

Later Mahāyāna References to Book Worship

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¹This paper is an exploration of references to book worship in later Mahāyāna literature, broadly after the eighth century. It will consider how textual prescriptions within Mahāyāna sūtra literature may have matured into actual practice. Such references will demonstrate how Mahāyāna sūtras were gradually incorporated into a tantric ritual practice, with the *Prajñāpāramitā* at the fore, and saw inclusion into maṇḍalas used in poṣadha rites.

Introduction

Much of what we know about pre-modern Mahāyāna book worship in South Asia is informed by self-referential passages within the sūtras that are themselves being worshipped. Such passages include encouragement to practice and propagate the text, to turn it into a book, to preserve it, and elaborate ritual scenarios.² While it is difficult to infer how these textual prescriptions manifested in actual practice, roughly from the eighth century and onwards, later Mahāyāna literature (which for the sake of this paper is characterised as tantricised Mahāyāna in contrast to pre-tantricised Mahāyāna) begins to give us a picture of how those prescriptions may have matured into actual practice (or were continuations of practices which had, in fact, been engaged in from an early period—for which the evidence we have is largely limited to sūtra literature). These references also allow us to see how the sūtra literature gradually appears to have been incorporated into a tantric worldview. In this brief overview, we shall see that despite the rise in the importance of tantrism, the exoteric Mahāyāna literature always plays a role in broader Mahāyāna Buddhism (within which we may include the Vajrayāna). We shall also demonstrate that within that

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² For a brief overview, see O'Neill, Alexander James, "Self-Reverential Passages in Mahāyāna Sutra Literature," *Pacific World* 1 (2020): 41–57.

development, the apparent prioritization of the *Prajñāpāramitā* (in its various forms) as the foremost sūtra ritually.

In exploring this period of development, which as a survey by no means aims to be exhaustive, we shall begin by looking at some of these later Mahāyāna sources in chronological order, where we shall gradually observe an increasing inclusion of tantric elements in the worship of sūtras otherwise not present in the earlier sūtra literature. We shall proceed with an exploration of the more mature discussions of the worship in manuals from the 10th century onwards. These include ādikarma, or preliminary/foundational, ritual texts, where developments make it apparent that sūtra literature is beginning to be conceived of as suited for use in a maṇḍala. It is particularly in the ritual literature of the poṣadha rites (which involve the ritual observance of ten precepts on holy days) that we see the development of the conception of Mahāyāna sūtras as constituting a maṇḍala with the *Prajñāpāramitā* as the central point.

Susiddhikārasūtra

In the context of general rules for worship for a tantric adept, the *Susiddhikārasūtra*,³ which was transmitted to China in roughly the eighth century, suggests that while one is anticipating the results of invoking a deity, one should “always recite three times [daily] the Mahāyāna *Prajñā*[*pāramitā*] and other sūtras, make caityas, and paint maṇḍalas.”⁴ It appears that by at least the time of the composition of the *Susiddhikāra*, around the late the seventh century,⁵ the *Prajñāpāramitā* was being viewed as, if not the most important of the exoteric Mahāyāna scriptures, then the head of a set of important Mahāyāna scriptures. What is implied by “and other sūtras” (等經) may be related to a set, headed by the *Prajñāpāramitā*, which we shall discuss in further detail later. What this also tells us, first and foremost, is that even in the context of esoteric rites and rituals, the recitation of exoteric scriptures is still considered effective—in fact, it is suggested in the context of expecting the results of one’s supplication of a deity. The recitation of sūtras, in particular, the *Prajñāpāramitā*, appears to have some bearing upon the efficacy of tantric ritual—at least at the early phase of the *Susiddhikāra*.

Another important reference to sūtra recitation in the *Susiddhikāra* is given in the context of rites for the retrieval of ritual articles that have been stolen. In such a situation, the tantric adept is

³ 蘇悉地羯羅經 (T18.893).

⁴ T18.893.618c29–619a1. 三時常讀大乘般若等經。及作制多。塗漫荼羅。

⁵ On the dating of this text, see Kotyk, Jeffrey, “Early Tantric Hemerology in Chinese Buddhism: Timing of Rituals According to Subhakarasiṃha and Yixing,” *Canadian Journal of Buddhist Studies* 13 (2013): 1–29, 6.

instructed to create a maṇḍala and perform various auxiliary rites to ensure that the stolen item is retrieved, after which the adept must perform various additional rites in gratitude to one's deities. If, however, one is unsuccessful, additional rites are suggested including pilgrimage and "the turning reading of the *Mahāprajñā[pāramitā] Sūtra* seven or even one hundred times."⁶ Of note for understanding the manner in which these rites may have been performed is the wording 轉讀, literally "turning reading" (which may justifiably be translated simply as a form of recitation, but which I chose to render literally here), which is distinguished from 眞讀, or "true reading." According to Enomoto, the former can refer to a number of different practices such as the chanting of a sūtra (rather than reading for understanding), but also the recitation of the title of the text followed by turning the pages, or reciting lines from the beginning, middle, and end of the scripture. Moreover, "turning reading" almost exclusively refers to the ritual "recitation" of the *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Sūtra*.⁷ While this may hold true for the Sino-Japanese context, it is not clear to what extent such practices prevailed in India (although modern Newar practices exist of similar character),⁸ however the practicality of reading the *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā* thrice in one day (due to its length) make it apparent that the practice being referred to cannot correspond to the modern understanding of reading. As regards "true reading," it may also be a mistake that this refers to something other than another kind of ritualised reading. We may, rather, looking at the terms we usually find in self-referential passages and commentarial materials, have a difference between reading aloud for the purposes of recitation (pāṭha)⁹ and the reading aloud for the purposes of exposition (vāc).¹⁰ Internalisation, or more likely, memorisation, on the other hand, may very well be represented by the process indicated by the verb to bear (e.g. dhārayati).¹¹ Regardless, it appears

⁶ T18.893.632c22–23. 轉讀大般若經。經七遍或一百。

⁷ Enomoto, Eiichi, "Kyōten no Tendoku ni Tsuite," *Tōyōgaku Kenkyū* 27, 1992: 45–58.

⁸ Gellner, David N., "'The Perfection of Wisdom'—A Text and Its Uses in Kwā Bahā, Lalitpur," in *Change and Continuity in the Nepalese Culture of the Kathmandu Valley*, ed. Siegfried Lienhard, 223–40 (Turin: CESMEO, 1996).

