

Reading Medieval Buddhist Manuscripts: Thoughts on Text and Image*

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Abstract: This paper examines Buddhist palm-leaf manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha* and the *Pañcarakṣā*. The Cambridge *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* with its illustrations of famous images has been well studied, but always in isolation from manuscripts of other religious traditions. This essay proposes that it and related Buddhist examples should be considered along with Jain palm leaf manuscripts that similarly illustrate famous images and sites, a practice that seems to have been quite popular across the sub-continent and across religious divides. The discussion of the *Gaṇḍavyūha* likewise suggests that a consideration of Jain manuscripts can help to explain illustrations on the Buddhist manuscripts that have not been understood. A close reading of the *Pañcarakṣā* texts offers new insights into its manuscript illustrations. In the

* I have had many fruitful discussions with colleagues over these ideas, for which I take full responsibility. I thank Sonya Rhie Mace, Osmund Boppearachi, Mimi Yiengpruksawan, Jinah Kim, Robert Brown and Donald Stadtnier. After I finished this paper Sonya Mace shared with me her discovery of some as-

concluding comments on some Jain paper manuscripts the essay suggests that in considering the relationship of text to image, we need also take into account the frequency of errors and the possibility of misplaced images.

I. Introduction

Perhaps one of the longest ranging debates about illuminated Buddhist manuscripts concerns the relationship of the finely painted images to the written texts. Scholars have often noted that the illustrations on Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts have little or no obvious connection with the text. This has led to two radically opposed conclusions. On the one hand, some scholars have therefore concluded that the images on these manuscripts are not in fact related to the written words and have no specific religious meaning, but serve more generally to beautify the manuscript or somehow make it more auspicious.¹ Some recent writings on Buddhist manuscripts,

tonishing features in the *Gaṇḍavyūha* images that make them practically literal illustrations to the text. She is in the process of writing up her findings, and I will want to modify some of the remarks about the manuscript that I made here in the light of her discoveries. While some of the images in that manuscript are entirely unrelated to the text, others are about as close to the text as visual representation can get to printed word. Specifically, she has shown how folio 56 that I discuss here in the clouds with protruding hands is a direct visual translation of the words of the written text. I am looking forward to her published results.

¹ Losty, 'An Early Indian Manuscript'; Allinger, 'An Early Nepalese Gaṇḍavyūha Manuscript'; Sakuma, 'Narrative and Art of Avalokiteśvara'. Sakuma and Losty both stress that the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* manuscript of the Pāla period in the British Library is different from the other Pāla manuscripts because its paintings illustrate the text, while in other cases they are simply ornaments to the text (Sakuma, 173; Losty, 1). Sakuma has also written about an illustrated *Kāraṇḍavyūha* manuscript in the Nagoya City Library, see Sakuma, 'Iconography and Narratives'. Pal and Meech-Pekarik, *Buddhist Book Illuminations* is a richly illustrated survey of the subject. These two authors suggest that the images

by contrast, evidence a strong desire to find a coherent soteriological function to the images on most if not all Buddhist illustrated manuscripts, even when that religious meaning cannot be tied to anything in the written text that the images accompany.²

In this essay I take a middle-road. Some illustrations, I will propose, cannot be related to the text, and in such cases, they need not be shown to have any overarching soteriological role. What they do have, however, is a close relationship to contemporary painting and sculptural traditions. In fact, in a few cases, a seemingly discordant image may even reflect manuscript painting in an entirely different religious tradition. This is Jainism with its equally highly developed tradition of manuscript painting. This point, I think, is important. Manuscript painters may well have been familiar with painting in more than one religious tradition as well as secular painting. In this

on the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscripts were not meant to beautify the manuscript but were 'to enhance its devotional value and protect it from material harm' (55). Melzer and Allinger, 'Die nepalesische Palmblatthandschrift' contains an appendix with details about the publication of many of the known manuscripts.

² Thus, Jinah Kim has recently argued that although the images as single images may not have any explicit connection to the text, the deities depicted are stored in memory one by one and then recalled together to form a coherent array of deities; a kind of *maṇḍala* that functions as an object of meditation. Such *maṇḍalas* and the deities in them are described in a range of texts but not in the actual texts that accompany the images in question. Meditations on these *maṇḍalas* are in turn linked to esoteric Buddhist practices with distinctly soteriological goals. See Kim, *Receptacle of the Sacred*. See also Weissenborn, *Buchkunst aus Nālandā*. My interpretations here are more modest. The meaning I seek to uncover is admittedly more limited; it is what can be discerned from the specifics of the written text that the images accompany. A comparison of Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts with their esoteric deities and Jain palm leaf manuscripts which similarly depict multi-armed deities from the Jain pantheon would seem to argue against reading the Buddhist images collectively as constituting a remembered *maṇḍala*. That such a reading is not possible for the Jain illustrations could well suggest that there was a common practice of simply painting important deities on a manuscript.

understanding, even religious painting may belong to a far more widely shared world than we have allowed, and the comparison between Buddhist and Jain manuscript paintings may help us better to understand the paintings on Buddhist manuscripts.

That images do not reflect the text that they accompany is only one side of a complex picture, however. I also believe that some images do reflect closely the written word in ways that we have not yet realized because insufficient attention has been given to the written word in the discussion of these manuscripts. Manuscripts and manuscript paintings differ, and there is no single way in which these illustrations related or did not relate, as the case may be, to the written texts. This essay treats both the case of manuscripts in which the images do not relate to the text and the case of manuscripts in which the images may be said truly to illustrate the text.³

As examples of manuscripts with images unrelated to the text I

³ I do not address here the question of the status of a manuscript as a whole as a cultic object, something that has been widely discussed since Gregory Schopen's influential article, 'The Phrase *sa prthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*'. See also Drewes, 'Revisiting the phrase "*sa prthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet*". Eubanks, 'Circumambulatory Reading' argues that a manuscript should be considered as analogous to a *stūpa*, an idea also found in Kim, *Receptacle of the Sacred*. Both authors liken Buddhist reading practices to certain aspects of the world-wide web and stress the dynamic nature of traditional reading practices. More recently Jinah Kim has described manuscripts as temples and has expanded her study to include Jain and Hindu manuscripts, Kim, 'Painted Palm-Leaf Manuscripts'. I thank Alexander von Rospatt for directing my attention to this article. The extension of the study of Buddhist manuscripts to Jain manuscripts is welcome, but much work needs to be done on Jain manuscripts before we can generalize, as this article does about what texts were illustrated, or conclude that Jains did not illustrate important canonical or doctrinal texts. A quick perusal of the catalogue of palm leaf manuscripts in the Śāntinātha Bhaṇḍāra, for example, reveals that canonical texts were indeed illustrated. See Puṇyavijayajī, *Catalogue of Palm-leaf Manuscripts*. A description of some of the earliest illustrated Jain manuscripts on palm leaf provided by Moti Chandra in *Jain Miniature Paintings*, chapter three, includes the most important doctrinal texts on the Digambara

consider one of the best-known manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrika Prajñāpāramitā sūtra*, the manuscript in the Cambridge University Library, number MS Add. 1643. I would suggest that, in fact, most of the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscripts that scholars have studied in fact belong in this group. As another example of a manuscript with images unrelated to the text I then consider folios of a *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra*, now in the Cleveland Museum of Art.

For my second group of manuscripts, those in which images and text are closely linked, I turn to a *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript, also in the Cambridge University Library, where I believe we have missed the close relationship between the illustrations and the text.⁴ Returning to the Cleveland Museum, the study of another *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript has suggested to me that the written text on the manuscript may on occasion give us clues to the identity and significance of the images if we mine it carefully, directing us to a text not too far afield for answers. Finally, I hope to complicate matters by pointing out the obvious: in these hand-written manuscripts, errors abound. Some-

side and several of the Śvetāmbara canonical texts. Jain manuscripts were also worshiped, and both Digambaras and Śvetambaras celebrate a festival dedicated to the sacred texts, Jñānapācamī. The medieval Śvetāmbara story cited in this note gives details about the worship of completed manuscripts, which were worshiped ‘as one worships the Jina himself’. The fact that one Jain text on lay religious duties, now in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, is written on what Kim has described as poor-quality palm leaves and even reuses old leaves, should not necessarily be taken as the result of lack of care or reverence for the resulting product. As an often-told Jain story informs us, palm leaves were difficult to procure in medieval Gujarat and Rajasthan, where this manuscript was made. By contrast, the Talipot palm grows abundantly in the much wetter Eastern and Southern India. Despite initial resistance to the use of paper, the scarcity of palm leaves made the use of paper in Gujarat/Rajasthan country inevitable. For the Jain story, which describes King Kumārapāla’s horror at the thought of sacred texts being written on paper and gives details of the worship of sacred texts, see the *Kumārapālacarita* of Jinamaṇḍanaṇi, written in 1492.

