CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Aims

The aim of this study is to recover and analyze, on the basis of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, a specific mode of practice that was available to Indian Buddhists in the early medieval period. This study seeks, furthermore, to demonstrate that the principle underlying this practice was the assumption of the persistence of the Buddha's power in the world, and that the design of the practice was to enable the practitioner to mediate that power and manipulate it toward particular ends. Because the practice is enclosed within a specific rhetorical framework, namely, a text, that text itself comprises a concurrent object of this study. The text is viewed here as an aspect of the practice in itself, its strategies for describing the rituals as intrinsic to the nature of those rituals. In other words, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is taken to be an additional datum, and not, strictly speaking, a "window" onto or a record of the past. As a document of ritual activity, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is similar to a doctored photograph.

The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa's* treatment of practice exhibits a concern with four themes in particular. These four are *darkness, disclosure, transformation,* and *totality*. The authors' reasoning concerning these can be summed up as follows. The men and women of the world are engulfed by moral and mental darkness. This darkness prevents them from perceiving the enlightened power of the Buddha at work in the universe. There are means, however, by which this power can be disclosed. The text reveals these means. In employing these means—ritual and cultic in nature—the practitioner is transformed into a being of power himself or herself. The disclosure of the text and the transformation of the practitioner represent the culmination of India's religious history.

A central contention of this study is that the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* posits a world, or, as Richard Davis calls it, a "ritual universe,"[1] and that successful practice of the rituals depends on the practitioner's ability to enter fully into that world. This "ritual universe" is a particularized world, permeated by the cosmological and metaphysical assumptions operating in the text; the rituals,

grounded in these assumptions, constitute the actions by which these are, in turn, realized. It is a world held by its proponents to be ontologically superior to that which is known through other, insufficient sources of knowledge—other texts, communities, teachers, and modes of apprehension. The efficacy of the practice is derived, then, from this dynamic between action and knowledge.

I am using the term "practice" in both a narrow and broad sense. Narrowly, "practice" refers to a system of formalized, prescribed, sequential, and generally repetitive activity. In this sense, "practice" is synonymous with the colloquial usage of "ritual." For instance, lighting incense, prostrating and then reciting three times the three refuges before an image of the Buddha every morning and evening is a form of practice. In a broader sense, "practice" signifies the wider range of ritualized activities surrounding such a ritual. These surrounding practices, furthermore, create the conditions that make successful practice, narrowly construed, possible. In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, three such practices are imagining the cosmos presented in, and presupposed by, the text, creating the object of worship, and becoming an adept. Each of these practices is localized in, respectively, the assembly (*sannipātamaṇḍala*), the primary cult object (*paṭa*), and the practitioner (*sādhaka*). In this study, I analyze these three "locations" as a means of illustrating the mode of practice taught in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.

Throughout, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* moves between these various locations, or spaces. In this sense, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa's* manner of argumentation can be said to be spatial. The text does not offer logical propositions in order to substantiate its claims of power and of superiority over other forms of practice. Rather, it is concerned with defining spaces and prescribing the activity that should occur in those spaces. It is within these presentations of space and activity that power and superiority are established. In each instance, the space articulated is a purified area where power is mediated through ritualized practice and relationship. There is, for instance, the circle of the initiation *maṇḍala,* drawn on the ground, where the *sādhaka*, by means of a specific rite of consecration, forms a special relationship with his teacher and with the Buddha, enabling him to recite *mantras* of a special potency. As sonic embodiments of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, even these *mantras* are presented as spaces in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa:* they are forms to be filled by the presence of enlightened forces. The text, furthermore, defines the extraordinary space within any given ritually delineated area—such as a solitary field, riverbank, *caitya*, or mountaintop—where the Buddha's power manifests in a particularly concentrated manner. This space is the *paṭa*. As central as it is to the cult of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, however, the *paṭa* is a refractive space, reflecting an even greater domain of power: the space of the Ākaniṣṭha heaven serving as the present realm of Śākyamuni and as the origin of his teaching.

Studies of practices, or rituals, whether based on anthropological fieldwork or on texts, are typically descriptive. In this study, such an approach, though not completely incompatible with the nature of my source text, would severely circumscribe our use of the text. For, although extensive, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* generally offers only formulaic descriptions of ritual per se. It might seem paradoxical that a seven-hundred page ritual ordinance would frustrate an attempt to classify and delineate the very practices that it is promulgating. The fact that this is so, however, is indicative of what the text does, how it does it, and, therefore, of how it might be fruitfully studied. In short, my study of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* proceeds under the premise that the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is a text that primarily *indicates*—simultaneously serves as a sign for and reveals—the presence of enlightened power within the ritual world of the practitioner, and that it does this by *demonstrating* the mediating function of the elements of the rituals. The text evinces a concern with broad demonstrations of power, and only secondarily with explications of ritualized actions—and practically no concern whatsoever with philosophical justifications. With this intention in mind, the authors of the text took much for granted, assuming as axiomatic basic structures, both formal and theoretical. The text they produced instead emphasizes what Friedhelm Hardy calls "the unrestrained creative exuberance and the spirit of experimentation underlying" India's ritual literature.[2] For this reason, my goal of analyzing a mode of Buddhist practice on the basis of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is best approached through the "experiments"—the innovations brought to bear on common structures—that are worked out in the text. These statements, however, involve propositions and assumptions on my part that underlie my understanding of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and its practices, and which, therefore, constitute the guiding ideas of this study as a whole. Therefore, I will try to clarify what I mean here. I will do so by focusing on the narrow sense of the term "practice."

