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**Visualizing the Power of Wisdom:
Mañjuvajra Mandala, an Eleventh Century
Pāla Period Sculpture from Bengal**

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Pāla Period Sculpture from Bengal**

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Abstract

Visualizing the Power of Wisdom: *Mañjuvajra Mandala*, an Eleventh Century Pāla Period Sculpture from Bengal

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Among the extant examples of carved-stone deity *mūrtis* from Pāla-period Bengal, few express their subject matter in such dynamic and aesthetically refined visual terms as a sculpture now in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. Entitled *Mañjuvajra Mandala*, the stele depicts a three-faced six-armed form of the bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañjuśrī. It dates from the latest phase of Vajrayāna Buddhism in India and likely reflects *sādhana* practices that entail *mandala* visualization rituals and union with a female consort. Although a superbly carved piece and an unusual form, it has not yet been fully studied. Surviving relevant texts locate Mañjuvajra primarily within a *mandala* diagram as the focus of *sādhana* visualization rituals. The purpose of this thesis is to explore aspects of the sculpture's execution that add to its meaning and, in turn, provide an enriched understanding of Vajrayāna practice. The innovative composition and metonymic forms of this Mañjuvajra sculpture demonstrate the congruency of religious content and artistic depiction in a powerful and multivalent manner.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The focus of this study is a Pāla period¹ Buddhist stone stele labeled *Mañjuvajra Mandala* in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (H: 50 3/4 in., 128.9 cm; W: 23 3/4 in., 60.3 cm; D: 9 1/2 in., 24.1 cm). Atypically large in size, the stele presents a rarely depicted six-armed and triple-faced form of the bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañjuśrī (figs.1-1.1). The increased number of the deity's body parts suggests that none are beyond his reach or sight. The artist juxtaposes the deity's peaceful, meditative gaze, with chin lowered slightly and two arms crossed before his chest, to a wide span of his other four arms, brandishing a long sword, bow, and arrow (now damaged). A striking trefoil niche delineates a deep space surrounding him.

Equally unusual is the elaborate architectural setting above the niche. Here, a central temple spire (*śikhara*) surmounts an assemblage of small, rounded *caitya* structures. These *caityas* (or *stūpas*), with concentric curving moldings and spiking pinnacles, each houses a small six-armed and triple-faced figure that aligns in posture and dress with the form of the central deity (figs. 1.2-1.3). These are the five transcendent *tathāgatas*, also called celestial buddhas or *jinas* ("victors"). Though each has a slight variation in collection of implements they hold, they share the sword and lotus with the

¹ The "Pāla Period" (also known as the "Pāla-Sena Period") stretched from 750-1200 CE in the region of present-day northeastern India and Bangladesh. I use the term "Pāla Period" here for purposes of simplicity to denote this region and time period. The Pāla Dynasty did not rule over the entire region during the whole of this period and various rulers intervened, particularly in Bengal after the tenth century. Further, my use of the term "Pāla Period" should not be taken as assuming any form of patronage of the artworks, for which there is no clear evidence. A complete discussion and outline of Pāla Period rulers may be found in Susan Huntington, *"Pāla-Sena" Schools of Sculpture* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1984), 27-80. Further, my use of the term "Bengal" in this study refers to ancient Bengal prior to colonial intervention in the sixteenth century and partition in the twentieth. Today, the region of ancient Bengal roughly comprises the modern Indian state of West Bengal and the independent nation of Bangladesh.

bodhisattva. This grouping of *jina* buddhas denotes a *mandala* (cosmic diagram). The small figures are situated to the four cardinal directions with the center figure before the temple *śikhara* (tower) directly above the deity. The bodhisattva is depicted as seated upon a stylized lotus petal throne. On the stele's plinth (or base) below, various figures are presented in low relief within curling vines. These indicate the *saptaratnas* (seven jewels) denoting a *cakravārtin* (great king or teacher²) (figs 1.6-1.7).³ In sum, the elements of the image present a sense of a majestic sacred space inhabited by a powerful divine presence.

