the...general characteristics (*sāmānyalakṣana*) of things.

- ◆ Etienne Lamotte, History of Buddhist India

To set in context this discussion of the Crown Prince of Wisdom in his Pāla incarnations, one must begin with wisdom. As Lamotte's observation suggests, Mañjuśrī's *prajñā* (Pāli *pañña*; Tib. *shes rab*), or what I call "critical wisdom," most broadly connotes a piercing and unmissaken insight into the nature of phenomenal existence (*saṃsāra*): its causes and conditions, as well as the ways of freeing oneself from it. Derived from the Pāli and Sanskrit root *ñā* or *jñā*, "to know."¹⁹³ *pañña prajñā* conveys a sense of forward-moving understanding, its use "often emphasizing the action

¹⁹³ The root *ñā* or *jñā* serves as the basis for a wealth of terms related to various aspects of cognition; for example, *viññāṇa vijñāna*, "consciousness" and *sañña samjñā*, "perception."

as carried on in a marked degree or even beyond its mark... more than ordinary.”¹⁹⁴

Implicit in its etymology is thus a two-fold analysis of reality, an assumption of a tension between the apparent and the true. *Pañña*, as an active, penetrating, ‘beyond the ordinary’ form of knowledge – one which pushes through external appearances to more subtle recognitions -- resolves this tension. “It serves the function,” asserts Asaṅga, “of removing doubt.”¹⁹⁵

Though a critical technical term in Buddhist Abhidharma and scholastic literature, *prajñā*’s significance is not limited to the realm of monastic scholarship. The “jewel of human beings,” *prajñā*’s multiple facets glitter at the hub of the early Buddhist tradition’s most elemental teaching models -- the Middle Path, the Eightfold Path, the Three Trainings. A luminous thread running through myriad dimensions of Buddhist religious, artistic and social life – from ethical discourse to temple sculptures, images of the ideal Indian ruler and Mahāyāna notions of religious legitimacy and authority – *prajñā* illuminates and adorns, imbuing its object with the super-ordinary power and authority derived from the insight which sees through and beyond.

Predictably, *prajñā* is defined and deployed in different ways by Buddhist thinkers and practitioners of varying philosophical and historical backgrounds; the

¹⁹⁴ Pali Text Society, Pali-English Dictionary. London: Published for the Society by Luzac, 1959, 378.

¹⁹⁵ Buddhaghosa’s comments are also instructive: [*Sanñā* is] “the mere perceiving of an object, say ‘blue’ or ‘yellow,’ it cannot bring about the penetration of its characteristics as impermanent, painful, and not self. Consciousness [*viññāna*] knows the object as blue or yellow, and it brings about the penetration of its characteristics, but it cannot bring about, by endeavoring, the manifestation of the path. *Pañña*, however, penetrates into the nature of the *dharmas*, cuts into the heart of reality, and leads to the dispersal of the darkness of delusion.” Bhikku Nanamoli, (trans.) Visuddhimagga. 3rd edition. Kandy, Śrī Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1975, 119.

Sarvāstivāda (Vaibhāṣika) Abhidharma notion of *prajñā* as a mental state which can be congruent with *avidyā*, ‘misknowledge,’¹⁹⁶ has a remarkably different feeling-tone from the subsequent Mahāyāna exaltation of *prajñā* as a state of consciousness that apprehends voidness (*śūnyatā*) – the *summum bonum* of Mahāyāna practice. Likewise, *prajñā*’s iconographic embodiments differ widely across geographic, historic and ideological terrains; a first century sculpture of the goddess *Prajñā* speaks to different aesthetic and ideological values than those communicated by a third century representation of a *Prajñāpāramitā* text as an embodiment of wisdom, itself a far distance from a tenth century figure of Mañjuśrī as a multi-armed Tantric deity in sexual union. These distinctions emphasize the necessity of historicizing representations of *prajñā* and its Crown Prince, Mañjuśrī, and the value of analyzing such depictions as mirrors of shifting social and religious values.

This chapter explores selected treatments of *prajñā* in Indian Buddhist texts before the eighth century. My purpose is not to provide a comprehensive overview – a task beyond the scope of this project – but to underscore specific characteristics, associations and patterns of representation in Nikāya and *Prajñāpāramitā* literature that are of particular relevance to my subsequent analysis of *prajñā* and Mañjuśrī in the Pāla milieu. As Jacob Kinnard rightfully observes, “it is this earlier discourse that explicitly and implicitly – or we might say consciously and unconsciously – informs and constitutes the context in which Pāla-period Buddhists beheld and responded to... representations

¹⁹⁶ For a closer discussion of this, see Padmanabh S. Jaini’s “*Prajñā* and *dr̥ṣṭi* in the Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma” in Lancaster (ed.), *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*. Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1977. 403–415, esp. 406.

that involve *prajñā*.¹⁹⁷ Towards this end, I attempt to foreground ways of thinking about Buddhist *prajñā* often glossed-over by “cogno-centric” Euro-American epistemologists: for example, *prajñā* as a signpost of Buddhist identity; *prajñā* as the culmination of ethical practice, the central aim of which is the mastery and regulation of desire; *prajñā* as a characteristic of royal authority.

With this understanding, I will pay attention to *prajñā*'s shifting rhetorical value, and on what Steven Collins calls “unconscious and non-rational patterns of imagery.” Like Collins, I am working from the belief that “patterns of imaginative and ‘collective’ representation might be seen as fundamental not only to the Buddhist intellectual’s way of thinking...but also to much wider ways in which Buddhists at all levels of conceptual sophistication represent to themselves society, psychology and cosmology.”¹⁹⁸ I will begin by looking at *prajñā* in pre-Buddhist literatures before moving to its usage and representations in select Pāli texts of the Nikāyas. I will then look at *prajñā* as it is portrayed in its earliest Mahāyāna form, namely the literature of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* – a genre of literature of tremendous interest to Pāla rulers and monastic scholars. I will then touch briefly on the presentation of *prajñā* by the Mādhyamika school, as represented by its founder, Nāgārjuna, and developed by a host of Pāla-period monastic scholars. This synopsis will serve as the springboard for the subsequent chapter, which explores representations of Mañjuśrī as Crown Prince of *Prajñā* in selected Mahāyāna texts.

¹⁹⁷ Jacob N. Kinnard, Imaging Wisdom: Seeing and Knowing in the Art of Indian Buddhism. Unpublished manuscript, 116.

¹⁹⁸ Steven Collins, Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravāda Buddhism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 119.

Pre-Buddhist

“Prajñā,” notes Frederick Underwood, “is by no means the exclusive property of the Buddhists.”¹⁹⁹ Speaking to the breadth of its field of semantic meaning, he remarks upon its importance to Brahmanic literature such as the *Upaniṣads* -- a collection of texts whose earliest work, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, dates to the sixth or seventh centuries BCE, or a century or two before the Buddha²⁰⁰ Unsurprisingly, key meanings and usages of *prajñā* in this work anticipate the epistemological centrality of *prajñā* in early Buddhist literature. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *prajñā* is incontrovertibly identified with nothing less than Brahman itself: *Vāg evāyatanam, ākāśaḥ pratiṣṭhā, prajñety enad upāsīta*: “Speech is its (Brahman’s) domain, space is its foundation. One should venerate it as *prajñā*.”²⁰¹ Equated here with *vāc* (speech), *prajñā* is thus tacitly aligned with the autonomous deity *Vāc* of the *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas* and, by extension, “the sacred

¹⁹⁹ Frederick Bradley Underwood, “Buddhist Insight: the Nature and Function of Pañña in the Pāli *Nikāyas*.” Ph.d dissertation, Columbia University, 1973, p. 13

²⁰⁰ The chronology of the *Upaniṣads* is a notoriously vexed question, as Patrick Olivelle remarks, “any dating of the documents that attempts a precision closer than a few centuries is as stable as a house of cards.” Significantly, its chronology depends upon -- and begs -- the equally vexed question of the date of the Buddha’s death. The widely accepted 486 BCE has been cogently challenged by Heinz Bechert’s dating of 375-355, which has been sustained by Kevin Ergosy’s analysis of archeological data. As such, the relative dating of the *Upaniṣads* may be moved forward by a century or two. See Bechert’s “The Date of the Buddha Reconsidered” in *Indologica Taurinensia*, 10 (1981), 29-36; Ergosy’s “Archeology of Early Buddhism” in N.K. Wagle and F. Watanabe (eds.) *Studies on Buddhism in Honour of Professor A.K. Warder*. Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for South Asian Studies, 1993, 40-56; Patrick Olivelle, (transl.) *Upaniṣads*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986, xxxvi-xxxvii. Scholarly consensus also counts the *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, and *Kauṣītaki* among the pre-Buddhist *Upaniṣads*.

²⁰¹ *Vāg evāyatanam ākāśaḥ pratiṣṭha prajñety enad upāsīta. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.1.2. Sanskrit from S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*. New York: Humanities Press Inc., 1978, 246.

power underlying the Vedic hymns, the sacrifice and the cosmos”²⁰² -- indeed, with what Andre Padoux calls “an outlook or a way of thinking according to which the Word, uttered at the origin of time (and sometimes personified), is a creative and efficient power, an energy (*śākti*) both cosmic and human, of which humans can take hold through formulas (*mantras*) which express it... thereby becoming equal of gods or of the primal creative principle itself.”²⁰³

Certainly the *prajñā-vāc* association anticipates the later identification of the Crown Prince of Wisdom as Mañiṅghoṣa (sweet voice) Vādirāja or Vāgīśvara (Lord of Speech); Padoux’s remarks begin to convey a sense of the centrality and power implicit in that association.

Although a doorway to both worldly and sacred knowledge, the Upaniṣadic *prajñā* is a far cry from mundane pedantry and discourse: “By knowing that very one, a wise Brahmin should practice *prajñā*. Let him not reflect on many words; it simply wearies the voice.”²⁰⁴ *Prajñā* is instead a creative energy and a specific, carefully-cultivated state of non-discursive consciousness.²⁰⁵ Interestingly, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*’s larger discussion of

²⁰² Underwood 1973, 19.

²⁰³ Andre Padoux, *Vāc: the Concept of the Word in Selected Hindu Tantras*. Translated by Jacques Gontier. Albany: SUNY Press, 1990, 4.

²⁰⁴ *Tam eva dhīro vijñāya prajñām kurvīta brāhmaṇaḥ: nāmudhyāyād bahūn śabdān, vāco viglāpanam hi tat iti. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.4.21.* Sanskrit from Radhakrishnan 1978, 278.

²⁰⁵ These suggestions are reiterated in the *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, in which an array of conscious states and functions, including memory (*smṛtiḥ*) and discrimination (*vijñānam*), are designated as names of *prajñā*. Likewise, “*Prajñā* is the eye of all that, [all] is supported on *prajñā*. *Prajñā* is the eye of world, *prajñā* is the support, Brahma is of *prajñā*.” *Sarvam tat prajñā-netram prajñāne pratiṣṭham prajñā-netro lokah prajñā pratistha prajñānam brahma.* 3.1.2-3. See Radhakrishnan 1978, 523-4.

subtle human physiology explicitly describes *prajñā* as a dimension of human consciousness; the third and most subtle state of a three-part taxonomy of human awareness, *prajñā* is equated with dreamless sleep, when one's consciousness comes closest to unity with Brahman. That realm, wherein "one has no desires and sees no dreams,"²⁰⁶ is beyond subject and object: "there is no second, that which he could know as other, separate from himself... he becomes as a single [body of] water, he becomes the non-dual seer. This is the world of *Brahma*..."²⁰⁷ This state of non-duality – described in terms reminiscent of later Pāli descriptions of purified consciousness -- is one of highest bliss. One is reminded here of later Tantric analogizing of *prajñā* with a female consort: "As a man when in the embrace of his beloved wife knows nothing without or within, so this person when in the embrace of the intelligent self (*prājñā*) knows nothing without or within. That, therefore, is his form in which his desire is fulfilled, in which his self is his desire, in which he is without desire, free from any sorrow."²⁰⁸

Subsequent Upaniṣads such as the *Māṇḍūkya* (dated to the later centuries BCE) adumbrate and personify the state of *prajñā* as dreamless sleep: "Prājñā – the Intelligent

²⁰⁶ *yatra na kaṃ cana kāmam kāmāyate na kaṃ cana svapnam paśyati. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.19; Ibid., 261.*

²⁰⁷ *Na tu tad dvitīyam asti, tato 'nyad vibhaktam yad vijānīyāt... salila eko draṣṭādvaito bhavati, eṣa brahma-lokaḥ. Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.30, 32. Ibid., 265-66.*

²⁰⁸ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, 4.3.21.* Andre Padoux notes: "...[I]n the Brāhmaṇas *vāc* is identified with Sarasvatī. Now this goddess, who eventually will become the goddess of eloquence and learning, appears as early as the *R̥g Veda*... endowed with a motherly... protective nature, taking care that sacrificial prayers bear fruit (RV 2.3.8), a nature that she shares with the Word... Therefore, Sarasvatī appears at once word, motherly, and creative power, qualities that will be, much later, those ascribed to the Goddess, who will also be Word." Padoux 1990, 11-12.

One – situated in the state of deep sleep-- when a sleeping man entertains no desires and sees no dreams; become one, and thus being a single mass of perception; consisting of bliss, and thus enjoying bliss; and having thought as his mouth. He is the Lord of all; he is the knower of all; he is the inner controller, he is the womb of all – for he is the origin and the dissolution of beings.”²⁰⁹ The *Māṇḍūkya* expands the tripartite taxonomy of awarenesses into a four-part model in which the deepest level of consciousness is the *turiya* state --an awareness “different from the state of deep sleep associated with *prajñā* only in that it does not require the sublation of ordinary waking consciousness or of dreaming-sleep consciousness....*turiya* is a form of transcendental awareness which can be maintained together with the phenomenal consciousness of daily life.” As such, it is, as I shall explore, resonant with a notion of *pañña* widespread in the Pāli Nikāyas – “also a type of penetrating awareness or insight which, when developed, can be maintained as a salvific element amidst the more normal on-going experiences of human life.”²¹⁰

Pāli sources:

Underwood’s observation is apt: *prajñā/pañña* is indeed a pivot-point of the Pāli textual tradition’s most foundational teaching models, and so imbued with unparalleled soteriological and polemical import. *Pañña* is associated with the early tradition’s most

²⁰⁹ Olivelle 1996, 289.

²¹⁰ All quotes in this paragraph from Underwood 1973, 23-24. Underwood further notes that *turiya* was developed in the context of an emerging Yoga system, and asserts that “Classical Yoga owes a considerable debt to Buddhism and has borrowed much of the Buddhist technical vocabulary.” 24.

controversial and trademark concept: *anatta/anātman*, selflessness. If the *Upaniṣad*'s *pañña* is the royal road to the Brahman, *pañña* as described in the Nikāyas counters that "Whatever is matter... whatever is sensation... whatever is conception... whatever is volition... whatever is cognition, past, future, present, or internal or external, or gross or subtle, or low or high, whether far or near – all cognition should, by means of right *pañña*, be seen as it really is, thus: This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self."²¹¹ In this Vinaya passage, the *pañña* experience thus signals the deconstruction of the unitary, permanent self of Brahmanic thought: the Buddha's vision of *dhammas* "as they really are" (*yathābhūta*), and not as they appear to the unenlightened mind (*yathābhāsa*).

Throughout the Nikāyas, the Buddha's *pañña* experience is characterized in doctrinal terms as the Buddha's understanding that all *dhammas* are characterized by the Three Marks (*trilakṣaṇa*): evanescent, lacking in a substantial self, the nature of suffering itself.²¹² The explication of this critical notion, scattered throughout the Pāli *suttas*, is formalized most thoroughly in the later *Abhidhamma* literature and its commentaries. *Dhammas*, the Sarvāstivādin literature explains, are not the self, but rather the primary, evanescent mental and material events that constitute the self – indeed, all phenomena -- as it appears through the lens of mental imputation. Substantial objects and enduring persons are a trick of the mind -- conceptual constructs, colored by linguistic and social activities, fashioned by the mind out of the raw data provided by the *dhammas*; symptoms of the futile human desire to freeze evanescent experience into permanent

²¹¹ V.i.6.44-45. See Herman Oldenberg (ed.) *Vinaya Pitakam*. London: Luzac & Company, 1969, 14.

²¹² This formula may arguably be read as a pointed refutation of the *Upaniṣad*'s description of reality as *sacciddānanda*, 'existent, conscious, and blissful.

truths. In the final analysis, only *dhammas* possess ultimate reality, a determinate existence “from their own side” (*svarupato*) that is independent of the mind’s conceptual processing. Only a *dhamma* is an analytically irreducible substance (*dravya*), possessed of its own distinctive mark (*lakṣhaṇa/lakṣaṇa*) or essence (*svabhāva*).

How does one break this cycle of futile reification? Freedom, we are told, arises from discrimination. By analytically dissolving these intentional objects into their constituent *dhammas*, one intuits their true essence, and so ‘sees things as they are.’ Here, the import of critical wisdom becomes clear: *pañña* is the sole analytical faculty which determines with certainty the *lakṣaṇa* and the *svabhāva* of *dhammas*.²¹³ “Regarding this,” asserts Vasubandhu, “*prajñā* is the discernment of qualities and attributes.”²¹⁴

²¹³ *Atthano lakṣhaṇaṃ dhārentiti dhamma. Visudhimagga*, Harvard Oriental Series, v. 41, p. 48, l. 17. See also *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya: svalakṣaṇadhāraṇād dharmah*. I. 9. This simplistic summary necessarily obscures the diversity in *dhamma* theories contained in the Abhidhamma literatures and commentaries of various schools, most notably the Pāli Theravada school and the Sarvāstivādin or Vaibhāṣika school. My summary emphasizes the latter, which arguably exerted the greatest influence on the development of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. Of particular importance is the work of Vasubandhu (late fourth century CE), whose *Abhidharma-kośa* became a highly revered and authoritative scholastic source for Sarvāstivādin Abhidharma as developed in Kashmir. Significantly, Vasubandhu was also deeply interested in the Sautrāntika school of Sarvāstivādin scholarship dominant in Gandhara, and composed an equally-influential *bhāṣya* upon his *Kośa* which refuted many Vaibhāṣika doctrines from a Sautrāntika perspective.

²¹⁴ *Tatra prajñā dharmavicayah*. The *Abhidhamma* begins from the premises that the wisdom that knows things “as they really are” enables liberation from *saṃsāra*, and that to achieve this wisdom, one must drive a wedge between entities imbued with ontological ultimacy – *dhammas* – and those which exist only as conceptual. Towards that end, *Abhidhamma* literature identifies a fixed number of *dhammas* – ranging from 75 to 108 -- and exhaustively classifies them within a web of categories and modes of relationships that highlights their place within the system’s structure. The result is an elaborate interlocking classification system which is a true mirror of reality – one which pinpoints the place and myriad functions of each *dhamma* in the structure of reality. As such, the function of the entire Abhidhamma project may be regarded as a form of *pañña*: *prajñāmalā sānucarābhidharmah*: “Abhidharma is taintless wisdom along with its

Importantly, the Sarvāstivādin tradition considers specific mental and psychological functions to be *dharma*s, specifically *caitasika-dharma*s, or concomitant mental factors. The *Abhidharmakośa* delineates forty-six such independent *dharma*s that arise in various combinations in tandem with a mind-ground (*citta-bhūmi*) to color individual mental states.²¹⁵ “The mental states are of five types, *mahābhūmikas* (*pañcadhā caittā mahābhūmyadibhedata*)”²¹⁶ i.e. they arise in tandem with five types of mental bases (*citta-bhūmi*), each of which has its own mental quality. Thus, there are the mental states that accompany all minds (*mahābhūmika*), those that arise with all healthy minds (*kuśalamahābhūmika*), those that arise with tainted minds (*kleśamahābhūmika*), with unhealthy minds (*akuśalamahābhūmika*), and with slightly tainted minds (*parittakuśalamahābhūmika*). *Pañña/prajñā*, not surprisingly, belongs to the first class. Classified here as *matī*, it is the one of ten global functions that arise in mental states, be they good, evil or neutral: “*Matī* is *prajñā*, the discernment of *dharma*s.”²¹⁷ Significantly,

following” Swami Dwarikadas Sastri (ed). *Abhidharmakośa & Bhaṣya of Acarya Vasubandhu With Sphutartha Commentary of Acarya Yasomitra*. Varanasi: Bauddha Bharati, 1970, p. 11.

²¹⁵ Not all Abhidharmic systems posit the same number of mental factors. For example, the Theravāda tradition as enumerated by the *Abhidhammatthasangaha* list fifty-two. Likewise, while the Sarvāstivādin system posits that the mind (*citta*) and independent mental faculties necessarily work in tandem with each other, (a process of concomitant arising called *samprayukta*, concomitance), not all Abhidharma systems adhere to this model. The Sauntrāntika school, for example, rejects the notion of *caitasika-dharma*s as independent entities, instead recognizing only sensation, perception, and volition as mental faculties. For a brief overview of the various schools, see Chapter 10 of Akira Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahayana*. Translator and editor Paul Groner. Buddhist Tradition Series, 19 Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1993.

²¹⁶ *Matih prajñā dharmapracicaya*. *Abhidharmakośa* 2.23. See Sastri 1970, 186.

²¹⁷ 2.24, in Sastri 1970, 187.

its comprehensive importance is further elevated by the Theravadin Abhidhammic tradition, which considers *pañña* to be the most central of the healthy mental factors. Here, *pañña* as critical intelligence is the polar opposite of delusion (*moha*), the basic ignorance of mind that leads to the misperception of the object of awareness. As such, *pañña* is the most fundamental antidote, the medicine which cures suffering and averts wrong view.

The intimate relationship of *pañña* to *anatta* and *dhamma* theory is a central concern of the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* – renowned as the first of the Buddha’s public teachings²¹⁸ and the *locus classicus* explication of the Four Noble Truths. *Pañña*, we are told in this hallmark treatise, arose in Siddhartha with his recognition that the “five aggregates of attachment (*kkhandas*) are suffering (*dukkha*)... [that] it is craving (*trṣṇā*) which produces rebirth... [that] the complete cessation of suffering is [engendered by] detaching from craving... [and that] the path leading to the cessation of suffering is simply the Noble Eightfold Path. [With these realizations], O *bhikkhus*, there arose in me vision, knowledge, *paññā*, discrimination, and light with regard to things not heard before.”²¹⁹

²¹⁸ This is not to assert that the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* is the oldest element of the *Sutta Piṭaka*, only that it describes itself as the Buddha’s first teaching. The individual components of the Pāli canon are notoriously difficult to date. The first written redaction for which we have evidence does not appear until several centuries after the death of the Buddha, i.e. the Alu-vihāra redaction of the first century BCE. It is not until the fifth-century commentary of Buddhaghosa that any light is shed on the content of the *Tipiṭaka*, and not until Nāgarjunikoṇḍa and Amarāvafī do we find any inscriptional reference to the *Samyutta nikāyas* from which the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* derives. See Schopen 1997, 23-24.

²¹⁹ See Vipassana Research Institute, *Samyuttanikāvo Mahāvaggapāli – Duttivo Khando*. Igatpuri, 1994, 485.

The closing refrain is repeated in the subsequent eleven verses, and so pointedly associates *pañña* with each of the twelve aspects of knowledge of the four Noble Truths,²²⁰ Its repetition further conveys the congruence of the Buddha's *pañña* experience with his supreme, perfect enlightenment, for only "when, O *bhikkhus*, my vision of knowledge about the way things truly are was completely clear about these three aspects and twelve ways regarding the Four Noble Truths, then I claimed, O *bhikkhus*, to have realized the perfect enlightenment that is unexcelled in the world with *devas*, *māras* and *brahmās*, in this world with wanderers and *brāhmaṇas*, with princes and men."²²¹

Clearly, conceptualizing *pañña* within the confines of its strict scholastic definition fails to capture its rhetorical and doctrinal richness: *pañña* is here tacitly portrayed as a manifestation of enlightened freedom itself.

Significantly, the language of *pañña* is equated here, and throughout the Pāli *suttas*, with visionary rather than auditory experience – a notable phenomena in an oral tradition which "was primarily oriented toward one particular sense – that of hearing. While Buddhist vocabulary was rife with visual metaphors, vision in a literal sense and visual

²²⁰ Each of the four is said to have three aspects: knowledge of the truth (*sacca ñāna*), knowledge of the function of the truth (*kiCCA ñāna*), and knowledge of the function of the truth which has been done (*kata ñāna*).

²²¹ *yato ca kho me, bhikkhave, imesu catūsu ariyasaccesu evam tiparivṛttam dvādasakāram yathabhūtam ñāṇadassanam suvisuddham ahosi, bhikkhave, sadevake loke samārake sabrahmake sassamanabrāhmaṇiṇyā pajāya sadevamanussāya 'amuttaram sammāsambodhim abhisambuddho 'ti paccaññāsim*. Vipassana Research Institute, 1994, 486.

imagery were not emphasized as a way of communicating the teachings.”²²² This pairing of *pañña* and vision, which prevails throughout the Nikāyas,²²³ is a striking exception to this rule. One of the canon’s most frequently-recurring refrains reiterates this association by underscoring the soteriological value of *pañña*-as- vision: “Again, by completely surmounting the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, a *bhikku* enters upon and abides in the cessation of perception and feeling. And his taints are destroyed by **seeing with wisdom**...(*paññāya...disvā.*)”²²⁴ Similarly, “Which five things are to be thoroughly realized? Five branches of Dhamma plus knowledge and vision of liberation (*vimutti nāṇa dassana-kkhandho*).”²²⁵ The *Dīgha Nikāya* and the *Itivuttaka* repeatedly refer to the eye of *paññā* (*paññācakkhu*) as the unexcelled (*amuttaram*) of three kinds of eyes, including the eye of flesh (*mamsa-cakkhu*) and the divine eye (*dibbā-cakkhu*). The

²²² David McMahan, “Orality, Writing and Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in the Mahāyāna.” *History of Religions*, 37.3, 1998, 253.

²²³ “Throughout the Nikāyas, *paññā* itself is associated with vocabulary appropriate to the physical act of seeing...Sight, seeing and vision are analogues on the physical plane of *paññā*. *Paññā*, itself, therefore, can be interpreted as a form of spiritual insight, an interior vision which may be superadded to the normal forms of sensory apprehension as well as to the supernormal states of transic concentration.” Underwood 1973, 55.

²²⁴ *Puna ca param bhikkhave bhikku sabbaso nevasaññāyatanam samatikkamma saññāvedayita nirodham upasanpajja viharati, paññāya c’assa disvā āsavā parikkhina honti.* From the *Majjima Nikāya* (hereafter *MN*) i 205. See Bhikku Nanamoli (ed), The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: a New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya. Translation edited and revised by Bhikku Bodhi. Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1995, 297.

²²⁵ The *Dasuttara Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* (hereafter *DN*). See Maurice Walshe, (trans). Thus Have I Heard: The Long Discourses of the Buddha. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995, 515.

Buddha of the *Sutta Nipāta*, “possessor of eyes on every aspect,”²²⁶ gazes upon the world with his compassionate *buddhacakkhu* immediately after his enlightenment, and then rises to his feet to preach the dharma. The Brahmin Pokkharasati subsequently attains a pure and spotless *dhamma-cakkhu* when he hears the Buddha speak, as did Prince Khanda and Tissa.²²⁷ (King Ajattasattu narrowly forfeits this privilege – apparently parricide is an obstinate stumbling block in the world of the *Digha Nikāya*.²²⁸) Yet it is the wisdom eye, the *paññā-cakkhu*, which is the supreme of these five kind of eyes, for – and the *Nikāyas* resound with this refrain -- it “sees things as they really are by means of *paññā*” (*yathābhūtam sammappaññāya passati*). “Friend, with what does one understand a state that can be known? Friend, one understands a state that can be known with the eye of wisdom.”²²⁹ This association of vision and *paññā* is especially significant in subsequent Mahāyāna literature, where it becomes deeply imbricated with claims for authority and legitimacy by heterodox traditions. I will explore this issue in greater detail later in this chapter.

Predictably, the visual language of *paññā* segues naturally into metaphors of light. Indeed, Frederick Underwood suggests that light and *paññā* generally function as

²²⁶ The *Dhammika Sutta* of the *Sutta Nipāta*: See H. Saddhatissa (trans). *The Sutta Nipāta*. London: Curzon Press, 1985, 43.

²²⁷ See *Ambattha Sutta* and *Mahāpadāna Sutta* in the *DN*; see Walshe 1995, 124 and 216.

²²⁸ See the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* in the *DN*, *Ibid.*, 109.

²²⁹ Nanamoli 1995, 389.

synonyms in Pāli texts.²³⁰ The *Anguttara Nikāya*'s five verse encomium to *pañña* exemplifies this trend:

O Monks, there are these four effulgences (*bhāsā*)...:the effulgence of the moon, the sun, of fire and the effulgence of *pañña*. Among these four, O Monks, it is the effulgence of *pañña* which is foremost.

O Monks, there are these four radiances (*ābhā*)...the radiance of the moon, of the sun, of fire and the radiance of *pañña*...Among these four, O Monks, it is the radiance of *pañña* which is foremost.

O Monks, there are these four lights (*āloka*)...the radiance of the moon, of the sun, of fire and the light of *pañña*. Among these four, O Monks, it is the light of *pañña* which is foremost.²³¹

The Buddha in the *Devatā Samyutta* extends this observation when he comments that “there is no radiance (*ābhā*) equal to *pañña*,” the “lamp of the world.” The luminous beam which reveals reality as it is, *pañña* is the radiant “jewel of humanity” (*paññā narānaṃ ratanaṃ*), and one of the seven treasures of the *cakravartin*.²³²

Pañña, śīla and trsna

Let us return to the *Dhammacakkappavātana Sutta*. What are the broader doctrinal and cultural assumptions which frame Siddhartha's *pañña* insight into the nature of samsara? Scholarly, “esoteric” analyses of *dukkasamudaya* traditionally identify misknowledge (*avidyā*) as the root of suffering.²³³ For the Buddha of this *sutta*, however,

²³⁰ Underwood 1973, 54, n3.

²³¹ The remaining two verses follow in this vein, equating *pañña* with *pabhā*, “splendor”, and *pajjota*, “lamp”. Quote taken (with minor emendations) from Underwood 1973, 69.

²³² See *Samyutta Nikāya*, i .36, 37, and the *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* of the *DN*, 452.

²³³ This division of the two canonical accounts of *dukkasamudaya* is found in Buddhaghosa, and pervades European scholarship. According to Lamotte, Lindtner and others, *trsna* is the simplified, exoteric account of *dukkasamudaya*, while the “real,” esoteric account is *avidyā*, as expressed through the teaching of the Twelve Links, *dvādasāṅgaprañītyasamutpāda*. See Etienne Lamotte, Le traite de la grande vertu de sagesse de Nāgārjuna. Louvain: Universite de Louvain, 1980. 35, note 2; Christian

misknowledge takes a back seat; here, the starting point for liberating practice is the problematization of desire: “O bhikkus, one who has gone forth from the worldly life should not indulge in these two extremes. What are the two? Indulgence in sense objects, which is low, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, unworthy, and unprofitable, and there is devotion to self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy, and unprofitable. O Bhikkus, avoiding both these extremes, the Tathāgata has realized the Middle Path [which]... leads to nibbāna. And what is that Middle Path...? It is simply the Noble Eightfold Path...” Attachment to sense pleasures and pains perpetuates suffering and unenlightened vision; it is desire which prevents our “seeing things as they are.”

Significantly, the antidote to desire is not its stigmatization, but moderation and self-control. It is the proper use and relationship to desire, rather than its repression, that coheres the components of the Eightfold Path. This outlook is curiously evocative of Michel Foucault’s description of fourth century BCE Greek culture, in which the accent was placed on “the relationship with the self that enabled a person to keep from being carried away by the appetites and pleasures, to maintain a mastery and superiority over them, to keep his senses in a state of tranquility, to remain free from interior bondage to the passions and to achieve a mode of being that could be defined by the full enjoyment of oneself, or the perfect supremacy of oneself over oneself.”²³⁴

In Foucault’s interpretation, the artful moderation of desire is the object of Greek morality, its mastery a paramount ethical concern. We can, I believe, see a similar logic

Lindtner, Masters of Wisdom: Writings of the Buddhist Master Nāgārjuna. Yeshe De Project. Oakland: Dharma Publishing, 1986, 317, 319, and note 168.

²³⁴ M. Foucault, The Use of Pleasure: History of Sexuality, Vol. 2. USA: Vintage Books, 1990, 31.

in the structure of the Eightfold Path, which presumes that the foundation of liberating practice is ethical behavior, and that its culmination is signaled by *pañña*. This progression is implicit in the structure of the famous Three-part Training (*tisikkha*), which divides the Eightfold Path into *sīla* (ethics), *samādhi* (concentration), and *pañña*: "Right speech, right action and right livelihood – these states are included in the aggregate of ethics (*sīla*). Right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration – these states are included in the aggregate of concentration (*samādhi*). Right view and right intention – these states are included in the aggregate of wisdom (*pañña*)."²³⁵ From this perspective, in which soteriological and ethical concerns are indivisible, *pañña*'s deeply practical, social dimensions are self-evident.

This implicit association of *pañña* with the mastery of desire is especially clear when we remember that the *tisikkha* presumes a non-Kantian form of ethics. Here, *sīla* ethics largely emphasizes the relationship one has to oneself: freedom is defined, not as free will or in opposition to determinism, but in relation to the mastery of one's desires.²³⁶ *Sīla*, coupled with concentration, is thus a form of liberative technology. Like its Greek analogue, it serves as "the deliberative component of free activity and the basis for a prolonged practice of the self, whereby one seeks to problematize and master one's desires and to constitute oneself as a free self."²³⁷ Consequently, *pañña* emerges as both a component on the continuum of the Eightfold 'technology of the self,' as well as its

²³⁵ *Cūlavaddalla Sutta* in the *MN*; Nanamoli 1995, 398.

²³⁶ In contrast to forms of ethics such as Kantianism which stress the duties and obligations a self has to others.

²³⁷ See Steven Best and Douglas Kellner. *Postmodern Theory*. London: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1991, 62-63.

culmination. The *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* neatly captures this bivalence: “Then the Lord, while staying at Koṭigāma, gave a comprehensive discourse: ‘This is *śīla*, this is *samādhi*, this is *pañña*. *Samādhi*, when imbued with *śīla*, brings great fruit and profit. *Pañña*, when imbued with *samādhi*, brings great fruit and profit. The mind imbued with *pañña* becomes completely free from the corruptions, that is, from the corruption of sensuality, of becoming, of false views and of ignorance.”²³⁸ In a worldview in which the mastery of desire constitutes a fundamental social aesthetic, it is not surprising that *pañña* as its culmination is associated with *mokṣa*, nor, as I will discuss, that both *prajñā* and the manipulation of desire by Tantric technologies emerge as parallel topics of interest in Pāla monastic scholarship.

Pañña and cakavatti

I noted earlier that *pañña* was one of the *cakkavati*’s treasures. Given the deeply social implications of the intimacy between *pañña*, the mastery of desire and personal liberation, it is also not surprising that much Pāli literature tacitly equates *pañña* with the Universal Ruler (*cakkavati*) ideal – an association has clear analogues to Hindu *puruṣārtha* theory:

The Indian concept of ‘king’ and ‘king of kings’ is intimately connected with the theme of the ‘good life’ as realized through the pursuit of the *puruṣārtha* in Hindu tradition. The king was, relative to his subjects, the man who more fully realized the three ‘worldly’ goals of *kāma*, ... *artha*, ... and *dharma*... The word for desire or wish, *kāma*, was also a word that meant will, intent, as well as pleasure and enjoyment. Without will or intent, without the desire for sons, success, paradise, or release from the world itself, none of these *golas* could be attained. So the

²³⁸ Walshe 1995, 240.

problem with desire was not to do away with it, but to direct it toward the appropriate end.”²³⁹

In the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the Buddha as embodiment of *sīla-samādhi-pañña*, exemplar of liberation, is explicitly juxtaposed with the ruler-archetype of the wheel-turning monarch:

Ānanda, [my remains] should be dealt with like the remains of a wheel-turning monarch... Having made a funeral-pyre of all manner of perfumes they cremate the king's body, and they raise a stūpa at the crossroads. That, Ānanda, is what they do with the remains of a wheel-turning monarch, and they should deal with the Tathāgata's body in the same way... There are four persons worthy of a stūpa... A Tathāgata... a Paccakka Buddha... a disciple of the Tathāgata, and a wheel-turning monarch. And why...? Because, Ānanda, at the thought: “This is the stūpa of a Tathāgata, a Paccakka Buddha, a disciple of the Tathāgata, of a wheel-turning monarch”, the people's hearts are made peaceful... and they go to a good destiny...²⁴⁰

The progressive juxtaposition of these four types functions not so much to elevate the Buddha to the level of king, but to subordinate the *cakkavatti* to the Buddha.²⁴¹ It is commentary on the nature of a legitimate *cakkavatti*: the ideal monarch is the inferior, worldly analogue to a Buddha-in-training, and so should strive to embody *sīla*, *samādhi*, and its culminatory *pañña*. Insofar as he thus shares the aims of a monastic, he is likewise

²³⁹ Ronald Inden, "Hierarchies of Kings in Medieval India." *Contributions to Indian Sociology: New Series* Vol 15, no. 1 and 2 (January 1981-December 1981), 100, 101.

²⁴⁰ Walshe 1995, 264.

²⁴¹ In fact, the Pāli literature abounds with such examples of the *cakkhavatti*'s second-rate status. One etymology for the term *bhagavā*, “Blessed One” explains that “He is *bhagavā* because he vomited (*vamī*) and spat out the sovereignty and fame which are [usually] reckoned to be good fortune (*bhaga*); thinking as little of them as a ball of spit he cast them aside. The Tathāgata gave no thought to the glory of a wheel-turning king... [or to] sovereignty over the four islands... [thinking it] a piece of straw, though he had it in his grasp; he gave it up, left home and reached Perfect Enlightenment.” This quotation from Steven Collins, *Nirvana and Other Buddhist Felicities: Utopias of the Pāli Imaginaire*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 474.

a pale reflection of the lowliest *sangha* member. In short, embedded in the Buddhist *cakkhavati* notion is a volatile “tension and competition between the ideological power specific to members of the Monastic Order, with their ethic and/or aesthetic of asceticism, and the political-military power of kings. For although the idea of the two Big Men and their Wheels does represent the symbiosis between clerics and kings, the dissimilarity and hierarchy between them represents their antagonism”.²⁴²

These suggestions are echoed throughout the *Dīgha Nikāyas*, which devotes six substantial *suttas* to the topic of the *cakkhavati*.²⁴³ The *Mahāpadāna Sutta* analogizes and hierarchizes the two paths of king and Buddha by recounting the biography of the former Buddha Vipassi who rejects his father’s throne to become a Buddha, only to return and teach the *dhamma* to his half-brother, Prince Khaṇḍa.²⁴⁴ The *Samaññaphala Sutta* comprises a lengthy discourse by the Buddha which results in the conversion of King Ajātasutta to righteous rule:

Excellent, Lord, excellent! It is as if someone were to set up what had been knocked down, or to point out the way to one who had got lost... Just so the Blessed Lord has expounded the Dharma in various ways. And I, Lord, go for refuge to the Blessed Lord, to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha. May the Blessed Lord accept me from this day forth as a lay-follower as long as life shall last! Transgression overcame me, Lord, foolish, erring and wicked as I was, in that I for the sake of the throne deprived my father, that good man and just king, of his

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ The *Cakkavatti-Sihanānda*, the *Mahāsudassana*, the *Mahāpadāna*, the *Lakkhaṇa*, the *Ambaṭṭha*, and the *Mahāparinibāna Suttas*. Tambiah is right to observe that while “the notion of cakravartin antedates Buddhism... it is the Buddhists who have given the greatest textual space and thought to the elaboration of the *cakkavatti* as a *mahapurusa* (great man), and have juxtaposed and compared him with the Buddha. Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, The Buddhist Conception of Universal King and Its Manifestations in South and Southeast Asia. Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya, 1987, 4.

²⁴⁴ This biography was transferred to the life story of Siddhartha Gautama. Ibid.

life. May the Blessed Lord accept my confession of my evil deed that I may restrain myself in future!²⁴⁵

The implications are clear: personal enlightenment, which begins with restraint, is essential for the overall good of the kingdom: the person who can best rule himself can best rule others. As such, *pañña* marks the ideal ruler. Conveying cosmic legitimacy, it signals rule by one who perfects ethical practice, masters his desire, and so “sees things as they are.”²⁴⁶ These associations, I will argue, are significantly extended and re-enforced in Mahāyāna discourse (which develops against the backdrop of close relations between Buddhist monasticism, traders and imperial power) and have important ramifications in Mahāyāna and Pāla portrayals of Mañjuśrī as the Crown Prince of *Prajñā*.

Pañña and samādhi.

Pañña's specific relationship with the second of the *tisikkha*, *samādhi*, is also an important subtext of the Nikāyas and later Abhidharmic literature. As early as the *Majjhima Nikāyas*, *pañña* is considered a natural faculty which is cultivated and purified in a meditative context, and so rendered soteriologically efficacious: “What is the difference,” the Buddha asks, “between *pañña* and consciousness (*viññāna*), these states that are conjoined, not disjoined? The difference, friend... is this: *pañña* is to be

²⁴⁵ Walshe 1995, 108.

²⁴⁶ The *Lakkhaṇa Sutta* likewise emphasizes *śīla* as the foremost distinguishing characteristic of the *mahāpurusa*, and the benefits of *śīla* to worldly rule: ‘Being endowed with this mark (of level feet), if he keeps to the household life, he will become a wheel-turning monarch... Conquering without stick or sword, but by śīla, he rules over this earth as far as its ocean boundaries, a land open, uninfested by brigands, free from jungle, powerful, prosperous, happy and free from perils... And if he goes forth into homelessness, he will become a fully-enlightened Buddha...’ Walshe 1995, 443.

developed (*bhāvetabbā*), consciousness is to be fully understood.²⁴⁷ A bare consciousness or cognition (*viññāna*) can arise without wisdom. *Pañña*, however, is dependent upon consciousness, and is far more refined: it is one of the five faculties (*indriyas*), and one of the five powers (*bālas*) included in a comprehensive list of thirty-seven practices leading to enlightenment (*bodhipakkhiyadhamma*). It is, asserts the *Milindapanha*, the honed blade which cuts through the conditioned, karma-bearing cognitions of *samsāric* experience to reveal “the world as it is:”

The king said, ‘What is the characteristic mark of reasoning, and what of *pañña*? Reasoning has always comprehension as its mark; but wisdom has cutting off.’ ‘But how is comprehension the characteristic of reasoning, and cutting off of wisdom? Give me an illustration.’ “You remember the barley reapers? ... With the left hand they grasp the barley into a bunch, and taking the sickle into the right hand, they cut it off with that. Just even so, king, does the recluse by his thinking grasp his mind, and by his wisdom, cut off its failings. In this way is it that comprehension is the characteristic of reasoning, but cutting off of wisdom.’ ‘Well put, Nagasena!’²⁴⁸

How is the blade of *pañña* honed? It is, we are told, the fire of *bhāvana* which draws forth its edge. *Bhāvana* has two objects: the achievement of *samatha* (calm abiding), and *vipassanā* (analytical insight). *Samatha* is associated with the cultivation of *samādhi*, the second element of the three-part training. It culminates in the cultivation of the four stages of meditation (*catur-dhyāna*). On the basis of this achievement, one then gains insight (*vipassanā*) into the truth. This insight is the stuff of *pañña*; it is *pañña* as *vipassanā* which serves as the active, critical instrument used to uproot the ignorance at the foundation of *samsāra*. Accordingly *pañña* and *vipassanā* function as synonyms in

²⁴⁷ *Mahāvedalla Sutta* of the *MN*. See Nanamoli 1995, 388.

²⁴⁸ T. W. Rhys Davids, *The Questions of King Milinda: Part I*. New York: Dover Publications, 1963, 51.

much Pāli literature.²⁴⁹ By extension, as one modern commentator notes, *pañña* in the *Nikāyas* more broadly connotes various ways of knowing analytically: “When (*pañña*) arises during *vipassanā* meditation, the meditator discerns the difference between mind and matter, cause and effect, and he or she knows how mental and material processes are arising and passing away every moment. The meditator knows these to be impermanent, suffering, and not subject to anyone’s control. Such knowledge is described as knowing analytically. The Buddha, therefore, said that such wisdom (*pañña*) had arisen in him.”²⁵⁰ Analytic insight into the nature of *dhammas* thus presupposes great proficiency in mental training at many levels – a conviction mirrored by the well-known three-fold division of *pañña* as 1) critical wisdom based on textual study (*śrūta-mayī prajñā*), 2) critical wisdom derived from critical reflection on what has been studied (*cintāmayī-prajñā*) and 3) the critical wisdom that grows out of synthesis of interpretation and application – the non-theoretical wisdom composed of meditative cultivation (*bhāvanamayī*). It is this final, culminating *pañña* which, like Nagasena’s sickle, “cuts off” the taints.

The Sword of Pañña

The equation of *pañña* with a knife or blade is, in fact, a common metaphor in the *Nikāyas* – a textual foreshadowing perhaps, of the later iconographic representation of wisdom as Mañjuśrī’s sword. In the *Nikāya* literature, the *pañña*-blade is generally portrayed not as weapon but as a tool, effective only when wielded by a knowledgeable

²⁴⁹ For an excellent description of the cultivation of *vipassana* in the *Nikāyas*, see the *DN Mahāsatipaṭṭhana Sutta* in Walshe 1995, 335-350.

²⁵⁰ Ven. Dr. Rewata Dhamma, *The First Discourse of the Buddha: Turning the Wheel of Dhamma*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1997, 82-83.

master. In the *Sunakkhata Sutta*, *pañña* is the scalpel of a surgeon who treats “a man wounded by an arrow thickly smeared by poison:”

The surgeon would cut around the opening of the wound with a knife, then he would probe for the arrow with a probe, then he would pull out the arrow and expel the poisonous humour, leaving a trace of it behind. Knowing that a trace is left behind, he would say: ‘Good man, the arrow has been pulled out from you... Eat only suitable food; do not eat unsuitable food or else the wound may suppurate (*assāvī*) ... Take care of your wound, good man, and see to it that the wound heals.’²⁵¹

The wound, the Buddha further explains, represents the six sense bases; the poison is misknowledge (*avijjā*); the arrow connotes craving (*tanhā*), as the probe does mindfulness (*sati*). “The ‘knife’ is a term for noble wisdom,” (*Satthan ti kho... ariyāy etam paññāya adhivacanam*), mindfully wielded by a trained and compassionate surgeon who is, of course, none other than “the Tathāgata, the Accomplished One, the Fully-Enlightened One.”²⁵²

The *Vammika Sutta* echoes this metaphoric sense of *pañña* as a sharp edge which separates the gold from the dross. In this curious parable, a *bhikkhu* named Kumara Kassapa encounters an unusual ant-hill which “fumes by night and flames by day.” Following the cryptic instructions of an equally mysterious Brahmin --“delve with the knife, thou wise one” -- Kassapa excavates the hill to uncover a puzzling succession of disparate objects: a toad, a fork, a sieve, a piece of meat, even a Nāga serpent. Each object, the Brahmin tells him, should be rejected, with the exception of the Nāga, which must be honored. Moreover, Kassapa should “go to the Blessed One and ask him about

²⁵¹ *MN* 865 ff. Note the use of the verb *assāvī* to evoke the *āsavas*, the taints which must be eliminated to achieve *nibbana*.

²⁵² Another intriguing parable employing *pañña* as knife or blade is found in the *Nandakovada Sutta* in the *MN*.

this riddle;” for other than the Tathāgata and his disciples,” there is no one in this world... whose explanation of this riddle might satisfy the mind.”

Kassapa does indeed hurry to tell his story to the Buddha, who elucidates its metaphoric significance. The ant-hill, explains the Tathāgata, is a symbol for the body; its nocturnal fuming connotes the “thinking and pondering” one does at night, its flames “the actions one undertakes during the day.” Each article symbolizes an emotion or hindrance -- ignorance, doubt, sensual pleasure, anger – and must be discarded. Only two objects should be treasured: the Nāga, for “he is a symbol for a *bhikhu* who has destroyed the taints” and the knife (*satthan*), for it “is a symbol of noble pañña, the delving a symbol for the arousing of energy (*virya*)... Delve with the knife, thou wise one.”²⁵³

Pañña, Right intention and Right view and Buddhist identity:

Finally, we turn to *pañña* as the first and second limbs of the Eightfold Path. Explications of both dimensions of *pañña* are scattered throughout the Nikāyas. Those dealing with right intention (*sammāsankappa*) are perhaps more straightforward: “And what monks, is Right Thought? The thought of renunciation (*nekkhama*), the thought of non-ill-will (*avyāpāda*), the thought of harmlessness (*avihimsā*).” Throughout the literature, *sammāsankappa* connotes a carefully-cultivated orientation of nonviolence and renunciation -- the “emotional” content of *pañña*, directed towards the eradication, not of “intellectual” taints, but of what LaVallee Poussin refers to as “klesas de l’ordre emotif, qui sont dans notre langue les <<passions>>, a savoir l’aversion et la desir.” La Valle Poussin’s analytical dichotomy is fortuitous, highlighting *sammāsankappa* as an essential

²⁵³ *Vammika Sutta* of the *MN*; see Nanamoli 1995, 237-239.

complement to the other wing of *pañña*, *sammādiṭṭhi*: “Détruire les <<erreurs>> n’est pas détruire les <<passions>> pour avoir reconnu la caractere impermanent et nocif des chises agréables, l’ascete continue cependant a les trouver agréables et á les désirer.”²⁵⁴

From this vantage point, *sammasankappa* distinctly resonates with the Mahāyāna’s emphasis on *mahākaruna* as the complement to *prajñā*.

What then, is this complement, the Right View (*sammādiṭṭhi*) dimension of *pañña*? In its detailed explication of sixty-two kinds wrong understandings, the *Brahmajāla* provides perhaps the most memorable doctrinal explication:

There are, monks, some ascetics and Brahmins who... put forth speculative theories about the past... Some... proclaim the partial eternity and partial non-eternity of the self and world... Some... proclaim the finitude and infinitude of the world... [Some are] eel-wrigglers, [who] resort to evasive statements and wriggle like eels... Some proclaim the doctrine of Unconscious Post-Mortem Survival... [while still others] proclaim Nibbana Here and Now...²⁵⁵

Purveyors of so many quack medical remedies, adherents of wrong views share a common misunderstanding: all assume a conception of self (*atta*), the foundation of ignorance (*avijjā*) from which inexorably follows a chain of dependent origination: “[Adherents of wrong views] experience these feelings by repeated contact though the six sense-bases; feeling conditions craving; craving conditions clinging; clinging conditions becoming; becoming conditions birth; birth conditions aging and death, sorrow, lamentation, sadness and distress.”²⁵⁶ An elaborate speculative system based on *atta* is nothing more than a castle built on sand, the stuff of “mental fabrication” (*papañca*):

²⁵⁴ See Musīla et Nārada, Melanges Chinois et Bouddhiques, V Juillet, 1937, 193.

²⁵⁵ *Brahmajāla Sutta* of the *DN*; see Walshe 1995, 73-89.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

Dependent upon the eye and forms, eye-consciousness arises. The meeting of the three is contact. With contact as condition there is feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, that one mentally proliferates. With what one has mentally proliferated as the source, perceptions and notions tinged by proliferation beset a man...²⁵⁷

By contrast, Right View is engendered by *pañña*, and begins from *anatta*:

[T]hose various views that arise in the world associated either with the doctrine of self or with doctrines about the world: if [the object] in relation to which those views arise, which they underlie, and which they are exercised upon is seen as it actually is with proper *pañña* thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’ than the abandoning and relinquishing of those views comes about.²⁵⁸

The true antidote to futile views is *pañña* in its aspect of *sammāditthi* –which is, the Buddha affirms, no view at all: “Speculative view’ is something the Tathāgata has put away...[W]ith the destruction, fading away, cessation, giving up, and relinquishing of all conceivings, all excogitations, all I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit, the Tathāgata is liberated...”²⁵⁹ It is easy to see why scholars such as Underwood suggest that “*pañña* as *sammāditthi* seems to be the forerunner of the Perfection of Insight (Prajñāpāramitā) and Mādhyamika notions of *prajña*.”²⁶⁰

Given its radical and hallmark nature, it is not surprising that the opposition of right and wrong view in the Pāli Nīkāya literature also conveys a wide range of non-technical, rhetorical uses. “The first and most simple sense,” suggests Steven Collins, “is that of having a correct attitude to one’s social and religious duties, in the light of the belief

²⁵⁷ *Madhupīṇḍika Sutta* of the *MN*; see Nanamoli 1995, 202.

²⁵⁸ *Sallekha Sutta* of the *MN*. *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁵⁹ *Aggivacchagotta Sutta* of the *MN*. *Ibid.*, 592.

²⁶⁰ Underwood 1973, 143.

system of *karma* and *samsāra*. By the time the Buddhist Suttas were collected, these ideas had changed from being the particular concern of Brahmanical sacrifice and ascetic renunciation, to being ideas which had influence over a whole range of Indian religious life.”²⁶¹ From this perspective, adherence to right view-as-*pañña* signals a particular ideological stance towards conservative, Brahmanic culture as represented by the belief that

There is no (gain from making) gifts, offerings, sacrifice; there is no fruition, no ripening of good or bad deeds; this world and the other do not exist; there is no (benefit from duties towards) mother and father;... there are not to be found in the world ascetics and Brahmins who, living and practicing rightly, proclaim (the existence of) both this world and the next, having personally experienced them by superior knowledge.²⁶²

This suggestion of ‘right view’ as generic anti-Brahmanism hardens into a distinctly Buddhist stance elsewhere in the Nikāyas. In the second sense of the term identified by Collins, ‘right view’ specifically refers to the first limb of the Eightfold Path “which summarises and symbolizes the ideal Buddhist life.”²⁶³ In this context, to affirm this sense of right view is to openly espouse Buddhist thought, and signal one’s basic acquaintance with key doctrines such as the Four Noble Truths:

“And what, monks, is Right View? It is, monks, the knowledge of suffering, the knowledge of the origin of suffering, the knowledge of the cessation of suffering, and the knowledge of the way of practice leading to the cessation of suffering. This is called Right View.”²⁶⁴

²⁶¹ Collins 1998, 88.

²⁶²For comparable examples of this refrain, see the *Sāmaññaphala Sutta* in the *DN*, and the *Sāleyyaka Sutta* in the *MN*. This passage, which derives from the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* of the *MN*, was cited in -- and translated by -- Collins 1998, 88.

²⁶³ Collins 1982, 90.

²⁶⁴ *Mahāsaripatthāna Sutta* of the *DN*, 348.

Adherence to right view functions to identify a person, not merely as generically anti-Brahmanic, but as actively Buddhist: one with “a knowledge of Buddhist doctrine and the motivation to accept and introject it”. It is in this sense, notes Collins, “that right view can be placed at the very beginning of the Path.”²⁶⁵

Significantly, the progressively deepening association of right view with ‘Buddhist identity’ culminates in its final meaning sense: right view as *pañña*, liberating wisdom:

And what, bhikkus, is right view? Right view, I say, is two-fold: there is right view that is affected by taints, partaking of merit, ripening on the side of attachment; and there is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path...

And what, bhikkus, is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path? The *pañña*, the faculty of *pañña*, the power of *pañña*, the investigation-of-states enlightenment factor, the path factor of right view on one whose mind is noble, whose mind is taintless, who possesses the noble path and is developing the noble path: this is right view that is noble, taintless, supramundane, a factor of the path.²⁶⁶

The Buddha’s presentation of the two-fold nature of right view is intriguing: right view apparently comes in degrees. Thus, its progressive introjection can serve as a yardstick to measure one’s progress on the Buddhist path, and the deepening identification of a person as Buddha. The culmination of this two-pronged evolution is, of course, nothing less than *pañña* itself: the right view that is noble and taintless, the faculty which itself has different degrees, the highest of which is that of *arhat*, liberation. To possess this noble taintless *pañña* is to exemplify the Buddhist *virtuoso* – s/he who has progressed from a ‘learner’ (*sekho*) with only a rudimentary acquaintance with

²⁶⁵ Collins 1982, 90.

²⁶⁶ *Mahācattārisaka Sutta* of the *MN*; Nanamoli 1995, 935.

doctrine to Buddhist ‘adept (*asekho*)—the monk-extraordinaire who “has arrived at the end of suffering” and “sees things as they are.”²⁶⁷

Prajñā in the Mahāyāna

Introduction:

As we have seen, Pāli Buddhist texts equate *pañña* with the signature Buddhist teaching of selflessness (*anātman*), with the internalization of Buddhist values and with the concomitant cultivation of a Buddhist identity. To cultivate one’s *pañña* faculty was to cultivate oneself as a Buddhist. Accordingly, an unmitigated *pañña* insight signified the paramount embodiment of Buddhist identity: *pañña* was a reiteration of the Buddha’s own experience of enlightened insight. Community recognition of a teaching as *pañña* thus stamped it as legitimate: it was *buddhavacana*, spoken by the Buddha or by a speaker empowered by him, and so implicitly canonical.

Locus of philosophical innovation, of community identity, of legitimacy -- it is not surprising that *prajñā* was seized upon as the ideological and rhetorical focal point of a Buddhist minority movement that emerged at the turn of the common era. Retroactively known as the Mahāyāna, or the Universal Vehicle, examination of inscriptional evidence suggests that this movement was primarily monastic in origin and nature. Thus,

²⁶⁷ This dual sense of *pañña* is underscored by Collins, who notes that ‘when [the eight limbs of the Path] are taken as a linear sequence, Wisdom occurs twice. At the beginning, it involves simply knowledge of basic doctrine and the motivation – if only in theory – to apply it to oneself. When this application is in fact undertaken, it is said to lead to perception of phenomenological truth of Buddhist doctrine, and so Wisdom recurs at the end of the Path as liberating “insight” or “understanding”. This recurrence of wisdom is sometimes recognized by the addition of a further two limbs to the path, *samāñāna* ‘right knowledge’ and *samāvimutti*, ‘right release’. This is said to be the ten-fold path of the ‘adept’, in contrast with the eightfold path of the ‘learner’. Collins 1982, 90.

even after its initial appearance in the public domain in the 2nd century (Mahāyāna) appears to have remained an extremely limited minority movement, - if it remained at all - that attracted absolutely no documented public popular support for at least two more centuries. It is again a demonstrable fact that anything even approaching popular support for the Mahayana cannot be documented until the 4th/5th century AD, and even then the support is overwhelmingly by monastic, not lay, donors, although there was -as we know from Chinese translations - a large and early Mahayana literature, there was no early, organized, independent, publically supported movement that it could have belonged to.²⁶⁸

Standing in stark contrast to a long-held view of the Mahāyāna as the brainchild of the laity - a revolutionary backlash against the increasing elitism and inaccessibility of monks and nuns -- it reminds us that 'Mahāyāna' denoted neither a schism within the *sangha* nor an institutional affiliation. Rather, it signified a broad-based philosophical orientation, grounded in a stinging critique of pre-existing *dhamma* theory and understanding of *prajñā*.

What was the nature of this critique? According to these monastic exegetes, the orthodox Nikāya adherents -- disparagingly dubbed Hīnayānists, or followers of the Inferior Vehicle - were fatally misinformed about the Buddha's real teaching on the nature of *dhammas*. The Nikāya vision was a prison of naive realism that compromised the breadth and profundity of the Buddha's insight, and erroneously underestimated the human capacity for personal transformation. In short, it was a vision of reality derived from an incomplete application of *prajñā*; the Hīnayāna teaching was "a defective *prajñā*, not the perfection of *prajñā*, or no real *prajñā* at all."²⁶⁹

²⁶⁸ Gregory Schopen, "The Amitabha Inscription" in *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 124-25.

²⁶⁹ Williams 1989, 43.

In contrast, the Mahāyāna movement identified itself with the perfection (*pāramitā*) of *prajñā*. Its teaching signaled the fullest embodiment of the Buddha's experience which was itself the Universal Vehicle ideal -- complete and perfect Buddhahood itself. The wisdom of *prajñā* was glorified as the "the most important mental power in Buddhism...the only wisdom that can effect a being's liberation from suffering...the perfect, experiential knowledge of the nature of reality..."²⁷⁰ In Mahāyāna polemic, to perfect one's *prajñā* was shorthand for attaining enlightenment; it meant nothing less than recovering the original inspiration of the Buddha,²⁷¹ becoming a true son or daughter of the Buddha at last.

The Mahāyāna exegetes built upon the rhetorical dimensions of *prajñā* developed by their Nikāya predecessors to promulgate their message. Just as the Nikāya's *pañña* was identified with the early Buddhist critique of the Brahmanic *ātman*, so the Universal Vehicle's *prajñā-pāramitā* connoted the Mahāyāna's salutary correction of Nikāya *dhamma* theory. Where *pañña* distinguished the Buddhists from the non-Buddhists in the Pāli imaginaire, *prajñā-pāramitā* elevated the monks interested in heterodox Universal Vehicle ideas above their 'inferior' Nikāya colleagues. Most importantly, where

²⁷⁰ Robert A. F. Thurman and Marilyn Rhie. Wisdom and Compassion: the Sacred Art of Tibet. New York: Abrams, 1991, 393.

²⁷¹ This sense of the Mahāyāna as a conservative revivalist movement has recently been suggested by Schopen's analysis of the *Maitreyamahā-simhananda sūtra*. This work, which is traced to the 1st century CE Kusana period, advocates "a highly conservative monastic vision of Buddhism, centered on the inferiority of the laity, austere practices in the forest as in ideal: "if there is any relationship of the polemic found in the *Maitreyamahāsimhananda sūtra* to the 'rise of the mahāyāna Buddhism' that relationship remains mystery. This early 'mahāyāna' polemic does not seem connected to the 'rise' of anything, but rather to the continuity and persistence of a narrow set of conservative Buddhist ideas on cult and monastic practice." Schopen 1999, 313.

recognition of a teaching as *pañña* stamped it as *buddhavacana* in Nikāya communities, the perfection of *prajñā* teachings were, in the rhetoric of Mahāyāna exegetes, implicitly legitimate: they were the complete, trans-local and trans-historical teaching of the Buddha and so unarguably canonical.

Consequently, the Mahāyāna exaltation of the deeply-valued and rhetorically-charged *prajñā* may in part be understood as a strategy of legitimation – an attempt by a cluster of dedicated monastics to appropriate *prajñā*'s cultural authority in Buddhist communities, and by extension, achieve greater institutional viability. Discussions and explications of *prajñā* in early Mahāyāna literature are thus fruitfully read at least two levels: as philosophical discourse, and attempt to challenge the authority of the orthodox *sangha* communities. A fuller understanding of the probable origins of the Mahāyāna will help make this clear.

Books and bones:

Drawing upon the careful analysis of material artifacts dating from the first century BCE, as well as of hundreds of extant *sūtras* composed in Middle Indo-Aryan and then Sanskrit from the first through at least the fifth centuries CE, contemporary scholars assert that the Mahāyāna was, first and foremost, a monastic initiative -- a philosophical development championed by established, *vinaya*-adhering monks and nuns. According to this hypothesis, promulgators of the new Universal Vehicle literature developed into “a loose federation of a number of distinct though related cults” each of which organized itself around the worship of a particular *sūtra* and attendant practices. For these monastic practitioners, the ‘book’ functioned as the primary object of veneration: its presence signaled sacred ground.

By so doing, the *sūtra* displaced the *stūpa* – a monument built over the relics of the Buddha – as the primary site of devotional practice for both lay and monastic followers. The *sūtra* was, in fact, displayed and revered as a holy object by Mahāyānists in much the way *stūpas* were, by “honoring, revering it with flowers, incense, rows of lamps.”²⁷²

What was the significance of this shift? One needs to view the *stūpa* through the eyes of the early Buddhist practitioners to appreciate the implications of this *sūtra stūpa* displacement. In his influential examination of relic veneration in Barabaður, Paul Mus argues that to the early Indian Buddhist, the *stūpa* served as an object of mediation -- a “mesocosm” – between the human realm and the realm of nirvāṇa. The *stūpa* was the body of the departed Buddha, “a body vivified by the corporeal remains of the departed master and made present to the faithful.”²⁷³ As such, early texts and archeological records link *stūpa* worship with key sites in the Buddha’s life and career, i.e. “the Lumbinī garden... where the Buddha was born, the Bodhi Tree, under which he attained Enlightenment... The kingdom of Kāśī, in the city of Benares, [where] he set in motion the Wheel of the Dharma in twelve ways.”²⁷⁴ The continued presence of the Buddha may have been denied by the philosophical tradition, but it was maintained and expressed

²⁷² Gregory Schopen, “The phrase ‘*sa prthivipradesas caityabhuto bhavet*’ in the *Vajracchedika*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna” in *Indo Iranian Journal* 17: 171.

²⁷³ Kevin Trainor, Relics, Ritual, and Representation in Buddhism: Rematerializing the Śrī Lankan Theravada Tradition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 38.

²⁷⁴ From the *Aṣṭamahāsthānacaiyastrotra*, cited in John S. Strong, The Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations. Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1995, 5.

through the cult of relic veneration:²⁷⁵ as the *Mahāvamsa* put it, “When the relics are seen, the Buddha is seen.”²⁷⁶ The *stūpa* was thus the reference point for this paradox – the site which evoked the Buddha’s post-*parinirvāṇa* absence even as it invoked his continued presence in the Indian landscape. The *stūpa* was the nexus point which looked backward in time to the Buddha’s life, and forward to the continued life of the *sangha* and to the omnipresence of buddhahood.²⁷⁷

Finally, these ‘substitute Buddha-bodies’ were the object of financial offerings by religious pilgrims, and so meant economic vitality to the *sangha* body by which they were maintained. In fact, one might argue that the *stūpa*’s significance was not limited to the economic health of the Buddhist monastery but to the larger Indian empire: the host of *stūpas* and *vihāras* that were founded in proximity to secular capitals and long-distance trade routes throughout India by the common era makes clear that the growth and dissemination of Buddhism both in and beyond India was reciprocally linked to long-distance trade and markets, and helped provide the

²⁷⁵ For closer discussion of this suggestion, see Gregory Schopen 1997, Chapters 7 and 8.

²⁷⁶ William Geiger, ed., The Mahāvamsa. London: Pāli Text Society, 1908, 133.

²⁷⁷ John Strong looks to the Sarvāstivādin understanding of time to make sense of this paradox. As their name suggests, the Sarvāstivādins propound the theory that dharmas exist in all three times, the past, present and future. Strong consequently hypothesizes that “from a Sarvāstivādin perspective, though the Buddha cannot be said to be ‘present’ in an image, he can be said to be ‘past’”. In this light, images (*stūpas*, relics, bodhi trees) do not make present something absent; rather, they – and the sentiment of *bhakti* directed towards them – enable the worshipper to overcome the barrier of time. They make possible a religious experience, not of the Buddha’s presence, but of his pastness, i.e., of his absence, his impermanence...” See 132-134 of “Buddha Bhakti and the Absence of the Blessed One” in Premier Colloque Etienne Lamotte (Bruxelles et Liege 24-27 septembre 1989). Louvain-La-Neuve: Institut Orientaliste, 1993, 131-140.

'horizontally' integrated infrastructure of extensive empires, such as those of the Mauryas and Kusanas, incorporating ethnically diverse military and mercantile elites. By its built-in potential for expansion and horizontal linkage, Buddhism was eminently suited to those imperially sprawling formations which organized themselves primarily around strategic urban centers and trade routes... Buddhism also provided the ideological and cultural setting of the world of the maritime merchant.²⁷⁸

This propinquity likewise underlines the deep interdependence of Buddhist monasticism with local economic concerns:

the construction of each of (these *stūpas*) was paid for by the entire-cross-section of society from kings and queens down to royal functionaries, craftsmen of various sorts, merchants and guilds, and, of course, monks and nuns. Patrons resided in the same region or came from afar, and the short donors' inscriptions (cf. Luders 1912) demonstrate with great clarity how the spread of Buddhism in this phase was associated with the burgeoning inland commerce and the economically secure laity.²⁷⁹

Seeking religious merit (*punya*), social status and even material benefits, merchants, monarchs, monastics and lay people donated increasing amounts of wealth to *vihāras* and *stūpas*. As such, the Buddhist monasticism of this period came to serve less tangible - - yet no less important -- symbolic functions:

By the third century B.C., major institutional forms of political power, and long-distance trade were centered in nodes of permanent settlement connected by trade routes. Buddhist monastic sites grew up at these new nodes and along the routes serving as symbolic structures mediating social hierarchy within a new urban complex. The triad of political power and commerce centered in stable occupational sites, associated with Buddhism as a major religious component, lasted into the Christian era.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Andre Winke, *Al-Hind, the Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, Vol. 1. Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1991, 227.

²⁷⁹ Dilip K. Chakrabarti, "Buddhist Sites Across South Asia As Influenced by Political and Economic Forces." *World Archaeology* 27, no. 2, p. 198.

²⁸⁰ James Heitzman, "Early Buddhism, Trade and Empire." In *Studies in the Archeology and Palaeoanthropology of South Asia*, Editors Kenneth AR Kennedy and Gregory L. Possehl. New Delhi, Bombay and Calcutta: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co, 1984, 2.

Imbued with unparalleled economic and ideological significance, the *stūpa* arguably functioned as what Stanley Tambiah calls an ‘indexical symbol:’ a duplex sign that

refers back to classical constructs and forward to uses in the present... The main point about indexical symbols or shifters is that they have a duplex structure because they combined two roles – they are symbols that are associated with the represented object by a conventional semantic rule, and they are simultaneously also indexes in existential, pragmatic relation to the objects they represent. The dual meanings point in two directions at once – in the semantic direction of cultural presuppositions and conventional understandings and in the pragmatic direction of the social and interpersonal context of action, the line-up of the participants and the processes by which they establish or infer meanings.²⁸¹

These then, are some the complex roles and meanings tacitly attributed by some Mahāyānists to the *sūtra*. A superior substitute for the relics of the Buddha, the *sūtra* was presented as a new, more authentic Buddha-body, “fulfilling the desire for restored presence, physically standing for his speech, manifest as the body of his teaching, a dharmakāya.”²⁸² The institutional ramifications of this shift were no less profound. In the realm of Mahāyāna discourse, wherever the book resided was understood to be holy ground; consequently, one no longer needed a *stūpa* -- consecrated and controlled by orthodox monks -- to establish sacred space, to confer legitimacy, and to attract financial donations from the devout. Book worship thus liberated the Mahāyāna monastics from the need for institutional sanction and support of the *sangha*, and allowed for the multiplication of new, heterodox worship centers – issues which Schopen and others

²⁸¹ Stanley Tambiah, *The Buddhist Saints of the Forest and the Cult of the Amulet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, 4.

²⁸² D.S. Lopez, “Authority and Orality in the Mahāyāna” in *Numen*, Vol. 42, 1995, 41.

argue was a pressing concern.²⁸³ Consequently, the conceptualization and exaltation of the text in early Mahāyāna discourse must be understood a means of challenging both the ideological and institutional hegemony of non-Mahāyāna Nikāya communities.

The Mahāyāna *sūtras* themselves mirror these concerns with legitimacy. Many early works are organized around implied accusations that Mahāyāna *sūtras* are not *buddhavacana*, but specious fabrications, doctrinal interlopers unknown until four centuries after the *parinirvāṇa* of the Buddha, and conspicuously absent from the accounts of the first Buddhist councils in which the teachings of the Buddha were compiled. Mahāyāna exegetes responded to such charges with a storm of rebuttals. The Mahāyāna teachings had, some asserted, been given by the Buddha to his most elite disciples who alone were advanced enough to fathom their profundity. The *sūtras* had then been entrusted to the protection and preservation of various *nāgas* and deities until a later and more enlightened era, when ordinary Buddhists would at last be ready to receive them.²⁸⁴ The *sūtras* were thus indeed *buddhavacana*,²⁸⁵ marked by the very fingerprints

²⁸³ Schopen notes the animosity expressed toward the *stūpa* cult expressed in many of the earliest Mahāyāna sutras and interprets the repeated presence of the phrase *sa pṛthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet* (“that spot of earth [where the sūtra is set forth] becomes a truly sacred place” as an indication that the early groups were in sharp need of new worship centers. See Schopen 1975. It should be noted, however, that some Mahāyāna sūtras, such as the *Lotus*, promote *stūpa* veneration in addition to trumpeting their own salvific powers.

²⁸⁴ This story can be found in the Tibetan history by Tāranātha, *History of Buddhism in India*, tr. Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya. Simla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1970, 98.

²⁸⁵ It should be noted that such strategies of legitimation in Indian Buddhism did not begin with the Mahayana movement. The Mahāsamghikas and Mūlasarvāstivādins considered both ‘what the Buddha said’ as well as the discourses of his disciples as buddhavacana. The Pāli Vinaya considers the proclamations of the Buddha, *śrāvakas*, selected *ṛsis*, and gods such as Indra as legitimate teachings. In the *Mahāparinibbāna*

of the codifiers of the so-called orthodox tradition -- historical luminaries such as Śariputra, Maudgalyayana, Kāśyapa, and Subhūti. Thus from the stance of this “revisionist myth as revisionist history,”²⁸⁶ charges of inauthenticity were worse than unfounded: they were tacit evidence of the attacker’s own intellectual and spiritual shortcomings. Skeptics and doubters should take to heart the Buddha’s condemnation of anti-Mahāyāna hypocrites: in texts such as the first-century *Pratyutpanna-buddha-sammukhāvasthita samādhi-sūtra* (PraS):

At some future time *bhikṣus* and bodhisattvas who are...stupid, deficient in wisdom, overproud of their attainments of trance...[will] with the intention of belittling...deriding...and reviling...say: ‘The proliferation of these scriptures, the appearance in the world of the likes of the *bhikṣu* Ānanda, and the appearance of *sūtras* like this are indeed wonders!’ and going to a secret place they will revile it, saying to each other: ‘*Sūtras* like these are fabrications, they are poetic inventions, they were not spoken by the Buddha, nor were they authorised by the Buddha!’...And saying ‘These *sūtras* were not spoken by the Buddha,’ they will make other people believe so too. In that way, they will cultivate, develop and increase their paucity of merit, those stupid men who have scant merit, have not engendered wholesome potentialities, have not done their duty under former Jinas, have rejected the supreme and precious Dharma, and are excluded from the precious Dharma.²⁸⁷

Interestingly, this very early *sūtra* provides clues to yet another possible in-road to legitimacy invoked by Mahāyāna monastics –meditatively-induced revelation. It is clear

Sutta of the *Dīghanikāya* (II.123), the Buddha articulates four criterion (*mahāpadeśa*) for ascertaining the dharmic validity of a teaching. For a discussion of this, see Lopez, 1995(a), 26-28. For a survey of Mahāyāna criteria for textual authenticity, see Ronald Davidson’s excellent “An Introduction to the Standards of Scriptural Authority in Indian Buddhism” in Robert Buswell, ed., *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990.

²⁸⁶ See Lopez 1995(a), 26.

²⁸⁷ Cited from Paul Harrison, *The Samādhi of Direct Encounter with the Buddha of the Present: An Annotated English Translation of the Tibetan Version of the Pratyutpanna Buddha Sammukhāvasthita Samādhi Sūtra with Several Appendices Relating to the History of the Text*. Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies, 1990, 55-58.

that as early as the first century BCE, Buddhist monastics were engaging in the structured visualization or recollection (*anusmṛti*) of the Buddha as a means of invoking his presence.²⁸⁸ The *PraS* suggests that by at least the first century CE, *anusmṛti* practices were directed to buddhas such as Amitayus, who eloquently preached the dharma in his Pure Land to his bodhisattva devotees. The dedicated practitioner of *anusmṛti* could,

if he concentrates on the Tathāgata Amitayus with undistracted thought for seven days and nights...see the Lord...[C]onceiving himself to be in that world system he also hears the Dharma. Having heard their exposition he accepts, masters and retains those Dharmas...After he has emerged from that *samādhi*, that bodhisattva also expounds widely to others those Dharmas as he has heard, retained and mastered them.

By the power of *samādhi*, therefore, the Mahāyāna monastic could see and hear a/the Buddha, and so assert the authenticity of Mahāyāna teachings on the most conservative mainstream criteria: *ekasmin evam maya śrutam*.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Thus the Buddha of the *Ekottarāgama* instructs his disciples: ‘A *bhikṣu* correct in body and mind sits crosslegged and focuses his thought in front of him. Without entertaining any other thought he earnestly calls to mind [*anusmṛ*] the Buddha. He contemplates the image of the Tathāgata without taking his eyes off it. Not taking his eyes off it he then calls to mind the qualities of the Tathāgata – the Tathāgata’s body...his perfection of the moral qualities (*śīla*)...the Tathāgata’s *samādhis*, never diminishing... the Tathāgata’s body of wisdom [*prajñā*], its knowledge unlimited and unobstructed; the Tathāgata’s body perfected in liberation [*vimukti*], done with all destinies...the Tathāgata’s body, a city of the knowledge and vision of liberation [*vimuktijñānadarśana*], knowing the faculties of others and whether or not they shall be liberated...This is the practice of *buddhānusmṛti*, by which one...arrives at Nirvana. Therefore, *bhikṣus*, you should always meditate on, and never depart from. *buddhānusmṛti*... Thus, *bhikṣus*, should you undertake this training.’ Cited from Paul Harrison’s translation of the Chinese. See Paul Harrison, “*Buddhānusmṛti* in the *Pratyutpanna-Buddha-Saṃmukhāvasthita-Samādhi-Sūtra*.” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 6 (1978), 38.

²⁸⁹ In his discussion of early *anusmṛti* practice, it is of interest to note that Paul Harrison distinguishes between “two substantially different approaches” to the idea of *buddhānusmṛti* and *buddha-darśana* on the basis of their respective orientations to *Prajñā-pāramitā* discourse. To Pure Land-style adherents, ‘seeing the Buddha’ is an actual and quite sensual event: “the immediate objective it holds out to the faithful is

Other Mahāyāna origin stories legitimized specific teachers and schools of thought. Thus in the second century C.E. *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, the Buddha explains that four centuries after his death, a monk named Nāgārjuna would re-establish the Mahāyāna.²⁹⁰ Later Tibetan historians concretized the intimacy of Nāgārjuna's connection to Mahāyāna's foundational *prajñā* literature by presenting him as its shamanic patron saint; the thirteenth century Busto portraits Nāgārjuna as a brilliant young monk from the south of India who is invited by the *nāgas* to study in their under-water libraries. There, he discovers the Mahāyāna *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*, which had been lost to humanity since their exposition by the Buddha. Recognizing the timeliness and profundity of the teachings, Nāgārjuna carries the precious *sūtras* home and so heralds a new age in the revelation of the true Buddha dharma.

The preoccupation with legitimacy by the Mahāyāna exegetes was further reflected by their appropriation and re-working of sanctioned Nikāya terms and values. Graeme

undoubtedly rebirth in the paradise of Sukhāvāṭī and the enjoyment of its spiritual pleasures, so lavishly described throughout the (*Sukhāvāṭīvyūha*) *sūtra*." The second strand of practitioners reject such understandings as erroneously materialistic. As the author of the *Pratyutpanna-sūtra* makes clear, the ontological nature of the *buddhānusmṛti* experience is rightfully located in *Prajñā-pāramitā* thought, which considers such a buddha-encounter to be like a dream, a product of the practitioner's own mind. These *samādhi*-encounters can arise throughout the practitioner's life, and must not become objects of attachment or reification. Rather, they must be used as opportunities to deepen one's insight into the void nature of the Buddha's form. One wonders if this might be a kind of prototype for deity yoga, where the mind perceiving voidness is none other than that which appears as the form of the deity. See Paul Harrison 1978, especially 51 ff.

²⁹⁰ *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* X 165-66. David Ruegg notes that it is actually "a certain Nāgāvaya – literally, the one named Nāga -- [who] is mentioned in the *Lankāvatārasūtra* in the context of a prophecy (*vyākaraṇa*) where he is evidently identified with Nāgārjuna himself." For further discussion of the identify of Nāgāvaya, see David Seyfort Ruegg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, 56.

MacQueen notes that “as is often the case...with revolutionaries, many of the terminological and conceptual resources available to them were in the tradition with which they were breaking.”²⁹¹ For the Mahāyāna thinkers, this meant the ‘revisiting’ of Nikāya understandings as canonical as the ontological status of the Buddha, and the necessity of monastic status for the attainment of enlightenment.²⁹² In particular, the hallowed Nikāya ideal of personal liberation (*arhat*-hood) was vociferously denounced. In contrast to the ‘narrow, self-centered scope’ of the Hīnayāna (Lesser Vehicle) practitioners, the Universal Vehicle followers proclaimed their commitment to achieving full Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings – to foster “the messianic resolve to

²⁹¹ Graeme MacQueen, “Inspired Speech in Early Mahāyāna II,” *Religion* 12, 1982, 61.

²⁹² It should be noted that scholars such as Rawlinson, Lancaster, Kalupahana and Williams have problematized this definitional rule of thumb by highlighting important exceptions; for example, the absence of key Mahāyāna terms and ideas in the earliest passages of the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka* and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*; the absence of the bodhisattva ideal in the *Kāśyapa-parivarta*; the absence of non-Mahāyāna rhetoric (or even the term Mahāyāna) in the ‘proto-Mahāyāna’ *Ajitasena Sutra*. As such, there are meaningful difficulties and dangers incumbent upon too recklessly applying the term; Ergil Fronsdal asserts that “for the most part, the term Mahāyāna has been adopted by modern Buddhist scholarship to delimit a historical category which is inappropriate for describing developments in Buddhist India during the first two or three centuries of the Common Era. And since this category has received such prominence in descriptions of Indian Buddhist history, it has also cast its influence on our historical understanding of much of Indian Buddhism that is considered outside “the Mahāyāna.”... If we define the Mahāyāna as a distinct school or group, we have difficulty in establishing its boundaries. What, for example, is the appropriate identification for a monk who is ordained, say, in a Sarvāstivāda lineage, lives in a Sarvāstivāda monastery, and is pursuing the bodhisattva path?... When the modern scholarly community labels a text a Mahāyāna sūtra, it is all too often using the term in a different and/or wider meanings than the word might have in the text itself...” Ergil Fronsdal, “Dawn of the Bodhisattva Path: Studies in a Religious Ideal of Ancient Indian Buddhists With Particular Emphasis on the Earliest Extant Perfection of Wisdom Sutra.” Ph.d dissertation, Stanford University, 41-42.

liberate all beings by transforming the entire universe into a realm of peace, abundance and happiness.”²⁹³

They make up their minds that ‘one single self we shall tame...one single self we shall lead to final Nirvana.’ A bodhisattva should not in such a way train itself. On the contrary, he should train himself thus: ‘My own self I will place in Suchness, and, so that all the world might be helped, I will place all beings in Suchness, and I will lead to Nirvana the whole world of immeasurable world of beings.’²⁹⁴

This commitment crystallized in the hallmark Mahāyāna ideal of the all-compassionate bodhisattva: the ‘enlightenment hero/heroine’ who vows to be reborn, no matter how many times necessary, in order to attain complete and perfect buddhahood for the purpose of liberating all beings from suffering.²⁹⁵ “Great compassion...takes hold of him. He surveys countless beings with his heavenly eye, and what he sees fills him with great agitation...And he attends to them with the thought that: ‘I shall become a saviour to all those beings, I shall release them from all their sufferings!’”²⁹⁶ The career of the bodhisattva is thus launched with the practitioner’s transformative awakening of the ‘aspiration for enlightenment’, or *bodhicitta*, and propelled by her unshakeable vow to embody universal unconditional compassion (*mahākaruṇā*).

²⁹³ Thurman and Rhie 1991, 24.

²⁹⁴ Edward Conze, The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines and Its Verse Summary. Bolinas: Four Seasons Foundation, 1973, 163.

²⁹⁵ The translation of the term bodhisattva is itself a dissertation topic. For an overview of key Euro-American translations, see Har Dayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Literature. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1970, 4-9.

²⁹⁶ Conze 1973, 238-39

This messianic commitment fuels the bodhisattva's rigorous cultivation of an array of spiritual and ethical practices which develop the mundane and super-ordinary powers needed to help sentient beings. The nuts and bolts of this training was formalized in some of the earliest Mahāyāna literature. The *PP 8,000* draws upon the Nikāya model of the ten perfections (*pāramitās*)²⁹⁷ to extol the six *pāramitās* as the religious practices of the bodhisattva: transcendent giving (*dāna*), ethics (*śīla*), tolerance (*ksānti*), effort (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and critical wisdom (*prajñā*).²⁹⁸ Each is important to the bodhisattva's self-cultivation, yet it is the perfection of *prajñā*, we learn, which is the pivot that "controls, guides and leads the five *pāramitās*. The five *pāramitās* are in this manner contained in the transcendent wisdom, and the term *prajñā-pāramitā* is merely a synonym for the fulfillment of the six *pāramitās*."²⁹⁹ This training was mirrored by the bodhisattva's development of *upāya*, 'artistry' – the ability creatively to adapt himself and his teachings to the specific aptitude and needs of his followers. Like the Buddha, the bodhisattva thus "teaches the Dharma according to whatever is the tolerance of his disciples. He teaches the Dharma to some in order to refrain from sin, to some in order to

²⁹⁷ The Pāli formula lists *dāna* (generosity), *śīla* (ethics), *nekkhamma* (renunciation), *pañña* (critical wisdom), *virīya* (energy), *khanti* (forebearance), *sacca* (truthfulness), *adhiṭṭhāna*, resolution, *metta* (friendliness), *upekkhā*, (equanimity). See Har Dayal 1970, 167 ff.

²⁹⁸ Although *upāya* is not one of the six *pāramitās*, it soon added as the seventh in an expanded list of ten, namely *upāya* (artistry), *pranidhāna* (commitment), *bala* (strength), intuition (*jñāna*). *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁹⁹ Conze 1973, 111.

accomplish virtue, to some to rely on dualism, to some to be independent of dualism...”³⁰⁰

Paul Harrison’s work strongly suggests that the bodhisattva was, among the Buddhist monks and nuns at the turn of the Common Era, largely understood to be a human ideal -- a group to join, a community identity to pursue. It is equally clear however, that by the first century C.E., early Mahāyāna also included practices centered around super-human bodhisattva figures who intercede into human affairs with powers so marvelous as to make the distinction between buddha and bodhisattva functionally invisible. *Sūtras* such as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* extol the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as the embodiment of great compassion, whose commitment to helping beings drives him to the deepest hell realms to lessen the suffering of its tormented inhabitants, rescue the innocent faithful from fire and roaring rivers, grant sons and daughters to worthy devotees, even to grant the Hindu god Śiva permission to rule.

Later Tantric literature hails the perfection of *prajñā* and compassion (*karuṇā*) as the two fundamental coefficients of enlightenment, a short-hand *dvandva* for the bodhisattva path. Yet this development is foreshadowed in far earlier Mahāyāna works. The *Aṣṭāśahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* or *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 lines* (hereafter *PP 8,000*) identifies *upāya* with compassion (*karuṇā*), and so plants

³⁰⁰ Nāgārjuna’s *Ratnāvalī*, Ch. IV, 94-95. *De bzhin sangs rgyas gdul bya la’ji tsam bzod pa’i chos ston to’kha jog la ni sdig pa’i las nram par bzlog phyir chos sdon te’kha jig bsod nams ‘grub bya’i phyir’kha cig la ni gnyis brden pa’kha cik la ni gnyis mi brten*. See *Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series XXII*. Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1991, 234-235.

the seed for the later treatment in Mahāyāna parlance of the *prajñā-upāya* pair as a synonym for *prajñā* and compassion:

When there are no Worthy Tathagatas...in the world...the Bodhisattvas who are possessed of artistry (*upāya-kaśālyā*) from the flow of the perfection of *prajñā* previously heard, feel compassion for living beings, and arousing this compassion, they come to this world and foster the ten virtuous ways of behavior...Just as plants and stones reflect the light of the moon and the lunar mansions reflect its light, so in the absence of Worthy Tathagatas...whatever holy conduct, good conduct, virtuous conduct is manifested and recognized in this world, all that comes about this the Bodhisattvas, is produced by Bodhisattvas and becomes manifest through their artistry.³⁰¹

The second century *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*, extending the association of *prajñā* with the female, famously characterizes the pair as the parents of enlightenment heroes: “Of the true bodhisattvas, the mother is the transcendence of wisdom the father is *upāya*; the Leaders are born of such parents.”³⁰² *Vimalakīrti* makes clear that *prajñā*'s deepest function is to serve as the complement to objectless (*anupalambha*) great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*): “*prajñā* not integrated with *upāya* is bondage, but *prajñā* integrated with *upāya* is liberation.”³⁰³ The bodhisattva is thus a seamless fusion of *prajñā* with *upāya* -- as integration which was most literally enacted and depicted in later (post sixth century)

³⁰¹ Conze 1973, 28; Sanskrit in P. L. Vaidya, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā With Haribhadra's Commentary Called Aloka*. Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, 4. Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960. 37. A corresponding passage is found in the PP 18,000; see Conze's *Large Sutra of Perfect Wisdom*, 1975, 237-38.

³⁰² *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa sūtra*, Ch. 8. See Thurman 1992, 67.

³⁰³ *Vimalakīrti nirdeśa sūtra*, Ch. 5. See *Ibid.*, 46.

Tantric practice and imagery as male-female sexual union wherein “*prajñā* is the woman, and *upāya* is the man...”³⁰⁴

What is the philosophical basis for this privileging and adulation of critical wisdom? How does the adulation of *prajñā* intersect with the larger Mahāyāna campaign for legitimacy? Here, one needs to look to the earliest and philosophically most influential of the Mahāyāna’s diverse *sūtras*: the aptly named Perfection of Wisdom or *Prajñāpāramitā* (*PP*) *sūtras*, “conveniently regarded as marking the beginning of the Mahāyāna...”³⁰⁵ The nature and object of *prajñā* are the core foci of the *Prajñāpāramitā* analysis, whose conclusions are arguably the foundation of all Mahāyāna Buddhist scholastic traditions. An overview of its background will help place its radical philosophy in context.

³⁰⁴ *Yoṣit tāvad bhavet prajñā upāya puruṣa smṛta*. See the *Hevajra Tantra*, 26.8. For Sanskrit, see G. W. Farrow, The Concealed Essence of the Hevajra Tantra With the Commentary Yogaratnamala. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1992, 94.

³⁰⁵ David Snellgrove, Indo-Tibetan Buddhism: Indian Buddhists and Their Tibetan Successors, Volume Two. Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1987, 316.

Prajñāpāramitā: background

Following the broad outline of Edward Conze, the *Prajñāpāramitā (PP) sūtras* may be considered a body of about twenty self-consciously related works that probably date from the first century BCE, and extend for over a thousand years. Conze's four phase model of the origin and development of the *PP* literature is helpful. From 100 BCE-100 CE, the foundational texts are elaborated, especially the *PP's Ur* text, the *Ratnagunasamcayagatha*, and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, or *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 lines*. The doctrines -- and the texts -- are expanded upon from 100-300 CE, yielding lengthy *sūtras* such as the *Perfection of Wisdom in 18,000, 25,000 and 100,000 Lines*. From 300-500 CE, *Prajñāpāramitā* literature undergoes a period of condensation and systematization that produces the famous *Heart Sūtra* and possibly the *Diamond Cutter Sūtra*.³⁰⁶ The period of 500-1000 CE sees the production of *PP* texts with a marked Tantric influence, including *The 108 Names of Perfect Wisdom* and the *Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Lines*.³⁰⁷ The urge to distill the essence of *PP* thought to its purest and most succinct form arguably reaches a climax during this time with the *Prajñāpāramitā*

³⁰⁶ Conze's chronology is not, of course, universally accepted. Scholars with a bent toward more conservative dating place the earliest *PP sūtras* at the second century CE. See, for example, David Snellgrove's *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, Vol. 2*, 1987, 316. Likewise, the date of the *Vajracchedikā* is subject to much debate. Ryusho Hīkata places it earlier than does Conze, and Gregory Schopen has even suggested it as a possible source for the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*.

³⁰⁷ For a full overview of this four-phase theory, see Edward Conze, *The Prajñāpāramitā Literature*. Second edition. Tokyo: The Reiyukai, 1978, 1-18. The Buddha of the *Aṣṭa* explains that "the transcendent wisdom gets its name from its supreme excellence (*paramavāṭi*). Through it the wholesome roots, dedicated to omniscience, get the name 'transcendence'." *Ibid.*, 111. It is interesting to note that the Tibetan translation of the Sanskrit *pāramitā* assumes its derivation from *param ita*, meaning "gone beyond;" thus, *pha-rol-tu phyin-pa*.

sarvatathāgatamātā ekākṣarā or *The Perfection of Wisdom in a Single Letter, the Mother of All Tathagatas* which, notes Conze, is premised upon “the doctrine of the Mahāsaṅghika school who maintained that the Buddha has taught everything by emitting just one single sound. The auditors hear it each one according to their own needs and in this way the one syllable A is transmitted in the minds of the people into all the sermons of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and on spiritual topics in general all over the world.”³⁰⁸ In the domain of the *PP*, the letter A can carry the same meaning as 100,000 verses – a point which underscores the *PP*’s complex and ambivalent understanding of language as both trap and liberative vehicle.

Importantly, academic interest in the geographic origins of the *PP* segues into larger discussions among scholars of Buddhist history about both the origins of the Mahāyāna movement, and the nature of Asian cross-cultural exchange. Edward Conze looks to Andhra of Southern India for the birth of the *PP* among the Mahāsāṅghika monastic communities near Amarāvati and Dhānyakāṭaka. He points to a passage in the *PP Aṣṭa* in which the Buddha states that the *PP sūtras* will “after the passing away of the Tathāgata, appear in the South. From the South they will spread to the East, and from there to the North”.³⁰⁹ Noting that “Nāgārjuna, whose name is so associated with the consolidation of the *Prajñā-pāramitā*, came from the South of India,” he observes that

the name of the Bhadanta Nāgārjunācārya occurs in an inscription found in the neighborhood of the Stūpa of Jaggayapaṭa. In this area, both Dravidian and Greek

³⁰⁸ This text is preserved only in Tibetan. See Conze, *The Short Prajñāpāramitā Texts*. England: Buddhist Publishing Group, 1993, vii.