⁴ The manuscript is online at <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01688/1>.

times images are simply wrongly placed and no amount of ingenuity on our part will lead to a coherent explanation of how they got there.

II. The Manuscripts

1. The Cambridge Library *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*

The Cambridge Library *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* is illustrated with paintings of famous Buddhist images and sites that are located throughout the Buddhist world. The manuscript has a colophon that tells us that it was written in 1015 CE in Nepal.⁵ It was first studied in great detail by A. Foucher in 1900 in his *Étude sur l'Iconographie Bouddhique de l'Inde*.⁶ A remarkable characteristic of the manuscript is that each illustration is provided with an inscription, probably put there by the scribe or one of his assistants to let the painter know what was to be painted in the space left blank. Without these inscriptions, it would be impossible to identify the images that are depicted. The manuscript contains eighty-five illustrations, most of them of sacred places and famous Buddhist images, the precise locations of which are specified. The images are from places as distant from each other as the Himalayas in the north and Tamil Nadu in South India; Gujarat in the west and Bengal and the present Bangladesh in the East, and even beyond continental South Asia in places as distant as Śrī Lankā, Malaysia, and perhaps Java. Only two of the images are not specifically labeled as associated with a particular place.⁷ This Cambridge manuscript is not unique; there is a manuscript in the Asia Society Calcutta, A. 15, that has the same iconographical program with similarly inscribed images. The two manuscripts were unmistakably based on a common source. Foucher suggested that the

⁵ The manuscript is online <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01643/1>. I have provided illustrations of only two of the folios I discuss.

⁶ Foucher, *Étude sur l'Iconographie Bouddhique de l'Inde*.

⁷ This is folio 222r, Dvibhujamārici caitya and folio 222r, Ārogaśālī Bhaiṣajyabhaṭṭāraka vajrāsana.

Cambridge manuscript with its illustrations does not date later than the end of the eleventh century, while Losty has argued for an even earlier date of 1015, the date stated in the colophon.⁸ There are manuscripts of other Buddhist texts that similarly depict Buddhist images from different locations, further supporting the assessment that these illustrations are not tied to the words of the particular text written on the manuscript.⁹

While much has already been written about these manuscripts, I would like to add to the discussion by suggesting that their illustrations may well reflect a popular practice of depicting the world, experienced and imagined. But first I offer a few examples of paintings from the manuscript with a brief comment on where in the text the illustrations have been placed. It will be immediately clear that text and image are unrelated.

On folio 8v, Figure 1, is a standing Buddha figure identified as ‘Dīpaṅkara of Śrī Laṅkā’. The text corresponds to the section in chapter one where Śāriputra, Subhūti, and the Buddha are discussing

⁸ Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*, 30. The paintings were added after the written text, thus giving rise to the debate.

⁹ These include a *Pañcaviṃśati Prajñāpāramitā* and a *Kāraṇḍavyūha*. Jinah Kim has discussed these manuscripts in *Receptacle of the Sacred*, chapter three. She suggests that ‘as he goes through the book, turning the folios, a Buddhist practitioner could roam freely beyond the spatial boundaries and physical limits and absorb all the cultic powers that these sites embodied. Ultimately, the manuscript could help him achieve the transformative power that many medieval Esoteric Buddhist practices sought to generate, getting closer to transforming one’s body into a lighter, enlightened body’ (93). She further compares the experience to cyberspace on the web today, which allows a person to ‘make a leap from one place to another with a single click beyond any spatial or temporal boundaries’. I prefer the simpler assumption that the images simply reflect a current vogue in painting, namely the painting of famous temples and images such as we see on the clothing of the Sumstek image to be discussed here. Pilgrimage paintings in later medieval times could serve as mementoes of trips taken or as surrogates for actual trips, the goals of which were more often described in the texts as this worldly, rather than anything that approaches her conjectured transformation.



FIG. 1 *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1643, folio 8v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Detail from MS Add. 1643, folio 8v, center illustration.

why a Bodhisattva is called a great and courageous being, a Mahāsattva. There is no mention of Dīpaṅkara or Śrī Laṅkā.

Folio 80v shows a green Tārā seated in the posture known as royal ease. To either side of her are four seated Tārās, in an arrangement that recalls a *maṇḍala*. The inscription tells us that she is Candradvīpe Bhagavatī Tārā, or Blessed Tārā from Candradvīpa, which is identified with coastal Bengal, now Bangladesh. The illustration to the right shows a fierce pot-bellied god holding a mongoose. He is the Buddhist god of wealth, Jambhala, and the inscription tells us he is in Sinhaladvīpa or Śrī Laṅkā. The text is chapter eighty-six, in which the Buddha explains to Subhūti the reasons why someone might reject the *Prajñāpāramitā* and heap abuse on its teachings. Clearly, here too the illustrations are going their own way, depicting famous images from the Buddhist world.

Folio 20v depicts at the left a complex scene. A Buddha is shown standing in an ocean, which has what we might expect to find in an Indian ocean, conches, and a horse, perhaps the marvelous horse Uchchaiśravas, who appeared at the time of churning of the ocean. At either side of the Buddha are two boat-like structures, moved along by figures with oars. The main occupants of these boats are dressed in royal attire and I think we can surmise that they are gods. The exact event depicted here is somewhat less certain. It clearly has to do with the demon in the lower right. The inscription tells us that the scene represents, ‘Mahāsamudre Rāhukṛta abhayapāṇi’, ‘(The Buddha) making the gesture of reassurance for Rāhu at Mahāsamudra’. Rāhu is widely known in Indian lore as the demon who causes eclipses. The *Samyutta nikāya* tells us that Rāhu gets jealous of the lustre of the sun and moon and goes after them, trying to swallow them up (*Candimasutta* and *Sūriyasutta*). Buddhaghosa explains that when the *sutta* says that Rāhu goes after the sun and moon it means that he is after the gods who live in the two divine floating palaces, the lunar and solar palaces, or *vimānas*.¹⁰ I suspect that these are what the boats depict. Divine floating palaces often look like boats in both sculpture

¹⁰ SN 2.9//SN 90 Candima Sutta (SN i 50//SN i 114); SN 2.10//SN 91 Sūriya Sutta (SN i 51//SN i 115).

and painting. In the *suttas* the gods of the sun and moon palace call upon the Buddha for help and the Buddha orders Rāhu to release them on pain of death. The terrified Rāhu, trembling in fear, flees to tell the king of the demons what has happened. From other Buddhist texts we know that Rāhu's palace is in the ocean and so it seems fitting that this image should belong to a place called 'Mahāsamudra', 'Great Ocean'. In the illustration, Rāhu leans toward the Buddha with hands folded in reverence. The illustration adds to the short *Candima* and *Sūriya suttas* what we also know from other texts, that the Buddha does not carry out his threat and Rāhu becomes a pious Buddhist.¹¹

The text on the folio on which this illustration appears is the end of chapter two and the beginning of chapter three of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. Chapter two ends with the Buddha explaining that he had received a prediction that he would attain Buddhahood from Dīpaṅkara. In the beginning of chapter three, the Buddha promises that the gods or humans who study the *Prajñāpāramitā*, recite it and spread its teachings, will not fall prey to Māra or Māra type demons. These demons lie in wait for living beings, always seeking an opportunity to harm them, but they will not get the chance as long as one holds tight to the *Prajñāpāramitā*. In some sense it might seem fitting that the illustration of a subdued Rāhu accompanies this passage of the text, but its position here is most likely fortuitous; it would be the lone image that suits the written text. The same folio has a second illustration, of a seated Buddha in a temple, with two seated adoring figures, probably Bodhisattvas, on either side of the temple roof. The inscription reads, 'Puṇḍravardhane Trīśaraṇa Buddha Bhaṭṭaraka', 'The Lord Buddha of the Three Refuges in Puṇḍravardhana'. Puṇḍravardhana is in Bengal, now Bangladesh. The written text makes no mention of the three refuges and the illustration is entirely independent of the text, one in the series of illustrations of important Buddhist sites.

