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The Buddha's Remains: \textit{mantra} in the \textit{Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa}*

The lord of the world, the maker of light remains through the form of the mantra. The omniscient one, possessing all forms, appears on the surface of the earth. (\textit{Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa} 25.286.9-10)

An abiding concern of Mahāyāna Buddhists has been the accessibility of a buddha's power in the world.\(^1\) Some Buddhists, notably philosophers and their commentators, have grappled with the very coherence of such a possibility.\(^2\) Viewing the question from a logical perspective, it has been necessary for such systematic thinkers to reconcile the apparent inconsistency ensuing from the two essential qualities deemed definitive of a buddha. A buddha is one who, by virtue of his awareness of the nature of reality, is completely liberated from the life-impelling force of mental defilements, and is thus beyond the scope of our world; \textit{and} he is one who, by virtue of his profound compassion, is naturally compelled to continue engagement with beings still delusively ensnared in the world. Logically, these two qualities are at odds. Not all Buddhists,

\footnote{I am grateful to Jens-Uwe Hartmann and Kidder Smith for their thoughtful comments on this article and suggestions for improvement, and to Charles Hallisey, Leonard van der Kuijp, and Stephanie Jamison for critiquing an earlier version.}

1. “Power” corresponds to the Sanskrit word \textit{adhisthāna}, which, in its Indian Buddhist context, refers to the sustained presence of a salvific force. This force is believed to follow spontaneously from a person’s attainment of enlightenment. It is a natural consequence of the practices that result in enlightenment; for example, the aspirant’s repeated, ritualized taking of the vow (\textit{samaya}) never to abandon living beings.

however, have sought a solution to the dilemma of accessing a buddha’s power on the basis of logical or epistemological theory. Some Buddhists have, rather, sought an imaginative-cultic solution. Relics, statues, paintings, architectural monuments, books, remembrance, meditation, guru veneration, and visualization have, at various times and in various places, been held to be the most effective means of rendering present the otherwise inaccessible or obscured power that accompanies a buddha. In this article, I trace the idea of the mantra as a vehicle of enlightened presence as it was presented to Indian Mahāyāna Buddhists in the medieval period.

The source for this presentation is the eighth century Indian Buddhist ritual manual called the Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa. My choice of locating the presentation of mantra in a text, and in this text distinctively, implicitly indicates two points that I would like to make in this article about our understanding of mantra, as well as of Indian cultic practice per se. First, although certain recognizable Indian cultural and philosophical axioms may be present in a given theory of mantra, theoretical presentations always concern the specific; that is, they are always bound to self-delineated groups, communities, texts, and so on. The axiomatic features of cultic practice are never sufficient for understanding what is being posited as unique and specific to that practice. For example, we learn little from the fact that a ritual practitioner performs an oblation (homa), since this is a widely shared cultural form. (The assumptions concerning the general worthiness, usefulness, effectiveness, and theoretical grounding of the homa remain unstated in the ritual manuals; hence, they are axiomatic.) But that the practitioner may burn only asoka wood and not amla wood in the fire teaches us a good deal about the basic

3. The printed text that forms the basis of this study, Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa, 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, Mahāyānasūtrasamgraha, Part II, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 18, Bihar, 1964. I have occasionally consulted an eleventh century Tibetan translation as well: Taipei Edition, volume XVIII bk’a’ ’gyur, ’phags pa ’jam dpal gyi rtsa ba’i rgyud, 540 no. 543, 25/175 (1)-96/667. This is referred to as “T” in the transliterations below. My translations of the text, however, are based on the Sanskrit. For the dating of the Mmk, see Matsunaga 1985.
orientation of the practice. This tells us, for example, that the practitioner is engaged in one of the cults directed towards 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 “left-handed” (vāmācāra) cults. When we additionally learn of the hand gestures, verbal formulas, and so on, that are employed during the oblation, the specific nature of the cult – its cosmology, doctrine, and broader affiliations – begins to emerge. We might use the phrase the economy of forms to capture this kind of specific borrowing, fashioning, and preservation of Indian modes and theoretical bases of cultic activity. The Manjusrīmūlakalpa’s theory of mantra provides us with an illuminating example of how common elements of India’s religious culture get economized yet creatively transformed into emblems of a unique practice. Second, by analyzing mantra (or any other cultic constituent) as presented in a ritual manual, we are confronted with a form of argumentation that differs significantly from other, more frequently studied, genres. The rhetoric of the Manjusrīmūlakalpa is spatial and imaginal. The text does not venture to say what a mantra is. Rather, its aim is to show the reader what mantra does. In other words, the nature of the mantra in the ritual manual can only be understood from the images of mantric use presented in the text; it can not be known from explicit statements. This is characteristic of the Manjusrīmūlakalpa and ritual literature as a whole. Certainly, there is nothing approaching the sort of “theological” discussions concerning the mantra found in the jñānapada sections of Vaiṣṇava and Śaivite ritual texts. There is, in the Manjusrīmūlakalpa, nonetheless, a richly presented imaginal discussion.

The nature of mantra in the Manjusrīmūlakalpa

In the Manjusrīmūlakalpa (Mmk), a mantra is presented as a linguistic space occupied by the force of some enlightened being, such as a buddha or a bodhisattva. It is thus analogous to a relic or an icon. A mantra is spoken, so it is a form of speech. Like ordinary speech, it must be learned. Learning it means knowing how to use it, and in which contexts. But the sense of a mantra relies on a “grammar” completely different from ordinary speech. That is, the system of rules implicit in

5. See, for example, Laksñītantra 18, summarized in SMITH 1975: 353.
mantric language does not concern linguistic features, but social, doctrinal, and ritual ones. A mantra, like an ordinary word, is effective only when spoken under the proper conditions; and the proper conditions exist only once numerous social, doctrinal, and ritual rules have been strictly followed. These conditions are discussed below.

The mantra is a central component of the form of Buddhist practice propagated in the Mmk. Indeed, the very term for its mode of practice is called mantracaryā – mantra performance. In the Mmk, the “word of the Buddha,” the buddhavacana, consists not of his discourses, but of the mantras that he, and “all buddhas,” have spoken throughout time.

The Mmk begins and ends with mantra. The text is preceded by a phrase that commonly marks the appearance of either a sûtra or a mantra: namah sarvabuddhabodhisattvebhyah. And it ends, 721 pages later, with the statement: “in short, every mantra causes success” (samāsena sarvamantram sādhayati). The former phrase intimates that every word that follows is to be regarded broadly as mantra, as a form occupied by the power of an enlightened being. The fact that the book itself, as a repository of such forms, is to be treated as a potent object of veneration supports this. The position of the latter statement, too, tells us something about the nature of the mantra; namely, that its success is dependent on a considerable infrastructure. In the text that lies between the two phrases are found the social, doctrinal, and ritual foundations upon which the success of the mantra rests.

The Mmk community’s reticence to make explicit statements about the mantra should not be passed over too quickly. As authors and practitioners of a ritual manual (kalpa), those who embraced the text would have been well aware of the exegetical and apologetic traditions governing ritual discourse. All the major groups – Vedic, Śaiva, Vaiśnava, Śākta, Buddhist – in their numerous varieties have developed such traditions. So why is the Mmk, and ritual manuals generally, silent on philosophical justification?

It is not the case that the text is devoid of rhetorical justification; rather, what is significant is the form that the justification takes. The

6. Mmk 1.1.1 (the notation refers to chapter, page, and line in T. Gaṇapati Śastri’s edition). This is followed by, evam mayā śrutam, marking the beginning of the text.


8. See, for example, Mmk 1.24.14-22.
Mmk shows what other texts say. It presents images – of, for instance, iconographical paintings (paça), rituals in action (sādhana) or imagined (called dhyāna in the text) – and teaches the reader how to make those images his own, in reality. In this sense, the Mmk reflects an extra-intellectualist and extra-theoretical tradition. Here, philosophical propositions are considered instruments of a logic that applies only to the most limited aspects of the world. The authors of the Mmk avoid philosophical modes of discourse because they – this tradition – apparently view it as ineffectual in the pursuit of enlightened power. This attitude evokes the ancient image of the Buddha as one who speaks only about that which is conducive to the end of suffering and to enlightenment – or, more to the point, as one who shows (desika) the direct way. To this way of thinking, language embodies the limits of the world. Transcending the limitations of the immediate world – which is the purpose of cultic practice – can therefore not be spoken about, but only shown. This is not to say that the Mmk is exempt from criticism concerning its “pictoral” propositions. That is, the text is still making claims that can be tested for their coherency. But if a skeptic argued in terms of foundations and justifications, the practitioner of the Mmk would respond by showing him an image – imaginative or actual – and teaching him how to realize it as his own. This is the spirit behind the text: a theory about mantra has nothing to do with mantra; a theory is a mere calculus, a lifeless symbolic notation; this sort of thing is of no use to a sādhaka – for he is one who practices.

The text, thus, shows the mantra. It does this by ascribing it authority, describing its use, and demonstrating its effect. Ascription of authority, description of use, and demonstration of effect are the means by which the several dimensions of the mantra in the Mmk are revealed. Therefore, I will present the mantra in the Mmk along these lines.

Ascription of authority

The Mmk shows that its mantras are inscribed with the authority of buddhas. The following passage is the first presentation of mantras in the text. Mañjuśrī is abiding in the “buddha-field” known as the Land of Flowers (kusumāvatī), presided over by the buddha Saṅkusumitarājendra. Saṅkusumitarājendra is enjoining the bodhisattva to go and “stand in the presence” of Śākyamuni in order to receive the instructions which comprise the mantra practice (mantracaryā) of the Mmk. The
vehicle for attaining this “presence,” in spite of the Buddha’s location in a distant buddha-field, is invocation of a mantra.