³⁰⁹ Conze’s translation of the passage is in his *PP 8,000*, 1973, 159. For his reference to this passage as supporting his thesis of a southern genesis of the *Prajñāpāramitā* see 1978, 2.

influences made themselves felt, and Grousset has rightly called the Stūpa of Amravati a 'Dravidio-Alexandrian synthesis'. In view of the close analogies which exist between *Prajñā-pāramitā* and the Mediterranean literature on Sophia, this seems to me significant...³¹⁰

Etienne Lamotte shares Conze's suspicion of Mediterranean influence on the *PP*, yet spearheads an opposing "out of India" camp which locates *PP* origins in Northwest Asia and Khotan. He counters the *Aṣṭa* prophecy with a reference in the *Mañjuśrī-mūla-kalpa* which asserts that the *PP* was established in the Northwest under Kaniška.³¹¹ Lamotte's position is tacitly corroborated by A.L. Basham, who asserts that inscriptional data indicates a northern origin for Mahāyāna, particularly the Universal Vehicle belief in "heavenly bodhisattvas". Speaking to the apparent discrepancy between textual and material evidence, Basham suggests a two-pronged model, whereby Mahāyāna philosophy may have developed separately from some of its more 'mythological' elements, such as the worship of divine bodhisattvas. Paul Williams clarifies and extends this hypothesis, and underscores the possibility that these two dimensions of Mahāyāna developed simultaneously in the south and north, respectively:

It is possible, although purely hypothetical, to see in the emergence of the Mahāyāna as an identifiable entity the commingling of two originally separate strata, say 'philosophical' and 'religious' (these terms are purely shorthand). The extant *Prajñā-pāramitā*... shows a predominance of the philosophical, while the other wing is represented by the Sukhāvati *sūtras* and the *Akṣobhyavyūha Sūtra*... It would be possible thus to trace the origins of these two tendencies to

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ "Pour le *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* également, c'est bien sous Kaniška que la *Prajñāpāramita*, supreme doctrine du Mahāyāna et Mere du Buddha, fut établie dans la région du Nord-Ouest." See Etienne Lamotte, "Sur La Formation Du Mahayana." in *Asiatica Festschrift Frederich Weller*, 377-96. Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1954, 389. The passage in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* to which he refers can be found at LIII, v. 574, where, in reference to Turuška (Kaniška) it says: *Mahāyānāgradharmam tu buddhānām jananiṣ tathā, prajñāpāramitā loke tasmin dese pratiṣṭhitā.*

different...religio-philosophical trends, and therefore perhaps to different geographical areas.³¹²

This model, which must remain hypothetical in the absence of conclusive data, thus opens the door to larger debates about the nature and impact of cross-cultural exchange in first century CE Europe and Asia.³¹³

Prajñā in the Prajñāpāramitā – doctrinal dimensions

Abstruse, ironic, flavored by paradox, negation and irreverence, the foundation of *Prajñāpāramitā* thought is its radical critique of traditional Abhidhammic portrayals of *prajñā* and its object, the *dhamma*. Here, the *dhamma* is no longer the terminating point of analysis, the ultimate, irreducible building block of the experienced world; that Sarvāstivādin truism “was a defective *prajñā*, not the perfection of *prajñā*, or no real *prajñā* at all.”³¹⁴ In the realmless realm of *PP*, *dhammas* themselves lack any defining characteristic (*svabhāva*). Just as the *Abhidhamma* asserted the non-existence of a personal self (*pudgala nairātmya*), so the *PP* taught the selflessness or voidness of dharmas (*dharmanairātmya* or *dharmaśūnyatā*). The *Aṣṭāsāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* is uncompromising in this discernment:

The dharmas do not exist in the way in which foolish, uneducated, ordinary people are accustomed to suppose... Their nature is no-nature, and their no-nature is their nature. Because all dharmas have only a single mark (*lakṣana*) -- no-mark. Accordingly, Subhūti, all dharmas have the character of being not fully-realized

³¹² Williams 1989, 40-41.

³¹³ It also raises some obvious methodological about the treatment, classification and evolution of Mañjuśrī as a ‘religious, mythological, heavenly bodhisattva’ whose purview is *prajñā* and philosophical insight.

³¹⁴ Williams 1989, 43.

by the Tathāgata. For, Subhūti, there are not two natures of dharmas; Subhūti, the nature of all dharmas is only a single one. Moreover, the nature of all dharmas is no-nature, and their no-nature is their nature. It is thus that all those points of attachment are abandoned.³¹⁵

Adherence to the existence of “defining characteristic” (*lakṣana* or *svabhāva*) is an ontological error of global proportions, epitomizing the conventional view of permanence and selfhood that imprisons the “foolish, untaught,” and unrealized. “What the Holy Subhuti here explores, demonstrates, teaches, that is remoter than the remote, subtler than the subtle, deeper than the deep...No one can attain any of the fruits of the holy life, or keep it, -- from the Streamwinner’s fruit to full enlightenment – unless he patiently accepts this elusiveness of the dharma.”³¹⁶ As such, even arhatship relies upon perfected *prajñā*: the capacity to see through the naive realism of the Abhidhammic analysis to the thorough-going voidness of all phenomena. “Even Nirvana, I say is like a magical illusion, is like a dream. How much more so anything else?”³¹⁷

The *PP* deconstruction of the dharma thus necessarily critiqued the Abhidharma’s binary division of reality, i.e. the seemingly antagonistic division between “the way things are” and “the way they appear”. In the world of the *PP*, wherein all entities are conceptual constructs, it follows that there are no essences at all: “No wisdom can we get hold of, no highest perfection, no bodhisattva, no thought of enlightenment either.”³¹⁸ Equally impossible, then, is the ontological independence of appearance and reality: to abide in perfected *prajñā* is to demand the reconciliation of these two worlds. It is the great

³¹⁵ Vaidya 1960, p. 8, line 6; p. 96, lines 6-11. Cf. Conze, 1973, p.87; 145: *Na hi te shariputra dharāstathā samvidyante yatha bālaprthagjanā ashrtavanto ‘bhiniṣṭāh...yā ca prakṛtiḥ, sā aprakṛtiḥ, ya ca prakṛtiḥ, sā prakṛtiḥ sarvadharmāṇāmekalakṣanatvādyuta alakṣanatvāt’ tasmātarhi subhūte sarvadharmāḥ anabhisambuddhāstathāgatenārhatā tatkasya hetoh? na hi subhūte dve dharmaprakṛtī:ekaiva hi subhūte sarvadharmāṇam prakṛtiḥ’ yā ca subhute sarvadharmāṇām prakṛtiḥ, sā aprakṛtiḥ, yā ca aprakṛtiḥ’ sā prakṛtiḥ’ evametāḥ subhūte sarvāḥ saṅgalotyō vivarjitā bhavanti//*

³¹⁶ Conze 1973, 98

³¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

second or third century C.E. scholar Nāgārjuna who developed one such integrative principle.³¹⁹

Nāgārjuna and the Madhyamaka school:

In what is arguably the most influential early scholastic exposition of *Prajñāpāramitā* thought, Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (*MK*) delineates a middle ground between the two ontological extremes of a realism that falsely ascribes *svabhāva* to phenomena, and a nihilism that negates and denies phenomena's causal efficacy. The key to this middle way lies in the Buddha's foundational teaching of dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*). Phenomena are indeed void (*sūnya*) of inherent existence, yet originate in dependence upon causes and conditions: "Whatever is *pratītyasamutpada*, that is explained to be voidness. Being a dependent designation, it is itself the Middle Way."³²⁰ When one searches an object for its own intrinsic independent identity, no such essence is found. This absence is, for Nāgārjuna, its voidness (*sūnyatā*); tantamount to the

³¹⁹ As David Ruegg's overview makes clear, Nāgārjuna's dates are a source of considerable debate. "Nāgārjuna has been placed variously at the end of the first century B.C...in the second century...and in the third century..." For details, see David Seyfort Ruegg, "The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India." *A History of Indian Literature*, Edited by Jan Gonda, VII, Fasc. 1. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, 4-5. Details of the life and legends of Nāgārjuna can be found in Chinese travel journals; see S. Beal, *Si-yu-ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*. London, 1906, ii, 210; T Watters, *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*. London, 1905, 22; J. Takakusu, *Record of the Buddhist Religion by I-Tsing*. Oxford, 1958, 158) in Tibetan histories, including Buston's in which he quotes a prophecy contained in the *Mañjuśrī mūla-kalpa*. See Obermiller, E. *The History of Buddhism in India and Tibet by Bu-ston -- Translated From the Tibetan by Dr. E. Obermiller*. Delhi: Śrī Satguru Publications, 1986, 111.

³²⁰ *Yah pratītyasamutpādaḥ sūnyatām tam pracakṣmahe'sā prajñaptir upādāya pratipat siva madhyamā. Madhyamakakārikā, XXIV.18.* See Louis de la Vallee Poussin (ed.), *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās (Mādhyamikasūtras) de Nāgārjuna avec la Prassanapadā Commentaire de Candrakīrti*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidas, 1992, 494; c.f. Jay Garfield, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamikakārikā*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 304.

Buddha's perception, it is the "reality [that] is absolute". Likewise, when one observes a phenomenon as it ordinarily appears, one sees that it arises within a specific matrix of causes and conditions. For Nāgārjuna, this constitutes its conventional status as a 'dependent arising', an expression of *prāṇītyasamutpāda*. For this reason, he asserted, all things may be viewed through the lens of Two Realities or Truths (*satyadvaya*): the absolute truth (*paramārthasatya*) and conventional truth (*samvṛtivada*):

The Dharma teaching of the Buddha presupposes two realities: the conventional reality of the world and the reality [that] is absolute. Those who do not understand the distinction between these two realities do not understand the suchness in the profound teaching of the Buddha. One cannot show the absolute without recourse to language. Without understanding the absolute, one cannot realize nirvāna.³²¹

Superficially, Nāgārjuna's two-pronged model presupposes the Nikāya's three-pronged presentation of *prajñā*. Thus the first step toward unmistaken insight into reality is pedagogical discourse, "recourse to language" (*śrutamayī prajñā*), subsequently deepened through critical reflection or "understanding the absolute" (*cintāmayī-prajñā*), and culminating in an unmistaken insight into the nature of dharmas -- the "realization of nirvana" -- through the exertion of non-theoretical *prajñā* composed of meditative cultivation (*bhāvanamayī prajñā*).

Yet in the context of his larger epistemology, Nāgārjuna's deployment of *prajñā* carries him far outside the boundaries of Nikāya thought. For Nāgārjuna, the progression of *prajñā* leads, not to the identification and apprehension of *svābhava*, but to its

³²¹ *Mūlamadhyamikakārika* XXIV.8-10. See Louis de la Vallee Poussin (ed.), 1992, pp. 492-494: *Dve satye samupāśrītya buddhānām dharmadeśanā'lokasmvṛtisatyam ca satyam ca paramarthataḥ. ye 'nayo na vijānanti vibhāgam satyayor dvayoh' te tattvam na vijānanti gambhīram buddhaśāsane vyavahāram anāśrītya paramartha na deśyate paramārtham anāgamyā nirvānam nādhigamyate//.*

analytical dissolution. As he reiterates in his *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā* (*YS*) the progressive, analytical faculty of *prajñā* crescendoes with the disappearance of its own object.³²²

At the beginning, one must say to the truth-seeker that everything exists. Later, [one should say] to he who understands the meanings and who is free from attachment that ‘all things are void.’”³²³ [At that stage], “the two, existence and nirvana, are not to be found. Nirvana is the thorough knowledge of existence... This is nirvana in this very life. One’s task is accomplished.”³²⁴

While superficially opposite, the two realities are ultimately non-different -- discrete modes of looking (*darśana*) at things that are, in turn, equal insofar as they lack *svabhāva*. This insight is epitomized in the famous refrain found in dozens of Mahāyāna works: “Matter is not void because of voidness; voidness is not elsewhere from matter. Matter itself is voidness. Voidness itself is matter.”³²⁵ *Prajñā* thus culminates in an

³²² Robert Thurman’s discussion of this triad in the context of the Buddhist enterprises is especially illuminating: “Thus, even after having discerned the definitive meaning of the scriptures as consisting of an absolute negation of the truth-status, intrinsic reality, selfhood, and so on, of all things, relative and absolute, having discerned it with a critical consciousness that is called “intellectual wisdom” (*cintāmayīprajñā*), one still has not concluded the hermeneutical enterprise. In fact it cannot be concluded until enlightenment is attained, until intellectual wisdom concerning the ultimate has been combined with one-pointed concentration, which combination leads to the holy knowledge of the space-like equipoise (*ākāśavatsamahitajñāna*), the meditative wisdom (*bhāvanāmayīprajñā*), the non-dual intuition.... Of the utmost significance is the fact that at no point is the intellectual study merely cast aside. In the contrary, reason is pushed to its utmost and held there by the cultivated power of concentration (*samādhi*).” Robert A. F. Thurman, *The Central Philosophy of Tibet: a Study and Translation of Jey Tsong Khapa's Essence of True Eloquence*. Princeton Library of Asian Translations. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, 126.

³²³ See Lindtner 1986, 82-83: *De nyid tshol la thog mar ni thams cad yod ces brjod par bya' don rnam rtogs shing chags med la' physis ni rnam par dben pa 'o*.

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, 74-77. *Srid pa dang ni mya ngan 'das' gnyis po 'di ni yod ma yin' srid pa yongs su shes pa nyid/mya ngan 'das zhes bya bar brjod... de nyid mthong chos mya ngan las' das shing bya ba byas pa 'ang yin...*

³²⁵ *Na śūnyatayā rūpaṃ śūnyam; nānyatra rūpācchūnyatā rūpaṃ eva śūnyatā śūnyataiva rūpaṃ.*

intuitive, non-dual knowledge, or *jñāna*, of the void nature of phenomena. Christian Lindtner's comments are useful:

At this stage, *prajñā* has also brought to an end its own *raison d'être*: By analyzing its objects away it has also deprived itself of an objective support (*ālambana*, etc.) At this moment, the analytical understanding suddenly shifts into an intuitive *jñāna* that has *śūnyata* as its 'object'; i.e. that has no object. The culmination of *prajñā*, then is *jñāna*, or intuitive into reality (*tattva*) beyond the duality of *asti* and *nāsti*, existence and non-existence...the suspension of *avidyā*...³²⁶

Nāgārjuna thus assigns to *prajñā* "a new and major role"³²⁷ wherein *prajñā* works to reconcile the basic dichotomy of world versus liberation, *samsāra* versus *nirvāṇa*. From this vantage point, the logic of Tantric imagery and practice leap into focus: the Great Bliss (*mahāsukha*) which arises from the sexual union of the female-as-*prajñā* and male-as-*upāya* may itself be understood as an experiential realization of the identity of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

Nāgārjuna's non-duality likewise fuels the *PP* affirmation of *prajñā*'s superiority to the other *pāramitā*: as unmistakable insight into the truth of voidness, perfected *prajñā* is naturally the ultimate truth and catalyst of each of the Transcendences of the bodhisattva path. The *PP 8,000* asserts:

³²⁶ Lindtner 1986, 335.

³²⁷ *Ibid.* Elsewhere, Lindtner notes that "Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna sources anterior to Nāgārjuna...occasionally distinguish between a relative (*saṃvṛti*, *Pāli* *saṃmuta*) and an absolute (*paramārtha*, *Pāli* *paramattha*) truth (*satya*) shows that he was not the first to introduce the theory...into Buddhism: The main Hīnayāna sources include the *Mahāvibhāṣā*, Saṃghabhadra. The key Mahāyāna *sūtras* treating *satyadvaya* are the *Lankāvatāra*- the *Pitāputrasaṃgama*-, *Satyadvayanirdeśa*-, *Akṣayamatīnirdeśa*- and the *Samādhirājasūtra*. See his "Ātiśa's Introduction to the Two Truths, and its Sources" in *JIP* 9, 1981, 161 and n. 2.

With regard to the all paramitas, and to all dharmas, [the bodhisattva] sets up the notion that that they are an illusion, an echo, a magical reflection. With his attention centered on all-knowledge, he dedicates to full enlightenment that wholesome root, after he has made it common to all beings. It is thus that a bodhisattva who courses in *prajñā-pāramitā* fulfills the *prajñā-pāramitā*. A bodhisattva is then called 'armed with great armour'.. It is thus that a bodhisattva, having stood firm in each single *pāramitā*, fulfils all the six *pāramitās*³²⁸.

The classic discussion of *dānapāramitā* in the *Vajracchedika sūtra* epitomizes this point.

Only when thoroughly grounded in the truth of voidness that is *Prajñāpāramitā* is an ordinary act of giving transcendent, a *pāramitā*:

A bodhisattva should not give a gift with the fixation of anything given or anywhere (that is given). He is not to give a gift with a fixation relating to form or sound or smell or taste or touch. He must give gifts without being fixed in any indicating concept.

The radical non-duality of *prajñāpāramitā* thus pulses at the core, not only of Nāgārjuna's Two Reality principle, but of Mahāyāna thought and practice as a whole.

The profound non-dual understanding of voidness, *prajñāpāramitā* is tantamount to nirvāṇa, the 'calming of all representations, the calming of all verbal differentiations, peace'³²⁹. One's failure to grasp its truth is as dangerous as the careless handling of a lethal serpent; it destroys the unintelligent.³³⁰

Most of the later scholars of the Indian Madhyamaka school were commentators on the basic works of Nāgārjuna and his disciple, Āryadeva. Among the most influential

³²⁸ The *PP 100,000*. See Conze 1975, 130-131.

³²⁹ *MK 25:24* in LaVallee Poussin 1995, 494: *Sarvopalambhopaśama prapañcopaśamah śiva*.

³³⁰ *MK, 24.11* in *Ibid.*, 495: *Vināśayati durdr̥ṣṭā sūnyatā mandamedhasam sarpo yatha durgr̥hīto vidhyā vā duṣprasādhitā*.

were Buddhapālita (about 470-540 C.E.), Bhāvaviveka (about 490-570), and Candrakīrti (600-650), whose extensive commentary on the *MK* (the *Prasannapadā Madhyamakvṛttih*) marks the founding of Prāsangika-Madhyamaka as a self-aware tradition standing in conscious opposition to the Svāntantrikas. In the early part of the Gupta period (fourth century C.E.), *PP* went under the knife of Vijñānavāda, or Yogacāra analysis, associated with figures such as Maitreyanatha (about 270-350), the brothers Asanga (about 310-390) and Vasubandhu (about 320-400), Dignāga (480-540), Sthiramati (510-570), and Dharmapāla (530-561). Nāgārjuna's *PP* analysis thus reached into almost every corner of pre-Pāla Indian Buddhist scholasticism, the details of which are outside the confines of this overview (though I will touch briefly on some of the key *prajñā* theorists of the Pāla period in Chapter Four).

Nāgārjuna's works were not, however, directed only to the scholarly elite. He composed for novice monks, lay people and monarchs – a fact which speaks not only to the pervasiveness of Nāgārjuna's influence at multiple levels of monastic and political life, but to the complex interplay between monastery and court in second century south India. Thus Nāgārjuna's introductory Buddhist teachings in the *Suhrillekha* (*SK*) (*Letter to a Friend*) and *Ratnāvalī* (*RA*) (*Jewel Garland*) take the form of a letter to a king – possibly King Antivahana of the Śatavahana dynasty, to whom Nagarjuna may have served as court counselor.³³¹ Significantly, Nāgārjuna builds upon the Nikāya assumption that the cultivation of Buddhist values by a king are continuous with the spiritual good of his people: thus he notes that “it is fitting, O King, that you think daily about this advice/

³³¹ An insight re-enforced by Nāgārjuna's own career; contemporary scholarship holds that Nāgārjuna was both an abbot and to a king of the Śatavāhana dynasty.

In order to achieve complete enlightenment for yourself and others.³³² Nāgārjuna is of course tacitly equating the king's responsibility to his people with the bodhisattva's vow, and so also invokes the Nīkāya's hierarchical juxtaposition of Buddha to *cakravartin*.

Towards these ends, Nāgārjuna highlights and exalts the power of critical wisdom:

prajñā bestows abiding faith in the Buddha dharma, *prajñā* is the rudder which steers the ideal ruler through the turbulence of conflicting loyalties and political crises:

Because one is possessed of faith, one relies on the dharma
 Because of being possessed of *prajñā*, one truly knows
 Of these two, *prajñā* is the chief
 (*Prajñā*) is the precursor of faith.³³³

By possessing *prajñā*, one's mind is unshakeable,
 One is not reliant on others, steadfast,
 Unhurt by deception.
 Accordingly, O King, be intent upon *prajñā*.
 A Lord of Humanity with the four goodness –
 Truth, liberality, peace and *prajñā* --
 Is praised by gods and men,
 Just as are the four good dharma (practices).³³⁴

If the nature of the Universal Vehicle is generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, *prajñā* and compassion,
 Accordingly, how can there be any bad explanation therein?
 ...Concentration and *prajñā* are the causes of liberation.
 This epitomizes the meaning of the Universal Vehicle.³³⁵

³³² *bdag dang gzhiñ nams yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub 'krub bgyi slad rgyal po gtam du bya ba 'di gdugs re zhiñ yang bsam pa'i rigs*. See Ngawang Samten (ed.) Ratnāvalī of Acārya Nāgārjuna With the Commentary by Ajitmitra: Vol. I (Tibetan Version). Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1991.

³³³ *dad can nyid phyir chos l brten shes rab ldan phyir yang dag rig 'di gnyis grtsho bo shes rab sde te yi sngon 'gro dad pa yin*.

³³⁴ *shes rab ldan pas blo mi 'phrogs gzhiñ gyi dring mi 'jog cing brdan bslu bas mi tshugs rgyal po ste de bas shes rab lhur blang mdzod bden gtong zhi dang shes rab ste bzhi po bzang ba'i mi dbang ni chos bzang nams pa bzhi lda bur lha mi nams kyis bstod par 'gyur*.

Interestingly, the benefits of *prajñā-pāramitā* to a king are only lightly touched upon in the earliest of the extant *PP* works, yet re-emerge as a topic of later (possibly Gupta period) *PP* texts. In the *Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom Which Explains How Benevolent Kings May Protect Their Countries*, the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* is hailed as a royal talisman, the indestructible wishing stone of the ideal ruler:

'Great kings, the name of the sutra is '*Prajñā-pāramitā* (in answer to) the Questions of all kings'. It may be called the Medicine of the Law for all kings of countries; when they use it, it will be very useful in protecting their homes and all that lives; this *Prajñā-pāramitā* shall protect them as walls and swords and shields... In all countries, when riots are immanent, calamities are descending, or robbers are coming in order to destroy, you, the kings, ought to receive, keep and read this *Prajñā-pāramitā*, solemnly to adorn this place of worship, to place a hundred Buddha images, a hundred images of bodhisattavas, a hundred lion-seats, and to invite a hundred Dharma-masters (priests) that they may explain this *sūtra*. And before the seats you must light all kinds of lamps, burn all kinds of incense, spread all kinds of flowers. You must liberally offer clothes, and bedding, and food and medicine, houses, beds and seats, all offerings, and every day you must read this sutra for two hours. If kings, great ministers, monks and nuns, male and female laymembers of the community listen to it, receive and read it, and act according to the Law, the calamities shall be extinguished.'³³⁶

Curiously, the potency of *prajñā* seems increasingly linked to priestly intercession. In subsequent passages, the Buddha tells the tale of how Śakra, king of the gods, repulses the armies of a hostile king "by the power of the *Prajñā-pāramitā sūtra*, read by a hundred priests at his request"³³⁷ and how King Samantaprabhāsa saves the lives of 999

³³⁵ *..sbyin dang tshul khriims bzod brtshon 'grus/bsam dan shs rab snying rje a' bdag theg chen yin na te yi phyir.'di la nyes bshad ci zhig yod: ...bsam gtan shes rab thar pa' rgyu:theg chen don ni bsdus pa yin.*

³³⁶ Edward Conze. *Perfect Wisdom: the Short Prajñā-Pāramitā Texts*. England: Buddhist Publishing Group, 1973. 174.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

hostage-kings by inviting a hundred priests to explicate the *PP 8,000*.³³⁸ Here, the king's cardinal responsibility is to safeguard the *sūtra* and thus his people, for like a precious jewel, the *prajñā-pāramitā* bestows numberless virtues, protection from poisonous Nāgas, shelter from malignant demons and spirits; she 'fulfills the desires of human hearts and gives them the title of a king...'»³³⁹

Evidently, the Mahāyāna adulation of *prajñā* did not speak only to vying epistemological stances. In the 'conventional' arena of Mahāyāna politics, the exaltation of critical wisdom was a central rhetorical strategy for challenging the authority of established non-Mahāyāna communities. How did this develop? We recall that in the world of early Mahāyāna discourse, the worship of the *sūtra* is far superior to veneration of the *stūpa*: it bestows greater merit, protects the devotee from wicked men and malevolent ghosts. When Śakra is asked to choose between a Jambudvīpa continent filled with relics of the Tathāgata and a written copy of the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, the king of the gods does not hesitate for a heartbeat: "[I would chose] this very perfection of *prajñā*..." Why? Sakra's answer points us to a critical moment in the Mahāyāna treatment of *prajñā*:

Because in truth, *this [perfection of prajñā] is the body of the Tathagatas*. The Bhagavan has said: 'The Buddha has the dharma as his body (*Dharmakāyā-buddhā*) the Bhagavans'³⁴⁰. Yet monks, do not think that this individual body is

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 175-76.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 178-79.

³⁴⁰ Emphasis mine. Conze 1975, 116-117; Sanskrit in Vaidya 1960, 48. Note that Conze translates *dharmakāyā* as a plural noun: "The Dharma-bodies are the Buddha..." Following Edgerton, Bagchi, Harrison, etc., I am taking the compound, not as a *tatpuruṣa* or *karmadhāraya* substantive, but as a *bahuvrīhi* adjective. For further discussion of this

my body. Monks, you should see me from the accomplishment of the Dharma-body.' That Tathagata-body should be seen as engendered by ...this perfection of *prajñā*... It is not, O Lord, that I lack respect for the relics of the Tathagata. On the contrary, I have an authentic respect for them, for those relics are worshipped *because they are pervaded by the perfection of prajñā*... The relics of the Tathāgata are true deposits of all-knowledge(*sarvajñāna*), but they are not true conditions, or reasons, for the production of that cognition. ...That cognition has come forth from the perfection of *prajñā*. ...And if I had to choose between a copy of wisdom on the one hand, and a great trichiliocosm filled to the top with relics of the Tathagata on the other, I would still chose this perfection of *prajñā*...³⁴¹

In *PP* discourse, the physical form of the Tathāgata is significant not unto itself, but insofar as it embodies dharma, the insight of voidness; one is reminded of Siddhartha's remarks to Vakkali: "Why do you want to see this foul body? (*pūti-kāya*)? One who sees the Dhamma sees me; one who sees me sees the Dhamma."³⁴² Here however, the shift arguably parallels the *PP*'s wider epistemological rejection of substantial essences. It is the truth of voidness that is the 'true' body of the Buddha; the teaching has become the teacher. And how is that body engendered? By the perfection of *prajñā*, the actual cause and essence of buddhahood, the mother of all Buddhas. "O Kausika, the Tathāgata attains his body (*śarīra*) through the skill-in-means of the Perfection of Wisdom. This [body] is the location of omniscience. At this location, omniscience comes into being, the Buddha relic comes into being, and the Saṅgha relic (*śarīra*) comes into being."³⁴³ The Buddha

point, see Paul Harrison's "Is the Dharma-kāya the Real Phantom Body of the Buddha?" in *JIAS*, Vol. 15, No. 1, especially 48-52.

³⁴¹ Vaidya 1960, 48ff; c.f. Conze, 1975, 116-117.

³⁴² Bhikku Bodhi, The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: a New Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya, Volume I. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000, 939.

³⁴³ Note that the word for the Buddha's body (*śarīra*) at the beginning of this passage is identical to that for the physical text, e.g., visualizing the *PP* text itself as a kind of relic with locational significance.

and his *stūpa*-encased relics are worthy of veneration, not for what they are, but by virtue of their realization of perfected *prajñā*. It is *prajñā* which empowers the *sūtra*, *prajñā* which consecrates a site of worship, *prajñā* which is the true body of the Buddha, *prajñā* which makes Siddhārtha the Tathāgata.

Mahāyāna writers draw upon the Nikāya equation of *prajñā*-as-jewel to develop this argument. The *Ur* text of the *PP* -- the *Ratnaguṇasamcayagāthā* -- describes the Buddha's wisdom as a jewel and, in a fascinating series of verses on the worship of the Buddha's relics, likens the Tathāgata's body to a jewel box³⁴⁴ to be treated with breathless reverence even after the jewel has been removed.³⁴⁵ Presumably espousing the worship of relics, the *Rgs* actually elevates the jewel of *prajñā* above the body of the Buddha: the physical form of the Tathāgata is still to be honored, yet is differentiated

³⁴⁴ Likewise in the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, omniscience is an open jewel box, and Buddhahood the ocean, the source of all jewels, for it gives rise to the gemstones of Buddhist teachings. Here, the Tathāgata is himself a jewel – a crystallization of transcendent *prajñā*, if you will – whose liberating activities are the dazzling rays of light which stream forth from its diamond heart. See Chapter 9 of the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, ed. S. Bagchi, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts Series, Vol. 13, Durbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1970, p. 37, 40. See also Chapter 7, in which a perfected Bodhisattva is able to manifest Buddha-fields of crystal and vaidurya gemstone. Phyllis Granoff notes that numerous such examples are also found in non-Buddhist religious writings. Thus, “in an allegorical ‘autobiography’, the *Upamitibhavaprapañcakathā*, the island of jewels is the state of birth as a human being, while the jewels gathered there are the right religious doctrines in a Jain text; beneficial qualities such as knowledge and strength in pursuing the religious path are also called jewels.” See Granoff's “Maitreya's Jewelled World: Some Remarks on Gems and Visions in Buddhist Texts”, *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 26, 1998, 371 n.4.

³⁴⁵ *Ratnaguṇasamcayagāthā*, in Vaidya, (ed), *Mahāyānasamgraha*. Buddhist Sanskrit Texts Series, Vol. 17, Durbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1961, 359.

from ‘what makes the Buddha the Buddha,’ namely his *prajñā*.³⁴⁶ As such, this image evokes the larger Mahāyāna challenge to *stūpa*-based relic cults, wherein the authority of the Buddha was asserted to reside, not in the localized, historically-conditioned physical relics extolled by the ignorant Śrāvaka, but in the Buddha’s non-local, trans-historical and uncontaminated *prajñā*, celebrated by the bodhisattva, and embodied in the *Prajñāpāramitā* text.

This connection is communicated most vividly in the final chapters of the *Aṣṭasāhasrika PP*. The famous story of Sadāprarudita’s vision quest³⁴⁷ recounts the journey of an ardent young truth-seeker on the road to Gandhavati, a paradisiacal jewelled city surrounded by seven jewelled walls and enveloped in a vision of countless Buddhas. Sadāprarudita’s quest is galvanized by his acquisition of various *samādhis*, by the powers of which he sees countless Buddhas who impart instruction to him and then evaporate. Sadāprarudita is understandably confused by the nature of these Buddha

³⁴⁶ This relative positioning evokes an earlier debate between Nikāya monastics about whether or not the Buddha’s wisdom and his body were eternal and unconditioned, or supramundane. The protagonists of this debate are generally said to be the Mahāsaṅghikas, who asserted that 1) the path to nirvana was an unconditioned dharma because it was comprised of eternal truths. 2) The “Buddhas themselves are all supramundane... The physical bodies of the Buddhas are limitless... the knowledge that he has already mastered the Four Noble Truths and that there is nothing more that he must accomplish is always present in a Buddha until the time of his *parinirvana*”. Accordingly, 3) the Buddha’s body and his wisdom are unconditioned, and extend beyond the lifespan of the historical Buddha. By contrast, the Sarvāstivādins claimed that 1) although nirvana is eternal, the Buddha’s wisdom was conditioned and not eternal; 2) the Buddha entered *parinirvana* when he was eighty years old, and so 3) the Buddha’s body and his wisdom are conditioned entities. Quotation above from the *Samaya*, translated by Hirakawa Akira 1990, 147–48.

³⁴⁷ It should be noted that the final chapters containing the Sadāprarudita story is thought to be a later addition to an earlier and shorter version of *Aṣṭa*. However, it appears in the oldest surviving Chinese version of the *Aṣṭa*, and so is very old itself, i.e. before 150 CE.

visions. Where do the all the Buddhas go when his vision dissolves? His mentor

Dharmodgata responds at length:

It is this way, O son of a good family. It is just like the jewels of the ocean; they do not come from the Eastern direction, nor from the South, nor from the West nor from the North; they do not come from the intermediate direction, nor from below, nor from above; indeed, they do not come from anyplace, from any direction, and yet jewels do come into being in that great ocean in response to all the good deeds of beings. They could not do so without the proper collocation of causes. They come into being through a chain of major causes and ancillary causes. And when those jewels vanish, they do not go anywhere, not to any one of the ten directions. Rather, in the absence of those very causes that brought them into being, those jewels do not appear. It is exactly the same, o son of a good family, with the production of the bodies of the Buddhas. They do not come from any one of the ten directions, nor do they go to any one of the ten directions. And yet the body of the Buddha is not without causes; it is produced through earlier deeds, dependent upon major causes and ancillary causes, though it is produced through causes, it comes into being because of the ripening of previous karmas.

In this passage, it is the Buddha-body and not *prajñā* which is likened to a jewel, yet the metaphorical association is identical: the Buddha-body is an expression of the truth of voidness, the fruit of *prajñā-pāramita*, which is, by extension, the true body of the Buddha.

Dharmodgata's deployment of the jewel metaphor tacitly attributes other characteristics to *prajñā*. The appearance of jewels, notes Phyllis Granoff, is widely associated in Indian literature with manifestation of meritorious karma. In fact, "Buddhist texts are replete with stories that show how real wealth and jewels are the result of merit-making."³⁴⁸ Dharmodgata's image is thus commentary on the nature of Sadāprarudita's enigmatic vision: like the appearance of a jewel, a visionary experience of the Buddha's body -- itself the embodiment of the jewel of *prajñā* -- is the fruit of meritorious karma.

³⁴⁸ Granoff 1998, 349-350; 352. Granoff further notes that "the belief in the appearance of jewels as a response to karma was in fact wide-spread" i.e. not unique to Buddhism, but found in Jain and Brahmanic texts, as well. See 351 ff.

and legitimate, effective spiritual practice. One is reminded here of the deep links between *prajñā* and *sīla* implicit in the Nikāyas, which teach that the foundation of liberating practice is ethical behavior, its culmination signaled by *pañña*. *Prajñāpāramitā* literature is similarly suffused with repeated assurances that it is only because of the accumulation of former merits and ethical action that one meets with *Prajñāpāramitā* teachings and so kindles the spark of the bodhisattva aspiration.

It is through the impetus of this former wholesome root that they will get this *prajñā-pāramitā*, even if they do not now hunt and search for it. Also the *sūtras* other than this one, which welcome just this perfection of *prajñā*, will come to them spontaneously. For it is a rule...that if a bodhisattva persistently hunts and searches for this Perfection of *prajñā*, he will obtain it after one or two births, and also the other *sūtras* associated with perfect *prajñā*-will come to him spontaneously³⁴⁹.

Dharmodgata carefully weaves this lesson into his larger disquisition on causation and the nature of the Buddha-body.

The body of the Buddhas and the Lords is not without cause. It has been brought to perfection by their conduct in the past, and it has been produced dependent on causes and conditions, co-produced by subsidiary conditions, produced a result of karma done in the past. It is, however, not in a place anywhere in the world with its ten directions³⁵⁰.

Dharmodgata's final comment is telling, leaving Sadāprarudita in no doubt of the most salient characteristic of this hard-earned visionary body: unlike the physical relics extolled by Śrāvakas, the *samādhi*-induced *buddha-kāya* is trans-local and accessible only through the superior understanding of the bodhisattva. Dharmodgata thus not only privileges Mahāyāna doctrine over that of the Śrāvaka vehicle; he validates *samādhi* as a doorway to *buddhavacana*, a trans-local and legitimate means of meeting with and

³⁴⁹ See Conze 1975, 81; Vaidya 1961, 114, lines 9ff.

³⁵⁰ Conze 1975, 292.

hearing the Buddha teach. *Evam maya śruta*; in spite of his late arrival on the scene, Sadāprarudita the Mahāyāna hero did indeed hear at one time, and his experience is generously documented in the newly-appearing Mahāyāna *sūtras*.

The slippage between the Buddha's *prajñā*, the body of the Buddha, and the body of the *PP* text implicit in the jewel imagery crystallizes in Sadāprarudita's culminating encounter with a dazzling, gem-encrusted tower (*kūṭāgāra*) enshrining the holy of holies, the mother of all buddhas and bodhisattvas: the text of the *Prajñāpāramitā*:

For the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata had at that time created, for the perfection of wisdom, a pointed tower, made of the seven precious substances, adorned with red sandalwood, and encircled by an ornament of pearls. Gems were placed in the four corners...and performed the function of lamps...And in the middle of that pointed tower a couch made of seven precious things (*ratna*) was put up, and on it a box made of four large gems. Into that the perfection of wisdom was placed, written with melted *vaidurya* on golden tablets...³⁵¹

Prajñā, *kāya* and *dharmaparyāya* (in this case, the *PP* text) are facets of a single, non-dual Buddha-jewel – a fusion solidified and celebrated by the shower of offerings (traditionally placed at the base of a *stūpa*) to the 'feet' of *Prajñāpāramitā*:

Thereupon, the Bodhisattva Sadāprarudita and the merchants daughters, with her five hundred maidens, all paid worship to the *prajñā pāramitā*-- -with the flowers they had brought along, and with garlands, wreaths, raiment, jewels, incense, flags and golden and silver flowers and, one after another, they deposited their portion in front of it...(289)

"This," the god Sakra proclaims, "is the perfection of wisdom, the mother of the bodhisattvas." We are reminded of a strikingly similar set of figurative associations in the second century CE *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* wherein Māyā, the mother of Śākyamani Buddha, sits upon a fabulous ruby throne at the center of another jewelled *kūṭāgāra*. "I am the mother of all Buddhas," she declares to Sudhana, and explains how her own body

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 288.

becomes yet another jewelled *kūṭāgāra* with the descent of the future Buddha into her womb.

Likewise, the penetrative sense of *prajñā* is richly developed in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. A lively -- if occasionally opaque -- play on Sanskrit words in the pre-seventh century *PP 2,500* pays homage to the swordless-sword of critical wisdom:

Here as to penetrating (*nirvedhikā*) *prajñā*, what does that *prajñā* penetrate (*nirvidhyati*)? There is nothing that should be penetrated. If there were anything that should be penetrated, one would (be able to intimate), “this is that *prajñā*, she who penetrates’. It does not pierce (*vidhyate*) or probe (*āvidhyate*) with anything and one cannot apprehend anything other which would be pierced. “It penetrates”, but there is not anything which pierces or is pierced, which probes or is probed...Moreover, “penetrating wisdom” – what does it penetrate? Whatever is visible, all that it penetrates. Whereby does it penetrate? With *prajñā* it penetrates. How then does it penetrate with *prajñā*? It penetrates to it (saying that), “it has the mark of being a verbal concept”...One who, endowed with suchlike *prajñā*, he pierces what belongs to the Triple World.³⁵²

Penetration imagery saturates the Buddha’s subsequent discourse on the dangers of false discrimination:

“complete cutting off” is used as a synonym of the complete cutting off of ill: but there is no such thing. There could be a complete cutting off of ill if ill were totally real. But that “complete cutting off of ill” is in fact nothing but the vision of the absence of the total reality of ill, its non-production...When he sees thus, the Bodhisattva does not construct or discriminate any dharma...he becomes one who has crossed all the floods, who is free from the darkness of delusion, one whose eyes are open (lit. ‘who has gained the eye’, *pratilabdhaśur*) one who is a true light for all beings...and his eye for dharmas has been made pure...This is the impregnation with the power of *prajñā* with which the Bodhisattva becomes endowed...All these evil Maras have no power to cause him an obstacle. Why? Because the Bodhisattva has become endowed with the impregnation with the power of wisdom, has become endowed with the scymitar of wisdom, with the sword of wisdom and thereby with a wisdom that is unthinkable...³⁵³

³⁵² *Ibid.*, 6-7. The dates for this *sūtra* are vague. It is quoted by Candrakīrti in his *Mādhyamakāvatāra*, and so is necessarily earlier than 625 C.E. Conze draws on “the unique Cambridge Ms. of the Sanskrit text.”

³⁵³ *PP 2,500*; see Conze 1975, 60-63.

The crux of the teaching is, of course, found in the Buddha's final remark. Perfected *prajñā* is ultimately unthinkable: it is the 'highest' vision that sees through the illusory nature of things to find nothing at all, the double-edged sword which cuts through dualism to reveal the inseparable and non-dual wholeness of all phenomena.

The early stratum of *prajñā* literature is similarly suffused with metaphors of vision and light -- well-worn pointers in Nikāya literature to *pañña:prajñā*, the "highest radiance" and, the Buddha pronounces, "the lamp of the world." Building upon this Nikāya association, Mahāyāna *prajñā* is acclaimed as the perfected light that illuminates reality with a brilliance beyond conception, the fabled torch that leads the blind to safety:

How can those nyutas of kotis of born-blind, who are without a guide, who are not conversant with the way, find an entrance to the city? Without *prajñā* these five pāramitās are eyeless: those who are without the guide are unable to experience enlightenment. When they are taken hold of by *prajñā*, then, having gained the eye, do they get that designation. It is like a painting which is complete except for the eyes. Only after the eyes are painted does one get one's fee.³⁵⁴

The *prajñā-pāramita* gives light, O Lord. I pay homage to the *prajñā-pāramita*!... She is untainted, the entire world cannot taint her. She is a source of light, and from everyone in the Three Worlds she removes darkness, and she leads away from the blinding darkness caused by the *kleśas* and by wrong views... She brings light to the blind, she brings light so that all fear and distress may be forsaken. She has gained the five eyes, and she shows the path to all beings. She herself is an organ of vision...³⁵⁵

Just as the flames of a burning oil lamp do not remain for even a moment, and yet they make an illumination, and through that illumination sight-objects come to be seen; just so, the perfection of *prajñā* does not abide in an dharma whatsoever, and yet it illuminates all dharmas, and through that illumination all dharmas come to be seen by holy men as they really are.³⁵⁶

³⁵⁴ *Rgs.* Vii.1. *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁵⁵ *PP* 8,000, 7.1. Cf. Conze 1973, 135.

³⁵⁶ *PP* 2,500, Conze 1975, 28. For comparable examples of *prajñā* identified with vision, see *Rgs* 280-81; 172; 173.

The prevalence of such images in *Prajñāpāramitā* works underscores the importance attributed to vision in *PP* rhetoric— a trend which some scholars interpret as a reflection of the larger pan-Indian move from orality to the visually-perceived, written word:

One of the important changes in Indian culture at the time of the arising of the Mahāyāna was the development of writing. The beginnings of the widespread use of writing in India contributed to some of the transformations Buddhism faced a few hundred years after the founder's death and was crucial to some of its most significant cultural and religious developments. Literacy disrupted the continuity of the oral tradition and reoriented access to knowledge from the oral- and aural-sense to the visual world.³⁵⁷

From this perspective, the Mahāyāna emphasis on the visual is read as yet another attempt to garner support for Mahāyāna communities. Richard Gombrich alleges that “writing provided a means by which heterodox teachings could be preserved without the institutional support of the Sangha” and “was a major factor in the ability of the Mahāyāna to survive.”³⁵⁸ David McMahan echoes Gombrich's suggestion, and adds that “the sacred status that many Mahāyāna *sūtras* ascribed to themselves, both as bearers of doctrine and material objects, encouraged their reproduction and dissemination and thus contributed to their survival.”³⁵⁹ Such hypotheses dovetail nicely with Schopen's notion

³⁵⁷ David McMahan, "Orality, Writing and Authority in South Asian Buddhism: Visionary Literature and the Struggle for Legitimacy in the Mahāyāna." History of Religions (1998), 251.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 255.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

of Mahāyāna communities promoting the *sūtra* as a substitute for the *stūpa* as cultic focal point.³⁶⁰

Yet they also deflect attention from some intriguing ways in which luminosity and light imagery intersect with doctrinal and rhetorical developments. It is interesting to note, for example, the smoothness with which luminosity imagery bleeds into Mahāyāna discourse about innate purity. Conspicuously absent from *PP* portrayals is the Nikāya concern with the relative status and purity of conventional dhammas. From the perspective of perfected wisdom, the *svabhava*-less, deconstructed dhamma is innately pure (*sarvadharmāḥ prakṛti parīśuddhāḥ*); as the Buddha explains, “the skandhas are neither permanent nor impermanent...they are neither bound nor freed... they are absolutely pure.” Concomitantly, so too is the consciousness which intuits their non-differentiated, unbounded nature:

Perfect wisdom is perfectly pure because the skandhas are pure, and because their non-production is perfectly pure, their non-stopping, their non-defilement, and their non-purification. It is pure because space is pure and because the skandhas are stainless, and the defiling forces cannot take hold of them.”³⁶¹

Indeed, “all this Suchness...of the Tathagata, the skandhas, of all dharmas, of all holy Disciples and Pratyekabuddhas – is just one single Suchness...without any trace of the

³⁶⁰ This thesis also muffles some of the complexity and ambivalence embedded in Buddhist relationships to the written word. Mahāyāna and Nikāya exegetes loudly and persistently affirm the superiority of content over form, of meaning over text; one thinks of the so-called four reliances common to many Mahāyāna and Nikāya works: “Rely on the teaching, not the teacher(’s authority); rely on the meaning, not the letter; rely on the definitive meaning, not the interpretable one; rely on (non-conceptual) insight (*jñāna*), not on (dualistic) cognition.” Quoted from Thurman 1984, 113-114. Here, the physical text is associated with all manner of suspect phenomena – from poor scholarship to dubious personality cults. “Writing,” notes Lopez, “stands even further removed, the representation of the word detached from the voice of the lineage.” Lopez 1995, 40.

³⁶¹ Conze 1975, 149.

variety of positivity and negativity...non-different, inextinguishable...non-dual...”³⁶² It is thus not surprising that the *PP 8,000* contains one of the Mahāyāna’s earliest and most emphatic affirmations of the original, luminous nature of the mind (*prakṛtis cittasya prabhāsvarā*): “The Tathāgata knows unpolluted thoughts for what they are. For he knows that those minds are transparently luminous in their essential nature.”³⁶³

The *PP 8,000* is thus an important source for later *Tathāgathagarbha* theory: a doctrine avowing that all beings possess an inherently pure Buddha-nature -- a latent “Buddha within” – which enables enlightenment to take place and which is, predictably, none other than the Dharma body of the Buddha.³⁶⁴ In what is arguably a reiteration of the *prajñā*-jewel-in-the-jewel-box image, this idea finds its earliest expression in the third century CE *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*:³⁶⁵

Good sons, when I regard all beings with my buddha eye, I see that hidden within the kleśas of greed, desire, anger and stupidity there is seated augustly and unmovingly the tathāgata’s wisdom, the tathāgata’s vision, and the tathāgata’s body. Good sons, all beings, though they find themselves with all sorts of kleśas,

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 177.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 176.

³⁶⁴ A concept with ancestry in the Nikāyas – see the *Anguttara Nikāya*, 1, 8-10, which observes that ‘thought in its substance is luminous through and through, but has become defiled by adventitious taints.’

³⁶⁵ William H. Grosnick believes the *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* pre-dates the *Mahāparinivāṇa Sūtra*, an important and controversial Mahāyāna work dating to at least the fourth century CE, often regarded as the earliest articulation of *Tathāgatagarbha* theory. See Grosnick in Lopez, 1995b, 92. *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine is not, notes David Ruegg, explicitly mentioned in PP literature until the *Adhyardhasatikā*, or the *Perfection of Wisdom in 150 Lines*, a *sūtra* deemed by Conze as Tantric in nature. D. Seyfort Ruegg, “The *gotra*, *ekayāna* and *tathāgatagarbha* theories of the *Prajñā-pāramitā* According to Dharmamitra and Abhayakaragupta” in Lewis Lancaster, (editor), *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems: Studies in Honor of Edward Conze*. Berkeley: Berkeley Buddhist Studies Series, 1977, 285

have a *Tathāgatagarbha* that is eternally unsullied, and that is replete with virtues no different from my own... The Buddha sees that all kinds of beings universally possess the *tathāgatagarbha*. It is covered by countless *kleśas* just like a tangle of smelly, wilted petals. So I on behalf of all beings, everywhere expound the true dharma in order to help them remove the *kleśas* and quickly reach the buddha way.³⁶⁶

Here, the penetration and visionary imagery so sharply associated in the Nikāyas with *prajñā* is invoked by the *sūtra*'s references to the "Tathāgata's faultless vision" which sees the *tathāgatagarbha*; his "supernatural vision" which penetrates the husk to see the seed, his "wisdom-eye" which sees through the dirty, worn-out rags to the gold within. Here, it is the *tathāgatagarbhā* which is the luminous, penetrating jewel of beings, the "great treasure in their bodies that is eternal and unchanging" the "profound quiescence of nirvana that is brought about by great wisdom."³⁶⁷ There seems to be an equation of the fully-revealed *Tathāgatagarbhā* with the fully-cultivated faculty of *prajñā* -- a resonance further suggested by the feminine gender of the two nouns.

A closer look at the term *garbha* and the imagery of the *sūtra* itself, however, suggests a more complex picture. The primary meaning of *garbha* is "womb;" its related meanings include the calyx of a flower, the husk of a seed, the 'inner sanctum' of a temple, or the rounded dome of a *stūpa*. Paradoxically, however, this feminine noun can also refer to its complementary opposite, i.e. the fetus, the object within the enclosure rather than the enclosure itself. Thus in a curious way, the multivalence of *garbha* reiterates that of *prajñā*; like *prajñā*, *garbha* is alternately the external Buddha-*kāya* as

³⁶⁶ Translated from the Chinese by William H. Grosnick, "The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra*" in Lopez, ed. *Buddhism in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 96.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 99.

well as the immaterial wisdom within which makes the body of the Buddha an object of worship.

Significantly, while the imagery of the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* draws upon both senses of *garbha*, the feminine use of *garbha* as container routinely functions as the debased counterpart to the masculine contained: “Although the outside seems like something useless, the inside is genuine and not to be destroyed.” The *Tathāgatagarbha* is thus “the unstained body of the Tathāgata” trapped inside “smelly, wilted petals;” the buddha-nature “submerged in the muddy silt of *kleśas*;” the

impoverished woman whose appearance is common and vile, but who bears a son of noble degree who will become a universal monarch. Replete with seven treasures, and all virtues, he will possess as king the four quarters of the earth. But she is incapable of knowing this, and conceives only thoughts of inferiority.³⁶⁸

We are reminded of the goddess *Prajñāparamita* who, “since the compassionate Buddhas, the gurus of the world are your sons,” is thus “the affectionate mother,” the “begetter and nourisher” the “grandmother of all beings.”³⁶⁹ Yet here, the positive qualities of mother are displaced upon the son. One wonders what the implications of this are for Mahāyāna treatments of *garbha*’s shadowy cousin *prajñā* -- whether this points to a monastic movement to ‘de-feminize’ critical wisdom which is, arguably epitomized by the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī -- the Crown Prince of Wisdom, a golden-hued fusion of mother and king.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.

³⁶⁹ Lamotte 1980, 1062.

Chapter Three: Meetings with the Prince of *Prajñā*

Introduction

Good men, in that world, there is a Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva named Mañjuśrī, who is a great disciple of Śākyamuni Tathāgata. He has great virtue; he is fully endowed with wisdom; he strives with vigor and courage; he possesses awesome miraculous powers; he can cause other bodhisattvas to acquire joy, to complete their dharma practices, to increase their power, and to strive courageously and diligently; he understands well all expressions of the dharma; he has reached the other shore of unhindered wisdom; he has completely achieved unhindered eloquence; he has a free command of dhāraṇīs; and he has already achieved all the inconceivable merits of a bodhisattva.

- ◆ *Suśhītamati devaputra-paripṛcchā-sūtra* (100-300 C.E.)

Well said, well-said, Mañjuśrī, you who demonstrate this dharma which is so deep. You have set up this seal of bodhisattvas, the great beings, so that the greatly conceited disciples should wake up to what is really true...

- ◆ *Ārya Saptaśatikā-prajñāpāramitā mahāyānasūtra* (ca. 600 C.E.)

Now is described another *sādhana* of Mañjuśrī. The greatly blissful Mañjuvajra has six faces, six arms and three eyes. His body is white, his expression peaceful; he is free of all impurities. He sits in the *vajraparyanka* position; he is possessed of the six auspicious ornaments, and has a figure of Akṣobhya at his crown. His matted hair is adorned by skulls; a serene half-moon and a skull-garland are his other ornaments. His faces are white, yellow and green in color, and the face at the top is extremely beautiful. He gives the fruit of divine powers. In his hands he has a vajra, bell, sword, thimble, blue lotus and an elephant goad; thus is he conceived as the embodiment of knowledge.

- ◆ *Vajrāvali*, (ca. 1150 C.E.)

The preoccupation with legitimacy by Mahāyāna exegetes was, as I discussed in Chapter Two, reflected by the Mahāyāna appropriation and re-working of sanctioned Nikāya terms and values; I have discussed the re-visiting of *pañña* in some detail. In particular, the hallowed Nikāya ideal of personal liberation (*arhat-hood*) was vociferously denounced. In contrast to the ‘narrow, self-centered scope’ of the Hīnayāna (Lesser Vehicle) practitioners, the Universal Vehicle followers

proclaimed their commitment to achieving full Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings – to foster “the messianic resolve to liberate all beings by transforming the entire universe into a realm of peace, abundance and happiness.”³⁷⁰

By the first century C.E., early Mahāyāna included practices centered around super-human bodhisattva figures who intercede into human affairs with powers so marvelous as to make the distinction between buddha and bodhisattva functionally invisible. *Sūtras* such as the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* extol the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara as the embodiment of great compassion, whose commitment to helping beings drives him to the deepest hell realms to lessen the suffering of its tormented inhabitants, rescue the innocent faithful from fire and roaring rivers, grant sons and daughters to worthy devotees, even to grant the Hindu god Śiva permission to rule. By at least the first century C.E. critical transcendent wisdom had taken on a bodhisattva incarnation in Indian Buddhist literature:

Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta, the Crown Prince of *Prajñā*.

Perhaps the earliest mythic *bodhisattva* of the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition, Mañjuśrī was held to have long ago reached the stage of non-regression. He remained in the world solely to engender transcendent wisdom in others through piercing, eloquent and immaculately-timed verbal discourses. As such, Mañjuśrī, or “Gentle Glory,” was intimately associated with mellifluous speech; his many epithets -- Mañjughoṣa, Mañjusvara, Vādirājā, Vāgīśvara – echoed this association. Mañjuśrī

³⁷⁰ Thurman and Rhie 1991, 24.

was, in short, the voice of enlightened and enlightening *prajñā*, and so closely associated with *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.³⁷¹

By at least the second century C.E., Mañjuśrī was widely known as *kumārabhūta*, “Ever-becoming youth” – a title with a wide range of meanings intrinsic to his progressive textual and iconographic portrayals. Early Mahāyāna taxonomies of the stages (*bhūmis*) to enlightenment, considered *kumāra* to be a stage one reached after realizing the arising of the aspiration to enlightenment (*bodhicitta-utpāda*), of non-retrogression (*avaivartika*), and of achieving tolerance of the truth of the non-arisal of dharmas (*anutpatika-dharma-kṣānti*).³⁷² The *kumāra-bhūmi* was followed by the *bhūmi* of consecration (*abhiṣeka*) and the assurance of Buddhahood in the next life (*eka-jāti-pratibaddha*), and so evoked the image of heir-apparent – the youthful, sharp, clear-eyed Crown Prince coming into his prime. Thus was Mañjuśrī *Kumārabhūta*: the eternally-young Crown Prince of *prajñā*, jubilantly poised on the cusp of buddhahood :

A prince (*rajā-putra*) is called a *kumāraka* and the Buddha is called a dharma-king (*dharma-rāja*). If a bodhisattva wishes to be assured of his eventual enlightenment (*samyaktvaniyāma*), then until he has passed through the ten stages (*daśa-bhūmi*), he is called prince. This is because he already possesses the essential qualifications to become a Buddha...A typical example is Mañjuśrī. He possesses the ten powers (*daśabala*) that arise in conjunction with wisdom and the four fearlessnesses (*caturvaiśaradya*) equal to those possessed of a Buddha. He has realized the stage of the *kumārakabhūmi*, and saves sentient beings.

Interestingly, *kumārabhūta* was also used in selected Mahāyāna texts to denote one who had renounced the world and successfully mastered desire; we are reminded of the Nīkāya identification of *pañña* both with the mastery of desire, as well as with the ideal ruler. The author of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrika-prajñā-pāramitā sūtra* foregrounds the association of *kumāra* with celibacy and chastity when he proclaims that “Some bodhisattvas, when they first develop the aspiration to

³⁷¹ Hirakawa notes that Mañjuśrī is also associated with teachings on innate buddhahood, thus suggesting a connection with *tathāgatagarbha* teachings and literature. Hirakawa 1990, 291-92.

³⁷² The stage of *kumāra-bhūmi* appears frequently in the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrika-prajñā-pāramitā sūtra*, and is also included in the ten abodes.

enlightenment, eliminate all of their lustful desires and practice as *kumārabhūtas*. In this way they attain supreme enlightenment.”³⁷³ *Kumārabhūta* thus functioned as a synonym for *brahmacarin* in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature; it is not hard to understand how Mañjuśrī developed into the patron saint of learning by celibate monastics.

In this chapter, I explore selected portrayals of Mañjuśrī in Indian Buddhist literature until the eighth century C.E.. My aim here is not an exhaustive overview of Mañjuśrī’s myriad manifestations, nor am I offering an evolutionary narrative of Mañjuśrī worship in India. Rather, I am seeking to uncover some key associations, philosophical connections, and patterns of representing the Crown Prince in pre-Pāla Indian Buddhist literature which shaped the ways in which Mañjuśrī was understood and deployed in the context of Pāla social formations. My aim is, as Pierre Bourdieu might say, to tease out the “socially constituted mental structures which generate practice” in the field of tenth to twelfth century Pāla Indian -- to narrow “the space of available possibilities...”³⁷⁴

To set the discussion in context, I begin with a brief review of some of the key scholarly theories regarding the literary and geographical origins of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. My concern here is not, of course, to “solve” these riddles, but to give the reader a sense of some of Mañjuśrī’s myriad literary associations and resonances. In so doing, I also suggest some ways in which the history of Mañjuśrī research reflects some deeply-held and somewhat problematic methodological assumptions by Euro-

³⁷³ For other examples of this use of *kumāra*, see Hirakawa 1983, 19-21.

³⁷⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Culture*. Edited and Introduced by Randal Johnson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, 30 ff.

American Indologists. Towards this end, I discuss a growing body of research in the history of Buddhism in Central Asia emphasizing Central Asia's role as filter, disseminator and source of Buddhist thought and practice.

Next, I turn to a loosely-chronological analysis of Mañjuśrī's representations in Mahāyāna *sūtras*, beginning with the translations prepared from 168-189 C.E. by the Indo-Scythian scholar Lokakṣema and his team of translators, and concluding with Mañjuśrī's increasing importance to Buddhist devotional and ritual texts until the eighth century. Here, I am especially interested in emphasizing the ways in which Mañjuśrī is deployed as a signpost for legitimacy within Buddhist monastic communities, and as a symbol of the Buddhist community in contrast to non-Buddhist traditions. I argue that these functions are natural outgrowths of his identification with *prajñā*, itself a complex and critical ingredient of Mahāyāna rhetoric.

Literary Origins: The Hunt for Red Mañjuśrī

Like many of the quests for origins that have preoccupied scholars in the field of Buddhist studies, the search for Mañjuśrī's antecedents is an open and unresolved issue. Euro-American scholars have employed a range of methodological approaches and criteria, to propose a number of intriguing candidates. The French scholar Marcelle Lalou noted similarities between Buddhist textual descriptions of Mañjuśrī and those of pre-Mahāyāna figures in Indian literature, and nominated a celestial musician (*gandharva*) named Pañcaśikha ("Five Crested") who figures in both Sanskrit and Pali texts,³⁷⁵ as Most Likely Mañjuśrī antecedent. Like the Mahāyāna bodhisattva of *prajñā*, Pañcaśikha serves as an intermediary and interlocutor between Śakyamuni Buddha and the faint of heart who wish to learn from him. Pañcaśikha's status as a sweet-singing musician likewise evokes Mañjuśrī's close association with mellifluous speech -- "parmi les nombreuses épithètes de Mañjuśrī, celles Mañjughoṣa, Mañjusvara, Vādirājā, Vāgīśvara, sont les plus fréquentes"³⁷⁶ -- and Pañcaśikha's name closely resembles an epithet commonly used to describe the Mañjuśrī: *pañcaśiraka*, "The One Possessing Five Hair-Braids." Moreover both figures are, he observes, endowed with eternal youth; indeed, "la popularité du

³⁷⁵ See for example, the *Sakkapanha Sutta*, the *Mahāgovinda Sutta* and the *Janavasabha Sutta* in the *Dīgha Nikāya*, and the Sanskrit version of the *Mahāvastu*.

³⁷⁶ Marcelle Lalou, *Iconographie Des Etoffes Peintes Dan Le Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1930, 68.

Gandharva Pañcaśikha et la culte du Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī paraissent dériver d'une même source mythique: la croyance à un dieu éternellement jeune."³⁷⁷

Lalou's reasoning was extended by Marie-Therese de Mallmann who, perhaps under the influence of Lalou's "eternal youth" scenario, posited a link between the development of *bhakti* and the spread of numerous son- or youth-gods portrayed in Brahmanic texts. According to Mallmann's 1949 essay, these "dieux-fils" began their careers as intermediaries between their transcendent godly fathers, such as Brahma or Viṣṇu, and the gods' humble, knock-kneed human devotees. *Bhakti*'s emphasis on more intimate, personalized forms of worship, however, gradually led to the transformation of these comparatively approachable go-betweens into hypostacized objects of veneration in their own right.³⁷⁸ Thus the eternally young Sanatkumāra, the son of Brahma, gradually developed into the *gandharva* Pañcaśikha, or Skanda/Kumāra/Kārttikeya, or even Pradyumna/Kāma.³⁷⁹ This

³⁷⁷ Lalou 1930, 69-70. Lalou's Mañjuśrī/Pañcaśikha observations were extended by David Snellgrove, who finds Mañjuśrī's origins in a simple case of name reversal: "His full name is Pañcaśikha Mañjughoṣa, meaning Five-Fold Crest and Gentle Voice. It is likely that the first was an original name and the second just an epithet. But as Gentle-Voiced he became associated with the preaching buddha, appearing first as his lieutenant and then afterwards securing recognition as bodhisattva of wisdom. He became generally known as Mañjuśrī -- Gentle Glorious One -- and *pañcaśikha* now appeared as an epithet." David Snellgrove, Buddhist Himalaya: Travels and Studies in Quest of the Origins and Nature of Tibetan Religion. New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1957, 61-62. Snellgrove offers no support for this theory and, to the best of my knowledge, does not repeat it in any of his later works.

³⁷⁸ 'Mais toute devotion fondee sur l'amour ne pouvait s'exprimer qu' a l'aide du vocabulaire dont on se sert pour depeindre l'amour humain, quelle que soit la forme de celui-ci -- sexuel, maternel, filial --; ce mouvement suscita donc une floraison de 'dieux-fils', de dieux jeunes'. Mallmann 1949, 175.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

transition, she suggested, is mirrored in the Buddhist idiom by the mediating Mañjuśrī who, as an emanation of Buddha Sankusumita, was assimilated to Kārttikeya and repeatedly designated as *kumāra*.

The Mañjuśrī- Kārttikeya connection did not originate with Mallmann. In the process of developing the “Eternal Youth” hypothesis, Lalou had also suggested as early as 1930 that Mañjuśrī may derive from -- or be a Mahāyāna analogue to -- Skanda or Skanda Kārttikeya, the erstwhile son of Śiva or Agni.³⁸⁰ In a 5-6th century appendix to the *Mahābhārata* entitled the *Harivamsa*, Brahma Sanatkumāra is, he pointed out, identified with both Kārttikeya and Skanda-Kumāra. Moreover, the *Mañjuśrī- mula-kalpa (MMK)*, a composite work whose dates may range from the fourth- to the tenth century C.E. contains a description of Kārttikeya-Mañjuśrī in the form of a six-faced Kumāra, with a radiant blood-red body clothed in yellow, sitting

³⁸⁰ Mythologically speaking, the identification of Mañjuśrī with Skanda is arguably a logical development in monastic culture. In all versions of Skanda’s origin myths, he is born solely of a male principle. The *Mbh* remarks that the mountain on which Agni discharged his semen is itself created from Shiva’s semen “and as Kārttikeya was formed from Shiva’s energy entering into Agni, he is the son of Shiva as well as Agni. So Kārttikeya, the leader of an all-male army, is the son of two males and also produces other males parthenogenetically from his body without the mediation of a female.” (i.e. Vishaka) See Vanita, Ruth and Saleem Kidwai. Same-Sex Love in India: Readings From Literature and History. New York: St. Martin's Press. 78-79. Yves Bonnefoy notes that Skanda’s identity is linked to his connection with Gaṇesa, his brother and opposite. Skanda is the male principle, abstinence, handsome, pure young man, red standard, while Gaṇesa is the female, ugly, gluttonous, guardian of the door and, interestingly enough, identified in East Asian culture as a kitchen guardian, frequently portrayed with a bowl! See Yves Bonnefoy, Mythologies: Dictionnaire Des Mythologies Et Des Religions Des Societes Traditionelles Et Du Monde Antique. Prepared under the direction of Wendy Doniger. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press. 1991, 866-869.

on Skanda-Kartikeyya's trademark peacock;³⁸¹ an allusion to a mantra called Kārttikeya-Mañjuśrī.³⁸²

More recent nominees for Mañjuśrī antecedents occupy a middle ground between Lalou and Mallman. Anthony Tribe has challenged the Pañcaśikha candidate, concluding that Mañjuśrī's "affinities with the *gandharva* Pañcaśikha are not as striking or as conclusive as Lalou and others suggest. The figure of Brahma Sanatkumara, on the other hand, displays a rather more convincing kinship with Mañjuśrī across a range of factors including name, appearance, role and associated qualities."³⁸³ In the *Janavasabha Sutta*, observes Tribe, the miraculously empowered

³⁸¹ *kārttikeyaśca mayūrāsana śaktyudhyatahasta kumārarupī śaṇamukha raktābhasamurti pītavarastranivasta pītavastrottarāsanga*. P. L. Vaidya, *Mahāvānasūtrasamgraha Part II*. Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1964, 31.3-4. For a similar description, see also 31.21-22. Interestingly, another passage notes that enemies can be destroyed or defeated only by being shown the banner on which Mañjuśrī riding on a peacock is depicted: *Hastikandhe mañjuśriyam agrato balasya dattvā darśanamātrenaiva parabalsya bhango bhavati: dhvajāgre kumārarupinam sauvarnamayūrāsanaṣṭhaṃ kṛtvā sangrāman avataret: darśanād eva parabalasya bhango bhavati*. 245.13-15. The *mayūrāsana mudrā* is identified in the *MMK* with inspiring sexual passion with young people. What were the monks thinking?

³⁸² *kārttikeyamañjuśrīḥ mantrō 'yam samudāhṛtaḥ*. Vaidya 1964, 22. Taking the compound *kārttikeyamañjuśrīḥ* as a *bahuvrīhi* modifying *mantra*, this may be read as "This mantra which is (called) *Kārttikeyamañjuśrīḥ* was proclaimed." Despite the nominal singular form of the Sanskrit, the Tibetan version, however, renders this as *smiṅ drug bu dang 'jam dpal gyis*, "Kārttikeya and Mañjuśrī." Lalou's *MMK* Mañjuśrī/Skanda references are certainly unambiguous. However, it should be noted that his examples are drawn exclusively from the second chapter of the *MMK* which Przulski, Matsunaga and others now agree to be "a more recent section" of the text that probably dates back no earlier than the eighth century C.E. Yukei Matsunaga. "On the Date of the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa." *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R. A. Stein* 3 (1985). 887 ff. Lalou therefore does not textually document a Skanda-Mañjuśrī identification before the fifth century CE *Harivamsa* -- too late for Skanda to be either a prototype or developing influence upon Mañjuśrī.

³⁸³ Anthony Tribe. "Mañjuśrī: Origins, Role and Significance, Parts I & II." 1999. www.westernbuddhistreview.com/vol2/manjusri_parts_1_and_2.html, 8.

Brahma Sanatkumāra takes on the form of Pañcaśikha and then discourses eloquently on the Buddha-dharma. There, “Brahma Sanatkumāra’s qualities of speech are more apparent and consonant with Mañjuśrī’s than are Pañcaśikha’s...he is depicted, not only as a disciple of the Buddha but as one who teaches the Dharma, acting in effect as the Buddha’s spokesman just as Mañjuśrī does.”³⁸⁴ Sanatkumāra is associated with wisdom in the *Samyutta Nikāya* and in the brahmanical *Chandogya Upaniṣad*. Finally, argues Tribe, the name Sanatkumāra – “Forever a youth” – resonates closely with Mañjuśrī’s most common epithet, Kumārabhūta, “Being a Youth.”³⁸⁵ Noting that Brahma and Mañjuśrī share the epithet of Vagiśvara, Lord of Speech, Tribe highlights the “great qualities of voice and speech” shared by Mañjuśrī and Brahma, and concludes that “[A]s a candidate for having an influence in the make-up of Mañjuśrī, the figure of Brahma Sanatkumāra has at least as good a claim as Pañcaśikha.”³⁸⁶ By contrast, Tribe feels that “Kārttikeya has very little in common with Mañjuśrī”, and suspects that the “common epithet Kumāra may help account for both the identification of Brahma Sanatkumāra with Kārttikeya as well as the evolution of a

³⁸⁴Tribe 1999, 6.

³⁸⁵ It should be noted, however, that while the post eight-century Tibetan translations of the earliest Mahāyāna sūtras routinely refer to Mañjuśrī as Kumārabhūta (*gzhon mur gyur pa*), the epithet “Kumārabhūta” does not appear in association with Mañjuśrī in any of Lokakṣema’s second century Chinese translations. Thus, the influence of Brahmā Sanatkumāra on Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta may have occurred well after Mañjuśrī was already established as the Prince of *Prajñā*, and not served as an influence on Mañjuśrī’s “formative years.”

³⁸⁶ Tribe 1999, 6.

form of Mañjuśrī dubbed Kārttikeya -Mañjuśrī.³⁸⁷ There is, I believe, more to the Mañjuśrī-Skanda connection than Tribe suggests. I will discuss this in a subsequent exploration of the Skanda-Mañjuśrī association.

Geographic Considerations: Ain't No Mountain High Enough

The hunt for Mañjuśrī's genesis has likewise drawn scholars across a wide range of geographical terrains. In his comprehensive study of Mañjuśrī's exoteric manifestations, Etienne Lamotte points out that "le culte du Mañjuśrī" was widely popular in the Mahāyāna of Inner and East Asia, documented in countries as far-flung as China, Khotan, Nepal, and Tibet. In each of these settings, he notes, Mañjuśrī worship is invariably identified with a five-peaked mountain chain, surrounded by a lake -- another thread linking Mañjuśrī to Pañcaśikha, the Five Crested *gandharva*.³⁸⁸ But which country was first documented as the site of Mañjuśrī's mountain home? Mañjuśrī scholarship on this question generally looks to two possibilities: China and India.

Certainly the most famous of Mañjuśrī's varied mountain getaways is the Chinese Mt. Wu T'ai Shan, "a group of five flat-peaked mountains roughly encircling an area of some 500 li (about 170 miles) in Shansi province... known for its unusual natural sights, its clear and cool rivers (hence its early name of Ch'ing-liang shan), and its rare and fragrant herbs..."³⁸⁹ The first documented sightings of Mañjuśrī at Mt. Wu T'ai Shan

³⁸⁷ Ibid., 7.

³⁸⁸ Lamotte 1960, 35.

³⁸⁹ See Raoul Birnbaum, Studies on the Mysteries of Mañjuśrī: a Group of East Asian Mandalas and Their Traditional Symbolism. Society for the Study of Chinese Religions, 1983, 9. For a full treatment of Mañjuśrī's connection to Wu T'ai Shan in Chinese

were reported in the fifth century, and by the seventh century, when Mañjuśrī worship was developing into what Raoul Birnbaum considers “one of the most important Buddhist cults of T’ang China,”³⁹⁰ Ch’ing liang shañ was definitively accepted as Mañjuśrī’s place of residence by both Chinese and Indian writers.³⁹¹ The Chinese pilgrim I-tsing boasted in the seventh century that even “...the people of India said in praise (of China), ‘The wise Mañjuśrī is present in Ping Chou, where the people are greatly blessed by his presence. We ought, therefore, to respect and admire that country.’”³⁹²

What textual evidence supports the China thesis? The most widely-cited example is the Tathāgata’s prophecy in the *Mañjuśrī-dharma-ratna-garbha-dhāranīsūtra*, translated by Bodhiruci in 710, and tentatively dated back to the fourth century:

After I have passed away, in this Jambudvīpa in the northeast quarter, there is a country called Mahā Cina. In the center of this country there is a mountain called Five Peaks. The youth Mañjuśrī will roam about and dwell there, expounding on the dharma at the center of the mountain for the sake of sentient beings. Countless devas, nāgas, spirits, rākṣasas, kinnaras, mahorāgas and other creatures human and not human encircle him, reverently making worship offerings.³⁹³

Buddhist literature, see 9-25. Also of interest is Birnbaum’s “The Manifestations of a Monastery: Shen Yīng’s Experiences on Mount Wu-T’ai in T’ang Context.” Journal of the American Oriental Society 106 (1986): 119-37.

³⁹⁰ Birnbaum 1983, 8.

³⁹¹ Hajime Nakamura, Indian Buddhism: A Survey With Bibliographic Notes. Buddhist Tradition Series, 1. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1996, 179.

³⁹² Yijing, A Record of the Buddhist Religion As Practiced in India and the Malay Archipelago (A.D. 671-695). Translated by J. Takakusu. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896, 169.

³⁹³ Cited from Birnbaum 1983, 11.

Mañjuśrī kumāra and his five-peaked mountain are indubitably ensconced in Mahā Cīna. The Crown Prince's whereabouts are similarly confirmed by the eminent seventh century historian and *vinaya* master Tao-hsuan, who reports that

In the southeast of Tai-chou, there is the Five Terrace Mountain. Anciently, it was said to be the dwelling of divine transcendents...The mountain is extremely cold. Those to the south call it Mount Clear-and-Cool...In scriptures, it is clearly said that Mañjuśrī leads five hundred transcendents and dwells at a clear and cool snowy mountain. This is that very place. That is why there were many masters seeking the Tao who roamed around this mountain...³⁹⁴

Tao-hsuan's allusion to previous scriptures about Mañjuśrī is intriguing, and probably refers to the *Mañjuśrī-parinirvāṇa sūtra* (*Mpn*),³⁹⁵ whose Chinese translation is traditionally dated to the late third century. Chinese readers of this *sūtra* find that Mañjuśrī's formative years are proved to have been spent at "snowy mountain" -- a locale naturally identified by seventh-century Mañjuśrī worshippers as Mount Wu-t'ai:

It is like this, O great one. Long dwelling in the meditative trance of heroic valor (*śūrnāṃgama-samādhi*), four hundred fifty years after my final passing, [Mañjuśrī] will go to a snowy mountain (*hsüeh-shan*) and – for five hundred transcendents – he will extensively proclaim the teachings...and bring to full ripening the five hundred transcendents, causing them to attain the spiritual state from which there is no regression.³⁹⁶

In short, Mañjuśrī's connection to Mount Wu-t'ai appears to be textually documented before the third century C.E.

Predictably, the China hypothesis has been contested by a number of Indologists, who consider Mañjuśrī's early residence to be in several important mountain peaks of the

³⁹⁴ Tao-hsuan, *Chi shen-chou san-pao kan-t'ung*, cited in Yen-i's Extended Records. This translation/citation from Birnbaum 1986, 120-21.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 123.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

Indian Himalayas.³⁹⁷ According to the India contingent, the Chinese reading of the *Mpn* passage cited above is incorrect; “a snowy mountain (*hsüeh-shan*)” refers not to Mount Wu-t’ai/Mount Cool and Clear, but to Mount Himavat, or the Indian Himalayas. Lamotte translates: “Four hundred years after the nirvana of the Buddha, [Mañjuśrī] will go to Mount Himavat where he will extensively proclaim the *Dvādaśaṅgasūtra* to five hundred *ṛsis*. He will convert...these five hundred, and they will become non-regressing bodhisattvas...”³⁹⁸ The India hypothesis is further re-enforced by Śākyamuni’s subsequent prophecy:

“Upon Mt. Gandhamādana (Perfume Mountain), there are eight great divinities: they will take Mañjuśrī and place him atop the diamond peak (*vajrasikhā*) of Gandhamādana. Innumerable devas, nāgas and yakṣas will come always to honor him.”³⁹⁹

Lamotte hastens to remind us that Gandhamādana is a mythic Himalayan peak “extremement celebre dans la legende indienne en general et bouddhique en particulier...”⁴⁰⁰ In fact, the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* excerpted from the *Mūlasarvāstivādin vinaya* tells us that Gandhamādana is surrounded by a lake named Anavatapta renowned as the

³⁹⁷ There are, of course exceptions. Hirakawa Akira emphasizes Mañjuśrī’s early connections to South India. Hirakawa, *A History of Indian Buddhism: From Śākyamuni to Early Mahayana*. Translator and editor Paul Groner. Buddhist Tradition Series, 19. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1993, 253.

³⁹⁸ Lamotte 1960, 37. My translation from French.

³⁹⁹ Translated from the Chinese into French by Lamotte 1960, 39. My translation from the French.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 34.

source of the rivers Ganges, Indus, and Oxus⁴⁰¹ – one would be hard-pressed to find a more archetypical South Asian locale. What’s more, Gandhamādana is depicted in the *Dirghama* as home to Maio-yin (possibly Mañjughoṣa), the king of the Gandharvas, and belongs to a cluster of five mountains, *pañcasirsa* – a plausible source for the name Pañcasikha, associated with the celebrated *gandharvan* candidate for Mañjuśrī antecedent reputedly sighted many times in the Himalayas.⁴⁰² From the perspective of the India contingent, Mañjuśrī’s penchant for mountain dwellings obviously originated in India, and was translated into the idioms of surrounding Buddhist cultural zones.

Is Lamotte’s India thesis the current consensus? Absolutely not; in 1986, the *Mpn* once again emerged as a bone of contention in the great Mañjuśrī-mountain debate. Nowadays, asserts Raoul Birnbaum, “it is difficult to accept the traditional attribution (of the *Mpn*) to (the third century) Nieh Tao-chen. The text is not listed in early scripture catalogs. It first appears in T’ang catalogs...and it is first associated with Nieh Tao-chen in the eighth century *K’ai yüan shih chiao lu*...” Rather, the *Mpn* provisionally “appears to have been composed in the northwestern borderlands of India and it would not be unreasonable for it to have been translated in the fifth or sixth centuries, around the time when the first visions of Mañjuśrī were beginning to be reported at Mt. Wu-t’ai.”⁴⁰³ In other words, the *kumāra*’s reputed fondness for India’s Perfume Mountain documented in

⁴⁰¹ Nalinaksha Dutt, *Gilgit Manuscripts*. Bibliotheca Indo-Buddhica No. 14. Delhi: Śrī Satguru, 1984, 163-4. An appropriate enough locale for the Prince of *prajñā*, the “source of the buddhas.”

⁴⁰² Lamotte points us to the *Mañjarī Jātaka* of the *Mahāvastu*, and the *Mahāmayūri*.

⁴⁰³ Birnbaum 1986, 123-24 and note 19 on page 124. It is not surprising that “Mount Himavat” is translated quite literally by seventh-century Chinese Mañjuśrī devotees as “Snowy Mountain”, and thus a reference to Mount Clear-and-Cool, i.e. Mt. Wu T’ai.

the *Mpn* does not predate his equally well-attested predilection for Five Peaks mountain in Mahā Cīna, i.e. China's Mount Clear and Cool. The *MMK* likewise places the youthful Mañjuśrī in Mahācīna.⁴⁰⁴ In contrast to Lamotte's conviction that the Mañjuśrī-mountain connection derives from India, it is clear to Birnbaum and company that the mountain connection is more likely a T'ang Chinese innovation.

Inner Asia -- the dark horse candidate

There is, however, a third geographical candidate that rises from the thickets of Lamotte and Birnbaum's analyses: Inner Asia, especially the Indo-Greek, Indo-Scythian, Indo-Parthian, and Kusāna cultures of "Greater Gandhāra."⁴⁰⁵ From the perspective of this camp, the references to Mañjuśrī's residence in Mahācīna contained in the *MMK* and the *Mañjuśrī-dharma-ratna-garbha-dhāranīsūtra* are anything but convincing, and the apparent northwestern provenance of the *Mpn* too suggestive to be ignored.

⁴⁰⁴ The relevant reference is found in K.P. Jayaswal, Imperial History of India. Lahore: 1934, 41: *bodhisattvo mahādīrah Mañjuḥoṣo mahādyutih'tasmin deśe tu sākṣād vai tiṣṭhate balarūpiṇah*: "At present, the splendiferous, self-possessed Mañjuḥoṣa resides in that country, in the form of a young man." Anthony Tribe points out that "though this stanza is found in the surviving Sanskrit, it is not in the Chinese translation. This is significant insofar as it means that, in this case, the link between Mañjuśrī and China cannot be a Chinese interpolation." Tribe 1999, Pt. 3, 12.

⁴⁰⁵ Gandhāra technically refers to the Peshawar Valley region in what is today the northwestern frontier province of Pakistan, bordered on the west by the Suleiman mountains by Afghanistan and in the east by the Indus River. However, the term is more often – and less precisely – used to denote a larger cluster of neighboring regions, including the Swat and other river valleys to the north, the region surrounding the famous Buddhist city of Taxila to the east, and on the west, the eastern edges of Afghanistan. These areas, which I am calling "Greater Gandhāra", came under the influence of Gandhāra proper from the first few centuries before and after the common era. See Richard Salomon, Ancient Buddhist Scrolls From Gandhāra: the British Library Kharosthī Fragments. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999, 3.

Lamotte and Birnbaum's arguments proceed from the assumption that 'Mahācīna' denotes China in Indian texts. This is, however, not a hard-and-fast rule. Todd Gibson points out that what is actually meant by the names 'Cīna' or 'Mahācīna' is far from clear:

A third century (?) Jaina text enumerates Naipāla, Mahācīna and Cīnadeśa as separate countries, while an eighth century Hindu *tantra* locates Cīna on the Himalayan slope; Tucci has demonstrated that this later Cīna is most likely equivalent to the Himayalan region around Kunnaur, the Upper Sutlej, and Western Tibet...According to Stein, Tibetan literature also distinguishes between Rgya-nag and Rgya-nag chenpo, and the Klong-rdol lama uses the latter term as a synonym for the mythic land of Shambhala.⁴⁰⁶

In some contexts, moreover, Mahācīna may also denote Central Asia. In his caption describing a Pāla-period image of Mañjuśrī entitled "Mañjughoṣa in Mahācīna", Snellgrove comments that "Greater China probably refers here to a Himalayan or Central Asian territory bordering on northwest India; from the iconography alone it would seem clear that China proper is not intended."⁴⁰⁷ In short, "it does seem that Indian literature was often content to employ [the terms Cīna and Mahācīna] for ill-defined areas to the north."⁴⁰⁸

The Mañjuśrī in Inner Asia hypothesis is further suggested by Birnbaum's allusion to the possible northwestern origins of the infamous *Mpn*. If the *Mpn* is in fact, an Inner Asian creation, why doesn't Birnbaum look west for Mañjuśrī's origins? This

⁴⁰⁶ Todd Gibson, "Inner Asian Contributions to the Vajrayāna." Indo-Iranian Journal 40 (1997), 42.

⁴⁰⁷ Snellgrove 1987b, plate 30b.

⁴⁰⁸ Gibson 1997, 42.

question underscores a current strand of critique by Central Asianists of particular interest to this discussion, neatly summed-up by Todd Gibson:

It has been a prevailing view among scholars of Buddhism – particularly Indian Buddhism -- that Central Asia has acted historically as a passive conduit for the spread of that religion to China, transmitting and perhaps retaining it but not contributing to its development in any significant way.⁴⁰⁹

Gibson argues that the development of early Buddhist thought and practice is routinely considered by Euro-American scholars to be an Indian or Chinese affair; one looks for clues in either the Buddha's homeland or in the great translation centers of the Middle Kingdom. This presumption clashes, however, with a growing body of research on Central Asia's role as a filter, disseminator and source of Buddhist thought and practice. Richard Salomon's discussion of Gandhāra's contributions are *a propos*:

There is compelling evidence that Gandhāran monks in particular were instrumental in the early expansion of Buddhism beyond India. For example, two Buddhist institutions in the Kharoṣṭhī script and the Gāndhārī language, which must have been written by monks from Gandhāra, have been found near the cities of Lo-yang and Chang-an, which were major early centers of Buddhism in China. Furthermore, the abhidharma literature of the influential Sarvastivadin school, which for the most part survives only in Chinese translations, frequently refers to a Gandhāran tradition, and it is generally agreed by modern scholars that some of the important abhidharma treatises extant in Chinese translations, such as the *Abhidharma-hṛdaya*, were originally composed in Gandhāra. And finally, linguistic analysis indicates that at least some of the early Buddhist texts rendered into Chinese were translated from originals in, or at least derived from prototypes in, the Gāndhārī language. Thus it was specifically the Gandhāran form (or forms) of Buddhism that were first encountered by other parts of Asia, and here once again Gandhāra's strategic location enabled it to play a pivotal role in the cultural history of Asia, serving, as it were, as the geographical springboard from which Buddhism made the great leaps that enabled it to transform itself from an Indian religion into a pan-Asian and ultimately world religion⁴¹⁰.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 37. Helmut Hoffman noted as early as 1970 that the early study of India “tended to view Indian culture as a cosmos within itself from which radiated fecund beams in all directions...early Indology scarcely conceived the possibility that in certain instances it was Indian culture that might have been on the receiving end.” Cited in Gibson, 37.

⁴¹⁰ Salomon 1999, 5-6.

Salomon is adamant in his contention that forms of Gandhāran Buddhism were not merely derivative but influential in their own right as movers and shapers of pan-Asian Buddhism. Todd Gibson extends Salomon's insights to highlight the importance of Gandhāran Buddhism on the Mahāyāna:

The importance of Kushan culture in the development of several trends in what came to be known as Mahāyāna Buddhism is by now commonly accepted; these include Gandhāran art and the creation of the Buddha image, the composition of the so-called Vaipulya sutras, and perhaps more controversially, Iranian influence on Mahāyāna bodhisattvas such as Maitreya and Amitabha.⁴¹¹

Given these assertions, one cannot help but wonder: might Mañjuśrī have acquired his love of mountain real estate when passing through Gandhāran cultural zones enroute to China? After all, "the Mañjuśrī cult would have been older in Khotan than in China, since Khotan was the locale from which many or most Mahāyāna scriptures were imported to the later country."⁴¹² In fact, might the Mañjuśrī-mountain connection and attendant cult practices have originated in Inner Asia and traveled back to India?

The collection of ancient Gandhāran texts at our disposal contain no mention of the Crown Prince -- or indeed, of any bodhisattvā -- let alone references to five-fold mountain residences. In fact, these Gandhāran works contain virtually no references to so-called Mahāyāna characteristics; viewed from the textual window, Gandhāra looks like an unlikely, even inhospitable stamping ground for the Crown Prince.

⁴¹¹ Gibson 1997, 44-45. Lamotte had also noted more than forty years ago, "c'est donc bien au Khotan et dans les regions immediatement avoisinantes qu'il faut chercher, sinon le berceau, du moins forteresse et la foye du mouvement mahayanist."

⁴¹² Ibid.

Is there any material (non-textual) evidence which places Mañjuśrī in Gandhāra?

For most of this century, Indologists have answered this question an unequivocal negative: “Ils sont absent des anciens styles relevant directement de l’école gandharienne ou d’une forme encore plus évoluée.” In fact, “La même constatation a été faite à Mathurā et vaudrait également pour Amāvavāṭī et Nāgārjunakoṇḍa.”⁴¹³ David Snellgrove notes that even the seventh century Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang, who “frequently mentions images of Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara,” makes little mention of Mañjuśrī, for whom “there is no identifiable image...anywhere in Gandhāra or elsewhere in India before possibly the sixth century.”⁴¹⁴ The weight of these accumulated assurances prompted Paul Williams to conclude in 1989 that Mañjuśrī’s arrival to “Buddhist art” was “relatively late”⁴¹⁵ – an example of a larger puzzle summarized by Snellgrove (1987) as

the appreciable time lag between the dates attributed to Mahāyāna sūtras and to tantras as literature and the periods that may be attributed with some confidence to the earliest known images associated with them... [M]any important Mahāyāna sūtras... can scarcely be dated earlier than the second century A.D., but although we learn the names of several great Bodhisattvas... it is not until some four or five centuries later that any except Avalokiteśvara and more occasionally Mañjuśrī are represented iconographically...⁴¹⁶

As luck would have it, this rare instance of scholarly unanimity regarding Mañjuśrī’s mysteriously belated iconographic appearance is increasingly under fire. This

⁴¹³ Lamotte 1960, 4. He suggests that Mañjuśrī’s iconographic debut is to be found among sixth century Chinese works inspired by the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*.

⁴¹⁴ Snellgrove 1987b, 314.

⁴¹⁵ Williams 1989, 238.

⁴¹⁶ Snellgrove 1987b, 316.

time, it is art historians who lead the challenge. As early as 1980, John Huntington had proposed that Mañjuśrī as *kumārabhūta* was already represented in Gandhāra in the Kuṣān period⁴¹⁷ -- i.e. late first or early to middle second century C.E. Huntington's claims were largely ignored until 1995, when Anna Quagliotti argued that a figure embedded in a Gandhāran relief represents the oldest surviving iconographic example of Mañjuśrī, the Lord of the Word as "a youthful looking bodhisattva" in *lalitāsana*, with hair "done up in several locks", his right hand resting behind his ear, his left hand grasping a book "in which one can make out characters resembling Kharosthi."⁴¹⁸

Huntington's and Quagliotti's claims have met with mixed review. For our present purposes, however, they are intriguing insofar as they place Mañjuśrī in Gandhāran geographical and cultural zones as early as the second century C.E. -- three centuries before his first documented sightings in China, and a good four centuries earlier than any other Mañjuśrī image known in India. This hypothetical Gandhāran incarnation thus opens the possibility that 1) Mañjuśrī worship was an early and meaningful feature

⁴¹⁷ John Huntington, "A Gandhāran Image of Amitāyus' Sukhāvāsi." Annali Istituto Orientale Di Napoli Vol. 40, N.S. Vol. XXX (1980), 664. See Huntington's discussion of a figure on a Buddhist stela preserved in the Lahore museum, which was erroneously identified by H. Ingholdt in 1957 as Maitreya. Figure reproduced in Huntington, pl X, fig. 15.

⁴¹⁸ Anna Maria Quagliotti, "Mañjuśrī in Gandhāran Art: A New Interpretation of a Relief in the Victoria and Albert Museum." East and West 40, no. 1-4 (December 1990), 99. This image is interesting for a number of reasons, not least for being one of only four other Gandhāran representations of a book, each of which depict Śākyamuni as a child studying sacred texts. Mañjuśrī as Lord of Speech is, it would appear, in exalted company. Likewise, this image is only the "second Gandhāran example of a book bearing an inscription" with Kharosthi writing. (Quagliotti 1990, 110.) Our attention is thus drawn not only to the physical presence of the book as an object, but to its content, the text itself. One cannot help but wonder what this may signify about literacy in Kharosthi culture, the use of *dhāraṇīs*, etc.

of Inner Asian Buddhism, and not simply a later import from India and China, as implied by Lamotte and others; and 2) that these Gandhāran forms of worship and belief could have colored perceptions and representations of Mañjuśrī in China, India and elsewhere. At the very least, these Gandhāran Mañjuśrīs encourage us to problematize the Indo- and Sino-centric diffusion model “so common among Buddhologists in the West,” and testify to the value of complementing textual analysis with that of art historical and archeological remains.

This hypothesis likewise suggests yet another way of conceptualizing Mañjuśrī worship in Central Asia: as a continuum in its own right that stretched from at least the second-century C.E., and which continually contributed to the development of South and East Asian Buddhist forms. Though a “proof” of such a hypothesis is obviously beyond this discussion, I will be returning to the influence of Central Asian religious practices on Pāla monasticism in a later chapter. Accordingly, I’d like to prepare the ground for such discussion by highlighting a number of disparate threads that connect -- and hint at the importance of -- the bodhisattva of *prajñā* to Central Asian Buddhism over a period of many centuries.

Mañjuśrī in Khotan

A number of seventh century Tibetan writings on Khotan, thought to have been composed in Khotan Śaka, characterize Mañjuśrī as a long-term denizen of a mountain-based monastery in the so-called Li-Yul,⁴¹⁹ and even describes the creation of

⁴¹⁹ A domain which is referred to in the Tibetan accounts as ‘the fivefold’. “Elsewhere,” observes John Brough, “(the city of Khotan) has the mysterious epithet ‘Nectarean’ (*dn̄gar-ldan*), and it is not impossible that this is a mere scribal corruption of *ln̄ga-ldan*, the two being almost indistinguishable in pronunciation in later Tibetan. The Chinese sources attribute five cities to the country of Khotan, and...this may simply refer to the

Khotan by Śākyamuni and Mañjuśrī. The Prophecy of Gośṃga (*Ri glang ru lung bstan pa*) begins with a description of Śākyamuni's arrival at a hill called Gośṃga⁴²⁰, accompanied by a retinue which includes, interestingly enough, both Mañjuśrī and the *gandharva*-king Pañcaśikha. There, the Buddha sees a great lake that he prophesizes will one day become a great country. The bodhisattva Mañjuśrī then steps forth and offers a prophecy and blessing of his own: a monastery of Par spong byed will arise on Gośṃga hill, and all beings who approach it will attain great (*siddhis*).⁴²¹

The Prophecy of the Li Region (*Li yul lung bstan-pa*) expands upon Mañjuśrī's intimacy with the founding and growth of Khotan. Here, the bodhisattva is not only an *aide de camp* to the Buddha during the establishment of Liyul, but is the country's long-term protector. As in the *Ri glang ru lung bstan pa*, the region of Li begins as a lake: in ancient times, we learn, the nāgas had flooded the land to show their displeasure of its inhabitants' disregard for the dharma. The newly enlightened Śākyamuni, however, sweeps in from Mount Gṛdhraakuta (*bya rgod phang po 'i ri*) accompanied by Mañjuśrī and seven other bodhisattvas, as well as a host of *śrāvakas*, and various celestial beings. He seats himself on a lotus throne suspended over the lake seven palmyra trees of height in the air (*ta la bdun srid tsam gyi gnam 'phan gi nam mkha*), and prophesizes that the

same fact." John Brough, "Legends of Khotan and Nepal." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 12 (1947), 336.

⁴²⁰ Identified by Stein with the modern Kohmari. See Brough 1947, 334.

⁴²¹ See DK #357: ' *Phags-pa glang-ru lung bstan pa shes bya ba theg pa chen po 'i mdo* (*Ārya Gośṃgavyakaraṇa nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*) mdo sde, Aḥ 220b-232a. English discussion and translation in F. W. Thomas, Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan - Part I: Literary Texts. Oriental Translation Fund, New Series, Vol. XXXII. London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1935, 3-38.

lake will one day become a country. Śākyamuni then summons Mañjuśrī and a number of other Tathāgatas and bodhisattvas from myriad buddha-fields to safeguard and control the land, where they remain its guardians in perpetuity (*dus thams cad du srungs*), and oversee its gradual emergence from inchoate, post-Naga-ian slime to Buddhist civilization *par excellence*.⁴²²

Mañjuśrī's civilizing duties in Khotan are not yet complete. Li, we are told, is a land where both Indians and Chinese meet (*rgya gar dang rgya phrad pa'i yul ni li lags*), yet its common language accords with neither region (*'bral skad ni rgya gar rgyar mi mthun pa*). In fact, though it had been previously taught by the Āryas, the language of Liyul actually derives from none other than the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī himself:

With respect to the shared language, in the past, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī had emanated as a *śrāvaka* monk named Vairocana. In a district called Tsarma, he introduced the language to two children, cattleherders, whose names were 'Jos and Muleji. [They] taught it to all, and then no one knew where the two boys were...[After that], the dharma arose.⁴²³

It is Mañjuśrī as Lord of Speech who is at work here, now dressed in monastic garb, and functioning as mediator between Indian and Chinese cultures.