⁹ Emmrich, Christoph A., "Emending perfection: Prescript, postscript, and practice in Newar Buddhist manuscript culture" in *Buddhist Manuscript Cultures: Knowledge, ritual, and art*, eds. Stephen C. Berkwitz, Julian Schober, and Claudia Brown, 140–156 (New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁰ Kim, Jinah, "Epilogue: Invoking a Goddess in a Book," in *Receptacle of the Sacred*, 271–286 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

¹¹ E.g. "pathitvā," Mikkyō Seiten Kenkyūkai, eds., "Advayavajrasaṅgraha—New Critical Edition with Japanese translation," *Taishō Daigaku Sōgō Bukkyō Kenkyūjō Nenpō* 10, 1988, 1–57, v. 25.

¹² E.g. "vācayitavyā," Wogihara, Unrai, ed., *Abhisamayālamkāraḥ Prajñāpāramitāvākyā: The Work of Haribhadra Together with the Text Commented On*, Tokyo: Sankibō Buddhist Bookstore, 1932 [1973], 41.

¹³ E.g. Wogihara, *Abhisamayālamkāraḥ Prajñāpāramitāvākyā*, 41. Haribhadra's understanding (p. 42) is "procuring by effectuating its arising from thought" (bhāvanāmayena pratipattāyā sampādanād), which, again being psychological

that some form of expedited ritual recitation was being practiced, or at least encouraged by the precursors to tantric Buddhists, in the seventh century in Indian Buddhism—but this may have precedents going back to the early Mahāyāna.

Considering, briefly, a later tantric text, the tenth or eleventh century *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra* suggests that the tantric practitioner of Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa's practices, should practice or accomplish (sādhayet) with a book of the *Prajñāpāramitā* among other requisites typical of a bhikṣu: "Thus he should accomplish with cloth shoes, a sacred thread, vestments, a parasol, and a book of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, a book of this tantra, and so forth."¹² The separation between sacred books and other objects indicates a distinction between objects which are to be used in rituals and books which are to be used in rituals—precisely how they are to be used, however, is not clear. Potentially an essentially expedited usage (i.e., probably more 轉讀 than 眞讀) may have been prioritised.

Śikṣāsamuccaya

The eighth century *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, or *Compendium of Trainings*, can probably be safely attributed to Śāntideva.¹³ The *Śikṣāsamuccaya* itself is characterised by Saitō as a compendium of quotations from 130 Mahāyāna-sūtras, around the theme of 27 basic verses, organised by theme into nineteen chapters. These themes are referred to as "vital points" (marmasthāna), summarised in verse as "[t]he sacrifice, for the sake of all living beings, of one's body, one's possessions, and one's merit acquired in all three times, and the protection, purification, and increase of those [three things, i.e., one's body, possessions, and merit]."¹⁴ The *Śikṣāsamuccaya* presents a variety of quotations from Mahāyāna sūtras to which we are no longer privy due to the ravages of time and fortune. This is

and not very practical, seems to mean "procuring the *Prajñāpāramitā* by having it arise in one's mind," i.e., perhaps, to "bear in mind."

¹² Mical, Wiesiek ed., "Appendix (half-critical, half-diplomatic ed.);" in *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantra*, on 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, version 2.25.2 (2019), <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh431.html>. evaṃ paṭapādukayajñopavitavastracchatraṃ ca prajñāpāramitāpustakatantrapustakādīn sādhayet, My thanks to Wiesiek Mical for pointing out the following: that *paṭapāduka* indicates ritually pure shoes, rather than clothing and shoes. This is in contrast to ritually impure leather shoes (*carmapādukā*), *paṭa* in this case likely refers to cloth such as wool or felt, as in "patakuti." The term also appears in the *Maiṅśūśrīyamūlakalpa* as part of two lists of things that are to be empowered, with it being associated with things to be worn on the body: evaṃ śūlacakraśaraśaktiprabhṛtayaḥ sarve praharaṇāḥ *paṭapādukadaṇḍakāṣṭhayañjñopavitādīni* parakalpaividhānena sādhayitavyāni | sarveṣāṃ trividhā siddhiḥ | [26.37] | Mical prepared this edition from the earliest available manuscripts, namely, *Ekallavīvanāmacaṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantram*, Royal Asiatic Society, London. Ref.: Cowell 46/31; *Ekallavīvanāmacaṇḍamahāroṣaṇatantram*, National Archives of Nepal, Kathmandu. Ref.: NGMPP 3/687, Reel no. A 994/4; *Caṇḍa-mahā-roṣaṇatantram*, University of Göttingen Library, Göttingen. Ref.: Bandurski Xc 14/43–45.

¹³ Saitō, Akira, "An Inquiry into the Relationship between the *Śikṣāsamuccaya* and the *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra*," *ITBK* 17, 2010, 17–24, and Akira Saitō, "Notes on the Interpretation of the *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvatāra* V.104–106," in *Gedenkschrift J.W. de Jong* edited by H.W. Bodewitz and M. Hara, International Institute for Buddhist Studies: Tokyo, 2004, 135–147.

¹⁴ Saitō, "Śāntideva," 395, insertions in original, translation by Saitō.

also done in the context of śāstric material by a well-known author, and thus it presents us with an ideal transition point from discussing sources regarding sūtra worship from the sūtric perspective, to sources discussing it from a śāstric perspective.

Firstly, in discussion upon the topic of self-protection (ātmabhāvarakṣā) in the sixth chapter, Śāntideva in his own voice suggests that:

Regarding diseases, apply medicine, water, and recite a mantra,
Or, one being composed, should offer forest-flowers to a caitya, an image, or to a
book of the True Dharma (saddharma).¹⁵

The apotropaic benefits of sūtra worship as claimed in the self-referential passages within the Mahāyāna sūtra literature were clearly, thus, accepted by practicing Mahāyānists in India in the eighth century. Moreover, we get a picture of how worship was done—albeit discussed in a brief and cursory manner relevant, in particular, to the removal of diseases. This tells us a number of things—one is that the worship of a sūtra in book form was considered as an alternative to offering to the physical body of a buddha (i.e. as buried in a caitya) and to an image of a buddha. Moreover, it is thus confirmable that sūtras were being set up for offering in the manner in which one would set up an image for offering. The question we may ask here is how far does such a setting go back—can we say that the passages in the early Mahāyāna literature were indicating that the same kind of worship was either done, or at least conceived of as ideally done by the early Mahāyānists? We also, however, see two somewhat different approaches to dealing with a problem. The usage of mantras is associated with applying medicine and water whereas the usage of a book is associated with worshipping other items, without mantras associated with such a practice. Could this suggest that in some way we have a distinction between the worship of sūtras and the recitation of mantras? Or could it indicate some kind of equivalence in efficacy between two kinds of practice?