The blessed tathāgata Saṅkusumitarājendra further said to the princely Mañjuśrī: “Moreover, O prince, your mantra practice ... has been pronounced, and will be pronounced, by one hundred thousand tathāgatas, perfected ones, perfectly enlightened ones, equaling the sands of the Ganges river ... Now consented to by me as well, you must go, O princely Mañjuśrī, if you think the time is fit, and stand in the presence of Śākyamuni. You will listen to this discourse on the doctrine, and then you, too, will proclaim that. The mantra [for this purpose] is: namah sarvatathāgatānām acintyāpratihataśasanānām om ra ra smara / apratihataśasanakumararūpadhārīṇa hūṃ hūṃ phat phat svāhā (Homage to the inconceivable, unobstructed teachings of the tathāgatas: Oṃ ra ra remember O unobstructed teaching O bearer of the princely form hūṃ hūṃ phat phat hail!) This, O princely Mañjuśrī, is the basic mantra, the essence of all buddhas. It has been, and will be, uttered by all buddhas. Now, you, too, will utter it. When you have arrived in the Sahā world, [utter] each all-accomplishing [mantra] in turn. The [mantra of] supreme essence has been authorized by the tathāgata Śākyamuni. It is: Oṃ vākye da nama; and the upahṛdaya is: vākye hūṃ.”

Mañjuśrī then enters into a deep meditation. The four directions are filled with buddhas. He is praised for achieving this deep meditation. Saṅkusumitarājendra then reveals the “utmost essential, utmost secre-

9. (Note on the Sanskrit text: 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, or vice versa; 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.)
tive” mantra (paramahrdayam paramaguhyaṁ). Saṅkusumitarājendra suddenly becomes quiet. Entering into meditation, he brings forth the mantra with his benevolent mind (maitrātmakena cetasā): namaḥ sarva-buddhānām (homage to all buddhas). This mantra, the text states, is Mañjuśrī, is the utmost essence of that being, whose power is a panacea for all ills (mantrah eṣa mañjuśrīḥ paramahrdayah sarvakarmakaraḥ).  

When the text ascribes authority to mantra utterance, it is doing several things at once. It is, first of all, making a claim about mythic origin. The mantras were originally uttered by not only Śākyamuni Buddha, but by all buddhas throughout space and time. The fact that Saṅkusumitarājendra accesses the mantra by entering into a contemplative state suggests that this is where mantras originate: in the minds of the buddhas, which are infused with benevolence. Similarly, that Mañjuśrī receives the mantra only after he has entered into a deep meditation suggests that it is in the deeper layers of consciousness that such mantras are held to resonate fully. We read, for instance, that dhāraṇīs, a type of mantra, “arise from the penetrative mind, which ensues naturally from meditative absorption” (samādhiniśpadaparibhāvitamāna-sodbhavā), and that vidyārājīs, the bearers of mantras called vidyās, “issue forth from the meditative absorption on the body of Avalokiteśvara” (vidyārājībhīr lokeśvaramūrttisamādhīvisṛtaḥ).  

The “inconceivable, unobstructed teaching of the tathāgatas,” furthermore, is equivalent to the ur-transmission of the mantras and accompanying practices that have constituted the practice of all buddhas. This is a picture of both a lineage and a particular relationship. The teaching on mantra practice is given to the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī by the buddha Saṅkusumitarājendra. Once he has received it, Mañjuśrī must then teach it to beings in the world, where it will be inscribed into the text. The reader of the text, past and present, is thus placed within the lineage, into direct relation to all buddhas.

The presentation of mythic origin leads easily into a claim about the means of knowledge (called pramāṇa in Indian epistemology): the validity of the knowledge about mantras contained in the passage is established precisely on the fact that both text and mantras were spoken by buddhas. To a non-adherent, the argument from authority is a weak form of pramāṇa. The logical incertitude of this claim, however, is
overcome by a further dimension of the ascription of authority, since this aspect lays the theoretical foundation for efficacy and, thus, for "direct perception," the strongest form of pramāṇa. The Mmk makes it clear in its opening statement that the theoretical basis for the mantra is "the inconceivable, wonderous, miraculous transformation of the bodhisattva," or vikurvaṇa. This process is alluded to above in the statement, "this mantra is Mañjuśrī, the utmost essence, the panacea" (mantraḥ eṣa mañjuśrīḥ paramahṛdayāḥ sarvakarmakaraḥ). The vikurvaṇa of the bodhisattva is a wide-ranging concept. Elsewhere in the Mmk this concept serves as the mechanism of embodiment (avatāra) in general. Here, I would like to consider its bearing on the text’s claims about mantra.

The statement, "that upon which all beings depend: the miraculous transformation of the bodhisattva (bodhisattvavikurvaṇa)," refers to a foundational axiom in the Mmk concerning both the method of the Buddha’s activity in the world and the constitution of ritual efficacy. The mode of practice recorded in the Mmk has no basis – as Buddhist practice – removed from this foundation. It might even be argued that it is primarily the framework supported by the concept of vikurvaṇa, "miraculous transformation," that distinguishes the Buddhist ritual of the Mmk from other forms of medieval Indian cultic activity.

The term vikurvaṇa has several layers of meaning. Combining the root √kṛ (to make), with the affix vi (apart, asunder, different directions), it means "to make different, change, transform." As the Pāli equivalent vikubbana indicates, however, Buddhists employed the term technically from an early date to denote a transformation effected by potent mental forces (iddhivikubbana). Being on the same scale as a bodhisattva – albeit at a lower point – the practitioner of the Mmk develops such psychic powers, enabling him to perform several supernatural transformations, or “miracles,” such as becoming invisible, walking on water, flying through the air, ascending to the highest heavens.

The implications of the term bodhisattvavikurvaṇa in the Mmk, however, exceed even these technical meanings. As one of the ten powers of the bodhisattva (bodhisattvabala), the power of miraculous transformation (vikurvanabala) is, for the Buddhist engaged in the Mmk, the mechanism generating the mantra. Mañjuśrī, by means of his powers of

12. At, for example, Mmk 1.1.6.
13. PED s.v. vikubbana.
transformation, becomes the mantra. The mantra is an effective instrument by virtue of its being nothing less than a form assumed by the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. As the various categories of mantras mentioned above indicate – hrdaya, upahrdaya, paramahrdaya – the mantras are the very essence, the heart (hrdaya) of the bodhisattva. The paramahrdaya mantra is “Mañjuśrī himself” (svayam eva mañjuśrīḥ), existing (upasthitah) through the form of the mantra (mantrarūpena). One indication of the force believed to pervade the mantra is the power attributed to it: “when merely remembered, it [the paramahrdaya mantra] cleanses [the practitioner] of the five acts entailing immediate retribution” (yatrasmaritamātrena pañcānantaryāṇi pariśodhayati).

Since the bodhisattva and the “form of the mantra” are, in essence, one, and because the text is not explicit about its claims, an analysis of one of these forms should reveal a clearer picture of the relationship between the mantra and the bodhisattva in the Mmk. In the opening scene of the Mmk, Mañjuśrī was “impelled” (codana) by the radiating force of Śākyamuni’s omniscience to perform his obligation as a tenth-stage bodhisattva. His existence as the mantra is one mode through which that obligation is fulfilled. The power that enables this equivalency, in turn, involves two additional doctrinal stances operating in the mantra. The first, as we have seen, is indicated by the imperative to “perform a miraculous transformation” (vikurva); the second, in the imperative “remember your vow” (samayam anusmara). The power of vikurvana is one of the ten supernatural powers of the bodhisattva (bodhisattvabala). Based, in turn, on the doctrinal axiom of “the ontological equivalence or ultimate convertibility of phenomena

18. Mmk 1.1.20.
and absolute,”¹⁹ vikurvana is, in Luis GÓMEZ’ words, “the capacity to effect, by sheer psychic power, the transformation, displacement or multiplication of the human body.”²⁰ The bodhisattva is a being situated in the world. Because, however, the bodhisattva is an enlightened being, it follows that he or she possesses complete knowledge of the illusory nature of the world, and thereby gains the ability to move unimpededly through the world, manipulating its forms at will. The world of the bodhisattva becomes the dharmadhātu, the world seen as a composition of ultimately non-substantial components subject – precisely because of their lack of real substance – to manipulation. The Samādhīrājā, referred to in the Mmk,²¹ likens the freedom of movement that ensues from this understanding of reality to “wind blow[ing] swiftly through space” or the unbounded flight of birds in the sky.

As birds do not leave a path in space, thus do Bodhisattvas awaken to the true nature of Awakening. The sky is said to be ungraspable, in it there is nothing to grasp. This is the true nature of dharmas, ungraspable like the sky.²²

The invocation of the bodhisattva by means of the purificatory mantra above impells him to inhabit (tiṣṭha), and thus become identical with, in the Mmk passage cited above, certain ritual implements. The means generating this result is alluded to in the plea that the bodhisattva remember his vow, and in the invoking of his universal compassion. Another text referred to in the Mmk, the Gaṇḍavyūha,²³ contains an elaborate version on the bodhisattva vow (called samaya in the Mmk, and pranidhāna in the Gaṇḍavyūha).²⁴ In the following extract, allusions are made to the several points of doctrine mentioned above.