The *kumāra* continues to manifest in his *śrāvaka* form throughout this text, most memorably to inaugurate a monastery built in Liyul at the behest of the pious (if somewhat demanding) King Vijayasambhava:

⁴²² DT #4202: *Li'i yul lung-bstan pa*. spring-yig, Nge 172a; 173a-174b.

⁴²³ DT #4202: 176a, 176b. *Li'i 'bral (emended from 'phal) skyad ni thog ma byang chub sems dba 'jam dpal nyan thos kyi dge slong gi tshul du sbrul te/mtshan vai ro ca na zhes bgyi bas pa phyugs rdzi khye 'u 'jos dang mu le 'ji zhas bgyi ba nyis la sogs pa la yul tsar ma zhas bgyi bar li skyad phyung ste' kun l bsalbs nas/khye 'u de gnyis kyang gar mchis pa'i cha su la yang ma mchis te...chos byung ngo.*

When the monastery was duly established, the Ārya Vairocana said to King Vijayasambhava: 'The king must strike the bell and summon forth the Āryas.' The King vowed that 'until the Tathāgata manifests here and offers the bell to my hand, I will not strike the bell.' Instantly, the emanation of Mañjuśrī, the monk Vairocana, emanated in the sky as the Tathāgata...and put the bell into the hand of King Vijayasambhava. The king struck the bell, and its sound arose, continuing for seven nights without break. In proof that the Tathāgata manifested, an impression of his footprint is in Tsarma today.⁴²⁴

Mañjuśrī's dual association with monastic culture and the civilizing of Khotan is evocative of the rhetorical opposition of Buddhist monasticism and civilization to a-dharmic anarchy found in tenth century Tibetan Buddhist accounts,⁴²⁵ and hints at the importance of Mañjuśrī as a symbol of legitimation in post eighth-century Buddhist discourse in Central Asia. These portrayals of Mañjuśrī as civilizing forefather are echoed in the legends of Nepal contained in works such as the *Svayambhū purāna* which, as John Brough has demonstrated, borrowed heavily from the tenth century C.E

Khotanese accounts:

Mañjudeva in early times came from a lake, Kālīhrada... There he opened the six valleys on the south side of the lake, thus draining off the water. Further, at the south end of one of these valleys, Gandhavati, he excavated a new lake, and built up a mountain beside the former Kālīhrada. On the top of this mountain, he excavated a new lake, in which the Nāga-inhabitants of Kālīhrada were invited to take up their residence.⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ DT #4202: 177a. *Gtsug lag khang brtsigs pa lags nas 'phags pa bai ro ca nas rgyal po bi ja ya sam bha la rgyal pos gan di brdungs la phag pa nam s cpyan drongs shig cas bgyis pa dang rgyal po 'i mchid nas de bzhin shegs pa mngon sum du 'dir gzhags te bdag gi lag tu gan di ma stsol gyi bar du bdag nas rgyal pos gan di brdungs pa dang dgung bdun gyi bar du gan di 'i sgra ma chad par byung ste de bzhin gshegs pa 'i sprul pa mngon sum sum du gzhin pa 'i dan rtags su gor ma la zhabs kyis bcags pa 'i rjes da dung gi bar du tsar ma na mchis.*

⁴²⁵ See the *Mani ka 'bum*, and a related article by Janet Gyatso entitled "Down with the Demoness" in Janice D. Willis, *Feminine Ground: Essays on Women and Tibet*. Ithaca: Snow Lion, 1987.

⁴²⁶ Brough 1947, 333-334.

It would seem that by at least the seventh century, the figure of Mañjuśrī was imbued with substantial symbolic capital in Tibetan and perhaps Central Asian thought.

Yet another thread tenuously links the prince of *prajñā* to Inner Asia: “the formula *arapacana*... traditionally associated with Mañjuśrī.”⁴²⁷ This so called “mystical alphabet of the Buddhists,” which derives its name from its first five letters, figures in a range of both Sanskrit and non-Sanskrit Buddhist texts, including the *Dharmaguptavinaya*,⁴²⁸ Sanskrit original and Chinese translations of *Prajñā-pāramitā sūtras*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* section of the *Avatamsaka*,⁴²⁹ the Chinese translation of the *Dharmaguptakavinaya*, the Tibetan and Chinese translations of the *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*.⁴³⁰ John Brough has argued convincingly that the earliest Chinese translation of the *Lalitavistara sūtra* contains a list of words that, in the Indic textual originals, seem to have been arranged in accordance with the *arapacana* alphabet.⁴³¹ Khotanese examples

⁴²⁷ Sten Konow, "The Arapacana Alphabet and the Sakas." *Acta Orientalia* 12 (1933), 15.

⁴²⁸ Conze 1975, 21, n.118.

⁴²⁹ See Chapter 45, in which each letter of this syllabary is called a *prajñāpāramitāmukha*.

⁴³⁰ This instance has been recently commented upon by Peter Skilling in "An Arapacana Syllabary in the *Bhadrakalpika-Sūtra*." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 116 (July 1996-September 1996): 522-23.

⁴³¹ John Brough, "The *Arapacana* Syllabary in the Old *Lalitavistara*." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 40: 85-95.

are found in the *Book of Zambasta*,⁴³² the *Anantamukha-dhāraṇī* and the “Book of Vimalakīrti.”⁴³³

It appears that the syllabary began its career as a *dhāraṇī* and served as a memorization aide to help students internalize key points of Buddhist doctrine. Specifically, the Arapacana may have served as “a list of head-words” which “might have been in origin a mnemonic device to fix the order of the verses or paragraphs of some important texts, by taking the first word of each.”⁴³⁴ The practicing of connecting letters of the alphabet to particular points of doctrine is at least as old as the *Lalitavistara*.⁴³⁵ The Arapacana, however, seems to have been particularly associated with propagating the Mahāyāna interpretation of *sūnyata* explicated by the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*.⁴³⁶

The A letter is the head of all dharmas, because they are unproduced in the beginning;

The RA letter is the head of all dharmas, because they are freed of dust;

The PA letter is the head of all dharmas, because of the explanation of the ultimate truth;

The CA letter is the head of all dharmas, because of the non-apprehension of death and rebirth.⁴³⁷

⁴³² See Ron E. Emmerick’s translation in *The Book of Zambasta: A Khotanese Poem on Buddhism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968, especially “Appendix 3: The Arapacana Syllabary,” 454-455.

⁴³³ Richard Salomon, “New Evidence for a Gandhāri Origin of the Arapacana Syllabary.” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110, no. No. 2 (1990), 255.

⁴³⁴ Brough 94-5.

⁴³⁵ Conze 1975, 22.

⁴³⁶ Etienne Lamotte, “*History of Indian Buddhism From the Origins to the Saka Era*,” translated from the French by Sara Webb-Boin. Publications De L’Institute De Louvain, 36. Louvain-Paris: Peeters Press, 1988, 497.

⁴³⁷ *akāro mukhaḥ sarvadharmānām adyanutpannatvāt; rākaro mukhaḥ sarvadharmānām rajo ‘pagatatvāt; pākaro mukhaḥ sarvadharmānām paramārthanirdeśāt; cākaro mukhaḥ sarvadharmānām cyavanopapattyamupalbdhitvāt.* See Dutt 1934, 212. Conze takes some

The *Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*, translated into Tibetan in the early ninth century, retains this sense of the syllabary as a *dhāraṇī*, as well as its rhetorical identification with the highest realizations of the bodhisattva path:

Pramuditarāja, this *samādhi* is called Showing the Means of All Dharmas. Bodhisattvas who attain that [*samādhi*] unmistakably realize all dharmas. They realize that all dharmas are non-abiding; they realize that all dharmas are non-produced; they realize that all Buddha-dharmas are not fabricated... They are the abode of beings. They open the door to nirvana. They are the givers; they are the teachers of immortality; they fully comprehend [have internalized] nirvāṇa. They clear away the torment of beings; they sever doubt in beings; they are unstained by the six systems; they have realized entry into the sixteen door letters.

If one should wonder: what are these sixteen letters so realized? The sixteen are:

A, RA, PA, TSA, NA, DA, SA, KA, THA, PA, BA, KṢA, TSHA, PA, THA, DHA:

From the *dhāraṇī* which applies the sixteen aspects, one obtains even the Stage of Infinite Attainment; one thoroughly understands the most minute detail of the dharmas; one attains certainty; one engenders understandings of the thoughts of all beings... If one wonders: how is this so? It is because this *samādhi* [so described] is omniscience itself.⁴³⁸

liberties to make this passage somewhat less opaque: “The syllable A is the door to the insight that all dharmas are unproduced from the very beginning... The syllable CA is the door to the insight that the decease (*cyavana*) or rebirth of any dharma cannot be apprehended, because all dharmas do not decease, nor are they reborn.” See Conze 1975, 160.

⁴³⁸ DK #94: *Ārya-Bhadrakalpika-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*, Ka 1b-340a.

mchok du dga ba 'i rgyal po 'di ni chos thams cat kyi tshul las nges par sdon pa zhes bya ba 'i ding nge 'dzin ces bya ste de thop pa 'i byang chub sems dpas ni chos thams cad phin ci ma loks ba nyid du rdoks so' chos thams cad mi gnas par rdoks so' chos thams cad skyes ba med par rdoks so' sangs rgyas kyi chos thams cad byas pa mes par rdoks so'...sems can rnam kyi gnas yin no' myang na las 'das pa 'i sgo 'byed do' sphyin pa po yin no' 'chi ba med par sdon pa yin/myang na las 'das pa khong du chud pa yin no' sems can rnam kyi gdung bsel do' sems can rnam kyi the tsom gcod pa yin no' dbang po drug po dag gis mi gos ba yin no' yi ge 'i sgo bcu drug la 'jug ba 'i gzungs thob bo' yi ge bcu drug 'thob pa dag pa zhe na' a zhes bya ba dang/ra zhes bya ba dang/pa zhes bya ba dang/ta zhes bya ba dang/na zhes bya ba dang/da zhes bya ba dang/sa zhes bya ba dang/ka zhes bya ba dang/tha zhes bya ba dang/pa zhes bya ba dang/ba zhes bya ba

Yet what is of special interest are its geographical and linguistic origins: contemporary research suggests that the alphabet “must originally have been formulated in the region of Gandhāra (in the modern Northwest Frontier of Pakistan) and in the Gandhāri (Prakrit) language and Kharosthi script...”⁴³⁹ i.e. the locale of the earliest Mañjuśrī figures, a possible source of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, and the Kuśān heartland so closely identified with the rise of the bodhisattva cults in general. It is thus of little surprise that Arapacana comes to be personified as a form of Mañjuśrī in India as early as the seventh century.

Similarly intriguing is a Khotanese text entitled the *Mañjuśrī-nairātmyāvatāra-sūtra* (*Mañj*). Written early in the reign of Viśa Śura (967-978 CE), the *Mañj* is a composite work that draws from older Khotanese literature as well as Mahāyāna *sūtras*,⁴⁴⁰ and a topic of growing interest among both Central Asianists and historians of Buddhism. As Ron Emmerick notes,

dang:ksha zhes bya ba dang:tsha zhes bya ba dang:pa zhes bya ba dang:sha zhes bya ba dang:dha zhes bya ba ste 'di dag ni:bcu drug go:rnams pa bcu drug la 'jug pa'i gzungs las ni mtha yas pas bsgrub pa'i sa yang thob bo: chos thams cad ya ma brlar rab tu shes so' nges par phed do' sems can thams cad kyi bsams shes pa dag skyed par byed do:...de ci'i phyir zhe na' 'di ltar ding nge 'dzin 'di ni thams cad mkhyen pa nyid kyi phyir ro:

⁴³⁹ Salomon 1990, 255. Until Salomon's 1990 article, the most widely accepted theory concerning the origins of the *arapacana* syllabary was that of Sten Konow, who proposed a Khotan Saka birthplace. Both Salomon and Konow's research suggest, however, that *arapacana* is associated with the Buddhism of the Kushan Empire. See Konow 1933, 13-24.

⁴⁴⁰ Especially the sixth chapter of the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa sūtra*, verses 871-879 of the *Lankavatāra-sūtra*, and the *Vajracchedika sūtra*. For a discussion of the *Mañj* in relation to the Khotanese Book of Zambasta, including examples of corresponding passages, see Appendix Two in Emmerick, The Book of Zambasta: A Khotanese Poem on Buddhism. London: Oxford University Press, 1968, pp. 437-453.

The importance of the *Mañj* in assessing the role played by Khotan in the development of Buddhist doctrine is considerable. Thus, in *Mañj* 54-82 (verses 42-69) the three kleśas Moha, Rāga, Dveṣa are described as three doctrinal monsters, kings of the Rākṣasas. The parts of their bodies are identified with details of Buddhist doctrine. The twenty eyes of Moha correspond to the twenty *satkāya-dr̥ṣṭi*, his ten mouths to the ten *akuśala*, his eight arms to the eight *akṣana* and so on...Such a description has not so far been traced elsewhere in Buddhist sources.⁴⁴¹

Once again, there are hints of Mañjuśrī's connection and importance to Central Asia. I will return to this issue in the next chapter. Now, let us turn to Mañjuśrī's earliest literary manifestations.

Mañjuśrī's Textual Debut: Lokakṣema Raises the Curtain

In light of his possible appearance among first century C.E. Kuśana material remains, we might expect to find evidence of Mañjuśrī in early Mahāyāna texts, and to play an especially prominent role in *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. We would be only half right. Mañjuśrī is indeed a visible and vocal figure in the earliest datable literary evidence of Mahāyāna works we have available in any language, namely the Chinese translations prepared from 168-189 C.E. by the Indo-Scythian scholar Lokakṣema and his team of translators. Curiously however, the bodhisattva of *prajñā* is virtually absent from (what we know of) the two earliest stratum of *Prajñāpāramitā* literature. He is mentioned once

⁴⁴¹ Ronald E. Emmerick, *A Guide to the Literature of Khotan*. Tokyo: International Institute of Buddhist Studies, 1992, 26. For further details, see Almuth Degener, "The Four Infinitudes (Apramanas) in Khotanese." *Studia Iranica* Tome 15, no. Fasc. 2 (1986): 259-64; Ronald Emmerick, "Three Monsters in Khotan." *Studia Iranica* Tome 6, no. Fasc. 1 (1977): 65-74; R. Emmerick, "Some Verses from the *Lankāvatārasūtra* in Khotanese." *A Green Leaf, Papers in Honour of Professor Jes P. Asmussen*, 125-33. Leiden: 1988.

in Lokakṣema's translation of the foundational *PP 8000*,⁴⁴² and appears among a host of bodhisattvas in attendance to the Buddha in the *Pañcavimśatisāhasrikā* (*PP 25,000*)⁴⁴³, and the *Śatasāhasrikā* (*PP 100,000*). It is not until the fifth century *Saptaśatika* (*PP 700*)⁴⁴⁴ that Mañjuśrī plays a leading role in what is formally considered to be a *PP sūtra*, though he is firmly associated with *PP* thought in multiple other works.⁴⁴⁵

How is Mañjuśrī portrayed and deployed in the Lokakṣema corpus? Mañjuśrī appears in fully two-thirds of the extant texts attributed to the Lokakṣema translation team: the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā sūtra*, the *Lokāmvartanā-sūtra* (*Lok*), the *Druma-kinnara rāja pariṣcchā-sūtra* (*DKP*), the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana-sūtra*, part of the *Avatamsaka-sūtra*, and the *Wenshushili wen pusa shu jing*.⁴⁴⁶ In most of these,

⁴⁴² Maitreya is also mentioned here, as he is in the Sanskrit version of the *PP 8,000*, which does not mention Mañjuśrī. Possibly the mention of Mañjuśrī in the Chinese is a later interpolation.

⁴⁴³ First translated by Dharmarakṣa, an Indo-Scythian from Dun-huang, apparently from a manuscript carried from Khotan. His translation is extant through Chapter 27. A second translation was completed by the Khotanese scholar Mokṣala in 291.

⁴⁴⁴ Translated into Chinese shortly after 500 C.E. by Mandrasena and Sanghabhara, both from Fu-nan in Cambodia.

⁴⁴⁵ Anthony Tribe notes: "As the bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañjuśrī's low profile in the earlier major Perfection of Wisdom sūtras is perhaps rather surprising. Yet to conclude the Mañjuśrī is unimportant in early Perfection of Wisdom literature as a whole may be premature. Although he does not appear in the *Aṣṭa*, he has an active and important role in the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana Sūtra*...a work written from a Perfection of Wisdom perspective." Tribe, Parts I & II." 1999, 12. It should be noted that contrary to Tribe's assertion, Mañjuśrī is mentioned by name in Lokakṣema's Chinese translation of the *Aṣṭa*.

⁴⁴⁶ All of these texts are extant in Tibetan except the last, which exists only in Chinese, and so is inaccessible to me. I know of Mañjuśrī's presence in this *sūtra* from Paul Harrison's discussion of Lokakṣema's corpus in "The Earliest Chinese Translations of Mahāyāna Buddhist Sūtras: Some Notes on the Works of Lokakṣema." *Buddhist Studies Review* 10, no. No. 2 (1993), 157, and from his conference presentation on "Mañjuśrī and

Mañjuśrī is little more than a face in the crowd. Despite the promise of its title, for example, the “interesting and enigmatic” *Wenshushili wen pusa shu jing*, or *Sūtra of Mañjuśrī’s Questions Concerning the Bodhisattva Career*, alludes to Mañjuśrī only twice, “and in the third person at that; he certainly never asks any questions.”⁴⁴⁷ The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā* merely mentions Mañjuśrī among the numerous other bodhisattvas present to hear the *sūtra*.

Yet in the *Lokāmuṃvartanā-sūtra* (*Lok*), Mañjuśrī begins to elbow his way to the foreground. Here, the bodhisattva Mañjuḥoṣa – “Mañjuḥoṣa the Expert” (*‘jam dbyang mkhas pa*), the Tathāgata’s “beloved child” (*thugs skyes sras gces*) in the Tibetan⁴⁴⁸ -- is singled out as the Buddha’s key interlocutor, i.e. the devotee who asks Śākyamuni the thoughtful and important questions which elicit and guide the Buddha’s subsequent discourse.⁴⁴⁹ The *Druma-kinnara rāja pariṣṭchā-sūtra* (*DKP*) also specifies Mañjuśrī

the Cult of the Celestial Bodhisattvas." Presented at Symposium on the Ambiguity of Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattvas in Buddhist Traditions, University of Texas at Austin, 25-27 October 1996. My own discussion on Lokakṣema’s works is much in debt to Harrison’s work.

⁴⁴⁷ Harrison 1993, 161.

⁴⁴⁸ Derge #200, *Ārya-lokāmuvartana-nāma-mahāyāna sūtra*, 303b-304.

⁴⁴⁹ It should be noted that Mañjuśrī is described as a bodhisattva only in the Chinese version of this text, and not in the Tibetan translation quoted here, prepared in the early ninth century by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Ye śes sde. An interesting issue raised by the *Lok* is its “sectarian” status. The *Lok* is described in Chinese and Tibetan canons as a Mahāyāna text – not surprising, considering its description of the transcendental qualities of the Buddha, and its affirmations of the voidness of dharmas. Candrakīrti, however, refers to the *Lok* as a canonical sūtra of the Pūrvaśāilas, thus suggesting something of the fluidity of the Mahāyāna-Hīnayana divide in actual practice. See Paul Harrison, "Sanskrit Fragments of a Lokottaravadin Tradition" in Indological and Buddhist Studies, edited by L. A. Hercus. Canberra: Australian National University, Faculty of Asian Studies, 1982, 225-27.

among the ranks of bodhisattva attendees, and later characterizes Mañjuśrī's presence as the product of good merit: it is because of merit that King Ajataśatru has "obtained two spiritual friends. The first one is the Buddha. The second one is Mañjuśrī. Through their grace, the doubt arising from the unrighteous acts you committed was completely dispelled."⁴⁵⁰

It is in the *Ajātaśatrukaukṛtyavinodana* (*AjKV*), however, that Mañjuśrī plays what is probably his earliest starring role.⁴⁵¹ "Without doubt one of the jewels of Lokakṣema's oeuvre," the *AjKV* is "perhaps the most sophisticated and evolved of the Mahāyāna sūtras translated into Chinese by the Indo-Scythian master."⁴⁵² As such,

⁴⁵⁰ Cited from Harrison's partial translation of Lokakṣema's translation in "Mañjuśrī and the Cult," 5. The Tibetan is slightly different, emphasizing the power of the two *kalyāna mitras* to dispel *avidyā*. See Harrison's Tibetan critical edition, 253.

⁴⁵¹ The *AjKV* has an interesting text history. In addition to Lokakṣema's version of this text, there are two other Chinese translations: that made by Dharmarakṣa in the late third century C.E., and by Fa-hsien in the tenth century. There is also a fourth Chinese translation of a smaller section of the *AjKV* that may have circulated independently at one time. The Tibetan canon contains a translation of this work that was revised by Mañjuśrīgarbha and Ratnarakṣita in the early ninth century. I draw upon the Derge version for the purposes of my own discussion. Although it postdates the Chinese by several centuries, Paul Harrison has informed me in a private communication that there are few meaningful differences between Lokakṣema's translation and the Tibetan. Lastly, it should be noted that quite recently, a few fragments of the *AjKV* in Sanskrit on palm leaf manuscripts were found in Afghanistan by local people taking refuge from the Taliban forces in caves near the Bamiyan valley. These Sanskrit fragments have been published in Jens Braarvig, *Buddhist Manuscripts: Volume I*. Manuscripts in the Schoyen Collection - I. Oslo: Hermes Publishing, 2000, and reflect the Tibetan translation almost exactly.

⁴⁵² Paul Harrison and Jens-Uwe Hartmann in Jens Braarvig, 2000, 168. Elsewhere Paul Harrison observes of the Indo-Scythian's works that "their level of development, both in form and content... (suggests that) the Mahāyāna reached China in full bloom, with perhaps several centuries of growth behind it, while the texts... represent a fairly advanced stage in a long literary tradition." Harrison 1993, 139-140. While the evidentiary value of such *sūtras* as primary historical records of Indian Buddhism obviously is limited, they do serve as small if somewhat cloudy windows into some of the ways in which Mañjuśrī

Mañjuśrī's prominence in the *AjKV* suggests something of his importance in the Mahāyāna textual universe well before the second century CE. The principal theme of this *sūtra* is, as Harrison succinctly notes "the glorification of...*prajñā* as expounded and personified by the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī."⁴⁵³ Perhaps developing Mañjuśrī's role as spiritual mentor of King Ajātaśatru that is alluded to in the *DKP*, the teachings of the *AjKV* are often couched as philosophical discussions between Mañjuśrī and the Magadhan King, who struggles to understand the nature of the remorse he feels for murdering his father. Here, Mañjuśrī is identified by the Buddha as the "the only person able to relieve the spiritual anguish of King Ajātaśatru, as a result, indeed, of a karmic connection through countless lifetimes."⁴⁵⁴ It is within the context of this somewhat elastic frame story that Mañjuśrī imparts teachings on everything from *prajñā-pāramitā* to the efficacy of *dhāraṇīs*, and so functions as an overall spokesperson for and promulgator of Mahāyāna thought.

Mañjuśrī's philosophical eloquence is placed in acerbic contrast to the furrow-browed queries of Nikāya luminaries such as Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. Mañjuśrī's role in the *AjKV* thus typifies the rhetorical strategies of legitimation so familiar from the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*. Here however, his perfected *prajñā* manifests as more than mere verbal or intellectual acuity: the *AjKV*'s Mañjuśrī is imbued with trans-worldly, Buddha-

was portrayed in Indian Mahāyāna literature and thought before the second century C.E. For further comments on the scholarly potential – and limits – of Lokakṣema's works, see Paul Harrison's "Who Gets to Ride in the Great Vehicle? Self-Image and Identity Among the Followers of Early Mahāyāna." Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies 10, no. 1, 72 ff.

⁴⁵³ Harrison 1993, 153.

⁴⁵⁴ From Harrison "Mañjuśrī and the Cult..." 1996, 7-8.

like powers and pedagogical abilities -- he is clearly a monastic bodhisattva of the very highest stage if not a buddha in his own right -- and so patently beyond the pale of even the most hallowed *śrāvaka*. This point is illuminated by two vivid narrative sequences in the second and third chapters of the *AjKV*. Each is a teaching offered by Mañjuśrī to prevent disheartened practitioners from falling away from the Mahāyāna path, and each centers around a monastic food offering which, to the sensibilities of the orthodox Nikāya practitioner, has gone awry.

Mañjuśrī: the Buddha's Right-hand Man

In the first, Mañjuśrī magically conjures up a lay devotee who approaches the Tathāgata with an alms bowl filled with food. As the Buddha accepts the offering and begins to eat, Mañjuśrī steps forth and speaks the unspeakable: 'Lord, if you do not first give some of this food to me, you will be (guilty of) ingratitude (*bya pa gzo pa mi mdzad par 'gyur*).⁴⁵⁵ True to form, Śariputra is shocked; how can Mañjuśrī suggest such a thing of the Tathāgata? The Buddha Śākyamuni however, is unperturbed, and promising to explain Mañjuśrī's remarks to Śariputra, drops his begging bowl to the ground. The bowl promptly disappears into the earth and miraculously passes through a host of Buddha-fields, each of which is home to a different, perfectly enlightened Tathāgata. Finally, "having passed through as many Buddha fields as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, the bowl stopped in mid-air in a world-realm named Avabhasa, in which resided the

⁴⁵⁵ DT #216, *Ārya- Ajātaśatrukaukṛittiyavinodana-nāma-mahāyānasūtra*, mdo sde, Tsha 223b.

Buddha-field of a Tathāgata, an *arhat*, a perfectly enlightened buddha by the name of Rasmiraja⁴⁵⁶ -- an event of considerable interest to the members of Rasmiraja's retinue.

The Buddha then turns to the hapless Śāriputra, and instructs him to find and return the bowl. Ever-faithful, Śāriputra disappears from the assembly, enters into the *samadhi* called "the Ten Thousand" and, "by the force of my *prajñā* and the Buddha's magic", passes through ten thousand Buddha-fields in search of the elusive container. He is of course unsuccessful, and sheepishly reports back to the Tathāgata, who sends in the second guard in the form of Maudgalyāyana. This Nikāya great also returns empty-handed, as do Subhuti and each of the five hundred *bhikṣus* (each equipped with divine eyes!) Even the future buddha Maitreya, prophesized by Śākyamuni himself to be a mere lifetime away from complete enlightenment, acknowledges that this is a task better suited to the great Mañjuśrī, whose prowess in meditation exceeds even his own.

Now it is Mañjuśrī's turn. The bodhisattva enters into the *Anugata* (*rjes su song ba*) *samādhi* and, "neither rising from his seat nor leaving the presence of the assembly", extends his right hand and thrusts it downward into the earth's nether regions (*og gis chen bo la lag ba gyas pa brkyong*). Mañjuśrī's arm miraculously elongates, and his hand passes through myriad Buddha-lands, graciously paying homage to each Buddha it meets along the way as a voice echoes through the underground worlds: "Śākyamuni salutes you!" Simultaneously, "every pore of Mañjuśrī's arm emitted millions of rays of light, and from all of the light rays there arose millions of lotus flowers. At the center of each

⁴⁵⁶ Derge #216, 224a.

lotus appeared the body of a Tathāgata, and all of those Tathāgatas extolled the Bhagavan Tathāgata Śākyamuni.⁴⁵⁷

In the Avabhasa realm, the devotees (*bsnyen bkur byed pa*) of Rasmiraja's retinue are understandably puzzled and amazed. What is the significance of this hand, this bowl, of these miraculous happenings? Rasmiraja explains: in a far away world-realm named Sahā, home to a Buddha named Śākyamuni and separated from Avabhasa by as many Buddha-fields as 72,000 times the number of grains of sand in the Ganges, there is a bodhisattva, a *mahāsattva* named Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta. "He has achieved the [six] superknowledges (*mnog bar shes pa*), the powers and all the perfections. Without rising from his seat, that Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta has extended his arm to retrieve this bowl."⁴⁵⁸

The devotees digest this for a while, and then turn to Rasmiraja. "Bhagavan, please let us see the Sahā world realm, Śākyamuni Buddha and Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta."

So,

the Tathāgata Rasmiraja emitted light rays from his *urna* (brow-curl) which reached all the Buddha-fields – 72,000 times as many (fields) as were grains of sand in the Ganges... And all the beings whose bodies were showered by that light became imbued with the bliss of a *cakravartin*; all the yogic practitioners showered by that light achieved all the fruitions; all the learners' showered by that light (achieved the) meditation on the eight liberations and became *arhats*; and all bodhisattva showered by that light attained the *samādhi* entitled "Lamp Like the Sun." And the bodhisattvas from that Buddha-field of Tathāgata Rasmiraja saw this Sahā world realm, the Bhagavan Śākyamuni, Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta and the *sangha* of listeners.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁷ Derge #216, 225a ff.

⁴⁵⁸ Derge #216, 225b-226a. Again, it must be remembered that while the term *kumārabhūta* is in the Tibetan edition of this work, it does not appear in the Chinese.

⁴⁵⁹ Derge #216, 226a. *De nas de bzhin shegs pa od zer gyi rgyal pos smin mtshams kyi mdzod sbu nas od phyung nas'od des sangs rgyas kyi shing gang ga'i klung gi byem snyed bdun cu rtsa gnyis po de dag thams cad brtol te' thams cat yot pa'i 'jig rten gyi khams snag ba chen pos khyab par gyur to' sems can gang dak gi lus la od des phog par*

When the bodhisattvas of Rasmira's retinue see the impurity of the Sahā world realm, they begin to weep. "‘Bhagavan,' they said, "‘like a precious *vaidurya* gemstone which is rendered valueless from sinking in a swamp, such is the situation of these Bhagavan bodhisattvas, mahāsattvas born in the Sahā world realm.' But the Tathāgata Rasmiraja chides them:

Noble sons, you must not speak this way. Why? A person who generates a loving mind towards all beings for a single morning in the Sahā world realm engenders far greater merit than one who practices and meditates for ten *kalpas* here. Why? Noble sons, those bodhisattvas, mahāsattvas in the Sahā world realm, those protectors of the holy dharma become purified of karmic sins and all of the taints.⁴⁶⁰

Then, from the thousand-spoked wheels on the soles of his feet, the Buddha Śākyamuni emits millions of light beams that travel through myriad Buddha-fields, shower attainments upon all beings that they touch, and illuminate the Tathāgata Rasmiraja of the Avabhasa world realm and his devoted followers. The bodhisattvas from each world realm look upon each other, and Mañjuśrī seizes the Buddha's begging bowl

*gyur pa de dag thams cad ni 'khor los sgyur ba 'i bde ba dang lden par gyur do rnal
'byor sbyod gang dag gi lus la od des phog par gyur pa de dag thams cad ni 'brus bu thob
par gyur to' slob pa gank dag gi lus la od des phog par gyur pa de dag thams cad ni
rnam par thar ba brgyad la bsam gden byed pa 'i dgra bcom par gyur to byang chub sems
dba gang dag gi lus la od des phog par gyur pa de dag thams cad ni ting nge 'dzin nyi
ma lta bu 'i sgrun ma zhes bya ba thob par gyur to 'di lta ste' de zhin gshegs pa od zer
gyi rgyal po de a 'i sang rgyas kyi zhing de nas byang chub sems dpa de dag gis 'jig rten
gyi khams mi mjed pa 'di dang' bcom ldan 'das sha kya thub pa dang' jam dpal gzhon
mur gyur pa dang'nyan thos kyi dge 'dun thams cad mthong bar gyur to'.*

⁴⁶⁰ Derge #216, 226b. *rigs kyi bu khyod de skad m zer cig' de ci 'i phyir zhe na gand 'jig rten gyi khams 'dir bskal pa bcur bsams gdan la gnas shing sbyod pa bas gang 'jig rten gyi khams mi jed par sng dro gcig sems can thams cad la byams pa 'i sems skyed na de bas 'di 'i bsod nams shin du 'phal lo' de ci 'i phyir zhe na rigs kyi bu byang chub sems dba sems dba chen po gang mi mjed kyi 'jig tten gyi khams na dam pa 'i chos srung ba de dag ni las kyi sgrib pa dang' nyon mongs pa thams cad byang bar 'gyur ro'*

and draws it upward to the Sahā universe and Śākyamuni Buddha. As his arm ascends, the light rays disappear and the flowers vanish. When it returns from its magical travels, Mañjuśrī prostrates to the Buddha, and offers him the long-lost bowl.

Even this abbreviated overview makes clear that the world into which the *AjKV*'s Buddha throws his bowl is grounded in the ontology of *prajñā-pāramitā* thought, yet hovers in the visionary, fantastical realm of the *Avatamsaka sūtra*. The underlying message of the *AjKV* is, of course, consonant with that of the *Aṣṭa*: contrary to the way things appear to the misguided *bhikṣu*, all things are, in reality, void of intrinsic identity. Insofar as all things lack *svabhāva*, the enlightened mind can, through meditation, 'enter into' all things; thus the Buddha's begging bowl may pass unimpeded through the apparently solid earth. We are not surprised that Śāriputra's search for a localized, self-existent entity is fruitless, nor that the bowl itself floats free of surfaces and fixed positions. Mañjuśrī's visual reiteration of Śākyamuni's climactic *bhūmi-sparśa* moment echoes this insight: when this bodhisattva extends his right hand to the ground, it passes through the hard surface of Nikāya ontology to equate the porous interdependence of the Mahāyāna vision with Śākyamuni's *bodhi* experience.

The *AjKV* thus portrays the world as a continuum of consciousness experienced through meditation. Mañjuśrī's position makes this especially clear: it is his status as *samādhi* master *par excellence* that empowers him to traverse the unfathomable landscape of the Buddha's imaginative creation without so much as rising from his seat. His mind can penetrate all things, and the Buddha is this all-penetrating, all-transforming awareness, embodying and revealing the interdependent, non-local nature of reality. As

such, the message is clear: Mañjuśrī in meditation is indistinguishable from the Buddha himself.

Acting in concert with Śākyamuni to stage this drama for disheartened devotees, Mañjuśrī is likewise Buddha-like in his mastery of compassionate artistry. His tacit status as buddha *incognito* is suggested by his miraculous acts of transformation and celebration – his very arm supports decillions of realized Tathāgatas born from blazing lights and shimmering lotus petals. It is Mañjuśrī as miracle-worker, Mañjuśrī as Grand Master of *upāya* who commands this stage. In this sense, the implicit Mañjuśrī/Buddha slippage reminds us of the *tathāgata-garbha* – the universal germ of buddha-potential whose presence implicitly problematizes absolute distinctions between buddhas and buddhas-to-be.⁴⁶¹

Powerful though he is, however, Mañjuśrī remains the monk-disciple *extraordinaire*. A respectful emissary of Śākyamuni, Mañjuśrī extends his greetings to other Tathāgatas only in Śākyamuni's name, even as his own Tathāgata emanations sing their praises of the Sahā buddha. This description of uncompromised fidelity functions as more than a standard literary embellishment – after all, the entire 'lost bowl' episode has been sparked by Mañjuśrī's apparent disrespect to the Buddha and transgression of monastic etiquette. The *AjKV* is deliberate in demonstrating that Mañjuśrī honors both the Buddha and the monastic paradigm; it is he who ultimately returns the begging bowl to the Buddha, he who occasions a visual doorway between two *sanghas* apparently

⁴⁶¹ Hirakawa observes that the *AjKV* includes "a detailed presentation of the teaching that the mind is originally pure...Mañjuśrī's activities can be understood as representing the process of uncovering the originally pure nature of the mind, which has been obscured by adventitious defilements. Hirakawa 1993, 292.

separated by inconceivable distances of time and space, yet in actuality of a single, non-dual reality.⁴⁶² Mañjuśrī functions not to challenge the institution of monasticism but to emphasize its consonance with the Mahāyāna; only through the perfection of *prajñā* will the heroism of the Sahā monks be fully rewarded, will “they become purified of karmic sins and all of the taints.” The magnitude and incalculable value of Mañjuśrī’s teaching to the suffering denizens of the Sahā universe is similarly highlighted: those who take Mañjuśrī’s insights to heart can realize a rate of meritorious return unheard of in analogous worlds. In keeping with this monetary metaphor, Mañjuśrī’s concern for *sangha* economics is likewise reflected by his close identification with the all-important alms bowl -- an object of even greater importance in the second *avadāna*.

Bowling for Merit

In the subsequent passages of the *AjKV*, Śākyamuni accepts the alms bowl from Mañjuśrī, and finally turns to the chastened Śāriputra to explain the context of Mañjuśrī’s earlier accusation of ingratitude. Innumerable *kalpas* in the past, he says, a fully-realized Buddha named Ajitadhvaja taught the three vehicles of dharma in a world realm named Anindya. Ajitadhvaja’s entourage was comprised of 84,000 *śrāvakas* and 12,000 bodhisattvas, and included a monk and preacher of dharma (*bhānaka*) named Jñānaraja.

One day, the learned Jñānaraja dressed himself in full monkly attire and set off to the king’s palace to gather alms. He had collected many appetizing offerings when he was spotted by Vimalabāhu, the young son of a merchant. Vimalabāhu leapt out of his nurses’ lap, rushed over to Jñānaraja and requested a share of the food. Jñānaraja

⁴⁶² Predictably, it is the transformative power of light -- a hallowed image of *prajñā* -- which enables this mutual recognition, even as it bestows blessings and meditative attainments on all beings in its path.

complied with this somewhat unorthodox demand, and the young Vimalabāhu followed his new friend back to where the Buddha was residing. “O son!” Jñānaraja then urged him, “offer alms food to the Tathāgata.” Vimalabāhu did so, and found that his bowl remained completely full. Accordingly, he offered food to the Buddha’s entire entourage -- all ninety-six thousand *śrāvakas* and bodhisattvas – and found that his bowl still held food enough to feed the entire *sangha* for seven days. Inspired by the apparent inexhaustibility of merit that accrued from honoring the Buddha and the *sangha*, Vimalabāhu took refuge, joined the *sangha* and conceived the Awakening Mind.

What is the significance of this event? Śākyamuni explains:

Śāriputra...At that time and on that occasion, the monk and preacher of the Dharma called Jñānaraja, was Mañjuśrī... Śāriputra, at that time and on that occasion, I was the son of the merchant called Vimalabāhu. Śāriputra, it was Mañjuśrī who, having giving me alms food, caused me to conceive the Awakening Mind – my first aspiration for the sake of enlightenment. Śāriputra, that is the way in which it should be understood. You should see that the Tathāgata Buddha’s greatness, the ten powers, the fearlessnesses, the unimpeded intuition and whatever other good {qualities} are engendered by Mañjuśrī. Why is that? Because the attainment of omniscience derives from that Awakening Mind. Śāriputra, in the ten directions, I see infinite, innumerable Śākyamunis – Tathāgatas who, just like me, abide in enlightenment because of Mañjuśrī. Similarly, I see Tiṣya, Raja and Dīpankara -- Tathāgatas who, because of Mañjuśrī, abide in enlightenment and then turn the dharma wheel. I could recite the names of such Tathāgatas for a *kalpa*, or for more than a *kalpa*, and not reach their end – not to mention those who practice the bodhisattva [path], those who reside in Tuṣita, those who are born, those who renounce the householder life, those who practice austerities, those who sit at the heart of enlightenment. Śāriputra, that is the way in which it should be understood. It is about that very Mañjuśrī that those who speak and teach aptly say, ‘he is the mother of bodhisattvas, he is the father, he is the [giver of] compassion and inspiration.’ Śāriputra, that is the cause and the reason why, because of a previous favor, Mañjuśrī accused me of ingratitude.⁴⁶³

⁴⁶³ Derge #216, 228b-229a. *'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa 'di de 'i tshe de 'i dus na dge slong chos smras ba ye shes rgyal po zhes bya ba r gyur te... nga ni de 'i tshe de 'i dus na tshong dpon gyi bu dri ma med pa 'l dpung pa zhes bya ba ter gyur te' sha ri bu 'jam dpal gzho nur gyur bas nga la bsot snyoms byin nas byang chub tu sems skyet du bjug ste de ni ngas byang chub kyi phyir thog ma sems skyet pa yin te. sha ri bu rnams grangs des*

Śariputra listens and understands -- Mañjuśrī's enigmatic behavior is finally clear, and the humbled arhat's insight into the power of *prajñā* and merit is measurably deepened.

What are we to make of the Buddha's story? What literary functions, social values and associations are being linked to the Crown Prince of *prajñā*? Paul Harrison rightfully notes that "[t]he insistence that Mañjuśrī takes ritual precedence here in the matter of the alms food is of course symbolic of the fact that the spiritual achievements of the Buddha, on which the attainment of the *śrāvaka* or *arhat* depend, are themselves premised on the existence of the bodhisattva."⁴⁶⁴ Mañjuśrī thus personifies the Mahāyāna retort to Nikāya claims of precedence: blending the dynamics of rebirth with the logic of filial devotion, the Mahāyāna Mañjuśrī is, in fact, anterior to the Buddha himself. We are of course

kyang 'di ltar shes par bya 'o de bzhin gzheks pa sangs rgyas kyi che ba nyid dang stops bcu dang mi 'jigs pa dang ye shes chags pa med pa dang ci 'ang rung ste de thams cat 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pas byed du bjug pa las gyur par blta 'o de ci 'i phyir zhe na sems bskyed pa de las thams cad mkhen pa thob pa 'i phyir ro sa ri 'i bu ngas ni phyogs bcu nang bdag ci lta bade dang 'br ba 'i de bzhin gshegs pa gang 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pas byang chub la bzhag pa sha kya thub pa zhes bya ba dpag tu med grangs med pa dang de bzhin du ti sha zhes bya ba dang rgyal ba zhes bya ba dang gtsug ltan zhes bya ba dang mar me mdzad ces bya bdag mthong ste gang 'jam dpal gzhonu nur gyuar pas byang chub la bzhag nas da ltar chos kyi 'khor lo bskor ba 'i de bzhin gshegs pa de tag gi mtshan kyang bskal pa am bskal pa 'i lhag ma ma lus par bdzod par gyur na gangbyang chub sems dpa 'i sbyad pa dag lta ci smos gang dga ldan gyi gnas na gnas pa dag lta ci smos gang skye ba dag lta ci smos gang khyim nas 'byung ba dag lta ci smos gang dk' ba spod pa dag lta ci smos gang byang chub kyi snying po la 'dug pa dag lta ci smos de sha ri 'i bu rnam grangs des kyang 'di ltar rig par byang ste gang dag byang chub sems dp' rnam kyi m'o skyet pa 'o thugs rje ba 'o byed du 'jam pa 'o zhes yang dag par smra zhing ston pa ni 'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa nyid la de dag smra zhing ston te sha ri 'i bu rgyu de dang rskyen de yin te sngon phan btags pa 'i phyir 'jam dpal gzhonu nur gyur pa nga la byas pa mi gzo bas rgol lo.

⁴⁶⁴ Harrison, October 1996, 7.

reminded of the *Aṣṭasāhasrika*'s affirmation that "the perfection of *prajñā*" is "the mother of the bodhisattvas."

Importantly however, Mother *Prajñā* here is a male monastic -- Vimalabāhu's substitute nurse -- who bloodlessly engenders the birth of the future Buddha through an artful demonstration of the rewards of monastic support. Mañjuśrī is thus positioned by the *AjKV* as the masculine, monastic analogue to the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* -- a reflection, perhaps of the values of the *sūtra*'s presumably monastic, celibate compiler(s).⁴⁶⁵ Equally striking is the Mahāyāna emphasis upon filiality here -- by the demands of filial piety, Mañjuśrī as Mother *Prajñā* is to be honored above and beyond the Buddha himself. The Mahāyāna compilers were evidently well aware of the importance of filial feeling to Indian Buddhist monks, and tapped the power of this sentiment to position and entrench the Crown Prince in the Mahāyāna pantheon.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁵ The assimilation of female reproductive functions to Mañjuśrī is reiterated later in the *AjKV*, when the Buddha notes that innumerable other Buddhas were past disciples of Mañjuśrī. Indeed, "in the same way that, in the world, all children have a father and a mother, so in the religion of the Buddha, Mañjuśrī is the father and the mother." See Lamotte, 1960, 93-94. Note that in the Pure Land of Mañjuśrī, described in the *Mañjuśrī-buddhakṣetra-guṇavyūha-sūtra*, the Crown Prince vows "to cause my land to lack the name 'woman,' and to be inhabited by numerous bodhisattvas who are free from the filth of afflictions, who cultivate pure conduct and who are spontaneously born dressed in monastic robes and seated with crossed legs." Garma C.C. Chang, *A Treasury of Mahāyāna Sūtras: Selections From the Mahāratnakūta Sūtra*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1996, 180. Likewise, we find in the *Bodhipaksanideśa* that devotion to Mañjuśrī and to his name "protects against all female birth..." See de La Vallee Poussin in Hastings *Encyclopedia*, 1970, 405.

⁴⁶⁶ The notion that Indian Buddhist monks were concerned with filiality flies in the face of much twentieth century scholarship which presumed that filiality was a primarily Chinese value, and that Indian monks were, as the Vinaya ideal would have them, unconcerned with the families they left behind. In fact, an examination of Indian monastic donor inscriptions shows that filial piety "was an old, an integral, and a pervasive practice of Indian Buddhism from the earliest periods of which we have any definite knowledge, and that in actual practice the idea of benefitting one's parents,

Mañjuśrī's association with *sangha* economic concerns is likewise reflected by the earnestness with which he (as Jñānaraja) encourages Vimalabāhu's offerings, and by his close identification with the all-important alms bowl (*piṇḍa-pātra*). A meeting place of monk and donor, the *piṇḍa-pātra* here connotes the transactions which comprise the monastic-lay relationships – transactions which, at the approximate time of the *AjKV*'s composition, were becoming increasingly complex. An examination of early Buddhist literature reveals that the number and kind of items to be given as *dāna* to Buddhist monks were dramatically expanding. The earliest *devvyadharmā* lists contained in the *Vinaya* and *Nikāyas* mention only four types of objects: *cīvara* (robe), *piṇḍapāta* (almsfood), *senāsana* (place for rest) and *bhesajja* (medicine). By the time of the *Cullanidessa*, however (i.e. no earlier than Aśoka), the *devvyadharmā* list had expanded to fourteen items, including major luxury items of trade, such as oil for lamps, perfume, and garlands.⁴⁶⁷

This shift was paralleled by a concomitant escalation in the magnitude and kinds of benefits which were said to accrue to the generous layperson:

The early Pāli canon had few tangible benefits to offer to the layman in return for gifts in kind. The only practical reason for making large donations to the Sangha was enhancement of social status. It is in the non-canonical texts that the idea of gift-giving is first linked with rewards like deliverance from the cycle of rebirth, old age and death (*Milindapanha*, 41 dilemma). These undergo further changes in the Mahāsaṅghika doctrine and in return for the construction and decoration of stupas, lay devotees were now promised wealth and even stature at par with the gods (*Mahāvastu* II:363-97).⁴⁶⁸

whether living or dead, by making religious gifts on their behalf was a major, if not a specific preoccupation of Indian Buddhist monks." See Schopen 1997, 65.

⁴⁶⁷ Himanshu P. Ray, *The Winds of Change: Buddhism and the Maritime Links of Early South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, 127.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 128.

Even as *dānapāramitā* transactions were becoming more weighted, another curious change was seen in Buddhist literature such as the *Divyāvadāna*: the word for almsfood, *piṇḍapāta* (literally ‘throwing a lump’), was replaced by the term *piṇḍa-pātra*, or alms bowl. This shift apparently reflected a new lay practice of donating valuable bowls to monastic institutions⁴⁶⁹ -- a sharp contrast from the tradition of placing a handful of rice in the wooden bowl of an individual meditator.

By the first century, therefore, the *piṇḍa-pātra* epitomized the increasingly abstract and financially-significant array of material and symbolic transactions that comprised the laity-monastic relationship -- it was a synecdoche, if you will, of the “economics of Buddhist devotionalism,”⁴⁷⁰ the material lynchpin of *dānapāramitā*. This is the celebrated object which the *AjKV*’s Mañjuśrī retrieves in Chapter Two, and artfully deploys in the *avadāna* of Chapter Three. Indeed, in the narrative logic of this story, monastically-focused *danapāramitā* is ontologically equivalent to the Awakening Mind and the Mahāyāna perfection of *prajñā*. All are the “mother of the bodhisattva,” and all

⁴⁶⁹ Himanshu Ray points out that “it is around this time that the legend of the merchants Trapusha and Bhallika and the offering of the bowls by the Lokapālas appears in the Buddhist texts (*Mahāvagga* I.4.1-4; *Jātaka* I.80; *Mahāvastu*, II.85:19-20; *Lalitavistara*, 381).” *Ibid.*, 127. The *Jātaka* provides an especially lush description of the offered bowls, which are made of sapphire, jet, etc.

⁴⁷⁰ I am thinking here, for example, of the pivotal role played by *stūpas* in the social history of post-Aśoka Buddhism: “these monuments became magnets attracting monastery building and votive construction, as well as local ritual traditions and regional pilgrimage...the economic of Buddhist devotionalism at these centers generated income for local monasteries, artisans and merchants, an alliance basic to Buddhism throughout its history.” See “Introduction” to Lopez (ed), *Buddhism in Practice*. Princeton Readings in Religion. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, p. 20.

are fused in the figure of the *AjKV*'s Mañjuśrī, the Grand Master of the Begging Bowl since time immemorial.⁴⁷¹

It is not only the “mother of the Buddha” image that draws from *prajñā* discourse to elaborate *prajñā*'s Crown Prince. The Mañjuśrī of Lokakṣema's corpus, especially the second century *AjKV*, exhibits and develops a host of associations and images familiar from portrayals of *pañña/prajñā* in the Pali canon. Mañjuśrī's role as King Ajataśatru's *kalyāṇī mitra* reminds us of *pañña* as a marker of the ideal ruler, and by extension, of *pañña*'s intimacy with *śīla* and the regulation of desire. The positioning of *pañña* as the culmination of *samādhi* is succinctly expressed by the *AjKV*'s portrayal of Mañjuśrī as a master of meditation unsurpassed even by Maitreya. The light which suffuses and radiates from Mañjuśrī reminds us of the metaphoric association of *pañña* with vision and light, while the portrayal of Mañjuśrī as monk *par excellence* resonates loudly with the Pali identification of *pañña* with perfected Right View: this bodhisattva-monk has, over the course of countless lifetimes, progressed from a ‘learner’ (*sekho*) to Buddhist ‘adept’ (*asekho*): he is the paradigmatic monk-*extraordinaire* who “has arrived at the end of suffering” and “sees things as they are.”

⁴⁷¹ Mañjuśrī's association with the begging bowl and with almsgiving is especially highlighted in the fifth-century *Questions of Nāgaśrī*, in which Mañjuśrī uses begging as a vehicle for explaining Mahāyāna teachings: “I enter this city in order to beg, full of thoughts compassion. Great will be the advantage produced by wisdom. I will practice begging in order to save all gods and men in the world, and to become the great guide of beings... [Yet] I have forsaken that notion [of seeking alms] from the point of view of existence; from the point of view of non-existence there is no forsaking, nor anything that could be forsaken. This is what is called pure seeking for alms on the part of the Bodhisattva.” Conze 1973b, 160.

By so doing, the portrayal of Lokakṣema's Mañjuśrī quite clearly draws upon and extends the Nikāya sense of *pañña/prajñā* as a signpost of Buddhist identity. In Chapter Two, I suggested that in Pāli literature, the progressive introjection of *pañña* was understood as a barometer of one's deepening identification as Buddha; fully-honed *pañña* was tantamount to *arhat*-hood. In Lokakṣema's works, this formula is apparently poured into the mold of Mahāyāna discourse. Now, the realization of *prajñā-pāramitā* characterizes the true Buddhist, eloquently exemplified by Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattvic personification of transcendent insight.

Textual Footprints – 150 C.E.-500 C.E.

Lokakṣema's corpus thus encapsulates a range of Mañjuśrī's roles and symbolic associations that are developed by Indian Buddhist writers over the next centuries: Mañjuśrī as spokesman for the Mahāyāna path, Mañjuśrī as *kalyaṇī mitra*, Mañjuśrī as promoter of *sangha* economic health, Mañjuśrī as male monastic *extraordinaire*. These threads are woven through and around the *kumāra*'s most prominent role here and in the subsequent four centuries of Buddhist literature: Mañjuśrī as the interlocutor who expounds and personifies the Mahāyāna's hallmark understanding of *prajñā*. Thus when a well-meaning disciple in the *Suśhīmati-devaputra-paripṛcchā* (*SDP*) wonders "what is the meaning of truth?" it is Mañjuśrī who provides the archetypal *Prajñāpāramitā* response: "Son of Heaven, the truth is no other than voidness. Thus, voidness may be called truth... Voidness is said to be the truth because it is without beginning and end, without increase and decrease. That [dharmas are] empty by nature is the truth. Thus,

such a truth is no truth [at all].⁴⁷² Mañjuśrī's identity as Crown Prince of *prajñā* is pivotal to the narrative structure of the highly-influential third-century *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* (*VN*) where, "sustained by the grace of the Buddha," he enters into conversation with Vimalakīrti, and so propels the unfolding of the *sūtra*'s profound, often *prajñā-pāramitā*-esque teachings on *śūnyata*:

Mañjuśrī: Householder, why is your house empty? Why have you no servants?

Vimalakīrti: Mañjuśrī, all buddha-fields are also empty.

Mañjuśrī: What makes them empty?

Vimalakīrti: They are empty because of emptiness.

Mañjuśrī: What is 'empty' about emptiness?

Vimalakīrti: Constructions are empty because of emptiness...⁴⁷³

Singled-out as the only member of the Buddha's retinue who dares to lock philosophical horns with the great lay buddha Vimalakīrti, Mañjuśrī's status here reminds us of his triumph over the Nikāya monks in the *AjK*. As such, Mañjuśrī's *VN* incarnation conveys the rhetorical thrust of *prajñā* in early Mahāyāna discourse, wherein *prajñā*'s exaltation signals the authenticity and doctrinal supremacy of the Mahāyāna over mainstream Buddhism. As the personification of *prajñā*, the figure of Mañjuśrī succinctly embodies this Mahāyāna narrative strategy, thus in the twelfth chapter of the

⁴⁷² Chang 1996, 64. This text is a part of the Ratnakūṭa collection, and was translated by Bodhiruci into Chinese between 706-713. The date of the Sanskrit original from which Bodhiruci worked is unknown, though several authors estimate that the text dates back to at least the fourth century. Interestingly, Mañjuśrī's identification with *prajñā* is deepened in the *SDP* by his subsequent and climactic discussion of the sword of *prajñā* - an image familiar to us from the Pāli *suttas*: "to kill the thoughts of a self, of a personal identity, of a sentient being," asserts Mañjuśrī. "I always kill with the sharp knife of wisdom and kill in such a manner as to have no thought of holding the knife or of killing." The influence of the *SDP* upon iconographic representations of Mañjuśrī holding the sword of wisdom is difficult to ascertain or evaluate. It seems that Mañjuśrī first appears with a sword in Indian iconography from the sixth century onwards.

⁴⁷³ Cited from Thurman 1992, 43.

Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra, it is Mañjuśrī's diminutive eight year old disciple -- a Nāga princess, no less -- who outwits and outshines Śariputra and his skeptical cohorts. In the second century *Śūramgama-samādhi-sūtra*, the indisputable superiority of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī's accomplishments to those of the Nikāya *śrāvaka* is asserted by none other than the great Ānanda himself:

Now there was in the assembly a bodhisattva devaputra named Vimalacandragarbha 'Spotless Moon Essence', who had this thought: The Buddha proclaimed Ānanda the foremost of the *bahuśrutas*; is Ānanda truly a *bahuśruta* as Mañjuśrī has just defined?

Ānanda replied: I do not in any way possess the learning that Mañjuśrī has just described.

Vimalacandragarbha asked: why has the Tathāgata always proclaimed you the foremost of the *bahuśrutas*?

Ānanda replied: The disciples (*śrāvaka*) of the Buddha obtain deliverance (*vimukti*) in so far as they repeat the words of the master (*ghoṣāmuga*): it is among them that the Buddha proclaimed me the foremost. But he never said that I was the foremost of the *bahuśrutas* among the bodhisattvas, immense seas of knowledge (*apramāṇa-jñāna-samudra*), endowed with unequalled wisdom (*asamaprajñā*) and unobstructed eloquence (*apratihatapratibhāna*).⁴⁷⁴

Mahāyāna spokesman *par excellence*, Mañjuśrī understandably dabbles in evangelical duties, carrying doubters out of the quagmire of non-belief to the reliable shores of the Mahāyāna way. In the *Ratnakaranda sūtra*, Mañjuśrī's exposition of the Buddhist dharma so overwhelms the followers of the Jain teacher Satyaka Nirgranthaputra that they drop to their knees before him and hail Śākyamuni. Mañjuśrī converts "incalculable numbers" of beings of the Naga's underwater kingdom in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*, and even manages to convert a prostitute to the Mahāyāna path in the *Mañjuśrīvikrīdita Sūtra*.

⁴⁷⁴ Cited from Etienne Lamotte, *Suramgamasamādhisūtra*. [The Concentration of Heroic Progress]. Translated from the French by Sara Boin-Webb. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press in association with The Buddhist Society, 1998, 210.

Likewise, the *kumāra*'s questions and insights routinely function as pointers to culminating teachings and milestone experiences. In the *Gandavyūha sūtra*, it is Mañjuśrī's public exposition of a scripture that ignites the "unhindered, unattached determination for enlightenment" in young Sudhana, whose ensuing spiritual quest is the subject of this influential work. (This Crown Prince *cum* "mother of the Buddhas" is, appropriately, the first of fifty-two teachers Sudhana encounters in a journey to enlightenment, and the first to be acknowledged by the Buddha Maitreya at the journey's completion.) In the *Śūraṅgamasamādhi-sūtra*, it is Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta who, "knowing the thoughts of the assembly and desiring to cut off the doubts (*saṃśayacchedana*) of the latter," quizzes Śākyamuni about the buddha of another buddha-field (*buddhakṣetra*), and so occasions the lesson on Pure Land mechanics that transforms the entire assembly.⁴⁷⁵ The bodhisattva's queries about the nature of the *trikāya* constitute the concluding chapter of the fourth century *Samdhinirmocana-sūtra*,⁴⁷⁶ and elicit the Buddha's reiteration of a key hermeneutic model propounded by this Yogācāra text:

'Bhagavan, please explain the core meanings by which bodhisattvas enter into the indirect intention of the profound doctrines spoken by the Tathāgata, the core meanings of the bodhisattva *sūtras*, the *vinaya*, the *mātrkā*...'

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 199-200.

⁴⁷⁶ It is very difficult to date the *Samdhinirmocana sūtra*. Current scholarship holds that it was compiled over several centuries. Insofar as its "third turning" Cittamātrin teachings are self-characterized as a correction of well-established *prajñā-pāramitā* thought, its earliest layers are placed around the fourth century. The latest sections are generally agreed to be Chapters 5-7. Mañjuśrī is found in Chapter 10.

‘Mañjuśrī, listen, and I will explain to you all the core meanings...’⁴⁷⁷

And in the *VN*, It is Mañjuśrī who gives voice to the *sūtra*’s remarkable and unorthodox affirmation of passions, presaging the imagery and soteriology of Buddhist Tantra,⁴⁷⁸ and who elicits Vimalkīrti’s electric silence in the ninth chapter:

When the bodhisattvas had given their explanations, they all addressed the crown prince Mañjuśrī: ‘Mañjuśrī, what is the bodhisattvas entrance into non-duality?’

Mañjuśrī replied: Good sirs, you have all spoken well. Nevertheless, all your explanations are themselves dualistic. To know no one teaching, to express nothing, to say nothing, to explain nothing, to announce nothing, to indicate nothing, and to designate nothing – that is the entrance into non-duality.’

Then, the crown prince Mañjuśrī said to the Licchavi Vimalkīrti, ‘We have all given our own teachings, noble sir. Now, may you elucidate the teaching of the entrance into the principle of nonduality?’

Thereupon, the Licchavi Vimalkīrti kept his silence, saying nothing at all.

The crown prince Mañjuśrī applauded the Licchavi Vimalkīrti...(whereupon) five thousand bodhisattvas entered the door of the Dharma of nonduality and attained tolerance of the birthlessness of things.⁴⁷⁹

Mañjuśrī’s own teachings on non-duality blend seamlessly into his question to Vimalkīrti, whose response is, in turn, the completion and confirmation of Mañjuśrī’s lesson. For these disciples, the ‘indication of nothing’ is indeed, the entrance to nonduality. It is Mañjuśrī and Vimalkīrti’s question-and-answer session that propels them into an immediate experience of that deeper reality.

⁴⁷⁷ *bcom ldan ‘das gzungs kyi don gang gis byung chub sems dpa rnams de bzhin gshegs pas gzungs pa’i chos zab mo rnams kyi ldem por dgongs pa’i rje su ‘jug par ‘gyur ba byang chub sems dpa rnams kyi mdo ste dang: ‘dul ba dang:m mo de dag gi gzungs kyi don ma lus pa ‘di.../’jam dpal de’i phyir gzungs kyi don ma lus khyod la shad par bya ‘o.*

⁴⁷⁸ “Noble sirs, flowers like the blue lotus...do not grow on the dry ground in the wilderness, but they do grow in swamps and mud banks. Just so, the Buddha-qualities do not grow in living beings certainly destined for the uncreated but do grow in those living beings who are like swamps and mud banks of passion...(W)ithout going into the ocean of passions, it is impossible to obtain the mind of omniscience.” Thurman 1992, 66.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

As these examples make clear, Mañjuśrī's pedagogic contributions are not primarily stand-alone discourses. In the world of second to sixth century Indian Buddhist *sūtras*, Mañjuśrī most famously plays the role of the Tathāgata's assistant: his seasoned partner in Socratic dialogues that are jointly staged for the benefit of less advanced disciples. In the *Sarvadharmāpravṛttinirdeśa*, it is Mañjuśrī who (in keeping with his close identification with mellifluous speech), elicits a complex discourse from the Buddha on the memory words (*dhāraṇīpāda*) by which a bodhisattva can attain unhindered eloquence (*apratihatapratibhāna*). In the question-answer session portrayed in the fourth century *Saptaśatika prajñā-pāramitā sūtra*,⁴⁸⁰ it is Mañjuśrī who describes the nature of transcendent *prajñā* to the Buddha himself:

'World-Honored One, to see that no dharma arises or ceases is to cultivate the pāramitā of wisdom. World-Honored One, to see that no dharma increases or decreases is to cultivate the pāramitā of wisdom.... World-Honored One, to neither beauty nor ugliness, to think of neither superiority or inferiority, and to practice neither attachment nor renunciation is to cultivate the pāramitā of wisdom. Why? Because...all dharmas are devoid of characteristics.'

The Buddha asked Mañjuśrī, 'Is not the Buddha-Dharma superior?'

Mañjuśrī answered, 'I find nothing superior or inferior. The Tathagata can testify to this, since he himself has already realized the emptiness of all dharmas...'

The Buddha told Mañjuśrī, 'Excellent, It is excellent that you can explain so well the attributes of the paramita of wisdom. What you say is the seal of the Dharma learned by the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas...'⁴⁸¹

As such, it is evident that Mañjuśrī's questions and pronouncements function in these texts far differently than do those of a Śariputra or a Sudhana. Mañjuśrī's is the voice of perfected *prajñā* -- the wisdom realized in the Buddha's enlightenment, and

⁴⁸⁰ Also called the *Mañjuśrī-parivartāparayārtha*, this text was first translated into Chinese in 502-552, and is tentatively thought to have "been popular" in fourth and fifth century India. See Vaidya 1961, 5.

⁴⁸¹ Cited from Chang 1996, 102-03.

implicit in the luminous nature of the mind. The words of Mañjuśrī are thus rightfully understood as expressions of liberative artistry, heuristic devices intended to cultivate that insight in his audience. Certainly the *Śūramgamasamādhi-sūtra* leaves no room for doubt that the prince of *prajñā* is a master of *upāya*: “comprehending the discouragement of those two hundred bodhisattvas, wishing to dissuade them from their resolve so as to cause them to acquire *amuttarasamyaksambodhi*,” Mañjuśrī recounts the story of his own, long-ago attainment of (an apparent) *nirvāṇa*:

‘[I]n days gone by (*atīte dhvani*), during the kalpa called Virocana ‘Shining’, in the course of three hundred and sixty hundreds of thousands of existences, I entered Nirvāṇa by means of the vehicles of the Pratyekabuddhas...I entered into the attainment of cessation (*nirodhasamāpatti*), but in accordance with my previous aspirations (*pūrvapraṇidhāna*), I did not enter into Parinirvana entirely...’ When Mañjuśrī had spoken these words, the *trisāhasmahāsāhasralokadhātu* trembled in six ways (*saḍvikāram akampata*) and was filled with a great radiance (*mahatā prabhayā pariṣphuto bhū*).⁴⁸²

Is Mañjuśrī a buddha? The buddha-bodhisattva slippage hinted at in the early second century *AjK* is even more pronounced in the late third century *Mañjuśrī-buddhakṣetra-guṇavyūha*. There, we learn that Mañjuśrī “has attained the ten stages of the Bodhisattva, fully acquired the ten powers of the Tathāgata and accomplished all the Buddha-dharmas.”⁴⁸³ Yet why then has he not attained supreme enlightenment? “Good man,” explains Mañjuśrī, “no one realizes enlightenment after he has achieved perfection in all Buddha-Dharmas. Why? Because, if one has achieved perfection in all Buddha-Dharmas, he need not realize anything more.”⁴⁸⁴ Indeed, “I do not even progress toward

⁴⁸² Lamotte 1998, 213-215.

⁴⁸³ Chang 1996, 176-177

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 177.

enlightenment; how then can I attain it?...Since neither a sentient being, nor a life, nor a personal identity exists, I do not progress toward enlightenment, nor do I regress from it.”⁴⁸⁵ In the light of emptiness, there is no such thing as “Buddhahood”. Mañjuśrī views the world in this light, and so indicates by his denial that he is, paradoxically, already enlightened. It is not surprising to find that in the third-fourth century *Angulimāliya-* and the *Mañjuśrī-buddhaksetra-gunavyuha sūtras*, Mañjuśrī has his own Buddha Field, and that the Mañjuśrī of the *Mañjuśrīparinirvana sūtra* is able “through the strength of *samādhi*” to manifest entry into *parinirvāna* “in the ten regions,” even “sharing his relics...for the good of sentient beings.”⁴⁸⁶ In the early sixth century *Acintya-buddha-viśaya-nirdeśa*, Mañjuśrī explains:

Subhuti asked. “is Mañjuśrī a śrāvaka, a Ppratyeka buddha or a completely enlightened buddha?”

Mañjuśrī responds: “Venerable Subhuti, I am a śrāvaka, yet I do not seek to attend to the words of others. I am a pratyeka buddha, yet am not separate from great compassion and fearlessness. I am a fully enlightened buddha, yet have not foregone my [monastic] vows.

Subhuti: In what sense are you a śrāvaka?

Mañjuśrī: I cause all sentient beings to hear the dharma they have not heard, and thus I am a śrāvaka.

Subhuti: Mañjuśrī, in what sense are you a pratyeka buddha?

Mañjuśrī: I comprehend the relativity of all dharmas. Therefore, I am a pratyeka buddha.

Subhuti: Mañjuśrī, in what sense are you a completely enlightened buddha?

Mañjuśrī: I have fully internalized the equality (of dharmas) in the dharmadhatu. Therefore, I am a completely enlightened buddha.... Venerable Subhuti, I certainly abide in all stages,...and in all beings...⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁴⁸⁶ My rendering of Lamotte’s French translation. See Lamotte 1960, 35-39.

⁴⁸⁷ Derge #79: *Phags pa sangs rgyas kyi yul bsam kyis mi khyab pa bstan pa shes bya ba theg pa cen po’ mdo*. (*Ārya-Acintyabuddhaviśayanirdeśa-nāma-mahāyānasūtra*) dkon-brtsegs, Ca 271a. *Btsun pa rab ‘byor kho bo ni nyan thos yin te pha rol las mnyan pa’i sgra la sbyor bar brtson pa ni ma yin no kho bo ni ran sangs rgyas yin te snying rje chen*

At the level of the ordinary monk-scholar, the boundary distinguishing the tenth stage bodhisattva Mañjuśrī from a fully realized Tathāgata is functionally invisible: as Mañjuśrī proclaims in the *PP 700*, ‘World Honored One, I *am* the inconceivable.’ Accordingly, the *Avatamsaka-sūtra* makes clear that one who sees Mañjuśrī is blessed indeed:

Sprung from the ground of Mañjuśrī’s knowledge...By virtue of past goodness (Sudhana) saw Mañjuśrī and set out for enlightenment.
Acting on Mañjuśrī’s instructions; observe his perseverance...
You are welcome in the human world; inconceivably great is your gain,
That you have seen Mañjuśrī face to face and made such a vessel of virtue.⁴⁸⁸

“Face to face with Mañjuśrī”

The language of Maitreya’s reference to this visionary encounter with the Crown Prince resonates with the critical Mahāyāna practice *cum* strategy of legitimation of *anusmṛti* or “recalling” the buddha. As we recall, *anusmṛti* was one means by which a devout meditator could travel to a Pure Land to see, hear and speak with a Buddha and so bring back authentic, legitimate teachings. In his overview of *anusmṛti* practice in early Mahāyāna, Paul Harrison notes that the object of “recollection” gradually shifted from

po dang my 'jogs pa dang bral ba ni ma yin no kho bo ni yang dak par rdzogs pa 'i sangs rgyas yin te bya ba 'i rgyun bjad pa ni ma yin no. smra pa 'jam dpal khyod ji ltar nyan thos yin smra pa chos ma thos pa mnyan pa sems cad la thos par byed de des na kho nyan thos yin no smra pa 'jam dpal khyod ji ltar rang sangs rgyas yin smra pa kho bos chos thams cad rten jing 'brel bar 'byung bar rtogs te des na kho bo rang sangs rgyas so 'jam dpal khyod ji ltar yang dak par rdzogs pa 'i sangs rgyas yin smra pa kho bo chos thams cad chos kyi dbyings su mnyam pa nyid kyis myam bar khong du chud de des na kho bo yang dak par rdzogs pa 'i sangs rgyas so ... Btsun pa rab 'byor kho bo ni thams cad la nges par zung shig ... sems cad thams cad kyang nges pa ste.

⁴⁸⁸ Thomas Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture*. Boston & London: Shambhala, 1993, 1463, 1465, 1470.

the historical Buddha to a range of enlightened figures, each of who taught the dharma in his own field (*buddhakṣetra*), functioning as an object of worship.⁴⁸⁹ Texts such as the *Surangamādhī-sūtra* suggest that Mañjuśrī may, by the end of the second century, have been such a figure. Certainly he was in the third and fourth century, when he attains his own buddha-field in the *Angulimāliya-* and *Mañjuśrī-buddhakṣetra-guṇavyūha sūtras*.

As such, by at least the third century C.E., the import of ‘seeing Mañjuśrī’ becomes clear: to ‘see Mañjuśrī’ is ontologically concomitant to ‘hearing the Buddha at one time.’ His is the enlightened and enlightening voice of the Buddha’s *prajñā* channeled through the intermediating heir-apparent; a vision of Mañjuśrī thus signifies an in-road to legitimate, extra-canonical access to *buddhavacana*. Such an exalted standing may also be read, in part, as a logical extension of his identification with Mahāyāna *prajñā* rhetoric: just as perfected *prajñā* is extolled as the highest and most complete expression of the Buddha’s original message, so too are the teachings of *prajñā*’s bodhisattva personification.

The tendency to deploy Mañjuśrī as a marker of both authority and legitimacy is evident in the works of foundational Buddhist scholar-commentators from a range of sectarian backgrounds. Nāgārjuna arguably sets the tone for Madhyamikan thinkers when he opens his ground-breaking *Prajñā-nāma-mūlamadhyamakārikā* (*MK*) by invoking the Crown Prince of *prajñā*: “*Ārya Mañjuśrīye kumārabhūtāya namaḥ.*”⁴⁹⁰ In the

⁴⁸⁹ Harrison 1987, 39-40.

⁴⁹⁰ Louis de La Vallee Poussin (ed), “*Mūlamadhyamikakārikās avec la Prasannapada Commentaire de Candrakīrti*, Nagarjuna. Bibliotheca Buddhica IV. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, p. 1. Nāgārjuna also salutes Mañjuśrī in several other works, including the *Yuktiṣaṣṭhikā*, the *Śūnyatāsaptati* and the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*.

voluminous *Mahāprajñā-pāramitā-sāstra* traditionally attributed to Nāgārjuna, Mañjuśrī is described as one of the compilers of the Mahāyāna scriptures.⁴⁹¹ Nāgārjuna's great disciple Āryadeva (170-270 CE) honors Mañjuśrī at the start of his *Catuḥśatakaśāstra-kārikā*, and bows to 'Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva' in his *Hastavāla nāma-prakarāṇa*.⁴⁹² Buddhapālita (470-540 CE) dedicates his famous commentary to the *MMK* to both Mañjuśrī and Nāgārjuna,⁴⁹³ as does Bhavaviveka (500-570 CE)⁴⁹⁴ who elsewhere explicitly characterizes Mañjuśrī as a great tenth stage sage.⁴⁹⁵

The Crown Prince is invoked with comparable vigor by Cittamātra thinkers. The great monk-scholar Vasubandhu hails Mañjuśrī at the opening of his two most influential Cittamātra works, the *Trimsikākarika* and the *Vimsakakārikā*. The sixth-century Sthiramati summons the Crown Prince at the beginning of his *Madhyāntavibhangatikā* and *Trimsikābhāṣya*, as does the contemporaneous Dharmapāla. Even Vasubandhu's brother Asaṅga (310-390), who composed five of his works under the inspiration of the

⁴⁹¹ Interestingly, the *Mahāprajñāpāramitāsāstra* tells the story of Mañjuśrī who, in a former incarnation as a bhikṣu, teaches a small child the virtues of giving to the *saṅgha* by lending him the contents of his begging bowl. As in the *AjKV*, the small child likewise becomes a monk.

⁴⁹² See DT #3824: Nāgārjuna, *Dbu-ma rtsa-ba'i tshig-le 'ur byas-pa zhes-rab ces-bya-ba (prajñā-nāma-mūlamadhyamakakārikā)* dbu-ma, Tsha 1b and Tsa 282b, respectively.

⁴⁹³ The only extant work attributed to Buddhapālita, imaginatively named the *Buddhapālita-mūlamadhyamakavṛtti*. See DT #3842, *Dbu-ma rtsa-ba'i 'grel-pa buddhapālita (Buddhapālita-mūlamadhyamakavṛtti)* dbu ma, Tsa 158b.

⁴⁹⁴ See DT #3853: Bhavaviveka, *Dbu-ma 'khrul-pa 'joms-pa shes-bya ba (Prajñā-pradīpa-mūla-madhyamaka-vṛtti)* dbu ma, Tsha 45b.

⁴⁹⁵ In the third chapter of his autocommentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakahṛdayakārikā*, entitled the *Tarkajvālā* (Flame of Reason), Bhavaviveka remarks that "Many sages, such as Avalokitesvara, Samantabhadra, and Mañjuśrī, who have mastered the tenth stage by fulfilling the transcendences, have been purified by the meditation of non-apprehension..."

bodhisattva Maitreya, salutes Mañjuśrī in two of those five works - the *Madhyāntavibhāga* and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*⁴⁹⁶ -- as well as in his renowned *Mahāyānasamgraha*. The seventh century Chinese pilgrim Hsuan Tsang recounts the story of how a Jain is persuaded by Mañjuśrī not to be an Arhat but to help living beings thru Yogacarin scriptures. In short, Mañjuśrī is routinely invoked as the seal of legitimacy by Buddhist scholastics of vying philosophical affiliation: “Well said, well-said, Mañjuśrī, you who demonstrate this dharma which is so deep. You have set up this seal of bodhisattvas, the great beings, so that the greatly conceited Disciples should wake up to what is really true...”⁴⁹⁷ It is not surprising that in later Indian and Tibetan histories, ‘to see Mañjuśrī’ emerges as short-hand means of characterizing an insight or experience as unmistakable and implicitly legitimate.

Bridge to the Pāla: 500 C.E.-750 C.E

With the disintegration of the Gupta political state in the sixth century, Buddhist monastic communities underwent a number of important changes. Archeological evidence suggests that from the sixth century, Buddhist monasticism became primarily focused in Bengal and Bihar.⁴⁹⁸ Grants to monasteries were now described in

⁴⁹⁶ It should be noted that Asaṅga’s authorship of these two works is rigorously contested by contemporary scholars. Moreover, Asaṅga makes no mention of Mañjuśrī in his treatise on *prajñā-pāramitā* practice entitled the *Abhisamayālamkāra* – an obvious place to allude to the Crown Prince of *prajñā* -- nor is Mañjuśrī honored in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (or *Mahayanottaratantra-śāstra*), a treatise on *Tathāgata-garbha* theory.

⁴⁹⁷ *Ārya Saptaśatikā-prajñāpāramitā mahāyānasūtra* (ca. 600 C.E.)

⁴⁹⁸ As well as in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat.

inscriptions, and as I shall discuss in Chapter Four, royal patronage became direct: the kings themselves apparently founded Buddhist monasteries.⁴⁹⁹

In the arena of Buddhist argumentation, this was the time of what Roger Jackson calls the “turn to epistemology and logic”⁵⁰⁰ heralded by the great logician Dignaga. This heightened valuation of critical reasoning is arguably reflected in the enlargement of and development by some north-eastern Buddhist *mahāvihāras* into universities, probably under the patronage of Harśa.⁵⁰¹ Nālandā, for example, acquired its two most notable monuments at the end of the seventh century: the fifth integument of the Great Stūpa of Site No. 3, and the stone temple plinth of Site No. 2.⁵⁰² The vitality of this monastery *cum* university is confirmed by Hsüan-tsang, who observed that it was occupied by “several thousand priests,” all of whom has passed a rigorous entrance examination.⁵⁰³ As he traveled deeper into Bengal, the Chinese pilgrim’s testimonies to flourishing monasteries and urban centers multiplied. Puṇḍravardhana was “densely populated” with 20

⁴⁹⁹ Dilip K. Chakrabarti, “Buddhist Sites Across South Asia As Influenced by Political and Economic Forces.” *World Archaeology* 27, no. 2, 200.

⁵⁰⁰ Roger R. Jackson, *Is Enlightenment Possible? Dharmakīrti and Rgyal Tshab Rje on Knowledge, Rebirth, No-Self and Liberation*. Itanaca, New York: Snow Lion, 1993, 99-107. Jackson’s model primarily tracks the changing thrust of Buddhist argumentation, i.e. the three-phase movement from inter-traditional, intra-sectarian and inter-traditional.

⁵⁰¹ Chakrabarti, 200.

⁵⁰² Fredrick M. Asher, *The Art of Eastern India, 300-800*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980, 46. Asher further observes that “it is no exaggeration to state that the best architectural sculpture of all Nālandā was made during this century.”

⁵⁰³ Samuel Beal (trans.), *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*. Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1969, 167-175.

sanghārāmas inhabited by 3,000 priests, and a hundred deva temples.⁵⁰⁴ Samatata had about thirty *sanghārāmas* with 2,000 Sthavira priests and 100 deva temples;⁵⁰⁵ Tāmralipta had ten *sanghārāmas* with 1,000 priests and fifty temples,⁵⁰⁶ Karmasurvaṇa boasted 10 *sanghārāmas* with 2,000 priests and 50 deva temples, not to mention “very rich householders.”⁵⁰⁷ Sheng Chi, who traveled in Bengal in the second half of the seventh century, testified to one example of imperial affirmation of Buddhism: King Rājbhata of Samatata, he observed, used to mold one hundred thousand statues of the Buddha out of clay every day, and read a hundred thousand ślokas of the *mahāprajñā-pāramitā sūtra*.⁵⁰⁸

In light of his intimate identification with critical insight (*prajñā*) and learning, we would expect to find definitive material traces of Mañjuśrī at these monastic sites. We are not disappointed: “Mañjuśrī was particularly worshipped at Nālandā in the seventh and eighth centuries as testified from the numerous stucco, bronze, and stone representations of the bodhisattva.”⁵⁰⁹ He is then portrayed as a *kumārabhūta*, a chaste prince. In a sixth-seventh-century basalt sculpture of Mañjuśrī in *ābhanga* posture,

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 194-195. Frederick Asher notes that “the remains of Mahāstangarh, Puṇḍravardhana’s capital, confirms its seventh century vitality.” Asher 1980, 37.

⁵⁰⁵ Beal 1969, 199-200

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 201-204.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 201-202.

⁵⁰⁸ Anasua Sengupta, Buddhist Art of Bengal (From the 3rd Century B.C. to the 13th Century A.D.). Delhi: Rahul Publishing House, 1993, 47.

⁵⁰⁹ Claude Bautze-Picron, “Some Aspects of Mañjuśrī Iconography in Bihar From the 7th Century Onwards.” *Tribus*, Band 38 (1989), 75.

displaying the *varada* mudra with his right hand and grasping the long stalk of the *utpala* in his left (*Pl. 2*), his *kumāra* status is underscored by the plain, disc-like earrings, decorated bracelet and single necklace with spoked disc “typical of the god, and also of Kṛṣṇa and Kārttikeya of the Hindu pantheon.”⁵¹⁰ In a contemporaneous sandstone sculpture (*Pl. 3*), Mañjuśrī wears elaborately decorated *cakra* earrings, two types of necklaces and a chained waist band. A sixth-seventh century stucco figure of Mañjuśrī, seated against a large bolster, is adorned not only with bracelets, arm bands and enormous *cakra* earrings, but a necklace “with a *cakra* suspended from a central amulet and tiger-claw (*vyāghranakha*) pendants placed at regular intervals.”⁵¹¹ Tellingly, “the eyes are almond-shaped and open rather than lotus-shaped and downcast as common to most of the other stucco figures of this stūpa”⁵¹² -- a visual allusion, perhaps, to the Crown Prince’s association with *prajñā*, the critical, unblinking insight that sees through and beyond. Likewise, a seventh-eighth century century stele portraying the *kumāra* flanked by “a pot-bellied dwarfish male figure...the Krodha Yamāri or Yamāntaka,”⁵¹³ recalls Mañjuśrī’s intimacy with the “Slayer of Death” in the *MMK*.

Mañjuśrī is an equally clear presence in sixth-seventh century texts, routinely and predictably invoked in scores of *pramāṇa* (logic) works composed by monastic scholars working in *vihāras* across northeastern India. Mañjuśrī inhabits the *Nyayapraveśa* of

⁵¹⁰ Debdanji Paul, The Art of Nālandā: Development of Buddhist Sculpture, A.D. 300-1200. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publisher, 1995, 10.

⁵¹¹ Asher 1980, 48.

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ Bautze-Picron 1989, 72.

Dignaga,⁵¹⁴ Dharmakīrti's famous *Pramānavārtikā*,⁵¹⁵ the *Pramānavārtikā-vṛtti-nāma* of Ravigupta,⁵¹⁶ Dharmottara's *Prāmanaviniścaya-sikā*, and Candragomin's *Nyāyasiddhyaloka*. When Candrakīrti (600-650) famously develops the filial dictum that 'prajñā is the mother and father of all buddhas' to assert that "a buddha is born from a bodhisattva,"⁵¹⁷ he explicitly identifies Mañjuśrī as that bodhisattva:

Accordingly, if someone wonders, in what way are bodhisattvas the source of Bhagavan Buddhas? (T)wo causes make bodhisattvas the cause of Buddha Bhagavans: the specific occasion (of their condition), and their entry into the true undertaking (i.e. the aspiration to enlightenment). With regard to the first, it is because the occasion of the Tathāgata has as its very cause the occasion of the bodhisattva. As for the second, it is stated that at the beginning (of their respective spiritual careers), Śākyamuni Buddha and other tathāgatas were induced by the Ārya Mañjuśrī the bodhisattva to enter into the true undertaking of the aspiration to enlightenment. Accordingly, in light of this being the chief cause of the fruit of enlightenment, it is taught that bodhisattvas are the source of Tathāgatas.⁵¹⁸

⁵¹⁴ See also his *Hetucakraḍamaru*.

⁵¹⁵ Also his *Pramānaviniścaya*, *Nyāyabindu-nāma-prakarāṇa*, *Hetubindu-nāma-prakarāṇa*, and the *Sambandhaparīkṣā-prakarāṇa*.

⁵¹⁶ A commentary on Prajñākaragupta's *Pramānavārtikālamkāra*, in which he refers to Bhagavan Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva.

⁵¹⁷ See the opening lines of his *Madhyamakāvatāra*: "Śrāvakas and middling buddhas are produced from Śākyamuni; a buddha is (himself) born from a bodhisattva..." *nyan thos sangs rgyas 'bring rnams thub dbang skyes sang gyas byang chub sems dpa las 'khrungs shing...*

⁵¹⁸ DT #3862: *Dbu-ma-la 'jug-pa 'i bzhad-pa shes-bya-ba (Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya)* dbu-ma, Ha 222b. 'di ni bden mod kyi 'on kyang rgyu gnyi kyis byung chub sems dpa dag sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das rnams kyi rgyur 'gyur te' gnas skabs kyi khyad par dang yang dag par 'dzin du 'jug pa las so de la gnas skabs kyi khyad par las ni de bzhin gshegs pa 'i skabs ni byang chub sems dpa 'i gnas skabs kyi rgyu can yin pa nyid kyi phyir ro yang dg par 'dzin du 'jug pa las ni ji ltar 'phags pa 'jam dpal byung chub sems dpa gyur pa nyid kyis bcom ltan 'das sha kya thub pa dang de las gzhin pa 'i de bzhin gshegs pa rnams ches thog ma kho nar byung chub kyi sems yang dag par 'dzin du bcug par 'dod pa yin no de 'i phyir de ltar 'bras bu mthar thug pa de 'i rgyu gtsho bor gyur pa la ltos nas de zhin gshegs pa rnams byung chub sems dpa las 'khrangs par bstan to.

Most striking about the sixth-eighth century Mañjuśrī textual world, however, is the upsurge of devotional and ritual works that exalt the Crown Prince:

Devaputra, if Mañjuśrī desired, he could arrange the good qualities of as many Buddha-lands as there are grains of sand in the Ganges and show them in one Buddha-land... He could pour all the oceans in those Buddha-fields into a single hair-pore without harming the sea creatures (within); and all would know themselves to be in their own ocean;... He could outshine as many suns and moons as exist in the Buddha-lands as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges by the brilliance of a single hair-pore.⁵¹⁹

As the seventh century moves into the eighth, Mañjuśrī progressively works his way from the periphery to the center of such works. Thus in the late seventh-century *Ārya-mañjuśrīnamāṣṭaśatakam* (108 Names of Mañjuśrī), Mañjuśrī is not merely a revered member of Śākyamuni's retinue, but is celebrated as "the teacher of the Four Noble Truths," the Tathāgata himself:

Beautiful in form, whose form is unexcelled,
Perfecting all the marks (*sarvalakṣaṇasampūrṇo*)
He is Mañjuśrī the glorious...
He teaches voidness to (the beings of) the three realms,
He knows all and he sees all.
He is supreme of all beings, he is honored by all beings...
Tamed, free of all the *kleśhas*
He is free of the subtle obscurations, even the imprints
He protects all beings, He is liberated and liberator of the world...⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁹ Derge #79: *'Phags pa sangs rgyas kyi yul bsam kyis mi khyab pa bstan pa shes bya ba theg pa cen po' mdo.* (*Ārya-Acintyabuddhaviṣayanirdeśa-nāma-mahāyānasūtra*) dkon-brtsegs, Ca 274b-275a. *lha'i bu 'jam dpal gzhon nur rgyur pa 'dod nas sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan bkod pa gang ga'i klung gi byem snyed gang dag yod pa de tag thams cad zhing gcig tu yang dag par ston to... sangs rgyas kyi zhing de dag rgya mtsho chen por gyur pa 'i chu 'i phung po gang dag yod pa de dag thams cad spu 'i khung bu gcig tu blugs kyang chu 'i sems can rnams la gnod pa med de thams cad kyang rang rang gi rgya mtsho chen po na gnas par bdag nyid kyis shes so... sangs rgyas kyi zhing gang ga'i klung gi byem snyed gang dag na nyi ma dang zla ba 'i 'od gang dag yod pa de dag thams cad spu 'i khung bu gcig gi 'od kyis zil tu rlag par byed do.*

⁵²⁰ DK #642: *'phags-pa 'jam-dpal-gyi mtshan brgya-rtsa-brgyad-pa shes-bya-ba* (*Ārya-mañjuśrīnamāṣṭaśatakam*) rgyud 'bum Ba. 126-126b: *gzugs mzes gzugs dang ldan ste:gzugs rnams kun gyi bla na med mtsan rnams thams cad kun tu rdzogs 'jam dpal dpal*

Mañjuśrī's growing importance and his association with Śākyamuni are echoed in the ninth volume of Bodhiruci's seventh-eighth century translation of the *Amoghapāśa-sūtra*, in which Śākyamuni is added as the central Tathāgata of its *maṇḍala*, and Mañjuśrī is inserted into one of its four corners. This shift is not insignificant; Matsunaga avers that changes such as this "are thought to indicate the process which gradually gave rise to the Vajradhātu-maṇḍala...the source of many of the mandalas in *Anuttarayoga-tantra*" and the "authoritative drawing of the *Tattvasaṃgraha-sūtra*."⁵²¹ Mañjuśrī as Mañjuvajra appears from the *Guhyasamajatantra*'s twelfth chapter on – the section of the text considered to have been compiled in the seventh-eighth century.⁵²² In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa (MMK)*,⁵²³ Mañjuśrī serves as the central teacher only in the chapters dated to the late seventh or

*gyi dam pa lags...srid pa gsum po stong par ston thams cad mkhyen jing thams cad
gzig...sems can kun gyi mchog tu gyur sems can kun gyis phyag bgyis pa...dul zhing
nyon mongs rnams dang bral sgrub pa dri ma kun mi mnga sems can thams cad yongs su
skyob/grol zhing 'jig rten grol mdzad pa...*

⁵²¹ Matsunaga 1978, XV.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, XXIV-XX. Mañjuvajra is identified in the 12th chapter with a *samādhi* called "Making invisible" (*mañjuvajrāgrāsamayāntardhānakarī*) -- a curious inversion of the bodhisattva's *sūtric* association with vision.

⁵²³ Jean Przyluski aptly described the *MMK* in 1923 as "C'est sorte d'encyclopédie qui traite, sous forme de sermons, des sujets les plus variés: iconographie, rituel, astrologie, etc." J. Przyluski, "Les Vidjarājā, Contribution a l'Historie de la Magie dans les Sectes Mahāyānistes." *BEFEO* XXIII (1923), 301. It is particular interest for our purposes for not only does it include "lists containing as many as a thousand names of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and deities, the earliest instructions for creating *maṇḍalas* and performing *homa* and *abhiṣeka* rites..." but records "a narrative of Indian royal geneologies, presented as a prediction of the Buddha, that later formed one source for Tibetan historical writings." Matsunaga is of course referring to Buston. See Matsunaga 1978, 1.

early eighth-century – chapters which offer some of the earliest iconographically-specific descriptions of the bodhisattva:

Below the lion throne one should draw a *dharmacakra* entirely surrounded by a ring of flames, and beneath that, a jewel-palace (*ratnavimāna*) where reposes the *mahāsattva*, the Bhagavat Mañjuśrī *kumārabhūta* in princely form, of yellowish saffron-like hue, tranquil (*prasannamūrti*) and graceful, with a somewhat smiling expression. He holds a blue lotus (*utpala*) in his left hand, while his right hand makes the *varada-mudrā* and holds a myrolaban fruit. He is adorned with the finery of a youth, and is decorated by five crests (*pancaśīṛakopaśobhita*), while he wears a string of pearls in place of the sacred thread. He wears an upper and lower garment of fine material, and he is quite splendid, entirely surrounded by a ring of flames, seated in *padmāsana*, as he glances at Krodharāja Yamāntaka, while facing the main entrance of the mandala with a graceful expression. On his right side below the lotus, one should draw Yamāntaka, the Lord of Wrath, terrible in appearance, entirely surrounded by a ring of flames, with his gaze fully directed toward the Mahāsattva, on whose command he attends.⁵²⁴

These eighth century creations likewise expand upon Mañjuśrī worship as a gate to *anusmṛti* experience and yogic communion with buddhas and bodhisattvas, complete with all attendant rights, privileges and claims to legitimacy:

[The *sādhaka*] sees Mañjuśrī directly. He hears the dharma, and he sees numerous thousands of bodhisattvas whom he worships. He plays [in the experience of] being free from aging, immortal for a thousand *kalpas*. Moreover, the *paṭa* resides there. He becomes inhabited (*adhiṣṭhito*) by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas, he tells them of his resolution [for enlightenment], and proceeds to the hundred thousand [buddha]fields. He is shown their hundred thousand bodies. He becomes illumined with numerous supernatural powers. The Noble Mañjuśrī becomes his *kalyāṇimitra*...⁵²⁵

⁵²⁴ I am drawing herefrom Ariane Macdonald's French translation in Le Mandala du Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa. Collection Jean Przyluski, Tome III. Paris: Adrien-Maisonneuve, 1962, 111.

⁵²⁵ 8.56.12-16: *āryamañjuśrīam ca sākṣatpaśyati: dharmam śṛṇoti: anekānyapi bodhisattvaśatasahasrā paśyati: tāmśca parupāste: mahākalpasahasram ajāramaralī bhavati: paṭastatraiva tiṣṭhati: sarvabuddhabodhisattvādhiṣṭhito bhavati: teṣām cādhiṣṭānam samjānīte ksetraśatasahasram cākrāmati: kāyaśatasahasram vā darśayati aneśkarddhiprabhavasamudgato bhavati: āryamañjuśrīyaśca kalyāṇimitra bhavati...*
T. Gaṇapati Śāstri, Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa. Trivandrum: CBH Publications, 1992, 287-288.

In short, to see Mañjuśrī, to hear his teachings, to win his mentorship, is tantamount to receiving a dharmic transmission from the Buddha(s).

Interestingly, these “unobstructed teachings of the Tathāgatas” are crystallized in the form of Mañjuśrī’s mantras which, as the Buddha Sankusumitarājendra explains, have been uttered by Tathāgatas “as numerous as there are sands in the Ganges:”

*namah sarvatathāgatānāmacintyapratihataśāsanānām om ra ra smara
apratihataśāsanakumārarūpadhāriṇa hūm hūm phaṭ phaṭ svāhā*⁵²⁶

O Mañjuśrī Kumāra, this is the root mantra. It is the heart of all Tathāgatas. It has been, is and will be spoken by all the Tathāgatas. Now you will utter it as well. Having gone to the Sahā world, individually [recite] each all-achieving [mantra]. It is authorized by the Tathāgata Śākyamuni, and it is the supreme heart: Om vākye da namah. The *upahrdaya* is vākye hūm.⁵²⁷

Mañjuśrī’s mantras are empowered, not only because they are authorized by Śākyamuni, but because they are a form of the *prajñā* bodhisattva: they are “Mañjuśrī existing (*upasthitah*) through the form of the mantra (*mantrarūpena*).”⁵²⁸ In this sense, the Buddha’s authority and the mantric form of Mañjuśrī are ontologically equivalent; indeed, as Sankusumitarājendra later asserts, the supremely secret, supreme-essence mantra *namah sarvabuddhānām* is ‘Mañjuśrī himself,’ the “supreme heart,” the all-

⁵²⁶ A loose translation might be: “Homage to the inconceivable, unobstructed teachings of all Tathāgatas! Om ra ra remember. The unobstructed teaching, the holder of the form of kumāra, hum hum phaṭ phaṭ svāhā.”