The term *practice* in this study is a translation of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa's* own term, *caryā*. In the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa, caryā* refers to a system of formalized, prescribed, and sequential activity. In this sense, *practice* is synonymous with "ritual," or ritualized activity. The term encompasses several additional terms. These can be grouped into two orders. The first order consists of *karma* (activity), *sādhana* (effecting rituals), *puraścaraṇa* (preliminary practices), *pūrvasevā* (prerequisite worship), *dhyāna* (contemplative visualization). At this level of order, there is nothing remarkable or distinctive about the practice promulgated in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. It is an example of the economy of forms, whereby prior modes and theoretical bases of cultic activity are preserved.[3] A description of the practice at this level illustrates that it may have conceivably occurred in virtually any period, region, social class or cultic group in India's history. It will be useful to

describe the bare ritual in this regard: early in the morning, a man, who has previously received initiation and instruction by a master, carries a rolled-up cloth painting and a bag containing small lamps, bottles of camphor and sandalwood oil, incense, rice and other implements to a desolate field. There, after bathing in a nearby pond, he cleans the area and arranges the cloth on the ground. Sitting on a mound of grass in front of this cloth, he repeatedly recites a short phrase, a *mantra*. With a pleasant voice he sings hymns of praise to visualized enlightened beings and deities. Finally, he may light a small fire before the cloth and make oblations of wooden sticks or flowers.

Devoid of any description of particular features, the most basic questions concerning this practice arise: Does it describe the activity of a Vedic brahman in 1000 B.C.E. outside of a farming village, on the banks of the river Sarasvatī in the Punjab? Does it occur only occasionally, in a field outside of the modern city of Varanasi? Was the practitioner a wealthy landowner, a scholar, a monk, an ascetic, a small craftsman, peasant, woman? Did the practitioner of the rite place his or her trust in the gods of the Vedic pantheon, in Śiva, Viṣṇu, in tranquil *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, or in the wrathful force of Kālī or Heruka? What was intended by the action; that is, what did the rite do? Did it manipulate forces, seen or unseen? Did it bring one man or woman closer to heaven, liberation, enlightenment, cure an illness, harm an enemy; or was it intended simply to express one's love for his or her personal god? At the first level, where forms such as *pūrvasevā* and *sādhana* are economized, these questions cannot be answered.

Each first level term, however, presupposes more elemental forms of the practice; for example, *mantra* (inherently potent verbal formulas), *mudrā* ("sealing" hand gestures), *homa* (oblation), *paṭa* (painted cult image), *maṇḍala* (the animated "circle" of beings generating both the authority and power sustaining the practices, as well as a rough depiction of this assembly drawn on the ground), *abhiṣeka* (initiation, consecration). Although such elements can be seen as economized cultural forms in their own right, it is here that the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* introduces particularity into these common forms. At this level, we can observe what Hardy calls "the phenomenon of uninhibited proliferation" in India's cultic life. It will be helpful to quote Hardy at length in this regard.

> [I]t is conceivable that were one to substitute musical notes for each discrete ritual item (e.g. scattering the petals of a particular flower), a musical structure might evolve. Such a structure extricated for an entire ritual event would then resemble a number of basic notes and discrete themes, and a set of increasingly complex variations on these themes. Thus on the one hand we are clearly dealing here with an aesthetic principle that underlies ritualistic proliferation. Such a 'self-authenticating' character may well explain the occurrence of ritual events in contexts that in terms of strict philosophy

> allow for no such practice (e.g., the Jain temple or the ancient Buddhist stupa). But on the other hand . . . such ritual events are not like the fixed and 'authentically performed' musical compositions of our Western classical tradition. The phenomenon of uninhibited proliferation suggests instead a comparison with the improvisatory character of the Indian musical tradition, in which each performance appears as an extempore creation that is structured merely by some formal conventions and by the *rag*.[4]

Improvisation and experimentation are observed in the variations of use and meaning brought to bear on common structures. We learn little from the fact that a ritual practitioner performs an oblation, since this is a widely shared form. But that the practitioner may burn only *aśoka* wood and not *āmla* wood in the fire teaches us a good deal about the basic orientation of the practice. This tells us, for example, that the practitioner is engaged in one of the cults directed toward pacification (of evil supernatural influences, etc.) and increase (of worldly or spiritual fortune, etc.). Conversely, we can conclude that the practitioner is not a devotee of one of the wrathful "left-handed" (*vāmācāra*) cults. When we additionally learn of the hand gestures, verbal formulas, visualized iconographic configurations, and so on, that are employed during the oblation, the specific nature of the cult—its cosmology, doctrine, and broader affiliations—begins to emerge. It is in this manner that the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* creatively transforms common elements of India's religious culture into vehicles for particular forms of knowledge and power, into emblems of a unique practice. Its practices, therefore, are best approached through the "experiments" that are worked out (or, to continue Hardy's musical metaphor, jammed on) in the text.

1.2 Methods

The methods used in this study are textual. The focus of the study is on the contents of a single text, and the ritual prescriptions that comprise the content of the text are analyzed strictly on the basis of their presentation and description in textual form, as opposed to practiced form. Occasionally, the narrow scope of the single Buddhist text that is the object of this study is complemented by reference to the wider context of medieval Indian ritual literature, in particular that of the Śaiva Siddhānta and Vaiṣṇava Pañcarātra sects.

