

oṃ vākyeda namaḥ:
Mañjuśrī's *mantra* and its uses

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INTRODUCTION

In chapter twenty-nine of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* (henceforth *Mmk*),¹ the Buddha entrusts to the *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī a *mantra* to be used in the dark days when the *dharma* is in decline. The *mantra* is *oṃ vākyeda namaḥ*. A pronounced feature of the type of Buddhism promoted in the *Mmk* is the insistence that Buddhist practice accommodate the multiple concerns, both worldly (*laukika*) and ultimate (*lokottara*), that presumably motivate the practitioner. So, here, too, the *mantra* is said to be particularly conducive to three matters of persistent concern in the text; namely, the acquisition of worldly knowledge (*dṛṣṭidharma*), the hindrance of unfortunate rebirths (*durgati*), and the attainment of awakening (*bodhi*). As Matthew Kapstein points out, the *mantra*, far from being merely a relic of Buddhism's past, "is recited to this day in Tibet, particularly by those wishing to gain the boon of Mañjuśrī's wisdom as an aid to study."²

After revealing the *mantra*, the Buddha gives instructions on rituals to be performed at a *caitya* containing relics. In fact, the recitation of a *mantra* (*mantrajapa*) in the *Mmk* is invariably but one element within a larger ritual complex. This complex includes an extended period of preparatory practice (*pūrvaseva* or *puraścaraṇa*), the construction and employment of a painted icon (*paṭa*), and knowledge of the forces of awakening operating in the universe. I will include discussion of these elements in notes to the translation of the text, which I now present.

TRANSLATION

Cosmological setting

Now, the blessed Śākyamuni looked down again on the palace of the *śuddhāvāsa* heaven and spoke to the princely Mañjuśrī.³ "This instruction on a ritual employing the painted icon (*paṭa*) is the seventh chapter [*sic*] in your ritual ordinance, Mañjuśrī. Whoever, at this time, in this period at the end of the eon,⁴ will practice it, success for that person will certainly be unailing, fruitful, happiness will arise, happiness will ripen. Success will arise concerning worldly knowledge, leading to the hindrance of all unfortunate rebirths, and leading always to his attainment of awakening.

Bestowal of the mantra

Then, the blessed Śākyamuni spoke the *hṛdaya*⁵ of the princely Mañjuśrī.

Possessing six syllables, by nature releasing one
from the six unfortunate rebirths,
equal to incomparable, inconceivably great power.
Releasing one from the binding fetters of existence,
the tumultuous ocean of every form of existence,
the pain of the three sufferings.

Unbearable for all demons,
an anointment for the entire world.
Invincible against all demons,
completely purifying the path of becoming.

Establishing the teachings of the *buddhas*,
hindering all obstacles,
applauded by all *buddhas*,
accomplishing every kind of good fortune.
Superior among all *mantras*
in the teaching of Mañjughoṣa.

Which *mantra* is that? It is *oṃ vākyeda namaḥ*.

The preliminary practice

He who subsists on begged alms, greens, and grains, makes the ablution at the three appointed times, and wears the triple robe should recite the syllables one hundred thousand times. He becomes one who has done the preliminary practice.⁶

The paṭa

Then, on a canvas with the outermost fringes left uncut, the noble Mañjuśrī should be painted by an artist who observes the twice monthly fast. [Mañjuśrī] is situated in the lotus posture teaching the *dharma*. [Mañjuśrī] is adorned with all of the ornaments, possessing the form of a prince, his outer garment loosened. To his left is the noble Avalokiteśvara, holding a lotus in his hand. On his right is the noble Samantrabhadra, who is holding a plume. Above him should be drawn two *mālādharas* and two *vidyādharas* coming out of the clouds.⁷ Below him is the practitioner (*sādhaka*) holding in his hand an incense vessel. Mountain peaks should be painted all around. At the foot of these are lotus lakes.⁸

The rituals

At a *caitya* that contains relics, [the practitioner] sets up the *paṭa* facing east and performs the exalted worship. Lighting lamps of ghee, he consecrates with *mantras* one thousand and eight flowers of excellent quality one by one. He should throw these at Mañjuśrī's face. He hears the sound of an extremely deep *hum*. The *paṭa* trembles. By means of the *hum* sound he becomes a king possessing sovereignty over the entire world. When the *paṭa* trembles, he becomes the superior disputant in all disputations, possessed of knowledge of a single treatise comprising the entire world. Now this is not to be effected; he becomes one who is capable of performing all rituals. This is the first practice.