⁵²⁷ Śāstri 1992, 1.27-3.89. ayam sa kumāramañjuśrīḥ mūlamantra/sarveṣām tathāgatānām hṛdayah sarvaiśca tathāgatairbhāṣitah bhāṣisyante/sa tvamapīdānīm bhāṣisyase/sahām lokadhātumgatvā vistaravibhāgaśah sarvakarmakaram/śākyamuninā tathāgatenābhyanujñātaḥ/paramhṛdayam bhavati cātra om vākye vāke da namah/upahrdayam cātra vākye hūm//

⁵²⁸ Śāstri 1992, 2.26.24-25.

achiever (*sarvakarmakaraḥ*).⁵²⁹ This portrayal of the Crown Prince's mantra as 'conductor' of Buddha authority is reiterated by its explicit ability to empower others, notably Yamāntaka⁵³⁰ who, in the second chapter of the *MMK*, Mañjuśrī mantrically transforms into a dharma cultivator *extraordinaire*.⁵³¹

This emphasis on Mañjuśrī as the power of mantra is nowhere more evident than in the late seventh- or early-eighth century Tantric *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (*MNS*) (Recitation of the Names of Mañjuśrī) begins by identifying Mañjuśrī with the *akṣara A*: "Likewise, (Mañjuśrī is) the Bhagavān, the Buddha, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, born from the letter A. The letter A is the foremost of all the letter groups, the great goal, the supreme letter. Free from the enunciations of speech, (he is the) foremost cause of all expression, luminous as all speech."⁵³² The core text is, as its title suggests, comprised of multiple Mañjuśrī epithets, each of which may be understood as yet another syllabic manifestation of this primal bodhisattva. This structure, notes Ronald Davidson, "preserves the paradigm of one reality reflected in multiple realities -- Mañjuśrī is

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 1.3;24

⁵³⁰ The slayer of Yama, who will later be considered an emanation of Mañjuśrī himself.

⁵³¹ *atha mañjuśrīḥ kumarabhūtaḥ yamāntakasya krodharājasya hrdayam sarvakarmikam ekaviram...om āh hūm idam tanmanhākrodhasya hrdayam sarvakarmikam...nidistam mahāsattvena mañjughoṣena sarvavighnavināśanam i atha mañjuśrīḥ kumarabhūtaḥ dakṣiṇa pāṇimudhyamya krodhasya mūrdhni.*

⁵³² Verse 29: *tadyathā bhagavāṃ buddhaḥ sambuddho 'kārasambhavaḥ akāraḥ sarvavarṇāgrya mahārthaḥ paramākṣaraḥ mahāprāṇo hy anutpādo vāgudāhārarajitaḥ sarvābhilāpahetvagrāḥ sarvavāksuprabhāsvaraḥ.* Sanskrit from Ronald Davidson's edited Sanskrit edition in "The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī: Text and Translation of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*." Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein 1 (1981), 51; English translation my own. Hereafter, Davidson's Sanskrit edition will be indicated as MNS.Dav. Davidson's introduction will be designated as Davidson 1981.

observed in the pronouncement of each name, and each of his reflections takes its place in the drama of crystallizing the universal diagram (*mandala*).”⁵³³

For the monastic scholastics of the Pāla, the *MNS* was the Mañjuśrī-text *par excellence*. From the eighth through the twelfth centuries, the *MNS* emerged as the subject of twenty-two commentaries and approximately 130 related works⁵³⁴ – far more than any other contemporaneous Mañjuśrī-centric work. Indeed, the *MNS* became the focus of cult worship by Buddhist monastics, *Tantrikas*, and laypeople alike: “its unusual ability to have crossed over into a popular cultus of the bodhisattva... (to) speak simultaneously to multiple communities...(thereby indicates) that it directly addressed an important facet of both popular and monastic Buddhism in India.”⁵³⁵ For my purposes, it is an important textual thread by which I will delineate rhetorical dimensions of Mañjuśrī discourse in Pāla India, and so will be more fully discussed in the following chapter.

⁵³³ Ron Davidson, “The Litany of the Names of Mañjuśrī in Donald S. Lopez, (ed.) *Religions of India in Practice*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 105.

⁵³⁴ As represented by the Tibetan sDerge canon.

⁵³⁵ Davidson in Lopez 1995, 105.

Chapter Four: Politics, Patronage and *Prajñā* in the Pāla

Introduction:

In the previous chapters, I attempted to unpack the multiple layers of meanings embedded in Indian Buddhist literary portrayals of *prajñā* and its *kumāra*, the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. In Chapter Two, I explored the rhetorical and philosophical dimensions of *prajñā*, paying especial attention to its treatment in early Mahāyāna literature. I argued that the Mahāyāna exaltation of *prajñā* could be understood in part as a strategy for appropriating cultural authority and economic resources from Nikāya monastic centers. Highlighting the Mahāyāna analogization of *prajñā* to the *Prajñā-pāramitā* text, I explained that the promotion of book worship in *PP* discourse functioned to liberate the Mahāyāna monastics from the need for institutional sanction and support of the *sangha*, and allowed for the multiplication of new, heterodox worship centers. In this context, I emphasized the crucial interrelationship between place, text and body in *PP* discourse, and traced some of the ways in which these overlapping associations segued into additional strategies to legitimate the Mahāyāna movement.

In the next chapter, I turned to a closer look at the Mahāyāna embodiment of *prajñā*: the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Touching on a selection of Mahāyāna works from the first through the early eighth centuries CE, I highlighted a range of associations and values overtly identified with Mañjuśrī in these works: Mañjuśrī as monk-disciple *extraordinaire*; as masculine, monastic analogue to the goddess *Prajñā-pāramitā*; as intermediary and dialogic partner to the Buddha; Mañjuśrī as icon of scholastic legitimacy. I likewise discussed some less evident associations: for example, Mañjuśrī as

promoter of *sangha* economic health; as spiritual mentor of a king; Mañjuśrī as emblem of Buddhist identity.

As my survey entered into the centuries just before the Pāla period, I looked with particular care at some late- and post-Gupta trends in Mañjuśrī discourse. I suggested that the notion of ‘seeing Mañjuśrī’ became ontologically concomitant to ‘hearing the Buddha’ and that accordingly, a vision of Mañjuśrī signified an in-road to legitimate, extra-canonical access to *buddhavacana*. I noted a closely related trend of privileging Mañjuśrī in mantra form, and I emphasized Mañjuśrī’s discursive function in these later works as epitomization of the Buddhist tradition *vis a vis* non-Buddhist challengers.

In the next two chapters, I turn to the shape and function of Mañjuśrī discourse in 1) eighth-ninth century and 2) tenth-eleventh century Pāla India. As I will discuss, the monastically produced texts and artworks of both of these periods were characterized by a marked resurgence of attention to *Prajñāpāramitā* discourse, Mañjuśrī-centric images and Mañjuśrī texts, particularly the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti* (*MNS*). The portrayals of *prajñā* and Mañjuśrī in these two periods were, however, markedly distinct from one another. I attempt to make sense of some of these differences by positioning them against the backdrop of key political and economic changes in post-Harṣa North India, particularly the rise of the *sāmānta* state – an institution which, I argue, not only altered earlier patterns of Buddhist monastic patronage, but palpably shaped the identity of the monastery in relationship to the Pāla state and Pāla society. I hypothesize that monastic portrayals of Mañjuśrī -- the long-time icon of Buddhist monastic identity -- can be seen to mirror the nature and development of those relationships, particularly the shifting power relationships between Buddhist monasteries and the Pāla State.

To lay the ground for this discussion, this chapter provides a brief overview of the history, genesis and content of Pāla studies by both European colonialist and Indian nationalist scholars. Though animated by diametrically opposed political concerns, each spawned deeply-rooted assumptions about Pāla religion and monarchy which continue to bedevil scholars of Pāla Buddhism -- most notably that Pāla monarchs were the chief patrons of the monasteries in their domain. I evaluate this assumption in light of the most up-to-date bodies of Pāla epigraphic, literary and material evidence, and attempt to make sense of those findings by locating Pāla State-monastic relations within a larger discussion of legitimation strategies employed by early medieval Indian kings. Within that context, I pay especial attention to a triad of three interlocking and fundamental Pāla economic and social trends: decline of Buddhist trade guilds, erosion of urban centers and commerce, and *samantatization*. I conclude with a speculative analysis of the *prajñā* discourse which so heavily infused Pāla Buddhist literature and art work.

Before commencing with my critique of Other People's Rhetoric, I should perhaps clarify my own. Throughout this discussion, I consider the "Pāla domain" to allude to the eastern Gangetic region during the mid-eighth to the twelfth centuries. This area, alluded to as Prācyā in ancient texts, is generally encompassed by the modern Indian states of Bihar and West Bengal and portions of Bangladesh, and was controlled by members of the Pāla dynasty for most of the period. Its cultural and political heartland lay in Bihar's Gangetic Plain, in the area known as Magadhabhukti or Magadha.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁶ Bihar was divided into at least four key regions: Magadha or south Bihar, Anga or east Bihar, Kajangala and Mithila, which were in North Bihar (ancient Tirabhukti).

Located south of the Ganges and endowed with tremendous natural resources, Magadha had been a traditional seat of Indian political, religious and economic power since at least the rule of Aśoka (ca. 272-231 B.C.E). Encompassing pivotal Buddhist pilgrimage sites including Lumbini, the birthplace of Śākyamuni, and Bodhgayā, the site of his enlightenment, Magadha and its capital, Kānyakubja (Kanauj) were the “symbol and center”⁵³⁷ of North Indian cultural life at this time, and the object of fierce imperial ambition during the entirety of Pāla rule.⁵³⁸

Magadha also embraced a dense and powerful network of internationally-renowned Buddhist monasteries and monastic universities, including the famous Nālandā,⁵³⁹ Vikramalaśīla,⁵⁴⁰ and Uddanāpura⁵⁴¹ complexes. These institutions

⁵³⁷ J. Schwartzberg, Historical Atlas of South Asia. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978, 188.

⁵³⁸ This is not to suggest that Kanauj was continuously under Pāla rule – far from it. Inscriptional evidence suggests that the Pāla king Dharmapāla (775-812 CE) marched on Kanauj and overthrew its ruler, Indrayudha, and installed Cakrayudha on the throne. However, the Gurjara-Pratihāra king Nagbhata II soon thereafter marched on Cakrayudha and made Kanauj his capital. Kanauj, though the Magadha area as a whole, remained a Gurjara holding for at least the next century.

⁵³⁹ Located seven miles north of Rajgir, the Nālandā monastery is probably the best-known and most closely studied of the Indian Buddhist monastic sites. Nālandā’s international renown is evidenced by the many allusion to the monastery in a range of non-Indian sources, including the seventh century journals of the Chinese pilgrims Hsuan-tsang and I-tsing, and writings of the thirteenth-century Tibetan pilgrim Dharmasvāmin.

⁵⁴⁰ The site of Vikramalaśīla remains a bone of contention among archeologists and Indologists; Pātharghātā and Colgang to the east of Magadha are the leading contenders. For discussion of this issue, see Pushpa Niyogi’s “Some Buddhist Monasteries in Ancient Bengal and Bihar.” Journal of Indian History LI, no. Pt. III (December 1973), pp. 294-95.

⁵⁴¹ The prototype for the famous Samyas monastery in Tibet, Uddanāpura (or sometimes Odantapura) is usually considered to have been built six miles from Nālandā, in the Rajgir area.

apparently were in close and regular communication with the Buddhist *vihāras* so rapidly proliferating within the Bengal portion of the Pāla domain: during the eighth through eleventh centuries, roughly the whole of Bengal, especially the ancient Varendra tract, came to be densely occupied by Buddhist centers, including the Jagaddala⁵⁴² and Somapura⁵⁴³ *mahāvihāras* in the north, and the Vikramapurī,⁵⁴⁴ Paṇḍita⁵⁴⁵ and Vajrāsana⁵⁴⁶ *vihāras* in the south-east. These monasteries not only yielded some of Indian Buddhism's most subtle and sophisticated literary treatises; their *ateliers* were the sources for a prodigious number of Buddhist artistic works whose quality and nuance were arguably unparalleled by those of any contemporaneous civilization. The influence of Pāla art on the development of sculpture in Indonesia, for example, is especially pronounced and explored by a range of contemporary art historians. Though these literary and art works are routinely alluded to as "Pāla productions,"⁵⁴⁷ it should be understood

⁵⁴² Famous as a center of Tantric Buddhist scholarship, particularly in the eleventh century, Jagaddala is identified with a host of Buddhist scholars including Śubhākaragupta, Vibhūticandra, and Danaśīla. Jagaddala is extolled by the eleventh century poet Sandhyākara Nandī in Ch. II, verse 7 of his *Ramacaritam*.

⁵⁴³ Located in Pāhārpur in the district of Rajshahi, Somapura is the largest Indian Buddhist monastery known to date. It is thought to have been constructed in the early ninth century for approximately 800 residents.

⁵⁴⁴ Currently considered to have been in the Dacca district.

⁵⁴⁵ Currently considered to have been in Chittagong, the Paṇḍita *vihāra* is best-known for its association with the tenth-eleventh century *siddha* Tilopa.

⁵⁴⁶ Located in the Dacca district, it is currently identified with a mound known as Vajārāsana-Bhūṭa, from which a number of Buddhist artifacts have been uncovered. For further discussion, see Pushpa Niyogi, 1973, pp. 285-86.

⁵⁴⁷ Also included in this category are art works made in Buddhist centers heavily influenced by, but not actively a part of, these monastic centers.

that this phrase is something of a misnomer. Not every region of Bihar and West Bengal was under Pāla influence from the eighth-twelfth centuries; rulers from dynasties such as the Candras and the Senas occasionally gained dominance over some of the eastern lands. Moreover, the Pāla domain was culturally and geographically quite diverse; though Pāla overlordship, and extensive trade and travel routes which connected the region bestowed a certain degree of unity upon this diversity, one should be mindful of minimizing the degree of cultural heterogeneity subsumed under the airy rubric of “Pāla India.”

APālagetics:

Caught in the crosshairs of several overlapping frames of Indological discourse, the Pāla period enjoys the uncertain distinction of being among India’s most highly polemicized periods of academic study. Early twentieth century writers conceptualized the Pāla period as the nadir of Indian history. Scorched by endemic warfare, degraded by degenerate religious practices, post-Harṣa “medieval India” was a time of decline; a compost heap for India’s once-great sciences, literatures and religions. By 1943, however, Pāla rhetoric began an about-face. Trumpeted by nationalist writers as India’s medieval Golden Age, Pāla India was newly hailed as a high water mark of Indian government and culture, a source and model of Indian modernity.

To a wolf, a good meal...

In the late nineteenth century, the European production of knowledge about post-Harṣa Northern India was primarily a British undertaking, and was embedded in larger discussions about the history and nature of imperial government in India. These historical

projects were in part shaped by England's colonial concerns, and often "emphasized the difference between India's ancient, post-tribal polities and their own modern one in order to justify their replacement with the Indian Empire..."⁵⁴⁸ European Indologists of this time often conceptualized India's history as a bell-curve of classical glory, medieval decline and modern renaissance, whereby Vedic India arose out of the inchoate, pre-Aryan wilderness, gradually evolved into the great Mauryan dynasty, peaked in the Gupta's Golden Age, and then descended into a period of "medieval decline" which stretched from the seventh to the eighteenth centuries. Finally, after a millennium of anarchy, despotism and decay, this decline was halted and reversed by the British, who re-built and re-seeded the land with new science, new roads, and the rule of law.

This lengthy period of medieval decay was generally held to have begun with the death of Harṣa, India's "last great ruler." His absence, Vincent Smith famously proclaimed, "loosened the bonds which restrained the disruptive forces always ready to operate in India, and allowed them to produce their natural result, a medley of petty states, with ever-varying boundaries, and engaged in unceasing internecine war."⁵⁴⁹ Indeed, post-Harṣa India's weakened political condition made logical its own subsequent

⁵⁴⁸ Ronald Inden. *Imagining India*. Cambridge MA & Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1994, 180.

⁵⁴⁹ Smith, 1924, 371 ff. A.L. Basham (1967) neatly captures this view: "The history of the succeeding centuries is a rather drab story of endemic warfare between rival dynasties. It can be followed in some detail, thanks to the numerous inscriptions and copper-plate charters of the period, but the detail is monotonous and uninteresting... On Harṣa's death there was great confusion..."

conquest by Muslim invaders; small wonder that the “barbaric Asian horde” could displace “the Aryan presence...”⁵⁵⁰

This rhetoric of medieval decline was linked to -- and buttressed by -- what John S. Deyell diplomatically alludes to as “strongly articulated perceptions of the nature of India’s early medieval economy:”

Certain of the putative elements of early medieval society, such as feudalization, decentralization, decline of trade and village self-sufficiency, have become virtual axioms of historic and economic texts. The keystone in this structure has been, and remains, the broadly-based perception of the under-monetization of early medieval society and the relapse of its economy into the exchange of goods and services by barter.⁵⁵¹

These perceptions were predicated upon the assumption of a palpable congruence between the events of India’s and Europe’s so-called medieval periods, and were most famously articulated by R.S. Sharma in his many writings on “Indian feudalism.”⁵⁵² According to Sharma, India in the seventh to tenth centuries saw a dramatic decline in trade and urbanism due generally to the “expansion of the Arabs under the banner of

⁵⁵⁰ Inden 1994, 187.

⁵⁵¹ John S. Deyell. Living Without Silver: the Monetary History of Early Medieval North India. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, 3. I Habib’s comments are an excellent example of this trend: “With the fragmentation of power, the volume of internal and external trade diminished...As in western Europe, the monetary economy contracted. Gold coins were rarely issued after the fall of the Guptas and even the silver and copper coinages are scarce and poor.” “Economic History of the Delhi Sultanate – an Essay in Interpretation”, *IHR* – IV, 2, 1977, 299.

⁵⁵² This thesis is most famously put forward in Ram Sharan Sharma, “Indian Feudalism: C. 300-1200.” Centre for Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History and Culture, Lectures and Seminars No. I-A (Lectures). Calcutta: University of Calcutta Press, 1965. A number of subsequent articles reiterate these themes: see, for example, “Coins and Problems of Early Indian Economic History.” Journal of the Numismatic Society of India XXX (1969); “How Feudal was Indian Feudalism in Kulke editor.” The State in India: 1000-1700. Oxford in India Readings: Themes in Indian History. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997, 48-86.

Islam” and more specifically, to the loss of silk trade with the Byzantines, who had acquired their own silkworms from China and halted importation from India. The effect was a thorough “agrarianization” of India’s “medieval economy.” Trade and commerce were “feudalized”; India’s economy became “closed;” political power became “fragmented” and “decentralized”. These changes could, he argued, be inferred by the paucity and debasement of coins from that time period, and from the plethora of land grants to brahmans, temples and monasteries which began to surface across India in the post-Gupta years.

To Sharma, these land grants were the mechanism of Indian feudalism. They heralded the arisal of self-contained villages ruled by a class of lords in control of land created by “large-scale subinfeudation.” India’s analogue to Europe’s feudal lords, these landed gentry were equipped with a full panoply of vassals, sub-vassals, and peasant “serfs” to work their land under conditions barely better than those of indentured slaves. Medieval India subsequently broke into a cluster of disconnected, insular regional units marked by their own scripts, dialects and architectural styles -- a far cry from the days of classical glory, when India was an international trade hub built upon the rock of the Gupta’s Empire’s pure gold coinage.

I will return to Sharma’s thesis presently. For now, it should be obvious that the “overall judgment” of nineteenth century British historians that medieval India was a zone of anarchy, despotism and decay arguably “functioned nicely as the historical justification for colonial intervention.”⁵⁵³ Its consequences for Europe’s study of Pāla

⁵⁵³ Partha Chatterjee, The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994, 102.

India however, were predictably grim. To scholars conditioned by the world-view of Vincent Smith, Pāla culture lay in the trough of Indian history, where science lay dormant and literature dead. This conviction manifested in vituperative condemnations of the moral degeneracy of Pāla-period Tantric texts. As early as 1882, Rajendra Lal Mitra condemned Pāla-period Tantric works as primitive, dissolute phenomena: theories and practices “which are at once the most revolting and horrible that human depravity could think of,” reeking of “pestilent dogmas and practices.”⁵⁵⁴ A half-century later, Louis LaVallee Poussin further normalized Mitra’s assessment when he noted that Pāla-period works described “disgusting practices both obscene and criminal.”⁵⁵⁵ For such writers, Tantra was a far cry from “authentic Buddhism” which was stalwartly anti-ritualistic and moral,

essentially a discipline of salvation... If we were asked to characterise in a word the old Buddhist discipline and the old Buddhism as a whole, we should say it was a form of rationalism. Every idea and every practice made use of by Śākyamuni... have been freed from any tinge of mysticism...⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁴ Rajendra Law Mitra, Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal. Calcutta, 1982, 24. He is referring to works collected by Brian Hodgson during his stint as British Resident at the Court of Nepal during the 1820s and 1830s, including the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, the *Guhyasamājatantra*, and Abhayakaragupta’s *Niṣpannayogāvali*.

⁵⁵⁵ In James Hastings Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics. With the assistance of John A. Selbie and Louis H. Gray. New York: C. Scribner, 1970, 195.

⁵⁵⁶ Louis de La Vallee Poussin, The Way to Nirvāna: Six Lectures on Ancient Buddhism as a Discipline of Salvation. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1982, 30-3. LaVallee Poussin’s implicit contrasting of “true” Buddhism with Tantric pseudo-science resonated loudly with a two-tiered model of Christian history popular among contemporaneous scholars (see Ch. 1) which pit the “authentic, original” doctrine adhered to by the religious elite, against the “corrupted, vulgarized” practices of the laity. For a discussion of this model, especially its debt to Hume and its impact on the study of Christianity, see Peter Brown, Cult of the Saints, Chapter One.

In short, Tantra was synonymous with early medieval religion, and both were the nadir of Indian culture. As Benyotosh Bhattarcaryya proclaimed as late as 1980, "If at any time in the history of India the mind of the nation as a whole has been diseased, in was in the Tāntric Age, or the period immediately preceding the Muhammedan conquest of India."⁵⁵⁷

Interestingly, by the middle of the twentieth century, Indian and Euro-American scholars of Indian religion had inverted this bi-partite model to implicate Pāla studies in yet another sub-school of the rhetoric of medieval decay: the search to explain the infamous "decline of Buddhism in India." R.C. Mitra asserted that it was the failure by Gupta and Pāla monastics to pay sufficient attention to the laity that so weakened Indian Buddhism that it was unable to rebuild itself after its monastic institutional base was destroyed. Padmanabh S. Jaini extended Mitra's analysis by contending that

the Buddhists committed an even greater error by failing to respond meaningfully to the threat posed by the waves of *bhakti* that swept across Indian from the fourth and fifth century onwards. The popularity of the various Hindu devotional cults...must have engendered a great many lay defections from the Buddhist ranks.

Indeed,

This problem was compounded by the depiction of the Buddha himself, in the *Mahābhārata*, certain *Purāṇas*, and Jayadeva's *Gītāgovinda*, as nothing more than an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. Buddhist monks were perhaps unaware of the grave dangers represented by these developments...for by their very silence Buddhist writers seemed to lend tacit support to the Hinduization of their founder...⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁷ Benyotosh Bhattarcaryya, Introduction to Buddhist Esotericism. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980, vii.

⁵⁵⁸ Padmanabh S. Jaini, "The Disappearance of Buddhism and the Survival of Jainism: a Study in Contrast." in Studies in History of Buddhism, editor A. K. Narain. Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1980, 85.

This conviction that Buddhism had been irretrievably subsumed by forms of popular Hinduism became a routine element of Pāla-period studies. For Sukumar Dutt, for example, this regretful loss of identity by a religion “already...heavily adulterated by Tantric cult and its magic spells and practices”⁵⁵⁹ led not only to its internal erosion but to its destruction from without: “(I)t was not possible for the Afghan soldiers to tell Buddhist monks from Brāhmaṇa priests,” and so “the great Pāla monasteries (in which) still whispered the last Tāntric accents of Buddhist learning...echoed to the tramp of marauding soldiers” before “laps(ing) into utter darkness”⁵⁶⁰ of Muslim despotism.

To her husband, a lover...

These deeply politicized conceptualizations did not go unchallenged. In 1943, the University of Dacca threw down the gauntlet with the “first comprehensive political and cultural history of Bengal.” The History of Bengal: Volume I, comprised of articles by specialists on multiple aspects of Bengali history and culture.⁵⁶¹ The Pāla dynasty was

⁵⁵⁹ Dutt 1988, 345.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., 357, 348

⁵⁶¹ This is not to say that (European) Pāla studies began here. Pāla historiography grew out of the progressive publication of the earliest inscriptions which alluded to Pāla kings. The Pāla dynasty made its European debut in the nineteenth century in the early volumes of *Asiatic Researches*. The work of the Archeological Survey of India fueled its momentum; the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the publication of newfound Pāla inscriptions in *Epigraphia Indica*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, and *Indian Antiquary*. These scattered inscriptions were further edited and summarized in 1911 by R.D. Banerji, whose narrative of the Pāla kings and their respective victories and defeats was fodder for much subsequent scholarship. Over the next two decades, the minutia of Pāla chronology was parsed and contested by scholars such as R.C. Majumdar and D.C. Bhattacharya in a spate of articles appearing in *Indian Antiquary* and the *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*. In 1943, these specialized epigraphic analyses were integrated into the “first comprehensive political and cultural history of

represented by the editor, R.C. Majumdar who, amplifying the nationalist undertones of works by R.D. Banerji, H.C. Ray, and B.C. Sen, turned the colonial model of medieval anarchy on its head by equating the founding of the Pāla dynasty with the introduction of stable government to an anarchic Bengal:

The anarchy and confusion which prevailed in Bengal for more than a century led to a natural reaction. The people, who had suffered untold miseries for a long period, suddenly developed a political wisdom and a spirit of self-sacrifice to which there is no recorded parallel in the history of Bengal. They perceived that the establishment of a single strong central authority offered the only effective remedy against political disintegration within and invasions from abroad to which their unhappy land was so long a victim. They also realized that such a happy state of things could only be brought about by the voluntary surrender of authority to one person by the numerous petty chiefs who had been exercising independent political authority in different parts of the country. The ideal of subordinating individual interests to a national cause was not as common in India in the eighth century A.D. as it was in Europe a thousand years later. Our admiration is, therefore, all the greater, that without any struggle the independent political chiefs recognised the suzerainty of a popular hero named Gopāla...who was made king in order to put an end to the state of anarchy which prevailed in Bengal.”⁵⁶²

Bengal.” (R.C. Majumdar, History of Ancient Bengal, G.K.Mukherjee, 1971, preface). Spearheaded by the University of Dacca, R.C. Majumdar’s The History of Bengal: Volume I comprised a collection of articles by specialists on various aspects of Bengali history and culture. The Pāla dynasty was represented by R.C. Majumdar as the editor, and functioned as a template for much subsequent scholarship on the Pālas.

⁵⁶²Majumdar, History of Bengal Volume I, 1943, 96-97. Majumdar is referring to an episode outlined in the Khalimpur Copper Plate, issued in the 32nd regnal year of Dharmapāla: “*mātsyanyāyam=apohitum prakritibhir=lakshmyāh karam grahitah śrī Gopāla=iti kshifīśa-śirasām chūdāmanis=tat-sutah*: “His son was the crest-jewel of the heads of kings, the glorious Gopāla, whom the people made take the hand of Fortune, to put an end to the practice of the fishes.” The use of the term *prakritibhir* (*prakṛti*, “subject people” in the instrumental plural) is the object of considerable debate. Some writers have inferred that Gopāla was formally elected by the people; others that Gopāla was selected by a group of independent chiefs. (Other writers, of course, chalk the phrase up to inscriptional hyperbole, and discount it altogether. These writers tend to live in Florida, and vote Republican.) Tāranātha describes this episode. Bengal, he tells us, “suffered greatly” because it was without a king. On several occasions local leaders elected a king, but each was killed by a demoness within hours of his election. When Gopāla was elected, however, he was given a club by Caṇḍi (a consort of Śiva) which he used to slay the demoness and so consolidate his rule. See Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya 1990, 257 ff..

Apparently re-shaping Britain's bell-curve of Indian historical development, Majumdar thus articulated an alternate pattern in which post-Harṣa decline was interrupted by an indigenous renaissance, spearheaded by Gopāla I and embodied by the Pāla dynasty. Imbued with historical agency, noble in democracy and self-sacrifice, the Pāla "nation" seemingly foreshadowed the political culture of modern Europe.⁵⁶³

Majumdar's Pālas also evoked India's own imperial greatness. In his widely read Age of Imperial Kanauj (1955), Majumdar asserted that Gopāla, after acceding to *vox populi* and founding the dynasty, "consolidated his rule over the whole of Bengal."⁵⁶⁴

Subsequently, "although the details and chronology of (his son) Dharmapāla's campaigns are not known to us...we must hold that Dharmapāla must have enjoyed" (in spite of a "passing phase" of Pratihāra insurgency) "the unique position of a paramount lord in Northern India."⁵⁶⁵ In fact,

There is enough to indicate that... he was the hero of a hundred fights and passed through many crisis, when not only his own fortunes, but the fate of Bengal hung in balance. But he never faltered; he overcame all difficulties, and in the end achieved phenomenal success. His triumph over the political field seems almost miraculous... The country, which was hopelessly divided by internal dissensions and trampled upon by a succession of foreign invaders for more than a century, was raised by him to the position of a strong integrated state exercising imperial sway over a considerable part of Northern India. Śaśānka's dream of founding a

⁵⁶³ Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund seem to have taken this conclusion especially to heart: "The political and philosophical ideas of Hobbes were thus anticipated in India, and if the reports are true than Gopāla owed his kingship to the kind of rational contract between the ruler and the ruled which Hobbes had in mind." A History of India. London and New York: Routledge, 1996, 118.

⁵⁶⁴ R. C. Majumdar, editor. The Age of Imperial Kanauj (750-1000 AD), History and Culture of the Indian People. Vol. 4. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1955, 45.

⁵⁶⁵ Ibid., 46.

great Gauḍa empire was at last fulfilled....His subjects fully realized what they owed to him, and his name and fame were sung all over the country. It is a strange irony of fate that he should have been forgotten in the land of his birth...⁵⁶⁶

Majumdar bestowed a comparable *praśasti* upon Dharmapāla's son Devapāla -- "a worthy son of a worthy father" who not only "maintained intact the great empire inherited by him, but...even appears to have extended its boundaries."⁵⁶⁷ Again invoking his own developmental bell-curve, Majumdar asserted that "the reigns of Dharmapāla and Devapāla constitute the most brilliant chapter in the history of Bengal. Never before, or since, till the advent of the British, did Bengal play such an important role in Indian politics."⁵⁶⁸ In short, the eighth-ninth centuries were the apex of Pāla history, the final days of Bengali glory before decline, decay, and Muslim colonization.⁵⁶⁹

A crucial element of Majumdar's construction of these democratic Pālas was his conviction that "the successors of Gopāla were all ardent followers" and "great patrons" of Buddhism. Indeed, "one of the reasons why no reference to the origin and caste of the Pālas occurs in their own records is that fact that they were Buddhists and so did not care so much to adopt Brahmanical institution or traditions...For nearly four hundred years their court proved to be the last stronghold of that dying faith (i.e. Buddhism) in India."⁵⁷⁰ He waxed eloquent on the monasteries of the early Pāla period -- "the name and fame

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁵⁶⁹ Majumdar does note that "by the year A.D. 1000...the Pālas had once more become a powerful ruling family in Eastern India" (55), but is unaccountably unimpressed by this apparent renaissance.

⁵⁷⁰ Majumdar 1943, 101.

of some of which had spread far beyond the frontiers of India,” and whose *bhikṣu* residents “dedicated their lives to the highest ideals laid down for them in the holy scriptures”⁵⁷¹ – yet was markedly less enthusiastic about later, often non-monastic dimensions of Pāla Buddhism, which fell victim to the “general moral lapse” which afflicted religious life across the region. For Majumdar, the only good Pāla Buddhist was a monastic Buddhist, and the best monastics were those who practiced during the golden rule of Dharmapāla and Devapāla. In short, the caliber of Pāla-period monasticism was a barometer of the imperial prowess of the contemporaneous Pāla ruler.

In the wake of Indian independence, Majumdar’s numerous and erudite publications emerged as the industry standard for Indian-based Pāla studies. It is not difficult to guess one reason why; whether he intended it to be or not, Majumdar’s Pāla India was the Indian nationalist’s answer to ‘medieval decline,’ a construct which perfectly met the need

to claim for the Indian nation the historical agency for completing the project of modernity. To make that claim, ancient India had to become the classical source of Indian modernity, while the “Muslim period” would become the night of medieval darkness.⁵⁷²

Majumdar’s Pālas were not only an appropriate source of Indian modernity; they apparently could teach the British a thing or two about modern nationhood, imperial strategizing and just rule.

By the mid-1960s, a number of European Indologists were beginning to agree. The influence of Majumdar’s models is evident in the work of influential Indologists

⁵⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 427

⁵⁷² Chatterjee 1994, 102.

including A.L. Basham, A.K. Warder and Herman Kulke. Subsequently, Majumdar's panegyric characterizations of Pāla India as a cultural Promised Land were reiterated by post-colonial critics of the "medieval decline" trope, as well as by historians of religion rightfully concerned with retrieving Tantra from "historical patterns of scholarly neglect."⁵⁷³ All presupposed and tacitly normalized (to greater or lesser degrees) a handful of core truisms about Pāla India: that it was synonymous with Tantra; that Buddhism was the "personal religion" of the Pāla rulers who were the primary patrons of its monastic life, and that it was diametrically opposed to -- and wiped out by -- the expansion of Islam.⁵⁷⁴

Post-Harṣa North India – new perspectives

⁵⁷³ Miranda Shaw's work is an excellent example of both of these trends: Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, esp. 33 ff.

⁵⁷⁴ In addition to these largely unexamined suppositions, few scholars have problematized Majumdar's most fundamental assumptions; for example, that the Pāla zone constituted a "nation" in the (post-Enlightenment) sense of the term; that the territories ruled by the Pāla kings represented an homogenous, cultural unity; that Pāla culture was primarily Buddhist; that so-called Pāla culture was unaffected by the input of competing dynasties. Indeed, only in the last two decades have these kinds of methodological concerns been broadly called into question; one thinks here of Herman Kulke's work on the state in pre-modern India (See "Introduction: The Study of the State in Pre-modern India" in Kulke 1997, 1-47); of Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya's explorations of early medieval Indian polities (see his excellent collection of essays in The Making of Early Medieval India. Oxford India Paperbacks. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1997); or Ronald Inden's reconstructions of Rastrakuta imperial formations (See, for example, Imagining India. Cambridge MA & Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1994; "Hierarchies of Kings in Medieval India." Contributions to Indian Sociology: New Series Vol 15, no. 1 and 2 (January 1981-December 1981): 99-125; "Ritual, Authority and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship." Kingship and Authority in South Asia. Second ed., edited by J. F. Richards. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin -Madison, 1981.

A half-century after Indian independence from Britain, academic models of “early-medieval India” are necessarily taking a new turn. We find, for example, that the scholarly preoccupation with the violent invasions of north India by so-called “Islamic barbarians” in the eleventh-twelfth centuries is being tempered by analyses of and a deeper appreciation for Muslim trade as a vital and non-violent economic resource for northern India from the seventh century onwards. As is well-known, the late seventh-early eighth century Arab conquest of Transoxania in Central Asia signaled new Muslim influence over the silk routes threading through the oasis towns of the Takla Makan desert and by extension, over some of India’s overland trade with China. Likewise, by the eighth century, Muslim maritime trading diaspora emerged as perhaps the most influential force in the trade of the Bay of Bengal. Edging out the hitherto dominant Buddhist trading guilds,⁵⁷⁵ Muslim traders were rivaled in influence only by the Śaivite merchant guilds in southern India.

The ascendancy of Islamic traders in early medieval India had particularly important implications for monastic Buddhist patronage. As we discussed in Chapter Two, the growth and dissemination of Buddhism both in and beyond India historically was linked to long-distance trade and markets. We recall that the majority of Buddhist monasteries were located along trade routes, and helped provide the

‘horizontally’ integrated infrastructure of extensive empires, such as those of the Mauryas and Kusanas, incorporating ethnically diverse military and mercantile elites. By its built-in potential for expansion and horizontal linkage, Buddhism was eminently suited to those imperially sprawling formations which organized

⁵⁷⁵ We are, however, aware of the presence of Indian Buddhist traders along the southern silk route, and between valleys of the Upper Indus (e.g. Gilgit) and the Tarim Basin. See A. Winke, *Al-Hind, the Making of the Indo-Islamic World*. Leiden and New York: E.J. Brill, 1991, Vol. 1, 227. Winke 1991, 42-43.

themselves primarily around strategic urban centers and trade routes... Buddhism also provided the ideological and cultural setting of the world of the maritime merchant.⁵⁷⁶

Likewise, we remember that Buddhist trading guilds – both local (*svadeśi*) and international (*nānādeśi*) – were vital patrons of Buddhist monasticism throughout Gupta-period. As such, it is reasonable to assume that the late seventh-early eighth century eclipse of Buddhist merchant guilds by Muslim traders compromised the economic stability of Buddhist monasteries; small wonder Hsüan-tsang dreamt of Nālandā in flames.⁵⁷⁷

This trend toward trade decline was both mirrored and aggravated by a marked decline of urban centers in post-Gupta India. While its causes remain an open question,⁵⁷⁸ its effects are unambiguous: Thakur and Jha demonstrate significant losses to twenty-two cities, including the two key urban centers of Bihar, Pāṭaliputra and Vaiśali.

These inter-related trends form the backdrop for what is arguably the latest installment to the Great Debate on Medieval Decline. Developed and explored by scholars such as Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya and Herman Kulke, the newest theoretical model of “Indian feudalism” is subsumed within a larger study area: medieval state formation. “When studied in the context of its local manifestations,” avers Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, this process “makes intelligible a wide range of relationships” in early

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁵⁷⁷ However, we must be careful not to presume that Muslim trade was the only wave rocking monasticism’s fortunes. The disparity between his grim account of Indian monasticism and the buoyant descriptions of his fourth century predecessor Fa-hsien suggests that the decline of monasticism was underway before the rise of Islam in India.

⁵⁷⁸ For an overview of leading theories, see Vijay Kumar Thakur, *Urbanisation in Ancient India*. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1981, 295 ff.

medieval Indian society. Indeed, for post-Harṣa India in general, and Pāla India in particular,

[State formation] was a crucial agency of change...in the sense that it brought about a measure of cohesion among local elements of culture by providing them with a focus. At the same times it mediated in the assimilation of ideas, symbols and rituals which had a much wider territorial spread and acceptability. Common modes of royal legitimation and interrelated phenomena such as the practice of land grants, the creation of *agrahāras*, the emergence of major cult centers...—all these were manifestations of the manner in which local-level states mediated in the absorption of ideas and practices which had been taking shape as a wider temporal and ideological process.⁵⁷⁹

In light of its importance, I discuss this model in some detail, with particular attention to the “religio-political strategies” deployed by early medieval kings to generate and maintain legitimacy.

⁵⁷⁹ Chattopadhyaya 1997, 35. It should be noted that neither he, nor I, am suggesting that this process was unique to the early medieval period; rather, that “the relationship between the process and region formation, considered from a pan-Indian perspective, was perhaps the closest in this period.” *Ibid.*

Rājās, sāmantas and maṇḍalas in early medieval India

Hermann Kulke draws upon the histories of a range of north and south Indian dynasties (including the Pālas) to formulate a general model of early medieval political development. This process can, avers Kulke, best be conceptualized as a three-stage successive development from chiefdom, early kingdom to imperial kingdom, a process which “would somewhat correspond to with the evolution from ‘king’ (*rājā*) to ‘great king’ (*mahārājā*) and ‘supreme king of great kings’ (*mahārājā-adhirājā*).⁵⁸⁰

In his view, as well as that of Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, Romila Thapur and others, early medieval state formation was a spatial as well as socio-political phenomena, and so strongly informed by the locations of the future early medieval kingdoms. For centuries, Kulke asserts, the “local nuclear areas”⁵⁸¹ that comprised the nascent kingdoms had arisen from centers of the Gupta empire or from its provincial capitals post-Harṣa kingdoms arose from “their autonomous peripheral hinterland and in intermediate regions which had not yet been conquered, but which had already come under a wide range of influences been heavily influenced by Gupta empire. These were therefore regions in which local princes had the chance to establish their rule on the model of more advanced

⁵⁸⁰ “The Early and the Imperial Kingdom: a Processual Model of Integrative State Formation in Early Medieval India” in Kulke 1997, 233-34.

⁵⁸¹ Though Kulke does not formally define the term “nuclear area” in this article, it is most generally used by historians of early medieval India to denote a specific geographical region endowed with a rich resource base, thus enabling the development of larger state structures. The Ganges basin, Kaveri basin and Krishna-Godavari *doab* are good examples. For the purpose of this discussion, I am following this definition. It should be noted, however, that it is also critiqued by some scholars. Chattopadhyaya argues that “a ‘nuclear’ region is finally a historical-chronological and not purely geographical region; the “nuclearity of a region is related to the way historical factors converge on it and not merely to its resource potential.” Chattopadhyaya 1997, 211-212.

forms of economic and political development, and to consolidate it undisturbed over many generations.”⁵⁸² As such, the typical chiefdom profited from the political models of the developed Gupta empire, yet incubated in relative isolation from outside interference.

Predictably, political legitimation was a pressing objective for these incubating chiefdoms: as Kulke succinctly notes, “raising the status of the new rulers was a most urgent necessity in order to legitimize the claim to a regular system of imposts and, later revenues.” Towards this end, the rulers facilitated specific strategies of “religio-political legitimation”⁵⁸³ i.e. mutually-beneficial relationships with culturally authoritative religious institutions and individuals. In the early phase of state formation, ‘religio’ legitimation was “pre-eminently the task incumbent on an invited Brahmin,” who created “genealogies which traced the origin of the new ruling dynasty (*vamśa*) back to a mythical progenitor” and “vested the new rulers with the paraphernalia of Hindu royalty...”⁵⁸⁴ Broad-based royal support of Brahmin culture was reciprocated by the

⁵⁸² “The Early and the Imperial Kingdom: a Processural Model of Integrative State Formation in Early Medieval India” in Kulke 1997, 234-35.

⁵⁸³ This compound term presupposes a theoretical split shared and highlighted by Chattopadhyaya: “the root of this need (to validate royal authority in the early medieval context)...lay in the separation between temporal and sacred domain. The domains, if one goes beyond theory and tries to grasp their relationship in concrete existential terms, must be seen as interdependent; if temporal authority power needs ‘legitimation’ from ‘spiritual’ authority, so did human agents of ‘spiritual authority’ authority require sustenance from temporal power.” Physical force was, Chattopadhyaya is careful to note, only one dimension of this temporal power: “protection related to the ideal social order as defined by guardians of the scared domain.” Chattopadhyaya 1997, 196.

⁵⁸⁴ Kulke 1997, 237-38.

Brahminic bestowal of *rājavamśa*, pertaining to “the chieftdom and establishment of local rule under a ‘royal’ lineage (*vamśa*) in a nuclear area.”⁵⁸⁵

This was, however, only one dimension of a multi-pronged campaign to preserve and legitimize royal rule. As Chattopadhyaya reminds us, although the ideal social order was defined,

dharmā, nevertheless, was not uniform, and although the king was required to preserve social order, he was at the same time enjoined to allow the disparate *dharmas* of regions, guilds, and associations and of social groups to continue. If there is an anomaly here, the anomaly may help us to understand the massive support which the ruling elites extended to the representatives of the sacred domain in the early medieval period.⁵⁸⁶

As such, up-and-coming chieftdoms also supported non-Brahminic “autochthonous local and tribal cults, since such a promotion involved concrete social advantages for those concerned... An important characteristic of the courtly cults of these early nuclear areas was thus the incorporation of mighty local cults and the (temporary) integration of their non-Brahmin priests into the courtly circle.”⁵⁸⁷

In short, the cultivation of political legitimation was fueled by a policy of cultural integration. This strategy had, it would seem, at least two objectives: the achievement of a ‘vertical legitimation’ of the new ruler within the nuclear area and its people, and of a ‘horizontal legitimation’ which equated the status of the new king and his dynasty with that of neighboring rulers and Hindu *rājās*. There was little concern during this phase

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 262.

⁵⁸⁶ Chattopadhyaya 1997, 198.

⁵⁸⁷ Kulke, 1997, 239.

with neighboring principalities, for “permanent subjugation and annexation after a military victory were still scarcely conceivable” to these fledgling rulers.

As the chiefdoms grew into small kingdoms, however, this situation changed. Co-existence was subsumed by violent competition -- the fighting for trans-local hegemony described by the ‘law of fishes’ (*matsya-nyāya*), wherein the big fish swallows the small one. Now, “the question of which local nuclear area would...(sustain) for several generations a hegemony -- and thereby the founding of a dynasty – came to be based then entirely on the powers and economic resources of the original nuclear area.” Accordingly, it was the “urgent concern of the ruler who had been able to upgrade his position to that of a ‘great king’ (*mahārāja*) to subjugate his original nuclear area...to his central and direct rule. Here, at least, the claim of the monopoly of legitimate and uncontested physical power and more or less direct revenue collection had to be established and...successfully implemented.”⁵⁸⁸

How was this new task of legitimation achieved? “[T]he ‘great kings’ of these early kingdoms were...zealously engaged in creating hierarchically graded administrative levels from a ‘provincial’ administration of districts down to the village and in associating those levels with a hierarchy of administrative powers and officials.”⁵⁸⁹ Importantly, political hierarchization was buttressed by the core policy of integration; thus both the local Brahmin population and non-Brahmin cults played different but key roles: “Mahārājas now bequeathed entire villages (*agrahāra* or *brahmadeya*)...to increasingly larger groups of Brahmins” for “these gift deeds unified norms of royal

⁵⁸⁸ Ibid., 242.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid.

dominion proclaimed for the whole nuclear area”,⁵⁹⁰ and, non-Brahmin cults and rituals were patronized to secure for the kingdom new areas for agrarian expansion, lines of communication, and settlements of traders,⁵⁹¹ as well as less tangible fruits:

The territorial spread of the state society required the required cutting through the tangle of disparate dharmas through the territorial spread of brahmans and of institutions representing a uniform norm in some form or another; they did not necessarily eliminate the disparate norms but they could provide a central focus to such disparate norms by their physical presence, their style of functioning and their control over what could be projected as the ‘transcendental’ norm.⁵⁹²

This two-pronged strategy of cultivating ‘religio-political legitimation’ through cultural integration and political hierarchization animated the rise of an important new political institution often characterized as “the hallmark of the structure of polity in early medieval India.”⁵⁹³ the *sāmantacakra*, circle of tributary princes.

Samantaization:

⁵⁹⁰ In fact, “the king may have transferred privileges which he himself was not yet in a position to enjoy fully...(E)very donation of land to Brahmins and the public proclamation of its legal conditions and implications for the villagers can be equated with the setting up of legal norms for the whole environs of the Brahmin villages. By enmeshing the entire nuclear area in a net of such privileged Brahmin settlements...obligatory standards were – most likely for the first time – created also for those ‘royal’ areas...Thus it devolved upon the Brahmins the difficult task not only to create validity for the ‘royal’ rights transferred to them, but also to develop a village-level administration necessary for the implementation of these demands.... In a pre-modern state, police or even military means could have been scarcely more effective than this form of intensification of royal authority by means of a group of loyal Brahmins whose existence depended on their implementation of the *rājadharma*.” *Ibid.*, 243.

⁵⁹¹ This trend, notes Kulke, “received a strong impetus from the bhakti cults which were spreading from South India...” *Ibid.*, 244-45. See also Chattopadhyaya 1997, 203-204 on the integration of local polities.

⁵⁹² Chattopadhyaya 1997, 198.

⁵⁹³ Chattopadhyaya in Kulke 1997, 205.

Before the seventh century, a *sāmanta*⁵⁹⁴ referred to an independent neighboring ruler. With the rise of the early medieval kingdoms, however, a significant shift in meaning took place:

“[S]āmanta had become generally prevalent as the title for ‘neighboring tributary princes’ This semantic change implied that for the rulers of a nuclear area, at least theoretically, there were no longer independent neighbours... the rājas of the nuclear areas were confronted with the choice of either conquering their immediate neighbours or themselves becoming a sāmanta tributary prince of a mighty neighbor... [T]his development led to... the *sāmanatacakra*. The ‘circle of tributary princes’ who surrounded the kingdom... (and) who became an established part of the early medieval kingdoms and their ideology. No true kingdom could exist without a circle of illustrious tributary princes, for only the brilliant ornaments on their heads let the Mahārāja shine in his entire greatness – a favourite theme in the *praśasti* panegyrics of the inscriptions.⁵⁹⁵”

When the dust settled, these “brilliant ornaments” were allowed to maintain autonomous control over their respective areas; indeed, most early *mahārājas* would have been hard-pressed to rule directly these conquered territories, and so were well-served by this practice of *grahaṇa-mokṣa* (capture and release).⁵⁹⁶ In return, each *sāmanta* paid a nominal tribute (*kara-dā*) to the *mahārāja*, participated in royal assemblies, and “had to mention always in their inscriptions their mahārāja and ‘overlord’ and as the date of donation mostly his year of reign.” Indeed, “if such a reference to the king of a central nuclear area is missing... and instead the sāmanta assumes royal titles... it always points to

⁵⁹⁴ From *sāmanta*, ‘all-around,’ ‘adjacent,’ ‘bordering.’ Monier-Williams, p.

⁵⁹⁵ Kulke 1997, 248. Kosambi also stresses the distinction between pre- and post-seventh century uses of the term: “In the *Arthaśāstra*, it uniformly means neighbour or dependent neighboring king. The *Amarakośa* (2.8.2) defines supreme monarch (*adhīśvara*) as a king who has subjugated all neighboring rulers (*sāmanta*) without exception... on the other hand, *sāmanta* in seventh century and later epigraphs has to be translated as ‘feudal baron’.” D.D. Kosambi, “Indian Feudal Trade Charters.” Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 2: 283-4.

⁵⁹⁶ Chattopadhyaya 1997, 218.

a weakening of the central power and frequently also to the attempt of the *sāmanta* to attain unrestricted independence or even to wrest for himself the supremacy over the *sāmantacakra*.⁵⁹⁷ The *sāmantacakra* was thus a volatile institution whose maintenance demanded the balancing of power between the royal center and its peripheries.

Yet for the loyal tributary ruler, the *sāmantacakra* was also a zone of opportunity: movement towards the central royal court spelled progression up the political-power food-chain. Towards this end, “loyal princes of the *sāmantacakra* were appointed *mahāsāmantas* by the kings, they sent daughters to royal harem and took over high offices at court.” The political empowerment of peripheral rulers, however, meant a concomitant loss of influence by (non-*sāmanta*) central administrators. They, in turn, naturally sought to jump on the *sāmantaization* band-wagon, and “thus, a ‘*sāmantaization*’ of the early kingdoms took place.”⁵⁹⁸

Sāmantaization was the backdrop for the final stage of state formation outlined by Kulke: the “*maṇḍala*” phase of imperial kingdoms, when sovereignties expanded their core region by annexing the *sāmantacakra* and transformed these territories into administrative *maṇḍala* provinces. This annexation process took two forms: large-scale neighboring principalities were obliterated in their entirety by the imperial kingdom, while smaller-scale autonomous principalities located in remote outskirts of the core area were subject to a process of “intense integration” characterized by “further agrarian extension, inclusion into trans-local trade networks and the spread of ‘state society’ of the dynastic core region.”

⁵⁹⁷ Kulke 1997, 248-49.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 249.

In the earlier *sāmāntacakras* located outside the peripheral zones, the *sāmāntaization* of central administrators continued. Now however,

the process often led to the replacement of the allodial rulers by members of the central dynasties or their courts. Thus from earlier tributary principalities of the *sāmāntacakra* there gradually evolved provinces or districts of the extended core region of the imperial kingdom. A good example of this ‘provincialization’ is offered by the semantic change of the term *maṇḍala*. ...*(M)āṇḍala* was always a term for autonomous principality or the area of an allodial *sāmānta* prince. But in the period of the imperial kingdom...it came to indicate unequivocally a province of the imperial kingdom under a governor appointed by a central power.⁵⁹⁹

Large numbers of imperial “insiders”-- i.e. courtiers and officers living on landed property and benefices – now resided in annexed provinces quite distant from the central royal court. The result was a large and dense network of mutual dependency that connected the center with its enlarged area: “whereas the court of the early kingdom depended mainly on resources of the direct hinterland, the whole enlarged core area of the imperial kingdom was linked with the centre.” The ‘*maṇḍala* phase’ form of *sāmāntaization* thus represented a significant ideological as well as logistical shift from the earlier practice of *grahaṇa-mokṣa*. No longer semi-autonomous agents, the *sāmāntas* were now “integrated into the structure polity” and the “overlordship-subordinate relation came to be dominant over other levels of relations in the structure.”⁶⁰⁰

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁶⁰⁰ As Chattopadhyaya asserts, “the structure of polities was only partly based on the elimination of existing bases of power, by the expansion of the kin network of the lineage that emerged as dominant or by the organization of a bureaucracy that could connect different nodes in the structure, but the fact that political relations were regularly expressed as those between the overlord and his feudatories suggests that the dominant mode in the formation of the structure was by encapsulation of the existing bases of power, the spearhead in the structure being the overlord.” Chattopadhyaya 1997, 218.

This relationship was perhaps *the* central organizing principle of early medieval political life, and helps make logical a range of legitimation processes characteristic of the early medieval state. In particular, Kulke points to a change in the ideology of Hindu kingship, whereby “the kings of the large kingdoms rose...more and more to the status of earthly representatives of the tutelary deity (rāṣṭradevatā) of the kingdom who was mostly Śiva, and since the twelfth century, Viṣṇu.” Interestingly, the deification of the temporal ruler was mirrored in the so-called ‘spiritual’ arena by a concomitant ‘royalization’ of the deity:

(Deities) were increasingly transformed into imperial lords by fitting them out with all the symbols of an earthly mahārāja and by assimilating their temple rites increasingly to the palace rites. For, the greater the ostentation of the mahādeva and his divine court, the more legitimate was the splendour and power of his earthly representatives and his royal court.⁶⁰¹

The kings further concretized this escalation of their own royal status through a range of complementary practices intended to cover their kingdom with “an additional network of direct royal, political and ritual influence:” the deliberate enlargement and embellishment of key pilgrimage sites, the building of new monumental temples and, particularly in the south of India, the gradual development of temple towns into centers of royal influence.⁶⁰² These varied efforts at regional integration were buttressed and molded by

⁶⁰¹ Kulke 1997, 258

⁶⁰² Importantly, the kings were careful to patronize the great temples that lay within the core regions of recently-annexed peripheral zones. Crucial vehicles of integration, such temples were “associated ‘vertically’ in an often closely meshed network of ritual and legendary relations with ‘sub-regional’ and local cults of their hinterland, as well as ‘horizontally’ with other temples of the region.” In short, “the effect of this ‘temple policy’ was to link local loyalties of the earlier nuclear areas and their peripheral zones with the cults of the central temples and then, at the level of ‘horizontally interlinked

the development of regional kinship and caste systems ('sanskritization'), by the codification of regional norms (*deśa dharma*), by the social and economic integration of the tribes ('ksatriyazation'), and the by the inclusion of tribal deities and rituals ('Hinduization') into Hindu cults. The medium in which the new regional loyalty was propagated was no more the Brahminic-court Sanskrit, but the regional languages. Non-Brahminic itinerant preachers, sectarian leaders and holy men emerged more and more as the propagators of the new 'mission'.⁶⁰³

These practices, Kulke concludes, animated early medieval Indian political and social life until the onset of the so-called medieval period, i.e. until the full-scale advent of Muslim culture from about the eleventh century.

systems', to integrate them into a new regional cult as a basis of new regional loyalty." Ibid., 260-61

⁶⁰³ Ibid., 262

Muslims, maṇḍalas and urban decline:

Thus far, I have discussed three broad and inter-linking trends which, I argue, necessarily shaped Buddhist monastic patronage in post-seventh-century north India: the decline of Buddhist trade guilds, the erosion of urban centers, and the wide-spread formation of regional, *sāmanta*-fied states. Yet how closely do these general models reflect the specifics of the Pāla empire?

Turning first to issues of trade, an overview of what little we know about the economics and geography of post-seventh century Bihar and Bengal yields a range of datum that demand we problematize the generalized vision of shrinking trade and urban decline. It seems clear that internal trade in early medieval Bengal and Bihar experienced some meaningful set-backs. We know that in pre-Gupta times, Mithilā (in North Bihar) was the nexus point of at least eight different trade routes, including the Mithilā-Tāmralipti route. There are, however, far fewer mentions of this key route in Pāla or contemporaneous texts, which leads us to wonder if it had become substantially less active by that time.⁶⁰⁴ “Even the references to internal trading activities in the inscriptions and literature of Bengal,” notes Vijay Thakur,

are few and far between, and they mainly refer to local periodical *hātas* (village markets.) Apparently the trade routes fell into disuse because they had lost their utility due to the decline in internal trade. Another indication of this trend is an inscription of Dharmapāla recording the handing over to the grantees of even the markets attached to the villages. These grantees would not have allowed the traders to operate as freely as the state would have done. The very idea of granting a village along with its market pace underlines the strictly local character of internal trade during this period.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰⁴ It should be noted, however that the Chinese pilgrims Hsüan Tsang and I-tsing, who visited India in the seventh century, allude to the prosperity of Tāmralipti.

⁶⁰⁵ Vijay Kumar Thakur, "Trade and Towns in Early Medieval Bengal." Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient XXX, 205.

Likewise, we find relatively little evidence of extensive foreign trade in the Pāla region from the late seventh-early eighth century onwards. Scholars such as H.B. Sarkar have suggested that, although Muslim trade with China and Indonesia was vigorous, as was trade between South India and Ceylon, Bengal and its Buddhist trade guilds participated in relatively little of trade and commerce activity in the Tahaī or Indian Ocean. The probable decline of Buddhist trade guilds in the Pāla empire is further suggested by the art historical record. In marked contrast to what we know of pre-Gupta and Gupta practices, which demonstrate a strong showing by trade guilds and nuns,⁶⁰⁶ none of the inscribed Buddhist images from the Pāla period were commissioned by trade guilds. Rather, the core patrons were lay donors and male monastics.⁶⁰⁷ Apparently, the edging out of the Buddhist trade guilds had significant ramifications for monastic patronage.

On the other hand, there is evidence to indicate that some areas of the Pāla zone bucked these inter-related declines in the areas of urbanization, trade and monastic support. Recent archeological studies of western Bengal document “unmistakable...evidence suggesting the continuation of urban tradition” in the Pāla-

⁶⁰⁶ For example, there was unusually strong participation in the cult of images among Kuśan nuns. “Nuns here, rather than being ‘far behind the monks,’ had parity with them both in terms of numbers and learned titles. This parity was not new. It occurred before in the earlier inscriptions recording donations concerned with the *stūpa*/relic cult at Sāncī: there were at Sāncī one hundred twenty-nine monks scholars and one-hundred twenty-five nuns.” Schopen, 1997, 249. What is most remarkable, however, is the fact that these nun donors effectively disappear from the epigraphic record in the Gupta period.

⁶⁰⁷ As indicated by an analysis of the inscriptions recorded in Susan L. Huntington, The Pāla-Sena Schools of Sculpture. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984.

period cities of Chandraketugarh, Rajabadidanga, Goswamikhanda and Banagarh.⁶⁰⁸ North-east of Tamralipti, each site lay along the Tamralipti-Mathila trade route which subsequently intersected with key Pāla Buddhist centers at Bodhgayā, Rājgir/Nalanda. Not surprisingly, archeological analyses show that in the Pāla period, several of these sites had explicitly Buddhist functions and associations. At Khana-Mihirer Dhipi (in Chandraketugarh), for example, we find evidence of the renovation of a number of temples, as well as a lotus medallion and a miniature bronze image of Maitreya. Sites at Goswamikhanda and Banagarh have yielded evidence of temples, and at Rajabadidanga, the artifacts include a *dharmacakra* seal and three Buddhist bronzes. In fact, a number of its seals suggest Rajabadidanga as the site of the Rakta-mṛttikā *mahāvihāra* in Karnaśuvarṇa described in Hsuan Tsang's seventh century account; for example, epigraphic references to the *Rakta-mṛttikā-mahāvihāra*, to the *Raktamṛttikā Mahāvihārakaryabhikṣu Sanghasya* and to an *ācārya bhikṣu*. Other Rajabadidanga seals "bear legends connected with merchants. Thus, we have two seals bearing the legends Vani(?)kasya and Śrī Vanika Vārendrasya respectively....(indicating that) purely religious centers were engaged in limited economic activities."⁶⁰⁹

A picture of localized Pāla prosperity may also be understood as a reflection of the shifting fortunes of Central Asian trade routes. Chinese sources make clear that from the middle of the seventh century, Central Asia was the site of a quadrangular struggle for

⁶⁰⁸ Vijay Kumar Thakur, "Trade and Towns in Early Medieval Bengal." Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient XXX, 207 ff. Looking to the Chandraketugarh site, another writer particularly highlights evidence of substantial rebuilding and refurbishing of temple walls during the Pāla period. See *Indian Archeology 1957-58 – A Review*, 52.

⁶⁰⁹ Thakur, Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient XXX, 218.

power between the Turks, Tibetans, Arabs and Chinese.⁶¹⁰ These conditions spurred increased traffic along trade routes that skirted the chaotic conditions of Central Asia, including an overland route through Bihar to Tibet and China. As such, it is not surprising to find urban centers in Bihar and along the route between Magadha and Tibet enjoying above-average levels of prosperity and trade activity.⁶¹¹ The apparent flourishing of Buddhist monasteries in these regions is likewise logical; “the frequent journeys of Buddhist monks between Magadha and Tibet must have heightened the importance of this route,”⁶¹² and the monasteries themselves, as nodes of key trade support services, doubtlessly benefited from increased patronage.⁶¹³ This apparent conflation of new trade routes with Pāla vitality and Buddhist activity is underscored by a handful of allusions to sea trade between Bengal and Indonesia. “We have references to Buddhist scholars like Dharmapāla (7th century) and Dīpankara (11th century) proceeding from Bengal to Suvarṇadvīpa. From the late eighth century we find influences from

⁶¹⁰ At this time, Tibetans “established their hegemony over Central Asia, especially the regions in the north-east and south-east and appear to have expanded their influence southwards to Bengal. It is not without significance that Al Iṣṭakhrī and Ibn Haukal call the Bay of Bengal the Tibetan Sea.” Lallanji Gopal, The Economic Life of Northern India C. A.D. 700-1200. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1989, 10. See also: Helmut Hoffman, Tibet: a Handbook. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1986, 39-45; Winke, Vol. I, 1990, 43-45.

⁶¹¹ The *Tabaqāt-I-Nāsirī* reports that Bengal received large numbers of horses brought by merchants through this route. Indeed, “between Kāmarūpa and Tibet it speaks of thirty-five mountain passes through which horses were brought to Lakhnauti in Bengal.” Lallanji Gopal, The Economic Life of Northern India C. A.D. 700-1200. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1989, 111.

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ These circumstances are mirrored by dramatic changes in Nepal’s economy; it is during this time that we see a significant growth in commerce, the development of manual arts and other industries.

northern India, especially the Pāla domains, becoming predominant in the culture of South-East Asia... indications are not wanting that eastern India continued to maintain direct contacts with South-East Asia."⁶¹⁴ The establishment of a monastery at Nālandā by the early ninth-century King Bālaputra of Suvarṇadvīpa testifies both to the intimacy of the Pāla domain with Java, as well as the centrality of Buddhist monasticism to this relationship.⁶¹⁵

This scenario likewise dovetails with the research of monetary historian John Deyell who, drawing on a meticulous analysis of existing north Indian coin hoards, hypothesizes that the apparent paucity and debasement of coinage in our area during the period c. 600-1200 can be read, not as indicators of regional impoverishment, but of economic vigor -- responses to a "sustained constriction in (North India's) foreign supplies of silver bullion" aggravated by "an expanding volume of exchange transactions."⁶¹⁶ Deyell's vision is arguably supported by the eye-witness accounts of contemporaneous Arab travellers through north India who allude to Bengal's animated international trade in aloe-wood, pottery, and the "unrivaled" cotton fabrics, and to the

⁶¹⁴ Gopal 1989, 140.

⁶¹⁵ See the Nālandā plate of Devapāla, described and translated by H. Sastri in *EI*, XVIII, 1923-24, 310.

⁶¹⁶ John S. Deyell, *Living Without Silver: the Monetary History of Early Medieval North India*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990, 7, 5. Also *a propos* here is M.R. Tarafdar ("Trade and Society in Early Medieval Bengal." *Indian Historical Review* IV, no. 2: 275-84) who attributes to south-eastern Bengal a developed money economy, currency system, prosperous urban centers and developed commercial links; Jonathan Karam Skaff's "The Silver Sasanian and Arab-Sasanian Coins Found at Turfan: Their Relationship to International Trade and the Local Economy." nd. My thanks to Ron Davidson for making this unpublished article available to me.

‘gold and silver’ used to pay for them.⁶¹⁷ Al-Biruni draws on the reports of Ghaznavid traders to outline a network of trade routes linking the major cities around Kanauj with the countries on all frontiers.⁶¹⁸ Arab geographers such as Masūdi (d. 956) emphasize the importance of *cauris* (wada) in Pāla Bengal, where they were “used as the money (ṣain) of the country”.⁶¹⁹ We see a picture of Pāla regions as increasingly connected between the seventh and eleventh centuries with Tibet and “the numerous Arab trading settlements which sprang up in the Malay peninsula and the Indonesia Archipelago.”⁶²⁰ In short,

Not only did expansion back up trade, but the proceeds of trade were reinvested in local production. The one reinforced the other. Internal trade also linked up with these developments, as we can see in the proliferation of new towns... The same can be seen in the diversification of trade items. In short, the successful expansion of regional economies provided new kings with the material impetus to take up relatively autonomous positions towards an ‘imperial’ center which receded into a symbolic background... to found dynasties which were ennobled by the association with brahmins who also provided the ritual underpinnings.⁶²¹

In sum, although the nature of Pāla trade and economics remains open to debate, our evidence renders it plausible to hypothesize the following scenario. Bengal and Bihar were affected by the generalized decline in trade and urbanization in north India;

⁶¹⁷ Wink 1991, Vol. I, 274, 272.

⁶¹⁸ H.M. Elliot, The History of India, As Told by Its Own Historians: the Muhammadan Period. 1869. Edited by John Dowson. New York: AMS Press, 1966. See entirety of Chapter 18.

⁶¹⁹ Arab authors of the ninth and tenth centuries “emphasize the backwardness of Europe, but describe India as a land of great wealth and the ‘king of kings of al-Hind’... as the most powerful king of the world. The caliph, of course, is at the top of the list. Then, in varying order follow the ‘king of China (*aṣ-Ṣīn*)’, ‘the king of the Turks’... the king of al-Hind’ who is known as ‘the king of the elephants (*malik as-fīla*) and ‘the king of wisdom’ (*malik al-hikma*)...” Wink 1991, Vol. I, 272.

⁶²⁰ Wink 1991, Vol. I, 274.

⁶²¹ Ibid., 230.

accordingly, agricultural production and local trade were likely cornerstones of Pāla economics and commerce, and international trade, though not unheard of, was rarer and no doubt highly-valued. These trends were mirrored by a concomitant decline in the fortunes of Buddhist trade guilds in the Pāla zone and concomitantly, in guild patronage to Buddhist monasteries.

Nonetheless, these tendencies were not absolute; there were pockets of urban continuity and trade growth in the Pāla region, particularly along the overland trade routes through Bihar to Tibet and China. Likewise, in spite of the loss of guild patronage, we find Buddhist monasticism continuing to thrive and to maintain an intimate and reciprocal relationship to Pāla trade and prosperity. The flow of pilgrims and students to the many Buddhist *śrīsthas* and monasteries in the Pāla empire ensured on-going local commercial and cultural communications, even as the transmission of Buddhism from Bengal to Tibet, China and Indonesia augmented the usage and importance of Bengal's international trade routes. Pāla urban continuity appears linked with Buddhist religious activity in general, and at sites such as Rajabadidanga, with Buddhist monasticism in particular.

What of Kulke *cum* Chattopadhyaya's pan-Indian models of medieval polity formation? How closely is their dynamic vision of polities, politics and legitimation strategies mirrored by the Pāla-period materials? A skeletal overview of what little we know of Pāla history reveals scattered points of discrepancy from Kulke's paradigm. The *rājāvamsā* phase practice of fabricating illustrious dynastic genealogies is conspicuously absent from the Pāla inscriptions, none of which identifies the caste or background of its

rulers.⁶²² Kulke's assertion that "local rule was far more frequently the result of physical coercion...rather than the result of voluntary agreement of the people" flies in the face of the popular election of Gopāla described in the Khalimpur grant. Likewise, although the Pāla government almost certainly included a complex hierarchy of administrators and officials, the dominated and thoroughly integrated *sāmantas* of Kulke's *maṇḍala* phase are difficult to reconcile with the apparently empowered Pāla *sāmantavraja* portrayed by Sandhyākaranandin in his eleventh century *Rāmacaritam*.⁶²³

These limitations do not however outweigh the applicability of the *sāmanta*-state model to Pāla particulars; Kulke's dynamic hypothesis arguably mirrors --and explains -- a broad range of Pāla royal practices. If, for example, royal support of Brahmins was the defining "religio-political legitimation strategy" of early medieval rulers, the Pālas were as mainstream as any Cola. Of the ten published copper-plate grants issued by the Pāla

⁶²² This is not to say that others have not compensated for the Pāla's reticence. The Kamauli copper-plate of Vaidyadeva refers to Vighrapāla III as *vamśe mihirasya jātavān*, 'born in the lineage of the sun' (*EI*, V. II, p. 350). Sandhyākaranandin claims a maritime origin for his beloved Rāmapāla, who he claims is *samudrakula-dīpa*, and descended from Kṣatriya stock. (Verse I/4). According to Tāranātha, Gopāla was the fruit of a union between "a very beautiful girl born in a Kṣatriya family" and a tree deity (Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya. Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India. Editor Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990, 257). Not to be outdone, Buston alludes to Gopāla as the offspring of a shepherd's widow and a tree spirit, and further claims that Dharmapāla is the product of a union between Gopāla's queen and a Nāga king. In the *Vyāsa Pūraṇa* of the *Vallālacarita*, the Pālas are the "worst of the Kṣatriyas" (MASAB, V. III, 4.).

⁶²³ See especially verse 45: *amuna devena rājñā 'asau sāmantavraj harayo 'shvā nāgā hastinaḥ ebhirlabdho bahalḥ prabhavo yena sa tādrak bhuvō bhūmervipulasya ca dānatastyāgāt amukūlitah*: "By that king (Rāmapala) that (body of samantas) who attained great strength by possession of cavalry, elephants and infantry, was gained over by presents of land and enormous wealth." 30.

rulers that record the recipient, eight designate a Brahmin as the beneficiary.⁶²⁴ The plates likewise testify to the practice described by Kulke of Mahārājas “bequeathing entire villages (*agrahāra* or *brahmadeya*)” to groups of Brahmins: five of the fifteen Pāla grants describe such gifts,⁶²⁵ and two more document gifts of villages for the express purpose of maintaining Hindu temples and institutions.⁶²⁶

Further underscoring the Pāla rulers’ policy of patronizing Brahmin culture and religion is the timing of their donations: five of their gifts to Brahmins were made after bathing in the Ganges on ritually significant days, i.e. on an equinox (*viśuvat samkrāntī*) or lunar eclipse (*soma-graha*).⁶²⁷ Thus in the fifth regnal year, Mahīpāla I bathed on the Ganges on the day of the *viśuvat-samkrāntī* and granted the village of Kotivara to a Brahmin named Kṛṣṇaditya-śarman “a student of the Vājasaneyin branch of the Yajurveda and well versed in grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), logic (*tarka-vidyā*) and *Mīmāṃsā*”⁶²⁸ Taken as a whole, the copper-plates intimate that Pāla rulers regularly commemorated Hindu institutions, images, and holy days with grants of land and/or villages; among the

⁶²⁴ The Jājilpāda grant; Belwa grant (Mahipāla I); Bānargh grant; Belwa grant (Vigrahapāla III); Amgachi grant; Bangāon grant; and Manahali grant.

⁶²⁵ Munger, Bhagalpur, Jājilpāda, Belwa (Mahipāla I), and Bānargh grants.

⁶²⁶ The Khalimur and Mirzapur grants.

⁶²⁷ The Belwa (Mahipāla), Bānargh, Belwa (Vigrahapāla), the Amgachi and the Bangāon grants. The *Brahma Purana* recommends the performance of ceremonial baths and offerings at the time of the equinox; the relevant passage is reproduced in D. C. Sircar, “Two Pāla Plates From Belwa.” *Epigraphia Indica* XXIX (1951), 2, footnote 1.

⁶²⁸ R.D. Banerji, “The Bangarh Grant of Mahi-Pāla I: the 9th Year.” *Epigraphia Indica* XIV, 325. (It is not until Mahipāla I that land appears to be granted on auspicious Hindu days. It is not clear that this was not happening before, only that 1) it was not recorded, or 2) record is illegible.)

copper-plates which contain a description of both the grant and the recipient, nine out of ten are Brahmin-centric, i.e. directed either to a Brahmin or a Hindu institution.⁶²⁹

The Pāla policy of Brahmin support also reverberated in the arena of government administration. Like the rulers of Kulke's model, the Pāla sovereigns extended and consolidated their rule by dividing their kingdom into a series of smaller administrative units⁶³⁰ which were, in turn, governed by a hierarchy of administrative officials.⁶³¹ The occupant of the hierarchy's top -- "the most important

⁶²⁹ Khalimpur, Munger, Jājilpāda, Belwa (Mahipāla), Bānargh, Belwa (Vigrahapāla), Amgachi Bangāon and Manahali grants.

⁶³⁰ For example, *bhuktis*, *viṣayas*, *maṇḍalas* and other smaller units ending with the suffix '-patakas'. See R.C. Majumdar, *History of Bengal* Vol. I, 273. The *bhukti* appears to be the largest unit, and was sub-divided into *viṣayas* and *maṇḍalas*. It seems that *maṇḍalas* were sub-divisions of *viṣayas*.

⁶³¹ For example, the Khalimpur grant refers to *jyestha-kāyastha*, *mahāmahottara*, *mahattara* and *dāśagrāmika* as administrators of *viṣaya*. We find mention of a *mahākārtākr̥tika* in the Monghyer and Bhagalpur grants, which may refer to a high official in charge of construction of buildings, embankments and reservoirs. Additional titles scattered throughout the epigraphic record include *grāmika*, possibly a village headman who collected royal revenues; *tadā-yukta* and *viniyukta*, clerical officers; *Dāsaparādhika*, a high official in charge of detecting 'the ten crimes'; *chauroddharamika*, officer in charge of tax collection; the *gaulmika* in charge of forests and forest revenues; *dāndika* and *khandaraksa*, members of the police division and *mahāsāndhivigrahika*, a minister in charge of war and peace. It should be noted that the Pāla government supported a substantial army. The Nālandā copper-plate of Dharamapāla refers to a five-fold military division, i.e. elephants, cavalry, chariots, infantry and navy (*hasty-aśva-oṣṭra-vala-naupr̥taka*). Further epigraphic data alludes to a *mahāsenāpati* or military commander-in-chief; a *mahāvryuhapati*, officer in charge of arrays; *nāvādhyaksa*, head of the navy; *koṭṭapāla*, officer in charge of forts; and *prāntapāla*, officer in charge of frontier fortresses. Interestingly, The elephant forces of the Pālas were apparently large and quite renowned; they are not only mentioned in several Pāla inscriptions, but according to Majumdar, alluded to in the records of Pāla enemies. (See Majumdar, V I, 279 ff.) The Pālas were equally renowned for their naval prowess – unsurprising in light of Bengals' numerous rivers and extensive sea-board. In virtually every Pāla epigraph, the royal fleets is mentioned first in the description of the "camp of victory," (*jayaskandhavara*). For a general discussion of Pāla administration, see Bagchi, 56-73.

personage next to the king in government”⁶³² was the chief minister, the *mantrīn*⁶³³ and was, according to Pāla epigraphic data, always a Brahmin. Indeed, the Pāla *mantrīns* appear to have been drawn from two hereditary ministerial Brahmin families touted for their honesty, valor and Vedic learning. Panegyrics notwithstanding, it is likely that these Brahmin families exerted considerable cultural as well as political authority.⁶³⁴

Brahmins were not, however, the sole objects of royal patronage or commemoration, nor should we expect them to have been; as Kulke reminds us, the affirmation of “tribal and non-Brahminic cults” was a wide-spread and critical dimension of early medieval polity consolidation. As such, we are not surprised to find that from the time of King Dharmapāla’s rule in the late eighth century CE, the Pāla monarchs publicly marked and identified their rule with specific forms of Buddhist imagery. Indeed, these practices and images were so pervasive that many twentieth century scholars, taking their cue from Banerji, Majumdar, Sircar and others, have concluded the Pāla rulers to be “devout Buddhists.”

⁶³² Bagchi, 56.

⁶³³ We find mention of a *mantrīn* in the Bānārgah copper-plate grant of Mahipāla I and the Amgachi plate of Vīgrahapāla. See JASB LXI, 77 and EI, XV, 293 ff, respectively.

⁶³⁴ The Badal pillar inscription gives us some sense of the cultural authority wielded by one of these families: Garga, it informs us, was a Brahmin by birth who “made Dharmapāla lord of the east and master of all quarters.” Under the rule of Devapāla, his son Dharbhapaṇi extended the Pāla kingdom from the Vindhya to the Himalayas only by virtue of his wisdom and diplomacy. His son, Someśwara was also “dear to the king,” and his son, Kedāramiśra, helped Devapāla shatter the pride of the Hunas and crush the power of the Dravidas and the Gurjaras. (Badal Pillar) His son Guravamiśra, the minister of Nārāyanapāla, was likewise “eloquent in speech, proficient in *Āgamas*, Tantras, astrology and in the Vedas, and a fighter in the assembly as well as in the field.”

How might an analysis of these policies help us make sense of the relationship between the Pāla State and Pāla monasteries? By extension, how might that relationship have related to and shaped the upsurge of *prajñā*- and Mañjuśrī-centric discourse by Pāla monastics? I begin with a closer look at the primary materials most apparently affirming the Pāla monarchs' avowal of Buddhism: the fifteen published copper-plate land grants issued by the Pāla kings.

Dharmacakras and Cakravartins: Buddhist Monks and Pāla Kings

As early as the eighth-century Khalimpur grant of Dharmapāladeva, the majority of the Pāla's copper-plates are sealed by what is perhaps the oldest and most wide-spread motif of Buddhist sculpture: the eight-spoked *dharmacakra*, or "wheel of Buddhist teaching." (Figs. 1,2) ⁶³⁵ Flanked on either side by a kneeling deer to signify the Buddha's foundational sermon in Sārnāth's Deer Park (*iṣapattana migadāva*), ⁶³⁶ the *dharmacakra* was routinely integrated into Kuṣana and Gupta period iconic representations of the Buddha as teacher, i.e. seated in a cross-legged position (*pralambapādāsana*), his hands forming the gesture of turning the wheel of dharma (*dharmacakrapravartanamudrā*). The *dharmacakra* thus visually epitomized both the Buddha *dharma* and the Buddha himself; as Albert Grunwedel observes, it was "adopted

⁶³⁵ The invocation and use of the *dharmacakra* are found in the Khalimpur, Munger, Nālanda (Devapāla), Mirzapur, Bhagalpur, Jājilpāda, Bānargh, Belwa (Vigrahapāla III), Amgachi, Bangāon, and Manahali copper-plates, as well as in a plate fragment tentatively dated to the reign of Mahendrapāla.

⁶³⁶ The deer are also said to connote the power of the Buddha's teaching to 'tame' creatures in the wild, and to serve as a refuge to the vulnerable.

The *dharmacakra* was however, also an image imbued with what Chattopadhyaya might call ‘temporal’ connotations of power in Pāla thought: the rule of the legendary Mauryan king Aśoka, who incorporated the *dharmacakra* into his famous rock pillars: the influence and prestige of internationally renowned monasteries such as Nālandā, which impressed a *dharmacakra* into its official seal.⁶³⁸ The emblem would also have been familiar to the Pāla kings from the royal seal of the south-eastern Devas, whose dynasty “held sway over Samāṭaṭa”⁶³⁹ as late as the eighth century,⁶⁴⁰ and who were apparently active in their support of Buddhist monasticism.⁶⁴¹ Epigraphic evidence of the Devas is sketchy; to date only three copper-plates and some gold and silver coins have been recovered.⁶⁴² Yet the very existence of coinage issued by the Devas suggests

⁶³⁸ See Hiranand Sastri, *Nālandā and Its Epigraphic Material*. Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1986, 2 ff.

⁶³⁹ Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal (c. 750-1200 A.D.)*. Asiatic Society of Pakistan Publications, 21. Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967, 146.

⁶⁴⁰ The dates for the Devas are a bone of contention among Indologists who, in the absence of any securely dated plates, have relied primarily on paleographic evidence. Based on the similarity of their script with that of the later Guptas, F.A. Khan placed the Bhavadeva plate in the last part of the seventh century. D.C. Sircar suggested an eighth century date. In light of the fact that Bhavadeva was at least the fourth Deva king, this suggests a relatively early date for the Devas. Regardless of these options, it is important to note that the very existence of the Deva dynasty problematizes Majumdar’s assertion that the Pālas came to power in south-eastern Bengal, and that they were *the* ruling power of 8-12 century Bengal and Bihar.

⁶⁴¹ A terracotta sealing from the Salban *vihāra* show the *dharmacakra* emblem and the legend *śrī bhavadeva mahā vihāra ārya bhikṣu sanghasya* thus suggesting the founding of the monastery by King Bhavadeva.

⁶⁴² In addition to the plate published by Sircar, two other plates and a small horde of coins were found at the Śālvana Vihāra in the Lālmāi-Maināmatī near Comilla. For further info, see a monograph by F.A. Khan, *Mainamati*, Karachi, pp. 19 ff; Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal (c. 750-1200 A.D.)*. Asiatic Society of Pakistan Publications, 21. Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967, 144 ff.

something of their prestige and influence, for coin production was a rare phenomenon in post-Gupta Bengal.⁶⁴³ As such, it is likely that “as one means of legitimizing his own authority, Dharmapāla adopted a seal which already had authoritative connotations.”⁶⁴⁴

Interestingly, the imperially-imbued *dharmacakra* is not the only Buddhist element of the Pāla plates that can traced to Deva copper-plate language. As did their powerful southeastern contemporaries, almost every Pāla monarch proclaimed himself to be a “supreme follower of the Sugata (*parama-saugata*),” thereby deepening the conflation of Buddhism with imperial authority.⁶⁴⁵ Here, Kulke’s discussion of the legitimating practice of up-and-coming kings identifying themselves as “earthly representatives of the tutelary deity (*rāṣṭradevatā*) of the kingdom” comes to mind. As rulers in what was arguably the Buddhist heartland of early medieval India –Bengal and Bihar embraced one of the largest concentration of monastic institutions of any contemporaneous region – it is not hard to understand the Pāla kings’ deliberation in proclaiming themselves lead devotees of the Buddha, i.e. of what Kulke might call an “autochthonous cult figure” *extraordinaire*. Similarly, we are not surprised to find that

⁶⁴³ The Deva coinage has fueled a number of hypotheses about the economic history of early medieval Bengal. M.R. Tarafdar has argued the existence in south-eastern Bengal of a developed money economy supported by a currency system and buttressed by intricate commercial links, including Indo-Arabian trade confined to the Mainmati region, and trade with China, Pegu, Burma and south-east Asia. See "Trade and Society in Early Medieval Bengal." *Indian Historical Review* IV, no. 2: 275-84. Tarafdar’s thesis is vigorously challenged by Vijay Kumar Thakur in "Trade and Towns in Early Medieval Bengal." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* XXX: 196-220.

⁶⁴⁴ Susan L. Buchanan, "A Study of Pāla Patronage: a Thesis for the Degree Master of Arts." Ohio State University, 1975, p. 19.

⁶⁴⁵ For an example of the Deva’s use of these terms, see the Bhavadeva inscription published in *JAS, L*, Volume XVII, 1951, pp. 83-94.

the Monghyr and Nālandā plates compare Devapāla's accession to the Pāla throne to the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment.⁶⁴⁶

The Pāla kings' additional epithets -- *Parameśvara* (paramount overlord), *Parambhaṭṭāraka* (grand master, designating the king of kings as pre-eminent in knowledge) and *Mahārājādhirāja* (the great king of kings)⁶⁴⁷ -- carry equally imperial connotations. Steeped in the hierarchical language of *samantaization* and rich in the imagery of Hindu kingship,⁶⁴⁸ all these epithets are found in the inscriptions of the Rāṣtrakūta rulers who routed the Pālas and the Pratihāras in the eighth century. Significantly, these titles were themselves appropriated by the Rāṣtrakūtas from the Calukya dynasty they defeated,⁶⁴⁹ suggesting that the appropriation of visual symbols and titles was a recognized means of communicating political victory and authority.

As such, it seems clear that the Pāla monarchs' display of the Buddhist *dharmacakra* and use of the *paramsaugata* title functioned as public signals of political

⁶⁴⁶ See *EI*, XVIII; *EI*, XVII.

⁶⁴⁷ Kielhorn, *EI*, 245.

⁶⁴⁸ In fact, many of the copper-plates apparently represent the Pāla kings as traditional Hindu *cum* kṣatriya rulers. King Rājyapāla, for example, is described as a great conquerer whose prowess is like that of Rāma (*rāmaparākrama*). Dharmapāla is praised for "scrupulously following *śāstric* injunctions and engaging the different castes in their respective duties by commands." He is described as bathing in "the waters of Kedāra and the confluence of the Ganges and the ocean" and going on pilgrimage to "Gokaṇṇa and the like." The importance of these three places as Hindu pilgrimage spots is well-attested in medieval literature (see D.C. Sircar, "The Śākta Pīthas." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal - Letters* XIV (1948): 84, 85, 88; Pratapaditya Pal, "The Fifty-One Śākta Pīthas." *Serie Orientale Roma* LVI, no. 3 (1988): 1039-60). Susan Buchanan also notes that the three spots can read as a reference to Dharmapāla's completion of a *dig-vijaya*, "conquest of the quarters," with Gokaṇṇa representing the western or southern quarter, Kedāra the north and the mouth of Ganges the east. Buchanan 1975, 23.

⁶⁴⁹ Inden 1994, 249-50

power and legitimacy. Was this proclaimed affiliation with Buddhism limited to the realm of public rhetoric, or did the Pāla kings materially patronize the monasteries in their realm? Significantly, the available epigraphic and literary evidence suggests that material patronage of Buddhism was confined to only a handful of Pāla rulers, and generally out-stripped by monarchical support of non-Buddhist people and institutions. In the period of the eighth and ninth centuries, there are two terracotta seal impressions that indicate that Dharmapāla (775-812) founded a Buddhist temple at the Nālandā *vihāra* and a monastery at Somapura, respectively.⁶⁵⁰ A copper-plate grant from Nālandā records Dharmapāla's gift of a village to a local Buddhist leader.⁶⁵¹ Additional clues from Tibetan historians lend weight to the suggestion of Dharmapāla as Buddhist patronage. In his biography of Atiśa, Mkhanpo credits Dharmapāla with founding the monastery of Vikramaśīla and with endowing it with grants to support 108 monks, pilgrims and students. Similar versions of this account are reiterated by Tāranātha and Sumpa, and Buston,⁶⁵² the latter of whom also attributes the founding of the Odantapurī *vihāra* to

⁶⁵⁰ The Nālandā inscription bears the *dharmacakra* emblem, and reads: *śrī nā dharmapāladeva gandha kuṭī-vāsika bhikṣūnām*, which presumably refers to the monks living in the *gandha kuṭī* (perfume chamber) founded by Dharmapāla at Nālandā. (Sastri 1986, 43.) The second inscription -- *śrī-somapure śrī dharmapāladeva mahā vihāriya ārya bhikṣu sanghasya* – presumably refers to the monks of the “monastery of Dharmapāladeva at Somapura” thus implying that Dharmapāladeva built or substantially supported the *vihāra*. See K.N. Dikshit, “Excavations at Paharpur, Bengal.” Memoirs of the Archeological Survey of India LV (1938): 90. It should be noted that Tāranāthā credits Devapāla with building the monastery of Somapura. The sealing, however, renders this account implausible.

⁶⁵¹ *EI*, XXIII, 290-292.

⁶⁵² Alaka Chattopadhyaya describes a colophon of Atiśa's *Ratna-karaṇḍodghata-nāma-madhyamaka-upadeśa* in which Vikramaśīla is said to have been founded instead by Devapāla “in connection with (his) solemn vow (*thugs-dam*).” Atisa and Tibet: Life and Works of Dipamkara Srijana in Relation to the History and Religion of Tibet, With

Dharmapāla.⁶⁵³ Finally, the Nālandā copper plate, issued by Devapāla in his 39th regnal year, dedicates five villages for the comforts of *bhikṣus*, the copying of texts, and the upkeep of a monastery built by King Bālaputradeva of Suvarṇadvīpa (probably Java) at Nālandā. This royal land grant is the only one directed to a Buddhist institution; indeed, it specifically excluded “the gifts to gods and the Brahmanas which were granted before.”⁶⁵⁴

With the ending of the first line of Pāla rulers in the latter half of the ninth century,⁶⁵⁵ evidence of material patronage by most Pāla kings is even more scanty and

Tibetan Sources Translated Under Professor Lama Chimpa. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981, 457. This colophon does not appear in the Derge edition of Atiśa’s work.

⁶⁵³ Both Tāranātha and Sumpa instead assert that it was magically constructed by a Tantric layperson and then entrusted to Devapāla. In light of the fact that the Odantapurī *vihāra* was the model for the construction of Tibetan *bsam-yas* monastery in the late eighth century (David Snellgrove and Hugh Richardson A Cultural History of Tibet. Boulder: Prajna Press, 1980, p. 78), the attribution of its construction to Devapāla (r. 812-850) is implausible.

⁶⁵⁴ It was, however, issued at the request of King Bālaputradeva, and so arguably as much a mirror of Devapāla’s foreign policy as domestic patronage preferences (though Devapāla was careful to direct some of the ensuing merit to himself and his parents). *EI*, XVII, 318 ff. On the merit issue, see esp. verse 33.

⁶⁵⁵ In the Bhagalpur plate, the genealogy of King Nārāyaṇapāla is traced through the seventh Pāla ruler, Vighrapāla (I), to Gopāla’s son, Vakpāla. This is in contrast to the first seven Pāla kings, who trace their family line back to the illustrious Dharmapāla, the brother of Vakpāla. Accordingly, it seems clear that the Pāla line split into two after the reign of Gopāla II in the latter half of the ninth century. (See *Pala Chronology* appendices.) Accordingly, we find that Nārāyaṇapāla’s copper-plates deploy Buddhist imagery in an interesting way: Nārāyaṇapāla combines the invocation to Gopāla with the traditional invocation to the Buddha, perhaps in an effort to elevate and emphasize his ancestry to the Pāla patriarch Gopāla. His copper-plate language stands in contrast to earlier invocations and genealogies, which emphasize the glorious exploits of Dharmapāla and Devapāla -- rulers from the “other side” of the family. Nārāyaṇapāla instead highlights the close connections Dharmapāla and Devapāla had with contemporaries from his own side of the Pāla family. For more on these dates and dynamics, see S. C. Mukherji, “The Royal Chronology of King Madanapāla and the

difficult to interpret. A fragment of a terracotta seal of Nālandā *vihāra* contains a reference to Nārāyanapāladeva (875-932) in the genitive, thus suggesting him as a donor of some sort.⁶⁵⁶ Tāranātha praises King Rāmapāla (1074-1127) for his support of 240 monks as permanent residents of Vajrāsana,⁶⁵⁷ and notes that the Edapura temple in which Abhayakaragupta sat in meditation was built by one of Rāmapāla's wives.⁶⁵⁸ Only King Mahīpāla (977-1025) appears to have been an active Buddhist supporter. Buston asserts that was a patron of Haribhadra, and Tāranātha identifies him as a patron of the Tantrika Ānandagarbha,⁶⁵⁹ Mkhampo adds that Mahīpāla appointed Afīsa to the position of head of Vikramalaśīla *vihāra*.⁶⁶⁰ Inscriptional evidence from the time of his reign

Chronology of the Pāla Kings of Bengal and Bihar." Journal of Bengal Art 4 (1999): 61-65; Buchanan, 53 ff.

⁶⁵⁶ The sealing is inscribed *śrī-nārāyanapāladevasya*, and so echoes the format of the previous sealings attributed to Devapāla. Sastri 1986, 58.

⁶⁵⁷ Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, translators. Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India. Edited by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990, 313.

⁶⁵⁸ *bKa' babs bdun ldan gyi brgyud 'pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba rin po che 'i khungs lta bu'i gtam*. In Five Historical Works of Tāranātha, ed. Tseten Dorje, Nyingmapa Monastery, Arunachal Pradesh, 1974.

⁶⁵⁹ It should also be noted, however, that Tāranātha mistakenly identifies Mahīpāla as the grandson of Dharmapāla; as such, it might be wise to take his comments about Mahīpāla with a grain of salt. Similar reservations may apply to Bu-ston's account, which states unequivocally that Gopāla built the Nālandā *vihāra*. Buston is obviously overstating his case – we know from the writings of the Chinese pilgrim Hsüan Tsang that Nālandā was flourishing in the second half of the seventh century. It is more plausible that Gopāla financed a new addition to Nālandā, or perhaps made a substantial donation.

⁶⁶⁰ It is difficult to know how best to interpret this intriguing claim. Did the Pāla kings control monastic "hiring"? An inscription found at Ghosrāwān dated to the reign of Devapāla suggests otherwise. It states that the Buddhist monk Vīradeva was "treated with reverence by the lord of the earth, the illustrious Devapāla" and notes that Vīradeva made substantial donations to the Nālandā *vihāra*, and was appointed its permanent head "by

speaks to the restoration of Nālandā monuments destroyed by fire⁶⁶¹ and to the construction of temples at Bodhgayā.⁶⁶² An inscription on the pedestal of a Buddha image, dated Samvat 1083 (1026 CE), points to Mahīpāla's multi-sectarian patronage,⁶⁶³ and "the excavations of Pāhārpur have also revealed the revival of Pāla power under Mahīpāla I and his religious activities. About the end of the 10th century A.D. or beginning of the eleventh century, the prosperity of the establishment was reflected in the wholesale renovation of the main temple and in the monastic cells...and at the shrine of Tārā at the Stayapir Bhiṭā numerous votive stūpas were constructed."⁶⁶⁴

In sum, examples of royal material Buddhist support are concentrated among a handful of particularly influential kings, and are far greater in the early period of Pāla rule than the later. We see substantive monastic institutional patronage by the eighth and ninth century Dharmapāla and Devapāla, followed by a period of relative non-involvement by Pāla kings. Monarchical support seems to enjoy a brief heyday under the tenth and

the decree of the assembly of its monks." (Sastri 1986, 91.) In the absence of further information, the nature of royal and monastic authorities in this area remains an open question.

⁶⁶¹ Nālandā stone inscription in JASAB (NS), IV, 106.