The printed text that forms the basis of this study, *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa*,[5] was prepared by T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī from the single known manuscript of the work, discovered near Padmanabhapuram, in South India, in 1909. This was published in three parts in the Trivandrum Sanskrit Series: Part I = no. LXX, 1920; Part II = LXXVI, 1922; Part III = LXXXIV, 1925, Trivandrum. This

was reprinted in a single volume by CBH Publications, Trivandrum, 1992, and recast with superficial changes by P. L. Vaidya, *Mahāyānasūtrasaṅgraha,* Part II, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 18, Bihar, 1964. Concerning the manuscript of the *Mmk*, Śāstrī writes in the Preface:

> It is a pretty large palm-leaf manuscript containing about 13,000 granthas. The palm-leaves are long, light and soft and the manuscript is written in Devanagarī characters with ink. Though the leaves have an appearance of being from 300 to 400 years old, the characters (except in the first and last leaf) look clear and legible as if they were just written down.

Since it was prepared from a single manuscript, the printed text should be viewed as the equivalent of a "copy," and by no means as a text-critical edition. Śāstrī writes, "as no second manuscript has been obtained, the text in this edition is adopted exactly as it is found in the original manuscript" (Preface). I have consulted an eleventh century Tibetan translation as well: Taipei Edition, volume XVIII *bka' 'gyur*, *'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi rtsa ba'i rgyud*, 540 no. 543, 25/175 (1)-96/667. I should reiterate here that my translations of the text are based solely on the Sanskrit.

Because of the length of the *Mmk*—55 chapters comprising 721 pages in the printed edition—the problem of selection and organization arises. My approach is to focus of chapters 1–11 (the contents of each *Mmk* chapter is given in Appendix A). These chapters contain the basic features that form the foundation of the practice with which I am primarily concerned: *Mmk* 1 presents the imaginal and cosmological background of the practice-world; *Mmk* 2 provides the instructions for the initiation rite and numerous *mantras* to be utilized in the practice; *Mmk* 4-7 gives the instructions for the creation of the cult object (*paṭa*), which is central to the rituals of the *Mmk*; *Mmk* 8–10 instructs on specific applications of the "superior" ritual activity (*uttamasādhana*) that is the focus of this study; and, finally, *Mmk* 11 provides the most explicit statements about the practitioner of the text. *Mmk* 1–11 contains the instructions on the activities that are imperative preconditions to successful practice; therefore, this section is sufficient for an illustration of the basic structure and specific applications of the ritual being investigated.

Subsequent chapters fall largely into one of two categories. The first consists of those that elaborate on certain features of the practice, such as *mudrās, mantras,* the fire oblation, and prognostication. It should be noted, however, that the elaborations are typically in the form of inventories and lists rather than amplifications of meaning. For example, chapters 41–46 comprise a "*mudrākośa,*" listing, and instructing briefly on the formation of, numerous *mudrās;* it does not, however, offer a "theology" of the *mudrā*. So, unlike Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava ritual texts, the *Mmk* does not alternate between

ritual discourse and explanatory discourse. The second category consists of those chapters that present specific applications of the practices. Chapter 29, for instance, gives instructions on the use of a particular *mantra*; and chapters 47–49 instruct on the worship of the four *bhaginī* deities. Virtually all of the chapters from 12–55 presuppose the fulfillment of what is contained in chapters 1–11; and, additionally, many of those replicate the basic structure of chapters 8–10 and parts of 11. Therefore, chapters subsequent to *Mmk* 1–11 are referred to only secondarily.

This book is structured roughly along the thematic lines of *Mmk* 1–11. Chapter 1 gives an overview of the *uttamasādhana* ritual as it appears at *Mmk* 8–10. The purpose here is to introduce the structures and elements that comprise the basic ritual. Chapter 2 is an analysis of *Mmk* 1. *Mmk* 1 renders the cosmological setting that provides both the natural and metaphysical foundations for the ritual claims of the work. Chapter 3 draws from *Mmk* 4-7 to discuss the *paṭa*, the cult image that is painted on cloth. Chapter 4 evaluates the descriptions of the practitioner that can be found scattered throughout the text, but primarily in *Mmk* 2, 10, and 11. Finally, Chapter 5 seeks to summarize the processes and strategies at work behind the text's presentation of its ritual world, and to suggest to present-day scholars a hermeneutic for reading Buddhist literature.

1.2.1 Studying Ritual from a Text

Studying the textual record of a performed activity raises questions of relationship that complicate the initial impulse to differentiate clearly between the two. This is particularly true when the textual record is itself an integral aspect of the performance. An example of this type of text is a musical score. A musical score is a plan of procedure, containing the details of a work to be performed. It is thus both a script *for* and a record *of* musical composition. The score, however, does not stand prior to performance: the composer composes *music* to be played and heard, and not a text to be read for its own sake. Even when read for its own sake, the knowledgeable reader of a musical score will hear music as she views the notation in the text. Performance is written into the text, and the text is an inscribed form of musical performance.

The *Mmk*, too, is a programmatic text. It is employed by a community of users for two main purposes: to prescribe and authorize a performed activity, and to form the moral and mental dispositions deemed necessary for the successful performance of that activity. The text itself thus becomes an aspect of performance in two ways. First, it serves as the script for the performers of the rituals, and as a blueprint for the practical, metaphysical, and mythical knowledge required for performance. Second, it is employed as

an instrument in the activities that it prescribes—it is to be consulted, meditated on, recited from, and even worshiped; it instructs, inspires, and effectuates. Like the knowledgeable reader of a musical manuscript, the informed reader of the *Mmk* (including the twenty-first century scholar) will, in the very act of reading, perform the ritual to some extent: the *mantras* will reverberate in his mind, he will envision the array of *bodhisattvas* as they are described, and so on. In studying a ritual text such as the *Mmk*, then, are we studying a text, a ritual, or both?