Throughout the night, he should make oblations of *oilbanum* oil smeared on *khadira* wood charcoal pieces that have been fumigated by aloa wood sticks measuring a half finger's length. At dawn, he sees the noble Mañjuśrī. [Mañjuśrī] grants him a boon, as [the practitioner] wishes, other than one associated with desire.

Burning sandalwood incense continually before the *paṭa*, he should perform recitation (*japa*) throughout the night. Then [at the end of the night], Mañjuśrī comes into his presence and teaches the profound *dharma*. [The practitioner] worships him; and, having worshipped him, becomes one who is completely free of, and has power over, illness.

After making a lotus flower ornament out of red sandalwood, mixing together six *angula* long flower stems and red sandalwood, making one thousand *mantra* consecrations concurrently with one thousand oblations, and placing these on a lotus leaf in front of the *paṭa* on a full moon day, he should, enclosing this in his hand, perform *japa* for as long as [the oblation] burns.

In grasping [the *paṭa*], he assumes the form of a sixteen year old, shining in golden resplendence, his glow surpassing that of the sun's, a *deva* prince. Bowing to all the *vidyādhara*s, he lives for a great eon. And, on the dissolution of his body, he is reborn in Abhirati.

Gathering white *vacā* herbs during a lunar eclipse and cleansing them with the five products of the cow, he wraps them in fig leaves. He should perform *japa* until it heats up, emits smoke, and burns brightly. He becomes capable of subjecting all people, one who is triumphant in all verbal disputations. As the smoke is rising, he becomes invisible. He lives for thirty thousand years. Radiating, he moves through space, living for a great eon.

Acquiring some ghee from brown, calf-like cows, he sets up a copper vessel with seven fig leaves. He should perform *japa* until, in this manner, he becomes one who has realized the triple knowledge (*trividhā*). Abounding in that, he becomes in this manner one who moves invisibly through space, retaining the transmitted teachings.

Throwing a flower seed in the face [of the *paṭa*], he should perform *japa* when the moon is eclipsed until [the *paṭa*] is made to quiver. Having wrapped it with the three types of metal and cast it at the face, he becomes one who is rendered invisible. When [the *mantra*] has been uttered, he is made visible [again].

Casting clove incense at the face, he should recite the *mantra* six hundred thousand times. He becomes one who subjugates the husband of Yamāla. He who subsists on milk and barley should recite the *mantra* one hundred thousand times. He becomes a *vidyādhara*. He who subsists on alms, the sage of the woods, should recite the *mantra* one hundred thousand times. He becomes one who attains invisibility. He should recite the *mantra* ten million times. Then Mañjuśrī teaches him the *dharma*. He becomes a *bodhisattva*, one who is living his final existence. Through continual recitation of the *mantra* he becomes one who is exalted in all matters.

Having made an image and covered it with all kinds of fragrances, he offers an oblation. In seven nights, he becomes capable of subduing others at will. He should offer one hundred thousand balls of fragrant resin, each measuring the weight of a jujube fruit kernel, coated with ghee. He obtains a hundred thousand gold coins.

Crossing a river, the seafarer should offer one hundred thousand lotuses. He sees a great treasure equal in value to an abundance of lotuses. He can not perish. [The practitioner] should offer one thousand and eight white mustard seeds coated with saffron. He becomes a ruler, capable of subduing others at will. He should offer one hundred thousand sesame seeds coated with thickened milk, honey, and ghee. He becomes a great, beneficent, householder.

Erecting a small platform with unclaimed refuse, and covering it with scattered flowers, he should recite the *mantra* one hundred and eight times. Then, he should recite a book of the good teaching. Within a month, he becomes one possessed of superior intelligence. Having made one hundred and eight measurements of yellow pigment, he should fashion a mark on his forehead. He becomes one who is dear to all people. Having made a crown consecrated with seven recitations of the *mantra*, unassailable among all people. He should offer a garland of *kiri* ten thousand times. He becomes one who is freed from every disease.