Quoting the *Trisamayarāja Tantra*, which today is only available in Chinese,¹⁶ regarding how one can purify sins, Śāntideva suggests that one method involves sūtra literature,

Also, in the *Trisamayarāja*, the procedure (ācāra) for the opposition of sin is declared:
“Having closed the eyes, with one’s mind clinging to the buddhas and bodhisattvas,
he should recite the hundred syllable [mantra] eight thousand times. Having closed
the eyes, as he sees the buddhas and bodhisattvas he is sin deprived. Otherwise,

¹⁵ Mahoney, Richard, ed., *Śikṣasamuccaya of Śāntideva: Sanskrit text*, base ed., Cecil Bendall, base e-text, Jens Braarvig, Indica et Buddhica: Oxford, North Canterbury, 2003, chapter 7. vyādhiṣu bhaiṣajyam udakam cābhimantryopayojyam || vanakusumāni vā caitye pratimāyāṃ saddharmapustake vā samāhito nivedayet ||

¹⁶ 底哩三昧耶不動尊威怒王使者念誦法 (T.21.1200).

doing circumambulations around a caitya, he should recite eight thousand times, having placed one of the books of the True Dharma before the caitya-image. That is the rule (vidhi).¹⁷

While reliance upon the method of mantra recitation is not sufficient in and of itself—one must also have visions of the buddhas and bodhisattvas—one can be assured of the removal of sin, according to the *Trisamayāra* by the placement of a sūtra before a caitya following extensive circumambulation. In many ways, it appears that the power of sūtras allows the typical Mahāyāna practitioner a far easier method of practice than were to rely upon their own powers—somewhat reminiscent of the discussions of self-power and other-power in the Pure Land commentarial literature in China and Japan.

Furthermore, in chapter ten, on the perfection of energy (vīryapāramitā), in regard to applying effort in hearing the Dharma, Śāntideva quotes,

And here he makes a full recitation of the *Jātaka of the Great Sage Uttara*, and says, “Indeed, O Vimalateja, to the bodhisattva mahāsattvas who love the Dharma, who are dignified and respectful, the lord buddhas, even those who are in other world systems, show their faces and proclaim the Dharma. O Vimalateja, for the bodhisattva mahāsattvas who love the Dharma, Dharma treasures are deposited in the midst of mountains, caves, and trees; endless Dharma doors are in books which are in the palms of [their] hands. O Vimalateja, for the bodhisattvas who love the Dharma, deities resembling past buddhas provide for them the eloquence of the buddhas.¹⁸

Here we see another way in which sūtras manifest their power in the world—those who love the Dharma and teach it will see the buddhas. We also see a potential justification for the later revelation of scriptures—something which clearly was happening in the first millennium, and something which also became prominent in the Tibetan conception of the gter ma, or hidden treasure. While the idea of a gter ma finds precedent in stories about, for instance, Nāgārjuna’s recovery and dissemination of Mahāyāna sūtras from mountains or the world of the nāgas,¹⁹ it

¹⁷ Mahoney, *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, chapter 8. trisamayārāje 'pi pāpapatipakṣasamudācāra uktaḥ || akṣiṇi nimilya buddhabodhisatvālambanacittāḥ śatākṣaram aṣṭasahasraṃ japeṭ | nimilitākṣa eva buddhabodhisatvān paśyati vīgatapāpo bhavati | athavā caityaṃ pradakṣiṇikurvann aṣṭasahasraṃ japec caityapatrimāyāḥ saddharmapustakānāṃ caikatamaṃ puraḥkṛtyāyam eva vidhīr iti ||

¹⁸ Mahoney, *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, chapter 10. atra ca maharṣe uttarasya jātakam vistareṇa kṛtvāha | dharmakāmānāḥ hi | vimalatejaḥ | bodhisatvānāṃ mahāsatvānāṃ sagauravānāṃ sapratīśānāṃ anyalokadhātusthitā api buddhā bhagavanto mukham upadarśayanti dharmam cānuśravayanti | dharmakāmānāḥ | vimalatejaḥ | bodhisatvānāṃ mahāsatvānāṃ parvatākandaravṛkṣasamadhyeṣu dharmanidhānāni nikṣiptāni | dharmamukhāny annantāni pustakagatāni karatalagatāni bhavanti | dharmakāmānāḥ vimalatejaḥ bodhisatvānāṃ pūrvabuddhadarśīnyo devatā buddhapratibhānam upasaṃharanti ||

¹⁹ E.g. T50.2047.184b–c.

appears to have developed more fully in Tibet around the cult of Padmasambhava, who was believed to have buried countless treasure texts.²⁰ This passage presents a similar picture in the Indian context. Moreover, just as we saw in sūtric references the manner in which buddhas or deities are said to benefit the worshipper or upholder of a Mahāyāna scripture, here we see the presentation of sūtras by buddhas as a kind of act of gratitude for bodhisattvas' love—something which may not completely make sense within the logic of the self-less, but tiered, conception of compassionate aiding of beings in the Mahāyāna buddhology.

Finally, in chapter seventeen, on worshipping (vandana), Śāntideva suggests that one can obtain merit from seeing even an image of the Buddha: which also applies to manuscript illuminations,

For it is said in the noble *Śraddhābalādhānāvātāramudrā Sūtra*, “O Mañjuśrī, whatever son of good family or daughter of good family should give hundreds of tastes, food, and divine vestments daily to pratyekabuddhas equal to the dusts of all world systems, and who thus giving should give for aeons equal to the sands of the River Ganges, and another son of good family or daughter of good family who should see a buddha, either painted in a painting or illuminated in a book: that [latter] one brings forth innumerable more merit. What more to say of him who should hold forth his hands in añjali, or should give a flower, or should give incense, or scents, or lamps? Such a one indeed brings forth innumerable more merit.”²¹

While all of these cases have been self-referential passages in sūtra literature, that Śāntideva quotes them in the context of his own recommendations regarding practice indicates that they were conceived of as living suggestions for contemporary practitioners and it is safe to therefore assume that they were either carried out, or idealised as being carried out. While it has been thoroughly established that Mahāyāna sūtra books were conceived of as having divine power, it should also be emphasised that a similar thesis could be written about the buddha image. That the power conceived of as presiding in a buddha image is said to also function in the case of illuminations in manuscripts may give us some idea about the reason why these images were painted into manuscripts in the first place.