There can, of course, be no definitive answer to this question. Too much depends on the analogy deemed representative of the relationship between text and ritual in a given instance. I have used a script/performance analogy because I think that this best approximates the relationship between the ritual manuals and ritual performances—Buddhist and non-Buddhist—with which I am familiar. The relationship between script and performance, however, is not uniform; there are numerous versions of the script/performance analogy. For example, the scripts used in improvisitory theater provide only the rough scenarios on which the actors must spontaneously build. The relationship between script and performance in this case will be necessarily loose and vague. It will be impossible to predict a performance from a script. Conversely, a Shakespearean script, in the hands of the Stratford Festival players, will be studiously followed with an eye for what tradition has deemed proper interpretation of the script. The script and its rubrics will yield a predictable performance that changes little over time.

When studying a religious script, such as a liturgical guide or ritual manual, we have to take into account the tradition's own views on the relationship between script and performance. From the evidence of the *Mmk*, it is reasonable to conclude that looseness and improvisation on the part of the rituals' teachers and practitioners were assumed. For instance, the text provides four options for the creation of the cult object. These options reflect varying degrees of aptitude and commitment in terms of time, expense, effort, and so on, on the part of the practitioner. Often, offerings are to be made, and *mantras* and texts selected for recitation, "according to one's wishes." The text, furthermore, is not comprehensive in its prescriptions and descriptions of ritual activity. We may infer from this that the idiosyncrasies of individual teachers were permitted some latitude in their oral instructions, and that a good deal of cultural knowledge—itself inexact and indeterminate—was presupposed.

In short, the *Mmk* shows an openness to improvisation and experimentation concerning the practice of the rituals that it prescribes. Obviously, this textual variation would have been reflected in practice. The details and emphases placed on the various aspects of performance would have varied according to community and teacher.[6]

1.3 The Text: *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*

1.3.1 Date, Origin, Language

The *Mmk*, like many Indian religious works, is most likely what Paul Hacker describes as an "anonymous" text that has "gradually grown . . . [and has] received [its] form only through compilation, redaction, diaskeuase . . . [it] contains parts that, at one time, existed independently."[7] Yūkei Matsunaga, too, has argued that the Sanskrit text of the *Mmk* cannot be dated as a whole since portions, even single chapters, have varying dates of composition. Matsunaga writes that the *Mmk* "was not composed with a single design from beginning to end," and that it "must be seen as a gradual compilation of rituals that were themselves passing through several stages of development." Matsunaga emphasizes this point by further stating that "the text is actually a random collection of chapters that are unrelated and were neither compiled in the same way nor at the same time."[8] He goes on to show how the translation history of several of the chapters of the Chinese version of the *Mmk* support this contention. Matsunaga's results, however, are largely negative in that his intention is to emend and qualify some more positive claims made previously by Jean Przyluski.[9]

In brief, Przyluski argues that the *Mmk* contains two primary historical strata: an older one commencing with *Mmk* 4, and a more recent one consisting of *Mmk* 1–3. He bases this conclusion primarily on the following internal evidence: (1) The chapter colophons of *Mmk* 1–3 read *parivartaḥ* (chapter), while those of *Mmk* 4 and on read *paṭalavisaraḥ* (chapter). This shift in terminology "proves that the first three *parivarta* are not of the same redaction as the following *paṭalavisara*" (303), and that the former term, being more recent than the latter, points to a more recent addition. (2) Beginning with *Mmk* 4, the term *mahāyānavaipulyasūtra* or *mahāvaipulyasūtra* appears in the chapter colophons; *Mmk* 1–3, being added around the eleventh century, the period when the Tibetan translation was made, omits this designation. Przyluski holds that the reason for this omission is that *Mmk* 1–3 was written at a time when tantric elements were becoming more pronounced than the historically prior Mahāyāna *vaipulya* elements. It is for this reason that the eleventh century Tibetan translation reads *tantra* (*rgyud*) in place of *vaipulya*, which is found in the tenth century Chinese translation. (3) This latter contention, Przyluski holds, is supported by the fact that in *Mmk* 1–3, Mañjuśrī "supplants" Śākyamuni as "the central personage, the eminent speaker who instructs the Grand Assembly" (304). In other words, the fact that the *bodhisattvas* gradually come to "exercise the functions of the speaker previously reserved for the Buddha Śākyamuni" (304) is among the evidence of a later, tantric development in Buddhist literature. (4) *Mmk* 14 is identical to

Chinese texts datable to 702–705. Thus, Przyluski argues that the *Mmk* is a text in which we can observe "the transformations of beliefs and the evolution of doctrines" (306) in a period from the early eighth to the eleventh centuries (Chinese translation of *vaipulya* sections = 980–1000 [the Chinese translation of this period consists of 28 chapters, corresponding to Sanskrit 1–17 and 24–34; the Tibetan translation consists of 37 chapters, and is datable between 1034 and 1044;[10] the Tibetan *Mmk* corresponds to Sanskrit 1–17, 24–38, and 50–54]).[11]

As Matsunaga notes, Przyluski is the first scholar "who has seriously addressed himself to the problem of the date of the *MMK*" (887). A more exact dating of the *Mmk* will require further implementation of the procedure applied to the problem by Przyluski; namely, careful analysis of terminological, stylistic, and doctrinal variation, and a close comparison of the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Chinese versions of the text. Matsunaga, utilizing these methods, has in fact been able to bring more precision to Przyluski's results, thereby emending them in certain details. Matsunaga shows, for example, that Przyluski's comparison of *Mmk* 14 with a series of Chinese translations that are datable to the early eighth century in fact produced the erroneous conclusion that *Mmk* 14, too, dates to this period. Przyluski's conclusion was based on the fact that both the Sanskrit and Chinese texts contained the same core feature: the *mūlamantra bhrīṃ*. Matsunaga, however, shows that apart from this, the texts have little in common, and that, on the whole, the Chinese texts, rather, resemble *Mmk* 9. Because such adjustments do not alter the basic time frame of the *Mmk*, they serve more as qualifications and problematizations of the concrete, though largely speculative, conclusions drawn by earlier scholars such as Przyluski.[12]