By the power of supernatural abilities, swiftly abounding everywhere;
by the power of universally eminent knowledge;
by the power of perfectly virtuous conduct;
by the power of universal love;
by the power of perfectly pure merit;

²⁰. Ibid.
²¹. This text is also known as Candrapradīpapamādhī (see WARDER 1991 [1970]: 395), by which it is referred at Mmk 2.38.12.
²³. Mmk 2.38.12.
²⁴. The vow is sometimes referred to as pranidhāna in the Mmk; for example, at Mmk 22.230.6 and 34.354.5, where a short vow is given.
by the power of unimpeded knowledge;
by the power of wisdom, means, and contemplation;
acquiring (samudānayamānaḥ) the power of enlightenment;
completely purifying the power of retributive actions (karma).
completely grinding the power of afflictions;
rendering powerless the power of death and time (māra)
I fulfill all of the powers of good conduct.

... Having completely fulfilled all of those [vows],
may I act for the happiness of beings
as long as [they remain] in the world.26

The above purificatory mantra is thus inscribed with the authority of the bodhisattva. The bodhisattva’s original vow to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings eventually produces the being capable of traversing the world, and of playfully entering and transforming linguistic “shells,” or spaces.

Description of use

From the angle of the ascription of authority, we learned that the mantra is a sound, word, or series of words that was spoken by enlightened beings in the past and, through the mechanism of vikurvaṇa, embodied by their force in the present and future. A mantra is therefore presented as a sonic embodiment or crystalization of a particular type of power. When we consider the mantra from the angle of the text’s descriptions of its use, these sounds, words, and series of words begin to separate out into subtly different types of utterance stemming from distinct aspects of that power.

Essence (hrdaya) mantras

At the beginning of Mmk 2, there is reference to Mañjuśrī’s “class of mantras” (tvādiyaṃ mantragaṇaṃ).27 This is followed by a compendium of the mantras used in the Mmk rituals. The first group comprises

25. See BHSD s.v. samudānayana.
26. Gaṇḍavyūha 433.7-18 and 436.3-4: rddhibalena samantajavena jñānabalena samantamukhena / caryabalena samantagunena maitrabalena samantagatena / punyabalena samantaśubhena jñānabalena asaṃgagatena / prajñ(o)pāya- samādhivalena bodhibalam samudānayamānaḥ / karmabalam pariśodhaya- mānaḥ klesabalam parimardayamānaḥ / mārabalam abalambkaramāṇaḥ pūrayi bhadracarībala sarvān / ... tāṃś ca ahaṃ paripūrya aśeṣān sattvahitaṃ kari yāvata loke /
27. Mmk 2.25.10.
hrdaya mantras. Examples of these were given above (at Mmk 1.2.20-22, 27-3.9): the hrdaya, paramahrdaya, and upahrdaya mantras. There, it was said that the hrdaya mantra accomplishes the task of leading Mañjuśrī into the presence of Śākyamuni, while the other two are called “all-accomplishing,” or “panaceaic” (sarvakarmakara) – mantras to be employed for any purpose. These mantras are “all-accomplishing” because they are the “utmost essence” (paramahrdaya) of compassionate, enlightened power, which is unlimited. These are the same mantras suggested for use in the preparation phase (puraścaraṇa) of the Mmk’s mantracaryā. A paradigmatic sequence of this mantracaryā is that given in the passage on the “ritual for superior attainment” (uttamasādhana):

First, he who has observed the vow, fulfilled the preliminary practices, received the initiation, taken the essential (hrdaya), basic mantra from this best of ordinances, or the upahrdaya or some other mantra, or having received a single syllable [mantra] or another one – according to one’s wishes – and who, having gone to a great forest, eats leaves and roots, who subsists on fruits and water, should recite [the mantra] three million times. He becomes one who has completed the preliminary practice.28

Here, by means of the mental and physical purity attained through prolonged recitation, the sādhaka is able to “come into the presence” (sāksat paśyati) of buddhas and bodhisattvas.29 The image presented at Mmk 2 of the power inhering in these mantras emphasizes the purifying, protective, and panaceaic nature of these mantras. Mañjuśrī addresses the section to Vajrapāni. Vajrapāni appears in the Mmk as the “lord of yakṣas, the master of guhyakas” (āguhyakādhipatī yakṣendra):30 by mastering these destructive divinities, Vajrapāni converts them into powers serving the aims of the practitioner. Thus, the mantras presented here are of this nature. They destroy, purify, and convert energy of various forms of embodiment, including mental, supernatural, and physical.

28. Mmk 8.79.10-28: adau tāvat dṛṣṭasamayaḥ kṛtapuraścaraṇaḥ labdhabhiṣekāḥ asmin kalparājamulamantrahrdayaṁ upahrdayaṁ vā anyataraṁ vā mantraṁ grhyātva ekāksaram vā anyaṁ vā yathepsitaṁ mahāranyam gatiṁ triśallakṣaṇī jape phalodakāhāraṁ mūlaparnābhakṣo vā kṛtapuraścaraṇo bhavati //
29. Page 80 is missing from my copy; I am thus referring to VAIDYA’s 1964 reprint (see Citations): p. 56.12.
30. Mmk 2.25.11.
The first mantra presented is that of Yamāntaka, the “sovereign of wrath” (krodhārāja), who, in later tantric theory, though not here, is identified as an emanation of Maṇjuśrī himself. For the practitioner of the Mmk’s rituals, the first step towards acquiring essential knowledge is protection and the destruction of obstacles.

Then Maṇjuśrī [bestowed] the preeminently heroic, all achieving essence (hrdaya) of the sovereign of wrath, Yamāntaka ... om āḥ hūm. This is the essence (hrdaya) of him whose wrath is great; it is all-accomplishing; it is taught by the great being Maṇjughoṣa for [use in] all maṇḍala and mantra rituals; it destroys all obstacles.

Then Maṇjuśrī lifted his right hand and placed it on the head of Krodha, and spoke thus: “Obeisance to all buddhas! May the blessed buddhas pay heed! May the bodhisattvas, who are dwelling in whatever world of the ten directions, and who possess unlimited, infinite, supernatural power (mahāarddhika), be firm in their vow!” Saying that, he circled [the Tibetan text reads: his hand] around the king of wrath, and dismissed him. The instant that the great king of wrath was dispatched to the entire world-realm, beings possessing great supernatural powers immediately restrained all evil-minded beings. He made them enter the Śuddhāvāsa, the great assembly. Making them remain there, becoming the family of those who are engulfed in flaming garlands, he stood at the head, among the evil-beings.

The mantra om āḥ hūm embodies the “essence” of Yamāntaka; it is therefore used in any ritual for the purpose of destroying malevolent obstacles. Here, the text presents an image of the violent, pre-linguistic archetype operating behind the use of this mantra. Placing his hand on the head of Yamāntaka, Maṇjuśrī invokes the authorizing presence of all buddhas. Yamāntaka becomes an agent of the bodhisattva, who, in turn, is an agent of all buddhas. So empowered, Yamāntaka gains mastery

31. Mmk 2.25.17.
32. Mmk 2.25.17-18; 2.25.22-26.7: atha maṇjuśrīḥ kumarabhūtaḥ Yamāntakasya krodharājasya hṛdayaṁ sarvakarmiṁ ekavirāṁ ... om āḥ hūm / idaṁ tan mahākrodhasya hṛdayaṁ / sarvakarmiṁ sarvamanḍaleṣu sarvamantracaryasu ca nidiṣṭaṁ mahāsaṣṭtvena maṇjughoṣena sarvavignāvīṇānām / atha maṇjuśrīḥ kumarabhūtaḥ dakṣiṇaṁ pāṇim udyamya krodhaṁ mūrdhni sthāpayāṁ āśa / evaṁ cāhā / namas te sarvabuddhāṁ / samanvāharanta [>°antu] buddhā bhagavantaḥ / ye kecid daśadig lokadhātuvyavasthitā anantā-paryantās ca bodhisattvā mahāarddhikāḥ samayam adhitiṣṭhanta [>°antu] / ity evam uktvā taṁ krodharājānaṁ bhṛāmayītvā kṣīpiṇī / samanvārarāṇiṣipte mahākrodhārāje sarvāvantāṁ lokadhātuṁ sattvā kṣanamārṣeṇa ye duṣṭāsavyāṁ sattvā mahāarddhikāṁ tāṁ nigrāhānayati / taṁ mahāpaśan maṇḍalaṁ śuddhāvāsabhavanam praveśayati / vyavasthāyāṁ ca sthāpayītvā samantajvālāmālākulo bhūtvā duṣṭasattveśu ca mūrdhni tiṣṭhate /
over all evil forces within the world. In subduing “all evil-minded beings,” Yamāntaka converts them into agents of his own violently purifying, protective force. When the practitioner recites the sounds *om āḥ hūm*, this image, capturing the essential (*ḥṛdaya*) function and activity of Yamāntaka, is effected. That is, hindering forces are dispelled from the ritual space; protection is achieved, and the area where a given ritual is performed thereby consecrated.

Additional “essence mantras” given at *Mmk* 2 are presented as belonging to the *bodhisattva* Vajrapāni, although the references within the mantras point to, respectively, Yamāntaka or Maṇjuśrī. Perhaps the ambiguity is intentional: the protective function of Maṇjuśrī is effected by Vajrapāni and Yamāntaka; the forms of each are ultimately undifferentiated. In any case, the mantras of this class are presented as serving as “rulers of great wrath that destroy all obstacles.”

Then the youthful Maṇjuśrī spoke to the *bodhisattva* Vajrapāni: “O master of secrets, these mantras are esoteric and supremely mysterious ...

Homage to all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, whose teachings are indestructible.