²⁰ Lewis Doney, “Padmasambhava in Tibetan Buddhism,” in *Brill's Encyclopedia of Buddhism, Volume II: Lives*, edited by Jonathan A. Silk, Leiden: Brill, 2019, 1197–1212, 1199.

²¹ Mahoney, *Śikṣāsamuccaya*, chapter 17, uktaṃ hy āryaśraddhābalādhānāvātāramudrāsūtre | yaḥ kaścīn mañjuśrīḥ kulaputraḥ kuladuhitā vā sarvalokadhāturaḥ jopamānāṃ pratyekabuddhānāṃ dīne dīne śatarasam āhāraṃ dadyāt divyāni ca vastrāṇi | evaṃ dadad gaṅgānadivālukopamān kalpān dadyāt | yaś cānyo mañjuśrīḥ kulaputraḥ kuladuhitā vā citrakarmalikhitaṃ vā pustakakarmakṛtaṃ vā buddham paśyed | ayaṃ tato 'saṃkhyeyataraṃ puṇyaṃ prasavati | kaḥ punar vādo yo 'ñjalipragrahaṃ vā kuryāt puṣpaṃ vā dadyāt dhūpaṃ vā gandhaṃ vā dīpaṃ vā dadyād | ayaṃ eva tato 'saṃkhyeyataraṃ puṇyaṃ prasavati ||

Pustakapāṭhopāya

According to Ronald Davidson, the translator Dānaśīla flourished during the reign of Ye shes 'Od, the second king of Guge in south-western Tibet, who reigned circa 959–1040.²² The text, *Pustakapāṭhopāya*, whose translation into English is given as follows, has a context which is unknown to us, but which contains clearly tantric elements for the relatively exoteric practice of the recitation of a book:

In the Indian language: *Pustakapāṭhopāya*. In the Tibetan language: *The Method of Reading a Scripture* (*Glegs bam klag pa'i thabs*). Homage to the Triple Gem. First, visualising oneself as Vairocana, one should visualise, abiding on a moon and multi-coloured lotus in front of oneself, whatever is suitable for the sake of oneself and others. One should then visualise what is to be accomplished (*sādhya*, *bsgrub bya*) on the moon. Then, in one's own heart, upon a moon, from the syllable BRŪM, many buddhalocanā devīs, golden in form, spread out. Visualise their vases completely full of the nectar of wisdom, and that these are performing abhiṣeka [on that which is to be accomplished]. Then one should read the book.²³

In the foregoing translation, “what is to be accomplished,” or *sādhya* (*bsgrub bya*), is a typical tantric term referring to the object of practice—be it a deity or more specific object of practice. In this case, it is reasonable to suppose that the *sādhya* is the book that one intends to read. That this prescription appears to be the only entirely tantric suggestion regarding how one begins to read a book is somewhat unusual—it is also rather simple in comparison with the ritual that appears to have developed in Nepal. Nonetheless, at least as far as Dānaśīla's source base (probably from north-western India) is concerned, this was a method that apparently gained some traction in being seen as important enough to translate into Tibetan. This method of reading, however, appears to not have gained much traction in the Indian and Nepalese context and Sanskrit equivalents for such a formula cannot be found.

Vimalaprabhā

The eleventh century *Vimalaprabhā* (c. 1027²⁴), a commentary on the *Kālacakra Tantra*, presents us with a number of interesting insights. On the one hand, it allows us to see the attitude of Buddhists

²² Davidson, Ronald M., *Tibetan Renaissance: Tibetan Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture*, Columbia University Press: New York, 2005, 12.

²³ Tōh. no. 4252. rgya gar skad du | pusta ka pa ṭho pa ya | bod skad du | glegs bam klag pa'i thabs | dkon mchog gsum la phyag 'tshal lo || dang por rang nyid rnam par snang mdzad sku mdog dkar po sna tshogs padma zla ba la gnas pa bsams te | de'i mdun du rang gi 'am gzhan gyi ched gang yin yang rung ste | zla ba la gnas pa'i bsgrub bya bsam par bya'o || de nas rang gi snying gar zla ba la gnas pa'i bhrūm las lha mo sangs rgyas spyan ma ser mo mang po spros te | rin po che'i bum pa ye shes kyi bdud rtsis gang bas bsgrub bya la dbang bskur bar bsams la | de nas glegs bam klag par bya'o ||

²⁴ Newman, John, *The Wheel of Time: The Kālacakra in Context*, Shambala: Boulder, 1985, 85–87.

at that time towards non-Buddhist textual traditions of the Vedas, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, siddhānta, and the purāṇas, but also an attitude towards the worship of sacred texts which mirrors that which we find in the early Mahāyāna self-referential passages:

If here, among mortals in the world, all humans, śūdras and so forth, know the Vedas, the *Gītā*, siddhānta, and logical treatises, then those who are respected will be as the brahmins; because of knowledge equal to their knowledge of the Dharma and vidyās, and because they would not have the particular qualities of all those who dwell at home and who are unable to enjoy saṃsāra. Having known this, the Dharmas of the *Gītā*, siddhānta, purāṇas, and so forth were written in book[s] in the Sanskrit language by corrupt ṛṣis with greedy nature; and the Vedas and those things which are to be read with the mouth were made limited, and [creating] a great confused progeny of foolish beings was the intention of not teaching all-knowledge. In this case, in past times the dharmas of the Vedas, the *Gītā*, siddhānta, and the purāṇas were not written in books; they only existed in mouths; then, because of the sway of the time of the five degradations,²⁵ they were written in books because of the deficiency in wisdom by as many [brahmins] as there were. Therein, the preceding Dharma teaching of Hari-Hara²⁶ was not to be approved by the Buddhists, was without pity for all beings, devoid, productive of the suffering of saṃsāra, creating incorrect egotism, and conceiting the doctrines of castes. Here, in the triple world, those Dharmas which are taught with all-knowledge and the language of all-knowledge are written in book[s] with songs and translations into the languages of many beings, are explained with meanings from worldly knowledge and so forth, explained with the meanings of the three vehicles, and are taught with worldly truth and ultimate truth, and for the recitation and listening of all beings, that beings with faith, to these teachings on all-knowledge—which are an assemblage of eighty-four thousand Dharmas and which are explained with both worldly and other-worldly meanings—listen, recite, speak, bear, illuminate and introduce them, worship them with many flowers, many perfumes, much incense, many aromatic powders, many robes, many bells, many banners, many cowries, many parasols, many canopies, many strings of pearls, many jewels, many lamps, and many ornaments made of jewels, and, having worshipped them, do a five-pointed prostration. Thus, those Dharmas taught with all-knowledge, which assist others, because of the power of faith for the benefit of others, and for the sake of those with caste and without caste, no one whatsoever is warded off by the Tathāgata. Even now, [those Dharmas] have not disappeared.²⁷

²⁵ The degradation of lifespan, views, defilements, beings, and the aeon, “āyuh-, dṛṣṭi-, kleśa-, satva-, kalpa-kṛ,” Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit*, 174.