⁶⁶² Bodhgayā image inscription: *Memoirs of Asiatic Society of Bengal*, V, 75.

⁶⁶³ "The illustrious Mahīpāla caused to establish in Kaśi hundreds of precious monuments of his glory, such as Isanas (i.e. Lingas) paintings, and bells, after he had worshipped the foot of Gurava-Śrī Vāmarāśi, which is like a lotus in the lake of Varanasi surrounded, as it were, by śaivala-plant through the hair of bowing kings, --they, who have made their learning fruitful, and who don not turn their back (*on their way*) to *bodhi*, repaired the *dharmarājikā* (*and*) the dharmacakra with all its parts, and constructed this new *Gandhakūṭi* (made of) stones (coming frm) eight holy places." Susan L. Huntington, *The Pāla-Sena Schools of Sculpture*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984, 223.

⁶⁶⁴ Chowdury, 1967, 88. C. is citing K.N. Dikshit in the last sentence.

eleventh century reigns of Mahīpāla, though its breadth is substantially less than that seen in the earlier period.

Following Kulke and Chattopadhyaya, how might we make sense of this pattern, and what are its implications for understanding the nature of State-monastic relations in the Pāla period? Speaking broadly, we can hypothesize that these patronized projects functioned in part as royal legitimation strategies aimed at consolidating the Pāla dynasty. From this perspective, Dharmapāla and Devapāla's establishment, expansion and broad-based support of Nālandā can be read as an attempt to engender a range of functions key to the economic vitality of the Pāla domain. Nālandā served as a trade hub, repository of information and essential skills such as writing, and internationally-renowned magnets for pilgrims, scholars and even royalty. Likewise, by cultivating the support of influential Nālandā monastics in the capital city, the Pāla's concretized their own association with Magadha's two distinct identities: critical political and cultural hub imbued with a hallowed history of imperial prestige, and India's Buddhist homeland. Both associations were fundamental to the Pāla kingdom's cultural and commercial vitality.

By extension, the eighth-ninth century Pāla patronization of Vikramalaśīla and Somapura -- monastic communities well "removed to the east of the traditional homeland and independent of it in doctrine" -- served to create other centers of support for his rule, more directly under his control."⁶⁶⁵ These *vihāras* were, to paraphrase Kulke, crucial vehicles of integration "associated 'vertically' in an often closely meshed network of ritual and legendary relations with 'sub-regional' and local *sanghas* of their hinterland, as well as 'horizontally' with other *sanghas* of the region." As such, one effect of this Pāla

⁶⁶⁵ Buchanan 1975, 33.

patronization policy was to link local loyalties of the earlier nuclear areas and their peripheral zones with the *sanghas* of the major monasteries and then, at the level of 'horizontally interlinked systems', to integrate them into a new regional *sangha* as a basis of new regional loyalty.⁶⁶⁶

In short, it seems clear that royal patronage of Buddhist monasteries was specifically linked to Pāla monarchial efforts to expand, consolidate and legitimate the state. This supposition is lent weight by the fact that our documented examples of royal support are limited to the most imperialistically active of the Pāla rulers: Dharmapāla, Devapāla and the later Mahīpāla. It is under the respective rules of the former two monarchs that the Pāla domain became firmly entrenched in Magadha and in outlying areas. It is Dharmapāla who brought Kanauj (however briefly) under his control – a decisive symbolic marker of the Pāla's acquisition of supreme power in Northern India, leading him to proclaim himself suzerain over the rulers of Bhoja, Matsya, Madra, Kuru, Yadda, Yāvana, Avantī, Gandhāra and Kīra. It is under Dharmapāla that Assam entered the Pāla domain, thus ensuring his kingdom access to the trade routes from Burma and China and a supply of precious metals that came from the region, and under whom hegemony over Nepal was briefly established.⁶⁶⁷

⁶⁶⁶ See Kulke 1997, 260-61 for the basis of this paraphrase.

⁶⁶⁷ The *Svayambhū Purāna* places his suzerainty as far north as Nepal; Tāranātha claims Dharmapāla subdued Kāmarūpa (Assam). (See E. Lyall, "Tāranātha's Account of the Magadha Kings" *Indian Antiquary*, v. IV, (1875), 366.) Tibetan and Chinese sources suggest, however, that Tibet maintained some form of suzerainty in Nepal from the seventh to the ninth centuries; not for nothing did the Nepalese king Amśuvarman give his daughter to marriage to the Tibetan King Srong brtsan sgam po. (See S. Levi, *Le Nepal*, Vol. II, Paris, 1905, 171-77)

In turn, Devapāla maintained and expanded Pāla hegemony by checking the influence of the Gurjara-Pratihāras as well as the Pāṇḍyan king: the Monghyer copper plate claims Devapāla's rule to extend from the Himalayas in the north to Rameśvara in the south. Panegyrics notwithstanding, it is under their collective rule that we have evidence of fortified Pāla settlements along some of Bengal's most important economic hubs, including Bhagalpur and north Monghyer, from where ships deployed the nearby Ganga tributary to continue to Ceylon or across the Bay of Bengal; the port town of Tāmralipti (modern Tamlūk) in western Bengal, from which commodities were exported south to South India, east to Java, Ceylon and China, and west to the land of the Yāvanās; the "great highway followed by the Buddhist pilgrims of northern Asia on their pilgrimage to India", which passed through the Himalayas across Nepal, Sikkim and the Cumbi Valley to Tibet and China;⁶⁶⁸ and critical urban and pilgrimage centers including Gauḍa in north Bengal, and Gayā and Patna, in Magadha.

By contrast, we have no record of meaningful monastic support by Devapāla's six successors (ca. 850-970) under whose collective rule we see the progressive shrinkage of Pāla land, access to vital trade routes and, concomitantly, economic vitality.⁶⁶⁹ We do see Pāla fortunes briefly expand under Mahīpāla (977-1025), our third documented Buddhist

⁶⁶⁸ Majumdar, R. C. History of Ancient Bengal. G.K.Mukherjee, 1971, 346.

⁶⁶⁹ These six successors were Mahendrapāla, Śūrapāla, Gopāla II, Vighrahapāla (I), Nārāyaṇapāla, Rājyapāla, Gopāla III and Vighrahapāla (II). In the latter half of the ninth century, the Gurjaras moved north and annexed large portions of Bihar, including the all-important Buddhist region of Gayā. The close of the century saw their appropriation of virtually all of northern Bengal between the Ganga and the Brahmaputra rivers – the arteries of trade for the region -- while the Rāstrakutas gnawed at the Pāla's southern borders, thereby threatening Pāla control of trade at Tāmralipti, while Gauḍa was utterly lost to the Kāmbojas.

royal patron who, according to inscriptional evidence, not only consolidated power over Anga and Magadha,⁶⁷⁰ but significantly expanded its boundaries: the Belwā, Bānargarh and Āmgāchi plates unanimously assert that Mahīpāla recovered his “paternal kingdom (*rājyam pitryam*)” – i.e. northern Bengal – which had become *anadhikṛita-vilupta* (lost due to the occupation by usurpers!),⁶⁷¹ and the Imadur inscriptions suggest that Mahīpāla ruled over northern Bihar by at least his 48th regnal year.⁶⁷² Yet even his gains were diminished by subsequent invasions by a number of local dynasties, including the Cola, who undertook an expedition to Bengal between 1021-1025 CE “to deflect the trade of the Bay of Bengal with Shrivijaya and Southeast Asia to the Coromandel coast.”⁶⁷³ The

⁶⁷⁰ For example, a votive inscription on a statue of Nārāyaṇa was dedicated in Samatāṭa in the third regnal year of Mahīpāla’s reign, thus confirming his rule in East Bengal. Similarly, the colophons of two manuscripts of the *PP 8,000* are dated in his fifth and sixth regnal years in Magadha. A Bodhgayā Buddha is dated to regnal year 11 and a Kurikhār bronze dates from regnal year 31.

⁶⁷¹ See verse 11 of the Belwa plate in *EI*, V. XXIX, 6 ff; verse 11 of the Bānargarh plate in *EI*, v. XIV, 326; verse 11 of the Āmgāchi plate in *EI*, v. XV, 296. The term *rājyam pitryam* probably refers to northern Bengal, which is stated in the *Rāmacarita* of Sandhyākara Nandī to the *janakabhū* of the Pālas. It is likely that Mahīpāla “recovered” it from the Kāamboja who, as the Dinaijpur pillar inscription and the Sylhet plate of the Candra king Śrīcandra make clear, occupied northern Bengal by the middle of the tenth century. See *EI*, v. XXIX, 7 and *EI*, v. XIV, 326.

⁶⁷² See *IHQ*, v. XXX, 382-87. For a detailed discussion of the debate surrounding the dates of these inscriptions, see Abdul Momin Chowdhury, *Dynastic History of Bengal (c. 750-1200 A.D.)*. Asiatic Society of Pakistan Publications, 21. Dacca: Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1967, 85-87.

⁶⁷³ Wink 1991, Vol. 1, 268. Further light on the condition of Mahīpāla’s kingdom is cast by inscriptions from the Orissan Cola dynasty. The Tirumulai inscription (circa 1025 CE) records a foray into Bengal by Rājendra Cola in order to take holy water from the Ganges to sanctify his kingdom. Apparently, the pious Cola general also took the opportunity to give a show of force to the rulers of northern and eastern India, including “the strong Mahīpāla” who he frightened “on the field of hot battle with the (noise of the) conches from the deep sea.” (See KA Nilakanta Sastri’s *The Colas*, vol. I, 249, and *IHQ*, XIII, 151-152. The inscription is dated to the Cola general’s 13th regnal year, or 1025. The

reign of kings Nayapāla and Vighrapāla (1031-1072) witnessed the further erosion of the Pāla empire from the west and south. By the eleventh century, the dynasty has lost eastern, western and southern Bengal, and the all-important region of Magadha was theirs in name only.

In light of this analysis, the traditional view that Pāla monasteries were largely dependent upon-- and subordinate to -- an unbroken succession of powerful, benevolent, and devoutly Buddhist Pāla patrons appears grossly inadequate. We have little evidence of substantive royal patronage from the tenth century onwards; if Pāla monasteries were primarily beholden to the Pāla kings' interest, it is hard to explain their continued prosperity after Devapāla's demise. Clearly, the Pāla *mahāvihāra* had independent sources of on-going support, the most meaningful of which were probably land grants. We know from the observations of I-tsing that as early as the seventh century, the Nālandā monastery enjoyed the revenue of two hundred villages⁶⁷⁴ -- a number confirmed by the terracotta seals recovered from Nālandā by twentieth century archeologists⁶⁷⁵ -- and that the monasteries of "Uddantapurī, Vikramaśilā and Jagaddala may similarly have possessed hundreds of villages."⁶⁷⁶ We also know from the Pāla

Bengal invasion is generally held to have occurred between 1021 and 1025). This resounding victory notwithstanding, the Coḷa raid apparently failed to leave a lasting impression on Mahīpāla's reign, which continued to be acknowledged in the copper-plate and image inscriptions that post-dated Rājendra Coḷa's departure.

⁶⁷⁴ Takakusu (tr). 1896, 65.

⁶⁷⁵ See Chapter Two of Sastri 1986.

⁶⁷⁶ R.S. Sharma 1965, 111.

copper-plates that the Pāla Buddhist monasteries were endowed with of a striking degree of both fiscal and administrative authority. When Dharmapāla granted a village to a local Buddhist leader, for example, he made it free of taxes and the right of entry by royal agents, and granted the new owner the right to punish thieves.⁶⁷⁷ Devapāla set similar terms in his grant of five villages to the Nālandā monastery, and expressly asserted that the cultivators (*kṣetrakaras*) of the land rather than the inhabitants (*prativāsins*) should obey the grantee – in effect, positioning the monastery as a kind of ‘petty king.’ R.N. Sharma understandably concludes from his investigation of medieval land grant practices that the Buddhist monasteries under the Pālas apparently enjoyed

not only economic privileges at the cost of the king and cultivators but also administrative at the cost of the king. It is remarkable that the Pāla writs granted the religious beneficiaries the right to punish thieves, a right which was usually retained in the land charters of Central India in Gupta times. Furthermore, they were also authorised to punish the ten offenses (covered by the term *daśāparādhadānda* or *daśāpacāra*)... It is held that the *daśāpacāra* implied the right to the proceeds from ten offenses, which may have taken the form of fine and physical punishment. Thus the practice of granting the right of the administration of criminal law and justice began from the middle of the 8th century and became a common feature in the Pāla kingdom. Without doubt religious elements came to be vested with such fiscal and administrative powers as they never enjoyed before in Bengal and Bihar.⁶⁷⁸

Accordingly, when conceptualized through the idiom of the *sāmanta*-overlord relationship, we find that the identity and status of the monastery in Pāla society was

⁶⁷⁷ EI, XXIII, lines 17-24.

⁶⁷⁸ Sharma 1965, 78-79. The force of Sharma’s observation may be tempered by the fact that he sees evidence of Pāla Buddhist patronage where others do not. For example, he characterizes the Belwa copper-plate inscription of Mahīpāla as given “for Buddhist worship.” (78) D.C. Sircar by contrast asserts that while the land “is said to have been granted in the name of (*uddiśya*) the lord Buddha-bhaṭṭāraka for the increase of merit and fame of the king and his parents”, it was “made a rent-free holding in favour of the Brāhmaṇa Jivadharadevaśarman...” (EI, XXIX, 5.)

neither simple nor fixed. Standing in relationship to the Pāla state, the *mahāvihāra* may aptly be conceptualized as *sāmanta*: a semi-autonomous and “brilliant ornament on [the Mahārājas’] heads” which facilitated the Pāla’s ‘religio-political legitimation’ and maintained administrative responsibility for its own maṇḍala provinces, even as it received a range of resources from its Pāla overlord. After the ninth century, that flow of State patronage apparently dwindled; one might hypothesize substantively less intimate State-monastery dynamic.

Even as the *mahāvihāra* stood in *sāmanta* position to the Pāla king, it arguably resided at the center of its own administrative maṇḍala as tait overlord to its village grantees -- the landed intermediary that collected village revenues and governed criminal justice. The *vihāra*’s identity thus pivoted in context: alternately overlord to its village “states” and *sāmanta* to the Pāla king. Yet were those relationships absolute? The *mahāvihāras*’ unprecedented administrative and fiscal autonomy from the Pāla state tacitly problematizes the assumption that the monastery invariably took a *sāmanta* position to the Pāla monarch. Do we have any evidence of situations in which the monastic-State power relationship was reversed?

One obvious point of investigation are Tantric works on maṇḍala-based practices such as initiation (*abhiṣekha*) –arguably the most transparent Buddhist literary application of the *sāmanta*-overlord idiom. It is hard not to presume a connection between the samantaization of north India and the dramatic post seventh-century proliferation of such works– in short, to consider Tantra in part as “ a sacralization of the *samantaization* model.”⁶⁷⁹ This is not to suggest that the politico-religious nature of the

⁶⁷⁹ Presentation at Columbia University, February 2002.

maṇḍala model is either a Buddhist or early medieval phenomena. The origins of the Tantric *maṇḍala* are directly related to the late Vedic concept of

the king as cakravartin – as both he who turns (vartayati) the wheel (cakra) of his kingdom or empire from the center and he whose chariot wheel has rolled around the perimeter without obstruction ... Basic to these constructions of kingship is the notion that the king, standing at the center of his kingdom (from which he also rules over the periphery) mirrors the godhead at the center of his realm, his divine or celestial kingdom.⁶⁸⁰

The *Arthaśāstra*'s description of the basic concept governing the relations of one king with another is the *locus classicus* articulation of the doctrine of the “circles” (*maṇḍala*), wherein the

would-be conquerer, the ally and the friend of the ally are the the [basic constituent elements of their states [the ministers, the countryside, the fortified cities, the treasuries and the armies] together make up the eighteen elements of this circle. Likewise, the enemy, the Middle and the Neutral kings have each a circle of eighteen elements. Thus, there are four circles, with seventy-two constituents, made up of twelve kings...⁶⁸¹

Likewise, descriptions of Tantric initiation (*abhiṣekha*) practices in texts such as the *Guhyaśamāyatantra* bear witness to the fact that this Buddhist re-modeling of the Vedic royal consecration ritual significantly pre-dates the early medieval era;⁶⁸² this is hardly a post-Harṣa innovation.

⁶⁸⁰ David Gordon White, “Introduction” to *Tantra in Practice*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000, 25. Indian *cakravartin* ideology likewise equates *maṇḍala* practice with the king’s ritual conquest of the four quarters (*digvijaya*), whereby the king traverses the four compass points to delineate the perimeter of his entire realm before returning to his starting point – now transformed into royal capital and cosmic center.

⁶⁸¹ *Arthaśāstra*, vi.2.24-29, page 559.

⁶⁸² The literal meaning of the term *abhiṣekha* is “to sprinkle, to water”, and as early as the Vedic period appears to have been used as a technical term to denote the act of dedicating the king to the gods by sprinkling water on his head during a royal initiation.

What does appear to be unique to the early medieval context however -- in addition to the sheer proliferation of such works -- is a new understanding of, and emphasis on, the initiation of particular Buddhist Tantric deity clans (*kulas*). In earlier works such as the *Hevajra Tantra*, we find *kula* routinely equated with *abhidharmic* categories such as the elements or the *skandhas*: “*Kula* is so-called because of reckoning (*kulyate*) that is grouping the families of the five elements and the five *skandhas*.”⁶⁸³ By the late seventh-century, however, *kula* denotes a classification and hierarchization of Tantric deities for the purpose of initiation. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (*MMK*) contains one of the earliest such descriptions, wherein a host of deities are classified as members of *Tathāgata Kula*, the *Abja* (Lotus) *Kula*, or the *Vajra Kuliśa Kula* members, and subsequently initiated into the maṇḍala as three discrete groups endowed with specific privileges and capacities.

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We find similar examples in works such as the *Sarvadurgatipariśodana-tantra* and the *Sarvatathāgata-tattva-saṃgraha*, and are necessarily struck by the structural resonance between this new ritual practice and the contemporaneous political practice of a *sāmanta* king being initiated into the maṇḍala of a Mahārāja overlord:

The king who submitted to an overlord placed himself under that lord’s command, agreed to obey his orders. The signifying act of his submission was his prostration (*praṇāma*) before the man he took as overlord, the placing of his head at the feet of the great king. This act was not simply a sign of personal submission, if by ‘person’ we mean the ‘empirical individual’ of social science or the ‘possessive individual’ of modern European culture. It was an act which signified the willingness of one lord to place not only himself under the orders of an overlord, but those people, animals and things that constituted his domain as a

⁶⁸³ Hevajra Tantra, 1.5.10.

⁶⁸⁴ See second chapter of the *MMK*, translated into French by Ariane Macdonald.

lord. He would offer his elephants, horses, men, beautiful daughter, treasure, weapons and grain for the use of enjoyment of his overlord. The relationship of command and obedience signed by the act of prostration, also obtained between the lesser kings of the various grades themselves.⁶⁸⁵

By extension, the Tantric analogization of Vajrācārya with overlord suggests at least one context in which the Pāla monarch may have functioned, not as overlord but *sāmanta* in relationship to the monastery: Buddhist *abhiśeka*. Though I am unaware of any epigraphic evidence of a Pāla ruler receiving Tantric initiation, the historical and literary records render it an eminently likely possibility. Textual evidence makes clear that Buddhist Tantric initiation functioned as a pan-Asian strategy of political legitimization during the Pāla period. Tantric Buddhism was transmitted to both Tibet and Japan in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, intersecting in each case with the process of state formation. The Buddhist rite of *abhiśeka* was also, as Ryuichi Abé has ably demonstrated, incorporated into the Japanese imperial coronation ceremony,⁶⁸⁶ leaving us in little doubt that in the East Asian context, Tantric discourse

legitimized the emperor's authority by characterizing him as the ideal Buddhist ruler, the *cakravartin*, while the emperor affirmed the authenticity of the Eight Schools of exoteric and esoteric disciplines as the orthodoxy of the state... This state of affairs suggests that the symbiosis between emperor and clergy... was in fact constructed in the language of Esoteric Buddhism.⁶⁸⁷

Within the Indian context, there is likewise no shortage of Buddhist texts which feature a king as the primary initiate of Tantric *abhiśekha*. The first chapter of the

⁶⁸⁵ Ronald Inden, "Hierarchies of Kings in Medieval India." Contributions to Indian Sociology: New Series Vol 15, no. 1 and 2 (January 1981-December 1981), 114.

⁶⁸⁶ See Ryuichi Abe, The Weaving of Mantra: Kukai and the Construction of Esoteric Buddhist Discourse. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, 359 ff.

⁶⁸⁷ Ryuichi Abe, 1999, 384-85.

Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa – interestingly enough, one of only three *kalpas* narrated by Mañjuśrī
 – extols the multiple benefits of initiation to a *mahārāja*:

The, the entire assembly made up of buddhas, bodhisattvas, *pratyekabuddhas* and noble *śrāvakas* were inspired to so declare:... “Aho Mañjuśrī Kumārabhuta! well-said is this *mantracaryā* which is in agreement with the teaching of the wonderful dharma. Whatever Great King declares this chapter on the assembly, preserves it, memorizes it, will, having first mounted an elephant, prevail in battle. If he offers worship by anointing [it] with various flowers, incense and perfumes, we will subject (his) enemies, adversaries, we will cause the destruction of the armies of (his) enemies.”⁶⁸⁸

The royal consecrand of the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhanatantra* is promised not only this standard menu of enemy destruction, protection of his kingdom, timely rain and good crops, but a promotion of the most exalted kind: “When one draws the maṇḍala and performs the empowerment, one who is not a king becomes a king. One who is already a king becomes a great king, the glorious ruler of Jambuling, the supreme lord of the four continents.”⁶⁸⁹ In the domain of Pāla-period monastic literature, we find the king foregrounded in the ninth century *acarya* Ānandagarbha’s *Sarvavajodaya*. There, when the Vajrācarya teaches the preparation of the maṇḍala,

he prescribes a scale of sizes beginning with that appropriate in the case of a monarch. In his case the sides should measure one hundred or fifty cubits, in the

⁶⁸⁸ *atha sā sarvā paraśat sabuddhabodhisattvapratyekabuddhāryaśrāvakādhiṣṭā evam... aho kumārabhuta mañjuśrīḥ vicitradharmadeśanānuvartinī mantracaryāmukūla subhāsitā/ yo hi mahārājaḥ imam sannipātaparivarta vācayiṣyati dhariṣyati, manasi kariṣyati sadgramevāgrataḥ hastimāropya sthāpayiṣyati vividhairvā puṣpadhūp gandhavilepanaiḥ pūjayiṣyati pratyarthikānāṃ pratyamitrāṇāṃ vaśamānayaṣyāmaḥ parabalasenābhaṅgam kariṣyāmaḥ/ Śāstri 1992, 24; c.f. Wallis 1999, 140.*

⁶⁸⁹ *Darvadurgatipariśodhanatejorājasya tathāgatasārḥataḥ samyaksambuddhasya kaipaikadeśanāma. PK #116, 47b: dkyil 'khor nyid du dbang bskur na'rgyal po ma yin rgyal por 'gyur rgyal po yin na che bar 'gyur 'dzam bu 'i gling dbang dpal dang ldan'gling zhi pa dbang ba 'i mchog... For discussion of this passage in Sanskrit, see Sanderson, 2001, 17.*

case of a feudatory or major feudatory fifty or twenty-five, in the case of a Śreṣṭhin or Sārthavāha twenty-five or half of that, and in the case of an ordinary Sādḥaka twelve or six. Ānandagarbha also requires the Guru to offer a Śāntihoma on behalf of the monarch before he proceeds to trace the Maṇḍala on the chosen site. The same Homa is required by Dīpankarabhada in his versified *Guhyasamājamaṇḍalavidhi*.⁶⁹⁰

In his *Prajñāpāramitānaya-śatapañcāśatkaṭikā*, Jñānamitra likewise alludes an elaborate maṇḍala meditation to be performed by the king and his royal retinue:

Having received the instructions of Vajrasattva, the king and his retinue were commanded to meditate in the manner of the Vajradhātu maṇḍala, with the king himself in the center, his four holy queens positioned as his consorts, his four ministers positioned as the four clans (*kula*), his four daughters positioned as the inner goddesses, his four concubines positioned as the outer goddesses, and the lesser officers positioned as the four gate keepers and the virtuous bodhisattvas. As a result the king thought that he along with his retinue had achieved the state of the *vidyādhara*.⁶⁹¹

Again we are struck, not only by the centrality of the overlord-*sāmanta* idiom to Pāla Buddhist monastic literature and practice, but by the way in which the monastic identity pivots and circulates in that equation: the monk is alternately *sāmanta* to the Pāla monarch, *Vajrācārya*-master to the Pāla king, overlord to the village. One thinks of Foucault's vision of *pouvoir: savoir*, whereby power is conceived, not as a centralized entity moving in top-to-bottom direction, but as a constantly-shifting, multi-directional network of relations which "produce domains of objects and rituals of truth." From this analytical stance, not only would Pāla monastic literary and artistic productions reflect the shifting power relationships between monastery and State, monastic and royal

⁶⁹⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Sanderson for forwarding me his unpublished manuscript from which this citation derives: "Tantrism and the State: Initiating the Monarch." March 23, 2001, 17-18.

⁶⁹¹ DT #2647, 273b. I am grateful to Dr. David Gray for bringing this passage to my attention.

discourses would be seen as intersecting with one another and so generating the emergence of new objects of knowledge, new “local discourses” such as that of *prajñā*. Was this, in fact, the case? In light of these interlocking insights into monastic identity and discourse, Pāla economics and statehood how might we interpret the renewed interest in, and proliferation of *prajñā* discourse in Pāla India?

Prajñā, Pāla State Promotion and Prosperity:

Let us begin our inquiry with a look at early Pāla-period Buddhist artwork. In contrast to the widely-held connotation of Pāla art as solely Tantric – a welter of multi-armed goddesses, copulating couples and *pañca-tathāgatas*– the eighth and ninth century sculptural record is pervaded by a single recurrent image: the historical Śākyamuni in the classic *bhūmisparśa* or *Māravijaya* posture, conquering Māra under the *bodhi* tree at Bodhgayā. This presentation, which represented a notable departure from Gupta-period Śākyamuni images which typically portrayed the Buddha in the *dharmacakrapravartanamudrā* may, Jacob Kinnard argues, be read as a specifically Pāla period expression of *prajñā*-centricity:

the story that the viewer self-narrates is contingent on the context in which that viewer is situated, and by the Pāla period...this context was saturated by *prajñā*. [I]mplicit in the narrative (of the *Māravijaya*) is the conception of *prajñā* as cutting through illusion and delusion, as the scalpel that cuts the *āsavas*, the sword that hacks through Māra’s treachery. Thus it is his *prajñā* that enables the Buddha to defeat the Māra, just as it is his *prajñā* that enables the Buddha to see through the transitory nature of the world...What a medieval Indian Buddhist would have seen in such an image would have been very much context bound...one might have seen here a present Śākyamuni, an absent Tathāgata, an object intended to represent his enlightenment, a representation of his enlightenment, a signification of the possibility of enlightenment, and so on. All of these possibilities, however, are resonant with *prajñā*...⁶⁹²

⁶⁹² Kinnard 1999, 137, 141, 144.

The artistic exaltation of the *Māravijaya* is paralleled by another trend in early Pāla art: an intriguing shift in the size and arrangement of *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya* images, or works portraying eight scenes of the Buddha's life.⁶⁹³ Beginning in the eighth century, four life scenes "not so popularly represented in earlier Buddhist art" became routinely reiterated in Pāla *Aṣṭamahāprātihāryas*: the Buddha's conversion of heretics at Śrāvastī; his descent from the Trāyastriṃśa heaven to the town of Śankāśya; his taming of a wild elephant in Rājgir; and a monkey's offering of honey to the Buddha in Vaiśālī.⁶⁹⁴ What are the common elements of these scenes? Janice Leoshko notes that each of the events portrayed emphasize "the importance of the Buddha's power and his teaching in the spread of the Buddhist dharma, which is brought about either by conversion or by conquering..."⁶⁹⁵ Put differently, one might say that the typical Pāla artist emphasized and expressed the Buddha's attainment of enlightenment as an act of conquering --the successful wielding, if you will, of the sword of *prajñā*.

Moreover, unlike the scenes more commonly portrayed in pre-Pāla *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya* images, each of these landmarks of the Buddha's life story occurred within the confines of the new Pāla empire, and was a developing pilgrimage site. As such, the polyvalent *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya* could be understood as both an expression of the conquering power of *prajñā* and a map of a pilgrimage circle to be completed within

⁶⁹³ *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya* images always included the core events of his birth, enlightenment, first teaching and *parinirvana* highlighted in the *Mahāparinibbana-sutta*. Throughout the Gupta period, the remaining four scenes were unfixed.

⁶⁹⁴ Janice Leoshko, "Scenes of the Buddha's Life in Pāla-Period Art." *Silk Road Art and Archeology* 3 (1993), 258.

⁶⁹⁵ Leoshko 1993, 260.

the confines of the Pāla empire, thus rendering this grouping “very much a part of newly evolving religious ideas in the Pāla period.”⁶⁹⁶

This emphasis on the locative dimension of *prajñā* is no less central to the *bhūmisparśa*; the locative significance of Bodhgayā as the site of the *māravijaya* was central to its identification with *prajñā* in the Pāla milieu: “Bodh Gayā, the site of (the Buddha’s confrontation with Māra) has a special association with *prajñā*; as Faxian puts it, Bodhgayā is the place where all Tathāgatas achieve perfect wisdom.”⁶⁹⁷ And Bodhgayā, as the Buddhist pilgrimage spot *par excellence* within the Pāla realm was, as we have seen, of profound economic and symbolic significance.⁶⁹⁸ In this sense, this Pāla portrayal of *prajñā* arguably functioned as a synecdoche of the overall identification of the Pāla zone as India’s Buddhist homeland, thereby evoking an association critical to both monastic and regional vitality.

As such *prajñā*, the discursive darling of Pāla monastic Buddhism, seems not only to have been imbued with metaphysical import and the non-local imperial connotations of the *dharmacakra*, but to have been conflated with the overall identity of the Pāla domain as historically-significant Buddhist heartland, an economically-critical web of pilgrimage sites, the conquering prowess of the early Pāla rulers, and with the newly-expanded

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 252. John Huntington offers a similar interpretation when he notes that each highlights the superior power of dharma – to conquer Māra, to instruct the gods, even to halt a raging elephant.

⁶⁹⁷ Kinnard 1999, 141

⁶⁹⁸ The importance of Bodhgayā as a early medieval pilgrimage spot is evident from the account of the seventh century Chinese pilgrim Hsuan-tsang, which alludes to the crowds of people from “every quarter” who came to scatter flowers, light incense and sound music. (Yijing and Beal, 1896, 117.) The many post-seventh century images recovered from Bodhgayā also testify to its continued popularity in the Pāla period.

boundaries of their Magadha-centered domain. This web of associations logically engendered the legitimation and vitality of the Pāla state and of the monasteries within its environs, and lends credence to our presumption that early Pāla artistic *prajñā* discourse was produced at the overlapping interstices of monastic and royal concerns.

This deep interfusion of *prajñā* with place is, of course, familiar to us from *Prajñā-pāramitā* discourse, wherein the *stūpa* is seen as a site of *prajñā* in part because of its location at a geographical landmark of the Buddha's life. In fact, this emphasis on *prajñā*'s locative *cum* hagiographical dimensions is one of multiple overlapping connotations of *prajñā* evident in *PP* commentaries composed by Pāla monastics. For the eighth-century Śrīsimha, for example, Vulture Peak in Rājagrha fairly vibrates with metaphysical, historical and hagiographic import: "The external place is the mountain [resembling] a pile of jewels, or like a round *stūpa* in the eastern region of Magadha, the abode of King Bimbisāra, where the Buddhas abide, this special place among all mountains."⁶⁹⁹ Jñānamitra echoes these qualities when he attributes Rājagrha's fame to the "the good qualities of King Bimbisara" (*rgyal po gzugs can snying po 'i yon tan las grags te*)⁷⁰⁰ -- Śākyamuni's renowned devotee, and the first king to make Magadha the

⁶⁹⁹ Śrīśiddhi, *Mantravivṛtaprajñāhrdayavṛtti*, Derge #4353, 207a: *rgyal po 'i khab bya rgod phung po 'i ri la zhes pa ni'gnas kyi bye brak stag sten de yang phyi 'i gnas ni rgyal po gzugs can snying po 'i gnas yul ma ga dhā 'i phar phyog na rin po che sbangs pa lta bu 'o mchod rten zlum po lta bu 'i ril sangs rgyas rnams kyi bzhugs gnas ri kun gyi khyad par gnas pa 'o.*

⁷⁰⁰ Jñānamitra, *Ārya-Prajñāpāramitāhrdayavyākhyā*. Derge # 3819, 282a.

center of political activity in India.⁷⁰¹ Playing on the Buddhist heartland theme, Vimalamitra describes Rājagrha “as a certain city in Magadha” containing Heap of Vultures Mountain which is “the permanent residence of the buddhas”; indeed, “because the Bhagavan stayed on Vulture Mountain, it became a *stūpa* and so is indestructible by fire and so on... It is the place where the Tathāgata... abides in any of the four behaviors.”⁷⁰² For these eighth and ninth century Pāla commentators, location is indeed everything.

By contrast, we find that tenth and eleventh century *PP* monastics markedly play down Magadha and Rājagrha as historically and geographically-specific loci of *prajñā*, emphasizing instead their trans-local symbolic dimensions. The tenth-eleventh century Vajrapāṇi, for example, observes that “Heap of Vultures Mountain is the noble [place] that is totally pure phenomena and is heaped with the brilliance of birds – the beings who

⁷⁰¹ “Bimbisara,” rhapsodizes Romila Thapar, “realized the potentialities of a large state controlling the river and decided that it would be Magadha. Bimbisara became king sometime in the second half of the sixth century B.C.... Having thus secured his western and northern frontiers, he went on to conquer Anga to the south-east, which controlled the trade and the routes to the sea ports in the Ganges delta, which in turn had commercial contacts with the coast of Burma and the east coast of India and was thus economically a valuable support to the kingdom of Magadha. Bimbisara was the earliest of Indian kings to stress the need for efficient administration...” A History of India: Volume One. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1990, 55.

⁷⁰² Vimalamitra, Ārya-Prajñāpāramitāhrdayātikā. Derge #3818, 268a-b: *rgyal po 'i khab ces 'byung ba ni yul ma ga dhā 'i grong khyer gyi bye brak go 'de 'i phyogs gcig na bya rgod phung po zhes bya ba 'I ri rtog to sangs rgyas kyi bzhugs nas yod de de na gzhugs so'... mchod rten nyid du gyur pa dang me la sogs pa 'i 'jig pa rnam kyi kyang gzhig tu med pa nyid tu shes par bya ste'... de bzhin gshegs pa' spyod lam bzhi yang run bas bzhugs pa 'i phyogs*. C.f. Lopez, 1996, 49 for a different take on this passage.

reside in emptiness.”⁷⁰³ His contemporary Śrīmahājana also presents a metaphorized, non-local Rajrgrha:

As for that, the word “*rāja*” has the meaning of benefit” and annihilate...”*grha*” has the meaning of dharmakāya. “Vulture” indicates discontentment... “Heap” has the meaning of inexhaustible. Therefore, one should know that (vulture and heap) respectively connote possessing the quality of the collection of limitless good qualities and to be without diminishment... “mountain” connotes the dharmakāya who is lord of the earth...⁷⁰⁴

Real wisdom is now equated, not so much with “the seat of enlightenment, or the vicinity of the seat of enlightenment or its interior, or...the foot of the Bodhi tree” but with totally pure phenomena, the dharma itself. In so asserting, these later Pāla monastics tacitly reiterate the *PP* critique of *stūpa* worship: in much the way that the text displaces the *dharmasārīra* and the *stūpa* in *PP* discourse, here the dharma – the trans-local ‘contained’ – is tacitly privileged over the locatively-specific ‘container:’ i.e. “a certain city in Magadha” containing Heap of Vultures Mountain and the Buddha’s relics.

Interestingly, we find this *prajñā-pāramitesque* elevation of the physical text over relic and place dramatically paralleled in the tenth and eleventh century material and artistic record. Archeological research suggests that from the late ninth century onwards, Buddhist monastic sites in the Pāla zone underwent a veritable eruption of text-exaltation.

⁷⁰³ Vajrapāṇi, *Bhagavaprajñāpāramitāhrdayatikāthapradīpa-nāma*. Derge # 3820, 287a:

bya rgod phung po 'i ri ni nam par byang pa 'i chos nams kyi khyad bar du 'phags shing stong pa nyid la gnas pa 'i skyes bu 'i bya nams zil gyis gñoh pas sbangs pa yin no. c.f Lopez 1996, 203.

⁷⁰⁴ Śrīmahājana, *Prajñāpāramitāhrdayāthaparījñāna*, Derge # 3822, 305b-306a: *de la yang phan 'dogs pa dang'tsar gcod pa 'i don ni rgyal po 'i sgra ste...de 'i khab ni chos kyi sku zhes bya ba 'i don to'bya rgod ces bya ba ni/chog mi shes pa nye bar mtshon ste/phung po zhes bya ba ni zat pa 'i don to'des na mtha med ba 'i yon tan gyi tshogs dang 'grib pa med pa 'i chos can zhes go rims bzhin du rig par bya 'o'...ri 'i sgra nye bar mtshon pas na sa 'i dbang phyug chos kyi sku 'o.*

We find for example, sites at Nālandā, and Paharpur⁷⁰⁵ literally inundated with so-called “*dhāraṇī* stones” -- terracotta seals inscribed with a short verse or mantra, most commonly the *Pratītyasamutpādagāthā*.⁷⁰⁶ With true *prajñā-pāramita* logic, these stones had been tucked into the relic chambers of votive *stūpas*, thus serving as did the text in *PP* discourse: as a substitute for a relic, a textual Buddha-body (*dharmaśarīra*) of sorts. As was a *Prajñāpāramitā* text, its worship was also said to engender far greater merit for the devotee than worship of a mere *stūpa*; indeed,

Whichever person, (be he) a monk or a nun or a male lay-worshipper or female lay-worshipper or any son of a noble family or daughter of a noble family having faith, constructs a *chaitya* after having written this *dhāraṇī* and thrown it inside – by the construction of that single *chaitya*, a lac of *Tathāgata-chaityas* will have been constructed by him...⁷⁰⁷

And like a *Prajñāpāramitā* text, the *dhāraṇī* or verse was characterized as the very essence of the Buddha’s teaching, “the source of his Buddhahood”.⁷⁰⁸ as the Buddha explains in the *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānahṛdaya-guhyadhātukarnaṇḍamudra-nāma-dhāraṇī sūtra*, “if someone made a copy of [this text] and put into a *stūpa*, that *stūpa*

⁷⁰⁵ Dhāraṇī tablets have also been found in the Pāla sites of Sārnāth and Bodhgaya. A. Ghosh, “A Buddhist Tract in a Stone Inscription in the Cuttack Museum.” Department of Archaeology: Epigraphia Indica XXVI (1941-42) (1952), 172. See also See Boucher, 1992, 6.

⁷⁰⁶ This verse composed in the *āryā* meter occurs canonically in the Pāli *suttas*, particularly in the conversions of Sāriputta and Moggallāna: *ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesāṃ hetum tathāgato/āha tesāṃ ca yo nirodha evaṃvādi mahāsamaṇo ‘ti*: Those *dhammas* which arise from a cause, the Tathāgata has declared their cause and that which is their cessation. Thus, the great renunciant has taught.

⁷⁰⁷ A. Ghosh, “A Buddhist Tract in a Stone Inscription in the Cuttack Museum.” Department of Archaeology: Epigraphia Indica XXVI (1941-42) (1952), 172.

⁷⁰⁸ Daniel Boucher, “The *Pratītyasamutpadagāthā* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics.” Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies 14, no. 1 (1992), 2.

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Dhāraṇī stones are only one manifestation of this distinctly *prajñā-pāramitesque* text-centricity. From at least the late ninth century, we also see a rise in the creation of images which portray a book set up as an object of veneration. On the base of a tenth century stone Tārā from Bodhgayā, a handful of figures kneel around a pedestal on which is placed a book almost the size of their own bodies; a tenth century stone *bhūmiśarīrāmudrā* Buddha sits above a book which rests upon a pedestal (Fig. 3) flanked by a venerating male figure; a book draped in cloth and surrounded by kneeling

⁷⁰⁷ A. Ghosh, "A Buddhist Tract in a Stone Inscription in the Cuttack Museum." Department of Archaeology: Epigraphia Indica XXVI (1941-42) (1952), 172.

⁷⁰⁸ Daniel Boucher, "The *Pratīyasamutpadagāthā* and Its Role in the Medieval Cult of the Relics." Journal of the International Association for Buddhist Studies 14, no. 1 (1992), 2.

⁷⁰⁹ *De de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi rdo rje 'i snying po 'i ring bsrel gyi mchod rten du 'gyur ro... de bzhin gshegs pa til gyi gang bu snyed dgu bcu rīsa dgu 'I mchod rten du 'gyur ro.* See Gregory Schopen's "The Text on the 'Dhāraṇī Stones From Abhayagiriya': a Minor Contribution to the Study of Mahāyāna Literature in Ceylon." JIAS 5, no. 1 (1982): 104-105; PK #508, 113.4ff.

practice and, at the same time, visual reflections on the nature of such practice.”⁷¹² We are not surprised to find *PP sūtras* tucked under the arms of the goddess Prajñā-pāramitā, the goddess Cunda, the Buddha and of course, Mañjuśrī, about whom I will have more to say.

Late Pāla *PP* commentators betray a similar celebratory attitude to the physical book. Thus while the eighth-century Vimalamitra argues that “the reading and writing [of scripture] has less merit [than meditation on the body of the Buddha],” the tenth-century Jñānamitra proclaims that “the perfection of *prajñā*, reading about it, reciting it, keeping it properly in mind, and explaining it to others destroys all diseases, such as diseases of the eye, and brings protection because one is protected by the buddhas of the ten directions, by gods, by nagas and so forth.”⁷¹³ And by the eleventh century, we are finding the first examples of actual *PP* manuscript remains, suggesting a contemporaneous resurgence of “book worship.”⁷¹⁴

⁷¹² Kinnard 1999, 237.

⁷¹³ Lopez notes that this passage from Jñānamitra’s *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayavyākhyā* (Derge # 3819) “this would suggest that the ‘cult of the book that appears to have been so important in the early stages of what is called Mahāyāna remained strong in the Pāla dynasty.” 1996, 14.

⁷¹⁴

	Gopāla II	Mahipāla I	Nayapāla	Vigrahapāla III	Rāmapāla	Gopāla III	Madanapāla	G
<i>Aṣṭa PM</i>	1	3			5	2		
<i>Other PM</i>								
<i>Pañcharaksa</i>		1	1	1	2		1	
<i>Other</i>	1		1		2			
Total:	2	4	2	1	9	2	1	

How might we make sense of these historically evolving images of *prajñā*? Better yet, how might a Pāla monastic have understood these images in context? In keeping with the apparent intimacy of monastery and State in eighth and ninth century Pāla India, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that monastic *prajñā* discourse was tacitly shaped by the values and rhetoric of monasticism's royal patrons. Accordingly, we are tempted to analogize the eighth-ninth century monastic artists' tendency to emphasize the Buddha's conquering abilities to contemporaneous representations of Pāla kings. After all, eighth and ninth century copper plates testify to the conflation in Pāla royal rhetoric of the Pāla ruler with the Buddha, and underscore the identification of the militarily victorious king with a "rāṣṭradevatā of the kingdom." By that same token, the accent on the Buddha's powers of conversion through *prajñā* bears a marked resemblance to the *maṇḍala* phase process of samantaization, whereby the Pāla kings strove to integrate competing principalities into the Pāla State and to make the "overlordship-subordinate relation... dominant over other levels of relations." Likewise, the apparent monastic emphasis on *prajñā*'s locative dimensions arguably evoked the newly-expanded boundaries of the Pāla's Magadha-centered domain and the overall identity of the Pāla domain as historically-significant Buddhist heartland, thus communicating a cluster of ideological connotations central to the legitimation and vitality of the Pāla state.

Is there, in fact, any evidence to support these readings? After all, we have no indication of royal patronage for any *prajñā*-centric artworks. Why should we presume that monastic portrayals of *prajñā* may have been shaped by Pāla royal rhetoric?

In fact, the literary record does hint that *prajñā*-centricity was deliberately promoted by eighth-ninth century Pāla monarchs. A royal propensity toward *Prajñāpāramitā* arguably is hinted at by Tāranātha's account of the first Pāla king's ascent to the throne, whereby Gopāla "received *abhiṣeka* from an *ācārya* with instructions to propitiate the goddess Cundā," and having "attained the *siddhi* of goddess Cundā...became king the next day."⁷¹⁵ Cundā, like *Prajñāpāramitā*, is called the mother of Buddhas, and symbolizes the *prajñā* necessary for enlightenment. Iconographically, she resembles *Prajñāpāramitā* insofar as she "(shares) her gesture, the book and the rosary"⁷¹⁶ and in some instances, even holds a sword.⁷¹⁷ Gopāla's Cundā affiliation may thus speak to a *prajñā*-monarchy connection.

Less speculative is a colophon appended to a commentary to the *PP 8,000* by the late eighth-century monk Haribhadra, which asserts that it was composed under the patronage

⁷¹⁵ Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, translators. Tāranātha's History of Buddhism in India. Edited by Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990, 257-58.

⁷¹⁶ Edward Conze, "Iconography of the *Prajñāpāramitā*." In Thirty Years of Buddhist Studies: Selected Essays by Edward Conze, 243-68. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer, 1967, 254.

⁷¹⁷ See *Sādhnamālā*, 271; *Niṣpannayogāvāli*, 48-57. The eighteen-armed Cundā image presently installed in the Mahant's compound in Bodh Gaya is a good example of a sword-carrying Cundā, as is a metal image from Nālandā, a stone sculpture located at Kurkihār, and a stone image from Niyamatpur (in contemporary Bangladesh), all of which may date to the ninth-century. For further discussion of Cundā and her iconography, see Johanna van Lohuizen-de Leeuw, "The Pattikera Chunda and Variations of Her Image." Nalini Kanta Bhattasali Commemoration Volume, editor A. B. N. Habibullah, 119-43. Dacca: Dacca Museum, 1966; Janice Leoshko, "The Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures of the Pāla and Sena Period From Bodhgaya." Ph.D. Ohio State University, 1987, 303-305.

of King Dharmapāla.⁷¹⁸ This alleged link between the Pāla king and this particular *paṇḍit* is striking; Haribhadra is perhaps the most influential Pāla-period commentator on *Prajñā-pāramitā* and is, as I will later touch on, remarkable among Pāla scholars for his innovative and controversial interpretations of *tri-kaya* theory in the *Abhisamayālamkāra (AA)*.⁷¹⁹ Haribhadra and Dharmapāla's apparent intimacy is further confirmed by Tāranātha, who states that Dharmapāla took Haribhadra and Haribhadra's disciple Buddhajñānapāda as his preceptors, and "filled all directions with the *Prajñā-pāramitā* and the Śrī Guhya-samāja. The *paṇḍita*-s versed in the Guhya-samāja and the *Prajñā-pāramitā* were offered the highest seats of honour." In fact,

Immediately after ascending the throne, the king invited the teachers of the *Prajñā-pāramitā*... The king built in all about fifty centres for the Doctrine, of which thirty-five were centres for the study of *Prajñā-pāramitā*... According to some, (Dharmapāla) was reborn as the king for the purpose of propagating the *Prajñā-pāramitā*. Since the time of this king, the *Prajñā-pāramitā* was extensively propagated.⁷²⁰

Though it is difficult to assess the accuracy of Tāranātha's sources, his comments are in keeping with the Buddhist textual record, which shows a proliferation of *PP* monastic

⁷¹⁸ This attribution is echoed by Tāranātha. See Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, 1990, 276.

⁷¹⁹ Haribhadra is the first writer to have related the *AA*, not to its root *PP 25,000* text, but to the *PP 8,000* – a text of incomparable import to Pāla period Buddhists. Likewise he is the first to have attributed the composition of the *AA*, not to a human author but to the bodhisattva Maitreya, the future Buddha. He makes this claim in his *Sphuṭārthā* and the *Abhisamayālamkāraḥ prajñāpāramitāvyākhyā* (also referred to simply as the *Āloka*). Many contemporary scholars consider the *Abhisamayālamkāra* to have been composed by a human author between the fourth and early sixth century C.E.

⁷²⁰ Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, 1990, 274. Curiously, Buxton claims that King Mahīpāla patronized Haribhadra, and "promulgated the *Prajñā-pāramitā*." In light of the fact that Mahīpāla post-dates Haribhadra by almost two centuries, his account is probably erroneous.

commentaries in the eighth-ninth centuries, and comparatively fewer in the tenth and eleventh centuries. By so doing, this pattern reiterates what we suspect about Pāla royal patronage of monastic Buddhism, i.e. that it was apparently substantial during the reigns of Dharmapāla and Devapāla, and dwindled in subsequent centuries. Barbara Miller and Richard Eaton remind us that “the ideological basis of a patron’s authority was rarely obscure;”⁷²¹ we cannot help but consider the monastic exaltation of *prajñā* to have functioned as a tacit element of Pāla State ideology.

From this perspective, how might we understand *prajñā*’s post-ninth century manifestations, particularly the infamous “explosion of the book”? There is, of course, no simple or single explanation for this phenomena; this period in northern India was not, for example, marked by the introduction of new writing materials or production processes.⁷²² We might speculate that the increasing threat of Muslim armies fueled the efforts of Buddhist monastics to preserve their tradition in writing, or that the increased

⁷²¹ Barbara Stoler Miller (ed.). The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992, 4.

⁷²² It is true that the process of papermaking was learnt by the Arabs after the conquest of Samarkand in 751 and spread throughout the Middle East. However, it appears not to have been introduced into India until the Turkish conquest in the 13th century. We know that the Assam valley of the Brahmaputra yielded *sāñcī*, a writing material made from the inner bark of an aloe tree which was used in Assam from at least the seventh century. However, in spite of the fact that Pāla India was commercially engaged with Assam from the tenth century, we have no evidence that *sāñcī* was used by Indian writers. Virtually all known Pāla manuscript fragments are made from palm leaf, usually the talipot (*Corypha umbraculifera*) or palmyra (*Borassus flabellifer*). See Jeremiah P. Losty, The Art of the Book in India. London: British Library, 1982, 5-15. See also: J.P. Losty, "An Early Indian Manuscript of the Karandavyuhasutra." Studies in Art and Archaeology of Bihar and Bengal, editors Debala Mitra and Gouriswar Bhattacharya, 35-39. Delhi: Sri Satguru publications, 1989; S.K. Saraswati, "East Indian Manuscript Painting." in Chhavi: Golden Jubilee Volume, editor Anand Krishna. Banaras: Bharat-Kala Bhavan, 1971.

demand for Buddhist texts by Tibetans from the tenth century or other non-Indian patrons contributed to this text-centricity.

A range of additional possibilities emerge if we consider this phenomena as a *prajñā-pāramitesque* response to the times. We remember that the early tenth century saw the Pāla empire's loss to the Gurjaras of large portions of Bihar, including the all-important Buddhist region of Gayā. If, as I have suggested, the early Pāla monastic emphasis on *prajñā*'s locative dimensions tacitly emphasized key locales in the body of the Pāla domain, particularly Bodhgayā, the subsequent de-emphasis on place in monastic writings may reflect the shrinkage of the Pāla empire and loss of Gayā by their royal patrons. After all, in the realm of *PP* rhetoric, the "book" rightfully subsumes the "place." Perhaps a loss of "place" tacitly fueled the resurgence of book veneration.

Following a similar reasoning, we might also understand Pāla biblio-mania as a fund-raising strategy. Drawing on an analysis of the archeological and literary records, I have suggested that royal patronage of Pāla *mahāvihāras* was relatively sporadic by the tenth century. Perhaps Pāla monastics, in search of additional sources of support, deployed the *PP* strategy of "setting up the book" to create multiple sites for worship and donation.

Summary: I have highlighted a triad of three interlocking and fundamental Pāla economic and social trends: decline of Buddhist trade guilds, erosion of urban centers and commerce, and *samantaization*. Locating these processes against the backdrop of early medieval State legitimation strategies, I postulated that they helped engender an apparent confluence of monastic with royal interests in the presentation of *prajñā* in the eighth and ninth century Pāla domain -- a time period in which State patronage of Buddhist

monasticism was substantive and consistent. I further noted that by the beginning of the tenth century Pāla patronage of Buddhist monasticism had all but disappeared – as had the military power of the state – and hypothesized concomitant changes in monastic-State relations and, by extension, in Mañjuśrī's monastic portrayals. Does the Mañjuśrī-centric art and literature of the Pāla period confirm this picture?

**Chapter 5:
Portrayals of the Pāla Prince of *Prajñā***

Where is Waldo? Mañjuśrī in Eighth-Ninth Century Pāla Art

In light of the burgeoning numbers of *vihāras* and monastics within the Pāla domain, Mañjuśrī's post-seventh century rise to stardom at first glance demands little explanation. The Crown Prince is, after all, both archetypal *bhikṣu* and patron saint of Buddhist scholastics; one can hardly imagine another place or population in early medieval India in which he would resonate more loudly. Mañjuśrī's rhetorical identity as archetypal Buddhist standing in opposition to non-Buddhists likewise renders him an ideal icon for monastics competing against Brahmans for state patronage.

The *why* of Mañjuśrī, however, is less intriguing than the *how*. We have identified a triad of three interlocking and fundamental Pāla economic and social trends: decline of Buddhist trade guilds, erosion of urban centers and commerce, and *samantaization*. These processes, we have postulated, helped engender an apparent confluence of monastic with royal interests in the presentation of *prajñā* in the eighth and ninth century Pāla domain. As such, we would expect contemporaneous monastic artistic and literary representations of Mañjuśrī, *prajñā*'s very own royalty, to reiterate these dynamics. Is this, in fact, the case? Where is Mañjuśrī at this time, and how is he portrayed by artists working in and for Pāla monasteries?

If we follow his footsteps through the art historical record of the first two centuries of the Pāla dynasty, we find the monastic patron saint of learning residing primarily in the monasteries of the Magadha region of Bihar, particularly Nālandā and nearby Kurkihār, and only rarely in the monasteries of Bengal. In light of the strong

identification of *prajñā* with Magadha tacitly communicated by other contemporaneous art works, this localization is not surprising. It is further interesting to note that unlike the Bengal *vihāras*, the sites yielding the majority of Mañjuśrī artifacts lay in close proximity to the Tāmralipti trade route. Mañjuśrī's long-term association with *sangha* donations may have made him an especially compelling symbol for *vihāras* anxious to preserve a dwindling merchant patronage base. Likewise, this Mañjuśrī-centricity may reflect the contemporaneous upsurge of Mañjuśrī worship in China; it is intriguing to find that Sanskrit texts which emphasized Mañjuśrī as master of the begging bowl were vigorously translated into Chinese from the middle of the eighth century.⁷²³

We also find that by the eighth century, Mañjuśrī appears for the first time as the solo subject of monastic renderings composed in these Pāla controlled territories. Thus, in contrast to a typical seventh-century figure of Mañjuśrī from Nālandā standing to the left of Śākyamuni, a late eighth century sandstone Mañjuśrī resides alone in the main shrine of Nālandā's Site 8 in the form of Siddhaikavīra (Figure 1).⁷²⁴ This overt shift from periphery to center has led one art historian to conclude that Mañjuśrī Siddhaikavīra became "the object of a separate cult" in the early Pāla monastic *milieu*.⁷²⁵ Certainly the

⁷²³ For example, the *Mahāyana-yoga-prakṛtisāgara-mañjuśrī-sahasrabāhu-sahasrapātra-mahātantrarāja-sūtra*, translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra in 740. For discussion of its East Asian textual history, see Gauri Devi, "Iconography of the Thousand-Armed Mañjuśrī" in *Cultural Horizons of India, Volume 6*, editor Lokesh Chandra, 58-63. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Cultures and Aditya Prakashan, 1997.

⁷²⁴ Standing at a slight bent, his right hand in *varadamudrā* and his left holding the *utpala*. See Asher, 1980, 82, Plate 164.

⁷²⁵ C. Bautze-Picron, "Some Aspects of Mañjuśrī Iconography in Bihar from the 7th Century Onwards." *Tribus* 38 (1989), 80.

Siddhaikavīra images leave little doubt of his popularity. In the late eighth and early ninth centuries, Nālandā in particular harbored dozens of these richly bejeweled Mañjuśrī manifestations, each of which routinely sported a diadem, two different types of ear ornaments, a single bracelet, armlets and pearled anklets, and the *kumāra* tiger-claw necklace with reliquary and disk (*vyāghranakha*) (Fig. 4).

How might this image have been read? One is tempted to understand Siddhaikavīra *kumāra* as an echo of the doctrinal emphasis of contemporaneous *Aṣṭamahāprātihārya* portrayals of the Buddha as conquerer *cum* teacher: a warrior of *prajñā* in both of its Pāla connotations. By tacitly reiterating Magadha's overlapping identities, Siddhaikavīra *kumāra*'s dual associations – princely warrior and *prajñā* embodiment – may concomitantly have recalled dual layers of self-identification by Pāla royalty: first and foremost, the victorious sword-wielding rulers of Magadha, and secondarily “supreme followers of the Sugata (*parama-saugata*),” the embodiment and representatives of a “tutelary deity (*rāṣṭradevatā*) of the kingdom.”

Another plausible reading is suggested by the association with Skanda implicit in the Siddhaikavīra *kumāra* portrayal. In his discussion of hierarchies of kings in early medieval India, Ronald Inden reminds us that “one name of the general of the gods, Skanda, was Kumāra; the sons of a king, also called *kumāra*, were often appointed as generals by their father.”⁷²⁶ We are thus tempted to see in Mañjuśrī Siddhaikavīra, not only a subtle reiteration of the Pāla ruler, but an image of a princely *sāmanta*: one of a host of loyal princes that provide military assistance in return for political power and royal favor. Finally, insofar as the *kumāra* figure simultaneously conjures up the Hindu

⁷²⁶ Inden 1981, 109.

Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, it is equally tempting to wonder if Mañjuśrī Siddhaikavīra might have been read as an icon of the Hindu-Buddhist syncretism characteristic of the early Pāla kings' poly-sectarian patronage habits;⁷²⁷ the eighth century is, after all, the first time that Mañjuśrī's wearing of the Brahmanic sacred thread is generalized.⁷²⁸

It should also be noted that Mañjuśrī's eighth- and early ninth century Siddhaikavīra incarnation resonates equally loudly with the Mañjuśrī described in the early eighth-century chapters of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (*MMK*). There, Mañjuśrī also sports the finery of the *kumāra*, wears a double garment, shows the *varada-mudrā* and holds the blue lotus. Like the Siddhaikavīra of several Nālandā and Kurkihār stelae, the *MMK*'s Mañjuśrī is accompanied by Yamāntaka, and is clearly associated with Skanda-Kārttikeya. In the *MMK* however, Kārttikeya-Mañjuśrī is not identical to the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī but subordinate to him-- a message made clear by Mañjuśrī's claims to authorship of a Śaivite mantra (*vividhā guṇavistāra śaivatantre mayodita*), a Vaiṣṇavite mantra (*ya eva vaiṣṇave tantre kathithā kalpavistarā' upāyavaineyasattvānām mañjughoṣeṇa bhāṣita*) and a "Garuḍa mantra" (*yavanta garuḍe tantre kathitā kalpavistara'te mayaivoditā sarva sattvānām hitakāraṇāt*). To an early Pāla monastic viewing the royal Mañjuśrī Siddhaikavīra through the lens of the *MMK*, it is thus equally possible that Siddhakavīra spoke not only of Pāla princes or to State-promoted religious syncretism, but of monastic Buddhism's alleged superiority to the Brahmanic tradition.

⁷²⁷ "Ils font partie de l' «aspect d'enfant» au même titre que – dans l'iconographie hindoue – ils sont réservés par les Çivaïtes à Skanda Kārttikeya, qui est kumāra, voire à sa repliques Kaumāri, et par les Vichnouites à Kṛṣṇa et à Balarāma figurés sout l'aspect d'enfants." Mallmann 1964, 35.

⁷²⁸ Bautze-Picron 1989, 76.

From the perspective of State-monastic relations, Mañjuśrī Siddhaikavīra is a figure of some ambivalence.

Late Ninth-Eleventh Century: This warrior *cum* scholar duality remains alive in Buddhist artistic discourse throughout the early Pāla; the *kumāra* Mañjuśrī Siddhaikavīra dots the monasteries of Bihar until the tenth century. From the end of the ninth century, however, we begin to see a marked amplification of Mañjuśrī's monastic 'scholar' dimension. We find, for example, an increase in images of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī giving instruction in the dharma, and of Mañjuśrī displaying the *dharmacakra-mudrā* (Fig. 5), thereby emphasizing his iconographic resonance with Śākyamuni as well as his role as *dharma* teacher.⁷²⁹ We find Mañjuśrī Kumārabhūta carrying an *akṣamāla* -- used by monastic students to keep count of verses during the memorization of texts:⁷³⁰ Mañjuśrī Sthiracakra's right knee clasped to his waist by a scarf, thus evoking the *yogin* dimension of Mañjuśrī's monastic scholar persona;⁷³¹ and perhaps most commonly, an increase in the number of images of Mañjuśrī holding a manuscript, presumably a *Prajñā-pāramitā* text. Thus in two ninth-tenth century bronze images from Kurkihār, for

⁷²⁹ His identification with the Buddha is likewise heightened by the appearance of a lion as his *vahana* in Bodhgayā – the site of Śākyamuni's lion throne -- and in Kurkihār. See 10th century stone Mañjuśrī, Nālandā, figure 14 in Kinnard; four eleventh century stone Mañjuvaras in Rajshahi VRS Museum; four eleventh century stone Mañjuvaras from Nālandā, which also feature companion deities. For general discussion, see Claudine Bautze-Picron, "Mañjuśrī au geste de l'enseignement." Premier Colloque Etienne Lamotte: Bruxelles Et Liege 24-27 Septembre 1989, Institut Orientaliste, 1993, 149-60.

⁷³⁰ See, for example, the late eleventh century Kumārabhūta holding a book and *akṣamāla* in Catalogue of Buddhist Sculptures in the Patna Museum. Patna: 1957, 50, figure 91.

⁷³¹ N.N. Bhattacharya in Sisir Kumar Mitra, East Indian Bronzes. Calcutta: Centre of Advanced Study in Ancient Indian History and Culture, Calcutta University, 1979, 86.

example, Mañjuśrī rests on a lotus seat, grasping an oversized book in his left hand, and a piece of fruit in his right, which displays the *varada-mudrā* (Fig. 3). The joint presence of book and offering is intriguing, perhaps invoking for the Pāla monastic Mañjuśrī's dual roles as Prince of *Prajñā* and icon of *sangha* economic stability, or a relationship between book worship and *sangha* offerings. A similar cluster of images is seen in each of four tenth-eleventh century Kurkihar bronze Kumārabhūtas sitting on a lotus throne, holding a book against his chest with his left hand and a fruit offering in his right,⁷³² as well as in a tenth century bronze Arapacana Mañjuśrī and Sthiracakra Mañjuśrī, both in the National Museum of New Delhi.⁷³³ Notable book-wielding Mañjuśrīs also include an eleventh century stone Mañjuvara from Bihar who sits languidly in *mahārājajālāsana*, his right hand draped on his raised knee while his left holds the stalk of a lily (*utpala*) on which lies a manuscript (Fig. 6); a tenth century stone Mañjuvara from Nālandā sitting in *lalitāsana* on a lion, his hands in *dharmacakramudrā* with two stalks of lilies between his arms, each of which supports a manuscript,⁷³⁴ and a tenth century metal Siddhaikavīra from Nālandā, who sits in *padmāsana* holding a flower and stalk lotus with manuscript in his right and left hands, respectively. Book-centricity is even more prominent in an eleventh century stone Mañjuvara from Rajshahi, who not only holds a manuscript, but is accompanied on his right by Sudhanakumāra, with a manuscript tucked under his left

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ See Ibid., 85.

⁷³⁴ See, for example, C.C. Mullick, Nālandā Sculptures: Their Bearing on Indonesian Sculptures. Delhi: Pratibha Prakashan, 1991, 50-52.

armpit. A pot-bellied Yamāntaka holding a staff in his left hand stands to Mañjuvara's right.⁷³⁵

Interestingly, this is also the period in which we see an upsurge in images of Mañjuśrī holding both book and sword -- perhaps the oldest symbol of *prajñā* in Buddhist literature.⁷³⁶ A late ninth century Nālandā Mañjuśrī epitomizes this archetypal later Pāla portrayal: adorned with princely head gear and jewelry, the *kumāra* sits on a lotus cushion holding his *PP* manuscript to his chest, with his sword poised behind his ear, ready to sweep out and sever ignorance at its root. Comparable examples are seen in two bronze tenth century Arapacana Mañjuśrīs from Nālandā (one of which sports a pair of peacocks on its pedestal, reminding us of Skanda) and an eleventh century Arapacana from Jalkundi. A three-faced, six-armed tenth century stone Mañjukumāra from Nālanda sits in *satvaparyanka* on a lotus seat, supported by lions, holding sword, arrow and *varada mudrā* in his right hands, and a manuscript, lily and bow in his lefts Akṣobhya perches on his matted crest, while Vairocana resides on top of the stela (Fig. 7).

⁷³⁵ S.K. Saraswati, *Tantrayāna Art: An Album*. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1977, XXIV. See also numbers 35, 36, 38 and 39 in Saraswati for additional examples.

⁷³⁶ Adalbert Gail hypothesizes that Indian iconographic examples of Mañjuśrī holding a sword should be understood as “the *interpretatio indica* of the Chinese discussion staff” and that “the conception and representation of Mañjuśrī carrying a sword, however, became so prominent that he returned to China with it and displaced the discussion staff.” The abbreviated nature of Dr. Gail’s discussion – and apparent knowledge of Indian Mañjuśrī iconography -- makes it difficult to assess the argument’s plausibility. See “Mañjuśrī and His Sword.” *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art: Proceedings of a Conference Held at Leiden University, 21-24 October 1991*. RR Van Kooij and H Van der Veer, eds. Groninger: Egbert Forstein, 1995, 137.

Likewise, book-and-sword wielding Arapacanas adorn the pages of two Pāla manuscripts dated from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, respectively.⁷³⁷

How might we make sense of these trends in Mañjuśrī's late Pāla manifestations? Previously, we noted a confluence of monastic with royal interests in monastic presentations of *prajñā* during the eighth and ninth centuries -- a time period in which State patronage of Buddhist monasticism was substantive and consistent. Positing that monastic portrayals of Mañjuśrī could be read in part as mirrors of the monastery-State relationship, we speculated that the contemporaneous pervasiveness of Mañjuśrī in his princely *Siddhaikavīra kumāra* form was susceptible to at least two readings. 1) This image of *prajñā*'s Crown Prince tacitly reiterated the layers of self-identification by the Pāla king: first and foremost, princely ruler of Magadha, and secondarily, Buddhist devotee *par excellence*. 2) Mañjuśrī *Siddhaikavīra kumāra* connoted a princely *sāmanta* -- a link in the *cakras* of protection encircling the Pāla overlord.

By the beginning of the tenth century however, Pāla patronage of Buddhist monasticism had all but disappeared – as had the military power of the state. We may logically assume concomitant changes in monastic-State relations and, by extension, expect to see meaningful changes in Mañjuśrī's portrayals. It is tempting to hypothesize, for example, that the amplification of Mañjuśrī's monastic persona speaks to a marked distancing between the monastery and its ex-patron; we are no longer seeing a tacit conflation of monastic prince with the victorious Pāla ruler. This iconographic shift

⁷³⁷ See Foucher, Cat. II.33, dated 1071 A.D., and plate and reference in Sarasawati 1977, XXI.

likewise effaces suggestions of the monastery as humble *sāmanta* to powerful Pāla overlord. Presumably, tenth-eleventh century Pāla monasteries are primarily dependent, not on royal largesse but on outside donations and revenue from its land grants – in short, on its ability to function as worthy donee and successful overlord. We are thus not surprised to find an upsurge of images of Mañjuśrī holding donations and offering bowls, nor of the Crown Prince grasping both book and sword – i.e. images of both secular and spiritual authority. The upsurge in book imagery may likewise reflect monastic attempts to deploy the *PP* strategy of “setting up the book” to create multiple sites for worship and donation.

Where is Waldo? Mañjuśrī in Exoteric Literature

Eighth-Ninth Century: Where is Mañjuśrī in the realm of early Pāla Buddhist writings? Do his literary manifestations echo, contest or expand the associations suggested by our reading of his artistic renderings? In the middle of the eighth century, we find Mañjuśrī fulfilling a range of familiar rhetorical functions in exoteric Buddhist literature. His discursive connection with *Prajñāpāramitā* thought is alive and well; Pāla commentators on *PP* continue to dedicate their works to the Crown Prince,⁷³⁸ though we do not see him playing the role of explicator in the commentaries themselves. Similarly, Mañjuśrī’s function as icon of Mahāyāna identity is still in force; Jñānamitra, for example, explicitly distinguishes Mañjuśrī as the subject of ‘*evam maya śrutam*,’ the personal witness of all the Buddha’s Mahāyāna teachings:

⁷³⁸ See, for example, Praśāstrasena’s *Āryaprajñāpāramitāhrdayaṭīka*, DT #3921; Śrī Mahājāna’s *Prajñāpāramitāhrdayārtha parijñāna*, DT # 3822.

Thus did I hear: the noble Mañjuśrī heard all the Mahāyāna sūtras. Because he compiled [the sūtra], it says *did I hear*. *Thus* connotes the very expression of the enumeration of what occurs in the Heart of Wisdom. *Did I hear* means it was heard [by Mañjuśrī] at the feet of the Bhagavan – that speech from the throat of the Glorious One was directly heard by the ear sense organ...⁷³⁹

Jñānamitra's claim is more than a poetic image. In his *Tarkajvālā*, the Madhyamika scholar Bhavaviveka launches a sharp attack against the authority of śrāvakas, explicitly rejecting the very idea that Ānanda could be the compiler of the *PP sūtras*, for the profound teaching of voidness is far beyond the ken of a lowly śrāvaka.⁷⁴⁰ Centuries later, Bhavaviveka's claim is still an active object of discussion for Pāla scholars.

Haribhadra "opts for a more accommodating position whereby the Mahāyāna sūtras, like the Hīnayāna sūtras, were all compiled by Ānanda, although as a śrāvaka he could only compile them through the benevolent empowerment of the Buddha. Hence, for Haribhadra, the "I" of "Thus did I hear at one time" consistently refers to the same person in both the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna sutras."⁷⁴¹ Jñānamitra however, unequivocally asserts the paradigmatic Mahāyāna Mañjuśrī as the true compiler of the *PP sūtras*. His overt affirmation of Bhavaviveka's pro-Mahāyāna stance thus leaves us in little doubt of

⁷³⁹ Jñānamitra, 'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa 'i snying po 'i nam par bsad pa (*Ārya-Prajñāpāramitāhṛdayavyākhyā*). DT #3819, fol. 281b: 'di skad bdag gis thos pa zhes bya ba ni theg pa chen po 'i mdo sde thams cad 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyis gsan te bsdus pas na bdag gis thos pa zhes bya 'o: de la 'di skad ces bya ba ni shes rab kyi snying po 'i nam grangs ji snyed brjod pa nyid do: bdag gis thos pa zhes bya ba ni bcom ldan 'das kyi zhabs kyi drung nas mnyan te/ dpal gyi mgur nas gsungs pa mngon sum du rna ba 'i dbang pos thos pa 'o...

⁷⁴⁰ The *Tarkajvāla* is found in the Peking canon, #5256, Vol. 96; these remarks are on fols. 69a ff. See also Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *The Heart Sutra Explained: Indian and Tibetan Commentaries*. SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988, 34.

⁷⁴¹ Lopez 1983, 35.

this Pāla monastic's understanding of *PP* as a shorthand denotation for Mahāyāna, and of Mañjuśrī as the epitomization of the Mahāyāna v. non-Mahāyāna way.

The continuation into the Pāla period of Mañjuśrī's traditional role as *kalyāṇi mitra* of Mahāyāna scholars is suggested by later historical sources, though I do not know of any Pāla-period works which explicitly confirms this trend. Tāranātha recounts the story of Prajñākaramati, the southern gate-keeper of Vikramaśīla, who “had the direct vision of Mañjuśrī. At the time of having debates with the *śīrthika*-s, the moment he worshipped Mañjuśrī and prayed to his picture, the appropriate answers to all the arguments... used to occur to him.”⁷⁴² The eighth-century *ācārya* Buddhaguhya “propitiated *ārya* Mañjuśrī” and won a smile from the deity, wherein “his body became free from all diseases, light and strong. Also his intellect became sharp and he was endowed with *abhijñāna*... He could even speak with *ārya* Mañjuśrī personally as it were”, and was invited by the Tibetan king Khri-sron-lde-btsan to teach in Tibet.⁷⁴³ Gambhīrapāda's son “had the special privilege of listening to all the doctrines from Mañjughoṣa himself”, and “learnt without studying the scripts, all the fine arts, prosody, *śabda-vidyā*, etc. He became the lord of the great scholars by learning many branches of knowledge only with a single reading and by studying only once or twice even the subjects that were most difficult.”⁷⁴⁴

⁷⁴² Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya 1990, 281-82, 295.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, 281-82. Apparently, he did not accept the king's offer, for Mañjuśrī refused him permission to travel. The Crown Prince was apparently a difficult task-master.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Significantly, we also find a number of texts which underscore Mañjuśrī's royal dimensions. These works refer not merely to Mañjuśrī as Crown Prince (*kumāra*), but to Mañjuśrī as king or overlord – an unsurprising trend in light of the tacit intersection of monastic and Pāla royal ideology we inferred from our earlier analysis. The eighth century *Mahāyana-yoga-prakṛtisāgara-mañjuśrī-sahasrabāhu-sahasrapātra-mahātantrarāja-sūtra* is punctuated by multiple such references: the *kumāra* is “foremost of the great maṇḍala, governor of the great maṇḍala (*mahāmaṇḍalāgre mahāmaṇḍalaśāsakah*)”; “giver of the state (*rājyadadaḥ*) and “*cakravartī*” who “towers over kings like a mountain (*rājānaka-dharādharah*).⁷⁴⁵ Likewise, we find repeated allusions to Mañjuśrī's previous incarnation as King Ambara as described in the *Mañjuśrī-buddhakṣetra-guṇavyūhā-sūtra*. The early eighth century monastic luminary Śāntideva holds up as a model bodhisattva vow the stirring promise uttered by the prince of *prajñā*:

Just as in the *Mañjuśrī-buddhakṣetra-guṇavyūhā-sūtra* in the chapter of his previous life, the Bhagavan Mañjuśrī engendered the aspiration to enlightenment. Thus he said: “As the cycle of *samsara* is without end, as are previous lives, so long shall I work for the benefit of beings. Here, in the presence of the World Protector, I engender the aspiration to supreme enlightenment. Having invoked all the world, I shall liberate it from poverty and need...”⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁵ Stanzas 18, 24, 30 and 15. Sanskrit found in Gauri Devi, "Iconography of the Thousand-Armed Mañjuśrī" in *Cultural Horizons of India, Volume 6*, editor Lokesh Chandra, 58-63. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Cultures and Aditya Prakashan, 1997. It should be noted that the dating and geographical origins of this work are presently open to question; thus my consideration of this text here is provisional.

⁷⁴⁶ Śāntideva, *bslab-pa kun-las btus-pa (Śikṣāsamuccaya)*. DT # 3940, dbu-ma, Khi 10b: *ji ltar 'jam dpa'i gyi sangs rgyas kyi zhing gi yon tan bkod pa'i mdo las' bcol ldan 'das 'phags pa 'jam dpa'i gyis sngon gyi tse'i rtogs pa brjod pa las' spyod pa dang ldan par byang chub tu sems bskyed pa de bzhin du sems bskyed par bya'o'des 'di ska ces' khor ba thog ma med pa yis' sngon gyi tha ma ji srid pa' de srid sems can phan don du' spyod pa dpag yas spyad par bgyi' 'jig rten mgon po'i spyān snga 'dir' byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed de' gro ba thams cad mgron gnyer nas' de dag dbul zhing phongs las dgrol.*

The eighth century Vimalamitra also emphasizes Mañjuśrī's dual status as king and model bodhisattva, citing him as a model for a practitioner unable to find a qualified person under whom to make a formal bodhisattva vow:

According to the practice demonstrated in the *Chapter on the Bodhisattva Training*, the bodhisattva vow should be taken from an expert who possesses and has mastered it. If one cannot find such a person, one should make manifest (i.e. visualize) the buddhas and bodhisattvas, and engender the aspiration to enlightenment, as did Ārya Mañjuśrī as King Ambara...⁷⁴⁷

Vow-taker exemplar, Mañjuśrī is thus tacitly associated with conversion –a kind of spiritual conquering by *prajñā*. As such, this portrayal arguably lends some weight to our hypothesis that eighth-ninth century monastic portrayals of Mañjuśrī overlapped with Pāla monarchial rhetoric.

Mañjuśrī in Tenth-Eleventh Century Exoteric Literature

These examples notwithstanding, eighth-ninth Pāla exoteric writings give us little opportunity to deepen our analysis and hypotheses about early Pāla Mañjuśrī portrayals. As luck would have it, tenth and eleventh century exoteric works have little more to offer. Substantive literary portrayals of Mañjuśrī are scattered and little different from their early Pāla analogues. The Crown Prince remains an honored but peripheral character in *Prajñāpāramitā* commentaries, and stalwart rhetorical representative of the Mahāyana way. Significantly, we still find Mañjuśrī fulfilling

⁷⁴⁷ Vimalamitra, *Rim gyis 'jug pa'i sgom don*. Leh: Ladhakhratnashridipika, 2000, 10: *byung chubsems dpa'i sdom pa la gnas pa mkhas pa pha rol po las mnod par bya 'o-mthun pa med na sangs rgyas dang byung chub sems dpa rnam mngon du byas la 'phags pa 'jam dpal rgyal po nam mkha zhes bya bar gyur pa na.*

his early-Pāla job of converting people to the bodhisattva path; four hundred years after Śāntideva, the great Pāla scholar Atiśa is maintaining this tradition:

I will explain another ritual for correctly taking the (bodhisattva) vow. This was how, in a former life as Ambarāja, Mañjuśrī engendered the *bodhicitta* heart. It is explained in the *Mañjuśrī-buddhakṣetra-guṇavyūhā-sūtra*. Here now, I set it down clearly: “In the presence of the Protectors, I engender the perfect *bodhicitta* mind, and extending invitations to all living beings, I will save them from *samsara*... Completely purifying the actions of my body and speech, I shall likewise cleanse the activities of my mind. Never will I [perform] an unvirtuous deed...”⁷⁴⁸

These are, however, slim pickings on which to deepen an analysis. Is the diversity of Mañjuśrī’s Pāla incarnations limited to non-literary artifacts?

In fact, Mañjuśrī’s literary presence in the late Pāla period is far more substantial in the zone of esoteric (Tantric) literature. The early Pāla identification of the prince of *prajñā* as Buddhist monarch is, for example, far more pronounced in maṇḍala and *sādhana* literature – a *genre* which, as we discussed earlier, overtly metaphorizes and ritualizes the overlord-*sāmanta* relationship. Of particular interest are the forty-one visualizations organized around a form of Mañjuśrī in the eleventh-century *Sāghanamālā*,⁷⁴⁹ the majority of which emphasize Mañjuśrī’s princely ornaments and accoutrements.⁷⁵⁰ We find literary confirmation of a number of other trends we have

⁷⁴⁸ Atiśa, *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma (Bodhipathapradīpa)* DT #3947, dbu-ma, 239a-b. *de las gzhan sdom nod pa yi cho ga yang dag bshad par bya de la sngon tshe 'jam pa 'i dpal/am ba ra' dzar gyur pa yis/ji ltar byang chub thugs bskyed pa 'jam dpal gyi sangs rgyas zhing/rgyan gi mdo las bshad pa ltar/de bzhin 'dir ni rab gsal bri/mgon po rnams kyi spyang snga ru/rdzogs pa 'i byang chub sems du gnyer/de dag 'khor ba las bsgral lo/... bdag gi lus dang ngag gi las/thams cad du ni dag par byas/yid kyi las kyang dag bya ste/mi dge ba 'i las rnams mi bya'o.*

⁷⁴⁹ Bhattacharya, Benyotosh, editor. *Sāghanamālā: Vol. I* Gaekwad’s Oriental Series No. 26, 1925.

⁷⁵⁰ See, for example, *sādhana* numbers 44–47; 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 67, 70–73.

observed in the artistic record: four *sādhana*s, for example, are dedicated to the Siddhaikavīra form of Mañjuśrī so prevalent in early Pāla monastic art.⁷⁵¹ In one he bears an image of the Buddha Akṣobhya on his crown, this suggesting a family connection with the Lord of the Vajra *kula*:

Bhagavan Siddhaikavīra sits on a moon disc, supported by the moon and illuminates the world. White in color, with one face and two arms, he wears divine adornments and sits in *vajraparyanka* (posture). His head is decorated (with images of) the *pañcavīra*... He holds a blue lotus in his left hand, and shows the *varada* (*mudra*) with his right. Devīs pay worship to Akṣobhya on the Bhagavan's crown...⁷⁵²

Mañjughoṣa in his six-armed Vajrānaga form also bears Akṣobhya in his crown, as does the three-faced and four-armed Mañjuśrī Nāmasaṃgīti – a figure we will return to subsequently. The lion-borne golden Mañjuvara carries a *PP* manuscript atop a lotus, as does the red three-faced and six-armed Mañjukumāra, who also carries a bow, arrow and a sword.⁷⁵³ Pāla book-centricity is further hinted at by eight *sādhana*s describing a book- and-sword wielding Mañjuśrī Arapacana, whose *Prajñā-pāramitā* affiliation is further suggested by his arisal from the letter A.⁷⁵⁴ Seven *sādhana*s stress his Kārttikeya dimensions and so evoke the Mañjuśrī-Skanda conflation.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵¹ See *sādhana* numbers 57, 67, 71, 72

⁷⁵² *Siddhaikavīro Bhagavān candramandalasthaḥ candropāśrayaḥ jagadudyotakāri dvibhuja ekamukhaḥ śuklaḥ vajraparyankkī divyāṅkārabhūṣitaḥ pañcavīrakaśekharaḥ... vame nīlotpaladharāḥ dakṣiṇe varadaḥ... tato Bhagavato mulau Akṣobhyam devatyāḥ pūjāṃ kurvanti.* B. Bhattacharya, editor. "Sādhanamāla." *Gaekwad's Oriental Series* 26 (1925), 140.

⁷⁵³ Bhattacharya 1925, 151.

⁷⁵⁴ See, for example, Bhattacharya 1925, 121.

⁷⁵⁵ *Sādhana* numbers 44, 48, 51, 54, 55, 56, 70.

Likewise, the twelfth century *Niṣpannayogāvalī* of Abhayakaragyupta⁷⁵⁶ describes twenty-six *maṇḍalas*, three of which center around the Crown Prince in one of his many forms,⁷⁵⁷ and several others which feature him peripherally. Unfortunately, though these 11-12th compendia are thought to be comprised of *sādhana*s dating from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, it is virtually impossible to ascertain the dates of the individual *Mañjuśrī sādhana*s,⁷⁵⁸ and thus to distinguish between early and late Pāla representations for the purposes of our analysis.

A cursory review of the Tibetan Buddhist canon, however, makes clear that *Mañjuśrī* was alive and well in datable Pāla esoteric texts; for Pāla monastics from the eighth through the eleventh centuries, it is *Mañjuśrī* of the pre-Pāla *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīṭī* (*Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī*) who reigns supreme, and to whom I now turn.

Mañjuśrī and the MNS

The *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīṭī* (*MNS*) is a liturgical text comprised of 167 *amṣṭubh* stanzas, followed by a long prose section (*anūsamsa*) extolling the many benefits that accrue to the text's devoted reciter, a short section comprised of mantras (*mantravinyāsa*), five concluding verses (*upasaṃhara*, verses 162-167), and a colophon.

⁷⁵⁶ B. Bhattacharya, editor. "*Niṣpannayogāvalī*." *Gaekwad's Oriental Series* 59 (1949).

⁷⁵⁷ The *Mañjuvara*, *Mañjuvajra*, and *Dharmadhātu maṇḍalas*. Sanskrit text found in Gaekwad 1949 on Sanskrit page numbers 1-5, 48-53 and 58-66, respectively.

⁷⁵⁸ Eight of the *Mañjuśrī sādhana*s in the *Sāadhanamālā* mention the names of their authors: #45 and 56 are attributed to Mukṭaka; #47 to Cintamaṇi Datta; #53 to Harihara; #15 to Ajitamitra; #66 to Sujanabhadra; #73 to Ratnakara; #79 to Ravigupta. However, the dates and identities of these authors remain open to argument.

Though the work nowhere designates itself as a Tantra, its opening twenty-five verses tacitly set the scene as such: Vajradhara -- Tantric deity *par excellence* -- accompanied by his retinue of fierce Vajrapānis, beseeches the Buddha to teach the *MNS*. “For the benefit of all sentient beings sunk in the slough of misknowledge, whose minds are disturbed by addictions, for the sake of attaining the unexcelled fruit,” please teach the *MNS*, “lofty in meaning, great in meaning, without equal, auspicious, virtuous in the beginning, middle and the end.”⁷⁵⁹ Śākyamuni is pleased by Vajradhara’s compassion and zeal. “Well done, O Vajradhara, glorious one!”... I will reveal to you [this] “*Nāmasamgīti* of the Mañjuśrī Intuition Body that is great in meaning, auspicious, destructive of evil.”⁷⁶⁰ The Buddha then utters a “verse of the Lord of Speech” endowed with six royal mantras of A Ā Ī U Ū E AI OA AU AM AH, and proceeds to recite a host of epithets of Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva each of which may be read both as a syllabic manifestations of Mañjuśrī and as a manifestation or quality of Buddhahood. The work concludes with Vajradhara and his retinue bowing in thanks to the Tathāgata: “O

⁷⁵⁹ *ajñānapaṅkamaṅgānāṃ kleśavyākulacetāsāḥ hitāya sarvasattvānāṃ anuttaraphalāptaye... gambhīrārthāṃ udārārthāṃ mahārthāṃ asamāṃ śivāṃ ādimadhyāntakalyāṇīm nāmasamgītim uttamāṃ* Verse 8. Sanskrit from Ronald Davidson’s edited Sanskrit edition in “The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī: Text and Translation of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasamgīti*.” Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein I (1981), 51; English translation my own. Hereafter, Davidson’s Sanskrit edition will be indicated as MNS.Dav. Davidson’s introduction will be designated as Davidson 1981.

⁷⁶⁰ *sādhu vajradharaḥ śrīmān... mahārthāṃ nāmasamgītim pavitrām aghanāśanīm mañjuśrījñānakāyasya mattah*. MNS.Dav., Verses 20-21.

protector, it is excellent, well-said. Great benefit is done for us in causing our attainment of perfect enlightenment. . . .”⁷⁶¹

Like many Tantric works, the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti*'s origins and date of composition are open to debate. We know that one version of *MNS* was known in Tibet at the time of King Khri srong lde'u brtsan (742-797)⁷⁶² who was himself regarded in Tibet as an incarnation of Mañjuśrī. In light of the fact that the *MNS*' earliest extant commentary is that of the mid eighth-century Śrī Lankan scholar Mañjuśrimitra, the late seventh century seems a plausible if conservative estimation of its composition date.⁷⁶³ Additional hints of its origins are embedded in its thirteenth verse and in the colophon, which respectively proclaim the *MNS* to be that “which is recited in the great *Māyājāla Tantra* by countless joyful mantra-holding Mahāvajradharas,”⁷⁶⁴ extracted from “the sixteen-thousand verse *samādhi* chapter of the *Āryamāyājāla*.”⁷⁶⁵ Extant editions of the *Māyājāla Tantra* do not, however, contain the *MNS*, rendering the infamous *Māyājāla*

⁷⁶¹ ...*nātha sādhu sādhu subhāṣitam*/kṛto 'smākaṃ mahānātha samyaksambodhiprāpaka. *MNS.Dav.*, Verse 165.

⁷⁶² See Marcelle Lalou, "Les Textes Bouddhiques Au Temps Du Roi Khri-Sron-Lde-Bcan." *Journal Asiatique* 241 (1953), 329; Davidson 1981, 13. Its presence in the early ninth century Tibetan *Idan dkar* catalogue and the Dun Huang manuscripts underscores its importance in both East and South Asia.

⁷⁶³ I echo the conclusions of Ronald Davidson here; see Davidson 1981, 5. It should be noted that Davidson further argues that verses 26-162 are the earliest stratum of the text, and that the framing verses (1-25), the *amuśamsa*, *mantravinyāsa* and colophon are later interpolations.

⁷⁶⁴ *māyājālamahāntantre yā cāsmiṃ sampragīyate*: mahāvajradharair hr̥ṣṭair ameyair mantradhāribhiḥ. *MNS.Dav.*, Verse 7.

⁷⁶⁵ *Āryamāyājālāt ṣoḍaśasāhasrikān mahāyogatantrāntaḥpātisamādhijālapāṭalād*. *MNS.Dav.*, 69.

clue more of a mystery than a clarification. Ronald Davidson finds “a distinct morphological similarity” between the *MNS*, the *samādhi* chapter of the extant *Māyājālatantra*, the *samādhi* chapter of the *Guhyasamājantra* and the *abhisambodhikrama* of the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha*,⁷⁶⁶ and so suggests that the development of the *MNS* probably occurred somewhere therein, though “there were undoubtedly other stages of development intervening.”⁷⁶⁷

A more fruitful line of explanation for the Māyājāla reference however, may begin with the *Vajrasāekharatantra* -- a corpus of eighteen Sanskrit texts which, as Kenneth Eastman has ably demonstrated, by the seventh century included the *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgrahatantra* and the *Guhyasamājantra*, and the *MNS* by at least the twelfth century.⁷⁶⁸ Was the *MNS* part of a version of the *Māyājālatantra* which belonged to this *Vajrasāekharatantra* corpus? Possibly, though a more likely explanation for the Māyājāla reference is hinted at by the canon of the Tibetan rNying ma school which has, since the fifteenth century, retained a complete canon of eighteen Tantras known as *sGyu 'phrul dra ba'i sde chen bco brgyad* (The Eighteen Tantras of the Great Māyājāla Class) – a group which shares several texts in common with the *Vajrasāekharatantra*. Although these eighteen works have been variously identified by

⁷⁶⁶ This gist of the similarity lies in the fact that each of these three texts can be broken down into an association between two units: a seed mantra from which all the deities of the respective maṇḍala proceed, and a visualization instruction. Davidson 1981, 2.

⁷⁶⁷ Ibid., 2-3.

⁷⁶⁸ Kenneth W. Eastman's detailed historical discussion of the contents of the *Vajrasāekhara* as inferred from various Chinese, Japanese and Tibetan sources is found in an unpublished manuscript entitled in "The Eighteen Tantras of the Vajrasāekhara/Māyājāla. Presented to the 26th International Conference of Orientalists in Japan." 1-32.

different Tibetan redactors,⁷⁶⁹ each compiler agrees on one element: a sub-class of eight texts known as the *Māyājāla* which in turn includes a text virtually identical to the present *MNS*: the ‘*Jam dpal rtsa rgyud ‘phrul dra ba (Māyājāla Mañjuśrī Root Tantra)*’.

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Is this the source of the *MNS*’ assertion that it is a part of the *Māyājāla*? Seven hundred years and thousands of miles separate the compilation of the rNying ma canon from the *MNS*’ origins; we cannot assume that the *Māyājāla* referred to the *Vajrasekharatantra*, or that it was a recognized sub-class of texts in early eighth century India. We do know from the research of Toganō Shuun that a Pāla-period commentary on the *PP 150* composed by Jñānamitra includes a reference to “a class of eighteen Tantras” that seems to have included texts characteristic of the *Vajrasekharatantra* collection such as the *Tattvasamgraha*.⁷⁷¹ However, there is no evidence that it included the *MNS*. We

⁷⁶⁹ For example, the list of works named in Ratna gLing pa’s sixteenth century canon of Tantras are not identical to those recognized by ‘Jigs med gling pa in the eighteenth century, nor with the collection redacted in the late twentieth century by Dil mgo mkhyen brtse in Bhutan. Eastman 1981, 16 ff.

⁷⁷⁰ Importantly, this text was later translated into Tibetan and accepted by the gSar-mas as the ‘*Jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa*. (David Germano, “Architecture and Absence in the Secret Tantric History of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*). *JIAS* Vol. 17, No. 2, 1994, p. 249.) Vimalamitra, one of the most prominent commentators to the *MNS*, was invited to Tibet by Khri-srong lde’u btsan (642-797) where he is considered to be a principal bearer of the *snying thig* meditation system. The influence of this system on the interpretation of the *MNS* in Tibet is thus an important avenue of exploration. Vimalamitra’s appears to have been the earliest *MNS* commentary translated into Tibetan, and is one of the few extra-canonical *MNS* commentaries of contemporary times. See Library of Congress PL 480 #1 (Sik) Tib 1973 901235, *a xylographic print from blocks preserved in Deorali Chorten in Gangtok, Sikkim*; Davidson, 1981, 9-10. For discussion of the Mahāyoga texts in general, see Ken Eastman, “Mahāyoga Texts at Tunhuang” in *Bulletin of Institute of Buddhist Cultural Studies* 22. Kyoto, Japan: Ryukoku University.

⁷⁷¹ Eastman’s discussion of this research can be found in 1981, 11 ff.

also know from the writings of the Tibetan scholar Klong chen rab 'byams pa that a text named the *'Jam dpal rgyud 'phrul* was a member of a collection of Tantras “known generally in India as the great class of eighteen.”⁷⁷² But this early fourteenth century reference is as far back as we can take the hypothetical *Vajrasékhara-tantra-Māyājāla-MNS* connection.

It is thus possible, though far from certain, that the *MNS* was originally a member of a group of primarily Tantric texts known collectively as the *Māyājālatantras* which circulated through Buddhist monastic communities of India by at least the middle of the eighth century. What is certain is that for the monastic scholastics of the Pāla, the *MNS* was a pivotal Mañjuśrī-text. From the eighth through the twelfth centuries, the *MNS* emerged as the subject of twenty-two commentaries and approximately 130 related works⁷⁷³ – far more than any other Mañjuśrī-centric work – the large majority of which were composed by scholars affiliated with Pāla monasteries. What is certain, however, is that the *MNS* became the focus of cult worship by Buddhist monastics, *Tantrikas*, and laypeople alike: “its unusual ability to have crossed over into a popular cultus of the bodhisattva...(to) speak simultaneously to multiple communities...(thereby indicates) that it directly addressed an important facet of both popular and monastic Buddhism in India.”⁷⁷⁴

⁷⁷² This quote appears in Kun mkhyen klong chen pa's *Chos 'byung rin po che gter mdzod* (History of the Buddhist Dharma). It is cited by Eastman in 1981, 17.

⁷⁷³ As represented by the Tibetan sDerge canon.

⁷⁷⁴ Lopez 1995b, 105.