*uh kara kara kuru kuru mama kāryam bhaṅja bhaṅja sarvavighnām dāha dāha sarva vajravināyakam mūrdhaṭakajīvitāntakara mahāvīkṛtarūpire pa ca sarvaduṣṭām mahāgaṇapati jīvitāntakara bandha bandha sarvagraham śaṅmukha śādhuja śaṭcaraṇa rudrāmānaya viṣṇumānaya brahmaṇḍyām devān ānaya mā vilamba mā vilamba iyal iyal maṇḍalamadhye praveṣaya samayam anumara hūm hūm hūm hūm hūm hūm phat phat svāhā (O maker O maker do for me what should be done shatter shatter all obstacles burn burn all adamantine impediments O killer of Mūrdhaṭaka O you of extraordinary appearance cook cook all evil O killer of great Gaṇapati bind bind all demons O six-faced one O six-armed one O six-legged one subdue Rudra subdue Viṣṇu subdue the gods, beginning with Brahman do not delay do not delay become silent become silent enter into the maṇḍala remember your vow! hail!)

O supreme master of secrets, this [mantra] is the supreme secret, the great hero, Maṇjuśrī; it is called “six-faced one,” and is the ruler of the great wrath which destroys all obstacles. By merely reciting that, *bodhisattvas* who are established in the ten stages are dispersed, let alone evil obstructions. By merely reciting that, great protection is created. There is also a sealing gesture (mudrā) known as “the great spike,” the destroyer of all obstacles.”

33. *Mmk* 2.28.21-22-29.1-11: *atha khalu maṇjuśrīḥ kumārabhūtaḥ vajrapāṇiḥ bodhisattvam āmantrayate sma / imāni guhyakādhimate mantrapadāṇi saraḥsaṇyāni paramaguhyaṅkāni [...] namaḥ sarvabuddhabodhisattvān apratihata śāsanānām / um kara kara kuru kuru mama kāryam bhaṅja bhaṅja sarvavighnām dāha dāha sarva vajravināyakam mūrdhaṭakajīvitāntakara mahāvīkṛtarūpire pa ca sarvaduṣṭām mahāgaṇapati jīvitāntakara bandha bandha sarvagraham śaṅmukha śādhuja śaṭcaraṇa rudrāmānaya viṣṇumānaya
This mantra, equated with both Mañjuśrī ("this is ... Mañjuśrī") and Yamāntaka (the "six-faced one"), begins with an interjection of anger and pacification (umī). Among the powers that it serves to shatter and subdue are those connected to other cults: Viṣṇu, Śiva (Rudra), Gaṇapatī, Mūrdhātaka, and Brahma. The mantra counteracts the power of these deities that has been set in motion by their adherents, and subjects that power – these deities – to the ends of the Mmk practitioner. This point is made explicit several pages later when the mantras of these cultic deities are presented as having been taught by Śākyamuni. Like an antibody, this mantra repels not only alien forms of power encroaching on the ritual space of the practitioner, but even the most advanced, allied bodhisattvas (tenth-stage ones). This indicates a degree of power bordering on the noxious. It is a small step from incapacitating the effected powers of rival deities to incapacitating those who effect such power. Indeed, the next mantra given justifies the destruction of "all enemies," presumably human as well as non-human.

This is the essence (hrdaya) of the ruler of wrath [Yamāntaka]: oṁ hrīḥ jñīḥ vikṛtānana hum / sarvaśatrūṃ nāśaya stambhaya phat phat svāhā (shame! destroy all enemies incapacitate! hail!) By means of this mantra, all enemies are seized by the great spike disease or by the fever that arises every four days. With a hundred recitations, or as many as desired, benevolence is not practiced. Then, he obtains a compassionate mind. May there not be liberation at the end of the recitation. Those offending the three jewels, saying, “he dies,” should not be treated entirely as those of gentle mind. The sealing gesture (mudrā) called “the great spike,” should be used. In this instance, the secondary essence [mantra] (upahrdaya) is this: oṁ hrīṁh kālarūpa hūṃ khaṃ svāhā (shame O you with the appearance of a crow! hail!) The sealing gesture to be used is also “the great spike.” Whatever evil he desires, that he accomplishes. The paramahrdaya [mantra] is indeed the single syllable empowered by all buddhas: hūṃ. This accomplishes all deeds. The sealing gesture to be used is also "the great spike." It hinders all misfortunes. In short, O ruler of wrath, this mantra is to be employed in every ritual for the subjugation of all demons.34

34. Mmk 2.29.11-22: asyaiva krodharājasya hrdayam / oṁ hrīṁh jñīḥ vikṛtānana hum / sarvaśatrūṃ nāśaya stambhaya phat phat svāhā / anena mantreṇa sarvaśatrūṃ mahāśūlarogeṇa caturthakeṇa /ṉām paramahārājā sarvavignānāsakāh / anena paṭhitamātreṇa dasabhūṁipratiṣṭhāpitabodhisattvād vidravante / kim punarduṣṭavighnāh / anena paṭhitamātreṇa mahārakṣā kṛtā bhavati / mudrā cātra bhavati mahāśūleśu vikhyāṭā sarvavignānāśikā /
The mention of the mudrā in this mantra passage points to a significant aspect of the mantra as it is used in the Mmk. The hand gesture is an indispensable aspect of the type of ritual promulgated in the Vaiṣṇava Pañcarātra samhitās, Śaiva Siddhānta āgamas, as well as in the Mmk. By the early medieval era, the mudrā becomes an increasingly widespread element of the type of worship known as mantracaryā or tantra.35 The importance of the mudrā for the practitioners of the Buddhist form of mantracaryā is evident from the fact that ten of the fifty-five chapters of the Mmk are devoted to it. At Mmk 34 we read of a mudrākośa, a treasury of ritual gestures.36 Mmk 34-37 and 41-46 is an extensive compendium, a “text on gestures” (mudrātantra).37 In the Mmk, these gestures invariably accompany verbal actions. The two, mudrās and mantras, are in fact so closely bound that they can be said to form a single instrumental act:38 “The mudrās are the seals of the mantras; and with the mantras they are well-sealed. There is no mantra without a mudrā; devoid of the mudrā, there is no seal.”39 In many instances, the mudrās seem to be bodily presentations of the object either invoked or offered by means of the mantra (e.g., the “three-headed” and “five-headed” gestures imitating the head dress of Mañjuśrī; “the spike,” and the “seat of the peacock”). Stephan BEYER calls these types of mudrās, “mimetic representations of the objects being offered — simulacra that control the transmission of worship to the god, just as the mantras of offering enjoin its acceptance and response.”40 BEYER also mentions a

rocate maitrātām vā na pratipadyate / atha karunācittāṁ labhate / jāpānte muktir na syāt / mṛyate iti ratnatrayāpakariṇāṁ kartavyaṁ nāśeṣam saumya-cittānāṁ [/] mudrā mahāśūlayaiva prajojanīyā / upahṛdayaṁ cātra bhavati / orī hṛṁh kālarūpa hūm kham svāhā / mudrā mahāśūlyaiva prajojanīyā / sarvaduṣṭāṁ yam icchati taṁ kārayati / paramahṛdayaṁ / sarvabuddhādhiṣṭhitam ekākṣaraṁ nāma / hūm / eṣa sarvakarmakaraḥ / mudrā mahāśūlayaiva prajojanīyā / sarvānarthanivāramān / sarvabhūtavasaṃkaraḥ saṃkṣepatāḥ / eṣa krodhrāja sarvakarmeṣu prayōktavyāḥ [/]

36. Mmk 34.351.8 and 35.355.10.
37. Mmk 34.350.16.
38. See, for example, Mmk 2.26.8-35.10, where numerous mantras and vidyās are given with their corresponding mudrās. The correspondences are made fairly explicit here.
“stereotyped gesture,” that is, a ritualized use of a common gesture for threat. Such mudrās correspond to mantras such as phaṭ – i.e., the ritual use of sounds that are employed in everyday expression. Examples of this type of mudrā are gestures of “reverence, threat, welcome, or farewell.”

(No such gestures are prescribed at Mmk 2.) In sum, the mudrā, when employed by a serious initiate in conjunction with the proper mantra, creates quick and infallible results (mudrā mantra-samopetā saṃyuktā kṣiprakarmikā; mudrā mantrasamopetā saṃyuktā sarvakarmikā).

So far, I have discussed hrdaya mantras. The text describes several uses of these mantras. Those related directly to the Buddha/all buddhas and to Mañjuśrī are “all-accomplishing;” that is, their application is manifold, ranging from the fulfillment of personal wishes, good health, and fortunate rebirth, to enlightenment. Those attached specifically to the “fierce” aspect of Mañjuśrī – in the form of Vajrapāni and Yamāntaka – are used to purify and protect the mental and physical space of the practitioner.

Invocation (āhvānana) mantras

After the presentation of the “powerful eight syllabled” hrdaya mantra (Mmk 2.26.13-27.3), Mmk 2 presents what it calls āhvānana mantras. As the term indicates, these are to be used specifically for the invocation (āhvānana) of both enlightened forces (Mañjuśrī, all bodhisattvas, all solitary buddhas, noble hearers) and worldly forces and spirits.

Here are the mantras for invocation: Oṁ he he kumārarūpīpisvarūpīne sarvabālabhāṣitatprabodhāne āyāhi bhagavaṃ āyāhi kumārakrīdotpaladhāriṇe maṇḍalamadhye tiṣṭha tiṣṭha samayam anusmara apratihataśasana hūṃ mā vilamba ru ru phaṭ svāhā (O you whose own form is the form of a prince O awakening spoken by all youth approach O blessed one approach O you who bear the lotus playing as a prince abide abide in the middle of the mandala! remember the vow! O indestructible teaching hūṃ! do not delay! hail!) This is the mantra for invoking the blessed Mañjuśrī, and [for invoking] all beings, all

40. BEYER 1973:146. See Mmk 35.355.24ff. for obvious examples of this category of mudrā. Gestures given there include utphala, svastika, dhvaja, chatra, ghaṭa, mālā, śīla, kumbha, and Mmk 2.27.10ff. for similar correspondences.