²⁶ Viṣṇu and Śiva.

²⁷ Upadhyaya, Jagannatha, ed., *Vimalaprabhāṭikā of Kalkin Śrī Puṇḍarika on Śrīlaghukālacakratantaraṅga by Śrī Mañjuśrīyāsas*, Vol. 1, Bibliotheca Indo-Tibetica Series 11, Sarnath: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1986, 40–41. iha martye loke yadi sarve manuṣyā vedagītāsiddhāntatarkaśāstravido bhavanti śūdrādayaḥ, tadā brāhmaṇānām ko gauravaṃ kariṣyati; vidyādharmaññānasādhāraṇaparīññāt, sarveṣāṃ grhavāsinām saṃsārabhogāsaktānām viśeṣaṅgābhāvāt | iti jñātvā duṣṭarṣibhir dravyalubdhaiḥ saṃskṛtabhāṣayā gītāsiddhāntapurāṇādayo dharmāḥ pustake likhitāḥ; vedāś ca mukhapāṭhenādhyayanīyā iti niyamāḥ kṛto bālaḥjanānām mahāmohajanaka iti asarvajñādeśanābhīpṛayāḥ | iha pūrvakāle vedagītāsiddhāntapurāṇādharmā na pustake likhitāḥ santi; yatīnām mukhe

The main problem identified by the author(s) of the *Vimalaprabhā* towards non-Buddhist literature appears to be that they are exclusive and that they are not accessible to all—but were designed to be the intellectual monopoly of the brahmin caste, which caste system is also said to be reinforced by that literature. Moreover, another complaint appears to be the attempt by the brahmins at keeping that literature exclusively oral—something which they were incapable of maintaining due to degradation over time. The teachings of the Buddhists, on the other hand, are presented as open to all, regardless of language or caste, and conducive to worship in the manner prescribed within the sūtra literature. This highly sectarian document does allow us at least to know potentially what a contemporary opinion might have been towards non-Buddhist literature and practice, but also, that the worship as prescribed within the sūtra literature was largely still accepted as part of sūtra worship. As usual, it is not possible to know with certainty what was done in practice, but it is not unlikely that we are presented with at least a normative picture of what was practiced in the preceding excerpt. While we have essentially treated these later sources as more descriptive of practice, and the earlier sūtric sources as more prescriptive, we cannot avoid understanding that to a certain extent the later sources are also prescriptive—we can only truly approach knowledge of description of practice and actual practice when we consider contemporary cases.

Kudṛṣṭinirghātana

We now move to one of two examples from literature dealing with prescriptions for beginner bodhisattvas, or ādikarmika bodhisattvas. The first is from the eleventh century *Kudṛṣṭinirghātana* composed by Advayavajra (c. 1007-1085).²⁸ Glenn Wallis argues that Advayavajra attempts to use this manual to reconcile institutional monasticism with antinomian tantrism, and also that he is attempting to show that the beginning practices, or “*ādikarma*” are not only “preliminary,’ as is generally the case, but ... ‘primary,’ in the sense of a continuously constituted foundation. In doing

tiṣṭhanti; tataḥ pañcakaṣāyākālavaśāt pustake likhitāḥ, prajñāhīnatvād yatibhir iti | iha prādeśīki hariharādīnām dharmadeśanā bauddhair nānumodaniyā sarvasattvakṛpayā rahiṭā saṃsāraduḥkhadāyikā(nī) mīṭhāhaṃkārakārīṇi jātivādābhīmānīni | iha traidhātuke ye sarvajñena sarvajñabhāṣayā deśitā dharmā nānāsattvabhāṣāntareṇa saṃgītikārakaiḥ pustake likhitāḥ, vedādīlaukikārthapratipādikāḥ, yānatrayārthapratipādakāḥ, lokasaṃvṛtisatyena paramārthasatyena deśitāḥ, sarvasattvānām śravaṇāyādhyayanāya ca, tadadhimuktikāḥ sattvas tām sarvajñadeśitām caturaśītisahasradharmaskandhān laukikalokottarārthapratipādakān śṛṇvanti paṭhanti vācayanti dhārayanti parebhyāḥ ca vistareṇa saṃprakāśayanti pratiṣṭhāpayanti, pūjayanti nānāpuspair nānāgandhair nānādūpair nānācūrmair nānāvastrais nānāghaṇṭhābhir nānāpatākābhir nānācāmarair nānāchatrais nānāvītanair nānāmuktāharair nānāratmair nānāpradīpair nānāratnābharaṇaiḥ pūjayitvā tebhyāḥ pañcāṅgapraṇāmaṃ kurvanti | evaṃ te sarvajñadeśitā dharmāḥ paropakāriṇaḥ adhimuktivaśāt paropakārāya na kasyacij jātyajātivāśāt te vihītāḥ pratiścedhitā tathāgaten ety” adyāpi nāntardhānaṃ gatāḥ |

²⁸ Wallis, Glenn, “Advayavajra’s Instructions on the *ādikarma*,” *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, Fall 2003, 1.

so, Advayavajra presents what he holds to be the necessary conditions for ritual efficacy.”²⁹ Advayavajra deals with the worship of texts in his method (*vidhī*) for the worship of images and books as follows:

Having recited the *Prajñāpāramitā*, he should worship,
 according to rule, the entire maṇḍala and so forth,
 Always immersing in their meaning.
 The *Ēkaḡāthā*, the *Caturḡāthā*, the *Gāthādvayadhāraṇī*,³⁰
 The *Ṣaṇmukhī*, or the *Bhadracaryā*, thrice, three times a day,
 Or a single syllable up to a hundred thousand:
 A wise one with unbroken concentration should recite as it profits.
 He should worship a scroll of a buddha or bodhisattva, a book, or an image, and so forth.³¹

As with previous examples, here we see the worship of the book equated with the worship of buddha images and other items. While the much earlier *Susiddhikāra* was the first to hint at a primacy of the *Prajñāpāramitā* among Mahāyāna sūtras, this was not an overwhelming theme in the other examples at which we have looked. Here, however, we see a return of this theme, which shall continue hereafter—particularly in the context of the beginner bodhisattva (*ādikarma* bodhisattva) and training. If, as Wallis suggests, *ādikarma* prescriptions are not just about what is important for beginners, but rather, what is considered foundational to monastic and tantric education, then apparently the *Prajñāpāramitā* begins to take pride of place in that context.