The fact that a text now known as the *Mmk* was compiled at all should give us pause to consider that, in the eyes of its custodians throughout the span of its formation, the text—or texts from which it was compiled—did in fact exhibit a thematic and stylistic consistency. The extent to which the *Mmk* can be shown to be a "random collection of chapters that are unrelated" awaits a careful linguistic and doctrinal analysis of each chapter. Such an analysis is well beyond the scope of this study. In the meantime, it may be more beneficial to entertain the possibility that the *Mmk's* apparent "randomness" is a result of our incomplete knowledge of indigenous notions of "text" and "related categories," and of the process of text formation in medieval India. For the purposes of this study, it is sufficient to note that the *Mmk* documents a form of Buddhism that was prevalent from, at the latest, the eighth century C.E. The strongest evidence for this is indirect: identical cultic patterns are recorded in Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava ritual texts. These texts are dated from the seventh to the ninth centuries with more certainty.[13] As a written document, the *Mmk* shows similar intention, function, style, and structure as

these texts. (This is argued in more detail in chapter 2, below.) Dating the *Mmk* to this period is therefore based on the evidence of ascendancy of both the cultic pattern and literary genre of which it is a type. (Some suggestive data for considering the *terminus ad quem*/*a quo* of the *Mmk* are given in Appendix A.)

Origin

The issue of provenance parallels that of date. Portions of the text may have originated in different places, eventually to be formed into a whole—although what constituted a "whole" likely varied from place to place. However, with the exception of *Mmk* 53, the text betrays virtually nothing concerning provenance. On the contrary, whether intentionally or not, the origin or origins of the text are obscured; and in their place we find assertions of universal origin and applicability.

Ariane MacDonald, refuting Saṅkṛtyāyana's claim that the text, and the *vaipulyasūtras* in general, originated in Śriparvata and Dhanyakaṭaka in South India, cites *Mmk* 10, "a long passage on geography."[14] There, dozens of regions are mentioned as being conducive to successful *mantra* practice. She rightly concludes that these geographical passages do not give preference to any one region, and thus, do not provide any evidence for provenance. This section, in fact, appears to constitute a map of medieval Mahāyāna pilgrimage "power places" (*siddhikṣetra*), as they are called at *Mmk* 10 (this is discussed more at chapter 4, below).

Concerning *Mmk* 53, Jayaswal states:[15] it "was written in Bengal. Geographically it is to Gauḍa and Magadha that the author pays greatest attention. In fact his history from the Nāga (ca. 140 C.E.) and Gupta times (350 C.E.) to the beginning of the Pāla period (750 C.E.) is a survey from Gauḍa—written from the point of view of Gauḍa, showing an intimate concern with Gauḍa and the provinces in the proximity of Gauḍa. To him Gauḍa means the whole of Bengal and includes generally Magadha." While this assertion may be true, it applies to *Mmk* 53 only, and not to the text as a whole.

Language

The *Mmk* is written in a form of Sanskrit that deviates regularly from the norms of Pāṇini. In virtually every sentence examples of the following are found: homogeneity of nominative and accusative; use of plural subject with singular verb; mixing of passive and active forms; variant and inconsistent spellings. While many of these forms can be found in other *vaipulya* works, as is documented by Edgerton in both volumes of the *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, others await further analysis of internal

consistency, as well as a comparison of the printed text with the manuscript, in order to determine whether they are viable local forms of written Sanskrit, editor's errors, or printer's errors.

1.3.2 Classification and Use: kalpa and mahāyānavaipulyasūtra

kalpa

The *Mmk* is a *kalpa*. The noun *kalpa* derives from the verbal root √*kḷp*, which means "to be well ordered or regulated, to arrange, fix, accomplish, perform." An early meaning of *kalpa* was a "manner of acting, proceeding, practice prescribed by the Vedas." This was, in fact, the *prathamaḥ kalpaḥ*, the primary duty regulating one's cultic life. *Kalpa* was thus employed technically to denote the "sacred precept, law, ordinance." Jan Gonda points out that the meaning of *kalpa* as used by the Vedic communities at the earliest stage encompassed neither "'texts' (books) nor special 'schools' but subjects of instruction to be studied in order to understand the Vedic texts and to perform the rites."[16] In this sense, *kalpa* was counted as one of the six *vedāṅgas* (auxiliaries to the Vedas). The subject covered by *kalpa* was ritual, or the proper performance of the rites. The texts that eventually emerged from the need to codify a school's particular understanding of a ritual procedure were called *kalpasūtras*, or "ritual texts." Gonda defines *kalpasūtra* as a comprehensive term for "the various ceremonial guides or didactic manuals on ritual practice (*kalpa*), detailed expositions of the procedures and rules for the performance of Vedic sacrifices."[17]

From the term *kalpa* we thus learn that the *Mmk* is a manual of ritual practice disclosing all of the elements of the course of practice promulgated in the text. As a Buddhist *kalpa*, the *Mmk* parallels the Vaiṣṇava *samhitās*, Śākta *tantras,* and Śaiva *āgamas*. Such ritual manuals comprised what Richard Davis calls the "new genre of liturgical texts [that] became prominent during the early medieval period."[18] The Śaiva *āgamas*, for instance, "set forth a sequence of transformative rituals—initiations and consecrations—that progressively incorporate the subject into the Śaiva community, move him toward liberation, and empower him to act as a temple priest or adept. In this respect, the *āgamas* provide liturgical compendiums for Śaiva priests (*ācārya*), for renunciatory adepts (*sādhaka*), and for committed householders worshiping at home shrines. They are the primary ritual texts of medieval Śaivism."[19] It is argued in chapter 2 and chapter 4 below that Davis's characterization of the *āgamas* applies to the *Mmk*; that is, that it was one Buddhist community's answer to the medieval concern to record, clarify, systematize, and extoll the community's ritual practices.