41. BEYER 1973:146.

42. See, for instance, Mmk 34.350.10-21, a section on the requirements of the the practitioner who receives mudrā: he must be adorned with bodhicitta, follow the buddhas’ path interminably, etc.

43. Mmk 34.351.9 and 22.
Several of the mantras presented so far have referred to the manḍala. The fact that this section on mantras precedes the prescriptions for the initiation (abhiṣeka) ritual indicates that the mantras are to be applied specifically during that ritual. The initiation is performed within a manḍala. The act of invoking auspicious, protective, and potentially threatening forces is a standard feature of the Mmk ritual practice. One example should suffice to show this. The raw cotton used for making the cult image must be consecrated (abhimantrana) before it is woven into a canvas. This is achieved, as mentioned above, by invoking the force of “all buddhas” in the form of Mañjuśrī.

Similarly, the āhvanana mantras consecrate the object into which some force is being drawn, or, in the language of the text, is being implored to approach (āyāhi) the object and abide (tiṣṭha) within it. While the mantra is always specific in that its terms refer directly to the effected object, and its corresponding mudrā often “mimicks” the object, the pattern of invocation is consistently generalized throughout the Mmk.

Offering mantras
From the mantras used to summon powers into the manḍala or to any other place where rituals are performed, the text moves to the objects of offering that are being directed to these powers. Since the goal of these offerings is to make present the invoked object, these mantras may be

44. Mmk 2.27.3-9: āhvānanaṁ mantrāṁ cātra bhavati / om he he kumāraraupilūpiṇe sarvabālabhāṣitaṁ prabhodhane āyāhi bhagavam āyāhi / kumārakrīdotpaladhāriṇe maṇḍalamadhye tiṣṭha tiṣṭha / samayaṁ anusmaraṁ apratihataśaśanaṁ hūm / mā vilambam ra ra phat phat svāhā / eṣa bhagavam maṇjuśriyam āhvānanaṁ / sarvasattvāṁ sarvabodhisattvāṁ sarvapratyekabuddhāḥ svāvatāvati- nāgaśaṅgaṁ gantudhāruḍakinnaramahoragapiśaśaśasasārvabhūtānām [/

considered a sub-category of āhvānana mantras. The following example shows the sensual nature of the language of these passages.

Having prepared the sandalwood water, consecrated seven times, he should scatter it everywhere: in all four directions, upwards, downwards, horizontally. All buddhas and bodhisattvas, the retinue of Mañjuśrī himself, all mantras, ordinary and extraordinary, all classes of creatures, and all beings must appear. Homage to all buddhas, whose teachings are indestructible! Oṁ duḥ ḍhūra dhūra dhūrpaśiṇā dhūrpaśiṇi ṛṣiḥ tiṣṭha samayam anusmara svāhā (O you dwelling in the incense O luster of the incense abide remember your vow! hail!) [This is the] “incense mantra.” Then, having prepared the saffron, camphor, and sandalwood, [the incense mantra] should be bestowed on the incense. All tathāgatas and bodhisattvas come, and they are drawn out of the heart of the gratified incense. The mudrā of this [mantra] is known as “the garland,” and is auspicious, attracting all beings. These mantras of invocation and their mudrās are beautiful garlands of lotuses. They should be offered to all the buddhas, bodhisattvas and other beings who come. After stirring water with camphor, sandalwood and saffron, and preparing a mixture of two draughts of crushed bakula flowers, white lotuses grown in the rainy season and fresh garlands of jasmine with some other fragrant flower that is in season, an offering should be made along with the mantra. Homage to all buddhas, whose teachings are indestructible! The mantra is: he he mahākāruṇika viśvarūpadhārini arghyaṃ pratīcchad pratīcchāpaya samayam anusmara tiṣṭha tiṣṭha maṇḍalāmadhye praveśāya praviṣa sarvaḥūtāṇukampaka ṛṛṣṇā ṛṛṣṇā ṛṛṣṇā ambaravicāriṇe svāhā (hey hey you of great compassion, bearer of manifold forms regard this offering receive this offering remember your vow! abide abide in the center of the maṇḍala! lead into it enter into it! O you who possess compassion for all beings seize seize O you who traverse the sky! hail!) The mudrā for this is known as “abundance,” and it is followed by all buddhas.46

46. Mmk 2.27.10-26: saptābhimantritaṁ candanodakaṁ kṛtvā / caturdiśāṁ ity udhvanadhasāt kṣipet / sarvabuddhabodhisattvāḥ maṇjuśrīyaḥ svayaṁ tasya parivāraḥ sarvalaukikāloka-kottarāḥ ca mantrāḥ sarve ca bhūtagaṇāḥ sarvasattvāḥ ca āgataḥ bhaveyyah / namaḥ sarvabuddhānāṁ apratihataśāsanānāṁ / oṁ duḥ ḍhūra ḍhūra ḍhūrpaśiṇā ḍhūrpaśiṇi ṛṣiḥ tiṣṭha samayam anusmara svāhā / ḍhūpamantrāḥ / candanāṁ karpūram kumkumam caikīkṛtya ḍhūpam dāpayettataḥ / āgatāṁ tathāgataṁ sarvabodhisattvānāṁ ca ḍhūpāpyāyātamanasaḥ ākṛṣṭā bhavanti / bhavati cātra mudrā yasya mālēti vikhyātā sarvasattvākaraṇāṁ śivā / āhvānana- maṇtrāyaśā ca ayameva mudrā padamālā śubhā / āgatāṁ ca sarvabuddhabodhisattvānāṁ sarvasattvānāṁ cāgatānāṁ arghyo deyaḥ / karpūracandana-kumkumāraḥ udakāmalodyājītakusumanavamalikavārśikapunānāṃ gavavakulapiṇḍitagarbhāyāṁ eteṣām anyatamena puṣpena yathārtukena vā sugandhapuṣpena māṣikṛtya anena maṇtrena arghyo deyaḥ / namaḥ sarvabuddhānāṁ apratihataśāsanānāṁ tadayathā / he he mahākāruṇika viśvarūpadhārini arghyaṃ pratīcchad pratīcchāpaya samayam anusmara tiṣṭha tiṣṭha maṇḍalāmadhye praveśāya praviṣa sarvaḥūtāṇa-
The equivalency of the mantra, mudrā, object of consecration, and possessing force is explicit in these offering mantras. These are called variously incense mantras (dhūpamantra), fragrance mantras (gandha-mantra), oblate mantras (balimantra), illumination mantras (pradīpa-mantra), and fire mantras (agnimantra).

And here are the perpetually fragrant mantras (gandhamantra). Homage to all buddhas! Homage to the tathāgata, whose glory, brilliance and fragrance are universal! The mantra is: gandhe gandhe gandhādhye gandhamanorame pratīcche pratīcchemaṃ gandham samantānusāriṇe svāhā! (O fragrant one O you abounding in fragrance O joy within the fragrance attend to me O you who entirely penetrate this fragrance! hail!) The sealing gesture (mudrā) in this case is called “the bud that completely fulfills all desires.”

And here are the flower mantras (puspamantra). Homage to all buddhas, whose teachings are indestructible! Homage to the tathāgata, the ruler of those who have fully blossomed! The mantra is this: kusume kusume kusumādhye kusumapuravāsini kusumāvati svāhā (O blossoming O blossoming O you abounding in blossoms O you dwelling in the city of blossoms O land of blossoms! hail!) He should thus fumigate with the incense mantra (dhūpamantra), mentioned above, [and] with incense.

Making obeisance to the buddhas, who possess inconceivably wonderous forms, I will proclaim this oblate mantra (balimantra), which has been spoken by the perfectly enlightened buddhas.

Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas, whose teachings are indestructible! The mantra is this: he he bhagavaṃ mahāśattva buddhāvalokita mā vilamba idaṃ balim grhnāpaya grhṇa hūṃ hūṃ sarvaviśva ra ra tā phāṭ svāhā hey hey blessed one! (O great being, do not delay take this offering take! O all and everything! hail!) Along with [reciting] this, he should present the offering and the oblation to all sentient beings. The mudrā has the power to ward off all evil. Homage to the indestructible teaching of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, which completely destroys the darkness of delusions! Homage to the tathāgata whose glory, resplendence and fragrance shines universally! The [illumination mantra (pradīpamantra: 28.15)] is: he he bhagavaṃ jyotiraśmiṣatasahasrapratimaṇḍitaśārīra virkurva vikurva mahābodhisattvasamantajvālodayottamāmārti khurda khurda avalokaya avalokaya sarvasatvānāṃ svāhā (O you whose body is adorned with a hundred thousand rays of light transform transform O manifestation who shines replendently and universally on the great bodhisattvas play play behold all beings! hail!) These are the illumination mantras. Together with this, the lamp (pradīpa) should be offered. The mudrā is called “the beam of light that beholds all beings.” Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas, whose teachings are indestructible! The [mantra] is: jvala jvala jvālaya jvālaya hūṃ
kampaka grhṇa grhṇa hūṃ ambaravicāriṇe svāhā / mudrā cātrapūrṇeti vikyātā sarvabuddhānuvartinī /
These are the fire mantras. The mudrā, called “the covered box” (ṣaṁpuṭa), is famous throughout the world. Shining brilliantly on all beings, it was previously proclaimed by those best of munis for the wise bodhisattva.\(^{47}\)

The offering mantras highlight the fact that a mantra must be preceded by a liturgical formula acknowledging the glory of the buddhas. As with any ritual practice in the Mmk, preparation is a central feature of all forms of mantra recitation. In every instance, preparation involves mentally focussing on the authority that stands behind the power being made manifest by means of the mantra.