Folio 176v, Figure 2, similarly has two illustrations. At the left is

¹¹ T no. 0024, 1: 0337b03. The story of Rāhu chasing after the moon is also known in the Chinese translation of the *Sarvāstivāda Samyukta Āgama*, *Za Aban jing* 雜阿含經, T no. 0099, 2, completed in the fifth century by Guṇabhadra.

Cundā in the Excellent Temple to Cundā at Paṭṭikera, ‘Paṭṭikere Cundāvarabhavane Cundā’. Cundā is a goddess whose popularity is not even attested at the time of the composition of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*. Paṭṭikera is another site now in Bangladesh; the number of illustrations of temples and images in Bangladesh confirms what we know from inscriptions and other historical data, namely that at the period in which this manuscript was written Bangladesh was a major center of Buddhist worship and learning. The second illustration on the folio is of a *stūpa* at Vārendrā, again the present Bangladesh. Two monks worship the *stūpa*, at the center of which is a small Buddha figure. The text is the end of chapter twenty-three, a dialogue between the god Indra and Ānanda. Indra explains to Ānanda that the Bodhisattva who practices the teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā* surpasses all others. The four kings of the quarters attend upon him; even the Buddha thinks such a great being worthy of serving. The Bodhisattva who follows the *Prajñāpāramitā* experiences no worldly suffering and never falls prey to enemy attacks.

Folio 127r has three illustrations. The first brings us far from South Asia. It depicts Samantabhadra from Great China, ‘Mahācīne Samantabhadra’ and shows the Bodhisattva seated on a richly caparisoned elephant in a mountain landscape. The cubist treatment of the landscape recalls earlier treatments of mountains in Indian paintings, for example, at Ajanta. The middle Bodhisattva is Lokanātha, from a monastery named the Kanyārāma, located in the Rāḍhya district of Bengal, ‘Rāḍhyakanyārāma Lokanātha’. The third illustration is of a building rather than a deity; it depicts the Dharmarājikā Caitya, again in Rāḍhya. The inscriptions use the words *stūpa* and *caitya* interchangeably. This *caitya* is the *stūpa* that we see in the front courtyard of a monastery. The illustration is particularly precious as an example of twelfth century Buddhist architecture. Now, what of the text? The text is the conclusion to chapter fifteen. The Buddha tells Subhūti that the *Prajñāpāramitā* protects the Bodhisattva who has faith, who has forbearance; the Bodhisattva who finds pleasure in it and has fortitude; who is always mindful and ever eager to achieve Perfect Enlightenment.

With 200v we move to South India, the city of Kāñcī, where we know from archaeological records and literature that there was once



FIG. 2 *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Cambridge University Library MS Add. 1643, folio 20v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Detail from MS Add. 1643, folio 20v, left illustration.



Detail from MS Add. 1643, folio 20v, right illustration.

a strong Buddhist community. There are also numerous inscriptions on bronzes from Kurkihar that name a monastery, the Āpāṇakamahāvihāra, which housed a community of monks from Kāñcī.¹² The deity in Kāñcī shown here is Vasudhārā, a goddess associated with wealth. At the viewer's right in red is a fierce three-headed Mārīcī from the other side of the country, north and west, from Oḍḍiyāna. The text is the conclusion to chapter twenty-eight, where the Buddha instructs Subhūti that the goal of a Bodhisattva should be perfect Enlightenment; a Bodhisattva cannot fall into a bad rebirth; a Bodhisattva not destined for Enlightenment should set his sights on rebirth in heaven, where he will never be without the presence of the Buddhas; he will be reborn in Buddha Lands where Buddhas are ever present, and where he can bring the aspirations of countless beings to fruition.

If, then, as is clear, these images are not related to the text, it seems natural to ask where they come from. I believe that these manuscripts belong to a lively artistic practice of depicting the real and imagined world, evidence for which exists in different media, and which may well have been something of a new fashion when the Cambridge manuscript was made. One of the most extraordinary examples is the painted garment of holy sites, temples, and images, on the large clay statue of Avalokiteśvara at Sumstek in Ladakh. The temples at Alchi are probably a century later than the Cambridge manuscript and they come from the same Himalayan Buddhist sphere. The image of Avalokiteśvara is four meters or thirteen feet in height. The lower garment or *dhōtī* is lavishly decorated with small delicate scenes of temples and worshippers. Not all of the temples and their images on the *dhōtī* of Avalokiteśvara have been identified; they include temples of Tārā, Sadāśiva, a Buddhist monastery with a Hindu temple to Balarāma, and temples to Viṣṇu and the Buddha Śākyamuni. It has been suggested that the temples depicted were important holy places located around the area of Srinagar in Kashmir. Some of them have been identified at least tentatively with existing temples.¹³

¹² Melzer and Allinger, 'Die nepalesische Palmblatthandschrift', 253, note 18.

¹³ Goepper, *Alchi*, 46–73. Photographs pages 47 and 65.

Given the sophistication of the painted garment of the Avalokiteśvara, it seems safe to conclude that there was a richly developed tradition of painted maps when this image at Sumstek was painted. The eighth to tenth century paintings of auspicious images of Khotan at Dunhuang discussed by Imre Hamar at the International Forum on Buddhist Art and Buddhism's Transmission to Europe Conference no doubt reflect the same larger practice of depicting important images.¹⁴ As even earlier Buddhist examples of places depicted on garments, one might consider the robes on the so-called 'cosmic Buddhas' that are known from Central Asia and China. The most famous of these is the headless sculpture in the Sackler Museum from China dated to the sixth century CE. The robe of this Buddha includes scenes from the life of the historical Buddha and depictions of the Buddhist cosmos; it has been described as a map of the Buddhist universe. The robe is studded with architectural structures housing images. Another example, also from China but reflecting the style of Indian Buddhist images made in Gandhāra, is a metal image now in the Musée Guimet. Near the neckline of the heavily decorated robe, the future Buddha Maitreya sits in front of a palace-like building. Below him is Mount Meru and then another architectural structure with a meditating Buddha.¹⁵ Painted Buddhas with elaborately patterned robes can be found in the sixth century in cave 428 at Dunhuang and earlier in several examples at Kizil.¹⁶

This tradition of making maps of the known realm, earthly and beyond, is not exclusively Buddhist; Jains and Hindus made depictions of sacred sites and the cosmos beginning in the medieval

¹⁴ Hamar, 'The Khotanese Ox-head Mountain'.

¹⁵ I thank Mimi Yiengpruksawan for reminding me of this and similar images. For a study of these images see Howard, *Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha*; Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*, beginning on 140. The Sackler Buddha is illustrated on the museum website, <https://www.freersackler.si.edu/object/F1923.15/>.

¹⁶ For pictures see Leidy, *The Art of Buddhism*, fig. 4.8, page 91 and fig. 3.12, page 70; Howard, *Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha*; Howard and Vignato, *Archaeological and Visual Sources*.



FIG. 3 Śatruñjaya and Girnar, Ranakpur. Photo by Koichi Shinohara.

period and continuing into the present.¹⁷ Jain examples in stone relief can be found in many temples. An inscribed *paṭṭa* or stone plaque dated to the thirteenth century and once in the Neminātha temple at Kumbharia depicts the temples and Jinas in the distant continent of Mahāvīdeha.¹⁸ Another *paṭṭa* from the same site shows the mythical continent of Nandīśvaradvīpa and its shrines. A similar *paṭṭa* from the fifteenth century can be found at Ranakpur. Also from Ranakpur is a fifteenth century stone carving of two of the most famous Jain sites in this world, Śatruñjaya and Girnar (Figure 3). As in the

¹⁷ For late Jain examples of pilgrimage paintings see Granoff, ed., *Victorious Ones*, plates 29 (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn Museum Collection 31.746, and 31, Private Collection, London). For a Hindu example, see the painting from Nepal, M.76.20 on the Los Angeles County Museum of Art website <https://collections.lacma.org/node/226886>.

¹⁸ Dhaky and Moorti, *The Temples in Kumbhāriyā*, 161–2, figs. 240 and 241; Singh, ‘The Jain Temples at Kumbharia’, 314. See also Granoff, ‘Cosmographs and Cosmic Jinās’.

case of the Cambridge Buddhist manuscript, each famous Jina image is identified by inscription.