Day after day, he should perform *japa* seven times. He expiates with certainty that which is known as *karma*. Then, with one hundred and eight recitations of the *mantra*, at the time of death, he sees the noble Mañjuśrī, completely, face to face.

¹ The printed text that forms the basis of this article was prepared by T. Gaṇapati Śāstrī on the basis of the single known manuscript of the work, discovered near Padmanabhapuram, in South India, in 1909. Śāstrī's work 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 version 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.

See further: Y. Matsunaga, "On the Date of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*," in *Tantric and Taoist Studies in Honour of R.A. Stein*, M. Strickmann (ed.), vol. 3, in vol. 22 of *Mélanges Chinois et Bouddhiques*, Brussels (1985): 882-894; G. Wallis, *Mediating the Power of Buddhas: Ritual in the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, Albany, 2002.

² Matthew Kapstein, "Weaving the World: the Ritual Art of the *pata* in Pala Buddhism and its Legacy in Tibet." *History of Religions*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1995):241-262.

³ Virtually every chapter of the *Mmk* opens with a scene common to medieval Indian ritual works. Whether Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, or Buddhist, such works are typically framed by a cosmological setting. The *Mmk* thus begins with the *suddhāvāsa devapūtras* asking Śākyamuni — who is situated in the sky above the *devapūtras* — to speak on various matters pertaining to awakening. This setting serves two principle, related ends. First, it is a rhetorical strategy legitimizing the teachings that constitute the work; second, it provides the basis for imagining (or viewing) and

knowing the universal grounds on which the ritual activity rests. A basic assumption of the *Mmk* is that the power of its rituals is limited by the practitioner's mental darkness concerning this understanding. It is thus one of the functions of the text to disclose to the practitioner the required knowledge. Only when this knowledge is acquired can the elements of cultic practice successfully mediate enlightened power, and thereby transform the practitioner into a being of power himself. "Cultic practice," then, clearly includes within its scope a wide range of activities not normally contained in that term. In the *Mmk*, an essential practice that presupposes cultic performance *per se* is that of properly conceptualizing the space that serves as the matrix of the *mantracaryā*. Significantly, the *Mmk* discloses this space at the very outset. In so doing, the text is arguing that the very foundation of its ritual course is the structure of the cosmos itself. This is the meaning of the lexically complex term *dharma*. The *dharma* (teaching) is the *dharma* (correct, proper) because of the *dharma* (the way things are). The *Mmk*'s teaching is what it is because the cosmos — transfigured by the light of the *buddhas* — is integral to each of its elements. The opening scene of the *Mmk* evokes for the reader the proper vision of the cosmos.

Homage to all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*! Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was dwelling in the vault of sky above the *śuddhāvāsa* heaven, in the pavilion of the assembly of inconceivably, miraculously, wondrously distributed *bodhisattvas*. There, the Blessed One spoke to the *devaputras*, the inhabitants of the *śuddhāvāsa*. "Hear, O *devaputras*, about that on which all beings depend: the inconceivable, wondrous, miraculous transformation of the *bodhisattva*, the [use of the] *maṇḍala* for superior liberation, purity, contemplation, proper conduct; [hear about] the *mantras* of that great being, the princely *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī, which completely fulfill one's wishes for power, health and long life. Listen to that and bear it well in mind. I will speak to you."

Then, with hands folded in salutation, those *devaputras* dwelling in the *śuddhāvāsa* heaven [requested to be taught]: "Out of compassion for us and for all beings, may the Blessed One, whose mind is benevolent and well-disposed, speak about that."

Then, the blessed Śākyamuni, looking down upon the entire dwelling of the *śuddhāvāsa*, entered into a state of concentration called *destroying through the dispersion of light into the purified sphere of activity*. Immediately upon entering into this state, the Blessed One [issued forth] a ray of light called impelling the *bodhisattva* in Saḥkusumita. Seeing the brilliant white light, and smiling slightly, he spoke to the group of *bodhisattvas*: "This, O sons of the conqueror, is my impelling of the light. Come here. Prepare yourselves."