Dismissal (visarjana) mantra

Following the offering mantras, the text gives the “dismissal mantra” (visarjanamantra). This is used for withdrawing the power of the mantra after it has “effected” the goal of the practitioner.

The dismissal mantras. Homage to all buddhas, whose teachings are indestructible. [The mantra] is: jaya jaya sujaya mahäkāruṇika viśvarūpiṇe gagcha gagcha svabhavanam sarvabuddhāṁ ca visarjaya saparivārāṁ svabhavanāṁ cānupraveṣayā samayam anusmara sarvārthāṁ ca me Siddhyantu

mantrapadāḥ manoratham ca me paripūraya svāhā (conquer conquer completely conquer O you of great compassion who appears in various forms go go to your own abode and dismiss all buddhas enter your own abode along with your retinue remember your vow may the mantra words effect all of my goals and my heart’s desire completely fulfill! hail!) This dismissal mantra should be employed in all rituals. The sealing gesture is known as “the throne of good” (bhadrapīṭha). Together with this, a seat should be offered. The mantra adept (mantrasiddhi) should employ the visarjana together with seven [silent] mental recitations (manasā saptajaptena) for all ordinary and extraordinary [rituals], manḍala [rituals] and mantra [rituals], and when under occasional vows – during jāpa recitation.48

Vidyā mantras

Following this is a long section on a class of mantras called vidyā, taught by Mañjuśrī to the assembly gathered in the Śuddhāvāsa palace. As with the above classes of mantra, the Mmk does not offer explicit explanations of the vidyā, but presents images and descriptions of use. The image of the vidyā is of a “female companion” (anucarī) of Mañjuśrī – all vidyās are given in the feminine gender. The vidyās are “possessed of beautiful hair” (keśinī, upakeśinī), “star-like” (tārāvatī), “possessed of brilliant, glorious beauty” (śvetasrīvapu), “of great loveliness” (mahālakṣmī).49 As with all other mantras, mudrās – usually “mimetic” – invariably accompany vidyās. And, as the following examples illustrate, vidyās are applied for various purposes.

Homage to all buddhas, whose teachings are indestructible: om riṣi svāhā! This is the vidyā that does everything; it is called “lovely hair” (keśini), and is] the female companion of Mañjuśrī. During all rituals requiring an attendant the great sealing gesture, “five-crests,” is used. Homage to the universal buddhas, whose teachings are indestructible: om niṣi. This vidyā, called upakeśinī, does everything. [This] should be used with the sealing gesture “blooming” (vikāsinī) in all rituals of seizure (sarvagrahakarma).

49. Mmk 2.30.4, 7, 25, 31.11, and 22, respectively.
Homage to the universal buddhas,
who possess inconceivably wondrous forms.

Oṃ nu re [T. = tāre] svāhā.
This vidyā, called “star-like” (tārāvati)\(^{50}\)
is commended for all rituals.
Done together with the sealing gesture
“staff of force” (śaktiyaśṭi),
[this vidyā] is a destroyer of obstacles.

Homage to the universal buddhas,
who proceed on an unobstructed course.
[The vidyā is] oṃ śrīḥ.
This spell, “she of great loveliness” (mahālakṣmī),
was taught by the protectors of the world.
Practiced with the sealing gesture
“bowl-shaped” (sāṃpuṭa),
she grants the rank of “emperor.”\(^{51}\)

The vidyās refer to feminine deities that were appropriated by Buddhists.
As such, they are classed as belonging not to the family of buddhas
(tathāgatakula), but to that of the “lotus” (abjakula). Mmk 1 mentions
numerous vidyārājīs “proceeding from the samādhi of the manifest
Lokeśvara” (vidyārājībhīr lokeśvaramūrttisamādhisvīrtaiḥ);\(^{52}\) the vidhārājīs “proceed from the mantras and penetrate the vow of the lotus
family” (abjakulasamayāṇupraveśamantravicāribhiḥ).\(^{53}\)

Non-Buddhist mantras
In this vein, the section on mantras at Mmk 2 ends with an appropriation
of the mantras of major non-Buddhist deities. This sub-section is
prefaced by a polemical “revisionist” history of the mantras that are then

\(^{50}\) At Mmk 10.16 tārā heads a list of vidyārājīs; at Mmk 4.65.9 called “compassion
of Avalokiteśvara.”
\(^{51}\) Mmk 2.30.3-7; 30.23-26; 31.20-23: namaḥ sarvabuddhānām apratihata-
sāsānām / oṃ riṭi svāhā // maṇjuśrīsayedam anucarī keśīṁ nāma vidyā sarvak-
ārīkā / mahāmudrāyā pañcāśīkhāyā yojyāsarvaviṣkarmasū / namaḥ
samantabuddhānām apratihitasaśānām / oṃ niṭi / upakeśīṁ nāma vidyeśaṁ
sarvakārīkā mudrayā vīkāṣyā ca yo jaya / sarvagrahakarmesūr namaḥ
samantabuddhānām acintyādbhātarūpinām [I] oṃ nu re [T. = tāre] svāhā /
vidyā tāravati nāma prasāstā sarvakarmasū / mudrayā śaktisyāṣṭā tu yo jita
vignaghātinī / namaḥ sarvabuddhānām apratihitagata[T. sākṣī]pracārīnām
[I] tadyathā / oṃ śrīḥ / eśā vidyā mahālakṣmī lokanāthaistu deśita / mudrā
sāṃpūṭā yuktā mahārājyapradāyikā //

\(^{52}\) Mmk 1.10.14-15.
\(^{53}\) Mmk 1.11.3.
presented. The central contention of the history is that all previous *mantras* – those of Brahma, Śiva, Viṣṇu, etc. – were originally spoken by the Buddhist *bodhisattva* Maṇjuśrī, though in the form of Brahma, Śiva, etc. Maṇjuśrī merely took the form of these Hindu deities as an *upāya* – in this case, as a means of conversion. Specifically, the preface identifies Maṇjuśrī with Kārttikeya (also called Skanda), the six-headed son of Śiva in Purāṇic mythology. In this manner, the *Mmk* presents its own Purāṇa fragment of sorts, rewriting the history of Kārttikeya, revealing essential facts about his life that had been left out of the Śaivite account. In the *Mmk* version, Kārttikeya’s name is combined with Maṇjuśrī’s: Kārttikeyamaṇjuśrī. This synthetic name gives a clear picture of the authors’ intention to co-opt Śaivite claims and subordinate these to those of the *Mmk*. Although there are allusions to Kārttikeya/Skanda’s role as the leader of the demons who cause illness in children, here that role is reversed: Kārttikeyamaṇjuśrī declares a mantra that “completely frees from illness during the period of youth.” Finally, Kārttikeya is assigned the roll of attendant (anucara) to the *bodhisattva*.

This was spoken by the *bodhisattva* Maṇjughoṣa, the protector, whose six[-faced] transformation shook the entire world.

To hinder evil beings for the sake of all beings’ welfare, the terrible son of Maheśvara (= of Śiva) came here in order to convert others.

54. See O’FLAHERTY 1975: 161ff. The *Mmk* emphasizes this equivalency by presenting an unmistakable image of Maṇjuśrī as “six-faced” (*saṃmukha*), and as making the gesture mimicking the seat of the peacock (the vehicle of Kārttikeya). This occurs immediately before the “Purāṇa,” as the final *vidyā*. It reads as follows (note the masculine forms). *om kuṃāra mahākuṃāra krīḍa krīḍa saṃmukha bodhisattvānujñāta mayūrāsanaṃghodyatāpāni raktāmga rakta-gandhānulepanapiya kha kha khāni khāni huṃ nṛtya nṛtya raktapuṣpārčitamūrtī samayam anusmara bhrama bhrama bhrāmaya bhrāmaya lahu lahu mā vilamba sarvakāryāni me kuru kuru tiṣṭha tiṣṭha huṃ huṃ sarvabuddhānujñāta svāhā (O youthful one O great youth play play O six-faced one authorized by bodhisattvas you whose hand is raised in the [mudrā] seat of the peacock flock O red-limbed one O beloved anointed with myrrh dancing dancing O you whose body is aflame with red flowers remember your vow wander wander cause to wander cause to wander cause to wander quickly quickly do not delay do do for me all work O you who bear a bright-colored form abide abide O you who have been authorized by all buddhas hail!)
Well marked by the emblems of demons
and with charcoal,
he who speaks sweetly (manjubhāṣinī\(^{55}\))
spoke with a mind engrossed
in compassion to Skanda.

This the great-souled bodhisattva,
for creating welfare for children,
proclaimed wherever beings wandered
throughout the world.

Combined with the sealing gesture of the great-souled one,
[called] “staff of force” (saktiyasti),
he leads one to Brahma, and so forth [i.e., to all the gods],
let alone to human results.

Kārttikeyamañjuśrī declared this mantra,
in brief, so that one may be
completely free from illness during
the period of youth.

Desirous of conferring benefits on beings,
the bodhisattva came here
to proclaim the three-syllabled essence
of his mantra.

He attends closely to attracting fortune
for the welfare of every beings,
and, fixed with the sealing gesture “staff of force,”
accomplishes all deeds.

*om hūṃ jah*
This mantra would achieve human results fully.

Homage to all buddhas, whose embodiments manifest universally.
*om vikṛtagraha hūṃ phat svāhā (O mutilated demon phat hail!)*
And the employment of its upahrdaya
together with the force of the sealing gesture,
averts bhūtas, grahas, and mātaras.

Fixing it with sealing gestures
that seal all,
it would be fruitful.
It causes terror to bhūtas,
releasing those intent on evil.