mahāyānavaipulyasūtra

The term *vaipulya* means "largeness, spaciousness, great extent." Edgerton notes that *vaipulya* is equivalent to *vaitulya*, which, in turn, is cognate to Pāli *vettulla*/*vetulya*. There is evidence that suggests that the Pāli terms referred to "a heretical sect, by some identified with Mahāyāna."[20] The commentary to the *Kathāvatthu*, for instance, states: "This view is now held by those of the Vetulakas, who are known as the Mahāsuññatāvādins."[21] The term *mahāsuññatāvādin* refers to a Buddhist who accepts the cardinal Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine that all phenomena (*dharmas*) are conceptual constructs possessing no inherent essence. An additional doctrinal position of the Vetulakas was that the Buddha was *vipula*, immense, immeasurable, infinite.[22] A *vaipulyasūtra* is thus a copious text in which Mahāyāna metaphysical and cosmological notions are either propagated or presupposed. It is to this position, in contrast to earlier forms of Buddhism, that Etienne Lamotte refers when he writes that the *vaipulya* works shared common "sources of inspiration," and that they comprised a unitary "philosophical-mystical movement."[23]

As a technical term, *vaipulya* denotes a genre of literature contained in an early twelvefold classification scheme: *sūtra, geya, vyākaraṇa, gatha, udāna, nidāna, ityukta, jātaka, vaipulya, adbhūtadharma, avadāna,* and *upadeśa*.[24] The term was later used synonymously with the term *bodhisattvapiṭaka* ("canon of the *bodhisattvas*"). In the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, for instance, Asanga (ca. 290–360) advises the *bodhisattva* to study "the canon (*piṭaka*) of the *bodhisattvas* . . . which is the *vaipulya* in the twelve-member scripture."[25] This connection between the two terms, *vaipulya* and *bodhisattvapiṭaka,* is expressed in most of the chapter colophons of the *Mmk*, where the text is referred to as a *bodhisattvapiṭakāvataṃsakamahāyānavaipulyasūtra*.[26] For certain communities, then, the *Mmk*, as a *vaipulya* text, both corroborated and was corroborated by, a larger group of texts espousing a particular Buddhist worldview. The *Mmk* refers indirectly to this larger group: in *Mmk* 2 and 11 liturgical rubrics call for recitation from four *vaipulya* texts: *Prajñāpāramitā, Daśabhūmika, Suvarṇaprabhāsottama,* and *Gaṇḍavyūha*.

Both terms, *vaipulya* and *kalpa,* are operative in the *Mmk*. As a *kalpa*, the *Mmk* orders, arranges and fixes the ritual prescriptions of the community; it regulates the corporate and private devotional activity of the practitioner; it specifies to him how to perform the rites of the cult, and thereby makes explicit how to accomplish the goals held by the community to be worthy or acceptable. As a *vaipulyasūtra*, the *Mmk* reveals, in often exuberant language and imagery, the cosmological basis of its cult. In this manner, as I show in detail below, the text's claims of ritual efficacy are given a metaphysical foundation.

1.3.3 Index

At the end of each chapter of the *Mmk* is a statement indicating the basic content of the chapter, its position within a larger unit, and the title and genre of the text as a whole. A typical example is the colophon of *Mmk* 9, which reads:

> Completed is the second [chapter] from the section on the rituals leading to superior success: the ninth [chapter] of the *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa,* the extensive Mahāyāna text, an ornament of the canon of the *bodhisattvas*.[27]

From such chapter colophons we learn of the compilers' organizing principles and of their categories of orientation. Here, *Mmk* 9 is presented as the second in a series of chapters on a specific ritual category: *uttamasādhana*, soteriologically directed rituals, rather than those aiming at worldly results. The content of the chapter is thus given as this type of ritual practice. The text as a whole is presented as being a contributor to the loosely defined corpus of literature propagating the *bodhisattva* ideal. This also indicates the self-perception of the medieval practitioners of the *Mmk* rituals as Mahāyāna Buddhists who adhered to the general tenets propagated in the *vaipulya* texts.[28]

A more specific form of organization and categorization is found at *Mmk* 1. *Mmk* 1 contains several passages that, as a whole, can be read as an index. By index I mean both a list or table of contents, and a signpost guiding the reader to larger claims being made in the text. The index tells the reader what to expect not only from the text as a treasury (*koṣa*) of specific knowledge, but from the practice promulgated in the text as well. It thus possesses rhetorical force. As a form of argument, for example, it serves to make the *Mmk*'s claim of privilege over other methods of practice. This becomes clear when we read the lists that make up the index in light of our knowledge of the diverse forms of Buddhist and non-Buddhist practice available in the medieval period. Because of the types of claims that the index is making—authoritative, hegemonic, totalizing—it can be understood as positing a *śāstric* argument. That is, the index points to a codification of *what should be done;* and this codification is posited as being primordial, revealed, and all-encompassing. The entire design of the *Mmk* is to show that "what should be done" is to practice rituals employing *mantras* (*mantracaryā*)—the knowledge of which only it, the *Mmk*, can provide. The index points to this knowledge. The end to which the rituals and the knowledge are applied is, in practice if not theory, immaterial.

Index lists

The opening paragraph gives a succinct statement of the ritual project of the *Mmk*. Śākyamuni is announcing to the *devaputras* in the *śuddhāvāsa* heaven that he is about to give a teaching "upon which all beings depend."