Extant evidence does not permit us to state with any precision when depictions of the universe or of famous pilgrimage sites began. We do know, however, that Jain stone carvings of the continent of Nandīśvara with its temples seem to have become popular at least by the twelfth century. At Mount Abu, cell 19 of the Luna Vasahi, built in the thirteenth century, has stone carvings that relate the stories of several famous pilgrimage sites.¹⁹

The sparse evidence that we have for including famous sites on palm-leaf manuscripts is also not confined to Buddhist manuscripts. A Jain palm-leaf manuscript of the *Uttarādhyāyana Sūtra* dated 1295 CE and in the Śāntinātha Bhaṇḍāra has a painting of the first Jina of our world age, Ādinātha, that identifies the Jina as the famous Ādinātha at the pilgrimage site of Śatruñjaya. This painting most likely commemorates an actual pilgrimage; a layman stands to the side of the Jina image, hands folded in reverence. He is identified as the merchant Āsadhara. Other sites on the mountain are labeled, the famous Rayana or Rājātana tree and the footprints of the Jina's disciple Puṇḍarīka, who is said to have achieved liberation on Mount Śatruñjaya.²⁰ Another Jain manuscript of a didactic story, the *Subābhukathā*, dated 1288 CE and in the Sanghavina Padano Bhandar, Patan, depicts the Jina Neminātha on Mt. Girnar, the second famous Jain pilgrimage place in Gujarat. It also includes a picture of the temples on the distant continent of Nandīśvara.²¹

The evidence presented here taken together suggests that a rich artistic tradition of depicting famous temples and images and mapping the cosmos was developing around the time that the Cambridge manuscript was made. In a way, then, the Cambridge *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* manuscript is quite up-to-the-minute, with its paintings of sacred

¹⁹ Jayantavijaya, *Holy Abu*, 102.

²⁰ Shah, *Treasures of Jaina Bhaṇḍāras*, p. 65, ms. 407 folio 438, and Nawab, *Jain Paintings*, fig. 107.

²¹ Nawab, *Jain Paintings*, figs. 91 and 95.

sites and famous images, many of which belonged to the newly expanding esoteric pantheon and not to the world of the written text that the images adorned. I would suggest that a similar practice of depicting famous deities, albeit not localized at particular sites, may lie behind the illustrations of Tantric deities on so many other *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscripts.

The distance between text and illustration in the Cambridge is not unique. I next consider briefly another extraordinary manuscript. This is the manuscript of the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, four folios of which are now in the Cleveland Museum, with others in various museums and private collections. It too, I will suggest, reflects contemporary paintings, in this case, paintings more appropriate to secular themes, on the one hand, and on the other hand to religious paintings from an entirely different tradition.

2. The Cleveland *Gaṇḍavyūha*

The first image is from folio 20 and depicts a young man looking at a tree (Figure 4).²² There is a bird on the tree trunk, about halfway down the trunk. The text corresponds to chapter one, the verses 47 and onwards, which describe the wondrous powers of the Buddha to create an infinite number of magic beings and displays and to manifest inconceivably many and marvelous Buddha fields.

On folio 37, Figure 5, a similarly graceful figure stands between two trees looking down at a deer who gazes back expectantly.²³ The

²² 'Folio 20 from a Gandavyuha-sutra (Scripture of the Supreme Array), 100–1100s, Nepal', <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1955.49.1.a>. As I noted in my acknowledgement, Sonya Rhie Mace has made some important discoveries about the visual language of this manuscript that bring it into the category of manuscripts with folios that are as directly related to the text as is conceivable. See also Allinger, 'An Early Nepalese *Gaṇḍavyūha* Manuscript', who discusses these and other folios of the same manuscript that are scattered in various museums and private collections.

²³ 'Folio 73 from a Gandavyuha-sutra (Scripture of the Supreme Array)', <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1955.49.3>.



FIG. 4 *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* folio 20 (recto) 1000–1100s, Nepal. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1955.49.1.



Detail from *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* folio 20 (recto), center illustration.



FIG. 5 *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra*, folio 73 (recto) 1000–1100s, Nepal. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1955.49.3.a.



Detail from *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* folio 73 (recto), center illustration.

text is from chapter 10, describing the numerous wishes and efforts of the bodhisattva to know all living beings and quench the fires of their suffering. These images have nothing to do with the words of the text and seem to derive more from secular painting than religious paintings, as a comparison with the fifteenth century *Vasanta Vilāsa* scroll, now in the Freer Gallery, with a *Gaṇḍavyūha* image demonstrates (Figure 6).²⁴

It is not only to secular painting that we should turn to understand the images of this manuscript. Another folio of the same *Gaṇḍavyūha* in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art depicts a preaching scene, with a Bodhisattva teaching Sudhana, who sits before him with folded hands (Figure 7).²⁵ Scholars have puzzled over the presence of the *stūpa* between the two figures and the curtain that hangs above the two figures. It is instructive to compare this preaching scene from the *Gaṇḍavyūha* with a typical Jain preaching scene, for example that on a Jain palm leaf manuscript dated 1260 CE, in the Boston Museum (Figure 8).²⁶ Preaching scenes abound in Jain manuscripts and there is, with few exceptions, a *sthāpanācārya*, a book stand, in the scene. The *sthāpanācārya* is the stand in for the absent Jina and appears in Jain art as early as a stone *āyāgapāṭa* from Mathura from the Kushan period.²⁷ Another example, a folio

²⁴ One folio of this manuscript is illustrated on the website of the Freer Gallery. See: ‘Vasanta Vilasa (a poem on Spring) (detail)’, <https://www.freersackler.si.edu/object/F1932.24/>.

²⁵ ‘A Night Goddess Instructing Sudhana, Folio from a Gandavyuha (The Structure of the World)’, Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, Los Angeles (M.71.1.1f), <https://collections.lacma.org/node/2267859>.

²⁶ The Jain manuscript, 30.1, is of the *Śrāvakaṣatīkramasūtra-cūrṇi*. It was discussed by Coomaraswamy, ‘An Illustrated Śvetāmbara Jaina Manuscript of A.D. 1260’. Other examples from early palm leaf manuscripts can be found in Nawab, *Jain Paintings*.

²⁷ On the antiquity of the *sthāpanācārya* in text and art and its common presence in Jain art see Shah, *Jain-Rūpa-Manḍana*, 19–22. Shah, in note 117, page 31 cites several texts which describe the function of the *sthāpanā*. The earliest is from the sixth century.



FIG. 6 Vasanta Vilāsa in the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.: Purchase — Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1932.24.



FIG. 7 'A Night Goddess Instructing Sudhana Folio from a Gandavyuha (The Structure of the World)', M.71.1.1f, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, from the Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection, Museum Associates Purchase. Photo © Museum Associates/ LACMA.



Detail from 'A Night Goddess Instructing Sudhana Folio from a Gandavyuha (The Structure of the World)', center illustration.

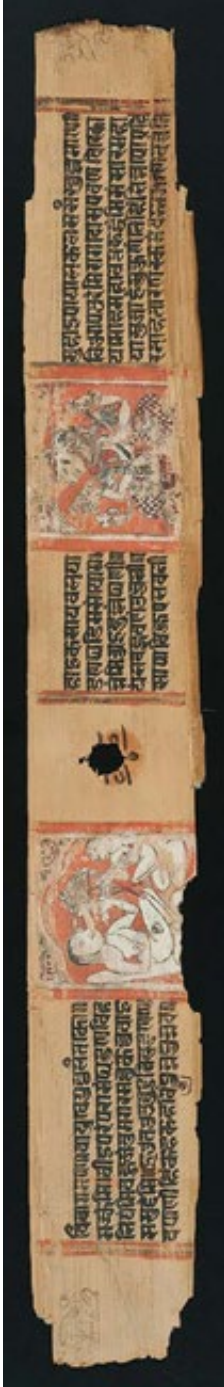


FIG. 8 'Śrāvakapratikramasūtra-cūrṇi of Vijayasimha'. Photograph © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, Ms. 30.1.1.



Detail from 'Śrāvakapratikramasūtra-cūrṇi of Vijayasimha', left illustration.



Detail from 'Śrāvakapratikramasūtra-cūrṇi of Vijayasimha', right illustration.