Dharma Maṇḍalas

Ādikarmaṇḍalā

Further *ādikarma* literature continues such themes and appears to begin to introduce themes that become prominent in later mentions of sūtras in a ritual context. In particular, we might consider Anupamavajra’s 10th or 11th century *Ādikarmaṇḍalā*. This suggests that a bodhisattva should, after purificatory rites, recite the *Nāmasaṅgī* and *Bhadracaryā*. Then, after offerings to Jambhala and pretas, caityas, and the Buddha, the disciple should offer the guru maṇḍala, the maṇḍala of one’s ritually chosen deity (*sveṣṭadeva*), and then perform a recitation, pāṭha, of the *Prajñāpāramitā*.³² The

²⁹ Wallis, “Advayavajra’s Instructions on the *ādikarma*,” 2.

³⁰ On these three texts, with edition, see Kano, Kazuo, “*Ēkaḡāthā*, *Caturḡāthā*, *Gāthādvayadhāraṇī*: A Set of Reciting Sūtras in 11th century India,” *The Mikkyō Bunka (Journal of Esoteric Buddhism)* 227 (2011): 80–107.

³¹ Mikkyō-seiten-kenkyūkai, eds., “Kudrīṣṭinirghātana by Advayavajra,” *Taishō Daigaku Sōgō Bukkyō Kenkyūjo Nenpō* 10, 1989: 255–198. *prajñāpāramitāṃ samyag maṇḍalādividhānataḥ | paṭhitvā pūjayed nityaṃ tadarthaṃ avagāhanam | |25 | | ekaḡāthāṃ caturḡāthāṃ gāthādvitayadhāraṇīm | ṣaṇmukhīm bhadracaryāṃ ca triṣkālaṃ ca trikālataḥ | |26 | | ekākṣaram upādāya lakṣam yāvat samāhitaḥ | akaṇḍitasamādāno yathālābhaṃ paṭhet sudhīḥ | |27 | | buddhabodhisattvapaṭapustakapratimādīṃs ca pūjayet |*

³² Takahashi, Hisao, ed., “*Ādikarmaṇḍalā*,” in *Indogaku Mikkyōgaku Kenkyū: Miyasaka Yūshō hakase koki kinenn ronbunshū*, Vol. 2, Hōzōkan: Kyōto, 1993, 132.

preliminary rites prior to recitation appear somewhat similar to the preliminary rites in contemporary recitation in Newar Buddhism, called *pāṭha yākegu*.³³ While, today, the recitation of the *Nāmasaṅgīti* and *Bhadracaryā* are themselves practiced as individual recitation rites, rather than as preliminaries to the recitation of sūtras, the offerings to deities, Jambhala, caityas, the Buddha, guru maṇḍala, and the maṇḍala of one's lineage deity are still performed—leading us to suspect that this instruction is part of the continuum of practice up to the present day.

Also, of note is that Anupamavajra uses the wording “*prajñāpāramitādinām pāṭhaṃ kuryād yathepsitam*.” Ādi, or etc. implies that after the *Prajñāpāramitā*, there are other sūtras. What is implied by this? Moreover, “*yathepsitam*” implies that which is wished for; does this mean it is one's choice? These matters are not elucidated in Anupamavajra's autocommentary.³⁴ For further clues, we might consider the presence of a similar formula in Kuladatta's *Kīryāsaṅgrahaḥaṅgikā* where in chapter three we find the suggestion that after vessels used in consecrating a monastery have been prepared and placed in the four directions, the officiating monk should recite the *Prajñāpāramitā* and other Mahāyāna sūtras, presumably three others, echoing the *Susiddhikāra* with the wording “*prajñāpāramitādimahāyānasūtrāṇi pāṭhayitavyāni*.”³⁵ While Kuladatta does not gloss this term, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* chapter two suggests that the Mahāyāna sūtras associated with the four directions are the *Prajñāpāramitā* in the south, the *Samādhirāja* in the west, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* in the north, and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottama* in the east.³⁶

As regards these four sūtras in this context, they are equal in standing, and we do not see the primacy of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. Doctrinally, we may have reasons to consider the *Prajñāpāramitā* the best candidate for placement at the centre of a maṇḍala, if one needs a central point, and there may be some connection to this reasoning behind the placement of the *Prajñāpāramitā* at the head of this formula. However, the ādikarma literature appears to suggest, to an extent, that a familiarity with the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and then the other Mahāyāna sūtras, was considered an important part of a monk's preliminary training. In such a training, the most essential points appear to come first, and the more contingent practices, requiring a foundation, are added later. Thus, there is a theoretical sūtra hierarchy that may be supposed to exist wherein the *Prajñāpāramitā* gets pride of

³³ The details of this rite will be fully fleshed out in my dissertation, but will also be briefly explicated in a forthcoming publication: O'Neill, Alexander James, “Textual Manifestations: The Use and Significance of the Mahāyāna Literature in Newar Buddhism,” *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 53 (2019/2020)

³⁴ Takahashi, ed., “Ādikarmaḥaṅgikā,” 149.

³⁵ Tanemura, Ryugen, ed., *Kuladatta's Kīryāsaṅgrahaḥaṅgikā*, Egbert Forsten: Groningen, 2004, 136–7.

³⁶ Vaidya, P.L., ed., *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, The Mithila Institute: Darbhanga, 1964, 26.

place. Another example of such a formula is in the 11th century *Mṛtasugatiniyojana*, which suggests that the *Prajñāpāramitā* and other Mahāyāna sūtras should be recited, as a preliminary to the homa, as part of a funerary rite.³⁷ In this manner, and the afore-mentioned case of the sūtra maṇḍala, it appears evident that recitation was being developed in the context of a larger tantric and non-tantric South Asian milieu. This is the same milieu in which we saw Buddhists and Hindus commonly beginning to refer to their texts as vidyās, in the sense of powerful speech acts, in addition to requiring worship on a mound of rice, representing the vedī altar in the Pañcarātra case (a practice which we see in modern worship in Nepal), and to requiring a text to undergo pratiṣṭhā in order for it to be allowed to be worshipped.³⁸ While direct causal relation cannot be established in cases like this, thematic similarities cannot be dismissed as meaningless.