> Hear, O *devaputras*, about that upon which all beings depend: the inconceivable, wondrous, miraculous transformation of the *bodhisattva*, the [use of the] [*paṭa*] for superior liberation, purity, meditative absorption, [Tibetan adds: supernatural powers: *rdzu 'phrul* < *ṛddhi*], proper conduct; [hear about] the *mantras* of that great being, the princely *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī, which completely fulfill all beings' wishes for power, health and long life.[B1] (letter/number notation refers to an Appendix entry)

This is a statement about the primacy of ritual as a Buddhist practice: the Buddha's teaching is a teaching about rituals. Broad categories of this teaching include the use of the *paṭa*, methods of purification, and so on. The linchpin of the entire ritual complex is mentioned here: the transformative power of the *bodhisattva*. The final clause is a general, though wide-ranging, statement about the applications and results of the rituals. Power, health, and long life include not only such mundane things as the power of clairvoyance, the ability to heal eyesores, and the avoidance of untimely death. They also include the power to proceed to the heavens of gods, unassailable health, and mortal existence for several eons.

For the sake of clarity, we can arrange the text's claims about the functions of ritual practice vertically. (Each instance should be prefaced by: "the text contains knowledge about.")

[**List 1**: *Mmk* 1.1.6–9]

- the use of the cult image for enlightenment
- purity, meditative absorption, proper conduct
- the *mantras* of the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī,
- complete power, health, and long life
- the operative force of the rituals: the miraculous transformation of the *bodhisattvas*

As mentioned above, this list alludes to central and prerequisite components of the *mantracaryā*, specifically, the cult object (*paṭa*), *mantras*, purification, imaginative worship, and ethical behavior. The list contains a claim of universal application, and then closes with an allusion to the foundation of the entire ritual structure. This is immediately followed by a more defined, though still relatively general, list.

> Then, with hands folded in salutation, those *devaputras* dwelling in the Pure Abode [Tibetan: exclaiming "excellent!" asked the Blessed One (about) the *bodhisattvas'* practices of superior meditative absorption], the obtaining of the superior stages [of the *bodhisattva* path], the approach to buddhahood, the turning of the wheel of the teaching for the overcoming of Māra, liberation

> of *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas*, birth as a god or human, pacification of all illness, poverty and suffering, attraction of wealth, the invincibility of all ordinary and extraordinary *mantra* rituals, the complete fulfillment of all hopes, the certain retention of the words of all *tathāgatas*. Out of compassion for us and for all beings, let the Blessed One, who is loving and benevolent, speak about that![B2]

(Here, each listing is a general claim about ritual function, and should thus be prefaced by: "the rituals are a means to.")

[**List 2**: *Mmk* 1.1.12–18]

***ordinary attainment* (*laukika*)**

- the abolition of disease and poverty
- the attraction of wealth
- birth as a god or human

***extraordinary attainment* (*lokottara*)**

- liberation of *pratyekabuddhas* and *śrāvakas*
- the approach to buddhahood
- obtaining the superior stages [of the *bodhisattva*]
- the certain retention of the words of all *tathāgatas*

universality

- the pacification of all suffering
- the invincibility of all ordinary and extraordinary *mantra* rituals
- the fulfillment of every hope

The means of attaining each of these is precisely the *mantracaryā* delineated in the *Mmk*. The one exception is "the turning of the wheel of the teaching for the overcoming of Māra," which is, presumably, a reference to *Mmk* 53, the chapter on Buddhist history. Otherwise, the rituals are presented as addressing concerns bearing on health, fortunate rebirth, and liberation. The references to liberation contain allusions to the three ascending orders of *śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha*, and *bodhisattva*. Like the first list, this list closes with rhetorical claims of absoluteness.

The first two lists are proclaimed by Śākyamuni and the *śuddhāvāsa* gods respectively. The third is spoken by the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī. He is explaining to Saṅkusumitarājendra—the *buddha* in whose world-realm he is living[28]—that he is going to the *sāha* world in order to serve Śākyamuni by teaching the beings there about the following:

> prescriptions for the *maṇḍala,* which (*maṇḍala*) is the means of attainment in all *mantra* rites, the prescriptions for the esoteric cult image in the ritual ordinance, the essential forms of all *tathāgatas*, the secret *mudrās*, the initiation rite, to fulfill completely every hope of every being.[B3]

[**List 3**: *Mmk* 1.2.13–15]

- the means of attainment (*sādhana*)
- the creation of the [initiatory] *maṇḍala*
- the initiation rite
- the essential forms of all *tathāgatas*
- secret *mudrās*
- the creation of the esoteric cult image (*paṭa*)
- rituals employing *mantras*
- fulfillment of all beings' every hope

List 3 contains the cardinal categories of the ritual practice prescribed in the *Mmk*. Ordered as above, the list gives the necessary, and complete, sequence of the practice. The means of attainment in the *Mmk* is, first, to have a master to prepare the initiatory space, namely, the *maṇḍala*, followed by the initiation ceremony itself. During this ceremony, the *sādhaka* is given the potent "essence" (*hṛdaya*) *mantra* and other *mantras* required for ritual practice, and he receives secret instruction on how to perform the "sealing" bodily gestures (*mudrā*) that must accompany *mantra* recitation. Once he has received this initiation, he may proceed with the final requisite of ritual practice—creation of the cult image (*paṭa*). Only then may he perform the *mantra* rituals "which lead to absolute fulfillment."