FIG. 9 Siddhahemaśabdānūsāna . Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Purchased with funds provided by the Indian Art Special Purpose Fund, Mrs. Wilbur Archer Beckett, Gerald Stockton and S. Louis Gaines, the Christian Humann Fund, Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr. and Dr. and Mrs. Peter Bing (M.88.62.2). Photo © Museum Associates/ LACMA.

from a grammar text written by the Jain monk Hemacandra is also in the Los Angeles County Museum (Figure 9).²⁸ It similarly shows the *sthāpanācārya* floating between the teacher and disciple. The hypothesis that the *stūpa* in the Buddhist preaching scene is a Buddhist version of this well-established Jain scene is strengthened when we look at two folios from an *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, dated 1148 CE and in the Asiatic Society Calcutta. On the one folio (295v) in the preaching scene there is a stand with a book, exactly as in the Jain manuscripts. Even the position of the book and stand, in between the preacher and the listeners and slightly above the listeners, recalls closely the Jain manuscript. The preaching figure in the Buddhist manuscript similarly sits on a high throne with a canopy above him, again, exactly as in the Jain manuscripts. On folio 296r the stand with the book has a *stūpa* above it.²⁹

These scenes have been identified as the conclusion of the story of Sadāprarudita, when the teacher Dharmodgata teaches Sadāprarudita the *Prajñāpāramitā* and creates a wondrous jeweled structure, a *kūṭāgāra*, in which the text is placed for worship. The *stūpa*-like structure over the stand is interpreted as this *kūṭāgāra*, but its appearance on preaching scenes in other contexts, for example on the *Gaṇḍavyūha* folio, suggests that it is at home in contexts that are not associated with this story.³⁰ In this particular image, the artist seems to have combined visually the book stand with the manuscript, the hallmark of Jain preaching scenes, with the floating *stūpa*, which we have seen in Buddhist preaching scenes. A very similar scene is

²⁸ ‘Instruction by Monks, Folio from a Jain text of Sanskrit Grammar, the Siddhahemashabdanushasana by Hemachandra (1089–1172)’, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (M.88.62.2), <https://collections.lacma.org/node/170864>.

²⁹ Illustrations are in Kim, *Receptacle of the Sacred*, online version, Web 4-2, and Melzer and Allinger, ‘Die nepalesische Palmblatthandschrift’, 15. Pal and Meech-Pekarik, *Buddhist Book Illuminations* illustrates the preaching scene in fig. 39, page 115, but wrongly states that the manuscript is in the Cambridge University Library.

³⁰ Kim, ‘Iconography and Text’.



FIG. 10 *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Harriet Otis Cruft Fund, 20.589.

painted on the concluding folio of a manuscript of an *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* now in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (Figure 10). A bookstand floating between two figures in a preaching scene was to have a long life. It appears on a nineteenth century palm leaf manuscript of the *Brahma Rāmāyaṇa* from Orissa.³¹

The scene on the *Prajñāpāramitā* folio 296r with the book stand and the stūpa above it depicts two figures seated in front of a circular area, perhaps a ritual space of some kind. The combination of a preaching scene with lay worshippers before a circular ritual space also has an intriguing Jain parallel that may or may not be coincidental. This is a folio of an illustrated *Uttarādhyāyana sūtra* in the British Library, Or. 13362.³² The text on this page is to chapter twenty-nine, which teaches the means to liberation through the destruction of karma. This page tells how the liberated soul, freed

³¹ *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston (20.589), <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/149606/>. The palm leaf manuscript from Orissa is plate 87 in Das and Williams, *Palm-Leaf Miniatures*.

³² The image is online <http://www.jainpedia.org/manuscripts/detail-view-meta/manuscript/uttaradhyayana-sutra-or-13362/teaching-with-similes.html>.

from all contact with the body, rises up to the top of the universe. The illustrations are impossible to construe with either the text or the commentary. Their presence here suggests that there was a wide selection of standard illustrations available for selection, some chosen more often than others. The combination of a preaching scene with a depiction of lay people worshipping a round ritual space may well have been one such scenario. What motivated its incorporation here in the Jain text and perhaps in the Buddhist text as well would have been the basic theme of preaching.

The presence of a curtain in the Buddhist preaching scenes has puzzled scholars. If you look carefully, I think you can see that Jain preaching scenes always have an ornate canopy or curtain over the scene. I would argue that the curtain and the *stūpa* are indications that the painter and his audience were aware of religious painting conventions outside the confines of Buddhist manuscript painting.

Returning to the *Gaṇḍavyūha* manuscript in the Cleveland Museum, we can see the complexity of the question of image and text. While most of the illustrations do not relate to the written text, there are also narrative scenes that resonate with the text. Folio 348 is a case in point. The text is chapter fifty-six and the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra explains to Sudhana how many times he sacrificed life and limb for the sake of achieving enlightenment. The painter has provided three illustrations on this folio, including two violent scenes. I suspect that their appearance here may not be unrelated to the textual description of the often-violent bodily sacrifices of the Bodhisattva. This dual strategy in a single manuscript, depicting non-related figures, often figures of the Buddha or Buddhist deities, and narrative scenes including scenes tied to the text, can also be observed in manuscripts of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, which combine narrative scenes of the life of the Buddha or the story of Sadāprarudita in search of the Buddhist dharma, with images of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. It is also a strategy we observe in Jain manuscripts from the earliest period, where scenes of donors worshipping at a temple or scenes from the life of the Jina are combined with images of popular Jain deities.

This brings me, then, to the second alternative I proposed at the start of this paper: the cases in which text and image share the same

meaning or somehow together create a meaning that is tied to the text. My own view is that this is far less common, but I am going to examine one case that I think we may have missed. I am now going to take a fresh look at an illustrated manuscript of the *Pañcarakṣā* to show that the illustrations in this manuscript, properly understood, are remarkably close renderings of the written text. This is the Cambridge University Library houses a *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript that is dated to the fourteenth year of Nayapāla, which corresponds either to 1054 CE or 1057 CE, depending on the calculation of the beginning of Nayapāla's reign (MS Add. 1688). I will turn then to a slightly later *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript made during the reign of Rāmapāla, and now in the Cleveland Museum of Art, to argue that reading the text carefully can, at times, give us clues to unpack the meaning of the images depicted. What ties all these explorations together is ultimately the text itself: reading the text can signal to us that the illustrations are not related to the text, that they are directly related to the words of the text, and that even if they are not directly related to the words of the folio on which the images appear, the written text may still harbor the clues to decipher them.

3. The Nayapāla Manuscript³³

Pañcarakṣā manuscripts consist of five different short ritual texts, each centered around a spell or *Vidyā*, who is both the words of the spell and the goddess whose power makes the spell effective. The Nayapāla manuscript consists of sixty-nine folios; it is incomplete in that one folio, folio 27, is missing. It is a palm-leaf manuscript, and each folio is five centimetres in height and fifty-six centimetres in width.

In the Nayapāla manuscript the text of the *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī* begins on folio 45v (Figure 11). This is an illustrated folio, showing in the center the goddess Mahāsāhasrapramardinī surrounded by flames. She is accompanied by two of the four guardian kings

³³ The manuscript is online <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01688/132>.



FIG. 11 *Pañcarakṣā*, Nayapāla , Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 45v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 45v, left illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 45v, center illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 45v, right illustration.



FIG. 12 *Pañcarakṣā*, Nayapāla , Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 46r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 46r, left illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 46r, center illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 46r, right illustration.

of the quarters; the next folio shows the remaining two. On folio 45v to the viewer's left is Dhṛtarāṣṭra, the guardian king of the East, easily identified by his lute. At the right, another seated king holds a sword, typically the attribute of Virūḍhaka, the king of the South. On 46r (Figure 12) on the left we can easily recognize Vaiśramaṇa, king of the North, who is holding a mongoose. If the identification of the figure at the right on 45v is correct, then the remaining king would be Virūpākṣa, king of the West. At the center of 46r is a *stūpa* with two delicately drawn celestial figures hovering on clouds and offering flowers. There is no question that this is an unusual subject for an illustration of the *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī*, but I hope to show that whoever chose it did so because he knew his text. The four guardian kings and the *stūpa* figure prominently in the main protective ritual prescribed in the *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī*.³⁴

As the text opens, the Buddha, accompanied by his monks, is in Rājagṛha. He is honored by Ajātaśatru, king of Māgadha, when suddenly disaster hits the city of Vaiśālī. There is an earthquake and dark clouds enshroud the sky. A wild wind whips up and everything is covered in darkness. The stars do not shine; the sun and the moon shed no light. With his divine eye, the Buddha sees terrible things that are afflicting the people of Vaiśālī. People are possessed by ghosts and goblins. The Buddhist monks and nuns, lay men and women, struck with fear, lift their faces to the heavens and cry out in prayer to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṃgha. Those who are of other religious faiths beseech their chosen deity. Everyone is desperate to find a way to escape their suffering. The Buddha appears to them in his most magnificent form. He is radiant like the full moon, glowing like molten gold, in appearance like a mountain of the finest gold. The Buddha is silent for a moment, and then he summons the four guardian kings. He upbraids them; it is not right, he tells them, that your followers should torment people here on earth, where the Buddha lives and righteousness prevails. Vaiśramaṇa is the first of