The same may be said of the *MNS* in relationship to Tibetan culture. In addition to the version mentioned in the ninth century lDan-dkar catalogue, the *MNS* was translated into Tibetan in the eleventh century by Rin chen bzang po, and revised in the thirteenth century by bLo gros brtan pa. The hundred-plus *MNS*-centric works translated into Tibetan from eighth century onwards underscores its importance, as do the indigenous commentaries composed by monastic luminaries such as the Second Dalai Lama dGe 'dun rgya mtsho, whose composition is fundamentally shaped around a handful of key Pāla *MNS* commentaries. (For details, see translation of Chapters 1-4 of dGe 'dun rgya mtsho's work in **Appendix**.) To this day, the *MNS* is routinely recited by both monks and Tibetan school children intent on bolstering their memories and academic performance.

What was it about the *MNS* that made it resonate so deeply for early medieval Indian scholastics? Speaking generally, the *MNS* has a number of characteristics which make it compelling to Buddhist monastics of any time period. Its relative brevity makes it easy to memorize; its melodious and hypnotic liturgical structure makes it a compelling choice for chanting and devotional use. Moreover, its broad-based Tantric content makes it amenable to a wide range of philosophical orientations. Thus, although the *MNS* "most obviously belongs to the phase of Buddhist Tantra known as Yogatantra, where Mahāvairocana is envisaged as the central embodiment... there is no systematic development of this Tantric material and as a result the (M)NS could be placed within different Tantric contexts without too much strain."⁷⁷⁵ As such, we find early *MNS* commentaries written primarily from a *Yogatantra* standpoint, while later scholars

⁷⁷⁵ Tribe 1997, 113.

analyze it through the lens of *Anuttara* terms and practices,⁷⁷⁶ or those specific to the *Kālacakratāntra*. The Tibetan sDerge canon, for example, contains 129 *MNS*-centric works, six of which are designated as *Kālacakra* (#1395-1400), thirty-two as *Anuttaratantra* (2090-2121), and ninety-one as *Yogatantra* (2532-2622).⁷⁷⁷

How might we understand the *MNS*' popularity from a specifically Pāla perspective?

In light of the centrality of *prajñā* discourse to the Pāla zone, we may hypothesize that

⁷⁷⁶ For example, reference to the Secret Initiation (*guhyaḅhiṣeka*), to Creation Stage (*utpattikrama*) and Perfection Stage (*niṣpannakrama*) practices, etc.

⁷⁷⁷ The distribution of *MNS* commentaries, however, are weighted more heavily in the *Kālacakra* department:

Commentator	Century	Type of Comm.
Vimalamitra	8th-9th	Anuttara
Mañjuśrīmitra	8th-9th	Yoga
Vilāsavajra	8th-9th	Yoga
Surativajra	8th-9th	Anuttara
Mañjuśrīkīrti	10th	Yoga
Candragomin	10th	Anuttara
Anupamarakṣita	10th to 11th	Kālacakra
Kālacakrapāda	10th to 11th	Kālacakra
Narendrakīrti	10th to 11th	Kālacakra
Rāja Pundarika	10th to 11th	Kālacakra
Avadhutipa	10th to 11th	Yoga
Dombi Heruka	10th to 11th	Yoga
Advayavajra	11th	Anuttara
Smṛtijñānakīrti	11th	Yoga
Raviśrī	11th to 12th	Kālacakra
Advayagupta	uncertain	Yoga
Candrakīrti	uncertain	Yoga
Kumarakīrti	uncertain	Yoga
Madhyamikānanda	uncertain	Yoga
Ratnakaragupta	uncertain	Yoga

The Peking canon shows some slight differences, though the relative distribution is comparable.

one important draw for Pāla monastics was the *MNS*' *Prajñāpāramitā*-like elements and discursive strategies. The core verses (26-162), for example, are initiated by the arisal of Mañjuśrī from the *akṣara A* -- the epitomization of *prajñā* in the *Prajñāpāramitā sarvatathāgatamātā ekākṣarā* (*The Perfection of Wisdom in a Single Letter, the Mother of All Tathāgatas*) and the Mañjuśrī-centric *PP 150*:

Likewise, (Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva is) the Bhagavan, the Buddha, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, born from the letter A. The letter A is the foremost of all the letter groups, the great goal, the supreme letter.

(Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva is) the great breath, indeed, (he is) non-arisal. Free from the enunciations of speech, (he is the) foremost cause of all expression, luminous as all speech.⁷⁷⁸

We are of course reminded of the *PP* positioning of *prajñā* as the source from which Buddhas originate -- not to mention *arhats*, *śravakas* and other potential challengers to Mahāyāna claims of legitimacy -- and are unsurprised to learn that the Mañjuśrī of the *MNS* is likewise

The creator of all Buddhas...supreme, the best, arisen from existence in *prajñā*...⁷⁷⁹

Without beginning or end, he is Buddha, the Primal Buddha (Ādibuddha)...he is the embodiment of intuition, the Tathāgata.⁷⁸⁰

⁷⁷⁸ *tadyathā bhagavāṃ buddhaḥ sambuddho 'kārasambhavaḥ/akāraḥ sarvavarṇāgryo mahārthah paramākṣarah// mahāprāṇo hy amutpādo vāgudāhāraavarjitah/ sarvābhilāpahetvagryah sarvavāksuprabhāsvarah//* *MNS. Dav., Verses 28-29:*

⁷⁷⁹ *janakah sarvabuddhānām...paro varah/prajñābhavodbhavo.* *MNS. Dav., Verse 60.*

⁷⁸⁰ *anādinidhano Buddha ādibuddho...jñānamūrtis tathāgata.* *MNS. Dav., Verse 100.* This identification of Mañjuśrī with the Ādibuddha tacitly locates him along a literary continuum which begins with the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* -- the earliest reference I know of to the Ādibuddha -- runs through the Tantric commentarial literature of the *Guhyasamāja* and culminates, as I will discuss, in the *Kālacakra* corpus in tenth and eleventh century Pāla Indian. Interestingly, Chapter 9, v. 77 of the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* condemns the doctrine of Ādibuddha on the grounds that there can be no Buddha without the requisite accumulations of merit (*puṇya*) and intuition

In this vein, the eighth-century commentator Mañjuśrīmitra identifies the *kumāra* as the white *A* which in turn symbolizes the “birthplace of the Buddhas, the mother of all the Sugatas.”⁷⁸¹ His perception of Mañjuśrī is, arguably, pure early Pāla: filtered through the logic of *PP* discourse, and locationally-sensitive. By contrast, when the eleventh century *MNS* commentator Smṛti deploys the *PP* rhetoric of primacy to elevate the Mahāyāna path, he remarks that though the *śrāvaka* is the son of a Buddha’s body, Mañjuśrī is the son of a Buddha’s mind, and so is “supreme, the best.”⁷⁸² We are reminded of the tendency by contemporaneous later *PP* commentators to play down *prajñā*’s site-specific connections – itself predicated on the Mahāyāna body-*stūpa* equation -- and to emphasize instead its trans-local, symbolic dimensions.

Deeply linked to this *PP* sense of Mañjuśrī’s *prajñā* as the source of Buddhas is the *MNS*’ conceptualization of Mañjuśrī as “Jñānasattva” or “Intuition-Being” – a concept introduced in verse ten,⁷⁸³ when Vajradhara begs the Buddha to (Teach the

(*jñāna*). Such an accomplishment can only be engendered by a previous Buddha, therefore, there can be no ‘First Buddha.’ This reference thus implicitly challenges the widely-stated conviction of scholars such as Benyotosh Bhattacharya (Indian Buddhist Iconography Calcutta: 1968) and Alexander Csoma de Koros that “No mention is made of ... the Ādibuddha by ancient writers in India until the tenth century.” (“Note on the Origin of the Kalacakra and Adi-Buddha Systems.” Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal II, 1833.)

⁷⁸¹ See *Bodhicitta-bhavana-dvadasartha* Peking Vol. 75, 140, 4.7.

⁷⁸² Peking 46.3.1.

⁷⁸³ This term is well-known from Tantric *sādhana* literature, in which a “*jñānasattva*” is usually paired with a “*samayasattva*”, or “pledge being.” In the course of a *sādhana*, a Tantrika may first visualize and identify with a particular deity in its *samayasattva* form, and then evoke and merge him/her with the *jñānasattva*. That moment when the Tantrika-as-*samayasattva* fuses with the *jñānasattva* is, in this ritual context, tantamount to enlightenment.

Nāmasaṃgīti) “of the intuition body, of the great *uṣṇisa*, the Lord of Speech, of the Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva, the embodiment of intuition, he who is self-born.”⁷⁸⁴ Śākyamuni graciously accedes; he will, indeed, teach “the *Nāmasaṃgīti* of Mañjuśrī-jñānakāya (the Intuition-body)”⁷⁸⁵ to his worthy and compassionate disciple.

Who—or what – is Mañjuśrī-jñānasattva? Looking at verses 10 and 21, Anthony Tribe rightfully notes that the meaning of Mañjuśrī-jñānasattva, and the connection between these two titles (i.e., Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva and Mañjuśrī Jñānakāya) is

clarified in the following phrase, found on two occasions in the *anuśamsā*: “... the *Nāmasaṃgīti* of the Knowledge-being Mañjuśrī who is the Knowledge-body (*jñānakāya*) of all the Tathāgatas.” If the term *jñānakāya* is construed as a *karmadhārya* compound, i.e. if it means “the body [or collection] that is Knowledge”, then to say that Mañjuśrī is the *jñānakāya* of all the Tathāgatas is to say that he is the Knowledge that underlies or lies within all Tathāgatas.⁷⁸⁶

In this sense, “Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva who is the *jñānakāya*” is not simply the embodiment of the *Prajñā-pāramitesque* conviction that Buddhahood has a prior condition: the *MNS*’ Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva is the very intuition (*jñāna*) which engenders and underlies the enlightened state in all of its manifestations.⁷⁸⁷ Accordingly, Mañjuśrī

⁷⁸⁴ ... *jñānakāyasya mahōṣṇīsasya giṣpateḥ mañjuśrījñānasattvasya jñānamūrteḥ svayambhuvah*: MNS. Dav., Verse 10:

⁷⁸⁵ MNS. Dav., Verse 21.

⁷⁸⁶ Anthony Tribe, “Mañjuśrī and the ‘Chanting of Names’ (*Nāmasaṃgīti*); Wisdom and Its Embodiment in an Indian Mahāyāna Text.” In *Indian Insights: Buddhism, Brahmanism and Bhakti*, edited by Peter Connolly and Sue Hamilton. London: Luzac Oriental, 1997, 115.

⁷⁸⁷ “Under the influence of Tantra,” asserts Anthony Tribe, “the Perfection of Wisdom becomes *Prajñāpāramitā*, a deity embodying Wisdom; whereas Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of Wisdom, undergoes a contrary transformation to become the Knowledge he embodies.” Tribe’s characterization is, I think, too simple to do justice to the complexities of Pāla monastic discourse, but is worth contemplating. Tribe 1997, 115.

Jñānasattva is identified with the full gamut of exoteric and Tantric Buddhist figures. He is not merely the Mahāyāna bodhisattva, the “great wielder of the weapon/sword of *prajñā*.”⁷⁸⁸ he is awesome Vajrabhairava, “king of furies, six headed and terrifying... a skeleton baring its fangs;” “Vairocana, the great light;” “Yamāntaka, the king of obstructions,” by nature and engendered by “the great mantra practice;” and a host of other figures, including Amoghapāśa (v. 60), Kṣitigarbha (v. 115), and Samantabhadra (v. 115). Be he equated as *prajñā* or *jñāna*, it is Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva who is the experience and progenitor of enlightenment “the Bhagavan, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, the teacher, the guru to the world.”⁷⁸⁹

This limitless mutability obviously made it simple to conceptualize Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva through the lens of virtually any Tantric system. To the eighth century Yogatantrika Vilāsavajra, “Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva [of the *MNS*] is not the bodhisattva who is the lord of the ten stages” but is “non-dual intuition.”⁷⁹⁰ To the eighth century Mañjuśrīmitra, “Mañjuśrī is the unmistakable understanding of the characteristics of *bodhicitta*.”⁷⁹¹ In the eleventh-twelfth century, Kālacakrin Anupamarakṣita declared that “Mañjuśrī is the drop in the jewel channel; Jñāna is the support of non-dual bliss and Sattva is the expanded phallus,”⁷⁹² and his contemporary Raviśrī agreed, identifying

⁷⁸⁸ *mahāprajñāyudhadharo*. MNS. Dav., Verse 34,

⁷⁸⁹ *sambuddho bhagavām śāstā jagadguruḥ*. MNS. Dav., Verse 9.

⁷⁹⁰ Tribe 1997, 84.

⁷⁹¹ See *Bodhicitta-bhavana-dvadasartha* Peking Vol. 75, 140, 4.7.

⁷⁹² *Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-amṛtabindu-pratyāloka-vṛtti-nāma*. Peking 2112,

Mañjuśrī with “that very immutable, orgasmic intuition which arises from the stabilization of *bodhicitta* at the *uṣṇiṣa*.”⁷⁹³

Equally striking in this regard is the *MNS*' repeated references to itself as the embodiment of *prajñā* and *jñāna*; here, perhaps more than any Mañjuśrī text we have seen so far, we find the conflation of wisdom, body and book so familiar to us from *PP* rhetoric. Just as the Buddha's *prajñā*, *kāya* and the text of the *PP 8,000* were presented as non-dual facets of a single Buddha-jewel in early *PP* discourse, so too does the *MNS* place the Buddha's non-dual intuition in apposition with “the Jñānakāya of all the Tathāgatas,” Mañjuśrī Jñānakāya, and with the *MNS* itself. So it is that that the recitation of the *MNS* is tantamount to – and yields the countless benefits of -- meditation upon the form of Mañjuśrī the Intuition Being (*Mañjuśrījñānasattva*).⁷⁹⁴ We are reminded of a related practice implicit in early *PP* literature that is also evident in the *MNS*, namely *anusmṛti*. The *MNS*' Mañjuśrī is likewise “face-to-face with all the Buddhas (*pratyaṅkṣa sarvabuddhānām*: v. 118)”; one who “takes the Intuition Body of Mañjuśrī as his meditation object (*Mañjuśrījñānakāyam ālambanīkṛtya*)” will “dwell in the state of Facing Everywhere (*samantamukhavihāraviharī*)” and be approached by all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas from all the three times who will “demonstrate all the ways of dharma. (*sarvadharmamukhāny upadarśayiṣyanti*).”⁷⁹⁵ We feel ourselves as firmly in the domain

⁷⁹³ *Amṛtakaṇika-nāma-āryanāma-saṃgīti-tippaṇī*, Peking 2111,

⁷⁹⁴ *sarvatathāgatajñānakāyasya mañjuśrījñānasattvasyāveṇīkapariśuddha nāmsaṃgītiḥ* (MNS.Dav. p. 61) *anuśaṃsa*; *bhagavato mañjuśrījñānasattvasya sarvatathāgatajñānakāyasya jñānamurter advayaparamārthām nāmasaṃgītiṃ* (MNS.Dav., p. 65 *anuśaṃsa*).

⁷⁹⁵ These excerpts are drawn from the colophon section found in MNS.Dav., 65.

of Sadāprarudita's vision quest of in the *PP 8,000* as in the ritual universe of the *MNS*' *sādhaka*.⁷⁹⁶ Certainly the sheer physicality and palpability of the *MNS*' *anusmṛti* experience is unmistakable: the Buddhas will quite literally “demonstrate their physical presence (*ātmabhāvam copadarśayiṣyanti*)”⁷⁹⁷ to the devotee of the *MNS*' Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva, and in so doing, bestow their irrefutable legitimacy and authority.

Also attractive to Pāla monastics -- in stiff competition with Brahmin contenders for patronage -- is the texts' repeated exaltation of Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva over the Hindu competition: Mañjuśrī is “the knower of Brahman (*brahmaid*, v. 95) who “overcomes the tip of Brahma's egg” (*brahmāṇḍaśikharākrānta*, v. 122); the “Sarasvati of all Buddhas” (*sarvabuddhasarasvati*, v. 108) who is “endowed with the three vidyās (*traividya*)”. Those who recite the *MNS* and meditate upon Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva will be guarded and defended by Brahmā, Indra, Upendra, Rudra, Nārāyaṇa, Sanatkumāra, Yama, Varuṇa, Harīti and others.⁷⁹⁸ For the late eighth-century commentator Vilāsavajra, for example, Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva of the *MNS* is inclusive of all such figures:

He is the LORD OF THE GODS, for he has the nature of the All-Pervading One (i.e. Viṣṇu). He is the GOD OF GODS because he has [the nature of] Brahma; he is LEADER OF THE *ASURAS* because he has the form of Vairocana. He is the MASTER OF THE GODS because he has the nature of the Rahula planet; he is the LORD OF THE IMMORTALS because he has the form of Purabhit (i.e. Indra). He is the LAMA OF THE GODS, because he has the form of the Bṛhaspati planet, he is DESTROYER,

⁷⁹⁶ This practice also obliquely referred to in verse 153, where Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva is extolled as the possessor of the *śaḍanusmṛti*, i.e. recollecting the Buddha (*buddhānusmṛti*), the Dharma (*dharmānusmṛti*), the Saṅgha (*sanghānusmṛti*), ethics (*śīlānusmṛti*), renunciation (*tyāgānusmṛti*) and one's chosen divinity (*devatānusmṛti*).

⁷⁹⁷ I borrow the translation of this phrase from Ronald Davidson 1981, 42. Further discussion of this term can be found in Edward Conze, *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā*, SOR 13, Rome: ISMEO, 1957, 110.

⁷⁹⁸ See colophon, *MNS*. Dav., 66.

for he has the nature of the Lord of Troops (i.e. Ganapati); and he is LORD OF DESTROYERS because he has the nature of Mahādeva.⁷⁹⁹

It is, I would suggest, the radical mutability of the *MNS*' Mañjuśrī, coupled with the time-worn conception of the bodhisattva as the voice of *buddhavacana*, that makes him a logical choice for what is perhaps his most overt function in Pāla *MNS* commentaries: from the eighth century onwards, Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva serves as the tacit guarantor of the legitimacy of monastic-based Tantra.

Tantrika par excellence:

At that time, those among the *panditas*-s of Nalendra who were capable of arguing with the *tirthikas* preached the Doctrine outside the boundary walls while those who were incapable of this preached within. Candrakīrti, who was then the upadhyaya, was once preaching outside... Candragomin reached there and stood listening.

Candrakīrti (saw him there and) thought, "is he an opponent calling for a debate?" And he... asked 'What subjects do you know?' (To which Candragomin replied) 'I know the three, viz. *Pāli*-Grammar, the *Stuti-sata-pancasika* and the *Nama-Samgiti*.'

Thus, although in words he did not express pride in so far as he said that he knew nothing beyond these three treatises, by implication he claimed that he knew all about grammar, *sutra* and *tantra*.

- Tāranātha, History of Buddhism in India, 203.

Eighth-ninth century:

⁷⁹⁹ Vilāsavajra, 'Phags pa mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i rgya cher 'grel pa mtshan gsang sngags kyi don du rnam par lta ba shes bya ba. (*Āryanāmasaṅgīti-sīkānāma nāmamantrārthālokinī*.) DT #2533, rgyud 'bum, Khu: *de la lha'i dbang po ni khyab 'jug gi rang bzhin nyid kyi phyir ro/lha'i lha ni tshangs pa'i bdag nyid kyi phyir ro lha min dbang po rnam par snang byed 'bo le'i gzugs kyi so'lha min bdag ni gza' ra hu la'i rang bzhin nyid kyi phyir ro'chi med dbang po ni grong khyer 'jig gi gzugs nyid kyi phyir ro lha'i bla ni gza' phur bu'i gzugs ni kyi phyir ro'joms byed ni tshogs bdag gi rang bzhin nyid kyi phyir ro'joms byed dbang phyug ni ma ha de ba'i rang bzhin nyid kyi phyir ro.*

Early Pāla monastic life was, we recall, marked by a number of key changes. Most visible in its literature and art is a curricular shift: from at least the early seventh century, we find the gradual introduction of Tantric Buddhist science and technologies into monastic university studies. This integration was markedly uneasy. Originating in non-monastic circles, Tantric discourse emphasized the inversion of entrenched community, hermeneutic and lifestyle norms, as a tool of liberating practice. This value extended to the zone of rhetoric; Tantric writings were frequently characterized by an apparent privileging of poetry, analogy, and felt body experience over seemingly flat rational analysis, syllogistic logic and phenomenological analysis. Further amplifying its apparent incompatibility with monastic rule and scholastic sensibilities was its artful deployment of physical desire and sexual intercourse, both literally and as an internalized process of sensation in meditation. As such its reconciliation with the norms and practices of a celibate, academic community was, shall we say, not unremarked.

From this perspective, we begin to understand why Mañjuśrī, Buddhist archetype of monastic orthodoxy and legitimacy, was adopted as central “spokesperson” by Pāla monastics struggling to integrate Tantric heterodoxy. This trend may have been sparked by Mañjuśrīmitra, who

evidently wanted to make the NS the center of an entire Vajrayāna system of practice so that every important religious function could be performed by a ritual or a cycle of meditation that was in some way tied to the NS... Mañjuśrīmitra created ritual manuals linking every sort of *guhya* mantra practice then current in Buddhist India to the text of the NS. Certainly a great deal of the popularization of our text is due to the focus of this illustrative Buddhist yogin.⁸⁰⁰

⁸⁰⁰ Ronald M. Davidson, "The Litany of Names of Mañjuśrī: Text and Translation of the Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti." *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein* 1 (1981), 5. For further details of Mañjuśrīmitra's life, see 'Gos lo tsā ba's fifteenth century history in Roerich, George N. (trans.) *The Blue Annals: Parts I & II (Bound in One)*. Delhi: Motilal

Mañjuśrīmitra's *MNS* corpus is indeed voluminous, comprising literally dozens of *sādhanas*, *maṇḍala* cycles and ritual texts which attempt to relate – and reconcile -- the *MNS* to everything from the twelve links to *Guhyasamājantra*.⁸⁰¹ Mañjuśrīmitra's major *MNS* commentary (the *Nāmasaṃgītivṛtti*) is particularly animated by his concern to reconcile the *MNS* "potentially compromising phrases and conceptual concepts [to]... the framework of Buddhist orthodoxy... this pattern of orthodox interpretation for the purpose of rendering a text acceptable to the Vajrayāna monastic communities became the norm for most later commentarial traditions, particularly with the *yogīnitantras*."⁸⁰² Mañjuśrīmitra may have tip-toed around Tantric references, but was unequivocal in his affirmation of the Tantric path: "the way of secret mantra" is appropriate only for the extra-sharp disciple – a sharp contrast to the "the Śrāvaka vehicle" which is best suited to those with dull faculties, unable to penetrate to the profound.⁸⁰³

Interestingly, by the end of the eighth century, we find Pāla *MNS* commentators legitimizing Tantra -- as represented by the *MNS* - by way of its association with *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, the quintessence of orthodox monastic studies. Vilāsavajra opens his erudite *Nāmasaṃgītikā nāma-mantrārthathāvalokini* (*NMAA*) by clarifying

Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1995, 369 ff; a biography by the eighth-century master Vairocana entitled *'Dra 'bag chen mo*.

⁸⁰¹ For Mañjuśrīmitra's works, see DT #2556-2568 and #2543-2555.

⁸⁰² Davidson 1981, 5-6.

⁸⁰³ Mañjuśrīmitra, *Nāmasaṃgītivṛtti*, DT # 2532, rgyud 'bum, Khu 3b: *de yang nyan thos kyi theg pa ni dbang po tha ma'i dbang du mdzod pa'i'gsang snags kyi tsul ni dbang du mdzad pa'o: theg pa chen po ni dbag po 'bying gi dbag du mdzod pa'o:gsangs snags kyi tshul ni dbang po rab kyi dbang du mdzad po'o: De yang dbang po rnon bo'i dbang du gyur bas gsnag sngags kyi bstan bcos khyoad par 'phags zhes gsung bya'o.*

his expertise in both non-orthodox and orthodox topics of study: his analysis draws on his study of the “Yoga, Caryā and Kriyā Tantras” as well as “the *Prajñāpāramitā, Sūtra* and *Abhidharma* collections... the entirety of the *Vijñānavāda* and likewise the *Madhyamaka*.”⁸⁰⁴ Having so defined the ostensibly opposing camps, Vilāsavajra thematically equates them:

the subject of both the *MNS* and *Prajñā-pāramitā* is non-dual intuition (*advayajñāna*)... Accordingly, Dignāga said: “The Tathāgata is the perfection of *prajñā*, that non-dual intuition.”⁸⁰⁵

The Tantric *MNS* – and by extension, Tantra in general -- is evidently a manifestation of *PP* thought; what better justification for its inclusion in conventional monastic curricula? This hitherto unrecognized blood-tie between *PP* and Tantra is further affirmed by monasticism’s most eminently respected representative, for Mañjuśrī, we learn, is the meeting-place of both: “Mañjuśrī *Jñānasattva*... is non-dual intuition, the perfection of *prajñā* itself.”⁸⁰⁶ One seeking to effect this perfection of *prajñā* should therefore,

imagine oneself as the Bhagavān, the *Jñānasattva*, born from the letter A... with six faces that shine like the moon in autumn, the best of sapphires in his hair, a halo [imbued with] the brilliance of the newly-arisen sun, ornamented by all the

⁸⁰⁴ DT #2533, Khu 27b: *rnal 'phyor spyod dang bya 'i rgyud/de bzhin pha rol pa 'i tshul/mdo sde chos mngon sde snod dang/rnal 'grel gzhan yang bltas pa dang/da ltar 'das dang skyes rabs te/stod byed gzhung dang de bzhin du/sems tsam smra ba thams cad dang/de bzhin dbu ma 'i gang yin dang/'jig rten gtsug lag de bzhin te/bla ma brgyud pa 'i rim 'ongs pa 'i/man ngag kyang ni lags dran de/gsol ba' debs pas bdag gis de.*

⁸⁰⁵ Derge #2533, 32b:... *de nyid kyi phyir na phyogs kyi glang po 'i zhal snga kyis gsungs pa/shes rab pha rol phyin gnyis med/ye shes de ni de bzhin gshegs zhes so.*

⁸⁰⁶ Derge #2533, 32b: *nge sa bcu 'i dbang phyug gi byang chub sems dba ni ma yin no de lta na su zhig yin she na/gnyis su med pa 'i ye shes rab kyi pha rol tu byin pa de nyid 'jam dpal ye shes sems dpa ste. 'Phags pa mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i rgya cher 'grel pa mtshan gsang sngags kyi don du rnam par lta ba shes bya ba.*

Tathāgatas, deep in *samādhi*, seated on a multi-colored lotus throne, with a *Prajñāpāramitā* book from a red lotus and a *Prajñāpāramitā* book from blue lotus in his two hands. One should imagine a moon-disc in the heart of that [*Jñānasattva*] and place above it the letter A, the nature of *Prajñāpāramitā* the cause of the arising of awareness of omniscience, the origin of all *śravakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, the accumulation of the merit and wisdom of all mahābodhisattvas... Thus the bodhisattva... engaging in the practices of *mantrayāna*, having meditated in these three ways – ‘taking the form of the Bhagavān Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva as an object of meditation,’ i.e. as the *jñānakāya*; ‘reflecting on his form’, i.e. as the moon-disc; and ‘meditating on his form’ i.e. as the letter A – ‘will soon come to see him in his *nirmanarūpakāya*’ provided that he follows the Vinaya.⁸⁰⁷

The Tantric Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva is unequivocally the master of *Prajñāpāramitā*: abiding at – and as – the root of *prajñā*’s letter A, as well as of *śravakas*, buddhas and bodhisattvas alike, he is anterior to and thus includes and transcends the *pāramitāyāna*. Concomitantly, Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva’s Tantrika-devotee is of course legitimized through the now-familiar logic of *PP* discourse. Lest anyone should doubt his fidelity to the monastic paradigm, we are explicitly assured of the devotee’s adherence to the *vinaya*: apparently it is as firm as Mañjuśrī’s two-handed grasp of his *PP* texts.

⁸⁰⁷ Derge #2533, 38b-39b: *yi ge a las bskyed pa'i bcom ldan 'das ye shes sems dba zhal drug pa/ston ka'i zla pa'i mdog can' in dra ni la mchog gi gtsug phus nyi ma 'char ka'i dkyil ltar od kyi dkyil 'khor gyis bskor ba/de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi rang bzhin gyi rgyan gyi ting nge 'dzin la snyoms par zhugs pa/sna tshogs pad ma'i gtan la bzhugs pa:phyag gnyis kyis ut pa la dmar po dang ut pa la sngon po gnyis la brsten nas gnas pa'i shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i glengs bam gnyis 'dzin pa...de'i thugs kar zla ba'i dkyil 'khor bsgoms nas' de'i steng du shes rab kyi pha rol du phyin pa'i rang bzhin thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye shes 'byung ba'i byed rgyu'nyan thos dang ran sang rgyas thams cad bskyet par gyur pa' byang chub sems dpa chen po thams cad kyi bsod nams dang ye shes kyi tshogs su gyur pa'don dam pa'i ye shes thams cad kyi byed rgyur gyur pa'i ye gi a bkod do'...de ltar rgyun du zhugs pa bsgom pa la gnas pa snags kyi sgo nas spyad pa sbyod pa' byang chib sems dbasbcom ldan 'das 'jam dpal ye shes sems dpa'i gzugs ye shes kyi sku'i sgo nas dmigs so zhas pa dang/zla ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi dbyibs kyi sgo nas de'i gzugs rjes su bsam mo zhes pa dang' yi ge a'i gzugs kyi sgo nas de'i gzugs rjes su bsgom mo zhes so' de ltar mam ba gsum gyi tshul gyi bsgoms pas de nyidkyi sprul pa'i gzugs kyi sgu dus ring po ma yin ma kho nar 'dul ba'i nye bar gzungs ste.*

In keeping with our hypothesis about early Pāla treatments of *prajñā*, we note that it is not so much the *PP* texts which embody and epitomize the Buddha's *prajñā* for Vilāsavajra, but the body of Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva himself; in fact, his "great *prajñā* is a body. He [Mañjuśrī] is 'one who possesses that [body].'⁸⁰⁸ "Because [Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva] is firm and possessed of material form, he is 'solid.'" For those truly devout *sādhakas* who meditate on his form, their final reward will be to "see him in his *nirmanarūpakāya*."⁸⁰⁹ For Vilāsavajra, the body of Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva is *the* central object of devotion; perhaps it is not accidental that he omits the next *pāda* of Dignaga's *Prajñā-pāramitā-piṇḍārtha* quoted above, wherein the perfection of *prajñā* is not only non-dual intuition and the Tathāgata, but also connotes "the book and the path, since [both] have this [*prajñā-pāramitā*] as their goal."⁸¹⁰ We are reminded of the role of Śākyamuni's relics as substitute Buddha-body for the pre-Mahāyāna Buddhist monk.

The *MNS*' Mañjuśrī's role as Pāla guarantor of Tantric heterodoxy arguably reached its height in the tenth century with the rise of the *Kālacakratāntra*⁸¹¹ -- a deeply synthetic

⁸⁰⁸ Derge #2533, 45b: *shes rab chen po ste de nyid kyī lus de 'dzin pas na shes rab chen po lus 'chung ba 'o!*

⁸⁰⁹ This is term common to Yogācāra *trikāya* theory, which analyzes the *rūpakāya* (form body) of the Buddha as two parts: a *nirmāṇa(rūpa)kāya* and a *sambhogakāya* (Complete Enjoyment Body). This bi-partite *rūpakāya* is of course distinguished from the *dharmakāya*, the Buddha's Truth Body.

⁸¹⁰ It is interesting to note that the eighth century Haribhadra explicitly de-emphasizes the book when he alludes to this passage by Dignāga. For Haribhadra, non-dual intuition is the primary meaning of *prajñā-pāramitā*, while the text is only a secondary, metaphorical meaning.

⁸¹¹ See *Paramādibuddhoddhṛtaśrīkālacakrarāja*: in *Kāiacakra-Tantra and Other Texts: Part I*. Edited by Raghu Vira and Lokesh Chandra. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1966, pp. 332-378 [Śata-piṭaka Series Vol. 69]

Tantric system which probably developed during in Central Asia during the tenth century and was primarily disseminated and developed in Pāla India.⁸¹² In its reinterpretation of standard *Amuttara* Tantric practices,⁸¹³ the *Kālacakra* tradition was radical even by Pāla standards; its concomitant need to establish its legitimacy may be one reason why the tradition specifically identified itself with Mañjuśrī, the *MNS*; the core commentary to the *Kālacakra*, the *Vimalaprabhā*,⁸¹⁴ cites almost seventy verses from the *MNS* in order to “explain or substantiate the *Kālacakratantra*’s views of Buddhahood and the path of actualizing it.”⁸¹⁵ In particular, the *Vimalaprabhā* identifies the Jñānakāya as the main topic of the *Kālacakratantra*, and states unequivocally that it is indivisible from the *MNS*.

⁸¹² Claudia Cicuzza and Francesco Sferra. "Brief Notes on the Beginning of the Kalacakra Literature." *Dhīh: Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Project* XXIII: 113-26. See also John Newman, John, "The Epoch of the *Kālacakra Tantra*." *Indo-Iranian Journal* 41 (1998): 319-49.

⁸¹³ One thinks here, for example, of its reinterpretation of the standard *Amuttara* practice of six-limbed yoga (*sadaṅgayoga*) or its inversion of the early signs of dissolution.

⁸¹⁴ For the Tibetan, see *bsDus pa 'i rgyud kyi rgyal po dus kyi 'khor lo 'i 'grel bshas rtsa ba 'i rgyud kyi rjes su 'jug pa stong phrag bcu gnyis pa dri ma med pa 'i 'od ces bya ba (Vimalaprabhānāma-mūlatantrāmusāriṇī-dvādaśasāhasrikālaghukālacakratantrarājāṭīkā)* Peking 2064, bstan 'gyur, rgyud, Ka-2 1-227a and Kha 2a-297a. For Sanskrit, see Puṇḍarīka, *Vimalaprabhāṭīkā on Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja by Śrīmañjuśrīyaśa, Vol. I*. Critically edited and annotated with notes by Jagannatha Upadhyaya. Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series No. XI. Sarnath: Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, 1986; Puṇḍarīka. *Vimalaprabhāṭīkā on Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja by Śrīmañjuśrīyaśas, Vol. II*. Rare Buddhist Texts Series No. 12. Sarnath: Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994; Puṇḍarīka. *Vimalaprabhāṭīkā on Śrīlaghukālacakratantrarāja by Śrīmañjuśrīyaśas, Vol. III*. Rare Buddhist Texts Series No. 13. Sarnath: Central Institute for Higher Tibetan Studies, 1994.

⁸¹⁵ Vesna A. Wallace, *The Inner Kālacakratantra: A Buddhist Tantric View of the Individual*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 19.

Accordingly, “The (*Kālacakratāntra*) is embraced by the *MNS*, which makes manifest the Vajradhara intuition-body because it is the statement in the *Ādibuddha*. ”⁸¹⁶ As such,

those who do not understand the *Paramādibuddha* do not understand the *Nāmasaṃgīti*. Those who do not understand the *Nāmasaṃgīti* do not understand the Jñānākāya of Vajradhara. Those who do not understand Jñānākāya of Vajradhara do not understand the Mantrayāna. Those who do not understand the Mantrayāna are thoroughly *samsaric*, separate from the path of Bhagavān Vajradhara. Therefore, noble teachers must teach the *Paramādibuddha*, and those noble disciples who desire liberation should listen.⁸¹⁷

Here, the term *Ādibuddha* – so famously identified as Mañjuśrī in verse 100 of the *MNS* – functions as a synonym for the *Kālacakra Tantra* itself; small wonder that one’s insight into each is co-dependent, and that the *Ādibuddha* text is considered to have been composed by an incarnation of Mañjuśrī.⁸¹⁸

We also find the *Kālacakratāntra* associating itself with *Prajñāpāramitā* -- the doctrinal bastion of monastic orthodoxy, and Pāla discourse. The *Vimalaprabhā* explains that the Buddha manifested in Tantric form to teach the *Kālacakratāntra* at the very moment at which he taught the *Prajñāpāramitā* at Rajṛgrha – a connection repeatedly alluded to by Pāla commentators such as the tenth-eleventh century Advayavajra, and the later Anupamarakṣita and Raviśrījñāna:

⁸¹⁶ PK #2064, fol. 17a.1-2.

⁸¹⁷ PK #2064, 52a, 5-8.

⁸¹⁸ Tradition holds that King Mañju Yaśas vigorously promulgated the *Kalachakra* tradition as the main religious system of Shambhala. He converted the entire population of Shambhala, including 35 million Hindu sages, to the *Kalachakra* tradition. By virtue of unifying all of the castes into a single family, he became known as the first of Shambhala’s *Kalki*, or lineage kings. Importantly, Mañju Yaśas wrote a 1000-verse summary of the root Tantra known as the *Kalachakra Laghutantra-raja* or Abridged Tantra. Today, this work is commonly referred to as the *Kalachakra Tantra*. Note also that not Yaśas as Mañjuśrī is identified with breaking down distinctions and Buddha-fying all beings under a single *kula* (family).

At the glorious Great Stūpa of (Drepung) Dhānyakaṭaka, the Buddha Bhagavan, the “glorious Śākya Lion” was entreated by *srāvanas* who desired to learn various Tantras. And in the middle spring month, having emanated the glorious Dharmadhātu Vagīśvara Maṇḍala and, above that, the Astrological Maṇḍala of the Ādibuddha, the Buddha gave initiation to the deities etc., on that very day. He then taught all the ways of secret mantras, dividing them according to (whether they were) expanded or concise. The Glorious *Ādibuddha* says: “Just as the teacher taught the *PPM* at Rajgrha, so too, he taught the dharma through the modality of secret mantra at the glorious Dhānyakaṭaka.”⁸¹⁹

The deep interconnection of *Kālacakra* with the Prince of *Prajñā* is suggested even here, for Dharmadhātu Vagīśvara is, of course a form of Mañjuśrī.⁸²⁰

Summary and Conclusions:

In Chapter Four’s review of artistic and literary treatments of critical wisdom in the early Pāla, I suggested that *prajñā* was conflated with the overall identity of the Pāla domain as historically-significant Buddhist heartland, an economically-critical web of

⁸¹⁹ Raviśrījñāna. ‘*Phags pa ‘jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa mdor bsad bdud rtsi ‘i thig pa zhes bya pa (Amṛtakāṇika-nāma-āryanāma-saṃgīti-tippaṇī)*. PT #2111, rgyud ‘bum, Ca, 45a, 4-7: ‘*dir nges bar dpal ldan ‘bras sbungs rgyal ba ‘i mchod rten chen por sangs rgyas bjom ldan ‘das dpal sha kya senge zhes bya ba la rgyud sna tshogs pa nyan par ‘dod ma rnams kyis gsol ba btab bas dpyid zl ‘bring po’ nya la dpal chos kyi dbyings su gsung gi dbang phyug gi dkyil ‘khor ang/de ‘I sdeng du dpal ldan na rgyu skar gyi dkyil ‘khor dang po ‘I sangs rgyas rnam par spros nas der nyi ma de nyid la lha la sogs pa rnams la sang rgyas kyis dbang bskur nas rgyas pa dang bsdu pa ‘I dbye bas gsang sngags kyi tshul thams cad bstan to*

See Advayavajra’s ‘*Phags pa ‘jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa ‘i ‘grel pa snying po mngon par rtogs pa zhes bya ba (Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-ṅikā-nāma-sārābhi-samaya-nāma)*. Derge 2098, Tshi 95a-b, and Anupamarakṣita’s *MNS vṛtti*, Peking 2112, 116a.

⁸²⁰ See, for example, Bhattacharya’s *Sādhnamāla*, 128. Manjughosa is also the main deity of the Dharmadhātu Vagīśvara *maṇḍala* described in the *Niṣpannayogāvali*. See also Deborah E. Klimburg-Salter, “The *Dharmadhātu-Vagīśvara-Mañjuśrī* Maṇḍala Tabo ‘Du Khan’.” *Tabo Studies II: Manuscripts, Texts, Inscriptions, and the Arts*, Edited by C. A. Scherrer-Schaub and E. Steinkeller, 299-320. Roma: Istituto Italiano per l’Africa e l’Oriente, 1999.

pilgrimage sites, the conquering prowess of the early Pāla rulers, and with the newly-expanded boundaries of their Magadha-centered domain. This web of associations fostered the vitality of both the Pāla state and Pāla Buddhist monasteries.

Noting that Pāla State patronage of eighth and ninth century monasticism was apparently both substantial and explicitly concerned with the production of *prajñā*-centric works, I hypothesized that eighth and ninth century monastic *prajñā* discourse was produced at the overlapping interstices of shared monastic and royal concerns – in short, that monastic presentations of *prajñā* were tacitly colored by State concerns. One example of this overlap might, I suggested, be seen in portrayals of *prajñā* in early Pāla art and *PP* commentaries, which seem to emphasize the intersection of *prajñā* with historically- and religiously significant sites in the Pāla heartland. This “locatizing” of *prajñā* -- whose logic can be traced to early Mahāyāna and *Prajñā-pāramitā* literature – tacitly promoted both State legitimation and monastic institutional vitality.

Turning to later (tenth and eleventh century) Pāla India, I noted that by the beginning of the tenth century, the geographical boundaries of the Pāla domain had dramatically diminished – as had Pāla patronage of Buddhist monasticism. Accordingly, I theorized a concomitant “cooling” of monastic and State relations and hypothesized that artistic and literary portrayals of *prajñā* would reflect this change. This hypothesis was tentatively confirmed: later Pāla art and *PP* commentaries show a marked tendency to de-emphasize *prajñā*'s locative dimensions-- i.e. *prajñā*'s equation with the “body” of the Pāla empire -- in favor of a renewed emphasis upon book worship, a practice with deep roots in *Prajñā-pāramitā* discourse (see Chapter Two). By reiterating this *Prajñā-pāramitesque* argument, late Pāla monastic artists and writers betrayed the impact of

prajñā-pāramitā discourse on their perceptions and possibly on their strategies for institutional survival.

In this final chapter, I turned to Pāla-period literary and artistic treatments of Mañjuśrī -- Mahāyāna Buddhism's long-time icon of monastic identity. I hypothesized that Pāla portrayals of the Crown Prince of *prajñā* would not only mirror Pāla monastics' perspectives on *prajñā*, but also the shifting and complex relationships between Buddhist monasteries and the Pāla State. In this context, I looked with particular interest at the *sāmanta*-overlord relationship so central to early medieval Indian politics as an idiom through which to conceptualize monastic-State relations. I highlighted the way in which Pāla monastic identity pivoted and circulated in that equation: the monk was alternately a *sāmanta* of the Pāla ruler and *Vajrācārya*-overlord to the Pāla king.

To test those presumptions, I compared the sculptural record of the eighth and ninth century with that of the tenth and eleventh centuries, as well as the treatment of Mañjuśrī in exoteric and esoteric literature of those two time periods. This analysis yielded mixed results. Pāla portrayals of the bodhisattva in the artistic arena were consonant with some trends I identified in the early vs. late treatments of *prajñā*; the renewed emphasis on book worship for example, was soundly corroborated. I did not, however, find as substantial a body of evidence to confirm the de-emphasis on *prajñā*-s locative dimensions I inferred from my analysis of contemporaneous literature.

On the other hand, artistic portrayals of Mañjuśrī seemed to resonate more distinctly with the multiple and evolving identities of the Buddhist monastery. In the eighth and ninth centuries, when monastic-State relations were apparently intimate and consistent, Mañjuśrī was portrayed almost exclusively in his military royal *kumāra*

dimension. This trend could, I suggested, be read in a number of ways: as an analogization of Mañjuśrī to the Pāla overlord, and/or an evocation of the monastery's role as *sāmanta* to the Pāla king.

By contrast, monastic Mañjuśrīs of the tenth and eleventh century showed a marked amplification of the *bodhisattva*'s monastic persona, evident in an upsurge of images of Mañjuśrī giving instruction in the *dharma*, or adorned with monastic paraphernalia such as *akṣamāla*, or holding a manuscript. This iconographic shift may, I suggested, reflect the distancing between the monastery and the Pāla State: Mañjuśrī is less overtly analogized to Pāla royalty, and less firmly associated with his identity as *kumāra sāmanta* to powerful Pāla overlord. The loss of Pāla patronage may have shaped Mañjuśrī imagery in other ways. Presumably, tenth-eleventh century Pāla monasteries were necessarily less dependent on royal largesse than on outside donations and revenue from its land grants— in short, on its ability to function as worthy donee and successful overlord. These roles were, I suggested, respectively reflected in 1) the increase of images of Mañjuśrī holding offerings and donation bowls, and 2) grasping both book and sword – i.e. embodying an image of both secular and spiritual overlordship. The increase in book imagery might likewise have reflected monastic attempts to deploy the *PP* strategy of “setting up the book” to create new sites for worship and donation.

My analysis of contemporaneous literary portrayals of the Crown Prince yielded somewhat less tangible results. Speaking generally, it seems that Mañjuśrī's portrayals in early Pāla exoteric literature are less numerous and diverse than those in Pāla art. The examples that I did uncover were generally congruent with my analysis of the art record; for example, the emphasis upon Mañjuśrī as a tacit converter of others to the *bodhisattva*

path broadly resonates with the artistic tendency to emphasize *prajñā*'s conquering qualities. However, these examples were few and far between, and hardly differed from late Pāla depictions of Mañjuśrī in exoteric literature. At best, my analysis of the exoteric literary record yielded inconclusive if not actively discouraging findings.

By contrast, Mañjuśrī was far more frequently and diversely portrayed in Pāla Tantric literature: the Crown Prince manifested under a dozen different titles and forms in *sādhana* compilations, *maṇḍala* descriptions and commentaries to a pre-Pāla Tantra organized around the Crown Prince himself: the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti*. Mañjuśrī's depictions in the *sādhana* and *maṇḍala* works share many features of his Pāla artistic portrayals; for example, we found a generous number of *sādhanas* dedicated to the Siddhaikavīra form of Mañjuśrī so prevalent in early Pāla monastic art, and to book-and-sword wielding Mañjuśrī Arapacanas, thus underscoring Pāla book-centricity. However, because these literary examples cannot be securely dated, they could not be employed to compare early and late Pāla representations, and so were inconclusive.

My analysis of the *MNS* and its literature was, however, more rewarding. The strong *Prajñā-pāramitesque* characteristics of the *MNS* tacitly confirmed the import and attraction of *PP* discourse to Pāla monastics, as did the deployment by Pāla *MNS* commentators of *PP* discursive strategies. Likewise, the treatment of *prajñā* by *MNS* commentators echoed the early Pāla tendency to emphasize *prajñā*'s site-specific connections and the late Pāla trend towards highlighting its trans-local, symbolic dimensions. This *MNS*-centric review yielded additional insights into the deployment of Mañjuśrī discourse by Buddhist monastics. For example, Mañjuśrī's time-honored role as guarantor of *buddhavacana* and scholastic legitimacy was evidently tapped, not only by

Pāla monastics seeking to justify the incorporation of heterodox Tantric practices into monastic curricula, but by the Central Asian compilers of the *Kālacakratantra*.

This project also opens the door to a variety of insights into methodological concerns. The occasional disjunctions I found between artistic and literary trends sharpened my desire to know the specific circumstances of production of each medium. Who were the intended audiences of each work? Who – if anybody – was its patron, and how heavily did s/he influence its content? The scarcity of relevant data makes it difficult to clarify these points; accordingly, my readings of these works are necessarily more speculative and less nuanced than the project deserves. This paucity of data similarly confines my tentative reconstruction of Pāla monarchical patronage trends, and underscores the logical pitfalls of arguing *ad absentia*: i.e. of presuming that a failure to uncover evidence of substantial royal patronage by late Pāla monarchs constitutes proof-positive that such patronage did not occur. Clearly, a methodological approach that more effectively negotiates these challenges is a desideratum for further research.

These limitations notwithstanding, *A View of Mañjuśrī* arguably problematizes a number of scholarly truisms concerning Pāla Buddhism. The examination of the Pāla copper-plate grants in tandem with State legitimation strategies makes it difficult to adhere to the naïve assumption that the Pāla monarchs were uniformly devout Buddhists and the core patrons of Pāla monasticism. The likelihood that Buddhist monasteries of the late Pāla were instead substantially supported by non-royal donations concomitantly belies the widely-held belief that Pāla Buddhism was institutionally moribund and unresponsive to the needs of the laity. Rather, our findings suggest that Pāla monasteries

were remarkably successful in adapting to changing social circumstances and institutional demands, and remained a crucial feature of Pāla social and economic life until at least the twelfth century.

This observation points us, in turn, to a disturbing lacuna in Kulke's pan-Indian model of State legitimation strategies: his failure to consider the parts played by Buddhist monasteries. True, Kulke's theorizing grows largely out his research into south Indian Hindu kingdoms, and so inevitably privileges non-Buddhist examples. Nonetheless, we cannot help but suspect that his oversight reflects a broader tendency among contemporary Indologists to underestimate the vitality and importance of Buddhist monasticism to early medieval north Indian society.

A View likewise points us to a diversity of future research trajectories. Even a cursory consideration of monastic identity in the Pāla period hints of intriguing complexities – of shifting and multiple roles experienced through a subjectivity constructed, not within the discourses of modern, Euro-American Cartesian unitary consciousness, but through the Mahāyāna metaphysics of selflessness. As such, the topic of such a study might fruitfully be conceptualized, not as a modern Western “individual” but as a “subject”; for as both Śākyamuni and contemporary theorists remind us,

focusing on subjectivity instead of individual takes into account that people's selves are processural and that they change over a lifetime of experiences; that one person can occupy many “subject positions” within multiple discourses [disciple, teacher, layman, monk, *sāmānta*, overlord]; and that these dynamics are constructed within an ensemble of social relations... We must grant that human “selves” are not substantialized unities that everywhere and in every epoch interact according to the same set of universal laws...⁸²¹

⁸²¹ Angela Zito, *Of Body & Brush*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, 209.

A deeper consideration of the relationship between the discourses of *prajñā* and desire in Pāla Tantric thought is another intriguing research possibility. The “logic” of Pāla Tantrika monastics’ deep engagement with *prajñā* might, as I discussed previously, have roots in teachings about *pañña* as foundational as those in the *Nikāya*. As I discussed in Chapter Two (pp. 15 ff.), several *Nikāyas* may be read to suggest that attachment to sense pleasures and pains perpetuates suffering and unenlightened vision – that it is desire which prevents our “seeing things as they are.” The antidote to this conflict is found not in the stigmatization of desire, but in the moderation and self-control engendered by the consecutive practice of *sīla* (ethics), *samādhi* (concentration), and *pañña*. Put into Tantric terms, we might assert that personal liberation is achieved through the artful mastery of sexual desire by *sīla* – i.e. monastic discipline -- and *samādhi*, i.e. Tantric *sādhana*. These “liberative technologies” culminate in *prajñā*, i.e. non-dual intuition (and later *jñāna* and supreme immutable bliss). I am again reminded of Foucault’s similar studies on desire in early Greek culture, and suspect his work might prove a useful methodological aid to this prospective project.

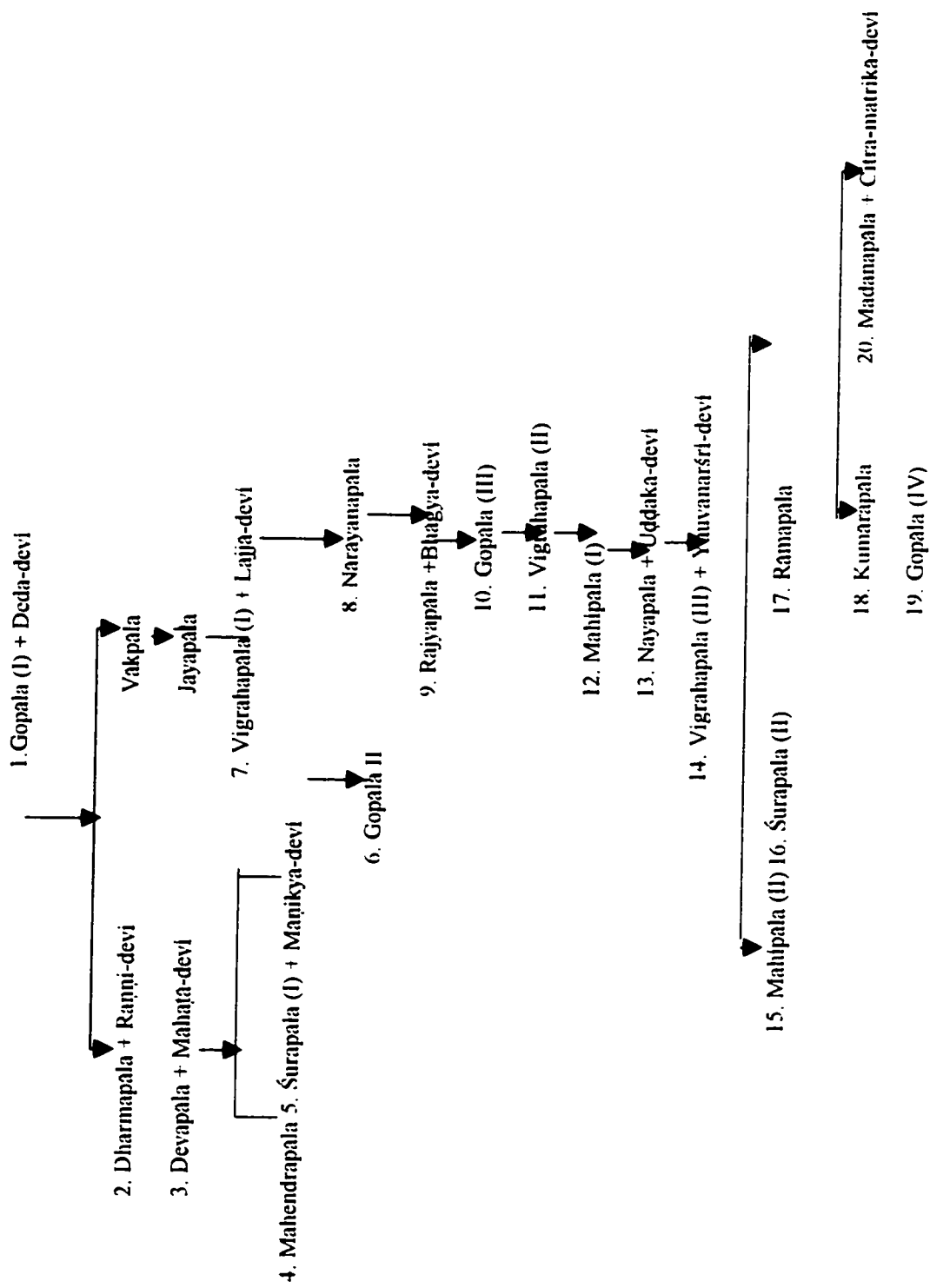
Finally, *A View of Mañjuśrī* directs our attention outside the boundaries of Pāla India to the monasteries of Tibet. From the eighth through the twelfth century, Pāla monastic scholars helped carry Mañjuśrī texts and practices to Tibet; Vimalamitra for example, one of the most prominent commentators to the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīṭī*, was invited to Tibet by Khri-srong lde’u btsan (642-797) where he is considered to be a principal bearer of the *snying thig* meditation system. The influence of this system on the interpretation of the *MNS* in Tibet is thus an intriguing avenue of exploration in its own

right, and might also serve as a window through which to examine the history and impact of Pāla-Tibetan relations.

Similarly, from at least the thirteenth centuries, *Kālacakra*-centric *MNS* commentaries written by Pāla Indian monastics had a pronounced impact on the history and content of Tibetan *Kālacakra* scholarship and practice. Closer investigation of the placement of Pāla *MNS* commentaries by Tibetan *Kālacakra* scholars thus promises to shed light on both the significant interplay between Indian and Tibetan thought, and on the development of indigenous Tibetan schools of *Kālacakra* interpretation. As a step towards these ends, I conclude this project with a provisional translation of the first four chapters of one such Tibetan *MNS* commentary by the Second Dalai Lama of Tibet, dGe 'dun rGya mtsho (1475-1542): “The Great Sun Illuminating the Reality of Vajra Yoga: An Extensive Explanation of THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ (*mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i rgya cher bshad pa rdo rje'i rnal 'byor gyi de kho na nyid snang bar byed pa'i nyi ma chen po zhes bya ba*)”. My hope that this work may serve as a small stepping-stone for more advanced scholars and translators than I.

APPENDIX A: Pāla Chronologies

Succession of Pāla kings



Provisional Ruling Dates

King	Known Reign Length	Approximate Dates
1. Gopāla	NA	750-775
2. Dharmapāla	32	775-812
3. Devapāla	35 or 39	812-850
4. Mahendrapāla	15	850-865
5. Śūrapāla (I)	NA	865-870
6. Gopāla II	4	870-874
7. Vighrapāla (I)(?)	NA	874-875
8. Nārāyaṇapāla	54	875-932
9. Rājyapāla	37	932-969
10. Gopāla III	11 or 17	969-980
11. Vighrapāla (II)(?)	NA	980-983
12. Mahīpāla (I)	48:	983-1031
13. Nayapāla	15	1031-1046
14. Vighrapāla (III)	26	1046-1072
15. Mahīpāla (II)(?)	NA	1072-1073
16. Śūrapāla (II)(?)	NA	1073-1074
17. Ramapāla	53	1074-1127
18. Kumarapāla (?)	NA	1127-1128
19. Gopāla (IV)	15	1128-1143
20. Madanapāla	22	1143-1165

Note: The approximate dates are *highly provisional*, and represent a “best-guess” based on the suggested hypotheses of D.C. Sircar, Susan Huntington and Gouriswar Bhattacharya. They are provided to give the reader a rough sense of historical location. The suggested progression of the kings is drawn entirely from Gouriswar Bhattacharya in Bautze-Picron 1998.

APPENDIX B: Illustrations

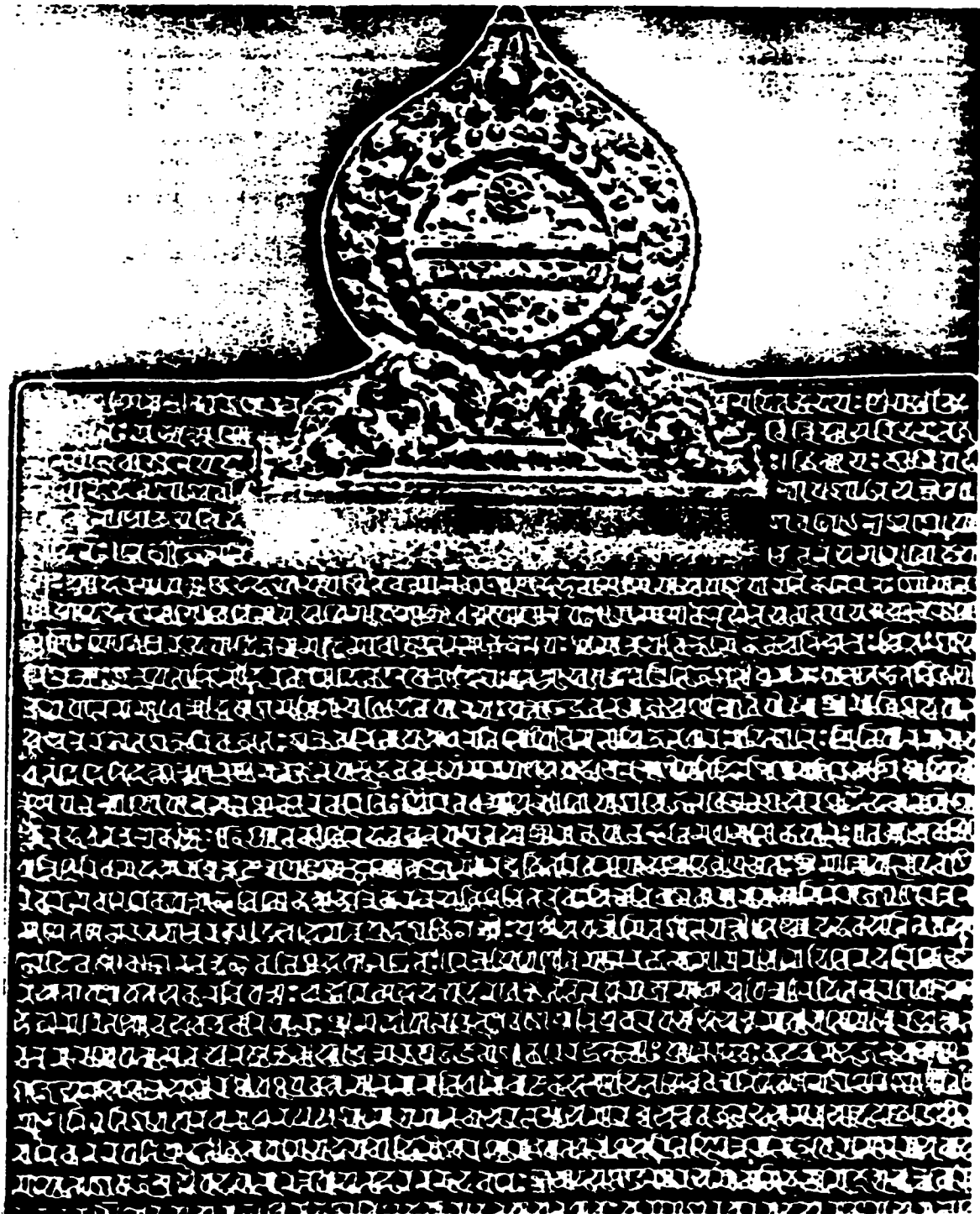


Figure 1: Seal of Mahīpāla's Bānargh copper plate. From R.D. Banerji, "The Bānargh Grant of Mahīpāla I: the Ninth Year," *Epigraphia Indica*, XIV, 1917-1918.



Figure 2: Seal of Vigrahapāla's Bangaon copper plate. From D.C. Sircar, "Bangaon Plate of Vigrahapāla III: Regnal Year Seventeen," *Epigraphia Indica*, XXIX, 1951-52.

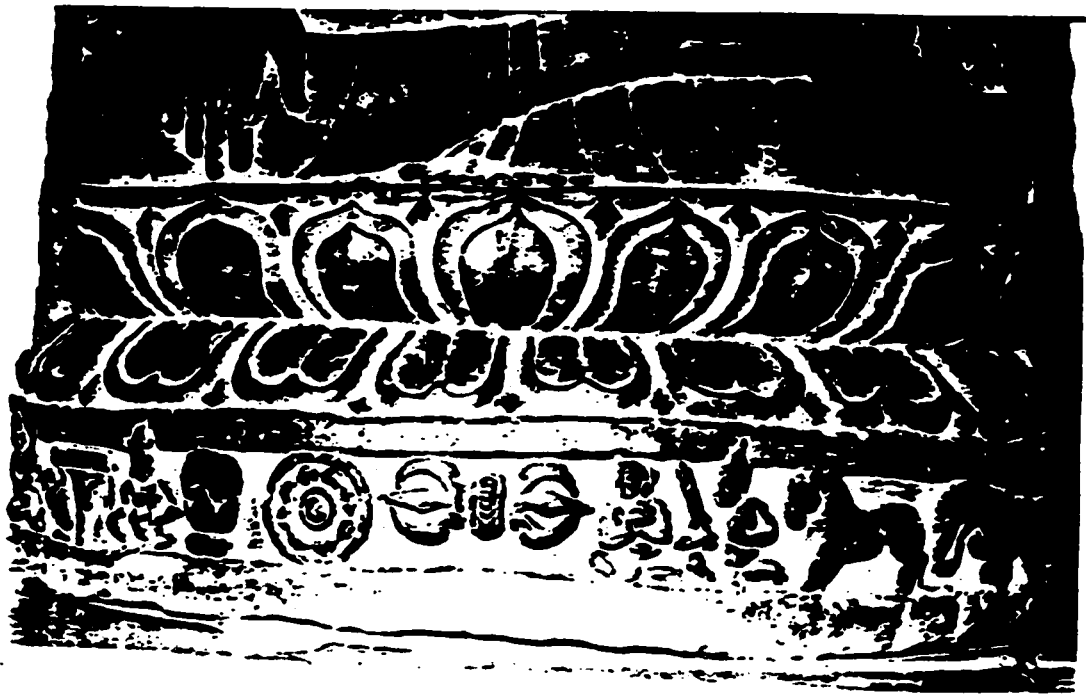


Fig. 3: Detail of 10th c. a tenth century stone *bhumisparśamudra*: Buddha sits above a book which rests upon a pedestal flanked by a venerating male figure. From J. Kinnard, Imaging Wisdom, 1999, unpublished galleries.



Fig. 4: Siddhaikavira, Nālandā, 8th century, stone. From S.K. Saraswati, Tantrayāna Art: An Album. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1977, plate 13.



Fig. 5: Mañjuśrī, 10th century, Nālanda, stone. From J. Kinnard, Imaging Wisdom, unpublished galleries, 1999.



Fig. 6: Mañjuvara, Bihar, 11th c, stone. From J. Kinnard, *Imaging Wisdom*, unpublished galleries, 1999, 334.



Fig. 7: Mañjukumāra, Nālandā, 10th c., stone. From S.K. Saraswati, Tantrayāna Art: An Album. Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1977, pl. 31.

Appendix C: Translation of Verses 1-27 of the *Mañjuśrī-Nāma-Saṃgīti*, based on the Sanskrit edition published by Ronald Davidson (1981)

Sanskrit (with Tibetan provided for reference)	Provisional English translation
I.	
<p>Atha vajradharaḥ śrīmān durdāntadamakaḥ paraḥ/ trilokavijayī vīro guhyarāṭ kuliśeśvaraḥ//</p> <p>de nas dpal ldan rdo rje `chang/gdul dka` `dul ba mams kyi mchog/ dpa` po `jig rten gsum las rgyal/rdo rje dbang phyug gsnang ba`i rgyal// (1)</p>	<p>Then, Vajradhara, the glorious, the best tamer of those difficult to tame, a hero [because he is] conquerer of the three worlds, the lord of secrets, lord of the thunderbolt.</p>
<p>vibuddhapuṇḍarikākṣaḥ protphullakamalānaḥ/ prollālayan vajravaramḥ svakareṇa muhur muhuḥ//</p> <p>pa dma dkar po rgyas `dra`i spyang/pa dma rgyas `dra`i zhal mnga `ba/rang gi lag gis rdo rje mchog/yang dang yang du gsor byed pa// (2)</p>	<p>With eyes like a white lotus in full-bloom, with a face like a wide-open lotus, again and again twirling by his own hand the supreme of vajras</p>
<p>bhṛkufītarāṅgapramukhair anantair vajrapānibhiḥ/ durdāntadamakair vīrair vīrabībhatsarūpabhiḥ//</p> <p>khro gnyer rim par ldan la sogs/lag na rdo rje mtha` yas pa/dpa` bo gdul dka` `dul ba po`jigs su rung dang dpa` byad can// (3)</p>	<p>Accompanied by innumerable Vajrapānis with furrowed brows, heroes [because they are] tamers of the difficult to tame, possessed of fearsome, heroic forms.</p>
<p>ullālayadbhiḥ svakaraiḥ prasphuradvajrakotibhiḥ/ prajñopāyamahākaruṇājagadarthakaraiḥ paraiḥ//</p> <p>rdo rje rtse mo rab `phro ba/rang gi lag gis gsor byed pa/ snying rje che dang shes rab dang/ thabs kyi `gro don byed pa`i mchog// (4)</p>	<p>Lifting upwards with their own hands [their] flashing-tipped vajras, supreme [because they are] actors for the good of the world through their wisdom, their liberative artistry and their great compassion.</p>
<p>hr̥ṣṭatuṣṭāsāyair muditaiḥ krodhavigraharūpibhiḥ/ buddhakṛtyakarair nāthaiḥ sārddham pranātavigrahaiḥ//</p> <p>dga` mgu rangs pa`i bsam pa can/khro bo`i lus kyi gzugs ldan pa/sangs rgyas `phrin las byed pa`i mgon/lus btung mams dang lhan cig tu// (5)</p>	<p>With a joyful and contented demeanor, possessing the form of Krodhas, protectors, performing the acts of Buddhas, their bodies bowed,</p>
<p>prāṇamya nātham sambuddham bhagavantam tathāgatam/ kṛtāñjalipuṭo bhūtvā idam āha sthito `grataḥ//</p> <p>mgon pa bcom ldan de bzhin gshegs/rdsogs sangs rgyas la phyag `tshal te/thal mo sbyar ba byas gyur nas/spyang sngar `dug ste `di skad gsol// (6)</p>	<p>[Vajradhara] bowed in devout salutation to the Protector, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, the Bhāgavan, the Tathāgata, he joined his palms, stood before [the Buddha] and said:</p>

<p>maddhitāya mamārthāya anukampāya me vibho/ māyājālābhisambodher yathā lābhī bhavāmy aham//</p> <p>khyab bdag bdag la sman pa dang/bdag don bdag la thugs brtse' ba'i phyir/sgyu 'phrul dra bas mngon rdsogs pa'i/byang chub ci nas bdag thob mdsod// (7)</p>	<p>For my benefit, O Pervading Lord, for my sake, as a favor to me, in order for me to obtain the Complete Enlightenment by the Māyājāla,</p>
<p>ajñānapaṅkamagnānām kleśavyākulacetasām/ hitāya sarvasattvānām anuttaraphalāptaye//</p> <p>nyon mongs pas ni sems dkrugs shing/mi shes 'dam bu bying ba yi/sems can kun la sman pa dang/bla med 'bras bu thob ya'i phyir// (8)</p>	<p>For the benefit of all sentient beings sunk in the slough of misknowledge, whose minds are disturbed by addictions, for the sake of attaining the unexcelled fruit,</p>
<p>prakāśayatu sambuddho bhagavān śāstā jagadguruh/ mahāsamayattattvajña indriyāśayavit paraḥ//</p> <p>rdsogs pa'i sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das/'gro ba's bla ma ston pa po/dam tshig chen po de nyid mkhyen/dbang po bsam pa mkhyen mchog gi //(9)</p>	<p>May the Bhagavan, the Perfectly Enlightened Buddha, the teacher, the guru to the world, he who knows the suchness of the great Pledge Being, he who knows the disposition and capabilities (of others), he who is supreme, please teach</p>
<p>bhagavajñānakāyasya mahoṣṇīśasya gīṣpateḥ mañjuśrījñānasattvasya jñānamūrteḥ svayambhuvaḥ//</p> <p>bcom ldan 'das kyi ye shes sku/gtsug tor chen po tshig gi bdag/ye shes sku ste rang byung ba' jam dpal ye shes sems dpa'i yi//(10)</p>	<p>Bhagavan, the (MNS) of the intuition body, of the great <i>uṣṇīśa</i>, the Lord of Speech, of the Mañjuśrī Intuition being, the embodiment of intuition, he who is self- born.</p>
<p>gambhīrārthām udārārthām mahārthām asamāṃ śivām/ ādimadyāntakalyāṇīm nāmasaṃgītim uttamām//</p> <p>mtshan ni yang dag brjod pa'i mchog/donn zab don ni rgya che zhin/don chen mtshungs med rab zhi ba/thog ma bar dang mthar dge ba// (11)</p>	<p>That highest <i>Nāmasaṃgīti</i>, profound in meaning, lofty in meaning, great in meaning, without equal, auspicious, virtuous in the beginning, middle and the end.</p>
<p>yāfitair bhāṣitā buddhair bhāṣiṣyante hy anāgatāḥ/ pratyutpannās ca sambuddhā yāṃ bhāṣante punaḥ punaḥ</p> <p>'das pa'i sangs rgyas mams kyis gsungs/ma 'ongs mams kyang gsung 'gyur la/da ltar byung ba'i rdsogs sangs rgyas/yang dang yang do gsung ba gang// (12)</p>	<p>Which was pronounced by past Buddhas, thus [that] which will be pronounced by future [Buddhas] again, and which the Perfectly Enlightened Buddhas of the present pronounce again.</p>

<p>māyājālamahātantre yā cāsmiṃ saṃpragīyate/ mahāvajradharair hr̥ṣṭair ameyair mantradhāribhiḥ//</p> <p>rgyud chen sgyu 'phrul dra ba las/rdo rje 'chang chen gsang sngags 'chang/dpag med mams kyis dgyes pa yis/rab gsungs gang lags bshad du gsol (13)</p>	<p>Which is recited in the great <i>Māyājāla</i> <i>Tantra</i> by countless joyful mantra-holding Mahāvajradharas.</p>
<p>aham cainām dhārayiṣyāmy ā niryānād dṛḍhāśayah/ yathā bhāvamy ahaṃ nātha sarvasaṃbuddhaguhyadhṛk//</p> <p>mgon po rdsogs sangs rgyas kun gyi/gsang 'dzin ci nas bdag 'gyur phyir/nges par 'byung gi bar du 'di/bdag gyis bsam pa brtan pos gzhung// (14)</p>	<p>And which I, of stalwart disposition, will hold until liberation. So that I may be protector, the keeper of the secrets of all the Perfectly Enlightened Buddhas [please teach].</p>
<p>prakāśayiṣye sattvānām yathāśayaviśeṣataḥ/ aśeṣakleśanāśāya aśeṣājñānahānaye//</p> <p>nyon mongs ma lus bsal ba dang/mi shes ma lus spang ba 'i phyir/sems can mams kyi bsam pa yi/khyad par ji bzhin rab bshad bgyi//(15)</p>	<p>I will teach in keeping with the particular dispositions of beings, for the destruction of the entirety of the addictions, for the abandonment of the entirety of misknowledge.</p>
<p>evam adhyeṣya guhyendro vajrapāṇis tathāgatam/ kṛtāñjalipuṭo bhūtvā prahvakāyasthito 'grataḥ</p> <p>gsang dbang lag na rdo rje yis/de bzhin gshegs la de skad du/gsol btab thal mo sbyar byas te/lus btud nas ni spyang sngar 'dug// (16)</p>	<p>Having thus beseeched the Tathāgata, Vajrapāṇi the Lord of Secrets joined his palms together and stood before him, body bowed.</p>
II.	
<p>atha śākyamunir bhagavān saṃbuddho dvipadottamah/ nirṇamayyāyatām sphītām svajihvām svamukhāc chubhām//</p> <p>de nas bcom ldan śākya thub/rdsogs pa 'i sangs gyas rkang gyis mchog/nyid kyi zhal nas ljags bzang ba/ring zhing yangs pa brkyang mdsad de// (17)</p>	<p>Then Śākyamuni, the Bhagavan, the Perfect Buddha, supreme among the two-footed, extended from his mouth his large, beautiful tongue.</p>
<p>smitaṃ saṃdarśya lokānām apāyatrayaśodhanam/ trailokyābhāsakaraṇam caturmārāriśāsanam//</p> <p>'jig rten gsum po snang byed cing/bdud bzhi dgra mams 'dul byed pa/sems can mams kyi ngan song gsum/sbyong bar byed pa 'i 'dsum bstan nas// (18)</p>	<p>He showed a smile, purifying the three lower rebirths of the world, illuminating the three worlds, chastising the enemies, the four Maras, (and)</p>

<p>trilokam āpūrayantyā brāhmyā madhurayā girā/ pratyabhāṣata guhyendram vajrapāṇim mahābalaṃ//</p> <p>tshangs pa'i gsung ni snyan ba yis/'jig rten gsum po kun bkang ste/lag na rdor rje stobs po che/gsang dbang la ni slar gsungs pa//(19)</p>	<p>Replied to Vajrapāṇi, Lord of Secrets, of great strength, with a sweet, Brahma-like voice filling the three worlds,</p>
<p>sādhu vajradharaḥ śrīmān sādhu te vajrapāṇaye/ yas tvam jagaddhitārthāya mahākaruṇayānvitah//</p> <p>snying rje che dang ldan gyur pas/'gro la phan pa'i don du khyod/ye shes lus can 'jam dpal gyi/ming brjod pa ni don che ba// (20)</p>	<p>“Well done. O Vajradhara, glorious one. Well done, Vajrapāṇi. Because you, so compassionate for the sake of the world.</p>
<p>mahārthām nāmasamgītiṃ pavitrām aghanāśanīm/ mañjuśrījñānakāyasya mattaḥ śrotuṃ samudyataḥ</p> <p>dag par byed cing sdig sel ba/nga las mnyan par brston pa ni/legs so dpal ldan rdo rje 'chang/lag na rdo rje khyod legs so//</p> <p>(21)</p>	<p>Are eager to hear from me the <i>Nāmasamgīti</i> of the Mañjuśrī Intuition Body that is great in meaning, auspicious, destructive of evil.</p>
<p>tat sādhu deśayāmy eṣa ahaṃ te guhyakādhipaḥ/ śṛṇu tvam ekāgramanās tat sādhu bhagavann iti//</p> <p>gsnags ba'i bdga po phyir ngas/khyod la legs par bstan par bya/khyod ni tse gcig yid kyis nyon/bcom ldan de ni legs shes gsol. (22)</p>	<p>I will reveal to you [this] excellent thing. O Lord of Secrets. Listen well, with a one- pointed mind.” “Excellent, Bhagavan.”</p>
<p>III.</p>	
<p>atha śākyamunir bhagavāṃ sarvakalāṃ mantrakulāṃ mahat/ mantravidyādharakulāṃ vyavalokya kulatrayaṃ//</p> <p>de nas bcom ldan śākya thub/gsnag sngags rigs chen thams cad dang/gsang sngags rig sngags 'chang ba'i rigs/rigs sum la ni mam par gzigs// (23)</p>	<p>Then the Bhagavan Śākyamuni, having looked out upon the entire great clan of mantras – the mantra knowledge-holder clan, the triple clan,</p>
<p>lokalokottarakulāṃ lokālokakulāṃ mahat/ mahāmudrākulāṃ cagryaṃ mahoṣṇīsakulāṃ mahat//</p> <p>'jig rten 'jig rten 'das pa'i rigs/'jig rten snang byed rigs chen dang/phyag rgya chen po'i rigs mchog dnag/rigs chen gtsug tor chen gzigs nas// (24)</p>	<p>the worldly and transcendent clan, the great world-illuminating clan, the pre-eminent mahāmudrā clan and the great uṣṇīṣa clan,</p>

<p>IV.</p> <p>imāṃ ṣaḍmantrarājānam samyuktām advayodayām/ anutpādadharminīm gāthām bhāṣate sma girām pateḥ//</p> <p>tshig gi bdag pos tshigs su bcad/gsnag sngags rgyal po drug ldan zhing/gnyis su med par 'byung ba dang/my skye chos can 'di gsungs pa//(25)</p>	<p>uttered this verse of the Lord of Speech, [that is] endowed with six royal mantras, which is the source of non-duality, which has the characteristic of non-arisal:</p>
<p>A Ā Ī Ū E AI O AU AM AH: sthito hr̥di/ jñānamūrtir ahaṃ buddho buddhānām tryadhvavartinām//</p> <p>A Ā Ī Ū E AI OA AU AM AH: snying la gnas/ye shes sku bdag sang rgyas te/sangs rgyas dus gsum bzhugs mams kyi'o// (26)</p>	<p>“A Ā Ī Ū E AI OA AU AM AH I, the Buddha, the embodiment of intuition, reside in the heart of the Buddhas of the three times.</p>
<p>OM vajrafikṣṇaduḥkacchedaprajñājñānamūrtaye/ jñānakāyavāgīśvara arapacanāya te namaḥ//</p> <p>OM rdo rje mon po sdug bsngal gcod/shes rab ye shes sku can te/ye shes sku can gsung dbang phyug/'gro ba smin byed khyod la 'dud// (27)</p>	<p>OM – homage to you, Vajra-sharp. Severer of Suffering, Embodiment of the Intuition of Wisdom, Intuition Body, Lord of Speech, Arapacana.”</p>

APPENDIX D:

Translation of Chapters 1-4 of dGe 'dun rGya mtsho, *mTshan yang dag par brjod pa'i rgya cher bshad pa rdo rje'i 'byor gyi de kho nyid snang bar byed pa'i nyi ma chen po zhes bya ba.*

(The Great Sun Illuminating the Reality of Vajra Yoga: An Extensive Explanation of THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ)

**dGe 'dun rGya mtsho's *The Great Sun Illuminating the Reality of Vajra Yoga:*
An Extensive Explanation of THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ
(MAÑJUŚRĪ PARAMĀRTHA NĀMA SAṂGĪTĪ: CHAPTERS 1-4**

ORGANIZATION OF CHAPTERS

INTRODUCTION

I. General arrangement:

- **I.1** How to Comment on Unexcelled Tantra
 - **I.1.1** The Meaning of the Non-dual Tantras *a la* the Hiding Tantras
 - **I.1.2** The “Three Bodhisattva Commentaries” Way of Explanation
- **I.2** How to Comment on the *MNS*
 - **I.2.1** The Essential Topic of the *MNS*
 - **I.2.2** Brief Explanation of *MNS* commentaries
 - **I.2.3** Why Elucidate it in Harmony with the *Kālacakra*
 - **I.2.4** The way to Comment in Harmony with the *Kālachakra*
 - **I.2.4a** The Setting
 - **I.2.4b** Expression of the Greatness of the Tantra
 - **I.2.4c** Presentation of the Condensed Body

II. Actual explanation

- **II.1** Meaning of the Name
- **II.2** Translator's Salutation
- **II.3** Explanation of the Meaning of the Text
 - **II.3.1** Abbreviated Teachings by way of Question and Response
 - **II.3.1a** Chapter of the Question
 - ◆ **II.3.1a-1:** Distinctions of the Collector
 - ◆ **II.3.1a-2:** Distinctions of the Retinue
 - ◆ **II.3.1a-3:** Distinctions of the Way it was Asked
 - ◆ **II.3.1a-4:** Distinctions of the Purpose
 - ◆ **II.3.1a-5:** Distinctions of the Place
 - ◆ **II.3.1a-6:** Distinctions of the Property
 - ◆ **II.3.1a-7:** Distinctions of the Commitments of the Asker
 - **II.3.1b** Chapter of the Response.
 - ◆ **II.3.1b-1:** Miracle of the Teacher and Body
 - ◆ **II.3.1b-2:** Miracle of the Speech
 - ◆ **II.3.1b-3:** How He Approves the Collector
 - ◆ **II.3.1b-4:** How to Listen to the Personal Instructions
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- **II.3.2** Extensive Explanation by way of Question and Response
- **II.3.2a** Arrangement of the Body of the Subject
 - **II.3.2a-1** Explanation of the “Chapter of the Six Clans”
 - **II.3.2a-2** Explanation of the “Chapter on Complete Enlightenment through the *Māyājāla*”

**dGe 'dun rGya mtsho's *The Great Sun Illuminating the Reality of Vajra Yoga:*
An Extensive Explanation of THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ
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TRANSLATION CONVENTIONS

[Square brackets]: contain material which is not present in the original Sanskrit or Tibetan which I have provided to help clarify the text's meaning.

(Round brackets) enclose a synonym for the word or phrase that immediately precedes it; for example, the Tibetan equivalent of a Sanskrit name or the Sanskrit equivalent of an English term.

Citations of the *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti* root text are printed in **bold face**.

Titles of texts are given in *italics*, as are Tibetan and Sanskrit terms, with the exception of proper names.

Chapter titles within individual texts are enclosed in single quotation marks; for example, the 'Cosmology' chapter of the *Kālacakra* tantra.

**The Great Sun Illuminating the Reality of Vajra Yoga:
An Extensive Explanation of
THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ
(MAÑJUŚRĪ PARAMĀRTHA NĀMA SAṂGĪTĪ)**

(1b/2) I bow at all times to the holy Primal Buddha Mañjughoṣa, the great sun which illuminates the reality of vajra yoga -- the great explanation of the elucidation of the names of Noble Mañjuśrī, the king of all Tantras; whose mind is filled with the light rays of a thousand suns of the great wisdom of the changeless supreme great bliss. I bow to Mañju Jñānasattva, imbued with the royal glory of that very sun of the meaning of truth; who is truly united with the consort whose form is the playful celebration of effortless wisdom; who is delivered from the watery bondage of incidental defilements. whose beauty is the truth realm of space, without aspects.

(2a/3) I salute the Śākya lion, the guru of the three states of existence, the Primal Buddha who taught all Tantras with his (bold) omnifaceted speech in the immeasurable mansion of the glorious Drepung.⁸²² As if filled (by a rain of) flowers and robes, his toenail reflects a river of the taintless coiffures of the entire host of deities and *siddhas* -- the totally pure retinue of the Abhirati [Heaven]; like the hundred sounds embraced by a net of earth-protectors. I bow to those who commented on the meaning of the Tantra: the

⁸²² This is the Dhānyakataka *stūpa* in south India, identified as Amaravati in the Sattenpalle Taluka of Guntūr District, Madras. It dates back to at least the second century A.D. See footnote 1 of George Roerich, The Blue Annals: Parts I & II (Bound in One). Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1995, p. 754. The *stūpa* is said to have received its name from an event in the lifetime of the Buddha Kanakamuni, when a monk is said to have caused a magic rain of rice to fall for twelve days, and thus alleviate a famine. The remaining rice was collected and the Heap of Rice (Dhānyakataka) was used to construct a *stūpa*.

Lord of Secrets who compresses all secrets, the two democratic kings, the great *siddha* Anupamarakṣita [and] the glorious Raviśrījñāna, who elucidate the essential meaning. I bow with humility to the glorious bLo bzang grags pa (Tsong kha pa), the actuality of all Victors, who definitively abandoned errors in regard to the keys of the path of all discourses, particularly the Tantras, and [I bow to] his sons. (2b/4)

The *Mañjuśrī-Nāma-Saṃgīṭī* (*MNS*) is the crown [jewel] of all the non-dual Tantras, difficult to fathom by even the most intelligent of the Victor's sons. Here, I will explain its intended meaning -- the vital point of the path of Vajradhara, Lord of Secrets - - according to the way in which it is elucidated by the "Three Bodhisattva Commentaries."⁸²³ From the ocean of yoga which lacks all depth and breadth arises a necklace of glistening pearls of reference and reasoning, embracing the throats of the maidens of the directions. This very thing is worthy of delightful joy.

Among however many pronouncements of the doctrine within the two vehicles of cause and effect which, mindful of the stages of his disciples, the Three World guru Buddha Bhagavān composed, the non-dual Tantras are the chief, the supreme, the most excellent of the Tantra class. Even among these, the essence of the essence, the chief of the chief is the *MNS*. Supremely difficult to fathom and to measure, it is the chief amongst all methods of secret mantra which actualize the ultimate essence. This is the doctrine to be set down.

⁸²³ The "Three Bodhisattva Commentaries" (3BC) are some of the first texts of the Kalacakra literature, and constitute commentaries to three tantras in terms of the Kalacakra path. The *Laghutantratikā* by Vajrapāni elucidates the first ten and a half verses of the *Herukābhīdhānatantra*. The *Hevajratantrapīṇḍārthika* by Vajragarbha explores the first five *paṭalas* of the *Hevajra Tantra*, and the *Vimalaprabhā* by Pundarīka is an extended commentary on the *Laghukālacakratantra*. Francesco Sferra notes that the success of the Kalacakra in its initial phase is closely linked to the diffusion of these three works, which were also an important source for Nāropa's *Sekkodeśafikā*. See Claudio Ciczuzza and Francesco Sferra, "Brief Notes on the Beginning of the Kalacakra Literature." *Dhīh: Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Project* XXIII, pp. 113-14.

There are two [kinds] of explanation: **(3a/5)** [I.] the general arrangement and [II] the actual explanation of the meaning of the words of the root text. The first has two [sub-divisions]: [I.1] concise expression on the way to comment on the intention of Unexcelled Tantra in general, [and] [I.2] explanation on the way to comment on the intention of the *MNS* in particular.

[I.1]: As for the first in general, the Victor's teaching only is the port for those desiring liberation. Even that has two [sub-divisions]: the Universal and Individual Vehicles. Then, the Universal Vehicle has two [parts], for it is divided into the *Mantra vehicle* and the *Perfection vehicle*. The Mantra [vehicle} has four [sub-divisions], for it is divided by Tantra class. Moreover, there are two types of non-dual Tantras, Father and Mother.

With regard to all those four Tantra classes, the things which can be explained in the lengthy general arrangements are: the arrangement of initiations which mature [the disciple]; how to protect one's vows after attaining initiation; the way to meditate on the path while one abides [in those vows]; and finally, the arrangement of the temporary and ultimate fruitions of meditation. **(3b/6)** These are the many things that could be explained. However, since they are extensively described in the scriptures of the foremost father and sons and will be explained elsewhere, I am going to forego their explication. Here, I will explain the crucial points: [I.1.1] the meaning of the non-dual Tantras, just as it is elucidated in the hiding Tantras, along with *their* elucidations, and [I.1.2] the way in which the "Three Bodhisattva Commentaries", etc. comment upon it. That is what I will discuss here.

[L1.1]: [The Meaning of the non-dual Tantras *a la* the Hiding Tantras, and their Elucidations]

Now in general, the main subject matter [of Unexcelled Yoga Tantra] is the *Rupakāya*, adorned with all signs and marks, and imbued with the supreme aspects, etc.; the *Dharmakāya*, the intuition which realizes ultimate reality, which is the realization of emptiness by means of great bliss; [and] the exaltation of the integration (*go-phang*) in which the achievement of the [enlightened] Body and Mind are indivisible in actuality. Insofar as all Unexcelled Yoga Tantras so delineate the meaning, it should be said that all Unexcelled Yoga Tantras 'are of one taste.' Accordingly, all of the learning and analyzing of Unexcelled Tantra should simply be taken as the art of realizing that very state of integration. All the paths of the two stages only serve as the art of achieving that exaltation.

Furthermore, there are two main objects of discussion of all Unexcelled Tantras and the main bases of purification of all paths: (4a/7) the extreme translucency mind, and the subtle body. [Speaking of] those two chief bases of purification: when the [life] systems, etc. involuntarily dissolve, that extreme translucency mind which is the basis [of ordinary reality] manifests. [That process] is conventionally called "death." Then, in the manner of a fish hopping out of the water, a body with the aspect of having a face and hands is actually established out of that mere wind-mind. [This process] has the name of "the between". And the aspect which connects the "between" to the birth-state is designated "birth".

That very [continuum] which exists in the three factors that create those three [states] is purified in the imaginative way by the Creation Stage paths. From the

perspective of transforming [the three states] into three imaginative bodies, [the paths of Creation Stage] serve to ripen the continuum. [By contrast,] the Perfection Stage paths purify in actuality; positively evolved by paths homogeneous to those two, (they) serve as the material cause (*gnyer len*) of the effect – the *Dharmakāya* and the *Rupakāya*. The three Buddha Bodies are made manifest.

In light of that core point, the Creation and Perfection stage paths are different from the procedures of achieving deity yoga and the signless *samādhi* of the lower Tantras. Therefore, at the lower [level], they take the bases of purification as the path, generating a form which is concordant with the processes of birth and death. At the higher [level], they take the fruit as the path, generating from now a form harmonious with the fruitional Truth and Form Bodies.⁸²⁴

In regard to delineating such a basis of purification along with the path and the fruition, there are two aspects (to consider): (4b/8) explaining unclearly, in a hiding manner, and explaining clearly, without hiding.

[Representative texts] of the first [kind] are the *Śrī Guhyasamāja*, the *Hevajra*, the *Cakrasamvara* and the *Laghu Cakrasamvara Tantra*. The essence which is the respective topic expressed by each of them is that very path of the fourth initiation which is definitive in meaning. Having hidden it by [saying things] like “Indeed, it is just like that,”⁸²⁵ the fourth is explained in that very unclear way. Accordingly, they are called “hiding Tantras.”

⁸²⁴ Emend *bskyet te* to *skyet ba te*, to maintain parallel construction.

⁸²⁵ This is found in the *Guhyasamājantra*, Chapter 18, verse 113d, and in the *Hevajratantra*, part II, Chapter iii, 10b.

There are two ways of extracting those hidden meanings. [The first] orientation (*phyogs*) elucidates commentaries by the great *siddhas* who visited the Holy Land, for example, Ārya Nāgarjuna and sons. [They elucidated] the meaning of the respective explanatory Tantras which unfold the intent of the root Tantras. [The second] is elucidation by the “Bodhisattva Commentaries,” which accord with the *Kālacakra Tantra*.

First: Condensing the oral instructions on the meaning of the root *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, and the meanings [explicated] by the six explanatory Tantras such as the *Vajramālā* into the five stages of Creation Stage, Candrakīrti taught the *Pradīpodyotana*.⁸²⁶ With regard to the Perfection Stage itself, the treatises of the noble [Nāgarjuna] and his disciples [describe] five-stage differentiations, such as speech isolation. Then, there are six branches of yoga explained in the *brtag gnyis*.⁸²⁷ and the *Samputa* commentary. The great *siddha* Virūpa spoke of it; he condensed *Hevajra*'s Perfection Stage into the path of three initiations which is famous to this day as the *lam 'bras* system. (5a/9) Moreover, there is the *Intention of the Cakrasamvara Laghu Tantra* in the *Abhidhāna-uttaratantra*. And in order to explain it through the six explanatory Tantras such as the *Mahā-samvarodaya Tantra*, there are elucidations of the individual Creation stages in the treatises of Luipa, Kṛṣṇācārya and Ghantaṭapa. As for the

⁸²⁶ The *Guhyasamāja* commentaries referred to here are sometimes called Ākhyānatāntaras, and are considered canonical to the Ārya ('*Phags pa*) commentarial school. In addition to the *Vajramālātantra* referred to here, the most important of the Ākhyānatāntaras are the *Saṃdhivṛyākaraṇatantra*, the *Caturdevīparipreccātāntara* and the *Vajrasamuccayatantra*. Candrakīrti's *Pradīpodyotana* is likewise a core text for the Ārya school. For more on this category of texts, see J. W. De Jong, "A New History of Tantric Literature." *Indo Kōten Kenkyū* 4 (1984), especially pp. 108-111.

⁸²⁷ The second section or *brtag-pa* of the *Hevajratāntara*. This second part is known as the *Hevajra-dākinī-jālasamvara-tantrarāja* or the *Kye'i rdo rje mkha'i 'gro ma dra ba'i sdom pa'i*.

Perfection Stage, there are elucidations just like the *Mahāyoga*, the *Vasantaṭilaka*, and the *Pañcakrama*.

[L.1.2]

Second: The procedure of explanation by the Bodhisattva commentaries which agrees with the *Kālacakra*-system [is exemplified by] the explanations of the great Nāropā, such as the *Vajrapādasārasaṃgrahapañjika* on the meaning of the *brtag gnyis*; *Vajrapāṇi Stotra*,⁸²⁸ which explains the meaning of the *Cakrasaṃvara*, and the *Sekkodeśapañjikā* which explains the meaning of the supplemental Tantras of the *Guhyasamāja*. In those, the arrangement of outer and inner bases of purification accords with the *Kālacakra*. Moreover, the six branches of yoga which are the means of purification are stated in exactly the way they occur in the *Kālacakra*. In order to understand this in detail, one should (refer to) those texts themselves. Furthermore, the *Vajrapādasārasaṃgrahapañjika* notes:

the definitive meaning of the *Cakrasaṃvara* and the *Catuhṣṭīta* must be understood from the 500,000 *śloka Hevajratantra*: one must understand the definitive meaning of the two light Tantras of *Cakrasaṃvara* from the *Catuhṣṭīta*; and one should understand the definitive meaning of all of them from the 100,000 *śloka Cakrasaṃvalaghu* and *Paramādhībuddhatantra*. By the *Hevajra* you must understand the *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Catuhṣṭīta*. The *Hevajra* and *Cakrasaṃvalaghu* (5b/10) must be understood by means of the *Catuhṣṭīta*. And then, one must understand the word meaning by the *Paramādhībuddha*, and the definitive meaning through the *Cakrasaṃvara*.

Since that is the case, there are two ways of eliciting the meaning of each of these Hiding Tantras such as the *Guhyasamāja*, and *Cakrasaṃvara*: the way of elucidating by the great *siddhas* of the Holy Land, and the way of commenting which accords with the *Kālacakra*.