This is the youthful, all-achieving attendant of Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, named
Kārttikeyamañjuśrī. Through mere repetition [of the mantra], he accomplishes all

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55. Inexplicably, the Sanskrit gives feminine *mañjubhāṣinī*. I translate the more consistent masculine form of the Tibetan, ‘jam pa’i nag gis.
deeds, terrifies all bhūtas, attracts, subjugates, hurts, kills, or whatever is desired by the practitioner of spells (vidyādhara), all of that is effected.

The mantras given here reflect the synthetic nature of the section as a whole. The one mantra, om hūṃ jaḥ, has both the formal and functional elements of the buddhal bodhisattva hṛdaya mantras, while the other, om viktagraha hūṃ phat svāhā, has those of the abjakula protective forces. This double function of the mantras is apparent when the text turns to those of Brahma, Śiva, and Viṣṇu.

Homage to the universal buddhas, whose teachings are indestructible.
[The mantra is]: om brahma subrahma bramavarcase sāntīṁ kuru svāhā (O Brahma perfect Brahma O divine splendor make peace! hail!)

This mantra, “great Brahmā,” was spoken by the bodhisattva.
Being attained peace;
from this moment on they are gentle.

Employed with the five-crested sealing gesture (mudrā),
he would quickly make auspicious progress.
It is mentioned in the Atharva Veda for all of the rites of malediction.

56. For vidyādhara, see PRYZLUSKI 1923.

58. Correct text’s reading of athavā ceda on basis of Tibetan: see MACDONALD: 39, fn. 3.
In short, this is taught in the abridged [version] of that ordinance.

Homage to the universal buddhas, whose teachings are indestructible.

[The mantra is]: om garūḍavāhana cakrapāṇi caturbhuja hūṁ hūṁ samayam anusmara / bodhisattvo jñāpayati (O you who ride upon Garūḍa O you who hold the discus in your hand O four-armed one! hūṁ hūṁ remember your vow! the bodhisattva has revealed this!)

Authorized by Mañjughoṣa, [this mantra] accomplishes all matters quickly and is auspicious.

With the form of Viṣṇu as a body for the people, it causes demons to be put to flight.

Employed with the “three-crested” sealing gesture it is steadfast, accomplishing all matters quickly.

Those extensive ordinances that were proclaimed in the Vaishnava tantra were spoken by Mañjughoṣa as but a means for converting people. 59

After making identical claims about the mantras used in the cults of Śiva and Garūḍa, 60 the Mmk ends this section on mantras with an image showing the relationship between these cults and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. According to this image, those who employ non-Buddhist – non-Mmk – mantras, do so foolishly, like playing children who wander dangerously far from their mother. But these non-Buddhist practitioners are ultimately saved from their transgression since the forms they worship, and the mantras they recite, are really aspects of the bodhisattva, gently prodding them into the family of the buddhas.


60. Mmk 2.34.6-13 and 14-26, respectively.
Just as a mother watchfully plays with her children in various ways, I (Mañjuśrī) wander among those of child-like intelligence in the form of the mantra.

Previously proclaimed by buddhas, and now uttered by me – the resplendent prince – is the meaning of all mantra texts.

Those [mantras] which were sung by the greatest of victors, those [mantras] which were sung by the sons of the buddhas – those were sung by him whose voice is pleasant in the aspect of miraculous, inconceivable forms.61

The image of the mother (dhātrī) playing (lālatī) with her children evokes the mythological image of the cosmic play (līlā) of the creator (dhātṛ) with his creation, and of the bodhisattva playfully entering and transforming material forms. It also calls to mind the uttamasādhana, where the sādhaka “becomes one who playfully enjoys immortality” (ajarāmaralīlī bhavati62) and other results of mantra practice. The metaphor of play is apt for a ritual text like the Mmk. In a sense, it can be argued that the very purpose of such a text is to provide the rules for playing. The game being played is of course the game of mantric utterance. Like a mother protecting her children by setting limits, the Mmk protects its aspiring sādhakas by laying down the rules for what its community holds to be real achievement, namely, the efficacious use of the mantra and all the benefits that that entails.

Demonstration of effect

By “demonstration of effect,” I mean the Mmk’s presentation of a passage describing the results of mantra practice. An example is as follows.

He proceeds instantly to the Brahmaloka. He stays in the world-realm Kusumāvatī, where the tathāgata Saṅkusumitarājendra dwells, exists, abides and teaches the dharma. He beholds Mañjuśrī directly (sāksāt). He hears the true teaching (dharma). He also sees several thousand bodhisattvas, and worships them. He becomes one who playfully enjoys non-aging and immortality for a

61. Mmk 2.35.5-10: yathā hi dhātrī bahudhā bālānām lālati yatnataḥ / tathā bālīśa-buddhānām mantrarūpāḥ carāmyaham // daśabalaṁ kathitaṁ pūrve adhunā ca mayoditaṁ / sakalam mantratantrārthaṁ kumāro ’pyāham mahādyutīḥ // jina-varaiś ca ye gītā gītā daśabalaṁ majaś / mañjusvāreṇa te gītā acintyādbuta-

thousand great eons. The *pāta* is also there. He is empowered by all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, and he declares to them his firm resolution to attain enlightenment and proceeds to their hundred thousand paradises. [Their] hundred thousand bodies are revealed to him. He becomes possessed of numerous powers and supernatural abilities. The noble Mañjuśrī becomes his virtuous friend. He becomes one for whom the goal of enlightenment is certain.63

When the *Mmk* presents a passage demonstrating the effect of the *mantra*, it is showing the end of its own form of *mantracaryā – end*, in several senses: purpose, consummation, extent, realization. But the ability to effect the power of the *mantra* represents more than the culmination of a religious practice; it represents the ends of both Buddhism as a whole and of the culture from which this practice emerges. If, as is the view of religious practitioners, such practices lead to levels of meaning and satisfaction not attainable through non-religious means, then demonstrations of effects are eschatological, in the most literal sense of the word: they are discourses (*logos*) on what lies furthest (*eschatos*) – furthest from the culture of which they are the culmination. A civilization that cultivates a Christian worldview will present as “last things” such issues as the end of history, redemption, final judgement, heaven, and hell. Such concerns follow from the temporal and spatial notions embedded in, and generating, Christian cosmology. Christian liturgy, worship, prayer, etc., are, then, believed to be the keys for unlocking that cosmic structure. A society that cultivates Buddhist views will offer a different set or sets of final things, such as *nirvāṇa*, salvific knowledge, liberation, cessation of suffering and of *saṃsāra*, and it will mold the keys, produced by its culture, to fit its specific cosmology. So, when the *Mmk* demonstrates the effect of its *mantra* practice it is revealing what its community held to be the most valuable ends grounded in, though transcending, the social world that gives that practice life and meaning.

63. *Mmk* 8.79.27-28: acchaṭṭamātṛeṇa brahma-lokamatrīrāmati / kusmaṇvatiṁ loka-
dhātum sampratiṣṭhati / yatrasau bhagavāṁ saṁkusuṁitrājendraś tathāgataḥ
tiṣṭhati dhriyate [VAIDYA 1964: p. 56.12-16] yapāyati dharman ca deśayati /
āryamaṇjuśrīyaṁ ca sākṣāt paśyati / dharmanā śriṇoti / anekānyapi bodhisattva-
śatasahasra paśyati / tāṁś ca parupāste / mahākalpasahasraṁ ajarāmaralī
bhavati / paṭas tatraiva tiṣṭhati / sarvabuddhabodhisattvādihiṣhito bhavati /
teṣām cādhiṣṭānām saṁjānte kṣetraśatasahasraṁ cākkramaṁ / kāyaśasa-
sahasraṁ vā darsaṁ / anekārdhiprabhāvasamudgato bhavati / ārya-
maṇjuśrīyaṁ ca kalpaṇamitra bhavati / niyatam bodhiparāyaṇo bhavati //
At the beginning of this article, I noted that a *mantra* is a form of speech, and that, like ordinary speech, it must be learned, and then used in specific contexts, if it is to be effective. I mentioned too that the system of rules implicit in *mantric* language is not dependent on linguistic features. The first two sub-sections then considered some of the ritual and doctrinal features of *mantric* “grammar.” This sub-section will look at the social dimension of *mantric* utterance.

“The social dimension of *mantric* utterance” is a phrase used by Harvey ALPER to emphasize the fact that the acceptance of the ideas revolving around the Indian *mantra* is “not itself discursive, it is social.”64 ALPER has drawn his inspiration from categories developed by Wittgenstein – particularly in his *Philosophical Investigations* – and attempted to apply “Wittgensteinian concepts to the study of mantras.” However, I want to limit my observations to three points made by ALPER, which, interestingly, correspond closely to points made in the *Mmk*. These points are as follows (in ALPER’s words): (1) uttering a *mantra* is a thing done, and hence, a learned activity; (2) uttering a *mantra* is both a context- and a rule-dependent activity; (3) the activity of uttering a *mantra* may be compared profitably to a move in a game.

Before turning to the *Mmk*, it will be helpful to give as background the general sense of what is meant by “the social dimension of *mantric* utterance.” ALPER offers a clear statement in this regard.

In the Hindu tradition ... there is an explicit awareness that achieving religious consummation involves the mastery of specifiable techniques. Ironically, this situation obscures the fact that the mastery of specifiable techniques itself presupposes a prior mastery of skills that resist specification. The successful use of an “instrument” such as mantric utterance presupposes that one has already acquired the proper attitudes, demeanor, and expectations – that is the proper frame of mind – by having been successfully socialized in the society that recognizes mantric utterance as an “authorized” technique that makes possible one of the kinds of transcendence it is deemed acceptable to experience.