³⁴ I am using the text on GRETIL, http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskrit/4_rellit/buddh/mspram_u.htm, accessed October 21, 2014. All my references to the texts are to the editions on GRETIL.

the kings to speak. He explains to the Buddha that the four kings live a life immersed in the most splendid of sensual pleasures, but their followers are not so fortunate. They roam everywhere, searching for food and they steal the vital essence of men and women, children and animals. They cause all living beings to suffer, and even deprive them of their lives. Vaiśramaṇa then tells the Buddha that he will explain to the Buddha what the signs are of people who are possessed by the retinues of the four kings. With this knowledge, the afflicted person is to make a *stūpa* with an image of the appropriate Guardian King, the one whose retinue is causing the trouble. He is to worship the *stūpa* with various fragrances, offered in the name of the Guardian King in control. Flowers are to be strewn over the ground and lamps lit as the sufferer worships at the *stūpa*. Vaiśramaṇa then describes the symptoms of possession by the *yakṣas*, who are his followers. Such a person laughs, shrinks in fear, constantly talks nonsense, and becomes enraged. The description, which is much longer, is followed by a list of mantras that the sick person is to recite, praying that the mantras work and that he or she (and here the sick person might insert his or her own name) and all living beings are well, through the power of the Great King Vaiśramaṇa. Each of the other Guardian Kings similarly steps forward and describes to the Buddha the symptoms that someone possessed by one of his retinue exhibits. There follow mantras and prayers. The symptomology is important; a person has to know which Guardian King to worship and in whose name to make offerings. After the Four Guardian Kings have said their piece, the Buddha makes a great lion roar in front of all assembled. He offers his own mantras and the prayer that he himself and all living beings may be healthy through the power of the Buddha. When the Four Guardian Kings hear his words, they take off, their retinue in flight at their heels. The spell that the Buddha has recited is the Mahāsāhasrapramardinī. For those troubling creatures who do not heed it and do not flee, leaving those they have been tormenting in peace, the text tells us that an angry Vajradhara will crack open their heads.

The text continues with more symptoms and mantras, but it should now be clear that these illustrations on folios 45v and 46r in the Nayapāla manuscript are a close reflection of the material in

the text. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how the designer of these illustrations could have more aptly conveyed the purport of the text. These small illustrations give visual form to the ritual that the text prescribes: worship of a *stūpa* and the Four Guardian Kings. This is a very practical text, concrete and precise in its goals. It offers remedies for a range of symptoms associated with demonic possession. These remedies are given a seal of approval by the fact that it was the Buddha himself who made the Four Guardian Kings share them with mankind, while the *Mahāsāhasrapramardinī* mantra was spoken by the Buddha himself. For those who commissioned this manuscript, wrote it, and painted it, the core of this text was these healing rituals that are illustrated as the text begins. We learn from the illustrations exactly what we will meet in the text.

These are not the only illustrations in this manuscript that are closely tied to the text. Folio 19 v (Figure 13) shows two Buddhas in identical pose at the left and center, with the Bodhisattva Maitreya at the far right. Maitreya is readily identified by the *stūpa* in his hair and the water pot on top of the flower. These three figures may be taken to depict the Buddha of the past, the present and the future. This is confirmed by the text. The *Mahāmāyūrī* often begins with an invocation of praise to the Buddhas of the past, present, and future.³⁵

On folio 66v (Figure 14) we find three ferocious figures, garlanded in skulls, surrounded by flames, standing with legs akimbo and one arm raised as if ready to strike. These figures, too, bear a close connection to the text. This is the end of the *Mahāśītavatī*, where the Buddha tells Rāhula that a person should make an amulet of the spell and tie it on his or her hand. The wearer of the amulet will not suffer from fever or sickness; he or she cannot be harmed by fire or poison. Then we are told that if the demonic creature that is possessing a

³⁵ See the edition of the text on GRETIL http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskr/4_rellit/buddh/mmayuvru.htm. Some manuscripts insert a brief praise to the Buddhas of the past, present, and future. This one begins directly with a longer invocation, to the seven Buddhas of the past and their community of monks and lay devotees, the arhats presently in the world, and the Bodhisattvas beginning with Maitreya.



FIG. 13 *Pañcarakṣā*, Nayapāla , Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 19v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 19v, left illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 19v, center illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 19v, right illustration.



FIG. 14 *Pañcarakṣā*, Nayapāla, Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 66v. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 66v, left illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 66v, center illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 66v, right illustration.



FIG. 15 *Pañcarakṣā*, Nayapāla, Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 67r. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 67r, left illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 67r, center illustration.



Detail from MS Add.1688, folio 67r, right illustration.

person does not at once leave his victim in peace, his head will split open. Vajrapāṇi, the army general of the *yakṣas*, will strike him with a flaming vajra, a vajra that is ablaze with fire, and crush his skull. The Four Great Kings will crack open his head with an iron wheel and strike him with sharp swords. These terrifying and menacing figures make visible the threat that the Buddha utters in the text. Such ferocious figures also appear on the next folio, 67r (Figure 15), as the *Mahāśītavatī* concludes. The fierce figures are at home in both the text that is concluding and the new text that is beginning, the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī*. In this text the Buddha is again in Rājagṛha, in the city of Vaiśālī. He instructs Ānanda to put his foot on the threshold of the city gate and recite some mantras. The mantras begin, ‘Scatter! Scatter! Scatter!’ and continue with words like these, ‘Release them! Release them! Release them! Do not stay here! Let the plague be stilled. Go away! Go away! Go away!’ At the end of a long command, ordering any offending demonic beings to flee, the Buddha instructs Ānanda to threaten them with these words: ‘If you wicked ones do not flee, do not vanish...’ And we know what the rest of the sentence should be: the horrifying Vajrapāṇi or the Four Guardian Kings will smite them. In both the *Mahāśītavatī* and the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* the words of the mantras contain direct threats of violence to those creatures who do not obey the Buddha’s command to stop afflicting living beings. The fierce creatures on folio 67r embody the threats that are spoken in the text that concludes on this folio and in the new one that is just beginning. Ferocious figures appear again as the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* concludes on folio 69v. The text on this folio starts at the end of the threat, ‘If you wicked ones do not flee, do not vanish...’

The Nayapāla manuscript may be somewhat unusual in its careful and intimate connection of image and text, and it seems reasonable to ask if what we see here has any relevance for the interpretation of other *Pañcarakṣā* manuscripts. I would like to look now at a manuscript dated to year thirty-nine in the reign of Rāmapāla, that is, to the early twelfth century. The manuscript, in the collection of Catherine and Ralph Benkaim, is now on permanent loan to the Cleveland Museum.

4. The Rāmapāla Manuscript in the Cleveland Museum³⁶

Like the Nayapāla manuscript, this manuscript too has fierce figures. One appears on the center of folio 64v (Figure 16). Interestingly, this folio contains the end of the *Mahāsītavatī* and the beginning of the *Mahāpratisarā*. The fierce figure thus appears at pretty much the same place in the text that such figures occupy in the Nayapāla manuscript, a visual reminder of the explicit threat contained in the text to any evil-doer who does not obey the command of the Buddha to stop tormenting those who are protected by the mantras. A second menacing creature is painted in the center of the next folio, 65r (Figure 17) which continues the opening passages of the *Mahāpratisarā*, which is a long list of everyone who is with the Buddha. We will return to the specifics of the list in a moment. The list is followed by a poetic description of the Buddha, who is radiant like the full moon, glowing like a magnificent gold mountain, and is seated on a diamond-lotus throne, in size like Mount Meru itself. He addresses the assembly, saying that he will teach the spell known as Mahāpratisarā. In the verses that follow he describes the benefits of carrying the Mahāpratisarā as a protective amulet: it affords protection from every imaginable source of harm. Finally, he speaks the Mahāpratisarā spell itself. The spell is filled with violent language; a host of deities, from the Four Guardian Kings to Viṣṇu and Varuṇa are petitioned to destroy all the wicked beings, to burn up their bodies. This protective action with its violence is at the heart of the text; it should not surprise us, then, to find an image of a fierce protector, poised to strike, as the text opens.