The opening passage of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* heralds the dispersion of an enlightening power into the world. The emergence of this power is signified by the ray of light emanating from the Buddha. This light is a sign from the Buddha to particular celestial and earthly beings that he is going to teach about "that upon which all beings depend" for their worldly happiness and ultimate liberation. It is also an impelling force causing this host of beings to assemble in his presence. Once they have heard the teaching, this assembly will disperse again to the earthly and celestial regions of the world to serve that teaching — it is for this that they must "prepare" themselves. The ray of light, and the Buddha's smile, is thus a sign that the Buddha has turned his thoughts to our world, "out of compassion for all beings," and will now act to lay the groundwork of a universally applicable teaching: the *mantracaryā* of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.

⁴ At *Mmk* 7.73.7-18 is a fuller account of "this period at the end of the eon."

In the future, when the teacher of the world passes away, when the sun lineage of the *tathāgata* disappears, when every Buddha-field is abandoned by all *bodhisattvas*, noble hearers and solitary *buddhas*; when the receptacle of the world becomes darkened; when the path of the noble ones is severed; when all jewels, gems, *mantras*, medicines and knowledge are lost. When, devoid of good people, beings in the world are deprived of light, they will become lazy, desirous of destruction, faithless, divided, surrounded by bad friends, deceitful, deluded, of fraudulent conduct. Hearing this discourse on the teaching, these will be seized by fear. Those who delight in sloth and indolence will not have faith; those seeking pleasure, rejoicing in false doctrines, will not exert themselves. These will produce much non-virtue, those who discard the true teaching, who descend to the *avīci* hell, go from terror to greater terror. For the sake of those who are afflicted, subjugating the unsubjugated, in order to give safety to the meek, by means of complete skillfulness in means, O Blessed One, speak about the rules for the painted cloth icon and *mantras*, if you think the time is right.

This passage can be interpreted in several ways. First, the language of the passage is apocalyptic. The images employed are dramatic, conveying a sense of imminent devastation. It is tempting to claim that something of the social context of the *Mmk* is coming through here. Such language suggests an environment in which a community's established social patterns are being threatened. Chaos and loss might be detected in the first half of the passage in particular. Less

drastically, the passage could point to a competitive environment, in which various groups are vying to win adherents and patrons. The apparent fact that the content and style of the Buddhist literature of this period (i.e., from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries) increasingly converged with that of the non-Buddhist sects, such as the Vaiṣṇava Pañcarātrins, might corroborate this suggestion. Unfortunately, too little is known about the date and provenance of the various portions of the *Mmk* to warrant decisive claims about the social conditions surrounding the work. We can more cautiously consider the rhetorical value of this passage. The form of Buddhist practice prescribed in the *Mmk* is not dependent on the monastic communities. The *sādhaka* is a solitary practitioner, whether monk or layman. As an *ācārya*, he may teach certain rituals to individual lay people. Other than the initiation rite, there is no indication of communal practice in the *Mmk*. The ability to access the power of the Buddha requires secretive, extra-monastic forms of training and induction. Thus, as opposed to institutional forms of Buddhism, the practice of the *Mmk* is private, lay, and esoteric. In light of this, we might interpret the "[severed] path of the noble ones" as referring not to encroaching Hindu sects, but to the erroneous systems of the Buddhist monastic establishment. It is the monks who have become "lazy, desirous of destruction, faithless, divided, surrounded by bad friends, deceitful, deluded, of fraudulent conduct. . . engaged in sloth and indolence. . . seeking pleasure, rejoicing in false doctrines." Resisting the innovations of the *Mmk*, the establishment monks "produce much non-virtue [and] discard the true teaching." Whether "the true teaching" of the *Mmk* is being contrasted to non-Buddhist or Buddhist practices, the text is proclaiming the advent of an extraordinary era when traditional practices will have lost their potency. The simplified *mantracaryā* of the *Mmk* as a whole refines and restructures the universal teaching of the *buddhas* in the same manner that *Mmk* 7 does for the specific teaching on the cult object. The above passage can thus be read as pointing to the *Mmk's* tendency toward innovative synthesis. Matthew Kapstein (*op. cit.*) sees in such a tendency a central feature of esoteric Buddhism. He writes of an "apparently paradoxical dimension of esoteric Buddhist doctrine"

which always claims that, as the world-age steadily degenerates, ever more efficacious means are revealed in the tantras. Though this no doubt served as a rationale for the introduction and gradual acceptance of new tantras and tantric techniques, it may without much interpretive violence be taken to mean that as [the] world becomes a messier place, so that the large-scale order of the Buddhist monastic community can no longer be well maintained, the local, ephemeral and often personal order engendered by high-powered techniques of ritual and yoga perforce become the primary points at which enlightened activity may enter the world.