Kṛiyāsamuccaya

A Nepalese source for understanding the development of the importance of the *Prajñāpāramitā* ritually is the *Kṛiyāsamuccaya* of Jagaddarpaṇa, writing around the 11th or 12th century. While the term appears in texts such as the *Guhyasamāja*, Jagaddarpaṇa's is the first mention of a Dharma maṇḍala in a ritual context, which accompanies a Buddha and Saṅgha maṇḍala, containing buddhas and bodhisattvas respectively. As regards the Dharma maṇḍala, his "Poṣadhavidhī" states, "The Dharma maṇḍala is headed by the Yoginīniruttara Tantras, surrounded by the Kṛiyā, Caryā, Yoga, and Yoginī Tantras."³⁹ This Dharma maṇḍala thus has the Yoginīniruttara Tantras in the centre, with some arrangement of the other classes of tantra surrounding it. Later texts, which we shall discuss, instead feature the *Prajñāpāramitā* and other non-tantric sūtras in the maṇḍala. Why is this the case? This section of the *Kṛiyāsamuccaya* is followed by one dealing with tantric abhiṣeka. The section in question is a poṣadhavidhī, which is a ritual manual for the taking of poṣadha precepts. The eight precepts are thus a preliminary to abhiṣeka, and it appears that in the case of a tantric adept, or ācārya, they are to hold the eight precepts during the time of abhiṣeka, at least according to Jagaddarpaṇa. What this also tells us is that abhiṣeka may not have required monastic

³⁷ Tanemura, Ryugen, ed., "Śūnyasamādhivajra's *Mṛtasugatiniyojana*: A Critical Edition and Notes," *Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūsho Kiyō*, 163, 110–136. 130.

³⁸ De Simini, Florinda, *Of Gods and Books: Ritual and Knowledge Transmission in the Manuscript Cultures of Premodern India*, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016, 339

³⁹ Lokesh Chandra, ed., 1977, *Kṛiya-samuccaya: A Sanskrit Manuscript from Nepal Containing a Collection of Tantric Ritual by Jagaddarpaṇa*, part 2, Sharada Rani: New Delhi, 318. kriyācaryāyogayoginītantraparivṛtayoginīniruttara-tantranāyakaṃ dharmamaṇḍalāḥ.

ordination, so even in the 11th century, prospective vajrācāryas, or tantric priests, were permitted to be non-celibates.

Poṣadhānuśaṃsā

What, then, did the Dharma maṇḍala look like in the case of laity who were not undertaking tantric abhiṣeka at the time of poṣadha? If tantric abhiṣeka required the presence of tantric texts, it seems natural that the presence of non-tantric Mahāyāna sūtras would be required for the laity. An early witness to this non-tantric Dharma maṇḍala cannot be found, but if we were to guess its structure, based upon preceding patterns, it would be difficult to expect the central element to be none other than the *Prajñāpāramitā*.

The 16th or 17th century *Poṣadhānuśaṃsā* features an explicit expression of the navagrantha or navasūtra, the nine texts that form the contemporary Dharma maṇḍala: this appears to be its first appearance in writing. Here we see a Dharma maṇḍala for use in poṣadha rites, but it differs from the contemporary list. This manuscript reads, “Om, to noble *Prajñāpāramitā*, you receive this vajra flower, svāhā! Middle. [... Same formula for:] *Pañcārakṣā*, [...] *Nāmasaṃgīti*, [...] *Gaṇḍavyūha*, [...] *Dasabhūmīśvara*, [...] *Samādhirāja*, [...] *Saddharmaṇḍarika*, [...] *Lalitavistara*, [...] and] *Laṅkāvatāra*,”⁴⁰ followed by instructions for worshipping the maṇḍala. While one might suggest that there is a development from the tantric to non-tantric in terms of elements of this maṇḍala, it seems apparent that in the case of the *Poṣadhānuśaṃsā*, we are dealing with an entirely non-tantric context—which is not the case with the *Kīrīyasamuccaya*. That being said, the verses used to praise the three jewels are direct quotes from the *Guḍiyasamāja Tantra*,⁴¹ perhaps complicating this attempt at a clear distinction. Moreover, the worship of sūtras and other exoteric Mahāyāna practices in Nepal, show signs of a great deal of influence from ritual literature such as the *Ādikarmaṇḍapā*. For instance, the practice of creating clay maṇḍalas on the occasion of poṣadha observance in the *Poṣadhānuśaṃsā* utilises the formula suggested in the *Ādikarmaṇḍapā*,⁴² which other than sūtra pāṭha,

⁴⁰ Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP), *Poṣadhānuśaṃsā*, B23/33. [7v]om āryaprajñāpā[8r]ramitāyai vajrapuṣpaṃ pra[ṭi]ccha svāhā|| madhye || om ārya pañcāraksayai vajrapuṣpa[m] praciccha svāhā| om āryanāmasaṃgītaye vajrapuṣpaṃ praciccha svahā| om āryagaṇḍavyūhāya vajrapuṣpa[m] praciccha svāhā| [insertion from above the first line] om āryadaśabhūmīśvarāya vajrapuṣpaṃ praciccha svāhā| | om āryasamādhirājāya vajrapuṣpaṃ praciccha svāhā| | om āryasa[d]dharmapuṇḍa[l]r[ī]kāya vajrapuṣpaṃ praciccha svāhā| om āryalālītāvistar(a)[ā]ya vajrapuṣpaṃ praciccha svāhā| om āryalaṅkāvatārāya vajrapuṣpaṃ praciccha svāhā|

⁴¹ NGMPP, *Poṣadhānuśaṃsā*, 7r¹⁻², 5, 8v².

⁴² NGMPP, *Poṣadhānuśaṃsā*, 13r–v.

bears no relevance to poṣadha rites. It is possible that at one time these two practices were associated, and that their relation carried forth into poṣadha practices.