Paying close attention to the text of the *Mahāpratisarā* may help us further to understand the iconography of this manuscript as a whole, although it takes us beyond the more straightforward use of

³⁶ I thank Sonya Quintanilla for her generosity in allowing me to view this manuscript and the *Gaṇḍavyūha* folios. I have benefitted enormously from her insights and from our many conversations. For published descriptions and interpretations see Black, 'An Early Nepalese Palm-Leaf Manuscript'; Allinger and Melzer, 'A *Pañcarakṣā* Manuscript'; Kim, 'A Book of Buddhist Goddesses'.



FIG. 16 *Pañcarakṣā* folio 64 (verso) c. 1116 (Year 39 of Ramapala). Eastern India, Bihar. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, Collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, Promised Gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art 16.2014.



Detail from *Pañcarakṣā* folio 64 (verso), center illustration.



FIG. 17 *Pañcarakṣā* folio 65 (recto) c. 1116 (Year 39 of Ramapala). Eastern India, Bihar. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, Collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, Promised Gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art 16.2014.



Detail from *Pañcarakṣā* folio 65 (recto), center illustration.

a visual image to encapsulate the essence of a text or to describe in pictures the rituals laid down in words. It offers us access to the more elusive general context of our texts and their illustrations. The Spells or *Vidyās* in all the five *Pañcarakṣā* texts are female, and they appear in anthropomorphic form in every manuscript examined so far. The Rāmapāla manuscript in Cleveland is unusual in that it pairs the female *Vidyās* with a male figure of the same color, multi-armed and multi-headed, wearing jewels. There has been considerable speculation about the identity of these male figures, who have been identified as the five Buddhas (Figure 18 and 19). An attempt has even been made to see them as esoteric forms of these Buddhas and in union with the *Vidyās*, as one folio rests upon another. Recourse is had to a wide range of tantric texts and iconographic compilations to substantiate these interpretations.³⁷ But what if we listened more closely to the texts at hand, which have no hint of these practices? Perhaps the *Mahāpratisarā* can lead us to a different explanation. In its list of the different beings who accompany the Buddha are several who are known elsewhere as Spell Kings, *Vidyā Rājas*, in other words, as the male counterparts to the *Vidyā Rājñīs*, the Spell Queens. Each of the five *Pañcarakṣā* texts explicitly calls its spell a Spell Queen, *Vidyā Rājñī*. Although the designation Spell King does not appear in the *Mahāpratisarā*, Vajrahasta and Vajrasena, two of the deities who are in the assembly of the Buddha, are explicitly identified in a related text, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, as Spell Kings.³⁸ The names of other Spell Kings appear in another one of the *Pañcarakṣā* texts, the *Mahāmāyūri*.³⁹ These Spell Kings are admittedly somewhat mysterious. In East Asian Buddhism the Spell Kings or *Myō-ō* are fierce

³⁷ See Black ‘An Early Nepalese Palm-Leaf Manuscript’; Kim, ‘A Book of Buddhist Goddesses’.

³⁸ *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, Vaidya p. 8, online GRETIL, http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/1_sanskrit/4_rellit/buddh/bsu041_u.htm, accessed October 22, 2014. Like the *Pañcarakṣā* texts, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* contains numerous spells and rituals for healing and protection.

³⁹ These are Suṣeṇa and Subāhu, who appear in the same section as Vajrahasta and Vajrasena in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.



FIG. 18 *Pañcarakṣā*, folio 61 (verso) c. 1116 (Year 39 of Ramapala). Eastern India, Bihar. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, Collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, Promised Gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art 16.2014.



FIG. 19 *Pañcarakṣā*, folio 62 (recto), c. 1116 (Year 39 of Ramapala). Eastern India, Bihar. © The Cleveland Museum of Art, Collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, Promised Gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art 16.2014.

beings. The painted Acala or Fudō- Myō-ō from Japan done in the Kamakura period now in the Asia Society is a typical example.⁴⁰ In Indic language sources, however, Vidyārājas or Spell Kings are not necessarily fierce. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* clearly distinguishes the benign Spell Kings, who may look like a magnificent World Emperor, from the fierce and hideous Anger Kings which it calls *Krodha Rājas*.⁴¹ This reminds us of another distinction made in a number of texts, between five benign Bodhisattvas, the teaching forms of the five Buddhas, and their five wrathful forms.⁴² As a tentative hypothesis, I would propose that we take a cue from the words of the *Mahāpratisarā* and the *Mahāmāyūrī* and identify the male figures with our Spell Queens as Spell Kings. While my identification of the male figures steps out of the written words of our folios and brings in other texts, it nonetheless starts from what is in the texts of our manuscripts—names of deities. The text that it turns to, the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, I would suggest, is very much within the ritual world of the *Pañcarakṣā* texts, replete as it is with references to Spell Queens and Kings and to rituals for healing illnesses caused by demonic beings. The identification is only a start, however; it needs to be the beginning of an in-depth investigation into the history of these enigmatic Spell Kings and their closely related Anger Kings. If the identification I am proposing is correct, we have here the first example of the presence of images of benign Spell Kings in an Indic context. They will travel across Asia to become the Five Great Bodhisattvas familiar to Japanese Esoteric Buddhism, paired with the Five Buddhas and Five Anger Kings, but so far, their presence outside East Asia has gone unremarked.

⁴⁰ 1979.209. Available online at http://www.asiasocietymuseum.org/search_object.asp?keywords=fudo&ObjectID=430.

⁴¹ This is clear in the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, chapter 14, page 95 and chapter 1, page 8. Strauch, ‘The Evolution of the Buddhist *rakṣā* genre’, specifically page 74, suggests that mantras were called spell kings before they came to be known as spell queens.

⁴² The lists of these five teaching forms or Bodhisattvas vary. For details see Orzech, *Politics and Transcendent Wisdom*, 178.

III. Conclusions

I began this discussion with an examination of a manuscript, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* in the Cambridge University Library, which I concluded we might even best consider as two different texts, so independent are the images from the written text. Thus, I proposed, we have the familiar Mahāyāna sūtra in the written words and a second new text, a visual catalogue of famous Buddhist sites in the second text that is comprised by the illustrations. I suggested that the illustrations have a context and that they reflect a popular theme in contemporary painting, the depiction of famous sacred places. Buddhist palm leaf manuscripts are not the only examples of paintings of famous images; Jain palm leaf manuscripts also depicted important pilgrimage sites. I then turned to another widely known Mahāyāna text, the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. Here I drew attention to parallels to secular and Jain paintings, for illustrations again that are not tied to the words of the text. This manuscript also provided an example of an illustration reflective of a narrative in the text, and I leave for Sonya Mace, forthcoming to describe her remarkable discovery of how this manuscript also quite literally gives visual form to abstract metaphors in the sūtra.

My third example, a *Pañcarakṣā* manuscript in the Cambridge Library, I argued is an excellent example of text and image in intimate synergy, if we only we would look carefully at the written text. And in my last example, another *Pañcarakṣā* that is in the Cleveland Museum, I suggested that even if the text may not tell us directly the identity of an image, it may guide us in our search. Thus, the male image who accompanies the spell goddess can be identified as a Spell King, one of a group of deities, several of whom do indeed figure in the lists of deities in the texts. We have, I think, various ways in which images and written words work together, and our first step in unpacking the complexities must be the written text itself. Only a careful reading of the written text can tell us into which category a manuscript fits: the first category I discussed, where text and image go their separate ways, or the second category, in which the images closely reflect the written word, or both, like the *Gaṇḍavyūha* manuscript, which has unrelated and closely related images.