The confident, routine use of mantras surely presupposes a specific, identifiable set of convictions concerning the human condition, the ideal social order, and the purpose of existence. Acceptance of these convictions is a tacit ground without which Mantraśāstra would neither have been invented nor have remained vital. Whatever reasons might be adduced to defend these convictions, their acceptance is not itself discursive, it is social. As lived, they are part of the forms of life, “the formal conditions, the patterns in the weave of our lives,” that give meaning to the language-game of uttering mantras.

64. ALPER 1989a:258. All citations of ALPER henceforth are from *ibid*: 249-294 unless otherwise noted.
... Self-evidently, the language-game of uttering mantras is situated within a social cosmos organized according to the principles of caste hierarchy, culminating in and yet transcended by institutional renunciation (sāṃnyāsa), which, as such, recognizes the authority of an elite of “perfect spiritual masters” (gurus) and which experiences the cosmos as a fabric interwoven of various “powers,” as sāktic. These are, in general, the “situation and facts” that are invariably concomitant with mantric utterance. They are the preconditions that make it possible and lend it meaning.

(1) Uttering a mantra is a thing done, and hence, a learned activity. The Mmk sādhaka must learn how to employ a mantra. The force of a mantra can be harnessed only through acquired technique, the possibility of which was embedded in medieval Indian religious culture. The efficacy of the mantra is thus equally dependent on both the power of enlightened force, as shown above, and proper training within a socially authorized structure. As great as it is, the force of buddhas alone does not ensure the success of the mantra; rather, the activation of this force is dependent on the presence of further, social, conditions.

The clue to the social nature of effective mantric utterance is given at the beginning of a primary ritual passage.

First, he who has observed the vow, fulfilled the preliminary practices (puraścaraṇa), received the initiation, taken the essential (hrdaya), basic mantra from this best of ordinances, or the upahrdaya65 or some other mantra, or having received a single syllable [mantra] or another one – according to one’s wishes – and who, having gone to a great forest, eats leaves and roots, who subsists on fruits and water, should recite [the mantra] three million times. He becomes one who has completed the preliminary practice.66

In the Mmk, even the briefest ritualized act, in order to succeed, must be preceded by a long period of preparatory training (puraścaraṇa). For our purposes here, we could translate puraścaraṇa as inculcation. “Preparation” entails an infusion into the practitioner of everything his culture might bring to bear on his quest for enlightenment, liberation, power, etc. Hidden behind the description here is the agent behind that infusion: the guru. The guru is the person who “socializes” the sādhaka, guiding him through the process that will enable him to use mantric

65. At Mmk 1.3.8-9 the hrdayamantra and upahrdayamantra are given respectively as oṁ vākyeda namah and vākye hūm. The hrdayamantra appears again at Mmk 29.322.7-16 as Mañjuśrī’s “incomparable,” etc., six-syllable mantra. There, it is employed in a caitya ritual.

66. Sanskrit above, footnote 28.
speech appropriately and effectively. Another passage, at *Mmk* 11, brings the *guru*, and his socializing role, more into the open.

First, one must take upon oneself the undertaking of knowledge, the vow, and moral conduct. First of all, one must obey the precepts and instructions of the *maṇḍala* master [i.e., the *guru* presiding over the initiation].

The *sādhaka* ... should make a request to the *maṇḍala* master [*guru*] in this manner: “I desire to enter into, through the agency of the master, the vow (*samaya*) of the great *bodhisattva*, the princely, noble Maṇjuśrī. This having been said, [may] the master [become] compassionate, his mind impelled by sympathy for us!” Then, having been carefully examined by the *maṇḍala* master, by whom instruction, in accordance with the ordinance, was previously given, as previously described [at *Mmk* 2] the student is introduced [to the practice]. Having conferred the initiation, as previously mentioned [at *Mmk* 2], he should bestow the *maṇḍala*. Duly, by degrees, he should reveal the vow. And, having considered very carefully that the time has arrived, and knowing the mental disposition [of the *sādhaka*] he should reveal the esoteric *mudrās* from the text (*tantra*) as well as the subsequent rituals ...

Then, the *maṇḍala* master has to bring about the notion “son” (*putraka*). He [the *sādhaka*] should behave like a son, who says “the benefits (*bhoga*) are to be offered to my mother.” 67

We saw in the previous sub-section that Maṇjuśrī “wander[s] among those of childlike intelligence in the form of the *mantra,*” (*tathā bālīśabuddhīnām mantrarūpī carāmy aham*) and that he does so “just as a mother watchfully plays with her children in various ways” (*yathā hi dhātrī bahudhā bālānām lálati yatnataḥ*). 68 The child-parent relationship is made explicit here, too. The practitioner is “the son, the child of dharma, [and must] be protected always, with continued effort” (*rakṣānīyo prayatnena putro dharmavatsalāḥ sadā*). 69 The ultimate form of protection that the *Mmk* guru can extend to his disciple is that afforded...


68. *Mmk* 2.35.5-6.

by effective mantric utterance. As an embodiment of his culture’s highest spiritual ideals, the guru is thus extending that culture’s ultimate form of protection, too. Mantric speech is both meaningful and effective only when properly learned and applied. This fact is significant because it complicates the understanding of mantras as “magical speech,” commonly found in scholarly studies on the subject. Rather, it is like ordinary speech. Someone who utters incoherent sounds will fail in social life; even someone who speaks with poor grammar or a “low class” accent will be limited through his language. Assuming, for the sake of argument, the desirability of attaining the upper levels of a culture’s material promise – status, wealth, etc. – then social protection involves teaching a child the proper forms of language. This analogy can be applied to mantric speech. Though the interface of this type of speech is not limited to social reality, it is a form of speech whose efficacy depends on the user’s ability as a speaker of mantras (mantravādin), or, as the text often puts it, as “one who mantras” (mantrin). Like ordinary speech, mantras can fail to serve as instruments serving the speaker’s goals. That point is made explicit throughout the Mmk, as in the inverse of this statement.

The disciple who honors that teacher (guru) obtains an excellent destiny.
His mantras are successful because he has been thoroughly shown the path of the ordinances.71

(2) Uttering a mantra is both a context- and a rule-dependent activity. As that last statement shows, there is a direct correlation between being socialized into mantric speech, and the adherence to rules: like regular speech, the rules are what make it social ("one person alone cannot follow a rule").

The Mmk is nothing if it is not a text of rules. It is, in this sense, a sort of etiquette for sādhakas. It records the community’s prescriptions for all of the forms of behavior expected of the sādhaka. From gathering the wood for prayer beads (Mmk 12), sleeping, eating, and begging for alms (Mmk 11), to constructing the oblation pit (Mmk 13), the text binds

70. See, for example, ALPER:1989c:330 for bibliographical references.
71. Mmk 11.96.3-4: puṣkalaṁ gatiṁ āpnoti śiśyo pūjyas tu taṁ guruṁ / mantrāsta-sya ca sidhyanti vidhimārgopadarśanāt//
its practitioner to a strictly delineated mode of acting in the world. The promise behind its prescribed limits is that real power and freedom, both social (laukika) and “spiritual” (lokottara), will follow from observing the rules. The reason that this is so is that the rule-dependent activities of the sādhaka produce the conditions – the necessary context – for effective mantric utterance.

When the mantras are applied according to the ordinances, then one rapidly succeeds.72

(3) The activity of uttering a mantra may be compared profitably to a move in a game. The metaphor of mantric utterance as a move in a game follows easily from the previous two assertions. Games are clear instances of learned, and context- and rule-dependent activities. The movement of a piece of wood on a checkered board or the kicking of a leather ball on a gridded field must be interpreted within the larger framework within which they take place – the games of chess and soccer; otherwise, they appear to be senseless activities. Efficacy, furthermore, follows from sense – these moves are effective within the strictures provided by the rules, and the rules orient the player toward the accepted notion of success, or victory. Uttering a mantra is like this. Saying om aḥ hum only makes sense within the larger game-matrix of mantracaryā. The meaningfulness of mantracaryā, in turn, is founded on the assumed possibility of what ALPER calls an “epistemological event” (the sādhaka sees the buddha, attains enlightenment) and an “ontological fact” (the existence of the beings and forces that are embodied in the mantras) – mantracaryā notions of victory.

The Mmk is the book of rules for the game of mantracaryā. Recitation of mantras comprises the moves in the game, leading the player, the sādhaka, to victory. It is profitable to compare the activity of uttering a mantra to a move in a game because this brings out points that the text is emphatic about. These are: mantras are effective (1) because of the presupposed cosmological situation (the “unlocking” of which constitutes winning the game), (2) when socially learned becoming a player, (3) when the rules of their utterance are adhered to (playing by the rules), (4) when engaged in (playing). This appreciably clarifies the context for such seemingly trivial statements – pervading the text – such

72. Mmk 32.336.19: vidhiyuktā hi mantrā vai kṣipram siddhim avāpnuyāt //
as “those well-recited mantras are majestic, extremely powerful” (sujaptā mantrā hy ete tejavanto maharddhikā), “the majestic mantras succeed for those of faith, and for no others” (sidhyante mantrarāt tasya śrāddhasyaiveha nānyathā), “the success of the mantra is not impelled by an ascetic of bad morals” (duḥśīlasya munīndreṇa mantrasiddhir na coditā). A mantra is effective by virtue of its being a “key that unlocks the śaktic structure of the cosmos.” But the ability to employ a mantra effectively requires that the practitioner properly negotiate the complex game of mantracaryā. To the extent that he does this, recitation of a mantra becomes the linguistic game-piece, which, like a wooden chessman, is indispensable to the game. Enlightened power abides, dwells (adhiṣṭhāna) through the deft moves of a skillfully formed player. But unlike other games, the promise held out to the sādhaka is nothing less than the ability to wield with efficacy the now vivified remains of the Buddha’s speech.

73. Mmk 33.342.8, 7.77.4, 11.101.9.
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