Later Formulae

Modern rites follow the set that would be found in, for instance, an *Aṣṭamūratavidhi* manuscript dating to 1915, which instead reads “Om, to noble *Prajñāpāramitā*, you receive this vajra flower, svāhā! Middle. [... Same formula for:] *Gaṇḍavyūhā*, [...] East. [...] *Daśabhūmika*, [...] South. [...] *Samādhirāja*, [...] West. [...] *Laṅkāvatāra*, [...] North. [...] *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, [...] South-east. [...] *Tathāgata[guhyaka]*, [...] South-west. [...] *Lalitavistara*, [...] North-east. [...] *Śvarṇaprabhāsa*, [...] North-west.”⁴³ Occasionally the ordering may vary, but invariably the *Prajñāpāramitā* is placed in the centre. Here we begin to see the inclusion, also, of the *Tathāgataguhyaka*—while the Sanskrit text exists in fragmentary form and in Tibetan and Chinese,⁴⁴ personal communications in Nepal appear to present the general impression that this text was “lost when Nālandā was destroyed,” and that since its name is similar, today it is substituted by the *Guhyasamāja*. It makes sense that this text was not originally the tantric *Guhyasamāja*, but rather a non-tantric scripture, but considering its absence from the earlier *Poṣadhānusamsā* formula. This text is an exoteric Mahāyāna sūtra, which appears to deal with a variety of topics related to the life and qualities of the Buddha.⁴⁵ While there is little evidence that it was ever a text of great popularity, something evident by its lack of widespread circulation in the manuscript copying situation in medieval Nepal, it is likely that the inclusion of this text can give us some insights about why certain texts were considered for inclusion into the Dharma maṇḍala. The contents of this sūtra appear to provide some interesting perspectives on the nature of the Buddha and buddhahood in a manner similar to the other eight

⁴³ NGMPP, *Aṣṭamūratavidhi*, E46/47. The manuscript in question is a bound codex, and is a mixture of Newar and Sanskrit, and the Sanskrit text is quite corrupt. It is represented here diplomatically without emendations (they will be obvious to those familiar with Sanskrit). Codex pages 9⁷–10⁷, vaṃ [=om] āryaprajñā[10]pāramitāyai vajrapūṣpaṃ praticcha [=praticcha] svāhā || madhya || vaṃ āryagandavyūhāya vajrapūṣpaṃ praticcha svāhā || pūrva || vaṃ āryādaśabhūmikāya vajrapūṣpaṃ praticcha svāhā || dakṣiṃ || vaṃ āryasamādhirājāya vajrapūṣpaṃ praticcha svāhā || paścima || vaṃ āryalaṅkāvatārāya vajrapūṣpaṃ praticcha svāhā || uttara || vaṃ āryyasaddharmapuṇḍarīkāya vajrapūṣpaṃ praticcha svāhā || agne || vaṃ āryyatathāgatakāya vajrapūṣpaṃ praticcha svāhā || nairtya || vaṃ āryyalalitavistarāya vajrapūṣpaṃ praticcha svāhā || tśāna || [insert from bottom of page] vāyuvya || vaṃ āryyasūvarṇaprabhāya [praticcha svāhā] ||

This manuscript, the countless others like it, and the contemporary practice of poṣadha rites essentially have expanded the medieval practice and essentially involve extensive maṇḍala practices undertaken by both the officiating *vajrācāryas* and the lay community—the offering to the three jewel maṇḍalas, in a way, is today a prelude to many practices, but the poṣadha involves more than just the taking of precepts, but rather the creation of the maṇḍala of the deity to whom the rite is dedicated (usually Amoghapāśa, but also often Tārā or Mañjuśrī).

⁴⁴ A critical edition of this text with a translation from Tibetan and Sanskrit is forthcoming by Péter-Daniel Szántó.

⁴⁵ Discussed by Étienne Lamotte in “Vajrapāṇi in India,” *Buddhist Studies Review* 20 (2), 2003, 119–144.

sūtras. Thus, this formula may be based upon consideration of the contents of sūtras—something which the later substitution with the *Guhyasamāja* appears to disregard.

Conclusion

If expedited reading was a practice with precedent in the latter half of the first millennium, then this is not as unique a practice as one may suppose and informs us about the nature of sūtras as conceived within the Vajrayāna practitioner's worldview. Other historical conclusions are hard to precisely pin down with the scanty textual evidence that we have, but ritual continuity is evident based upon the sources we discussed. The later Mahāyāna in India almost certainly worshipped sūtras in a manner similar to that depicted within the sūtras' self-referential passages (as they do today), and it is not unrealistic to infer that to a certain extent a similar rite was performed in the early Mahāyāna. What this investigation into the later Mahāyāna literature regarding sūtra worship showed us is how this worship developed in light of developments within the Mahāyāna towards tantricised ritual, even when the books involved were not themselves tantras.

One trend which preceded this tantricisation was the prioritisation of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature as the head, if not the most important, of the exoteric Mahāyāna literature, as seen, for instance, in the *Susiddhikāra Sūtra*. Śāntideva's selection of passages related to the worship of sūtras allows us to infer the acceptance of the power of sūtra literature in the latter half of the first millennium, as well as how sūtras were conceived of not necessarily as (or not only as) vessels for doctrine, but also as ritual devices. While we see some fully tantric prescriptions for recitation, essentially the recitation of the exoteric scriptures appears to be generally beneficial in an exoteric context, as well as a preliminary and underlying general necessity for general Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna practice. The development of Dharma maṇḍalas for the worship of the Dharma as a whole, as represented by sūtras, marks a significant shift in the employment of sūtras, and allows for their iconographic representation to change as well as their general conceptualization to evolve. This forms a part, but not a full part, of the shift that we see from the employment of sūtras at an early period to the way in which they are employed in a later period.

After the *Ādikarmaṇḍapa*, many of the elements of the contemporary pūjā employed before the recitation (pāṭha) of a sūtra are without textual precedent. William Tuladhar-Douglas⁴⁶ and

⁴⁶ Tuladhar-Douglas, Will, *Remaking Buddhism for Medieval Nepal: The Fifteenth-Century Reformation of Newar Buddhism*, Routledge: London, 2007.

Jinah Kim⁴⁷ both discuss the manner in which, during the 15th to 18th century, Newar Buddhism appeared to remake itself in terms of literature and art respectively. It is possible that during this period ritual practice also developed in different directions. The rituals of the vajrācāryas, in combination with the development of new conceptions of what the Dharma consisted (due to the development of the model of the Dharma maṇḍalas), may well have laid the groundwork for the development of a more tantric form of sūtra pāṭha, which also took into account the model of dharma maṇḍalas as found in the poṣadha rites. On the basis of the material available to us now, it is impossible to fully trace this development, but the lack of earlier precedent allows us to imagine that its development, along with some of the liturgical elements that are utilized in it, took part within Nepal as part of this local development of a distinct Newar Buddhism.

⁴⁷ Kim, Jinah, “Performing Texts, Engendering Merits: Manuscripts and *Paubhas* as Ritual Objects,” in *Dharma and Punya: Buddhist Ritual Art of Nepal*, Hotei Publishing: Leiden and Boston, 2019, 88–99.