There is, of course, much more that could be said of texts and images. I close with one of the more challenging discoveries I have made in studying carefully a very different set of manuscripts: fifteenth century paper manuscripts of the Jain *Kalpasūtra*. The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston has a manuscript dated 1494 CE that is richly illustrated.⁴³ A close examination of the images along with the text reveals that many of the illustrations are simply in the wrong place. Where one expects an image of the Jina plucking out his hair to renounce the world, there is an image of him Enthroned in Heaven (Figure 20); where one expects an image of the Preaching Assembly of the Jina, we are confronted with an image of his Liberation (Figure 21) And that is followed by another image of the Liberation (Figure 22). Abstracted from the text, these images would have confounded the researcher who sought to understand their relationship to each other. Reading the text and images together, however, we realize at once that someone has slipped up in making this manuscript. Starting with this initial accidental discovery, I have found in my work on manuscripts that mistaken and misplaced images are in fact more common than we might have suspected. In fact, the early twelfth century palm leaf Buddhist manuscript of the *Kāraṇḍavyūha* in the British Library, or 13940, also has a number of misplaced images. Illustrations for the story of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the demon Bali are dispersed across the manuscript, appearing, for example, on folios 15–16, but then several folios later on folio 26, long after the text has finished with the story. Similarly, in the famous story of Simhala, several of the images are displaced. The shipwreck that brought the merchants to the island of the demonesses in the first place is illustrated on folio 18r, after the scene of their rescue on folio 17. Another image on folio 20v of Simhala spying on the doomed merchants also belongs before the

⁴³ *Kalpa Sutra*, India, A.D. 1494, ink and opaque watercolor on paper; cotton and cardboard, page 26 x 11cm, covers 27.8 x 12.7cm, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, Boston (22.364.1-146), <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/605349/>. I thank Laura Weinstein, Curator of the South Asian Collection, for all her assistance as I studied these manuscripts.



FIG. 20 *Kalpa Sūtra*. © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 22.364.1-146.



Detail from *Kalpa Sūtra*, 22.364.1-146.



FIG. 21 *Kalpa Sūtra*. © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 22.364.1-146.



Detail from *Kalpa Sūtra*, 22.364.1-146.



FIG. 22 *Kalpa Sūtra*. © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 22.364.1-146.



Detail from *Kalpa Sūtra*, 22.364.1-146.

rescue on folio 17. In fact, all the illustrations to the Simhala story appear at the wrong place in the text: that is, they are not where we might expect them, where the text is telling the Simhala story. The most likely explanation for all these misplaced images is human error. There are other narratives in the sūtra and the illustrations to these narratives appear alongside the appropriate text. They are a clear indication that the designer of the text intended the narrative scenes to appear with the text passage that they illustrate. Thus, folio 19v begins the account of Avalokiteśvara among the *yakṣas* and describes how he emitted light from his body. This is exactly what the image depicts. In a lesser known story, the bodhisattva takes on the guise of a brahmin and visits a destitute godling named Sukundala, whom he makes wealthy. The illustration on folio 23v is exactly where it belongs, showing Sukundala in his palace.

It was not only in the placement of the illustrations that mistakes were made. An exquisite nineteenth century Assamese manuscript of the Assamese translation of the *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa* in the British Library, Or. 11387, has entire pages rewritten and a number of pages crossed out.⁴⁴

Although the many errors in these manuscripts would seem greatly to complicate the task of studying the relationship of text to image, there is also something poignantly comforting in their presence. The very simple fact of the co-existence of perfection and imperfection in these manuscripts led me to think about how closely, albeit in an unintended way, they reflect some of the basic assumptions of the texts they record. The quest for understanding, they seem to say, is just that, a quest, a journey, along which there will be inevitable missteps.

⁴⁴ I have discussed this manuscript in my essay 'Illuminating the Formless'. I presented some of the material on mistakes in manuscripts as the keynote lecturer for the 10th Annual Lawrence J. Schoenberg Symposium on Manuscript Studies in the Digital Age, University of Pennsylvania, November 2, 2017.

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List of Illustrations

- Fig.1 *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Nepāla. March 1015 CE. Palm leaf and Nepalese paper, 5.5 x 54.5–55 cm. Cambridge University Library. MS Add.1643, folio 8v. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01643/18>.
- Fig.2 *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Nepāla. March 1015 CE. Palm leaf and Nepalese paper, 5.5 x 54.5–55 cm. Cambridge University Library. MS Add.1643, folio 20v. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01643/42>.
- Fig.3 Shinohara, Koichi. *Śatruñjaya and Girnar, Ranakpur*. Photograph.
- Fig.4 *Seven Leaves from a Manuscript of the Gandavyūha-sūtra (Scripture of the Supreme Array)*. Nepal. 1000s–1100s. Gum tempera and ink on palm leaves, 4.2 x 52.4 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1955.49. <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1955.49>.
- Fig.5 *Folio 73 from a Gandavyūha-sūtra (Scripture of the Supreme Array)*. Nepal. 1000s–1100s. Gum tempera and ink on palm leaf, 4.2 x 52.4 cm. The Cleveland Museum of Art, Purchase from the J. H. Wade Fund 1955.49.3.a. <https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1955.49.3.a>.
- Fig. 6 Vasanta Vilasa (a poem on Spring). 1451. Opaque watercolor, ink and gold on paper mounted on cloth, 1101.5 x 24.5 cm. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.:

- Purchase — Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1932.24. <https://www.freersackler.si.edu/object/F1932.24/>.
- Fig. 7 Unknown. *A Night Goddess Instructing Sudhana, Folio from a Gandavyuha (The Structure of the World)*. Nepal. c. 1150–1175. Opaque watercolor and ink on palm leaf, 5.1 x 55.3 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, From the Nasli and Alice Heeramanek Collection, Museum Associates Purchase (M.71.1.1f). <https://collections.lacma.org/node/2267859>.
- Fig. 8 *Sravakapratikramasutra-curni of Vijayasimba*. Indian, Jain. 1260. Ink and opaque watercolor on palm leaf, 5.5 x 41 cm. © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 30.1.1-229. <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/605509/>.
- Fig. 9 Unknown. *Instruction by Monks, Folio from a Jain text of Sanskrit Grammar, the Siddhabemashabdanushasana by Hemachandra (1089–1172)*. c. 1350. Ink and opaque watercolor on palm leaf, 6.35 x 23.5 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Purchased with funds provided by the Indian Art Special Purpose Fund, Mrs. Wilbur Archer Beckett, Gerald Stockton and S. Louis Gaines, the Christian Humann Fund, Jo Ann and Julian Ganz, Jr. and Dr. and Mrs. Peter Bing (M.88.62.2). <https://collections.lacma.org/node/170864>.
- Fig. 10 *Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita*. Eastern Indian. 1147. Ink and opaque watercolor on palm leaf and wood, 52 x 6 cm. © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Harriet Otis cruft Fund, 20.589. <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/149606/>.
- Fig. 11 *Pañcarakṣā*. Nayapāla of Bengal. 1054 CE or 1057 CE. Palm leaf, 5 x 56 cm. Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 45v. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01688/90>.
- Fig. 12 *Pañcarakṣā*. Nayapāla of Bengal. 11054 CE or 1057 CE. Palm leaf, 5 x 56 cm. Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 46r. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01688/91>.

- Fig. 13 *Pañcarakṣā*. Nayapāla of Bengal. 1054 CE or 1057 CE. Palm leaf, 5 x 56 cm. Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 19v. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01688/40>.
- Fig. 14 *Pañcarakṣā*. Nayapāla of Bengal. 1054 CE or 1057 CE. Palm leaf, 5 x 56 cm. Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 66v. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01688/132>.
- Fig. 15 *Pañcarakṣā*. Nayapāla of Bengal. 1054 CE or 1057 CE. Palm leaf, 5 x 56 cm. Cambridge University Library MS Add.1688, folio 67r. <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01688/133>.
- Fig. 16 *Pañcarakṣā*, folio 64 (verso) c. 1116 (Year 39 of Ramapala). Eastern India, Bihar. The Cleveland Museum of Art Collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, Promised Gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art 16.2014.
- Fig. 17 *Pañcarakṣā*, folio 65 (recto) c. 1116 (Year 39 of Ramapala). Eastern India, Bihar. The Cleveland Museum of Art Collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, Promised Gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art 16.2014.
- Fig. 18 *Pañcarakṣā*, folio 61 (verso) c. 1116 (Year 39 of Ramapala). Eastern India, Bihar, Collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, Promised Gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art 16.2014.
- Fig. 19 *Pañcarakṣā*, folio 62 (recto) c. 1116 (Year 39 of Ramapala). Eastern India, Bihar, Collection of Catherine Glynn Benkaim and Ralph Benkaim, Promised Gift to the Cleveland Museum of Art 16.2014.
- Fig. 20–22 *Kalpa Sutra*. Indian, Jain. A.D. 1494. Ink and opaque watercolor on paper; cotton and cardboard, 26 x 11 cm. © 2019 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Denman Waldo Ross Collection, 22.364.1-146. <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/605349/>.