See also, R. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*, New York, 2002.

⁵ At *Mmk* 2.25.10, there is reference to Mañjuśrī's "class of *mantras*." This comment is followed by a compendium of the *mantras* used in the *Mmk* rituals. The first group comprises *hṛdaya mantras*. Examples of this type are also given at *Mmk* 1.2.20-22, 27-3.9. This section mentions three classes of *hṛdaya mantra*, namely, the *hṛdaya*, *paramahṛdaya*, and *upahṛdaya*. Capturing as it does the "heart or essence (*hṛdaya*)" of a being, a *hṛdaya mantra* functions in the *Mmk* primarily to lead the practitioner into the presence of the being or force that is being invoked by the *mantra*.

⁶ The idea that successful ritual performance requires both stringent preparation and continual practice is a commonplace, if often implicit, feature of medieval Indian ritual literature. Throughout the manuals, the simplest ritual gestures are shown to require a considerable groundwork of training and instruction if they are to be effective. From initiation into a cult to its mastery, the practitioner is instructed in a series of interlocking conceptual and technique oriented practices that aim simultaneously to lead him into the vision of life postulated by the community, and to mold him into an ideal type of person. The scope of this ideal is indicated by the term for practitioner in this literature, *sādhaka* — one who is able to effect the power of ritual practices and thereby accomplish his, or his benefactors', ends. The term *puraścaraṇa* specifically refers to a series of ritualized activities. Though activities vary from such sect to sect, they generally include such practices as prolonged *mantra* recitation (*jāpa*), ablutions (*snāna*), oblations (*homa*), meditation (*dhyāna*), worship (*pūjā*), and alms begging (*bhikṣā*). These practices are carried out under a vow (*vrata*) during an extended period of training. The execution of the *puraścaraṇa* follows formal initiation into a cult, but

precedes the performance of advanced ritual practice; hence, it is literally a preliminary (*puraś*) practice (*carāṇa*).⁶ The purpose of the *puraścarāṇa* is precisely to acquire the expertise deemed necessary for successful practice of advanced rituals (*uttamasādhana*) that are prescribed by a given community. The term is used by both Buddhist and Hindu groups in medieval India. One common characteristic of the diverse groups that fall under these monikers lay in their ritual programs. All placed great emphasis on elements that are generally considered emblematic of a tantric milieu. That is, emphasis was placed on the prerequisite of initiation (*abhiṣeka* or *dikṣa*) by a qualified *guru*, the employment of two or three-dimensional diagrams (*maṇḍala* or *yantra*) in several categories of rituals — appeasement, possession, attraction, fixation, hostility, destruction, and death — the use of sculpted (*pratimā*) or painted (*paṭa*) images of deities and revered beings in devotional rituals, and the implementation of hand-gestures (*mudrā*) in “sealing” the efficacy established by means of practice. Of paramount importance to these groups’ ritual programs, furthermore, is the generative linguistic instrument known as *mantra*. The central role played by the *mantra* in such groups during this period is reflected in the indigenous terms *mantraśāstra*, *mantracaryā*, and *mantrayāna* as synonymous with both the texts and practices of *tantra*.

See further: H. Brunner, “Le *sādhaka*, personnage oblié du Śivaïsme du sud,” in *Journal asiatique* 263 (1975): 411-443.

⁷ See J. Pryzluski, “Les Vidyārāja, contribution a l’histoire de la magie dans les sects Mahāyanistes,” *Bulletin de l’École française d’Extrême Orient* XXIII (1923): 301-318; P. Pranke, “Becoming a Buddhist Wizard,” in D. Lopez (ed.), *Buddhism in Practice*, Princeton (1995): 343-358; R. Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism: A Social History of the Tantric Movement*, New York, 2002.