⁸²⁸ The *Lakṣābhīdhānād-uddhṛta-laghu-tantra-pindārtha-vivarana-nāma*, one of the Three Bodhisattva Commentaries.

The *Kālacakratāntra* commentaries comprise those which explain clearly, without hiding [anything]: the Creation and the Perfection Stages in general, and the Fourth initiation – which is definitive in meaning – in particular. As the *Great Commentary*:⁸²⁹ on the second summary topic of the ‘Cosmology (*Lokadhātu*) Chapter’ states:

Here in the Vajrayāna, the Vajra word is hidden in all Kings of Tantra, in keeping with the capacity of beings. For the Tathāgata said: “The Fourth is again like that;” thus, the Fourth is not the Third, because it is called “the Fourth.” Because it says, “it is again like that,” that very Third becomes the Fourth. Because of this statement of the Bhāgavan, [it is clear that] the vajra word is hidden. The vajra word is not clear in all of the Kings of Tantra; they must be understood through the lineage of the lamas. Thus the Tathāgata said “Tantras are to be understood through other continuum(s).”⁸³⁰

In the Hiding Tantras, the vajra-yoga of definitive meaning is explained in a hidden manner. In regard to clearly-spoken explanations in the *Kālacakra*, (6a/11) the *Vimalaprabhā* states:

at the very end of that [the *Kālacakratāntra*], the Bhagavān made it very clear by teaching, explaining and thoroughly clarifying those Vajra words in the *Ādibuddha*. In the *sadhana* [chapter] of that Tantra, the meditation of the *mahāmudrā* is made very clear as being the path of signs such as smoke, and so forth. ‘What makes one’s mind one-pointed in void (is) thoroughly investigating a single day.’ Because of this statement of the Bhāgavan, the vajra words of the *Ādibuddha* are very clear that the path of *mahāmudrā* is the path of signs such as smoke and so forth. The statement “it is not the verbal edict of the lama” clearly shows that (the meaning) does not come (through) the lineage of the lamas.⁸³¹

When Unexcelled Mantra is taken to be the basis, two great path systems are customarily taught: commentaries on the intent of the Hiding Tantras by the great Indian

⁸²⁹ Pundarīka’s extended commentary on the *Laghukālacakratāntra*, entitled the *Vimalaprabhānāma-mūlatantrānusārīṇī-dvādaśasāhasrikālaghukālacakra-tantrarājafīka*, or the *Vimalaprabhā* for short.

⁸³⁰ Pundarīka (Avalokiteśvara) *bsDus pa’i rgyud’ kyi rgyal po dus kyi ‘khor lo’i ‘grel bshas rtsa ba’i rgyud kyi rjes su ‘jug pa stong phrag bcu gnyis pa dri ma med pa’i ‘od ces bya ba* (*Vimalaprabhānāma-mūlatantrānusārīṇī-dvādaśasāhasrikālaghukālacakra-tantrarājafīkā*). PT #2064, rgyud ‘bum. Ka-2, 17b.3-5.

⁸³¹ PT #2064, 17b.8-18a.3.

siddhas such as Nāgārjuna along with commentaries such as the *Hridayaṅkā* which elucidate the intent of those; and the [path system] which accords with how it is taught by the commentaries of *Kālacakratāntra*.

In the first system, the Perfection Stage paths chiefly generate an aspect utterly harmonious with those bases of purification [which serve] as a means of purifying them: birth, death and the in-between. Not only that: there arises an aspect absolutely harmonious with the three enlightened bodies at the time of fruition. (6b/12) Therefore, the [Perfection Stage] paths definitely meditate on the complete, quintessential technique of taking those three bodies of the Creation Stage as the way of evolving the personality of the practitioner.

By that key, in the Tantras and the texts of the great *siddhas*, the phenomena of the basis are contextually given the name of 'path' and 'fruit'. Moreover, they are also called by the name of 'basis;' the 'path' [has the name] 'fruit', 'fruit' [has the name] 'path.' There are numerous such [examples]. Accordingly, the [*siddhas*] assert that one must clearly identify the bases for achieving the two bodies of Buddha as the extreme translucency mind and the vital wind on which it rides. That extreme translucency mind must be generated as the actuality of orgasmic bliss by the method of terminating the movement of the winds in the right and left channels into the central channel. Thereby, through continuous progress in that homogeneous pattern of realizing voidness by orgasmic bliss, one achieves the Victor's Mind which is the Truth Body (*Dharmakāya*). One accomplishes the pure and impure Magic Bodies, which are actually established from taking that very subtle wind which is the mount for clear light as the basis for achievement. (This is) claimed to be the achievement of the Enjoyment Body

(*Sambhogakāya*), which has the 7-fold branches of union.⁸³² In the paths of Creation and Perfection Stages, it is said that one heightens the impact through the three types of activities, namely proliferated, unproliferated and extremely unproliferated.⁸³³ The way of achieving fruition is described as three ways of becoming purified. In the best case scenario, [it is realized] in the very life in which one enters mantra. In the middling-case scenario, [it happens] in the in-between, and in the worst-case scenario, [it happens] in a subsequent life.

The supplementary Tantras and commentaries on the *Kālacakra* adopt the point of view of the branches (7a/13) of astronomy. First, [one should] consult other texts to delineate with great precision the arrangements of the outer basis to be purified. In keeping with the dictum ‘Just as it is outside, so is it inside,’ consult other sources to determine precisely an inner arrangement whereby [inner phenomena] are harmoniously correlated with the outer things learned about in the “Cosmology” section. In the manner of the dictum, ‘As it is internally, so it is alternately,’ one initially meditates on the Creation Stage as a means of purifying those bases of purification. It is further asserted that by purifying these two bases of birth and death, one can also purify the in-between. Accordingly, there is no arrangement for achieving the pure and impure Magic Bodies in Perfection Stage, nor is there any path on which to meditate to purify the in-between other than the means [deployed to] purify death and birth.

⁸³² 1. Complete Enjoyment Body; 2. Embracing each other; 3. Great bliss; 4. Lack of inherent existence; 5. Filled with compassion; 6. Uninterrupted continuity; 7. Non-cessation.

⁸³³ These refer to activities which are performed during Perfection Stage to enhance meditation on emptiness. “Proliferated” activities entail the use of masks, clothing., etc. and call and response; “Unproliferated” includes masks, clothing, etc., and “extremely unproliferated” includes sexual union with a *jñāna mudrā* and the lear light of sleep. For further discussion, see Daniel Cozort, *Highest Yoga Tantra*. Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 1996, 91-92.

As for the immediate causes of the two bodies of Buddhahood: It is not sufficient to realize emptiness through the orgasmic bliss that develops from depending upon merely a *karma-* and *jñāna-mudrā*. [Rather], one must develop the unchanging great bliss [which is induced] from depending upon a *mahāmudrā*. Thus, the 21,600 paths of realizing voidness by that [kind of great bliss] consume the 21,600 material aspects of this old body – just like mercury consumes iron. [The paths thus] cease all the karmic winds of the twelve great transitions. Eradicating the subtle instinct for transitions, one necessarily engenders the Enlightened Mind as Truth Body.

Likewise, (7b/14) it is claimed that the immediate cause of the Form Body is the achievement of the vision of the Void Form Body within the context of Withdrawal.⁸³⁴ Having stabilized that through the branches of contemplation, the [vision] progressively improves in the context of Life-effort (*srog.rtsol.prāṇayāma*) and Retention (*'dzin.pa.dhāraṇā*). In the context of Subsequent Mindfulness (*anusmṛti, rjes dran*), the body of Universal Form actually arises within the central channel nerve complex of the naval. That body, adorned with the signs and marks of a Buddha, progressively improves through the branch of *samādhi*. By that immediate cause, it is claimed, the Buddha is achieved.

On such occasions as these, the following kind of doubtful point may occur: In general, is that unchanging great bliss which accords with the *Kālacakra* system superior to the orgasmic bliss well-known in the other Unexcelled systems, or is not different? [If one asserts] the latter, [then it follows that] one attains the properly-

⁸³⁴ The *Kālacakra Tantra* teaches a six-branched yoga comprised of: 1) Withdrawal; (*sor.sdud.pratyāhara*) 2) Concentration (*sor.gtan.dhyāna*); 3) Life-effort or Vitality-stopping (*srog.rtsol.prāṇayāma*); 4) Retention (*'dzin.pa.dhāraṇā*); 5) Subsequent mindfulness (*rjes.dran.anusmṛti*); 6) Meditative stabilization (*ting.nge.'dzin.samādhi*).

qualified orgasmic bliss by depending on a *karma-* and *jñāna-mudrā*. How, then, [does one reconcile this statement with the assertion that] immutable great bliss is established in dependence upon the *mahāmudrā*, it not being enough merely to attain a fully-qualified orgasmic bliss through the *karma-* and *jñāna-mudrā*?

If one asserts the former, then since the path of directly realizing voidness through changeless bliss and the path of directly realizing voidness through the mere orgasmic bliss [would be different], they would also be a difference in superiority between the two *Dharmakāyas* that arise in dependence upon those two acting individually as proximate causes. Are there better and worse *Dharmakāyas* between buddhas? Or else, just as at the end of the *Pāramitā* path (8a/15) one definitely has to enter into the *Mantra* path, so too, after traversing the general progress path of Unexcelled Yoga Tantras, one would have to enter the *Kālacakra* path in order to achieve changeless great bliss. Otherwise it would have to be taught that although initially there is a great difference between the orgasmic bliss of the other Unexcelled systems and the unchanging great bliss [of the *Kālacakra* system], within the context of the path there is no difference.

Likewise, is there or is there not a difference between the pair of Void Form Bodies of *Kālacakra* – the one which actually arises during the recollection stage and the one which arises in the *samādhi* branch – and the [two] magic bodies of the other Unexcelled Yoga Tantras, i.e. the well-known third stage magic body and the fifth stage magic body? If [these pairs] are not different, than one must assert that those Void Form Bodies are established from the vitality wind which is the mount of Clear Light, [yet] no authoritative commentator explicitly gives such an explanation. Moreover, it is said that concerning the basis for establishing this particular Void Form Body, each time one

completes the ten signs in the context of withdrawal, there dawns the appearance of the [Kālacakra] Couple (*yab-yum*) in the center of darkness.⁸³⁵ During the branch of contemplation, having placed one's pride on that [vision], it progressively improves, whereby one achieves the Void Form Body.

Either one must teach (8b/16) that that very Couple that is the Void Form Body explained in the context of the withdrawal is accomplished through the vitality wind. Or, although one does not accomplish initially, in such a context of the path, it becomes non-different from accomplishment. One must teach [either one of these erroneous statements] along with reference and reasons.

If there is a difference, then the two bodies in the time of the path would act individually as material causes, and there would be distinctions of superiority and inferiority with regard to the two form bodies which arise in dependence upon that. [Regardless of] however many statements there are of the presentation of the definite need to accomplish through taking just that vitality- wind which is the mount of clear light as the material cause of the Form Body, how would you assert that? [Regardless of] however many statements there are of the presentation of the definite need to accomplish through taking just that vitality-stopping wind which is the proximate cause for Form Body, how would you assert that? Moreover, as far as the basis of creating something in Unexcelled Mantra Yoga, one must take something that exists in the time of the basis as a

^{835a}With the first of the six branches, one experiences the ten signs, and achieves the eleventh – the sign of the *yab-yum*, or deity in sexual union. In fact, the function of the first branch is primarily to accomplish all eleven signs. The ten signs are 1. smoke; 2. mirage; 3. fireflies; 4. butter-lamp flame; 5. fire-like sign; 6. moon-like sign; 7. sun-like sign; 8. Rahu (darkness or gloom); 9. lightening; 10. blue drop. “Then, one visualizes a very, very tiny black drop in the central channel in the space between the eyebrows...(within which one imagines) the *sambhogakāya*-like form of the *Kālacakra* *yab-yum*. This process of bringing the energies into the central channel can also be broken into three stages: 1. ‘Entering’ (*jug-pravesa*); 2. ‘Abiding’ (*ālaya-gnas*) and 3. ‘Dissolving’ (*utthāna-thim*). See Geshe Ngawang Dhargyey, *Kālacakra Tantra*. Translated by Alan Wallace. Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1985. 135 ff.

basis of establishment; therefore, to say “one must achieve two bodies in context of Path and the Fruition” is unacceptable.

If you have this doubt, “it would be wrong to assert that, because in the *Kālachakra* system, the appearance of the Void Form Couple which dawns adventitiously on the occasion of withdrawal serves as the subsidiary cause of the form body by way of positing (divine) pride in that.” These days, I understand most of what people say to be pointless. Even if I am able to assert conclusively, “the Victor Tsong kha pa and his sons asserted (such-and-such) in their system” there would still be some occurrence of doubt. What’s more, the system of *Kālachakra* (9a/17) does not describe a system of developing impact by way of three types of behaviors of yogis in the context of Perfection Stage. Even at the time of actualizing the fruit, the best disciple becomes fully enlightened in this very life of entering *Kālachakra* path, and the worst becomes enlightened in some continuum of lives. Apart from such presentations, there are no presentations of becoming enlightened in the in-between. One becomes enlightened definitely in this very life if, after having attained the fully-qualified body of Remembrance, one attains the ability to induce the great bliss in dependence upon the *mahāmudrā*. If one does not obtain that, one becomes enlightened in subsequent lives. Except for that, there is no place to get enlightened in the in-between.

Now I have explained in general the way of elucidating the intention of the Unexcelled Yoga Tantras. As for extensive details, you can understand them from *The Elucidation Illuminating Reality*.⁸³⁶

[L2]: [The way to comment on the intention of the MNS]

⁸³⁶ A commentary to the *Kālacakra Tantra* by mKhes grup dge legs dpal bzang (1385-1438).

Second: In order to explain the way of elucidating the intention of the *MNS*, there are four sections: [L.2.1] identifying the essential topic of the *MNS*; [L.2.2] a brief explanation of the number of commentaries which explain the *MNS*, and how they elucidate it; [L.2.3] the proof for why one should elucidate it in accordance with the *Kālacakra*; and [L.2.4] the way one actually comments on it in harmony with the *Kālachakra*.

L.2.1 [Identifying the Essential Topic]

The chief topic of this very Tantra [the *MNS*] is the Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva himself of interpretable and definitive meaning, (9b/18) and the paths for achieving that. With regard to these, there are two ways of commenting: the Yoga Tantra way and the Unexcelled Yoga Tantra way.

In the first [Yoga Tantra] way, the definitive meaning Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva is the non-dual intuition of all buddhas. The *Lalitavajra* says: “Here, what is to be expressed is non-dual intuition.” The interpretable Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva is the arisal for the sake of disciples of that very [intuition] in the form of Mañjuśrī-deity wheels.

The Unexcelled Tantra ways of commenting are also of two [types]: the general system, and that done in harmony with the *Kālacakra*. In the first of those, there are two types of Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattvas: the bliss-void Indivisible and the Two-Reality Indivisible. In general, the Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva is the chief meaning of the fruitional *Evam*. The master Advayavajra comments: “the ones [possessed of] acute, very acute and extremely acute faculties should strive to go to the essence of that very expression

‘*evam maya sruta samaya eka.*’”⁸³⁷ He states that because the Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva will be achieved by realizing the meaning of the fruitional *Evam*, (10a/19) jewel-like individuals with supremely acute faculties should, having understood the meaning of the fruitional *Evam*, strive to generate the path *Evam* in their continuum. They should (strive to) understand the meanings of the *Evam* of the basis, and the symbolic *Evam* which induces the *Evam* of the path.

It is also said that the *Evam* [syllables] illustrate all of the art and wisdom combinations of Unexcelled Yoga’s basis, path and fruition. From that same text:

It possesses everything. However many basis and parents enumerated by the 84,000 dharma properties are well-taught to be these two letters. The *E* letter is the mother; *Va* is commonly said to be the father; the *thigle* is the union, which is extremely marvelous.⁸³⁸

This is stated therefore in this commentary, which gives as its source the *Devendrā-parasamucca Tantra*.⁸³⁹

The fruitional *Evam* is of the nature of the non-duality of art and wisdom, whereby the male is art, the female is wisdom, and the non-duality of both is the hermaphroditic being which does not privilege one over the other. That same text says, “The union of male and female is the hermaphrodite.” Therefore, “The distinctive individual who enters into that [fruitional *Evam*] is the expression of the *mahāmudrā*, whose nature is the orgasmic bliss. This is certain.”

⁸³⁷ Advayavajra. *Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i 'grel pa snying po mngon par rtogs pa zhes bya ba* (*Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-ṅikā-nāma-sārābhi-samaya-nāma*). PT #2945. rgyud 'bum. Phi 106b.4. Emend *shu tra* to *shru ta*.

⁸³⁸ PT #2945, 106b.5-6.

⁸³⁹ A *Guhysamāja* commentary.

[Clarifying the meaning of] the distinctive individual who enters into the meaning of that fruitional *Evam*: one is the Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva or *Evam* which is the indivisibility of bliss and voidness in the occasion of the fruit; the other one, interpreted by that, is the *Evam* Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva which is the union of the Two Truths: the one thing that is both body and mind, the Enjoyment Body, adorned with signs and marks, which is the seven-fold branches of union, and (10b/20) the *Dharmakāya*, which is bliss-void indivisible.

The definitive meaning Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva as elucidated by the *Kālacakra*-centric “Three Bodhistava Commentaries” is the aspectless voidness, and the changeless great bliss of experiential uniformity is the natural *Dharmakāya*. The body adorned with signs and marks, which in all aspects has the union in one experiential taste, is the *Rupakāya* in the aspect of union with the *mahāmudrā*. In short, that very thing is the vajra yoga of art and wisdom indivisible, or the definitive meaning fourth initiation. As Avalokiteśvara said in the *Vimalaprabhā* of the *Nāmasaṃgīti*: “What is to be spoken of is the indivisible Ādibuddha. The means of expressing that is to say that. Again, the topic is the Intuition Body. The means of saying that is the mass of these letters.”⁸⁴⁰ One can understand this in detail from the explanation of the verbal meaning.

⁸⁴⁰ Pundarīka. ‘Phags pa ‘jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa ‘i ‘grel pa dri ma med pa ‘i ‘od zhes bya pa (*Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-ṅikā-vimalaprabhā*). PT #2114, rgyud ‘bum. Ca. 216a.7-8.

[I.2.2] [Brief description of MNS Commentaries and their Arrangements]

Generally, the *MNS* is commented upon as a Yoga Tantra and an Unexcelled Yoga Tantra. Within the first [category], the master Śrī Mañjukīrti wrote a commentary on the *MNS* which was translated by Rin chen bzang po. There is sGeg-rDor's *Vision of the Meaning of Tantra*, translated by Smṛti and revised by Prajñākuta;⁸⁴¹ the commentary of Someśvara Kīrti Śrī, (11a/21) translated by Ārya Prajñā,⁸⁴² Vimalamitra's *Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti-vṛtti*, translated by gNyags Jñāna.⁸⁴³ Advayavajra wrote the *Vitarka* which was translated by bSod nams gyan.⁸⁴⁴ There is Mañjuśrīmitra's commentary, translated by Rin chen bzang-po;⁸⁴⁵ Avadhūti's *Gar*, translated by Chos-skyan Bzang-po;⁸⁴⁶ Avagupta wrote the *Realization of the Essence*, translated by Smṛti; Prajñākīrti wrote a small commentary; Kumarakīrti wrote the *Upadeśa*,⁸⁴⁷ and then there are several by Buddhaguhya.

⁸⁴¹ Sgeg-pa'i rdo-rje. 'Phugs pa mtshan yan dag par brjod-pahi rgya-chen hgrel-pa mtshan gsang snags-kyi don du rnam par lta-ba shes bya-ba. DT #2533. Khu 27b-115b. Tr. Smṛtijñānakīrti; Rev: Phyang-na rdo-rje. Klog skya Śes rab brtsegs.

⁸⁴² Zla-ba grags-pa. Ārya Mañjuśrī-nāma-saṃgīti-vṛtti-nāma. DT #2535. Gu 1b-27a. Tr. Srimahajana. Phags-pa ses-rab.

⁸⁴³ Vimalamitra. Nāma-Saṃgīti-vṛtti-nāmārthaprakāśakaraṇādīpa-nāma. DT #2092. Tshi 1b-38b. Tr: gNyags-jnana.

⁸⁴⁴ Nāmasaṃgītyupasamhāravitaraka. DT #2094. Tshi 56b-84b. Tr.: Śrīvajrabodhi. bSod-nams rgyal mtshan.

⁸⁴⁵ Indefinite. This could be the *Nāmasaṃgītivṛtti*, also known as the "Little Commentary" found in DT # 2532. Khu 1b-27b. Alternately it might be the *Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītiṅkā*, also known as the "Great Commentary." See DT #2534, Khu 115b-301a.

⁸⁴⁶ Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītivṛtti. DT #2536 Gu 27a-47b. The translator's full name is 'Gar chos kyi bZang-po; hence, the text is referred to as the "'Gar".

⁸⁴⁷ Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītyupadeśavṛtti-nāma. DT #2539. Gu 118b-145a. Tr.: Devarāja. Śes-rab bla ma.

Second, the Unexcelled Yoga category of commentaries are of two kinds: those that elucidate in accordance with the general procedure of Unexcelled Tantra, and those that elucidate in accordance with the *Three Bodhisattva Commentaries*. Among the first [type], there are the commentaries by Vimalamitra;⁸⁴⁸ by dGa rab rdo rje;⁸⁴⁹ by Śrī Advayavajra; by Prajñāguru;⁸⁵⁰ and those of Acarya Advayavajra.⁸⁵¹

Those that comment from the perspective of the *Kālacakra* in harmony with the *Three Bodhisattva Commentaries* include the Narendrakīrti, translated by Vajrarāja,⁸⁵² and the *Essential Abbreviated Mantra Meaning* on the benefits of that commentary by Kālacakrapada,⁸⁵³ (11b/22) translated by Vajrarāja. Bu-ston mentions these two as the basis of doubt. There is Puṇḍarika's *Vimalaprabhā*, translated by bSod-snyoms chen-po at Nalanda, the Sa-skya monastery.⁸⁵⁴ This was not included in Bu-ston's *History of Dharma* (*chos-'byung*) index, but it is included in the *bstan 'gyur* of the Ri-wo bDe-chen

⁸⁴⁸ *Nāma-saṃgītivṛtti-nāmārthaparakāśakaraṇādīpa-nāma*. DT #2092. Tshi 1b-38b. Tr.: gNyags-jūāna.

⁸⁴⁹ *Ārya-Maṅjuśrīnāmasaṃgītyarthālokara-nāma*. DT #2093 Tshi 38b-56b. Tr.: unknown.

⁸⁵⁰ *'Jam-dpal gyi-snags don rnam gzugs dang, ne-ba bsdus pahi rnam-par rtog-ge gnyis kyi don bsdus-pa mtshan gyi sgron-me*. DT #2095. Tshi 85a1-92b7. Tr. unknown.

⁸⁵¹ It's not clear why Gendun Gyatso mentions Advayavajra twice. However, the texts in question are probably *Ārya-Maṅjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti-ṅikā-sārābhisamaya-nāma*. DT #2098. Tshi 95a-129b. Tr. Prajñāśrījñānakīrti, and Advayavajra's commentary on the Benefits (*anusamsa*) section. *Nāmasaṃgītyupasamhāravitaraka-nāma*. DT #2094. Tshi 56b-84b. Tr. Śrīvajrabodhi. bSod nams rgyal mtshan.

⁸⁵² *Ārya-Maṅjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti-vyākhyāna*. DT #1397. Pha 124a-184b. Tr.: Abhayavajra and rDo-rje rGyal-po.

⁸⁵³ *Ārya-Maṅjuśrī-nāmasaṃgīti-anusamsa-vṛtti*. DT #1399. Pha 232b-285b. Tr. Abhayavajra. rDo rje rgyal po.

⁸⁵⁴ Interestingly, the colophon to this text in the Derge edition notes that it was translated at the Tara temple at Nalanda.

monastery, and the Ze-tang *bstan- 'gyur*.⁸⁵⁵ Anupamarakṣita wrote *Amṛtabindu-pratyāloka*⁸⁵⁶ and Dharmakīrti and rDo-rje rgyal mtshan translated it. Raviśrī wrote the *Amṛtakaṇṭhika*.⁸⁵⁷ These are in Bu-ston's *History* index, though they are not included by some [others]; these are mentioned only as authoritative commentaries in the Chong ge Ri-wo bDe chen monastery. In addition, there are many *sādhana*s relying on the *MNS*, and many kinds of dharma teachings which offer assorted relevant rituals.

Someone may wonder, “Well then. How do (these commentators) elucidate the import of the *MNS*?” The Yoga Tantra commentaries, as already explained, taught the Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva of definitive and interpretable meaning to be the arising of various deity wheels of that very Mañjuśrī, the non-dual intuition of all the buddhas. Then, they comment on the *MNS* as elucidating the arts of achieving that, namely the yogas with and without signs.

Those who elucidate in accordance with the General Unexcelled Yoga way (12a/23) comment saying: “[The *MNS*] teaches the bliss-void indivisible Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva, and the Two Reality indivisible Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattva, as well as the arts of achieving those (Mañjuśrī-Jñānasattvas), such as the two stages of the path, and so forth.” Those who comment in accordance with the *Kālacakra* way teach the Vajra Yoga which

⁸⁵⁵ The Ze-tang monastery was based in the town of Ze-tang, located at the head of Tibet's Yarlung Valley, at the south bank of the river.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti-amṛtabindu-pradīpāloka-vṛtti-nāma*. DT #1396. Pha 96b-124a. In the Peking *bstan 'gyur*, the text has an alternate title: see PT #2112, *bstan 'gyur*, rgyud. Ca. 115b-146a. *Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṅgīti-amṛtabindu-pratyāloka-vṛtti-nāma*.

⁸⁵⁷ *Amṛtakaṇṭhika-nāma-ārya-nāmasaṅgīti-tippaṇī*. DT #1395. Pha 36a-96b. Tr. Norbu dpal ye śes. Nyi ma'i dbang po'i 'od zer. Chos rje dpal.

is the non-duality of goal and means. Then, they teach the six-branched yoga and so forth as the art of achieving that.

If someone wonders: Do all those different approaches on how to comment on the *MNS* abide as the intention of the vajra words? Or does one made a division thinking, “among all those ways of commenting, this one abides as the intention of the *MNS* and this one does not.” Which is correct?

If that is what you’re wondering: [I think] the actuality of the *MNS* is [in harmony with] Unexcelled Tantras, and from among those, the ultimate intent [inheres in] the *Kālacakra*. However, a number of different meanings are taught for each of the vajra-words of the root *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and there are six different ways of explaining the meanings of each. So, with regard to the authoritative commentaries on the *MNS*, I think there is no contradiction in asserting that all the different approaches are the meaning of the vajra-words of the *MNS*.

[I.2.3] The Proof of Why Elucidate it in Accordance with the *Kālacakra* (12b/24).

Though there are many different perspectives from which to elucidate the intent of the *MNS*, the ultimate way explains [from the perspective of] the “Three Bodhisattva Commentaries”. The heart of the topic of the “Three Bodhisattva Commentaries” which accord with the *Kālacakra* is vajra yoga itself -- art and wisdom indivisible. To explain that clearly, they take that as the chief topic of the *MNS*. The great *Kālacakra* commentary states: “It is embraced by the *MNS*, which makes manifests the Vajradhara intuition-body because it is the statement in the *Ādibuddha*. ”⁸⁵⁸ [Here,] “The Vajradhara

⁸⁵⁸ PT #2064, 17a.1-2.

intuition-body” is the Void Form Body Couple, which has the nature of changeless great bliss; “makes manifest by the *MNS*” [connotes that it] explains clearly. “Because it is the statement:” here again, having taken that as the chief topic of the *Ādibuddha* which is like that, it is “the statement [of the *Ādibuddha*].” By the method of taking that [vajra yoga] as the chief subject of the *MNS* and the chief topic of the *Kālachakra*, they are “embraced.” Thus it explains clearly.

If one does not understand the meaning of the *Ādibuddha*, one cannot understand the essence-meaning of the *MNS*. If one does not understand that, one cannot understand the Vajradhara intuition-body as above; and if one does not understand that, one cannot understand the essence of the Mantrayāna path. (13a/25) and is separate from the Vajradhara path. Accordingly, one will be unable to eliminate the subtlest instincts of *samsara*, and unable to achieve the exaltation of *Kālacakra* which abandons those instincts. From the *Great Commentary* on the sixth summary topic of the ‘Cosmology Chapter:’

those who do not understand the *Paramādhībuddha* do not understand the *Nāmasaṃgīti*. Those who do not understand the *Nāmasaṃgīti* do not understand the Jñānākāya of Vajradhara. Those who do not understand Jñānākāya of Vajradhara do not understand the Mantrayāna. Those who do not understand the Mantrayāna are thoroughly *samsaric*, separate from the path of Bhagavān Vajradhara. Therefore, noble teachers must teach the *Paramādhībuddha*, and those noble disciples who desire liberation should listen.⁸⁵⁹

This explains the need for understanding the *MNS* in harmony with the *Kālacakra*.

[I.2.4] Fourth: The method of how to comment on [the *MNS*] in harmony with the *Kālacakra*.

⁸⁵⁹PT #2064, 52a. 5-8.

The method of how to comment in harmony with the *Kālacakra* has three parts: [L.2.4a] the setting – explaining the place where the *MNS* Tantra was spoken and so forth⁸⁶⁰; [L.2.4b] a brief expression of the greatness of the Tantra to be explained; and [L.2.4c] explanation of the presentation of the condensed body which is the meaning of that Tantra endowed with those greatneses.

First, [L.2.4a: the explanation of the setting]:

Here, if one explains the *MNS* Tantra: If one were to ask: by which teacher, in what place, to what kind of retinue, at what time and in what way was it taught? (13b/26) As for the teacher: it was that very Śākya Rāja, possessing the Vajra. When the teacher had taught the method of becoming manifestly enlightened at Vajrāsana, he turned the wheel of the doctrine of general vehicle of perfections and at Vultures' Peak, he turned the wheel of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The place is the glorious Drepung Stūpa near the southern part of India at Śrīparvata. Below, [he] emanated the Dharmadhātu-Vagiśvara Maṇḍala, and above, the glorious Great Astronomical Maṇḍala. There in the place of great bliss on the vajra lion throne at the great Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala he sat -- the superlative teacher, the Śākya lion, abiding in the form of the lord of the maṇḍala. The retinue was those [beings] with the good fortune to listen to this Dharmadhātu Tantra. As for the time: in the full moon of the middle spring month of Nakba (Chitra), he gave [to that retinue] the mundane and transcendent initiations for the first time. He taught all the Unexcelled Yoga Tantras, such as the superlative *MNS* and the *Ādibuddha*. Raviśrī's commentary states:

⁸⁶⁰ The Five Certainties of a *sambhogakāya*: place, body, times, teachings and disciples.

Here at the glorious Great Stūpa of (Drepung) Dhānyakaṭaka, the Buddha Bhagavan, the “glorious Śākya Lion” was entreated by *srāvanas* who desired to learn various Tantras. And in the middle spring month, having emanated the glorious Dharmadhātu Maṇḍala and, above that, the Astrological Maṇḍala of the Ādibuddha, (14a/27) the Buddha gave initiation to the deities etc., on that very day. He then taught all the ways of secret mantras, dividing them according to (whether they were) expanded or concise. The Glorious Ādibuddha says: “Just as the teacher taught the *PPM* at Rajrgrha, so too, he taught the dharma through the modality of secret mantra at the glorious Dhānyakaṭaka.” Because it actualized the essence of the ultimate, the *MNS*, whose depth is difficult to measure, is the main of all mantras.⁸⁶¹

Likewise, Anupamarakṣita says,

On the fifteenth [day] of the Citra month, those seeking the meaning of various mundane and transcendent Tantras gathered in the Drepung Stūpa. At that time, for the sake of beings, the teacher emanated the Dharmadhātu-Vagiśvara Maṇḍala[[at] Dhānyakaṭaka. Above that, Vajradhara emanated the Glorious Astronomical Maṇḍala; below, he radiated the Ādibuddha Maṇḍala. He gave initiation to all, such as the gods, and extensively taught the four Tantra classes as well as the essential Tantra -- five in all. This is the quintessence.

This also explains that in that place, the Bhagavan taught the four great Tantra classes along with the quintessence, (14b/28) (which is) the *MNS*. The teaching at glorious Dhānyakaṭaka of all of the Unexcelled Tantras is also the intent of the root and commentaries on the *Kālacakra*. It is stated in the supplement chapter of the *Kālacakra*: “The ten-fold Mighty One taught the myriad Buddha Tantras in the Dharmadhātu (Maṇḍala) at Glorious Dhānyakaṭaka.”

If someone wonders: Who is the collector of the *MNS*? Generally speaking, Vajrapāṇi is the collector of secret mantra Tantras. In the specific case of the *MNS* and the *Kālacakra*, the requester and collector was King Sucandra, a [human] emanation of Vajrapāṇi. The *Vimalaprabha* [commentary] to the *MNS* states: “Therefore, he is ‘Vajrapāṇi Sucandra’ the Lord of Ten Stages, who emerged from the womb of the

⁸⁶¹ Raviśrījñāna. ‘Phags pa ‘jam dpal gvi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa mdor bsad bdud rtsi ‘i thig pa zhes bya pa (*Amṛtakaṇika-nāma-āryanāma-saṃgīti-ṭippanī*). PT #2111. rgyud ‘bum. Ca. 45a. 4-7.

goddess Suryaprabha Vijaya in the city of Kalapa and the country of Shambhala.”

Anupamaraksita (comments on) the meaning of that: “Profound and hard to measure, it cannot be understood by anybody; yet it was taintlessly explained by Sucandra.”

[I.2.4b] Second, expressing briefly the greatness of the Tantra to be explained.

This *MNS* Tantra is the chief of all modalities of secret mantra. The great commentary to the *Kālacakra* explains its greatness: “its very envelopment by the *MNS* is stated to be the greatness of the *Kālacakra*. One who does not understand the *MNS* (15a/29) does not understand the Intuition Body of Vajradhara. One who does not understand Vajradhara’s Intuition Body does not know the mantra vehicle.”⁸⁶² Not only that, in the very well-known “Three Bodhisattva Commentaries” [which contain] the full essence of the Unexcelled Vehicle, it is said: “the full essence of the path is definitely made clear by the *MNS*.” In addition, the treatises of the great *siddhas* of India which elucidate the meaning of the Hiding Tantras cite the *MNS* as a source, and contain many eulogies to the greatness of the *MNS*. Speaking as the Lord of all Tantras, this very text itself states that “the Supreme Lord of all Tantras.” Moreover, its own benefit [section] contains various enumerations of praise. The great *siddha* Anupamaraksita says “ the four Tantra classes, the Essence Tantra and the Fifth [One] were extensively taught by Vajradhara. This one [the *MNS*] is the quintessence. It was collected by the *dakinis*, each of whom sealed it in her own place. That is this very quintessence, widely renowned, read

⁸⁶² PT #2064, 52a.5ff.

a billion (times) for the sake of beings in Jambuling.”⁸⁶³ There are a great many unparalleled praises such as Raviśrī’s statement: “It is the chief of all modalities of secret mantra.” (15b/30)

Accordingly, the essence of all the discourses of the Bhagavan is the mantra collections. And among those that exist within the four classes of Tantras, the non-dual Tantras are supreme.

The ultimate essence of all non-dual tantras makes clear the intuition body of Vajradhara. Under the influence of the Vajra words of all Tantras, this *MNS* Tantra is like a Buddha jewel-casket thrown open, for it is the very teaching which makes clear the ultimate profound path that easily grants the exaltation of Vajradhara in one lifetime. It should be understood as the unexcelled of all scriptural statements. From the perspective of learning about and reflecting upon the meaning of Tantra, it is correct to enter it in whatever way possible.” It is thus expressly recommended for fortunate [beings].

[I.2.4c] Third, the explanation of the arrangement of the body of the concise meaning of this Tantra which has this greatness.

Vasubandhu, the second omniscient one, explained the *Sūtras*, relying on the personal instruction of the Victor Maitreya: “Concerning those who want to speak the meaning of *Sūtras*, I will give personal instruction which is the art of explaining the Tantra. One should explain the purpose with the summary, and the word commentary with the continuity, and state the rebuttal of objections.”

⁸⁶³ Anupamarakṣita. ‘Phags pa ‘jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa ‘i ‘grel pa bdud rtsi ‘i thigs pa sgron ma gsal ba zhes bya ba (*Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-amṛtabindu-pratyāloka-vṛtti-nāma*). PT #2112. rgyud ‘bum. Ca. 116a.3–4.

The same holds for explaining Tantra. Therefore, it is appropriate to comment either in that way, or from the point of view resonant with that explanation of the Seven Ornaments,⁸⁶⁴ the precept of the method which is given in the Explanatory Tantra of the *Guhyasamāja* known as the *Jñānavajra Samuccaya*. Furthermore, (16a/31) in the very beginning, one teaches from the viewpoint of the condensed meaning merely the framework (the guts) of the treatise, just its coarse meaning, and then one engages in [the process of explaining] the word meaning. That is the great art which makes it easy for the explainer to explain, and for the hearer to grasp.

Notes Śrī Candrakīrti in his *Pradīpodyotana*: “Having understood the condensed meaning of the five stages, one engages in the six parameters.” It teaches that one enters the Tantra after initially learning the five stages which collect all the meanings of Tantra. Moreover, it states that one explains in particular the condensed meaning of each chapter. Likewise, in the *Vajragarbhaṭika*, the condensed meaning of both the topic and the means of expression of the *Samuṣṭa Tantra* is stated: “Thus, the Tantra abides in the nature of the twenty-two chapters.”

Also, in keeping with the *Laghubantra* of the *Kālacakra* along with its great commentary, when it is done in terms of the coarse presentation, there is the topic and the five chapters of words which express that topic. Sub-dividing it more finely, the

⁸⁶⁴ The Seven Ornaments are:

1. Five preliminaries: name of Tantra, its size, identification of audience and author, and its purpose.
2. Four procedures: continuum, ground, definition and means.
3. Six parameters: “Interpretable” and “definitive” meaning; “Ulterior” and “ingenuous” statement; “Literal” and “symbolic” speech;
4. Four kinds of interpretation: Linguistic meaning, common, mystic and ultimate meaning, a.k.a. the five stages of Perfection Stage practice;
5. Two types of teaching: public and private;
6. Five kinds of disciple: from jewel-like to sandalwood-like;
7. Two Realities in Perfection Stage context of translucency and integration. (See *Jñānavajrasamuccaya* and Thurman’s “Vajra Hermeneutics” in Lopez, 1988, 134-143.

‘Cosmology Chapter’ points out twenty-four things to be purified, i.e. the twelve houses of the zodiac, and the twelve links; thus, there are twenty-four topics.

The ‘Inner (*Adhyātama*) Chapter’ has eighteen topics that point out the six treasuries of the body, the six great channels, and the six *cakras*, [all of which] are to be purified. The ‘Initiation (*Abhiṣeka*) Chapter’ has twelve sub-topics that point out the twelve purifying initiations, [which come from] the division of the higher initiations into two. The ‘*Sādhana* Chapter’ has (16b/32) seven sub-topics that describe the seven inner and outer pairs, and the means of achieving the purification of the seven inner sense media. The ‘Intuition Chapter’ has twenty sections that describe the twenty-fold Perfect Enlightenment. This expresses the condensed meaning of the eighty-one sections that exemplify the single body which is to be adorned and the eighty (auspicious) signs which adorn it.

In regard to the *MNS* also exemplified by that, the condensed meaning together with the expression of praise is done as in the *Vimalaprabhā*, which is a summary of the supreme, immutable bliss of the ‘Intuition Chapter’, or divides it into thirteen chapters that are meaning sections, or the 132 verses. The condensed meaning is expressed [by identification with] the condensed accounts (*mdor bsdus*) of the [*Kālachakra*’s] *Vimalaprabhā* which is the supreme unchanging bliss of the ‘Intuition Chapter,’ or (with) the thirteen meaning-sections (*don tshan*) divided into 162 verses, along with the encomium (*nak chod*). The majority of Tibetan commentators express it in this way, particularly those that explain the *MNS* in harmony with its own Yoga Tantras, those who comment on the general way of doing Unexcelled Yoga Tantra, and those who comment

in harmony with the *Kālacakra*. In most such commentaries, there occurs some condensation of the meaning.

If I explain it in accordance with how it occurs in the *Kīrti* expressed by Narendrakīrti, the two *Vimalaprabhās* which were expressed by Avalokiteśvara, and the *Amṛtabindu* by Anuparakṣita: Narendrakīrti's *Kīrti* teaches by condensing the *MNS* Tantra into fifteen meaning-sections. That very commentary states as follows:

In order to teach clearly the meaning, **(17a/33)** the so-called *Narendrakīrti* [text] stated, in order to give a full understanding of the *MNS*: Context; Conditioning factors; Things to be Explained; Seeing the Six Clans; Complete Enlightenment through the *Māyājāla*; *Bodhicitta-vajra*; *Dharmadhātu* intuition; Mirror-intuition; Individuating intuition; Equalizing intuition; All-accomplishing intuition; Five-clan praises; Benefits; Mantra and Subsequent rejoicing. As for the nature of the three sets of five lords, one should understand that essence of the three sets of five lords [the *MNS*] is collected like this in order to make it easier to understand the text's meaning and to make it an object of the mind.⁸⁶⁵

The *Vimalaprabhā* taught [the *MNS*] as [comprised] of fourteen chapters: the chapter of the Request; the Reply; Seeing the Six Clans; Complete Enlightenment through the *Māyājāla*; the Vajra Maṇḍala; the five chapters of the Five Intuitions; Praising the Five Clans; Mantra; Benefits; and Subsequent Rejoicing.

Anupamarakṣita explained it as thirteen. He asserts in the *Amṛtabindu*:

Although herein it is explained as fourteen meaning-divisions, thirteen are of the sphere of words that have meaning. One is praised by all; therefore, it is not explained here. The thirteen that should be explained are the 'Request'; the 'Reply'; 'Seeing; the *Māyājāla*'; the '*Vajradhatu*'; '*Dharmadhātu*'; 'Mirror [Intuition]'; 'Individuating [Intuition]'; 'Equalizing [Intuition]'; 'All-accomplishing [Intuition]'; 'Mantra'; 'Subsequent Rejoicing', and **(17b/34)** thirteen, which is the stage of Vajradhara.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶⁵ Narendrakīrti. 'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i rnam par shes pa ((*Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-ṅikā*) PT #1397. bstan 'gyur. rgyud. Pha 1a-2b.1

⁸⁶⁶ PT #2112. 116a.5-6.

He delineates thirteen [chapters] without counting the ‘Benefit Chapter’ as did the other *Vimalaprabhā*. Although he does it like that, because there occurs the “stage of Vajradhara,” this is asserted as being doctrinally concordant with the thirteenth level.

Similarly, Mañjuśrī states it as fifteen in the *Kīrti*. The two [chapters] of the Request and Reply have three [subdivisions]. Beginning from the context, [there is] the Request, the Circumstances of the Request, and the topics of the Request. Further, as for Raviśrī’s commentary appearing as in the [way of] *Vimalaprabhā*, although there is no mention of a chapter count in the very beginning, if one ascertains the demarcations of the text, it is evidently posited as in the *Vimalaprabhā*.

Therefore, those three -- the *Vimalaprabhā* and the two *Amṛtabīndus* – are the bases here. Although the ‘Benefit Chapter’ occurs as something consonant with the *MNS*, it does not appear in the well-known [version] that is currently recited, and its types of words are easy to comprehend. Accordingly, [I will] comment [on the *MNS*] by condensing it into thirteen [chapters] like Anuparākṣita. Because its thirteen chapter demarcations are very clear in the *Vimalaprabhā*, I will explain it likewise. Therefore, this Tantra of the *MNS* which teaches the indivisible Ādibuddha, in which the omnifaceted Void Form Body, and intuition of supreme, immutable great bliss is fused into a single actuality, and which also teaches the paths for attaining achievement, abides in thirteen chapters. **(18a/35)**

Like that, therefore, the sixteen verses of the ‘Chapter on the Question’ [run] from the quote THEN, VAJRADHARA... up to the quote STOOD BEFORE HIM, BODY BOWED. The six verses of the ‘Chapter of the Answer’ or ‘Replying’ [run] from the quote THEN, THE BHAGAVAN ŚĀKYAMUNI to EXCELLENT, BHAGAVAN. The two verses of the ‘Chapter of

Seeing the Six Clans' [run] from THEN...ŚĀKYAMUNI up to [HAVING SEEN] THE UṢṢIṢA [CLAN]. The three verses of the 'Chapter of Enlightenment Through the *Māyājāla*' run from the quotes [UTTERED THIS VERSE OF] THE LORD OF SPEECH, up to HOMAGE TO [YOU]....ARAPACANA.

There are fourteen verses in the 'Chapter of the Praising the Great Maṇḍala of the Vajradhātu', [running from] LIKewise, THE BHAGAVAN, THE BUDDHA to THE SUPREME [MASTER] OF THE MAHAYANA. The twenty-four and 3/4 verses of the 'Extremely Pure Dharmadhātu Chapter' [run] from BUDDHAVAIROCANA to VAJRA-GOAD HOOK. The ten-plus-1/4 verses of the 'Chapter of the Mirror-like Intuition' [run] from FRIGHTENING VAJRABHAIRAVA to THOSE WHO ARE SUPREME OF ALL THINGS OF SOUND. **(18b/36)**

The forty-two verses of the 'Chapter of Individuating Intuition' [run] from TRUE SELFLESSNESS AND SUCHNESS up until THE EXTREMELY BRILLIANT LIGHT OF THE INTUITION FIRE-TONGUES. The twenty-four verses of the 'Chapter of the Equalizing Intuition' [run] from THE SUPREME ATTAINMENT OF ITS DESIRED OBJECT up until THE PRECIOUS GEM, THE SUMMIT JEWEL. The fifteen verses starting from the quote THAT TO BE REALIZED OF ALL THE BUDDHAS up until MAÑJUŚRĪ, THE SUPREME OF THE GLORIOUS is the 'Chapter of the All-Accomplishing Intuition'.

There are five verses of the 'Chapter of Praising the Five Transcendent Lords' from the perspective of those five intuitions. [They] extend from the quote PRAISE TO YOU, EXCELLENT GIVER, VAJRA SUPREME to PRAISE TO YOU, INTUITION BODY. Thus, there are 162 verses.

Moreover, they signify the presentation for stopping the evolutionary winds which move inside the 162 channel *nexi* along with the six great channels, by means of

the 21,600 paths of realizing voidness by great bliss. The *Vimalaprabhā* says: “Like that, as the Transcendent Lord of the *MNS*, Vajrasattva, the Transcendent Lord taught the 162 verses wherein the supreme changeless intuition becomes the essence of the Buddha and bodhisattvas, thereby giving in its initial [summary] the arrangement of the concise meaning. In a similar vein, Raviśrī clearly states:

Here, Bhagavan Vajradhara [describes] the intuition of immutable great bliss (19a/37) as the essence of all the bodhisattvas. All the Transcendent Lords truly state that the 162 verses and remaining benefits (symbolize) the cessation of the 162 channels which abide in the six *cakras* which are endowed with the six types of clans.⁸⁶⁷

In the context of the *Vimalaprabhā*, these 162 verses are explained as the essence of all discourses through quotes such as “[these are] concentrated, having been extracted from all of the vehicles,” the many praises from the point of view of the distinctive excellence of the topic and their activity, etc., and [by passages] from the root Tantra’s ‘Intuition Chapter’, citing the quote “meditating on smoke, etc.” to the enumeration that “oneself becomes the Vajrasattva.” Having cited that, it explains the way of meditating on the changeless great bliss.

Therefore, the ‘Mantra Chapter’ extends from the quote OM SARVA DHARMA up to JÑĀNA GARBHA AH. The ‘Chapter of Congratulations’ extends from THEREFORE, GLORIOUS VAJRADHARA up to EXPLAINED BY ALL THE PERFECTED BUDDHAS. Roughly, one understands by just the names of the chapters what meanings each of the chapters teach. In detail, one understands that from the explanation of the word meaning. Therefore, it is done here like the chapter demarcations of the *Vimalaprabhā*.

⁸⁶⁷ PT #2111, 45a.8-45b.2

The *Vimalaprabhā* appears [to contain] an abbreviated arrangement of all three – Inner, Outer and Alternative [*Kālacakras*], as well as an explanation of the stages of both Creation and Perfection paths. However, (19b/38) close attention is not paid to the actual words. The commentaries of Raviśrī and Anupamarakṣita do not pay close attention to explaining the literal meaning, except for explaining Perfection Stage as chief.

In the *Kīrti* spoken by Narendrakīrti, [there is no literal explanation]. It is evident that other than when it is asserted that the *aide memoire* (*brjed byang*) spoken by that is like something done by another, it is not done by way of setting up the connections between words of that [root]. In the transitional section (*mtshams sbyor*) which presents the abbreviated meaning after the expression of worship, it says, “in order to realize all the meanings of the *MNS*, Narendrakīrti spoke in order to teach clearly the meaning.” Nonetheless, it lacks much capacity to explain the vajra words, and the omniscient Bu ston makes it a basis for doubt. As such, one should examine whether or not these are, in fact, Mañjuśrī’s words (i.e. truly the work of Narendrakīrti.)

Here, I will explain by arranging in good order all the good parts, taking as basis the *Vimalaprabhā* stated by Puṇḍarika which explains the verbal meaning, the commentary by Anuparakṣita, and the *Bindu* of Raviśrī [drawing on] those parts when they explain and fit nicely in the context: the many good parts of the *Kīrti* by Narendrakīrti, and also adorning it with explanation from the *Kālacakra Tantra* commentary, the *Vajragarbha* and, drawing on the successful explanations of texts such as the *Lakṣabhidha* (by Vajrapāṇi).⁸⁶⁸

⁸⁶⁸These three texts are the “Three Bodhisattva Commentaries.”

Wish-fulfilling lakes of non-dualistic Tantras which all come from the rain-clouds of Indra, (20a/39) immeasurable in both breadth and depth, which has waves of many explanations of what is unclear, difficult to cross by millions of so-called experts, source of precious attainments, look! I alone launched the great boat of analysis to achieve the desired goal of entering wish-fulfillment. In the vermillion ocean, where the rising sun is gently reflected, which makes creepers of the arching eyebrows like unlimited patterns of beauty in all directions, I, having set the eye in the lotus of the face of Mañjuśrī, will illuminate the immutable great bliss which is the nature of that [eye], and which is of one taste with the omnifaceted supreme body, which is the glory of the White Lotus Holder who illuminates things as they are – leading to this point, I will clarify those things.

(20a/39.4)

[II.] [Actual Explanation of the Meaning of the MNS]

Second: the entry into the actual explanation of the word meaning of the root text has three [sub-divisions]: **[II.1]** the meaning of the name, **[II.2]** the translator's salutation, and **[II.3]** the explanation of the meaning of the text.

[II.1] [The Meaning of the Name]

As for the first, in the translation of Zhong, the title of this Tantra in Sanskrit is *MAÑJUŚRĪ PARAMĀRTHA NĀMA SAMGĪTĪ* (THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ). In Tibetan, it is the *RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAME OF 'JAM DPAL, THE INTUITION HERO*. This seems congruent with the statement from that very text. "the name of Mañjuśrī, the Intuition Hero, is the supreme recitation." However, the [version] of this great translator (Rin chen bzang po) appears to be [more] widely known at present. Therefore, if one explains [on the basis of] this above [text], in Sanskrit it is the *ĀRYA MAÑJUŚRĪ NĀMA SAMGĪTĪ* (20b/40) When one translates it into Tibetan, *ĀRYA* is "Noble one;" *MAÑJUŚRĪ* is "'Jam dpal;" *NĀMA-SAMGĪTĪ* is "Recitation of the Names."

Therefore, the *Dharmakāya*, whose mind is of the nature of voidness and the changeless great bliss of experiential uniformity, and the *Nirmanakāya*, possessed of signs and marks, omni-aspected and beyond the ultimate nature of indivisible particles, are, in actuality, conjoined as one as the Intuition Body of Vajradhara. [That is] Mañjuśrī. Taking that [Mañjuśrī] as the main topic, it teaches that and so is called THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ.

Like that, with regard to the dharma teaching of this topic, the *Vimalaprabhā* teaches:

The recitation of the name of Mañjuśrī is the intuition body. Thus, it is GREAT IN MEANING, purifying and removing the taints.” The intuition body is the body which is asked [about]; the body of Mañjuśrī is like that [i.e. such a body]. Relying upon the name, one internalizes its MEANING. Therefore, it is GREAT.”

[II.2] [The Translator’s Salutation]

Second: :I PAY HOMAGE TO THE EVER YOUTHFUL MAÑJUŚRĪ is the introduction by the translators.

[II.3] [The Explanation of the Meaning of the Text]

Third: the explanation of the meaning of the text has two [parts]: [II.3.1] the abbreviated teachings by way of Question and the Response -- the branches for penetrating the meaning of the Tantra -- and [II.3.2] the extensive explanation of the nature of the meaning [that gives rise to] the Question and Response.

The first has two [sub-divisions]: [II.3.1a] the ‘Chapter of the Question’ and [II.3.1b] the ‘Chapter of the Response’.

The first has seven [sub-divisions]:

- [II.3.1a-1] the distinctions of the collector by whom the question was asked;
- [II.3.1a-2] the distinctions of the companions of that very collector;
- [II.3.1a-3] the distinctions of the way it was asked; (21a/41)
- [II.3.1a-4] the distinctions of the purpose for which it was asked;
- [II.3.1a-5] the distinctions of the place of the question;
- [II.3.1a-6] the distinctions of the property of the question and
- [II.3.1a-7] the distinctions of the commitments of the asker.

The first [sub-division: II.3.1a-1] has two [parts]: the general meaning and the branch meaning.

As for the first: the entire import of Unexcelled Tantra is condensed in the words of the setting: “This I heard at one time...” The *Vajramālā* says: “‘This’ [*Evam*] is two letters. Their absence at the beginning of a Tantra renders it unacceptable.” This quote

teaches the necessity of affirming these two letters at the beginning of all Unexcelled Tantras.

If someone should ask: ‘Given that this Tantra [the *MNS*] is the chief of all Tantras, how is it that it does not contain [mention of] such a setting?’ It is a small extract from the *Great 60,000 Māvājāla*, wherein the words “*Evam maya śrutam*” etc. do not actually occur at the beginning. However, its meaning is present when one clarifies. Therefore, the equivalent of the quote THEN, VAJRADHARA, THE GLORIOUS, is present in the Indian [Sanskrit] text as ATHA ŚRI VAJRADHARA.

The three letters of that ATHA ŚRI symbolize all the distinctions of art and wisdom, just as they are symbolized by the two [letters] of *Evam* which is synonymous with “this” in the quote “This I heard.” Accordingly, those three syllables aptly fulfill the meaning of *Evam*. So, the *A* illustrates the meaning of the voidness of aspectless intuition which is characterized by *E*; *THA* illustrates the meaning of the intuition of unchanging great bliss which is characterized by the *Va* letter and ŚRI illustrates the meaning of the (21b/42) *anuśvara*, which is the experiential unity of subject and object. Not only that; here *A* indicates the meaning which is characterized by *E*, namely wisdom (as) the Void Form *mahāmudrā*; *THA* indicates the Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva of multifaceted artistry which is characterized by the letter *Va*; and ŚRI indicates that very meaning of the integration of the art and wisdom pair -- the meaning characterized by the *thig les*.

Acarya Raviśrī says:

Here, by the fact that it designates selflessness; the *A* letter teaches the supreme, omnifaceted voidness; the *Tha* letter teaches the objectless compassion which signifies the nature of Akṣobhya. Those are also mentioned in the *Union of Extreme Faith* by dGyes pa Dorje: “Because those two are non-dual, the topic of

the utterance *Evam* is the spontaneous joy which is the semen (*gu ba/rasa*) which resides at the tip of the jewel. For that, one should say *Atha*.⁸⁶⁹

Similarly, the *Amṛtabindu* teaches: “By adorning the letter *A* which is the melter from *Triśakuni* with the letter *Tha* of *Jālandhara*, it explains the source of the doctrine, namely *evam maya*. Just that is what enters into the *yoni* of the vajra-queen.”⁸⁷⁰

The seat on which the Teacher sat and taught the dharma is, in some Tantras, referred to as “secret.” Similarly, the meaning which is signified by *E* is realm of space, *bhaga*, dharmottara, lotus, lion throne, etc. Likewise, the meaning signified by *Va* is called Vajra-possessor, Vajrasattva, Vajrabhairava, (22a/43) Lord Vajra Heruka, Kālacakra, and the Ādibuddha.

In brief, it is explained that *E* is said to signify secret, realm of space, *bhaga*, *dharmottara*, [and] lotus, while Vajrasattva, teaching the supreme marvel and sitting on the lion throne, is described as *vam*, vajra, Vajrabhairava, Heruka, Śrī Kālacakra and the Ādibuddha. Here also, it is similarly explained that the signification of the letter *A* is the seat in which the Dharma Teacher sat and taught the Tantra, and *THA* is the Ādibuddha who taught the dharma while sitting in that [seat]. [all of which] is signified by *Va*. This mainly explains the meaning of the fruitional *Evam*.

The wondrous method for explaining in *Lokeśvara's Vimalaprabhā* is as follows:

“Therefore, having affirmed *Evam* as the meaning of the *ATHA ŚRI* as previously

⁸⁶⁹ PT #2111. 45b.3-5

⁸⁷⁰ PT #2112. 114a.2. The Kālacakra literature describes twelve sets of cosmic pilgrimage sites in *Jambudvīpa*, namely *pīthas*, *upapīthas*, *kṣetras*, *upakṣetras*, *chandohas*, *upachandohas*, *melāpakas*, *upamelāpakas*, *veśmas*, *upaveśmas*, *śmaśānas*, and *upaśmaśānas*. These sites are also corresponded to the twelve links, the twelve signs of the zodiac, the twelve bodhisattva-*bhūmis*, and are said to reside at the six *cakras* of the human body. *Jalandhara* – a well-known Śakta pilgrimage center – is one of the four *pīthas*, and is identified cosmically with the earth element *maṇḍala* and with the *jñāna-dhātu cakra* at the level of the individual. *Triśakuni* is one of the four *upakṣetras*, and is identified with the water *maṇḍala* and the earth *cakra*.

explained, initially, virtue is the cause; in the middle, virtue is the path; and at the end, virtue is the fruition.” Having explained virtue in reference to the three -- beginning, middle and end -- therefore, in the beginning, virtue is the cause. Or, if referred to in the context of the basis: the *A* is the body of the mother whose nature is wisdom, the *THA* is the body of the father, whose nature is artistry. *ŚRĪ* is composed of the three letters ŚA, RA and I: As for supplementing the etymological analysis of the first, the ŚA sound [connotes] ‘śaśukra, which is the semen of the father. Supplementing the etymological analysis of the first of the second, the RA sound [connotes] rakta, the blood (ovum) of the mother, (22b/44) and the I which is the ki gu serves as Vam. As for the etymological analysis of that, Va⁸⁷¹ is vāyu, the wind. Those two -- the very subtle translucency mind and the vitality wind which is its mount -- achieve a human body from entering into the middle of the sperm-ovum mixture of the father and mother. However, having achieved that, it is the meaning of VAJRA, “inseparable,” for that subtle two-part wind-mind resides inseparably for the life of the body.

As for DHARA, it has the meaning either of ‘grasper’ or ‘holder’. These two [wind-mind] are the actual basis for the achievement of the Buddha *Dharmakāya* and *Rupakāya*. Alternately, that ‘holder’ connotes a human being, womb-born⁸⁷² and endowed with the six elements. This should be called either the support or the basis for complete enlightenment in a single lifetime. This meaning is also in that very text:

The quote *ATHA ŚRĪ VAJRADHARA* refers to the cause, the path and the fruition. The *A* of that *ATHA* is the body of the mother, which is of the nature of wisdom, and the *THA* is the body of the father, which is of the nature of artistry. The *ŚRĪ* functions as three letters: the sound śaśukra is the semen of the father;

⁸⁷¹ Emend *va na* to *va ni*.

⁸⁷² i.e. Grasping at a human, womb-born birth, thus suggesting that s/he has the capacity for *Rupakāya*.

rakta the blood (ovum) of the mother, and because *I* is *ki-gu*, *ṛ* is *Vam*. Because the *VA* is *vāyu*, it is the wind, the ordinary consciousness of the basis of all. Similarly, it is glorious, *ŚRĪ* in Sanskrit, because it achieves a human body. VAJRA is 'adamantine'. It resides in the body for as long as there is life, and is thus inseparable (from it). Therefore, it is 'adamantine'. DHARA is either Dhara is holder or apprehending: therefore the human body of the six elements is established as the wind-mind which is the cause of buddhahood.

Like that, in the context of the basis, either the *EVAM* or the *ATHA ŚRĪ* has the signification of (23a/45) art and wisdom. [These are] the basis-level father and mother, which are the red and white elements of those two. The wind-mind continues through the transition of death and rebirth. Having gone through the transition (i.e. conception, *nying mtsams sbyor wa*) and achieved a human body, it is the wind-mind pair that abides in the body until death. This is the way of [practicing] in the context of virtuous actions (lit. "abiding on the path") at the time of the middle.

The *A* signifies the special blazing of the inner fire, the *gTum mo*, at the navel, within the central channel through the power of the winds of the left and right channels (*ro kyang*) being blocked in the central channel during the upwards-moving life-effort (*srog.rtsol/prāṇayāma*). The *THA* signifies the melting of the white element at the crown by the power of that; the *ŚRĪ* signifies the descent [of the drops] along the path of the central channel [occasioned by] the melting of the *bodhicitta* like that, and the up and down movement of the four blisses. VAJRA signifies the union of the special bliss from the melting like that with indivisible, immutable voidness. DHARA signifies the external retention of the element [i.e. non-ejaculation] from the tip of the jewel until the stage of Buddha. Alternately, it is explained as that very indivisible, immutable bliss-voidness grasped until the stage of Buddha. Also, from this very commentary:

The *A*, because it is achieving the path which is virtuous in the middle, is the blazing intuition from the *gTum-mo* at the navel. *THA* is the trickling of the

bodhicitta from the crown. *ŚRĪ* is 'glory', the ordered progression of the blisses. VAJRA, because indivisible, is bliss and voidness. DHARA, because it is grasper, means up to buddha [hood].⁸⁷³

In regard to this, the meaning indicated by either *Evam* or *ATHA ŚRĪ* is however many art-wisdom [dyads] are on the occasion of the path: *Evam* of the sex organs which (23b/46) is a way of developing [bliss], existing in the pattern of the kiss [i.e. in union] within the central internal channel complex; the dyad of the *gTum mo* at the navel and the white element at the crown; of the orgasmic bliss which is developed in dependence upon the downward and upward movement of the drops and their object voidness; the dyad of the vajra of the male adept and the lotus of either the *karma-* or *jñānamudrā*; the bliss-void intuition developed in dependence upon that [union of vajra and lotus], and the body of the universal void-form couple; the dyad of vajra and lotus; and the unchanging great bliss which is developed in dependence upon that, and the aspectless voidness which is of one taste with that [bliss].

At the end, if one applies it within the context of the virtue of fruition, having exhausted all bodily substances through 21,600 paths of realizing emptiness by the unchanging bliss, it points to that very circumstance of the twelve stages of blocking the various winds from the twelve "great breath shifts."⁸⁷⁴ Therefore, *A* [points to] the

⁸⁷³ Peking #2114, folio 1638, lines 6-7.

⁸⁷⁴ 12 months and 12 signs of zodiac correspond to the 12 shifts of breath (*pho ba*) of a person in a 24-hour period. Outer Kālacakra analogue is 12 *pho chens* in one year, i.e. the 12 months in which the days gradually wax and wane. During half of a person's day, one's breath is predominantly in the right nostril, i.e. the sun channel, and the other half in the left, i.e. the moon channel. In one shift or *pho ba*, a person takes 1,800 breaths, totaling 21,600 per day. Each of these 12 groups are purified one-by-one in Perfection stage.

OUTER

1 year	=12 months	= 360 days	=21,600 (360 X 60) <i>nadi</i>
	1 month	= 30 days	= 1,800 (360 X 5) <i>nadi</i>
		1 day	= 60 (5X 12) <i>nadi</i>

ultimate realm of the two purificants of the four liberations, and *THA* [to] that very unchanging great bliss which is experientially uniform with objectless compassion and which, for analytical purposes, exists as the five intuitions. The *ŚRĪ* is glory: it is the ultimate great bliss body of self-interest and the two *Dharmakāyas*,⁸⁷⁵ as well as the ultimate all-aspected *Sambhogakāya* of altruistic interest, and the *Nirmanakāya*, (24a/47) which is the achievement of four bodies. *VAJRA* is the actual non-difference of the four bodies like that; *DHARA* is either 'holding the great intuition of excellent, immutable self-grasping', or 'grasper.' Like this, from that very text:

In the end, virtue is the twelfth stage of Buddhahood; *A* is the voidness of the four liberations, the totally purified Dharma realm; *THA* is the five-aspected Buddha-intuitions that are the fulfillment of compassion; *ŚRĪ* which means glory is the attainment of the four bodies for the sake of self and others. 'VAJRA' is the non-difference of the four bodies. *DHARA* should be called *VAJRADHARA* because it holds the supreme unchanging bliss.⁸⁷⁶

This is spoken in order to illustrate whatever special methods and wisdoms [exist] on the occasion of the fruition.

In short, someone who is born from a human womb and endowed with the six elements is the supreme basis or support for practicing the path. Such a one purifies his continuum through the common path. Having entered into the path of *Kālacakra*, he trains himself by the six branches of Creation and Perfection Stage [practice], whereby he attains buddhahood in that very life. All the art and wisdom [dyads] of the basis, path and

INNER			
1 day	= 12 shifts of breath	=60 (5X12) <i>nadi</i>	=21,600 (360 X 60) breaths
	1 shift of breath	= 5 <i>nadi</i>	= 1,800 (360 X 5) breaths
		1 <i>nadi</i>	= 360 (60 X 6) breaths

From Brauen, 1997, 55-56.

⁸⁷⁵ The Wisdom and Nature bodies of the *Dharmakāya*, as opposed to the *Sambhogakāya* and *Nirmanakāya* which compose the *Rupakāya*.

⁸⁷⁶ PT #2114, 1638.7-1639.2.

fruit [for such a process] are expressed by *ATHA ŚRĪ VAJRADHARA*. It is clarified by ascertaining the statement of Lokeśvara, “In particular, *ATHA ŚRĪ* points to it.” As such, the myriad meanings of the topics of the *MNS* are condensed in the meaning of the first *pāda*: THEN, VAJRADHARA, THE GLORIOUS. Therefore, having clarified it in summary as the three letters *A THA ŚRĪ*, (24b/48) seize this explanation! unprecedented in excellence.

As for the second: the branch meaning is to be discerned.

In regard to [the *MNS*] THEN, VAJRADHARA, THE GLORIOUS and so forth, the *Vision of Meaning of Tantra* speaks of the [term] TIEN:

Lord Śākyamuni taught it in the *Samādhijāla* chapter in the great yoga Tantra of the 60,000 *Ārya Māyājāla*, which is *THE AUTHENTIC EXPRESSION OF THE ULTIMATE NAME OF LORD MAÑJUŚRĪ, THE INTUITION HERO*. For the sake of helping the dull-witted, that text [opens with] the statement THEN in order to assert that ‘Lord Vajradhara is the collector.

If one follows the words in the *Vimalaprabhā*, THEN means [something] “was explained previously.” The literal meaning is *ATHA*. It means ‘auspiciousness’ and serves to announce the topic. By saying that this Tantra is one part extracted from the *Māyājāla*, here [ATHA] means ‘next,’ ‘thereupon.’ This underscores it as a continuation of the *Māyājāla Tantra* by saying “just after that.” For example, ‘Then, there is something else to be explained;’ like that. The chief meaning was previously explained.

With regard to [the meaning of] VAJRADHARA, it is that he is the collector. Vajrapāṇi. Moreover, he is VAJRA which means indivisible, the intuition of the experiential unity of voidness and unchanging great bliss, [beyond] mental hyperactivity of unreal dualistic appearance. He is VAJRA because he is unperturbed by the four Māras. (25a/49) The collector of this Tantra is the lord of secrets who HOLDS the symbolic

implement of the five-pronged vajra. This signifies externally that he HOLDS that [adamantine quality] as his own nature. Therefore, he is LORD OF SECRETS.

At the ordinary [level of meaning], because he is the collector of all secret mantra Tantras, he is characterized like that. If one takes the external meaning of that, then the word SECRET connotes *yakṣas*. Because he is the lord of that, he is the LORD OF SECRETS. If one applies the internal meaning, then, just as one says [that the lion is] Lord of beasts because all beasts are killed by the lion, likewise, the 18,000 karmic breaths are shown by the word SECRET or *yakṣa*, and he stops them by the power of vajra yoga. For this reason, appropriately manifesting as abiding in tenth stage *Dharmamega*, Avalokiteśvara explains this in the *Vimalaprabhā* and in commentaries to this. Furthermore, *DEMS* has the meaning of 'di *skyet* (heard), and VAJRADHARA is the meaning of the quotation *bdag gis* (by me). Raviśrī explains glorious as the meaning of "heard." Because he possesses the glory of non-dual intuition, he is GLORIOUS.

If someone were to ask: Is that Vajrapāṇi the collector the same or different from the teacher of the Tantra? In an objective sense (*don la gnas pa'i phyogs*), one must understand as certain that the two are of a single continuum. For if the collector Vajrapāṇi were a different bodhisattva from the teacher of the Tantra, how could he have the ability to grasp in one instant the 84,000 dharma properties? As the *Hevajra Tantra* says: "I am the explainer, I am the doctrine; (25b/50) I am the retinue, I am the listener."⁸⁷⁷

If those two are the same, what purpose is served by showing them as different? Although there is no difference between the continuum of the very teacher [and

⁸⁷⁷ Hevajra, Ch II, verse 39.

collector], one must grasp as certain that [his acting as] the questioner and collector is 'theater' [performed] for the sake of benefiting the beginner sentient beings.

If someone then asks, what are the distinctive qualities of that collector? He is THE BEST TAMER OF THOSE DIFFICULT TO TAME, etc. At the outer [level], THOSE DIFFICULT TO TAME are the *yakṣas*. At the inner level, they are the 21,600 karmic winds. [By] the intuition that realizes voidness through changeless great bliss, that is the supreme way of taming them. Therefore, it is not troubled by them (i.e. the *yakṣas*/winds).

The HERO is the very ability to tame them. He is the VICTOR who, at the outer [level of interpretation], CONQUERS THE THREE WORLDS: the underworld, the surface of the earth and the space above the earth. At the inner [level], the three worlds are the body, speech and mind. Conquering them, those three become mixed into a single taste in the actuality of unchanging great bliss.

Likewise, he is VAJRA, the LORD of the intuition of unchanging great bliss. That very intuition is SECRET, for it is difficult to understand experientially by *śrāvakas*, *pratyeka buddhas* and bodhisattvas of the Perfection Vehicle; by [practitioners] of the three lower Tantras, as well as by those who are unable to develop great bliss, relying on the *mahāmudrā* which is the abiding reality of Unexcelled Yoga Tantra. As for enjoying all desires, because he controls them, he is called CONQUERER

(26a/51) In that light I explain them, correlating the explanations of the *Vimalaprahā*, and of Anupamarakṣita and Raviśrī. Now, there is a slight difference [between these explanations]. Regarding the meaning of VAJRADIARA, LORD OF SECRETS, Raviśrī notes that the meaning of LORD (*ĪṢARA*) is abiding without emitting the white substance in the tip of the vajra. He CONQUERS into the actuality of great bliss by

the three -- body, speech and mind -- in that context. This is explained as the meaning of the CONQUERER. From that very text:

It is LORD OF THE THUNDERBOLT (*KULIŚEŚVARAH*) because he is the very [Lord] residing in the tip of the THUNDERBOLT. Vajra vehicle refers either to the unexcelled, or to the merging into one of the body, speech and mind. Because he is LORD through that very form of great bliss, he is the LORD OF SECRETS.⁸⁷⁸

Although there occurs a second way of explaining there, it is overly prolix; therefore, I am not going to write on it.

With reference to the quote EYES LIKE A WHITE LOTUS IN FULL BLOOM: Ācārya Anupamarakṣita explains the meaning of LOTUS as the *avadhuti*, the central channel; WHITE as the jasmine-like *bodhicitta*; IN FULL BLOOM as the descent of the white element within the central channel, and EYE connotes [his] clear perception. Raviśrī's way of explaining is identical to that.

Although there are other modalities of explanation, this arrangement is good, for it is the one given by Avalokiteśvara in the *Vimalaprabhā*. Therefore, if one [understands the quote] in terms of its literal meaning, the LORD OF SECRETS who is like that becomes everybody's object of worship (26b/52) because of the lustrous radiance of his FACE and his lotus petal-like EYES. In terms of the inner meaning of WHITE LOTUS, LOTUS has the meaning of all that is signified by the letter *L*. EYES and FACE have the meaning of all signified by the letter *I'am*. Accordingly, WHITE LOTUS IN FULL BLOOM signifies the EYE of the intuition of immutable great bliss upon aspectless voidness. Likewise, the FACE of the intuition of the supreme unchanging great bliss resides in the lotus of *mahāmudrā* -- the LOTUS IN FULL BLOOM. From that very text: "E and LOTUS are 'expanse of sky', 'bhaga', the moon-cushion, lion seat, and Vajradhara."

⁸⁷⁸ PT #2111. 47a.4-5

The quote ‘explained by me’ is explained in other Tantras, as well as the sources to the root Tantra. With regard to this very meaning, the *Vajragarbha* states that the meaning of “heard by me at one time, etc.” is explained in other Tantras. This is clearly stated through the “Three Bodhisattva Commentaries” method of explanation. From that very text:

As for bliss, it is the great bliss, great Vajrasattva; it is this very teacher. It is “heard” insofar as [the teaching] is understood “by me.” “At one time” connotes manifest enlightenment in a single instant. “*Bhagavān*” is also unchanging bliss itself. “All the Tathāgatas” refers to the five systems. [The honorific terms] “Body, Speech and Mind” in the quote ‘in the *yonī* of the Vajra-queen (*yoshit*) who is the Body, Speech and Mind’ connote the activities of [ordinary] body, speech and mind. (27a/53) The Vajra-queen is the property of being an object. ‘In the *bhaga*’ connotes the primary elements such as space, etc. “Dwelling” connotes [the entrance of *bodhicitta*] at the crown, brow, throat, heart, the naval wheel, the secret vajra, the naval-lotus, and the vajra jewel. Discerning in accordance with the divisions of mixing as one, two three, four and five, according to the divisions of coming and going -- this is the emergent order, the entrance of the mind of enlightenment through the divisions such as abiding by the three good qualities. Reversing that, those qualities of the center of the vajra, etc. exhaust those good qualities of the vajra. Having exhausted the objects of the secret place, one purges the taints from the systems and elements by the movement of [*bodhicitta*] at the navel, heart, throat, brow and crown, i.e. through the divisions of homogenous cause. By that, it is explained, they are complete.

If one explains a little of the meaning of that: the thrust of [the quote] “heard by me at one time” as said in the *Māyājāla*, the *Guhyasamāja*, and the *Hevajra* is that the meaning signified by the letter *E* is aspected and aspectless voidness, which is the support wherein unchanging great bliss dwells. The letter *Vam* has the meaning of great bliss -- the teacher of the Tantra of definitive meaning, known as the great Vajrasattva who resides therein. (27b/54) “By me (*maya*)” has the meaning of “very” [i.e. it functions to emphasize “me”] “Heard (*śrutam*)” means understood; “at one time (*ekasmin*)” [reminds us that] the manifest enlightenment of the 21,600 unchanging great blisses is the perfection of a

single instant.⁸⁷⁹ ‘*Bhagavān*’ is that very changeless great bliss; “All the Tathāgatas” [suggests that] the five systems and their body, speech and mind is the Body, Speech and Mind [of the Tathāgatas]. “The Vajra-queens” connote the elements such as space, etc., i.e. the observable quality of the Tathāgata’s object of engagement. The *bhagas* are the lotuses at the root of the six channel-wheels (*cakras*) such as the *uṣṇisa*, and so on. There is an order to “the things that reside in the *bhagas*” that is achieved through the divisions of coming and going. As for that order, the entry of the *bodhicitta* by way of the categories of joy, supreme joy and so on into the *bhāgas* of the lotuses at the crown, *uṣṇisa*, the throat, the heart, and the naval which is achieved through the particularities of the one, two, three, four, and five qualities (*yon tan guṇa*), [and the entry of the *bodhicitta* into] the three *bhāgas* by way of the division by the three *guṇas*, is the emergent order. As for the reverse order, it is reversed from the order that has gone previously. Therefore, through the exhaustion of the *guṇas*, the *bodhicitta* enters through the stages of homogenous cause and so forth into the jewel and the secret place. Exhausting the object, the *bodhicitta* enters successively through stages homogenous with its cause into the *bhaga* of the lotuses from naval up until the *uṣṇisa*. The *bodhicitta* becomes stabilized, and the intuition of the great bliss [which arises from having made the *bodhicitta* stable] causes the five aggregates (28a/55) to become undefiled.

[Puṇḍarika] briefly elaborates on this in the *Vimalaprabhā*, drawing upon many sources from the root Tantra. These are expressed in detail when he connects it to the sources of many Tantras in the *Hevajra Tantra* commentary by the great Nāropa. In

⁸⁷⁹ The author is referring to a culminating event of *Kālacakra* Perfection Stage practice, whereby the *yogi* simultaneously -- i.e. ‘in a single instant’ -- stacks red and white drops within his individual *cakras*, and so engenders 21,600 moments of unchanging great bliss. This experience in turn, signals a number of transformations which culminate in the *yogi*’s actualization of the four bodies of the Buddha.

particular, that same text draws on the *Vajraguhya Tantra*: “The Invincible One, who maintains the various forms which have the nature of immutable, unexcelled great bliss.”

In the meaning of *Vam*, there exists both immutable great bliss and void form. To give a brief, ordinary example: [Looking at] the meaning of the two *pādas* [AGAIN AND AGAIN TWIRLING] BY HIS OWN HAND THE SUPREME OF VAJRAS, BY HIS HAND refers to the collector [Vajrapāṇi] himself; the SUPREME OF VAJRAS connotes his indivisible great bliss and emptiness which, in order to sever dualistic notions along with the instincts in the mental continuum of beings AGAIN AND AGAIN, that very [Vajrapāṇi] TWIRLS in the continuum of THOSE DIFFICULT TO TAME, and thus makes the minds of beings like his own vajra mind.

Anupamarakṣita explains that

BY HIS HAND are the two the right and left channels; THE SUPREME OF VAJRAS is the non-dual one. Relying on many enumerations, through the remedy of zealous effort, TWIRLING, he engenders the experience. Thus the quote AGAIN AND AGAIN refers to the cause of the experience [of great bliss].⁸⁸⁰

BY HIS HAND are the two the right and left [channels], and the VAJRA is the central [channel]. The meaning of repeatedly TWIRLING is explained as the very causing of the experience of unchanging great bliss from numerous strategies of blocking the movement right and left channel [winds] in the central channel. (28b/56) Thus he has explained the distinctions of the compiler in response to the question of “by whom?”

[I.2.3a1-2] Second: Explaining the distinctive qualities of the friends (retinue) of the compiler.

⁸⁸⁰ PT #2112. 117a.6-7

When taking literally the quote that runs from WITH FURROWED BROWS until HAVING THUS BESEECHED [THE TATHAGATA]...HE STOOD IN FRONT, if one were to ask: what sort of friends had Vajrapāṇi the compiler at the time he requested this very Tantra from the Tantra master? He asked together with INNUMERABLE VAJRAPĀṆIS WITH FURROWED BROWS. In what way did he ask? He BOWED IN DEVOUT SALUTATION to the teacher, requesting by words such as 'FOR MY BENEFIT, O LORD!' If one were to wonder: what are the distinctive qualities of these collectors? Their qualities should be connected to the quote that runs from HEROES [BECAUSE THEY ARE] TAMERS OF THE DIFFICULT TO TAME, up to PROTECTORS, PERFORMING THE ACTS OF BUDDHAS; thus one easily understands.

If one explains in accordance with the essence meaning, FURROWED BROWS is like the concentrated space at the forehead. Here, FURROWED BROWS thus connotes the jasmine-like *bodhicitta* abiding in the wheel of the mid-brow in the space at the forehead, and the waves which ensue from the [*bodhicitta*'s] melting which FURROWS (i.e. which progresses in successive stages). This very thing is the arising of mutable great bliss. Through the art of the six-limbed yoga, one makes it unmovable; thus one cultivates the great bliss which is immutable.

If one differentially analyzes the intuition that realizes voidness, there are five [aspects]. Thus it is VAJRA (i.e. five pointed.) Moreover, because [the intuition] manifests in oneself, the VAJRA is BY HIS OWN HAND. (29a/57) That intuition is limitless; it does not abide in the two extremes. It is the tamer of dualistic notions and the attendant karmic winds that are so DIFFICULT TO TAME. Accordingly, that intuition is a HERO.

These [lines] are explained in this way in the commentaries of Anupamarakṣita and Raviśrī. Although there are minor discrepancies between the two, both single-out the quotation FURROWED BROWS for a word-by-word [gloss]. Raviśrī's [explication] is as previously explained. Anupamarakṣita explains by saying that

BROWS alludes to the drop in the lotus in which the sixteen [joys] are experienced [in a] FURROWED (*rim par ldan*) [manner]. Thereby, one's intuition deepens. VAJRAPAṆI means *bsnyen* intuition. By acquiring INNUMERABLE great arts, they are TAMERS OF THE DIFFICULT TO TAME, namely the addictive notions. They are HEROES in [performing] the primary ACTS OF BUDDHAS.⁸⁸¹

Regarding the quote POSSESSED OF FEARSOME, HEROIC FORMS and so on, the *Viṃśatī* explains FEARSOME as possessing the nine theatrical styles.⁸⁸² Accordingly, they have HEROIC FORMS. Having explained that, one may think, in what way are they like that? Although it is taught that they possess FEARSOME FORM, it is as wrathful ones that they serve as protectors who PERFORM THE ACTS OF BUDDHAS, taming the DIFFICULT TO TAME, and TWIRLING⁸⁸³ BY THEIR OWN HANDS [THEIR] FLASHING-TIPPED VAJRA hand-implements. That is what chiefly appears to be the literal meaning [of the quote] (29a/58) according to Anupamarakṣita's way of explanation.

From the perspective of taking desire [for sense objects] into the path, [the Vajrapāṇis] frighten the *śravakas*. Therefore, they are FEARSOME. Because they conquer the difficult to tame both internally and externally, they possess HEROIC FORM. VAJRA is their own body; TIP connotes the letter HAM on the crown, which FLASHES from the melting caused by the glowing fury-fire (*gTum mo*) at the navel. BY HIS OWN HAND means developing the four blisses in the emergent and reverse order. The meaning of the TWIRLING is

⁸⁸¹ PT #2112, 117a.7-8. Note: Text reads *dpra-pa*, brow instead of *pad ma*, lotus.

⁸⁸² 1. *sgeg pallasya*: charming. 2. *dpa-ba-vira*: heroic. 3. *mi sdug palaśubha*: ugly. 4. *drug śul ugra*: aggressive. 5. *bzhad gadlhasita*: smiling. 6. *krodha*, wrathful. 7. *snying rjes/karunika*: compassionate. 8. *rngmas pa adbhuta*: frightening. 9. *zhi walśanti*: peaceful.

⁸⁸³ It should be noted that although the author cites the verb "twirling" (*gsor bar byet pa*), the root text in Sanskrit has *ullālayadbhīh*, "lifting upwards".

increasing from full to full through the cultivation of the six limbs of withdrawal, etc. COMPASSION refers to the definitive meaning compassion -- the *bodhicitta* of unchanging great bliss. As for WISDOM, it is either the intuition which is of a single taste with the *dharmadhātu*, or it is the inferior *karma mudrā*, the middling *jñāna mudrā* and the supreme *mahāmudrā*. One generates the arisal in one's own continuum of the intuition which cognizes voidness through unchanging orgasmic great bliss, striking the key points of the vajra body through the [branches of yoga] such as Withdrawal, Life-effort, etc. and relying on the three *mudrās*. [This is] THE SUPREME LIBERATIVE ARTISTRY FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD. Because [they] arise as the actuality of the great bliss mind, they are JOYFUL. By abandoning the two obstructions through the path of realizing voidness by means of that [bliss], they are CONTENTED. They achieve a satisfied body-mind through such joy and contentment; thus [they] have the supremely DELIGHTED DEMEANOR.⁸⁸⁴

Void-form bodies adorned with signs and marks, they are HEROIC in blocking the extreme of peace. Hence, they have a FEARSOME FORM. Possessed of forms of unchanging intuition that block the extreme of existence, (30a/59) they are an intuition body or the Buddha-embodiment itself -- the supreme bliss. Radiating such a bliss, they are PROTECTORS who PERFORM [BUDDHA] ACTS for the sake of beings. BODIES BOWED to that great bliss, the Lord of Yoga, their body, speech and mind are spontaneously united.

Raviśrī explains the meaning of the two *pādas* WITH A JOYFUL AND CONTENTED (AND DELIGHTED) DEMEANOR in a similar fashion, although with some minor differences:

JOYFUL is the actual intuition of great bliss. Because the bliss is attached to that, is CONTENTED. The embodiment of experiential uniformity of orgasmic fusion of body, speech and mind accomplishes the good of the world, and so is DELIGHTED (*rangs ba*). FEARSOME is either the intuition which understands voidness, or the extreme of cessation joy (*viramānanda*). Separate from desire (by that bliss), they either embody its form or nature.⁸⁸⁵

That is the explanation which differs slightly in some details.

⁸⁸⁴ The Tibetan addition of *rangs pa* (delight) to *dga' pa* (joy) and *mgu pa* (contentment) has no analogue in the Sanskrit, which employs only the terms *hr̥ṣṭa* and *tuṣṭa*. Accordingly, it is necessary to add a phase which is not present in my Sanskrit translation in order to accommodate the author's gloss.

⁸⁸⁵ See PT #2111, 48b.6-7; quote is not *verbatim*.

[L2.3a1-3] Third: the qualities of the way in which the question was asked.

PROTECTOR, THE PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHA, THE BHĀGAVAN, THE TATHĀGATA. If one takes this in terms of its literal meaning, he has GONE TO (*āgata/gsheks pa*) beauty, completion and unmistakeness; [thus he is a *Tathāgata de zhin gshegs pa*). Alternately, because he UNDERSTOOD subjective intuition according to the objective voidness, he UNDERSTOOD.

Because he has defeated the four Māras and possesses the six fortunate assets such as power and wealth,⁸⁸⁶ he is BHĀGAVAN.⁸⁸⁷ Vajrapāṇi the asker, along with his retinue, rising from below, JOINED HIS PALMS, STOOD BEFORE [THE BUDDHA]. He (30b/60) spoke thus to the teacher of the Tantra, who completed all abandonments and realizations and so is THE PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHA. This explanation is like that of the *Vimalaprabhā*.

If one examines the essence meaning, Ācārya Ravisī explains it like this: [He is] PROTECTOR for, because he does not emit the jasmine-like *bodhicitta*, he is a PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHA; [he] produces the great bliss. [He is] BHĀGAVAN for, relying on the blazing and trickling of the two elements - the white element which resides in the root *cakra* at the mid-brow, and the red element which resides in the root *cakra* at the naval -- he arises as the actuality of bliss, together with the arising of the mind of clear light. Therefore, he is BHĀGAVAN.

⁸⁸⁶ 1. *dwang phyug* (power and wealth); 2. *gzugs* (physical form); 3. *dpal* (glory); 4. *grags-pa* /fame; 5. *ye shes* (intuition); 6. *brtson 'grus* (enthusiastic perseverance).

⁸⁸⁷ The author is glossing the Tibetan word for *bhāgavan*, namely *bcom ldan 'das*, whose sense of being the "victorious" or "triumphant one" is less obvious in the Sanskrit. Likewise, the Sanskrit sense of *bhāga* as wealth is highlighted by the author's allusion to the possession of the six fortunate assets.

The *bodhicitta* which came to the center of the jewel from the crown of the head drew on the orgasmic bliss in the emergent order, and so STOOD BEFORE. Similarly, it went from the center of the jewel to the *cakra* at the *uṣṇisa*, invoking the orgasmic bliss of the reverse order; thus, he is TATHĀGATA (*DE ZHIN GSHEGS PA*).⁸⁸⁸ BOWED IN DEVOUT SALUTATION means realizing great bliss, JOINED HIS PALMS has the meaning of mixing the two -- life-wind and evacuative wind -- by the power of *prāṇayama*. STOOD BEFORE [THE BUDDHA suggests] relying on the branch of *samādhi*, and SAID is enjoying/experiencing unchanging great bliss.

Now in the commentary, it is explained that the brow *cakra* is the place wherein abides the intuition drop. Thus verse 120 of the 'Intuition Chapter' of the *Vimalaprabhā* says:

The '*Nada*' is the heart-mind drop, which causes the occasion of extremely deep sleep. (31a/61) 'Drop' is the body-drop [at the] brow which creates the occasion of waking consciousness. 'Cha' (part) is the speech drop at the throat, which gives rise to dreams. 'Intuition' is the intuition drop [at the] navel which creates the occasion of the fourth awareness.⁸⁸⁹

Someone may think: that [explanation] seems contradictory to the expression of the four kinds of drops and the four occasions as explained in the 120 verse of the 'Intuition Chapter' of the *Vimalaprabhā*. Anupamarakṣita remarks:

BHAGAVAN means going down from above, and conquering by realizing bliss. TATHĀGATA means going back up from below, and GONE (*gzhegs pa*) in the abode of SUCHNESS (*de zhin*). PERFECTLY means perfecting the conch mansion; and [he is] BUDDHA because he achieves the abandonment of what is to be abandoned. [Accordingly, Vajrapāṇi] BOWED IN DEVOUT SALUTATION to that. The palms connote the channel and the winds; JOINED [reminds us] of the non-

⁸⁸⁸ Here Raviśrī is drawing on the Sanskrit sense of *a-ṅgam* as "to come" or "arrive".

⁸⁸⁹ This refers to the sexual bliss engendered through heterosexual intercourse, which is experienced with the descent of the *bodhicitta*.

emission of the drop. STOOD BEFORE connotes the radiant drop standing within the middle of the Vajra.⁸⁹⁰

The *Vajragarbha* commentary glosses the meaning of TATHAGATA: “The definition of TATHAGATA should be explained like this. It is ‘endowed with glory’ (*Śrī*)” because it has GONE TO SUCHNESS and then again [returns] to SUCHNESS. By this, he is TATHAGATA by [virtue of his] knowledge of wisdom.” The quote “By [virtue of his] knowledge of wisdom” connotes [knowledge of the] emptiness by emptiness along with its image. TATHA (*DE ZHIV*) is the stage of non-abiding *nirvana*, [tantamount to] the fulfillment [of the journey of the *bodhicitta*] from the lotus at the secret place to the vajra-jewel. (31b/62) Abiding in the *bhaga* of the Vajra-queen, whose nature is of the elements of wind, fire, water, earth and intuition, it journeys [through] the crown, mid-brow, throat, heart, navel, and the lotuses at the secret place.

Śrī’s vajra *bodhicitta*. It is GONE TO SUCHNESS (TATHAGATA), and again [returned]. Like that, GONE [is described in accordance with] the preceding part, [whereby] the *bodhicitta* is GONE from the Vajra-jewel to the lotus at the secret place, [identified with] the element of intuition, and to the navel, the heart, the throat, the mid-brow and to the top of the crown. In such a way is it GONE to SUCHNESS. By so achieving [that], one eliminates the twelve branches, and fully achieves the twelfth [*bodhisattva*] stage. In conventional terms, it is GONE *via* the divisions of the four joys – joy (*ānanda*), supreme joy (*paramānanda*), extraordinary joy (*viramānanda*), and orgasmic joy (*sahajānanda*). Similarly, going from below connotes going from the purified secret place and arriving at the mid-brow, [identified with] the harmonious cause, the fruitional aspect, person-creation, and the stainless. Again like that, it is explained that harmonious

⁸⁹⁰ PT #2112, 118a.1-3.

cause is [identified with] the navel; fruitional aspect [*rnam smin*] with the dharma-maṇḍala; person-creation (*skyes bu byed pa*) with enjoyment, and stainless with great bliss. This is stated as certain.

Moreover, with reference to the explanation of from below: in much the way of dividing time into fifteen, i.e. the first digit of month and so on, [the movement of *bodhicitta*] goes from the lotus at the secret [place] to the crown; thus it is GONE TO REALITY (*rang zhin du gzhegs pa*) which is the fifteenth digit.⁸⁹¹ In conventional terms, the mind of intuition is seminal fluid. Likewise, by [the way of] dividing time in fifteen -- i.e. first digit of the month and so on -- in reverse order, the reality *bodhicitta* (*rang zhin gyi byang chub kyi sems*) which is the fifteenth digit is drawn from the secret lotus by the power of yoga at the vajra-jewel. (32a/63) At the sixteenth digit, it goes above [to arrive at] the mid-brow and crown. Similarly in the *cakra*, by [the way of] dividing such as the first digit of the dark [fortnight] and so on, the blood element particle (uterine blood) moves from the secret place to the crown: this is the new moon, the division which conquers the sixteenth digit.⁸⁹² That very [process] by Buddhas is the reverse order. By the [the way of] dividing such as the first digit of the dark [fortnight] and so on, it arrives at the lotus at the secret [place]: this is the new moon, the division which conquers the

⁸⁹¹ The *Kālacakra* tradition includes a variety of models of the human body as, quite literally, a Wheel (*cakra*) of Time (*kāla*). These models presuppose that *samsaric*, ordinary time is non-dual from the body of the cosmos and of the practitioner – an understanding which gives rise to detailed webs of analogies. For example, the sixteen digits of the moon are identified with specific *nāḍīs* at particular *cakras* in the human body; with particular bodily constituents, etc. Here, we see a mapping of the moon digits (*kalā*) to the yogically-directed movement of *bodhicitta* through the *cakras*.

⁸⁹² In the *Kālacakra* system, the passage of time indicated by the digits of the moon manifests in the individual's body as semen or uterine blood, and is corresponded with the movement of these materials between and within the bodily *cakras*.

sixteenth digit. In the root *Kālacakra Tantra* and its sources it says “Embodied beings at death” -- the definitive meaning of TATHAGATA in detail.

From the development of the Void Form Couple, achieved in actuality within the *dhūti* in the center of the navel *cakra*, comes the melting of the *bodhicitta*-drop which is of the nature of the five systems which abide in the one’s own body, and the five *maṇḍalas* such as earth and so on. The drop arrives at the throat from the forehead, bringing forth [the experience of] joy; at the heart, supreme joy; at the navel, killing joy, and at the tip of the jewel at the secret place, orgasmic joy. [There are] sixteen subdivisions (literally “portions”) of joy in the dripping of *bodhicitta* from the crown to the tip of the vajra-jewel. The building-up of [drops] from the first instance of immutable bliss [at the genital *cakra*] to the building-of the last instance at the crown [yields] 21,600 white element-drops. (32b/64) As they come [down], so they go [up]: [the building-up process] from the crown back down to the jewel similarly [yields] 21,600 red element drops, as the [yogin] does not emit, and maintains stability. Only in the occasion of the sixteenth part, remaining permanently in that way, one completes 21,600 [instances] of immutable great bliss. As a result, the twelve limbs together with their instincts and the karmic winds of twelve transits are halted, and thus the twelve stages are realized. [That is] said to be the meaning of the definitive meaning Tathāgata.