The fourth list repeats categories given previously, and introduces several new ones. Four sections in the *Mmk* are referred to: *Mmk* 11 (dwelling in a fixed place), *Mmk* 17–21 (gems and planets), *Mmk* 22–26 (proper time), and *Mmk* 53 (prophecies on the sovereignty of kings). In addition to this, two "ordinary" (*laukika*) "supernatural attainments" (*siddhi*) are mentioned—invisibility and clairvoyance—and one "extraordinary" (*lokottara*) attainment—the ascension to the stages of the *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, *bodhisattva,* and *buddha*. In this passage, Saṅkusumitarājendra is granting Mañjuśrī permission to hear Śākyamuni teach about the following:

> the *maṇḍala* used in the *mantra* rituals, initiation into the esoteric ordinance, *mudrās*, creation of the cult image, the fire oblation, [*mantra*] recitation, discipline, complete fulfillment of every hope and complete satisfaction of all beings, knowledge of present, past, future by means of the extensive

section on gems and planets, [the section on the] prophecies on the sovereignty of kings, recitation of *mantras,* [the section on] dwelling at the borders of countries, ability to become invisible, the extensive section on the period [when the practitioner is] under the vow, everything, with nothing excluded, concerning the rituals conducive to all that is ordinary and extraordinary, the ascension to the stages of the *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, *bodhisattva,* and *buddha*.[B4]

[**List 4**: *Mmk* 1.2.22–27]

general

- discipline
- gestures
- fire oblation
- recitation of *mantras*
- gems and planets
- prophecies on the sovereignty of kings
- wandering
- the proper time [for particular practices]

preliminary

- initiation into the esoteric ordinance
- the *maṇḍala* used in the *mantra* rituals
- creation of the cult image
- *mantra* recitation

ordinary attainment: instrumental power

- ability to become invisible
- knowledge of present, past, future

extraordinary attainment: soteriological power

- the ascension to the stages of the *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, *bodhisattva,* and *buddha*

universality

- complete fulfillment of every wish
- complete satisfaction of all beings
- everything, with nothing excluded, concerning the rites conducive to all that is ordinary and extraordinary

In the final indexical passage, Śākyamuni is instructing Mañjuśrī to teach the *śuddhāvāsa* gods. In doing so, Śākyamuni simultaneously outlines the contents of the *Mmk* and describes the ideal "treasury of the true teaching" (*dharmakośa*), the book of rituals serving the "welfare and pleasure of numerous people." This final statement of List 5 closes the indexical section of the *Mmk* by invoking the value and authority of the text itself.

> [The ritual text, *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, deals with] the rituals of the great beings, production of and establishment in enlightenment, complete attainment of all the goals of a *bodhisattva*, initiation into the ordinances for the *mantras*, *maṇḍala,* and *mudrās* for the esoteric initiation ceremony, long life, good health, power, the fulfillment of every wish, means of attainment, periodical performance of that which is known through familiarity with the *tantras*, [acquisition] of royal lands; in short, the complete fulfillment of every hope of every individual in past, present and future, attending to the *mantra* rites which awaken one's virtues, causing the sage to cause others' happiness, wander invisibly, traverse the sky; the power of attraction, the ability to enter into the underworld, maledictory incantations, the attainment of every desire, attaction of all spirits, *piśācas*, *kiṃkaras*, violent male and female *yakṣas*, causing one to remain young or advanced in years, as the case may be; in short, complete fulfillment and joy in all of one's endeavors, the performance of rites of malediction, pacification, and increase. Just as it was practiced by me, so was this extensive jewel, this great ordinance, ornament of the *bodhisattva* canon, proclaimed and authorized by me and spoken by all *buddhas*. Teach this treasury of the true teaching to all pure beings, men, and gods, for the welfare and pleasure of numerous people.[B5]

[**List 5:** *Mmk* 1.6.13–22]

general

- the rituals of the great beings (i.e., of *bodhisattvas*)
- means of attainment
- the performance of rites of malediction, pacification, and increase
- attending to the *mantra* rites (known through the *tantras*, etc.)

preliminary

- preparing the *maṇḍala* for the initiation ceremony
- initiation into esoteric *mantras* and *mudrās*

ordinary attainment

- long life
- good health
- power

- awakening virtues in oneself
- causing joy in other people
- causing sages to:
  wander about on foot
  traverse the sky
  disappear
- power of attraction
- entrance into the underworld
- attaction of all spirits, *piśācas*, *kiṃkaras*, violent male and female *yakṣas*
- cessation of aging and maintenance of youth
- [acquisition] of royal lands

extraordinary attainment

- production of and establishment in enlightenment
- complete attainment of all the goals of a *bodhisattva*

universality

- complete fulfillment and joy in all of one's endeavors
- the complete fulfillment of every wish of every individual in the past, present, and future

Although there is a good deal of overlap in these five lists, each one has a particular emphasis. List 1 is the most general, referring to the broadest features of the *mantracaryā*. In addition, it states the mechanism believed to be operating behind the *mantracaryā*: *vikurvaṇa*, the miraculous transformation of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*. List 2 refers to the functions of the *mantracaryā*. These can be organized under the two categories provided by the text, ordinary and extraordinary attainment. As with all of the lists, Lists 1 and 2 include claims of universal application. List 3 can be organized sequentially, laying out the step by step process of the *mantracaryā*. Otherwise, the categories presented there involve, like lists 2–5, the preliminary stages, as well as general features, of the *mantracaryā*. Lists 4 and 5 combine information about the contents of the text with claims about the function of the rituals.

Taken as a whole, these five lists represent the index to the *Mmk*. This index has a double function. It presents the contents of the text in both general and specific terms, and reports on the results of its prescribed practice. Like a *śāstra,* the index thus presents, in summary form, *what should be done* and *what may be expected*. The basis of the first of these is the authority