⁸ As the verbal root $\sqrt{paṭ}$ (“to string together, wrap”) implies, a *paṭa* is first of all a piece of cloth formed from raw cotton. The noun *paṭa* thus generally denotes a type of woven cloth used for things such as clothing, screens and, as in

the *Mmk*, canvases for painting. The *paṭa*, or cult image, is presented in the *Mmk* as being of a single piece with the cosmological image discussed above. The *paṭa* is thus the area where the Buddha's power manifests in local, concentrated form. In this function, the cult image is held to be a refractive space, reflecting the original domain of awakened power. Thus, the original, cosmic domain is rendered ever-present and always available. As mentioned in note 5, a presupposition operating in the *Mmk* is that the darkness of human ignorance obscures this presence and availability. The text remedies this situation by revealing to the practitioner the means by which the Buddha's cosmic assembly may be literally woven into a lively image of tremendous force.

The *Mmk* organizes its presentation of the cult image in terms of three stages undergone by the *paṭa*. These three stages point to the basic senses of the term as well: canvas, painted image, and animated cult object. Discussing the historical, iconoclastic notion of "icon" (which I am calling "cult image" and "cult object" as more specific terms) as "idol," i.e., as an inherently ineffectual artifact composed of "base matter," Matthew Kapstein offers a helpful insight into this creative process. Kapstein's comments are particularly pertinent here since they are made in regard to what he calls the "world-constructing enterprise" of *paṭa* creation specifically in the *Mmk*. Kapstein writes (*op. cit*):

In consideration of what is yet unformed, and thus in a crucial sense empty, the construction of value emphatically appears as a matter of intentional practice by human agents within human communities. The art of esoteric Buddhism is appropriate subject matter for our reflections about this, for esoteric Buddhism . . . seems always to accentuate the constructedness of human values, with particular attentiveness to the unformed character of the stuff from which those values are constructed, and to the requirement that they be reconstituted continuously in a world of ongoing change.

Long before any image is depicted on the blank canvas, the *paṭa* is a repository of a complex vision of the world. As the initial space to be fashioned and imprinted with the emblems of the specific value system propagated through the *Mmk*, the raw cotton *paṭa* is the first step in what Kapstein aptly calls "world-building, in its physical, symbolic, and conceptual dimensions."⁵

The second stage of the *paṭa* involves the painting of an image on the canvas. The common usage of the term *paṭa* is, in fact, to denote a picture painted on canvas. This applies as well to its cultural and etymological varieties, such as Hindi *pat*, Nepali *paubhā*, Bengali *paṭua*, Tibetan *thangka*, Chinese and Japanese hanging scrolls (Chinese, *zi-thang*), Korean *tangwa*. As the English equivalent to these terms, "painting," might seem to warrant, the *paṭa* is thus typically discussed within the purview of "painting" or "sacred art." The example of the *Mmk*, however, does not warrant the equation of *paṭa* with "painting." The text does not distinguish between painted image (painting, sacred art) and cult object (icon, relic) categorically. The text is emphatic on this point: what obtains for the whole applies to each minute part. Kapstein alludes to this fact when he mentions the necessity of continuous, repetitive value creation within a single process. In the *Mmk*, a speck of raw cotton, a brilliant image, and a consecrated object are but overlapping moments in a unitary field. The Western idea of "painting," of a work of art, does not allow for this unity.

In his *Bild und Kult* (Munich, 1990), Hans Belting notes the historical shift that gave rise to the notion of "art."

A history of the image is something other than a history of art. But what does this mean? In its general usage, the term "image" encompasses everything and nothing, as does the term "art." Therefore, let it be said at the outset that by the term "image" . . . is to be understood primarily the figurative depiction, the *imago*. The *imago* presents a person, and, therefore, is treated as a person. In this sense, the *imago* became the preferred object of religious practice. In this regard it was honored as a cult object, and distinguished from the narrative image, or *historia*, which placed before the observer -- who simultaneously read a corresponding text -- the sacred history.