With reference to [the term] BHAGAVAN, the root *Kālacakra Tantra* says:

Bhaga is explained as possessing the six excellences: godliness, beauty, fame, glory, intuition and energy, which are perfect. By the thirty-six elements purified, the earth and so on, the Vajra Queens, the qualities of those such as godliness and so on, those six are called *bhaga*.

Also, from the *Vajragarbha*: “He conquers all the karmic winds of the twelve transits, and because [he] eliminates them, is called Bhagavan.” That same text says: “[He is]

called Bhagavan because he halts the twelve branches. He is also Bhagavan for he possesses the six good fortunes, and conquers the four Māras.”

As for the meaning of PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHA (*sambuddha*): The waking drop that is free of obstructions is the Extensive Aspected One. It has all the formless and profound dharmas and is also the very realization [which applies to that]. The root *Kālacakra Tantra* says: (33a/65) “One is buddha when one goes to the occasion of waking; one is renowned as ‘Omniscient.’ Knowing everything, one is freed by that: there is no going to the occasion of darkness.” That meaning is also [indicated by] the *Vajragarbha*: “By realization, one firmly becomes buddha – that is certain.”

Uncontaminated bliss itself is called bliss, truth, suchness, and ultimate reality. They are synonymous with voidness, signlessness, wishlessness, and activitylessness, the nature of the four [doors of] liberation and [the four *brahma-vihāras*, namely] compassion, love, joy and equanimity. The arts of perceiving them by the way of non-perception are the nature of wisdom: that is called buddhahood itself.” The four liberations are the four intuitions which realize voidness with respect to the intrinsic reality of those four, namely a *dharma*’s actuality, cause, effect, and function. The arts which are indivisibly applied with that wisdom are divided into four, just as are the conceptual opposites (*ldog cha*) of what purify the obstructions of the four kinds of occasions in great bliss [namely the occasions of waking, dreaming, deep sleep and the fourth occasion.] These are the four *brahma-vihāras* which are, in this context, extraordinary. The ultimate consummation (*mthar phyin pa*) of the two – art and wisdom – like that is said to be meaning of PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHA. I mention these a little bit as a factor in producing

certainty in the occasion of the verbal meaning. One should remember [these] later from what is below.

[II.3.1a-4] Fourth: as for the distinction of the purpose for which it was asked, "O PERVADING LORD, [TEACH] ME!" If one considers the literal meaning, **(33b/66)** he is the LORD who PERVADES all the clans, and PERVADES all beings with compassion. Thus he calls the teacher of the Tantra PERVADING LORD. The commentary says FOR MY SAKE, AS A FAVOR TO ME, PLEASE TEACH ME THE *MNS*. Why does he ask that? FOR MY BENEFIT, [thereby expressing] the self-interested purpose, and AS A FAVOR TO ME [thus expressing] the altruistic purpose. He asks because of those two [aims]. If someone asks, like what is the meaning of FOR MY BENEFIT? Those two *pādas* COMPLETE ENLIGHTENMENT BY THE MĀYAJĀLA explain that. The altruistic purpose is explained by the *pāda* MINDS BEING DISTURBED BY ADDICTIONS – those are explained as in the *Vimalaprabhā*. In actuality, Vajrapāṇi the collector is of single continuum with the teacher of the Tantra. Nonetheless, adopting the bodhisattva mode, he shows it as if he were [motivated by] self-interest.

If one explains from the essence meaning-level, he is the PERVADING LORD in all things animate and inanimate, the intuition of immutable great bliss. By the mode of experiencing that, FOR MY BENEFIT is helping; FOR MY SAKE is the arisal like that great bliss in all beings, and AS A FAVOR TO ME. By that intuition [of bliss], one eradicates the truth habit that is incorporated in the continua of self and other, along with its instinctual residue. Having done so, by the way of showing the infinite MĀYAJĀLA which is like the magic whereby the sixteen joys become unobstructed, one [obtains] COMPLETE

ENLIGHTENMENT, (34a/67) [becomes] a buddha. Like that, by whatever means necessary, make me capable of attaining [that state].

Anupamarakṣita explains it like this: PERVADING LORD is the white element at the crown [that] travels along the *dhuti* from the crown and drips down. Thus it develops the supreme great bliss, [which is the meaning of] FOR MY BENEFIT. FOR MY SAKE is the creation of great bliss in [one's own] body. [This arises from] abiding in the context of totally completing all the portions of the white element, neither terminating them [nor] exhausting them by uterine blood -- the increase of the jasmine-like *bodhicitta*. AS A FAVOR TO ME connotes the creation of great bliss for the sake of others -- the non-emission and preservation of the *bodhicitta* which is the support of its [arisa] in a person. ENLIGHTENMENT BY THE MĀYĀJĀLA is as was previously explained.

If we explain the meaning of the quote WHOSE MINDS ARE DISTURBED BY ADDITIONS as does the *Vimalaprabhā*, ADDICTIONS are the five poisons⁸⁹³ whose imprints make MINDS...DISTURBED. The four kinds of drops contain the cause homogeneous with the four types of [Buddha] bodies. If they are free of stain, one may actualize the bodies. That is indeed the way things exist. However, one may not realize things as they are by the power of meditation. Accordingly, [Vajrapāṇi] requests the explanation of the *MNS* (34b/68) FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL BEINGS SUNK IN THE SLOUGH OF MISKNOWLEDGE.

Relying on vajra yoga, the art which benefits, one purifies the stains contained in the four kind of drops by the four yogas. Then, having cultivated [*yar ldan du byas*] oneself by the causal path homogeneous with the Four Bodies, one attains the fruit of the unexcelled bodies -- the Truth body, Complete Enjoyment Body, Emanation Body and the Body of

⁸⁹³ *·dod chags*: desire; *khroṅ khro*: hatred, anger; *ma rig pa*: misknowledge; *nga rgyal*: pride; *phrag-dog*: jealousy.

Great Bliss. The *Abridged Tantra* observes “All beings [are] that Buddhahood. The Great Buddha [is] in the world -- there is no other.” The *Vimalaprabhā* moreover asserts that “Here, intuition abides in the heart of beings. That is the unconquerable sound, which has the nature of the perpetual *nada*.” That same text further states: “As for ‘misknowing’, because one’s own Ādibuddha exists as the actuality of the Four Bodies, it is ‘knowing.’”

In general, the four kinds of occasions contain the homogeneous cause of the four kinds of Bodies. In particular, there exists a very subtle mind of clear light which has the appearance of the Void Form Body, like an [image seen in an] oracle mirror. That is the four-fold achievement of the Truth Body and Form Body. Reflecting upon that very explanation, the ways of actualizing [the bodies] by the path will be explained below.

Anupamarakṣita. and Raviśrī explain it like this. [The term] ADDICTIONS refers to thinking which is ruled by the power of attachment to bliss, [causing] the emission of the external element. By that power comes the *samsaric* suffering of the six types, and (35a/69) MINDS ARE DISTURBED by various addictions. Those without addictions means the liberative arts which BENEFIT BEINGS SUNK IN THE SLOUGH OF MISKNOWLEDGE and its instinctual residue. Conclusively perfecting the 21,600 moments of great bliss in a single instance by immutable great bliss while evoking the mind of clear-light -- it is in order to attain this fruit that he requested the explanation of the *MNS*. That is the explanation, [though] it does not draw upon [the author’s original words].

If one puts into practice the meaning of these literal [explanations], it teaches that the Vajra disciple having JOINED HIS PALMS TOGETHER in reverence to the Vajra master, requests of him the initiation and the explanation of the Tantra. Drawing from Nāropa’s great commentary on the *Hevajra Tantra*: “Now, with devotion and great love, the

disciple should prostrate at the feet of the master and request the initiation.” With one-pointed mind, having JOINED HIS PALMS TOGETHER AND STOOD BEFORE HIM, BODY BOWED, [he says] “FOR MY BENEFIT, O PERVADING LORD.” This is how it is explained one should request the initiation from the Vajra Master. Likewise, the distinctions of the dispositions like that are explained by the quote.

The Vajra master’s oral instruction to the Vajra disciple is explained as a vital teaching from the perspective of the capable disciple. The *Vimalaprabhā* commentary to the ‘Intuition Chapter’ [of the *Kālacakra Tantra*] says: (35b/70) it is explained in the fifteenth verse of the ‘Chapter of the Request’ in the *MNS*, “in order to completely clarify the addictions and abandon misknowledge, he requested explanation [consonant with] the particular dispositions of sentient beings.” Because of this teaching of the Bhagavan, the Vajra master should certainly give [teachings consonant with] the capacity of the disciples’ dispositions.

[II.3.1a-5]: Fifth: The Distinctions of the Place in which the Question [was Asked].

THE BHAGAVAN, PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHA. In we take this *śloka* in terms of its literal meaning, the meaning of the first *pāda* is as explained previously. THE GURU who is dharma TEACHER TO THE WORLD is said to be the realization of the two bodies [which fulfill] self- interest and other-interest in the wake of the initial arisal of *bodhicitta*. Not going beyond these two [interests], it KNOWS THE SUCHNESS OF THE GREAT PLEDGE [BEING], and of that which is to be known. Thus he requested an explanation from HE WHO IS SUPREME [in] knowing THE DISPOSITION AND CAPABILITIES of disciples.

As for the essence meaning: he is BUDDHA who thoroughly comprehends all things through the intuition which PERFECTS instances of changeless great bliss: the

BHAGAVAN whose mind is of a single taste with the intuition of aspectless voidness, and whose all-aspected body is indivisible [with that mind]. The TEACHER is the drop which is the source of great bliss, residing in the channel *cakra* at the crown. THE WORLD refers to the channels and the branch winds. GURU is the supreme art: applying the *gTum mo* to the collection of winds, one melts the *bodhicitta* at the crown, [from where it travels] along the path of the *dhuti*. By that kindling, (36a/71) one finally stabilizes the four blisses, and actualizes the intuition of non-dual, immutable great bliss.

Therefore, PLEDGE [BEING] is the four kinds of drops. KNOWS THE SUCHNESS is the intuition imbued with the essence of the sixteen joys which are sub-divisions of them (the four drops). He requests the explanation of the *MNS* from (he who is) SUPREME in KNOWING objective and subjective phenomena, the disposition and capabilities [of beings], and [whose] nature is of single taste with immutable great bliss, [which is] all subjects and objects. This is the rough arrangement of the explanations of Anupamarakṣita and Raviśrī.

[II.3.1a-6]: Sixth: The explanation of the distinctions of the property of the question has two [sub-divisions]: The *Vimalaprabhā* way [of explanation] and the way of other commentaries.

As for the first: Having demonstrated the reality of the teaching of the question by the five *pādas* [beginning with] THE INTUITION BODY of the BHAGAVAN and so on, he teaches the distinction of that through the quote PROFOUND IN MEANING, etc. Explaining methodically, drawing as a basis of explanation the quote “please teach,” if [one asks]: by which person? By the Bhagavan, the Lord of All Words; thus, the quote BHAGAVAN, the

LORD OF SPEECH. The 122nd [verse] of the [*Kālacakra Tantra* 's] 'Intuition Chapter' says: "Without explaining in a single language to everybody, by the many languages of other people, he enters into the hearts of all." The third condensed account (*mdor bsdus*) of the Great Commentary to the [*Kālacakra Tantra* 's] 'Cosmology Chapter' states:

The Bhagavān Buddha has perfected his collections of merit and intuition (36b/72) through the power of his previous prayer, and is possessed of the full array of the virtues of sovereignty (*dwang phyug*) such as self-confidence and so forth. When the various requestors in the billion world galaxies in a Buddha field use the infinite utterances of infinite beings to request the dharma, he used infinite, unobscured Magic *Nirmanakāyas* to teach the worldly and transcendental dharma by means of the omniscient language that employs the utterances of all beings. The Omniscient One is not more than one.⁸⁹⁴

This is from the evidence expressed in the extensive commentary.

If one asks, 'what is the teaching [that was taught]?' THAT SUPREME REPETITION OF THE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ *Jñānasattva*. If one further wonders, 'what is (the *Jñānasattva*) like?' [Like] BHAGAVAN, for he is all the buddhas of the three times and their Void Form Vajradhara Bodies which have the nature of the intuition of immutable great bliss. When explaining that, one should praise him as THE GREAT UṢṢṢA of the Buddha. Alternately, he is like the UṢṢṢA of the Tathāgata insofar as it is stable, difficult to realize, and whose meaning is difficult to explain in words of an everyday mode. That is clearly expressed by the quote THE EMBODIMENT OF INTUITION. He is endowed with all supreme natures of the supremely changeless intuition which is knowable only in meditative introspection (*rang rik ba*), because it is made of subtle particles. The meaning of SELF-BORN is THE INDIVISIBLE ADIBUDDHA whose expression will be explained below. (37a/73) In that moment of perfecting the 21,600 [instances] of great bliss, all of the substantial elements of the body are exhausted, and the Void Form Body

⁸⁹⁴ PT #2064. 180a-b.

which has ceased all evolutionary winds has the form of the father-mother in union.

Because of that, the root *Kālacakra Tantra* states: “Yoga is not artful means, nor wisdom alone. The Tathāgata teaches that yoga is the meditative fusion of art and wisdom.”⁸⁹⁵

If somebody were to wonder, ‘what is the distinctive excellence of RECITING THE NAME OF MAÑJUŚRI JÑĀNASATTVA?’ Because it is the nature of immutable great bliss, it is PROFOUND IN MEANING. Because it arises as the aspected Void Form Couple, it is LOFTY IN MEANING. Because its nature is the essence of all paths of secret mantra, and has the nature of the culmination of their fruition, it is GREAT [IN] MEANING, WITHOUT EQUAL. Because the nature of all of those is uncontaminated intuition, it is AUSPICIOUS. With the distinction of being VIRTUOUS in the context of the cause IN THE BEGINNING, in the path in THE MIDDLE, and the fruition at THE END, (37b/74) it is the Tantra of the *MNS*, the Ādibuddha: it has the distinction of being that WHICH WAS PRONOUNCED BY PAST BUDDHAS, WHICH WILL BE PRONOUNCED BY FUTURE [BUDDHAS] AGAIN, AND WHICH THE PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHAS OF THE PRESENT PRONOUNCE AGAIN. Thus the *Vimalaprabhā* asserts:

Here, just as the Tathāgatas of the past, present and future spoke, are speaking and will speak the *MNS*, just so is the *Ādibuddha*. The word *Ādi* means without beginning. Since beginningless time, beginningless Buddhas have taught it, are teaching it and will teach it. Accordingly, it is not taught solely by Dipaṃkara and Śākyamuni.⁸⁹⁶

If someone were to wonder, ‘the *Guhyasamāja* states that from Tathāgata Dipaṃkara up to Śākyamuni, no one explained the mantra vehicle. As such, isn’t such [an assertion] a contradiction?’ The meaning is that it was not explained in the Land of the Aryans

⁸⁹⁵ Ch 1.2. See also the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, 18.33.

⁸⁹⁶ Ch 1.2

(‘*phags pa*’i *yul*, India) to the beings of the four clans of India. They were unsuitable receptacles of the mantra vehicle, arrogant and inflated. As such, it is not said that the mantra vehicle was not taught by all of the Buddhas up to them. [That would erroneously entail that] they were not omniscient Buddhas, because they did not teach the vajra vehicle. Therefore, although they did not teach [Tantra]) in India, (38a/75) in other places times and in other times, other fortunate disciples [were taught] the vajra vehicle in general, and the *MNS* in particular, as well as the *Ādibuddha*. (check the lettering here – instrumental is typo?) The *Vimalaprabhā* says:

Here, it says in the *Samāja* that from Tathāgata Dipaṃkara up to Śākyamuni, no Tathāgata taught the mantra vehicle. That [carries the sense of] ‘in that period, in that time.’ At the time they were teaching the dharma in the land of the Aryans, they did not teach the [mantra vehicle] to the retinue of India, because of the disposition and capabilities of those unfortunate beings, possessed of the arrogance of the four clans. [Nonetheless] it is not the case that they did not teach it at another time to the retinue of another world-realm. Because of this statement of the Tathāgata, [it is clear that] all the Tathāgatas teach the three vehicles. Otherwise, they would not be omniscient, because they would not teach the Vajra vehicle. Therefore all the Tathāgatas teach the three vehicles and the the eighty-four thousand dharma properties, in accordance with the disposition and capabilities of beings. Accordingly, [the *Ādibuddha*] is embraced by the *MNS* which makes manifests the Vajradhara intuition-body.⁸⁹⁷

In light of this certainty, “even at the time of entering [his] mother’s womb, he was teaching the lucky assembly of the gods. From the moment of [his being] Buddha, (38b/76) there is not even the slightest occasion when our Teacher is not turning the wheel of dharma, nor the slightest occasion when he is not teaching the dharma of the vajra-vehicle in particular.” Why do you have to look into anything other than that kind of promise?

⁸⁹⁷ Ch. I.2: PT #2064, 17a.1-2.

Second: the way of other commentaries. The great *siddha* Anupamarakṣita explained it like this. In reference to the quote THE INTUITION BODY OF THE BHAGAVAN,⁸⁹⁸ INTUITION BODY means that he has fulfilled the sixteen joys and [so possesses] the body of orgasmic bliss. He explains the meaning of INTUITION BODY OF THE BHAGAVAN as either to realize or to actualize that [body.] As was explained like the other, previous [commentary], Raviśrī explains the meaning of BHAGAVAN as a vocative (Skt. *aho* or *sambodha*). The UŚNISĀ refers to the HAM letter which resides at the brow *cakra*; GREAT refers to the presence in that very *cakra* of a triangular E; SPEECH refers to the drop [and] the six letters. The LORD of that is that very teacher who is the definitive meaning orgasmic intuition, accessed through the aspect of the [letter] VAM. INTUITION BODY is that very immutable, orgasmic intuition which arises from the stabilization of *bodhicitta* at the *uṣṇiṣa*. It has the meaning of SELF-BORN, because it is not requested from external arising, (39a/77) but [arises] only by internalizing into one's own body the instruction of the lama. The *Hevajra [Tantra]* says: "it is orgasmic; nobody will bestow it. It will not come from anywhere [else]. It is known as a result of depending on the arts of the lama, and as a result of one's own merit."⁸⁹⁹ Likewise, [the Indian scholar] Darika[pa] says: "This intuition which is unborn is partless, like the center of the sky. Through bliss, it diffuses through the points of the body. So Darika asserts."⁹⁰⁰ MAÑJUŚRĪ is the drop at the center of the jewel, that very non-dual INTUITION which is the basis for the person. BEING is the expanded phallus in she who is faint with bliss; NAME is said to be the intuition of

⁸⁹⁸ Note: the Sanskrit of this phrase yields BHAGAVAN, THE (MNS) OF THE INTUITION BODY.

⁸⁹⁹ Chapter 8.34. For Sanskrit. see Farrow. 1992. 98.

⁹⁰⁰ See PT #2112. 118b.4.

orgasmic bliss; RECITATION connotes that very essence of the path RECITED by all of the Unexcelled Tantras. Because it is hard to fathom, it is PROFOUND IN MEANING; because it pervades all phenomena, it is LOFTY IN MEANING; because it is realized by the power of *mahāmudrā*, it is GREAT IN MEANING, WITHOUT EQUAL. Because it is in character of a single taste with that, it is AUSPICIOUS. At THE BEGINNING connotes Joy; MIDDLE is the Supreme Joy; END means the Extraordinary Joy; VIRTUOUS is the experience of the great, unchanging orgasmic bliss.

BY PAST BUDDHAS means [it is] understood by first hearing and meditating on that very great bliss from the oral teachings of the lama. WHICH WILL BE PRONOUNCED BY FUTURE [BUDDHAS] connotes the future perfection of [all] instances [of great bliss]; THE PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHAS (39b/78) OF THE PRESENT PRONOUNCE AGAIN means the experience of great bliss by the power of meditation up to the path. TANTRA connotes continuous attachment to bliss; *MIYALALA* [suggests that the *MNS*] is that which is sung from complete enlightenment. VAJRADHARAS connotes his body which is the intuition realized by oneself. Great MANTRA-HOLDING means the great bliss which is itself the five intuitions. COUNTLESS refers to the 21,600 distinctions of the path; JOYFUL refers to the meaning made manifest by the [clear] light which [is occasioned by] the cessation of the twelve great transits (*'pho chen*).

This is the general arrangement explained by both Anupamarakṣita and Raviśrī. By people plagued by doubt, all the words of these commentaries lead nowhere. This is the definitive meaning of the Recitation of the Names of Mañjuśrī Jñānasattva. From the *Amṛtabindu-pratyāloka [vṛtti]*: “MAÑJUŚRĪ is the drop in the jewel channel; INTUITION is the support of non-dual bliss; BEING is the expanded phallus; NAME is the orgasmic bliss.

RECITATION means that which is described by many Tantras to be the holy supreme thing to be achieved.”

[II.3.1a-7:] Seven: [the Distinctions of] the Commitments [of the Asker are ascertained by analyzing] the three *slokas* beginning with PROTECTOR...ALL THE PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHAS, ETC. The literal meaning is easy to know. If we take it in terms of the essence meaning, HOLD (*DHARA*) refers either to the immutable great bliss that is the PROTECTOR of all sentient beings, THE SECRET OF ALL THE PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED BUDDHAS, or to the SECRET art of the six-limbed yoga, whereby one must HOLD the vital drop without external emission. As for I, I WILL HOLD to the entity that produces the immutable intuition, without vacillating to other realms, WITH STALWART DISPOSITION UNTIL LIBERATION -- the mastery of the twelve grounds as much as the twelve great transits.

If one should wonder, for what need? FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENTIRETY OF THE ADDICTIONS that grow from sexual bliss (lit. “the dripping bliss,” *‘dzag bde*) and for the abandonment of the entirety of misknowledge -- both with and without addictions -- that is comprised of the truth habit and the instinct for migration. Transforming the addictive passions into the path IN KEEPING WITH THE PARTICULAR DISPOSITIONS of the sharp disciples, they come to attain the unexcelled enlightenment in this very life. I desire to explain the foregoing teaching of that art to the fortunate ones. Therefore, the Buddha Kapalika says thus: “It is a sin to be passionless; there is no other such sin in [all] the three worlds. Accordingly, O Child, always pursue desire!”

SECRET connotes the center of the jewel, marked by [the syllable] *E*; PAṆI (hand) connotes the interior of the central channel of that. VAJRA connotes the mental requesting

of great bliss; by going in the reverse order of the previous visitation of the *bodhicitta*, which is the actuality of Akṣobhya marked by the syllable VAM, one fulfills the realization of voidness by unchanging great bliss. The form is free of taint; PALMS means that the actuality of art and wisdom is inseparably TOGETHER. BODY BOWED connotes the perfection of [the 21,600] instances (40b/80) of unchanging great bliss; STOOD BEFORE connotes the simultaneous realization of all phenomena, conventional and ultimate (*ji lta ba dang ji snyed pa'i chos thams cad*).

Likewise, in order to denote the pure sixteen joys that rely on the central channel, the first chapter of this [MNS] has sixteen *ślokas*. From the *Amṛtabindu-pratyāloka [vṛtti]*: “Like that, because of the pure sixteen joys that rely on the central channel, there are sixteen verses.” Raviśrī spokes thus: “Because he requested through sixteen verses which are the pure sixteen joys contained in the central channel, there are sixteen verses.”⁹⁰¹ In a brief part of the transitional section [of his commentary to] this chapter, Raviśrī explains that very supreme, unchanging bliss by the guise of the request through the sixteen verses such THEN, VAJRADHARA, THE GLORIOUS.

We have repeatedly [emphasized] unchanging great bliss itself as the extensive explanation of the essence meaning. Although there appear such explanations [highlighting it] as the basis for the subject, [through] various modes of explanation, for diverse purposes, and by distinctive [approaches] such as extensive and abbreviated, [in fact] you should know that incorruptible thing with a mind for detail through that very method explained above. Those [commentators] who follow act accordingly. However the text is explained – be it by equating it with the Inner, Outer or Alternative [*Kālacakra*

⁹⁰¹ PT #2112. 119b.2

levels], and the literal and essential meaning -- in the context of definitive or interpretable, one should explain in [a manner] suitable to the capacity [of the listener].

(41a/81)

Nāropā says in his great [*Hevajra Tantra*] commentary:

The glorious *Nāmasaṃgīti* says: “Chief in being the great lord of giving; supreme as holder of the great morality; stalwart as bearer of great forbearance; zealous with great exertion. Abiding in a *samādhi* of great meditation, bearing the body of great wisdom.” As for the certain meaning of this, the *Ādibuddha* [asserts that] giving means abandoning jewels, and morality is non-emission, [even in the presence of] female bodies.⁹⁰²

Having drawn on these [verses], he states the explanation of the quote “Chief in being the great lord of giving” from the perspective of the interpretable meaning

Thus ends the detailed explanation of the ‘Chapter of the Question’, from **The Great Sun Illuminating the Reality of Vajra Yoga: An Extensive Explanation of THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ.**

⁹⁰² *Vajrapada-sāra-saṃgraha-pāñjikā*, 12.1.7. Nāropā is quoting verses 36-37 of the MVS.

(41a/81.5)

Homage to Vajradhara, who [although of a single continuum] is Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi; who plays a variety of music though there be only one string. Like the scattering of golden light rays in all directions; like cloaking the three worlds with a flash of lightning; like a roll of thunder, proclaim that responding meaning – I should make it known.

[II.3.1b] Two: The explanation of the Chapter of the Response (41b/82) has five [sub-divisions]:

- **[II.3.1b-1:]** The Consummate Miracle of the Teacher and [his] Body;
- **[II.3.1b-2:]** The Consummate Miracle of his Speech;
- **[II.3.1b-3:]** How He Approves the Collector [lit. how he authorizes it with “*sadhu!*”];
- **[II.3.1b-4:]** How to Listen to the Personal Instructions the Teacher Agreed to Convey;
- **[II.3.1b-5:]** The Way of Promising to Listen Respectfully by the Collector.

[II.3.1b-1:] First, if one explains in accordance with the literal meaning of the two *ślokas* THEN ŚĀKYAMUNI, THE BHAGAVAN, he is BHAGAVAN for, having been requested [to teach the *MVS*] by the collector, [the Lord] then explains it. He was born into the clan of the ŚĀKYAS which is, therefore, a consummate clan. He is capable (ŚĀKYA) of controlling the inappropriate activities of the three doors; thus, he is master of the *srāvakas* and *pratyeka-buddhas*. Alternately, [the phrase means that] he has the power to taste the actuality of intuition which is the non-duality of body, speech and mind; the miracle of the mind of that very [ŚĀKYAMUNI] should be so explained. The *Vimalaprabhā* states it thus: “He’s ŚĀKYA because he controls body, speech and mind; the miracle of his mind resides in equipoise.” He is THE PERFECTLY ENLIGHTENED

BUDDHA, SUPREME AMONG THE TWO-FOOTED because he is the refuge of all beings -- the many-legged and the legless. Accordingly, he is SUPREME and holy, the consummate teacher.

How does he perform miracles in order to instill faith in his retinue? To signify the depth of the dharma teaching, that very teacher [extended his] BEAUTIFUL TONGUE, so LARGE as to stretch from FROM HIS MOUTH to his hairline, extending to cover the orb of his face. Then he smiled, and his face radiated light [thus] ILLUMINATING THE THREE WORLDS, CHASTIZING THE ENEMIES, THE FOUR MARAS, (42a/83) PURIFYING the suffering of THE THREE LOWER REBIRTHS OF THE WORLD, and the cause of bad migrations in the karmic continuua of humans and gods. And having [done so], he taught this Tantra.

With regard to this meaning, the *Ārali Tantra* says: “O Great King Suddhodana, [your son] is fully explained as A RA LI. In there, Ri Gi is [Queen] Mahāmayā. Siddhartha is Vajrasattva, supreme ecstasy, great bliss.”⁹⁰³ The definitive meaning of VAJRASATTVA is the nature of unchanging great bliss, the supreme ecstasy. As for BHAGAVAN: he relied on that *mahāmudrā* which was developed in dependence upon that unchanging great bliss. By the intuition of that great bliss, he conquered the four Māras and the defilements along with their instinctual residue. Therefore, he is BHAGAVAN. The *Hevajra Tantra* says:

He should be called BHAGAVAN because he defeats the *klesha-māra* and so on. Addictions are defeated by wisdom; accordingly, he should be called Bhagavan.⁹⁰⁴

He is PERFECT, for he PERFECTS and stabilizes the *bodhicitta* to the *uṣṇisa*. Because he realizes the body of intuition at the six *cakras*, he is BUDDHA.

⁹⁰³ DT #427, 179b.6-7.

⁹⁰⁴ Chapter I, v 15.

Each of the two commentaries has two ways of explaining SUPREME AMONG THE TWO-FOOTED. (42b/84) The first [way] states that TWO-FOOTED connotes the two intuitions that realize phenomena as conventional and ultimate reality. Because he has mastered that, he is SUPREME.

What are these two [intuitions] like? The *Sekoddeśaṭīkā* of the glorious Nāropā says:

PROFOUND AND LOFTY is the actuality which is seen as voidness which is perceived of past and future phenomena. PROFOUND is the un-reality of past and future phenomena. LOFTY is [such] a perception of past and future phenomena.⁹⁰⁵

The Void Form Body which is seen as the variety of past and future 'knowables' is the PROFOUND AND LOFTY voidness. The un-reality of the Void Form Body that sees in this way should be explained as the voidness which is PROFOUND.

Within the two categories of PROFOUND and LOFTY, LOFTY is [associated with] conventional reality and PROFOUND with ultimate reality. Accordingly, the LOFTY Void Form Body is conventional reality. The Void Form Body is void by nature, [and so] PROFOUND; it is ultimate reality, the intuition that realizes the two.

The second way of explaining [posits that] the one of the TWO-FOOTED is the white element. Developing from the vajra jewel up to the *uṣṇisa*, he stabilizes [it]. The other one is the red element. Developing from the *uṣṇisa* down to the jewel tip, he stabilizes it, and so perfects the instance of immutable great bliss. [This is] the supreme meaning. The *Vimalaprabhā* says:

one foot is the uterine blood at the vajra jewel, which is the sun; the second is the semen at the crown, which is the moon. The eternal arrangement is indivisible, unwavering, the lord of desire (43a/85) worshipped by the three worlds – I bow down my crown.

⁹⁰⁵ DT #1353. 85b.

In the multi-aspected form of his face, his tongue, being the root of intuition, is the central channel. It is the place from which originates the intuition that pervades all worlds. From stabilizing one's meditation of Withdrawal at the rising-up to the upper tip, one culminates the perfection of the Day and Night signs. Then, in the center of something which has the size of the mere hair-tip with a single black mark, one will see Vajrasattva's *Sambhogakāya*, radiating five-color light rays. The *Ādibuddha* states: "Smoke, mirage, fireflies, lamp, flame, moon, sun, gloom (i.e. the sign of Rahu). Kalāgni, the great drop, the variegated clear light Form ..."⁹⁰⁶ *The Praise to Vajrapāṇi*

Commentary says:

by visualizing voidness within, one sees all phenomena as not analyzed, void. This expresses the Withdrawal branch, when one sees all the images of Buddhas of the three realms just as a young maiden sees a form in the oracle mirror.⁹⁰⁷

Here, the object has the appearance of a void, like cloudless sky. The nature of that mind of subtle and clear light is free of any substantive atoms. The Void Forms [including the signs of dissolution] such as smoke, etc. are said to arise by their own impetus, not freshly constructed by the mind. Thus as was [previously] explained, having directed one's perception into the space of void, (43b/86) the upper opening of the central channel at the time of meditation [during the stage of] Withdrawal, this is meditation. However, this does not mean, as some Tibetan [scholars] assert, that the mind is focused non-conceptually on the outer sky. [Why?] Because in the context of Withdrawal, one

⁹⁰⁶ Here, the author describes the four night signs and the six day signs, as well as the subsequent appearance of the *sambhogakāya* form of the Kālacakra deity in a black drop in the central channel in the space between the brows.

⁹⁰⁷ For further insight into the image of the oracle mirror, see Giacomella Orofino's "Divination With Mirrors: Observations On a Simile Found in *Kālacakra* Literature." In Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the Sixth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies. Oslo: Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture. 1994. 612-27.

needs to meditate by first focusing observation at the upper opening of the central channel. By meditating in this way, it is said that the ten winds enter the central channel, and the signs like smoke etc., arise. This establishes the first proof. The *Rigi Ārali Tantra* says: if one meditates in the center of the brow, neither opening nor closing the eyes, the yogin will first of all see the form of the non-exhaustion of darkness.”⁹⁰⁸ The Great Commentary on the 80th verse of [the *Kālacakra*’s] ‘*Sādhana* Chapter’ says:

The *mahāmudrā* of Withdrawal has the characteristic of a void sky. Setting the mind there only, in the direction of that opening, at the end of those signs there is a line. In that, variety moves and does not move.

What is that opening like? That same text says: “Having the conch *mahāmudrā*, that is called ‘the inner fire’...”

In this context, the word *śna* is a convention for the central channel itself.

[Now,] the latter reason of the root is proved. Drawing from the condensed accounts of the supreme immutable root Tantra: “Mediating on [signs] like smoke etc., do not allow the mind to be distracted. Having purified the central channel...” underscores Withdrawal [stage practice] as the means of purifying the central channel. The 121st verse of the ‘Intuition Chapter’ says: “‘the vitality at the central channel etc.’ is (44a/87) the yoga of compression (*nye bar bsdus pa*). Here, the yogin should first introduce the vitality into central channel. When he see the signs, it is [called the] the *avadhuti*.” It is stated that in the context of Withdrawal, one sees the signs from injecting the vitality into the central channel. In order to state this, the *Feet of the Glorious Hermit* also says

by injecting the ten winds into central channel [while] possessed of the three types of undistractedness, one blocks outer and inner concepts, and the signs emerge. [That is] the branch of Individual Severance.

⁹⁰⁸ Quote not *verbatim*: see DT #427, 178b.3.

Some people assert that the beginning [practioner], bound by ordinary activities, who does not direct his perception in the central channel and who holds his mind in the sky in front of him will [succeed in] having his winds enter the central channel and [experience] Day and Night signs. [If this is the case, then] why is it that an ordinary person who is bound by [ordinary] activities, who cultivates the observation of quiescence meditation does not induce the realization of entering the vitality into the central channel?

As for the abbreviated explanation: Conceptual thought is quieted from the force of bringing the winds -- which cause capricious, conceptual thought -- into the central channel. By achieving the ten signs, and then practicing the Day and Night yogas, one's mind becomes extremely supple (*rab tu brkyang bar*). The *Samvarodaya* says thus:

Those who become firm in meditation fully understand clear illumination. By the practice given at the tip of the tongue, however much that is desired, by that much the tongue is increased. At that time, the three elements are purified.

THE THREE WORLDS refers to (44b/88) body, speech and mind. The meaning of ILLUMINATING is the cessation at the central channel of movement in the left and right channels in the three main upper openings. Raviśrī explains the meaning of ILLUMINATING THE THREE WORLDS: "ILLUMINATING THE THREE WORLDS has the characteristic of illuminating by luminosity (*snang ba*), radiance(*snang ba mched pa*), immanence (*snang ba thop pa*) and clear light (*snang ba med pa*)."⁹⁰⁹ However, I see that [this reading] is unacceptable, because the three terms 'luminosity', 'radiance' and 'immanence' are not stated in the Three Bodhisattva Commentaries. THE FOUR MARAS are the addictions, systems, Yama (i.e. death) and Devaputra. CHASTISING THOSE ENEMIES is the stopping of the movement of karmic winds through the great-bliss intuition that

⁹⁰⁹ The fifth through eighth stages of dissolution. See PT #2111, 52a.5.

inhibits (lit. “binds”, *bcings*) the emission of the drop. Thus it is CHASTISING by the mode of purifying the elements and so on.

With regard to this very meaning, the *Vajragarbha* says:

Mara is the four kinds of occasions of a person in *samsara*. As for those four Maras: the Mara of the systems is at the emanation [*cakra* at the navel]; Death is at the heart [*cakra*]; Addictions is at the throat, and the Mara of Devaputra is at the crown. Corresponding to the sixteen⁹¹⁰ digits of the moon, each Mara destroys four portions. From within the 21,600 vitalities, by killing 5,400, one drinks their blood. That also destroys conceptual notions about things and thinglessness.

The Maras [correspond to] the four obscurations upon the four awareness drops in their *samsaric* context. One successively perfects 5,400 [blisses] out of the 21,600 immutable great blisses. (45a/89) Having so conquered them, one perfects [all] the instants of immutable great bliss. When one achieves residing in each of the joys within the context of the sixteen parts, one eliminates the obscurations of the four drops in the context of the navel and so on; conquers all movement of karmic wind; exhaustively conquers THE FOUR MARAS; uproots the conceptually-based truth habit along with its instinctual residue; and actualizes the four [Buddha] bodies.

The three lower paths of beings are called THE THREE LOWER REBIRTHS; by intensifying their addiction for worldly orgasmic bliss -- for emitting semen outside -- they are caused to circle in *samsara* and fall to these states of lower existence. By generating the orgasmic bliss-intuition, one binds the elements into non-emission – the means of PURIFYING them. SHOWED A SMILE refers to the intuition of the four joys. In this way is explained the intention of the teachings of the Great Siddha Anupamarakṣita.

Second: If we explain in accordance with the literal meaning.

⁹¹⁰ Emend six (*drug pa*) to sixteen (*drug pa*) per text.

BRAHMA-LIKE VOICE refers, not to the spoken Vedas from the Four-faced Brahma of the world, but to the omnifaceted speech of the Tathāgata. Because [everybody who hears what he says] understands it as his own language, [his speech] is **SWEET**, fulfilling the wishes of the residents of the three realms, Desire, Form, and Formless. This omni-linguistic [quality] is the miracle of his speech.

If one explains in accordance with the essence meaning, **BRAHMA** is the path of the central channel, and **(45b/90) VOICE** is the upward-moving wind. **SWEET** is the musical sound of wind which generates great bliss. **THE THREE WORLDS** connotes **FILLING** the three doors; indeed, pervading [them] by the sixteen joys.

The Acarya Raviśrī explains that the meaning of **SMILE** is the kindling of the light of the Fierce Women. **BRAHMA** connotes speech that is self-born and unconquerable; **SWEET** means **FILLING THE THREE WORLDS** by the nature of great bliss; this is explained as meaning [great bliss] pervades the three [doors] of body, speech and mind.

Third: if we explain in accordance with the literal meaning, **VAJRAPAṆI** is **VAJRADHARA** of certain and interpretable meaning. Because he has conquered the Maras and all the addictions, he is **OF GREAT STRENGTH**. Because he is the collector of all Tantras, he is **LORD OF SECRETS**; it is to him that the Tathāgata repeatedly **REPLIED**. Because he is motivated by loving kindness, **SO COMPASSIONATE**, his purpose is **SOLELY FOR THE SAKE OF THE WORLD**. The **NĀMA** OF THE **MAÑJUŚRĪ INTUITION BEING** is the intuition body. Because it is **SAMGĪTĪ** (recited), one understands [all] meanings; thus it is **GREAT IN MEANING**.

Because it developing the consummate Abandonments,⁹¹¹ IT PURIFIES. By developing consummate understanding, it is DESTRUCTIVE OF EVIL; [because Vajrapāṇi is] ANXIOUS TO HEAR IT FROM ME, it is “WELL-DONE! WELL-DONE!” He calls him GLORIOUS VAJRADHARA and then VAJRAPAṆI, for although it fulfills his own benefit, [Vajrapāṇi’s] EAGERNESS [to hear the *MNS*] is for the aim of others. Thus. he exclaims WELL-DONE! twice. This explanation is in accordance with the *Vimalaprabhā*.

According to the essence meaning, VAJRAPAṆI is the immutable intuition. Because he eliminates the various winds which serve as the mount for [mistaken] conceptions, he is (46a/91) WITH GREAT STRENGTH. The LORD OF SECRETS is the center of the Vajra-jewel; and repeatedly REPLIED means the repeated departure of the *bodhicitta* to the crown-tip *cakra*. Ācarya Raviśrī says that LORD OF SECRETS is be orgasmic joy, and repeatedly REPLIED is explaining for the purpose of [engendering] personal experience. Because he is imbued with the immutable great bliss, his COMPASSION is of certain meaning. THE WORLD is the wind which serves as the mount for conceptual consciousness; and FOR THE SAKE OF means for the purpose of stopping them. YOU is the INTUITION BODY (*Jñānakāya*) which is the Vajra body.

MAÑJUŚRĪ is the drop that serves as the foundation for great bliss, and *NĀMASAṂGĪTĪ* is the instance of joy which is the foundation of that. GREAT IN MEANING is the great bliss free of mistaken conceptions. Because it realizes the meaning of free of elaborations, it PURIFIES the two defilements. Seeing all bound and liberated [beings] as of a single taste with suchness, it is DESTRUCTIVE OF EVIL. Tilopa says:

⁹¹¹: The three qualities of abandonment exclusive to Buddhas: 1) *lags par spangs pa*: excellent abandonment; 2) *slar mi ltogs pa’ tshul gyi spangs pa*: irreversible abandonment; 3) *mi lus par spangs pa*: complete abandonment.

To those on the golden side of Mt. Sumeru, things lose their nature and appear to be the nature of gold. Likewise, through the yoga which understands the birthlessness [of things], they abandon their substantial nature and appear to be *mahāmudrā*.

FROM ME is the intuition of unchanging great bliss; EAGER TO HEAR is the yoga which achieves that very [bliss]. GLORIOUS is great bliss; VAJRA is the single taste of that [great bliss] and emptiness; DHARA is the objective reality [of that experience. He is “WELL DONE” because (46b/92) he holds (DHARA) the antidotes to the addictions. VAJRAPAṆI is the six-branched yoga, and meditation on the art of that is indeed “WELL-DONE.” This [explanation] was in accordance with Anupamarakṣita.

[II.3.1b-4: How to Listen to the Personal Instructions]

Four: First, as for the essence meaning: if we explain according to the connections by adhering to the sense of that same commentary, SECRET likewise is the center of the jewel; LORD is the experience of orgasmic [bliss] which arises from holding and not emitting the element at the center of that [jewel]. Consequently, because [you are] endowed with that distinctive art, I WILL TEACH YOU [THIS] EXCELLENT THING. YOU who LISTEN WELL, WITH A ONE-POINTED MIND [to my teachings] about the immutable great bliss, meditate on [that].

According to the literal meaning: Having called Vajrapāṇi LORD OF SECRETS, because YOU have the culminatory zeal and the desire to listen, I WILL REVEAL TO YOU [THIS] EXCELLENT THING. YOU should LISTEN undistractedly, WITH A ONE POINTED MIND. [Therefore] Vajrapāṇi, who is free of distracted mind, instructs subsequent disciples.

[II.3.1b-5: How to Promise to Listen]

Five: first calling “Bhagavan,” (Vajrapāni) states the *MNS* teaching? Offering EXCELLENT, EXCELLENT means I will attend with faith.”

As for the essence meaning: BHAGA is that *bhaga* of the *mahāmudrā*. Because it is faultless, residing in unchanging great bliss, it is EXCELLENT. Depending on that (*bhaga*), one generates unchanging great bliss, moving sequentially up to the crown. That is the meaning of REVEAL. The *Amṛtabindu-pratyāloka* states: “BHAGAVAN means *bhaga*, the residence the queen. Because it is faultless, (47a/93) it is EXCELLENT. Because it moves upward, it is REVEALED?”

In order to indicate the purity of the experience of great bliss [which arises] in the center of the six *cakras* in dependence on the six great channels, the second chapter has six verses. The *Pratyāloka* says: “The six *ślokas* again explain the aspect of the six root *cakras*, such as [the one at] the *uṣṇīsa*.” Moreover, Raviśrī explains well: “The six verses illuminate the experience of great bliss at the center of each *cakra*, such as [the one at] the *uṣṇīsa*.” The karmic winds which move through the six great channels are drawn into the center of the six *cakras*. Conquered by the weapon of the six limbs [of yoga], practice with deep desire at the place of the six Victors.”

This is the explanation of the second chapter comprising *The Great Sun Illuminating the Reality of Vajra Yoga: An Extensive Explanation of THE RECITATION OF THE ULTIMATE NAMES OF MAÑJUŚRĪ*.

(47a/93.6)

[II.3.2]. Second, the extensive explanation of the nature of the meaning of the

Question and the Response has four [sub-divisions]:

- **[II.3.2a]** The Arrangement of the Body of the Subject (48a/94);
- **[II.3.2b]** The Extensive Explanation of the Nature of the Branch [meaning];
- **[II.3.2c]** The Way in which it is Introduced and Concluded;
- **[II.3.2d]** The way that the Collector Rejoices.

[II.3.2: The Body of the Topic]

The first part has two [sub-divisions]: **[II.3.2a-1]** Explanation of the “Chapter of the Six Clans” and **[II.3.2a-2]** Explanation of the “Chapter on Complete Enlightenment through the *Māyājāla*”-- the pith of the body arrangement. The first is explained in accordance with the *Vimalaprabhā* as well as by way of the other commentaries. As for the first, this chapter is explained by compressing all of its subjects into ten sub-divisions. That very commentary says:

Now, the classification of the clans is to be presented: What is it that is seen by whom?; the Single Clan; The Two [clan division]; the Three; the Five, the Six; the Thirteen; the Sixteen; the 360, and the 1080 clan division.

When we explain these consecutively, [someone might ask]: by whom are seen those clans about which we speak? Following the “Chapter of the Response,” it comments on the verses from BHAGAVAN ŚĀKYAMUNI to LOOKED OUT UPON... THE GREAT.⁹¹² This indicates that the Omniscient One perceived the sixth of the clans as supreme. If someone then wonders: given that the sixth is the supreme among the clans, what are the other clans like, such as the Single Clan, etc.? [The *MNS* says} THE ENTIRE GREAT CLAN OF MANTRAS. Moreover, MANTRA is the Sanskrit equivalent of SVAGS. Etymological analysis

⁹¹² The entirety of verses 23 and 24.

[equates] *MA* [and] *NA* of *MAN-TRAYA* with ‘mind.’ ‘*TRAYA* has the meaning of ‘protector.’ Accordingly, (48b/95) [MANTRA CLAN means] Mind Protector Clan. The Single Clan is the Lord of Mind Clan.

Similarly, the Two Clans are THE MANTRA KNOWLEDGE HOLDER CLAN.⁹¹³

Divided into two, the MANTRA HOLDER CLAN is liberative artistry, and the KNOWLEDGE HOLDER CLAN is wisdom. [As for the phrase] LOOKED OUT UPON THE TRIPLE CLAN: by dividing into body, speech and mind, there are three clans. [As for the phrase] MAHAMUDRA: The clan of ‘planting the seal’ refers to the Five Clans, such as Akṣobhya and so on. THE SUPREME CLAN [connotes] the sixth, [which] is Vajradhara. That, together with [the five clans yields] six clans. With regard to the quote WORLDLY AND TRANSCENDENT CLAN, each of the six clans has five sub-divisions, yielding thirty, i.e. the WORLDLY CLAN. Each of those thirty has two sub-divisions that correlate with liberative artistry and wisdom, yielding sixty: the TRANSCENDENT CLAN. THE GREAT WORLD-ILLUMINATING CLAN [refers to] those sixty, [comprised of] three father-oriented clans, and three mother oriented clans, thus yielding 360 sub-divisions.

As for the great clan division, by dividing the 360 clans into body, speech and mind, there are 1,080. Although there are numerous such clan divisions, the meaning of the quote LOOKED OUT UPON... THE GREAT UṢVIṢA of all the clans indicates the very sixth one. The Great Commentary on the “Intuition Chapter” of the *Kālacakra Tantra* states

As for the quote ‘Now, the clans of the six mantras are stated’ up to the quote (49a/96) ‘that is the certainty about clans of the consonant classes.’⁹¹⁴ Thus, the

⁹¹³ Note: Gyatso commentary has misprint: reads *gsang snags rigs snags ‘chang ba’ rigs* instead of *rig*. knowledge. Sanskrit confirms this correction: “*mantra vidya-dhara kulam*”.

⁹¹⁴ Gyatso has *rigs pa* in singular. Sanskrit of *Vimalaprabhā* reads *varga-kulaniyamah*. See Peking 2064, 168b.7.

six clans of mantras divide according to the six consonant classes.⁹¹⁵ Therefore, [note the statement] that begins, ‘Furthermore, each consonant class is divided into the five divisions of the supreme victors’ and concludes with ‘Like that, the consonant classes such as *ka* and so on are divided by the five-type (*panca-prakāraih*) Clans of the Supreme Victors. The stated letters are to be understood by the clans of the Vajra, Sword, Jewel, Lotus and Wheel. That is certain’⁹¹⁶

Each of the six consonant classes may appropriately be sub-divided either in accordance with the stages of Withdrawal: earth, water, fire, wind, sky, or by the stages of Creation: sky, wind, fire, water, earth. Each of the five letters has the nature of [all] the five elements, and is again divided into five.⁹¹⁷

The *Vimalaprabhā* says: “Now, the clan of the crown *cakra* ... *uṣṇiṣa*, etc. is stated. Here, as for the clan of the great *uṣṇiṣa*, whatever is intellect (*mahat*) is stated in the Cosmology chapter as the five voids.”⁹¹⁸ Accordingly, the sixth clan is the *uṣṇiṣa* clan, which has the nature of the five letters of the great void. Moreover, it is as was already explained as the “Cosmology Chapter.”

The three clans [of] body, speech and mind are divided into three by [uttering] “OM AH HUM.” As for the *A*⁹¹⁹ and so on: *A, I, R, U, L* are the sealing clans such as Akṣobhya and so on, in order to seal the host of deities.” MAHAMUDRĀ is explained as five clans that seal. As for THE GREAT CLAN OF THE SIGHT OF THE WORLDS, [note the quotation from the *Vimalaprabhā*] which begins “joined by *HA, YA, RA, VA, LA, KṢA*” and ends with (49b/97) “(are) the previous sixty.” The two WORLDLY AND

⁹¹⁵ For example, *ka, ca, ṭa, ta, pa, śa*. For further detail, see the *Vimalaprabha* gloss of Ch. 5.5.

⁹¹⁶ See PT #2064, 169a.5.

⁹¹⁷ *ka, ki, ku*, etc.

⁹¹⁸ PT #2064, 169a.6-7

⁹¹⁹ GG has short *a*; Skt has long *a*.

TRANSCENDENT CLANS are divided respectively into thirty and sixty. Therefore, “the *KA* and so on, together with the vowel units, are 360. Divided repeatedly by *guṇa*, *vrddhi* and the substitution of the semi-vowels, there are 1,080,⁹²⁰ and become the WORLDLY AND TRANSCENDENT CLANS.” Accordingly, with regard to the division of the great mundane and transcendent clans and the preeminent consonant [groups, note the quotation from the *Vimalaprabhā*] which begins “becomes the Lord of Vidyādhara” and ends with a quotation marker. The [MNS] refers to the two MANTRA- AND KNOWLEDGE-HOLDER CLAN.

Furthermore, the [*Kālacakra*] *Tantra* and the Great Commentary state the mantra syllables such as the six consonant classes as referring to the divisions of the clans and, moreover, states the mantra letters as referring to most of the three Outer, Inner, and Alternative things. Such statements express mantra syllables that indicate outer things, corresponding inner things, as well as the Creation Stage deity identified as the means of purifying those outer and inner things, the seed that creates that [deity]; and [the fruitional elements which are the] unobstructed nature of those outer and inner things.

From the perspective of their being the mantra of those six things, [one can understand how] the Tathāgata, by using a single mantra letter symbolically, can express through common illustration (50a/98) one outer part, one inner part, one Creation Stage part, one Perfection Stage part, and fruitional parts. That being the case, though outer and inner parts correspond, those two are purified by the two Creation and Perfection parts. From the activity of purification in that way, there emerge parts of the occasion of

⁹²⁰ GG. ms. reads ...*ya ṅar bsgyur ba ltar brgyad cu ni*. By contrast. Peking ed. of *Vimalaprabhā* reads ...*ya ṅar bsgyur bas phyer ba stong brgyad cu ni*. which better matches the Skt. ...*yaṅādeśhabhinnā aśhītyuttarasahastrāh*.

fruition. This is in order to understand that. To understand the explanation of this arrangement in detail, one should study The Elucidation Illuminating Reality and other related works.

Second, the way of other commentaries.

Raviśrī did not compose a definitive meaning commentary on the first *pāda*.

Anupamarakṣita notes: “BHAGAVAN connotes great bliss. ŚĀKYA connotes emptiness. THUP-BA connotes non-emission from the jewel.”⁹²¹ The *bodhicitta* element is the intuition that realizes emptiness by the bliss that arises from not-releasing at the central channel at the tip of the jewel. Therefore, it should be [further] explained like this.

Taking LOOKED OUT UPON as the basis for explaining, one may wonder: by what does he LOOK? He LOOKS by that very intuition just mentioned. If one asks, what does he see? He sees the definitive-meaning six clans. If one asks, how does he see them? He sees the six buddhas at the center of the six wheels.

Furthermore, if one asks, in what form does he see [them]? He sees them as ‘mind protector,’ SECRET MANTRA as a GREAT CLAN of non-dual intuition. [This is] the extremely subtle clear light that resides in the central channel at the hub of the six wheels -- the *bodhicitta* in which the nature of all things (i.e. emptiness) and great bliss are of a single taste. It has in its nature all forms of the Void Form Body, (50b/99) and is united with all phenomena as that. That is how it is seen.

Anupamarakṣita explains: “THE ENTIRE GREAT CLAN OF MANTRAS refers to the *bodhicitta* of clear light that pervades the hub of the six wheels.”⁹²² Raviśrī explains that

⁹²¹ PT # 2112, 120b.3

⁹²² Gyatso ms. differs in its quotation of this line from the Peking edition. GG: ‘*od gsal ba yi byang chub sems* as opposed to ‘*od gsal ni byang chub sems*. See Peking 2112, 120b.4-5.

“the form which has the nature of self-knowledge is the *bodhicitta* which, when pervading the nodules of the six wheels, is of a single taste with all phenomena.”⁹²³ That very [explanation] is the way of seeing the six clans in the hub of the six wheels. Furthermore, in the center of the channel wheel of the jewel is the secret MANTRA-HOLDER CLAN. The orgasmic joy that arises from not emitting the seed is Akṣobhya. That very lord disperses the endless wheels of *maṇḍalas* from the omni-dimensional Void Form Body; thus (he) is the KNOWLEDGE-HOLDER CLAN. Likewise, Vairocana, in the center of the channel wheel at the navel, is the seed-drop inside the central channel, as well as the intuition of great bliss that relies on that.

The TRIPLE CLAN refers either to the three forces of *rajas*, *tamas* and [*sattva*], or the body, speech and mind clan. The meaning of LOOKED OUT UPON is the experience of the successive blisses of the nature of the body at the navel. Anupamarakṣita explain: “The orgasmic joy which derives from not emitting the element at the jewel is Akṣobhya Vajra. The *Jina Jik* at the navel wheel is Mahavairocana. The three clans are the forces *rajas*, *tamas* and *sattva*” (51a/100) and so on.⁹²⁴

The term WORDLY connotes that the body and mind have different bases. TRANSCENDENT connotes the clan of Amitabha at the navel of the dharma wheel, [whence abides] the intuition of great bliss which is of the nature of the perception [process]. Anupamarakṣita explains: “Amitabha is *AROLIK*; WORDLY is the *maṇḍala* at the hub of the heart, which is TRANSCENDENT.”⁹²⁵ Raviśrī states: “the term WORDLY

⁹²³ PT #2111, 53a.4-5.

⁹²⁴ PT #2112, 120b.6

⁹²⁵ PT #2112, 120b.3

connotes body, speech and mind.” TRANSCENDENT means the dharma wheel.”⁹²⁶

WORLDLY connotes the center of the channel wheel at the throat inside the central channel. Therein lies the drop which is the basis for great bliss, as does the intuition of great bliss that is the nature of the sensation system, which relies on that [drop]. [This is] Ratnasambhava’s ILLUMINATING. Anupamaraksita notes: “Ratnasambhava is the throat channel wheel; *RATNA DHIK* is ILLUMINATING.”⁹²⁷

MAHAMUDRĀ is the Amoghasiddhi clan in the middle of the channel wheel between the brows. [It is] the single taste of emptiness and great bliss, immutable, the nature of the emotion system. Anupamaraksita notes: “The GREAT CLAN is the body of Amoghasiddhi at the brow that descends from the HAM.”⁹²⁸ The great clan at the center of the wheel at the *uṣṇīṣa* is the complete perfection of the sixteen-part drop. From the termination and removal of the white element, i.e. [uterine] blood, comes the perfection of all instants of unchanging great bliss -- the clan of Vajrasattva. This is the meaning of seeing the GREAT UṢṆĪṢA. (51a/101) Anupamaraksita notes: “MAHAMUDRĀ is Vajrasattva. The PRE-EMINENT CLAN, the condensed [clan], the liberation of great bliss, the completely perfect sixteen-fold drop, purifying anything by fifteen -- that very one is the GREAT UṢṆĪṢA.”⁹²⁹

The words of these two commentaries are deep, not easy to grasp. It is difficult to reconcile the two texts, and to fit their meanings together. Although this is apparent, I have arranged the body of this material deftly and completely.

⁹²⁶ PT #2112, 53b.1-2.

⁹²⁷ PT #2111, 120b.7-8

⁹²⁸ PT #2112, 120b.8

⁹²⁹ PT #2111, 120b.8-121a.1

This meaning is also in the *Kālacakra Uttarantra*: “When one holds that semen that drips to the secret vajra, it is Vajradhara, ‘holding the vajra.’ From whatever bliss at the navel *cakra* is the semen, the seed of the body, the semen, the sole that is JINA JIK. That guardian supreme bliss at the heart is, according to its symbolism, the AROLIK itself (Amitabha). As for that means of knowing, whoever holds the unmoving bliss at the throat, that knower is RATNA DHIK. Whoever holds that semen, that very taintless bliss at the brow there, that is PRAJNADHRK.

Likewise, ultimate reality is [equated with] the division of the six clans as the intuition which realizes voidness by means of great, unchanging bliss. Relative [superficial] reality is the divisions of the six clans of deities with form/attributes, all of whose infinite dimensions are of one nature [with the six intuitions]. (51b/102)

There are two *ślokas* that unlock the symbolism of the two realities, or of liberative artistry and wisdom. As Anupamarakita notes: “The two *ślokas* [speak to] the nature of art and wisdom.” Raviśrī says: “All of the six clans, by relative and ultimate [truth], are shown by the two verses to be the very non-dual intuition in the six channel wheels.”

It is said, E AM HO! the wonder of the theater of nothing-arising is like a crystal jewel, set close to the hundred colors of the various deity-wheels of the six clans, whose nature is changeless great bliss. I bow down to the Victor who is enlightened through the net of magic. Never stirring from the body of truth, yet unfurling clouds of innumerable emanations; distinctly creating all natural manifestations of variegated objects, that magician emanates this magic game of the *Māyajāla*.

[II.3.2a-2] Second: the Explanation of the “Chapter on Perfect Enlightenment through the *Māyājāla*” has two [sub-divisions]: explanations which accord with the *Vimalaprabhā*; explanations which accord with other commentaries.

The first has two [parts]: The explanation of the meaning of the pith of the teaching which was taught by that teacher, and the explanation of the meaning of mantra.

The first has a general meaning and a branch meaning. The first [general meaning] posits that the stages of enlightenment in general have four aspects: **(52a/103)** Instantaneous Perfect Enlightenment; Five-fold Perfect Enlightenment; Twenty-fold Perfect Enlightenment; Perfect Enlightenment by Stages through the *Māyājāla*.

[Instantaneous] means achieving 21,600 instants of unchanging great bliss sequentially. By the instant that abandons entirely all subtle instincts for transference (migration), one sees all phenomena directly. [Such an] enlightenment is “Instantaneous Perfect Enlightenment.” [When one] purifies the five elements, the five systems, and blocks all of the evolutionary winds of the five maṇḍalas, one is enlightened by the five intuitions. This is “the Five-Fold Enlightenment”. Among them, when one purifies that very twenty -- the five sense-faculties, the five objects, the five action organs and the five activities -- [then] from the point of view of their differentials, being enlightened by that process is “the Twenty-fold Perfect Enlightenment.” By the way of showing the infinite net of illusion, which is like a mirage/magician’s trick, the sixteen joys are made free of obstruction. Enlightenment [by this process] is called “Perfect Enlightenment through the *Māyājāla*.”

These [four] are also equated with the stages of the four vajras: The intuition vajra [is equated with] Instantaneous actual, Perfect Enlightenment; The mind vajra [with]

Five-fold actual, Perfect Enlightenment; the speech vajra [with] Twenty-fold actual, Perfect Enlightenment; and (52b/104) the body vajra [with] Perfect Enlightenment by Stages through the *Māyājāla*.

Likewise, the Great Commentary of the Kālacakra says:

[It is] completely purified by the four perfect enlightenments and the four fully purified vajras. [It is] completely purified by Instantaneous Perfect Enlightenment, by the Five-fold Perfect Enlightenment, by the Twenty-fold Perfect Enlightenment, and by the Perfect Enlightenment through the *Māyājāla*. [These purify] by the Creation Stage born in the womb, and by the Perfection Stage of the perfect form -- smoke, and so on.⁹³⁰

Likewise, it is said, “fully purified by the four actual perfections” and so on.

Accordingly, [enlightenment] by the *Māyājāla* is explained here as the very actual enlightenment.

This chapter is to be accepted as setting forth [the arrangement of] the body of the later chapters. [In] the “Chapter of the Question,” it says, “how can I attain the enlightenment by the *Māyājāla*, which is perfect?” Among the four enlightenments, it is the very actual, perfect enlightenment by the *Māyājāla* that is asked about. The *Vimalaprabhā*, when commenting on the twelve vowels, says: “That which is PROFOUND IN MEANING, LOFTY IN MEANING.” [That] verse is in answer to that question: it is said like that. The myriad meanings that [comprise] the subject of the MNS emerge by explaining the meaning of this.

Similarly, the foregoing chapter on “Seeing the Six Clans” shows the general arrangement of the six clans. There are individual chapters on the six clans that extensively explain them, and which show the sixth [clan] to be supreme. These [chapters] should [collectively] be counted as (53a/105) the ultimate source of the arrangement of the body.

Second [the “branch” explanation]:

⁹³⁰ PT #2064, 18b.5-7.

The speaker, LORD OF SPEECH, ENDOWED WITH SIX ROYAL MANTRAS such as Vajratiksna and so on, proclaimed THIS VERSE OF the Buddha. Here, the explication of the six mantras should be equated with [each of] the three : the Outer, Inner and Alternative.

[From] the Outer [perspective], [the mantras] signify the world elements, which have the nature of sky, wind, fire, water, earth, and intuition. Here, they signify the attainment of a body endowed with all six elements. [Such bodies are characteristic of] the world's animate beings with the exception of human beings.

The Inner should only be equated with the body of the human being -- womb-born and endowed with the six elements. Thus there occurs the quote in the *Vimalaprabhā*: "As for the Inner, this is only the human body." That equation underscores the certainty that only a human body, womb-born and endowed with the six elements, is the basis for achieving enlightenment in a single life span through the Unexcelled path. That very teaching also signifies the six elements, the six systems, the six faculties, the six objects of the sense faculties, the six action organs, and their six activities.

When one [explicates the mantras within the context of] the Alternative: [the six vowel pairs] are the six abandonments of the path -- the five obscurations plus the intuition obscuration, thus making six obscurations. The antidotes to these abandonments include the Creation stage of the two Creation and Perfection [Stages], the maṇḍala of the six clans, the six shape-cities, and the six secret mantras. In the Perfection Stage, the bases for hitting the vital points are the six winds, the six channels, the six *cakras*, and the six elements. (53b/106) [In order to hit those vital points], there is the six-limbed yoga. In terms of the fruition, the Victor is the six-clans. Likewise, those six-set phenomena of the three – Outer, Inner and Alternative – are said to be signified by the six vowel sets.

The second has two [sub-divisions]: The transitional section and the mantra's actual meaning.

As for the first: The non-dual intuition arising as changeless great bliss is that extremely -subtle mind of clear light -- the root of all samsara and nirvana in the basis. In [the context of] the path, that very [mind] arises as the actuality of changeless great bliss. In the context of fruition, it can become the body of the great bliss intuition. This very meaning is stated by the Bhagavan in the *Mahāmāyā*: “Mahāmāyā, the Great Famous One, collector [of] things that are non-arisen, [she who] creates herself, [she who] steals herself, herself the king, herself the lord...”⁹³¹

All things depend upon their own basis of designation. Since all things are so achieved, they are not established by intrinsic reality, and so have the property of being unproduced. This is stated by these words of the vowels that designate [that]. This is the transitional section.

Second: the actual [truth] of the mantra.

With regard to the four neuters,⁹³² the 12 vowels, and *STHITO HRDI* and so on: first, one should express the meaning of the mantras. Therefore, the first *A* is symbolic in nature. It is a symbol for suchness, and of the verbal expression.

First: that *A* designates the holy nature which is of one taste with the variegated, omni-faceted form -- itself the very nature of the changeless great bliss which is of one taste with suchness, free of all emanation. (54a/107) This very meaning may be realized from the context of the quote: “beginingless and fabricationless lord” and so on. The symbol of the verbal expression signifies its meaning, relying on the sound created from the activity of the tongue and palate. These mantras, such as *A* and so on, are by their

⁹³¹ First two phrases are verse 5 of the *Mahāmāyā*. The remaining verses are not, but are found in the *Hevajra Tantra* I.8.47, and the entire verse is cited in the *Vajragarbha*, 4.2.2-3.

⁹³² ll. 11

very nature symbolic. Accordingly, they teach designatively the three – outer, inner and alternative. As such, the first is the way of designating outer things.

A, AA signify that space-void which is the support that is opened up at the occasion of the first creation of the world-realm. *I, II* signify the creation upon that [space-void] of the wind-sphere, from the compression of subtle wind particles. *U, UU* signify the creation upon that [wind-sphere] of the water-sphere, from the compression of subtle water particles. *E, AI* signify the creation of a fire-sphere upon the wind sphere, from the compression of subtle fire particles. *O AU* signify the earth-sphere upon the water-sphere, from the compression of subtle earth particles. *AM AH*: signify the intuition realm in the center of that, which is Mount Meru and the other mountains. In short, those two sets of six-vowels⁹³³ signify the world realm that is 400,000 *yojanas*. The two six-set vowels designate the twelve earth-slices,⁹³⁴ (54b/108) and the twelve mansions of the constellations such as the 108 Sheep, ornamented by the sun, the moon and the stars. In brief, the outer world that is to be purified is shown to be signified by the vowel letters.

As for the remaining mantras, they designate the arrangement of the Inner. Therefore, if *STHITO* is the world-vessel, *HRDI* is its essence-concentrate, namely animate beings. *JñĀNAMURTI* has the mind of clear light, the seed of non-dual intuition from the very beginning, *RA HAM* is “Lord” or “I”,⁹³⁵ *BUDDHO BUDDHĀNAM* means endowed with the buddha-essence; *TRAYADH[VA]VARTINAM* is the essence of the Sugata, [who is] the

⁹³³ All the short vowels.

⁹³⁴ Four sets of three continents.

⁹³⁵ In fact, the Sanskrit word should be “*aham*” not “*ra-ham*,” the ‘r’ is the *sandhi* by-product of “*murti*” and “*aham*”.

bliss of the three times, not separate and non-local. The six mantras beginning with VAJRATIKṢṂA⁹³⁶ signify the beings of the six clans. In short, from time beginningless, [the mantras] signify the mind of extremely subtle clear light, which is the seed of non-dual intuition. [They also signify] the beings of the six clans, endowed with the essence of the Sugata -- the arrangement of living beings.

In accordance with the path-fruits of ordinary Mahāyāna, the first of the two vowels denotes the Ground of Faith *bhūmi*, the practice-collections of the state of faith. The ten subsequent [vowels] denote the ten bodhisattva-*bhūmis* such as Very Joyous (*Pramudita*), and so on. BUDDHO BUDDHA signifies buddha fruition. The remaining [syllables] signify the body and intuition of that very [state].

Here, from this thorough explanation of the Outer and Inner way of signifying, [one can see] the inanimate world, created from the compression of subtle atoms, and the concomitant creation of animate beings, as the voidness that is without personal self (*puḍgala nairatmya*) (55a/109) They should be seen and meditated upon in that way. This fruitional path is in accord with the *Śrāvaka* Vehicle, whereby one attains enlightenment by abandoning the ten sins, and by becoming free of desire for sense pleasures.

The twelve vowels also designate the twelve links of dependent origination. By the condition of ignorance there occurs *samskara*; from *samskara*, by the condition of birth, there occurs old age and death. By blocking ignorance, one blocks the *samskaras*. As such, [the vowels] also signify the fruition of the path common to *Pratyeka* Buddhas,

⁹³⁶ The remaining five are: Duḥkhaccheda, Prajñājñanamūrti, Jñānakaya, Vagisvara, and Arapacana.

whereby one manifests enlightenment by meditating on the emergent and reverse order of the twelve links. That is how it is taught as signifying the fruition of the common vehicle.

The special disciples of this Tantra must know how to bring together the teachings of the three vehicles and so on. For that purpose, [it is explained in this way.]

According to the Alternative [level], the [mantras] are equated with the six taints to be abandoned. Thus, A Ā with the sky realm and hate; I Ī with the wind realm and jealousy; U Ū with the water realm and lust. As for E AI, although the body is wind, the thought is fire realm and pride. With regard to O AU, although the body is water, the thought is earth realm and delusion. AM AH designates the intuition realm and the equally-mixed addictions.

As for the six maṇḍalas which serve as their antidotes, A Ā is the Mirror-like Intuition, Akshobhya and his maṇḍala; I Ī is the All-Accomplishing [Intuition], Amoghasiddhi and his maṇḍala U Ū is the Intuition of Discrimination, Amitabha and his maṇḍala; (55b/110) E AI is the Equalizing Intuition, Ratnasambhava and his maṇḍala; O AU is the *dharmadhātu*, Vairocana and his maṇḍala. AM AH is the actuality of the five intuitions, the *Vajradhātu* maṇḍala and the body of Vajradhara.

One meditates that STHITHO HRDI is the heart of those deities; JĀNANAMŪRTI is the intuition hero; RAHAM has the meaning of “I”; BUDDHO BUDDHA is the buddha; TRAYADH[VA]VARTINAM is the meaning of BUDDHA OF THE THREE TIMES; VAJRATIKṢṂA is Sharp as a Vajra in the heart of Amitabha; DUḤKACCHEDA is Cutter of Suffering in the heart of Akṣobhya; PRAJÑĀJÑĀNA is Wisdom Intuition in the heart of Vairocana; JĀNANAKĀYA is Intuition-Embodied in the heart of Amoghasiddhi; VĀGĪŚVARA is the Lord of Speech in the heart of Ratnasambhava; ARAPACANA is the Intuition-Concentrate in the heart of Vajrasattva.

Because these mantras are signs, they symbolize the distinctive meanings of the three: Outer, Inner and Alternative. Here, from the perspective of [understanding them as] the

seeds that produce all deities, since they produce deities and compel vitalities, they are recited as essence. Insofar as they should be visualized, they should be visualized in the hearts of the deities.

The practice of creating the Alternative [entails] the six maṇḍalas of the six clans. These [practices] are Shape Yoga. One should also recite Mantra Yoga. Now, in the navel channel wheel, there are sixty-four petals. The first four petals come out from the center of the channel wheel. (56a/111) From each of the four, two [petals] come out, making eight. From each of the eight, two [petals] come out, making sixteen. With the exception of the channels of the four quarters of those sixteen, each of the remaining twelve has five branching petals, making sixty petals. Each of the four quarter petals should be [added to the sixty, making a total of] sixty-four. The Great Commentary states, “In the essence of the navel channel is the Lord of the four petals. Outside of that is the Lord of the eight petals. Outside of that is the Lord of the twelve petals.” There are sixteen in the array [of petals coming out] from the eight [petals]; the four empty channels are not counted among “the twelve” in order to highlight the twelve transit channels (*pho ba'i rtsha*). The stellar mansions or time interstice channels are the twelve navel channels. Therein, there are twelve transits within one day and night.

Likewise, A Ā symbolizes [the movement of] 1,800 space-winds from the left [channel]. I Ī symbolize [the movement of] 1,800 wind-winds from each of the right and left channels. U Ū symbolize 1,800 water-winds from each right and left channel. E AI symbolize [the movement of] 1,800 fire winds from each right and left channel. O AU symbolize [the movement of] 1,800 earth-winds from each right and left channel; OM

AḤ symbolize [the movement of] 1,800 water-winds in each right and left channel.

(56b/112)

Because it is abiding, STHITO is the interior of the central channel. As essence, HRDI is the Void Form Body that arises within the central channel. By that JĀNAMORTI, the great bliss intuition is caused to move. BUDDHO BUDDHAYA is the Buddha, the great bliss intuition itself; TRAYADHVAVARTNĀM is the binding of all the winds of the twelve great channels in the navel central channel; VAJRATIKṢṆA and so on are the six intuitions which emerge from the method of binding the movement of the six *cakras* into the central channel.

Now, Dharma Yoga should be discussed. With regard to that, there are the six *cakras*. A Ā is the crown space-wheel; U Ū is the brow water-wheel- E AI is the throat fire-wheel; I Ī is the heart wind-wheel; O AU is the navel earth-wheel; AM AḤ is the secret place intuition-wheels.

As for the six great channels,⁹³⁷ A, Ā is the central channel, E AI is the right-hand *roma* channel and I Ī is the left-hand *kyangma* channel. [These are] the three great upper

⁹Although in this system the body is lined with 72,000 channels, there are three which are most important, and which are subdivided and counted as six. The three main channels are 1) the central or *avadhuti*, where the energy of Rahu flows and which also goes by the name *susumna* and *tamani*. It is located in the center of the body, and goes from the crown (*uṣṇīṣa*) to the navel. 2) On the right is the *rasanā* or *pingala*, where the solar energy flows. 3) On the left is the *lalanā* or *idā*, in which flows the lunar energy. These three form a knot at the navel *cakra*, and then move down to the lower half of the body where they regulate the ejaculation of semen, and the disposal of urine and feces.

The central channel bends to the right below the navel; there, it is called 4) the conch, or *śankhini* or *khagamukhā*, and controls semen emission. The upper right channel, the *rasanā*, becomes 5) the lower left hand channel, and controls urination. The upper left-hand channel, the *lalanā*, becomes 6) central in the lower half of the body, where it governs defecation. G. Orofino observes: "These channels are interconnected in a relationship of wisdom and means, related to the male and female essences (semen and menstrual blood), in their turn differentiated into the standard three-fold division of Tantric Buddhism of body, voice and mind...Moreover, following a mandala pattern, in their sublimated dimension each of them represents a Tathāgata of the six families, related to the six aggregates, the six elements, the six sense organs, six sense objects, the six action senses and the six actions. In this way, the representation of the inner channels reflects a universal vision of microcosmic existence that is symmetrical with the outer macrocosm."

channels. As for the three great lower channels, O, AU is the right-hand excrement channel, U, Ū is the left-hand urine channel, and AM AḤ is the *bodhicitta* conch channel. The six elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space and intuition are the six intuitions of great bliss – the buddhas which arise from non-emission -- The 72,000 descending from them down to the navel of the 6 wheels. The ability to hold them there without emitting is buddhahood. That is the dharma yoga.

When Suchness Yoga is associated with the six branches of yoga, AM AḤ symbolizes Withdrawal; A Ā symbolizes Concentration; I Ī (57a/113) symbolizes Vitality-stopping; E AI symbolizes Retention; U Ū symbolizes Remembrance; and O, AU symbolize the branches of *samādhi*. That very [text] explains: “Concerning the way the fruition arises, one should place the mind vajra in the *dharmodaya* in space. Then, at the beginning of the time of repeating it, one should meditate on withdrawal, etc.” One trains in the six branches such as Withdrawal, etc. placing a one-pointed mind in the space at the upper top of the *dhuti*. Then, it is explained that the twelve vowels signify progressing along the twelve stages.

Three kinds of sign or marks emerge from the training in these six branches. The sign of the first begins from seeing the ten signs such as smoke, etc., [and extends] up to the achievement of the Remembrance Body, with its definitive characteristics.⁹³⁸ The

⁹³⁸ The use of the term “Remembrance Body” is a little puzzling. Ostensibly, the first of the three phases comprises the first two limbs of *saḍaṅga* yoga. i.e. 1) Withdrawal and 2) *Dhyana*, and not the fifth limb of remembrance. During the practice of the second limb, the *yogin* sees a variety of apparitions. “empty forms (that) appear as pervasive as space...they gradually transform into the different goddesses, who all dissolve into one goddess, who dissolves into the *sambhogakāya* with the five definite attributes.” Gen Lamrimpa notes that “the fifth phase is called Recollection because it bears a resemblance to the facsimile of empty form that occurred in the first two phases of retraction and meditative stabilization.” This resemblance may explain why Gendun Gyatso refers to the “empty form” or *sambhogakāya* that occur in the second phases as “Remembrance Body.”

intermediate sign [begins] from the achievement of the first instance of immutable great bliss. [The *yogin*] then perfects 1,800 [instances], and stops the same number of evolutionary winds. He thus achieves the first stage and, with his five super-knowledges, sees various objects he has never seen before. The concluding sign is that [the *yogin*] blocks 3,600 karmic winds in each *cakra*, and so achieves two stages each. From stopping all the evolutionary winds, and perfecting 21,600 instants of the changeless bliss, he achieves the integration of Vajradhara. This is called the *mahāmudra siddhi*. These are aptly explained by the *Vimalaprabhā* style of explanation.

Second: The way of other commentators. (57b/114) Raviśrī does not provide an explanation of the definitive meaning of the first two verses. If one explains according to Anupamarakṣita, LORD OF SPEECH is Buddha Bhagavan. UTTERED THIS VERSE is the net of channels abiding in the body -- the basis in which things are collected. ENDOWED WITH SIX ROYAL MANTRAS are Vajratikṣṇa, etc., who symbolize the six wheels. DUALITY connotes the *ro ma* (right channel) and *rkyang ma* (left channel). The NON-DUALITY of those is the central channel (*kun dar ma*), and that very immutable orgasmic supreme great bliss which arises as one taste with the natural, unborn dharma realm -- things that are unborn. That kind of bliss-void meditative equipoise is not accurately the object of the speculative mind, and is beyond expression, thought and articulation. [That is] the meaning of the quote UTTERED THIS.

The twelve vowels such as A, etc., designate the twelve stages. If one identifies them by names of places,⁹³⁹ etc., the A form is the *pīṭha*; Ā is the *upapīṭha*; the I form is the *kṣetra*; the Ī form is the *upakṣetra*; the U form is the *chandoha*; the Ū form is the

⁹³⁹ The twelve groups of cosmic pilgrimage sites as designated by the *Kālacakra Tantra*.

upachandoha; the E form is the *melāpaka*; the AI form is the *upamelāpaka*; the O form is the *śmaśāna*; the AU form is the *upaśmaśāna*; the AM form is the *pīlava*; the AḤ form is the *upapīlava*.

Therefore, all these show the six pairs of vowel letters as means of symbolizing achievement; each pair is of the nature of the immutable great bliss [which arises] from stopping the 3,600 karmic winds within each of the maṇḍalas in the six *cakras*, such as the secret *cakra*, etc. (58a/115) [As such], they serve to symbolize the Lord of the twelve stages. Anupamarakṣita discusses the twelve stages:

All-radiance; Elixir radiance; Space radiance; Vajra radiance; Jewel radiance; Lotus radiance; Non-conceptual radiance; Incomparable radiance; Unexcelled radiance; Wisdom radiance; Omniscient awareness and Individuated awareness.⁹⁴⁰

Raviśrī explains some of them likewise, although he calls the seventh “Evolutionary radiance” and the ninth “Unparalleled.”⁹⁴¹

The *Vajragarbha* Commentary states:

‘Kye! Bhagavan, is it the place of gathering?’ With regard to *pītha*, *upapītha*, *kṣetra*, *upakṣetra*, *chandoha*, *upachandoha*, *melāpaka*; the AI form is the *upamelāpaka*; the O form is the *śmaśāna*, the AU form is the *upaśmaśāna*; the AM form is the *pīlava*, the AḤ form is the *upapīlava*. Because there are twelve, the Lord of the Ten Stages is the Protector Himself; do not seek anywhere else but that.

Similarly, works such as the *Kālacakra* Commentary, the *Ekādaśamukha*, the *Hevajra* (lit. “*brtag gnyis*”),⁹⁴² the *Cakrasamvara*, the *Ārāli*, the *Vajradāka*, *Mahāmudrātilaka*, *Jñānatilaka*, etc., discuss the arrangement of the *pītha* and *upapītha*,

⁹⁴⁰ PT #2112, 121b. 1-2.

⁹⁴¹ See PT #2111. 56b.4.

⁹⁴² The second section or *brtag-pa* of the *Hevajratantra*. This second part is known as the *Hevajra-dākinī-jālasamvara-tantrarāja* or the *Kye'i rdo rje mkha'i 'gro ma dra ba'i sdom pa'i*.

the *kṣetra* and *upakṣetra*, and so on. Analyzing them in detail, there are twenty-four *pīthas*, thirty-two, thirty-five, twenty-eight, thirty-six, forty-eight and on – they are arranged [to reflect] as many as there are.

(58b/116) Among the five types of disciples, there is the dull-witted one who is unable to do the inner yoga meditation. In order to abandon his cravings for his own country, he should meditate (i.e. place his mind) on external *pīthas* and so on. The disciple of middling [powers] should meditate on *pīthas*, etc. on the spokes of the maṇḍala wheel. The sharp-witted disciples are divided into the lesser, middle and great. The lesser [sharp-witted disciple] should meditate on them as *pīthas* of the body, such as the crown, etc. The middle sharpest [disciple] is a perfection stage [practitioner] and so disregards the seed letters. He visualizes them as goddesses, and places them at the crown, etc. and the channels. The great one, abiding on the Perfection Stage, meditates on the *pīthas* etc., as the *bodhicitta* of the indivisibility of voidness and compassion, as the Joyous, etc. The final of the five types [of disciple] are seen as definitive meaning, while the first four, in contrast to the final, are seen as interpretable meaning.

By dividing the vowel letters into triple groups, one signifies the four joys. The three [vowels] A, I and U are the three doors, and signify the natural Joy which is united with their non-duality. The three Ā, Ī, Ū are the very way of duality, and signify the Supreme Joy. The three E, O AM are the 3 vajras each of which has the nature of the two vowels, and signify the Incessant (Extraordinary) Joy. The three AI AU AH have the nature of the indivisibility of the three vajras, (59a/117) and signify the Orgasmic Joy. Anupamarakṣita says: “the first three short [vowels] are the three doors and joy. The first three long [vowels] are supreme joy. The second three short [vowels] are Extraordinary Joy. The three long [vowels] are orgasmic joy.”⁹⁴³

Raviśri does not explain the meaning of the remaining mantras, i.e. from STHITO HRDI to TRAYADHVAVARTINĀM. If one explains [them] in accordance with Anupamarakṣita’s way, STHITO HRDI means the drop which is the support of great bliss:

⁹⁴³ PT #2112. 121b.2-3

JñĀNAMŪRTI means the great bliss which arises in dependence on that. RAHAM BUDDHO means the abandonment and development of the culminatory understanding through great bliss; BUDDHA means the *avadhūti*, the place where great bliss is born; TRAYADHVAVARTINĀM means the meditation of the vajra repetition, wherein the energy of the three letters is, in fact, the exhalation, inhalation, and holding of the breath.⁹⁴⁴ The *Pratyāloka* says: “STHITO HṚDI is the drop; JñĀNAMŪRTI is great bliss. RAHAM BUDDHO means having the abandonments and understanding. BUDDHĀNĀM is the *dhuti*. TRAYADHVAVARTI is wind meditation.”

VAJRATIKṢṂA means [the name] Sharp Vajra -- the orgasmic nature of Vajra Akṣobhya in the center of jewel. Because it finally cuts off the winds which are the mounts of the thoughts; it is ‘Sharp’. That same text says: “VAJRATIKṢṂA is the jewel Akṣobhya, cutting the wind.”⁹⁴⁵ It is DUḤKACCHEDA because it cuts suffering; it has the meaning of cutting suffering by the great bliss intuition that is the nature of Vairocana at the navel. The same [text] says: (57b/118) “Cutting off (CCHEDA)existence [that is] suffering (DUḤKA), that is called Vairocana, who lives in the navel.”⁹⁴⁶ PRAJñĀJñĀNAMŪRTAYE IS the body which is only wisdom intuition. It is the great bliss body which is the nature of Amitabha in the heart. “PRAJñĀ is the wisdom [that is] Amitabha. At the heart, there is JñĀNAMŪRTAYE.”

JñĀNAKĀYA is the intuition body. It is the drop at the brow which is of the nature of Amoghasiddhi and the great bliss body. That same [text] notes: “The intuition body is

⁹⁴⁴ Gendun Gyatso is glossing the section of Anupamarakṣita’s commentary found on 121b.3-5.

⁹⁴⁵ PT #2112. 121b.4

⁹⁴⁶ PT #2112. 121b.4

Amoghasiddhi, and the realm of the drop which resides at the brow.”⁹⁴⁷ VĀGĪŚVARA is the Lord of Speech. Having the nature of vowels and consonants, the place of invincible sound; the nature of Ratnasambhava in the throat. [It is] the mass of dharmas (*phung po*) of the intuition of great bliss abiding there. That same text says: “VĀGĪŚVARA is Ratnasambhava, abiding as the mass of dharmas at the throat.”⁹⁴⁸

As for ARAPACANĀ, A and RA are art and wisdom, and PA, TSA and NA refer to the actuality to be clarified; it is the Bhagavan who possesses the nature of an instance of ultimate unchanging [bliss], whose nature is Vajrasattva who abides in the crown *cakra*. YA TE NAMAH has the meaning of ‘I pay homage to that’. Thus, “ARAPACA is Vajrasattva, the Bhagavan at the crown. YA TE NAMAH is ‘I pay homage to that.’”⁹⁴⁹

Those [verses] are explained by arranging neatly the two commentaries. As such, those three *ślokas* signify the practice of fusing the vajra yoga of body, speech and mind [described] in this chapter. Anupamarakṣita notes, “Like that, the purity of the three -- body, speech and mind – [are denoted] by those three verses.”⁹⁵⁰ Raviśrī states: (58a/119) “The three verses compress the great yoga into the actuality of one body, speech and mind; by that is signified the stage of Complete Enlightenment through the *Māyājāla* previously explained. That is how it is explained.”⁹⁵¹

⁹⁴⁷ PT #2112121b.5

⁹⁴⁸ PT #2112121b.5

⁹⁴⁹ PT #2112121b.5-6

⁹⁵⁰ PT #2112121b.7

⁹⁵¹ PT #2111. 57b.1-2

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Editions consulted:

DK, DT: sDerge bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur, facsimile edition of the 18th century redaction of Situ Chos-kyi 'byung gnas, Delhi, 1978. Numbers from Tōhaku catalogue (Tokyo, 1934h)

PK, PT: Peking edition of the 'bKa' 'gyur and bsTan 'gyur prepared in 1737 under the Qianlong emperor, from the modern reprint. Numbers from the Otani catalogue (Kyoto, 1961)

bKa' 'gyur:

'*Jam-dpal ye-shes sems pa 'i don dam-pa 'i mtshan yang-dag-par brjod pa* (*Mañjuśrījñānasattvasya paramārtha-nāma-saṃgīti*). DK #360, rgyud 'bum, Ka 1b-13b.

'*Phags-pa 'jam-dpal-gyi mtshan brgya-rtsa-brgyad-pa shes-bya-ba* (*Ārya-mañjuśrīnamāṣṭasatakam*). DK #642: rgyud 'bum, Ba. 126-126b.

'*Phags-pa 'jig-rten-gyi rjes-su-'thun-par 'jug-pa shes-bya-ba theg-pa chen-po 'i mdo* (*Ārya-lokamuvarṭana-nāma-mahāyāna sūtra*). DK #200, mdo-sde, Tsa 303a-308a.

'*Phags-pa glang-ru lung bstan pa shes bya ba theg pa chen po 'i mdo* (*Ārya Gośṅgavyakaraṇa nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*). DK #357, mdo sde, Aḥ 220b-232a.

'*Phags pa ma skyes dgra 'i 'gyod pa bsal ba shes bya ba theg pa chen po 'i mdo* (*Ārya-Ajātaśatrukaukṛittyavinodana-nāma-mahāyānasūtra*). DK #216, mdo sde, Tsha 211b-268b.

'*Phags pa sangs rgyas kyi yul bsam kyis mi khyab pa bstan pa shes bya ba theg pa chen po 'i mdo*. (*Ārya-Acintyabuddhaviṣayanirdeśa-nāma-mahāyānasūtra*) DK #79, dkon-brtsegs, Ca 266b-284b.

'*Phags-pa bskal-ba bzang-po shes-bya-ba theg-pa chen po 'i mdo* (*Ārya-Bhadrakalpikā-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra*). DK #94, mdo-sde, Ka1b-340a.

bsTan-'gyur:

Advayavajra. '*Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i 'grel pa snying po mngon par rtogs pa zhes bya ba* (*Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-ṭikā-nāma-sārābhisamaya-nāma*). PT #2945, rgyud 'bum, Phi 105b-148a.

Anupamarakṣita *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i 'grel pa bdud rtsi 'i thigs pa sgron ma gsal ba zhes bya ba (Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-amṛtabindu-pratyāloka-vṛtti-nāma)*. PT #2112, rgyud 'bum, Ca, 115b-146a.

Atīśa. *Byang chub lam gyi sgron ma (Bodhipathapradīpa)* DT #3947, dbu ma, Khi 238a-241a.

Bhavaviveka, *Dbu-ma 'khrul-pa 'joms-pa shes-bya ba (Prajñā-pradīpa-mūla-mādhyamaka-vṛtti)*. DT #3853, dbu ma, Tsha 45b-259b.

Buddhapālita. *Dbu-ma rtsa-ba 'i 'grel-pa buddha-pālita (Buddhapālita-mūlamādhyamakavṛtti)*. DT #3842, dbu ma, Tsa 158b-281a.

Candrabhadrakīrti. *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i 'grel pa (Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-vṛtti)*. PT #3358, rgyud 'bum, Hi 1-32b.

Candrakīrti, *Dbu-ma-la 'jug-pa 'i bzhad-pa shes-bya-ba (Madhyamakāvatārabhāṣya)*. DT #3862, dbu-ma, Ha 220b-348a.

dGe 'dun rGya mtsho. *mTshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i rgya cher bshad pa rdo rje 'i 'byor gyi de kho nyid snang bar byed pa 'i nyi ma chen po zhes bya ba*. Dharamsala: Tibetan Cultural Printing Press (n.d.).

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Li 'i yul lung-bstan pa. DT #4202, spring-yig, Nge 168b-188a.

Mañjuśrīkīrti. *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i rgya cher bzhad pa. (Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-ñikā)* DT #3357, rgyud, Si 135a-351a.

Mañjuśrīmitra. *Mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i 'grel pa (Nāma-saṃgīti-vṛtti)* DT # 2532, rgyud 'bum, Khu 1b-27b.

Nāgārjuna, *Dbu-ma rtsa-ba 'i tshig-le 'ur byas-pa zhes-rab ces-bya-ba (prajñā-nāma-mūlamādhyamakakārikā)*. DT #3824, dbu-ma, Tsha 1b-19a.

Narendrakīrti. *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i rnam par shes pa ((Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-ñikā)* PT #1397, bstan 'gyur, rgyud, Pha

Puṇḍarīka. *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i 'grel pa dri ma med pa 'i 'od zhes bya pa (Ārya-Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-ñikā-vimalaprabhā)*. PT #2114, rgyud 'bum, Ca, 214a-265a.

Puṇḍarīka (Avalokiteśvara) *bsDus pa 'i rgyud kyi rgyal po dus kyi 'khor lo 'i 'grel bshas rtsa ba 'i rgyud kyi rjes su 'jug pa stong phrag bcu gnyis pa dri ma med pa 'i 'od ces bya*

ba (Vimalaprabhānāma-mūlatantrāmusārīṇī-dvādaśasāhasrikālaghukālacakra-tantrarājaṭīkā). PT #2064, rgyud 'bum, Ka-2 1a-227a and Kha 2a-297a.

Raviśrījñāna. *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa mdor bsad bdud rtsi 'i thig pa zhes bya pa (Amṛtakaṇika-nāma-āryanāma-saṃgīti-tippaṇī)*. PT #2111, rgyud 'bum, Ca, 44b-115b.

Śantideva. *bslab-pa kun-las btus-pa (Śikṣāsamuccaya)*. DT # 3940, dbu-ma, Khi 3a-194b.

Smṛtijñānakīrti. *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod kyi bshad 'bum (Mañjuśrīnāma-saṃgīti-lakṣbhāṣya)*. PT #3361, rgyud 'bum, Hi 78a-135a.

Śrīmahājāna. *shes-rab kyi-pha-rol tu-phyin pa 'i snying-po 'i don yongs su shes-pa (Prajñāpāramitāhrdayārthaparijñāna)*. DT # 3822, shes-phyin, Ma 303b-313a.

Śrīsiddhi. *sher snying 'grel-pa snags-su 'grel pa (Mantravivṛtaprajñāhrdayavṛtti)* DT #4353, sna-tshogs, Co. 203b-209b.

Vajragarbha. *Kye 'i rdo-rje bstus pa 'i don gyi rgya cher 'grel pa (Hevajra-piṇḍārthafīkā)*. PT rgyud 'bum, Ba 1a-121

Vajrapāṇi. *mNgon par brjod pa 'bum pa las phung ba nying du 'i rgyud kyi bsdu pa 'i don nram par bshad pa zhes bya ba (Lakṣābhīdhānād-uddhṛta-laghu-tantra-piṇḍārthavivarana-nāma)*. PT #2117, rgyud 'bum, Cha 1a-74a.

Vajrapāṇi. *Bcom-ldan ldas-ma shes-rab kyi-pha-rol tu-phyin pa 'i snying-po 'i 'grel-pa don gyi sgron-ma shes bya-ba. (Bhagavātiprajñāpāramitāhrdayafīkāṛthapradīpa-nāma)*. DT # 3820, shes-phyin, Ma 286b-295a.

Vilāsavajra. *'Phags pa mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i rgya cher 'grel pa mtshan gsang sngags kyi don du nram par lta ba shes bya ba. (Āryanāmasaṃgīti-ṭīkānāma nāmamantrārthālokinī.)* Derge #2533, rgyud 'bum, Khu 27b-115b.

Vimalamitra. *Mtshan yang dag par brjod pa 'i 'grel pa mtshan don gsal bar byd pa 'i sgron ma shes bya ba (Nāmasaṃgītivṛtti nāmārtha prakāśa karaṇa dīpa nāma)* PT #2941, rgyud 'grel, Phi 1-43a.

Vimalamitra. *'Phags-pa shes-rab kyi-pha-rol tu-phyin pa 'i snying-po 'i rgya cher bshad pa (Ārya-Prajñāpāramitāhrdayafīkā)*. DT #3818, shes-phyin, Ma 267b-280b.

Other:

mChog gi dang bo 'i sangs rgyas las phung bo rgyud kyi rgyal po dpal dus kyi 'khor lo zhes bya ba (Paramādibuddhodhṛtaśrīkālacakra-nāma-tantrarāja) in Kālacakra-Tantra

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