"Art" . . . presupposes the crises of the ancient image and its new valorization as art work in the Renaissance. . . While the old type of images were destroyed during the phase of iconoclasm, images of the new type were appearing in art collections. From that point on, it becomes possible to speak of an *epoch of art* [in distinction to the previous "*epoch of the image*"] (p. 9).

Although *paṭas*, *thangkas*, hanging scrolls, etc., now appear in art collections around the world, their intended use and function (past and present) are best perceived when they are viewed as images, in the sense of *imago* — animated presentations.

As a visual presentation, the *paṭa* of the *Mmk* serves several purposes. By its specific use of color and figurative expression and form it communicates to the practitioner the attitude required of him toward both the parts and the whole. In the largest *paṭa*, for example, Mañjuśrī is painted a soft, muted red, his expression gentle; Yamṣntaka is dark and ferocious-looking; the whole is backgrounded by a calming, deep blue sky with soft, billowing white clouds. These features instill an attitude of reverence; and they are instructive of the appropriateness of that attitude. In fact, the practitioner himself is depicted in the *paṭa* reverentially making an offering to the assembly, stressing this didactic feature.

This depiction points to an additional purpose of the visual form. Belting mentions the *historia*, the narrative image of the "sacred history," and distinguishes this from the *imago*, the image as cult object. In the *Mmk*, the presentation of the "sacred history" is an aspect indistinguishable from the cult object *per se*. As *historia*, the *paṭa* presents a vital moment in the *Mmk's* history. It does this in both senses of the term "present." As an image it makes present to the imagination of the practitioner the scene of a primordial event in both the history of the Buddha's teaching and the history of salvation. In this way, it serves as a catalyst to an imaginative remembrance of that pivotal moment. As an image, then, the cult object is a refractive space. But what it reflects is a *real* domain of power, one that is conceived as being fluid, unbound by time and space, and thus unfolding continuously. In this way, the cult object transforms the imagination "into a spiritual organ of making present." While it is itself a form of imaginative experience, it is one whose primary function is to make present an otherwise obscured reality.

The image, then, does not serve merely as an instrument of communal memory. The scene presented on the *paṭa* is of the continuous unfolding in the present of a past event. We might consider this past as having occurred in "mythic" space and time, or as being "sacred history," if these terms are meant to refer to the fact that all traditions creatively interpret and use "history," statically conceived. In any case, the image on the *paṭa* merges this past with the present. The *sādhaka*, as mentioned above, is to be painted in a gesture of worship on the *paṭa* itself, thereby situating him within the history of revelation. Furthermore, external to the painting, in a bodily act of devotion or ritualized

coercion, he contemplates the image of revealed power presented by means of the *paṭa*. This points to both a highly synchronic conception of past and present, and to the immediacy of mundane and transcendent space.

With this idea of the merging of past and present events by means of the image, the notion of the *paṭa* as an instrument of liveliness and efficacy is introduced. The interpretive translation of the term *paṭa* as "animated cult image" is useful in this respect. Through correct ritualized production, the *paṭa* becomes permeated by the power of the Buddha. As such, the *paṭa* was believed to possess miracle-producing properties often associated with *buddhas*. For example, proper ritual employment of the *paṭa* enabled the adept to traverse great distances of space rapidly, overcome the force of time, heal sickness, produce food during a famine, and converse with gods and enlightened beings. Most importantly perhaps, it assured the practitioner of the attainment of buddhahood. Throughout the history of Buddhist cultic life, other objects have played this role. Relics, statues, architectural monuments, books, remembrance, and visualization have, at various times and in various places, been believed to render present the otherwise inaccessible power that accompanies a living Buddha.

See further: M. Lalou, *Iconographie des Étoffes Peintes (Paṭa) dans le Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, Paris, 1930; A. MacDonald, *Le Mandala du Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, Paris, 1962; M-T., de Mallmann, *Étude iconographique sur Mañjuśrī*, Paris, 1964; V. Mair, *Painting and Performance: Chinese Picture Recitation and Its Indian Genesis*, Honolulu, 1988; Matthew Kapstein, "Weaving the World: the Ritual Art of the *pata* in Pala Buddhism and its Legacy in Tibet." *History of Religions*, vol. 34, no. 3 (1995):241-262; G. Wallis, *Mediating the Power of Buddhas: Ritual in the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, Albany, 2002.