On the basis of comparison with textual sources, scholars have identified the central deity as Mañjuvajra, a form of the bodhisattva of wisdom Mañjuśrī specific to the Vajrayāna (esoteric or tantric) school of Indian Buddhism. He embodies the power of *prajñā*, the wisdom of insight necessary to attain enlightenment. Mañjuśrī becomes a particularly important deity by the Vajrayāna phase of Indian Buddhism, the latest before its general demise in the subcontinent by the thirteenth century. The powerful ritual practices of the Vajrayāna (meaning literally “diamond vehicle” or “thunderbolt vehicle” in Sanskrit) functioned to accelerate the practitioner’s attainment of enlightenment to within a single lifetime for particularly advanced adepts. This was in sharp contrast to the

² Meaning literally “wheel-turner,” as in one who turns the wheel of the dharma. From its outset, Buddhism adopted royal symbolism in multitudinous ways. Kings were historically identified with the divine in ancient India.

³A common iconographic convention for deity steles in southeastern Bengal, these figures include the wealth deity Jambhala, the goddess Tārā, a horse, and an elephant. In addition to the *saptaratnas*, there are also human female devotees and a monk with pointed hat engaged in ritual practice at far right. The monk holds ritual implements of a *ghāṇṭa* (bell) and *vajra* (meaning diamond or thunderbolt and denoting the adamant nature of Buddhahood). See, Claudine Bautze-Picron, “Between Gods and Men: Small Motifs in the Buddhist Art of Eastern India, an Interpretation.” *Function and Meaning in Buddhist Art: Proceedings of a Seminar Held at Leiden University, 21-24 October, 1991* (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1995), 59–79.

typical bodhisattva path of the Mahāyāna (“great vehicle” or “great path”) wherein the achievement of enlightenment required countless lifetimes.

Mañjuvajra, as a form of Mañjuśrī specific to the Vajrayāna Buddhism, contrasts with his more typical two-armed form also holding a lotus flower (*padma*) but topped by a book, the *Prajñāpāramitā* (the Perfection of Wisdom). This highly revered early Mahāyāna text on the attainment of enlightenment (translated into Chinese from Sanskrit ca. second century CE) held sustained importance in Pāla period Buddhism. An object of worship itself from this earlier period, the text became personified by the goddess *Prajñāpāramitā* in Buddhist artworks dating to the seventh through eighth centuries.⁴

The Met Mañjuvajra sculpture reflects a Vajrayāna phase innovation with regard to this concept of *prajñā* (or “insight wisdom”) long associated with Mañjuśrī. Also rarely depicted in Pāla art, the deity’s *mudrā* (ritual hand gesture) indicated by the bodhisattva’s two crossed lower hands (also damaged), describes the joining of the bodhisattva in sexual union with the unseen presence of a *prajñā*. This is a type of Vajrayāna feminine deity who also personifies the wisdom of insight necessary to attain Enlightenment. This *mudrā* most clearly associates the Met Mañjuvajra artwork with the Vajrayāna ritual practices believed to be institutionalized in major Bihāri and Bengali monasteries at this time (ca. tenth to eleventh centuries).⁵

⁴ See, for example, *Prajñāpāramitā* (ca. ninth century) in the Avery Brundage collection, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. Published in Susan L. Huntington & John C. Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi tree: The Art of Pāla India (8th-12th centuries) and its international legacy* (Dayton, Ohio: Dayton Art Institute in association with the University of Washington Press, 1990), no. 8.

⁵ Reginald Ray, “Reading the Vajrayāna in Context: A Reassessment of Bengal Blackie,” *Buddhist-Christian Studies* (Vol. 5, 1985): 173-189.

Acquired by Asian art collector and heiress Cora Timken Burnett in the early part of the twentieth century and subsequently bequeathed to the Metropolitan Museum, the artwork is without verifiable provenance or date.⁶ This is typical for Pāla works acquired by Western collectors, often through antiquities dealers. Few bear dated inscriptions and the find-spots for these works were rarely preserved in market transactions.⁷ The Met Mañjuvajra however can be dated and provenanced on stylistic grounds to eleventh century southeastern Bengal.⁸

This thesis undertakes a thorough comparative analysis and contextualization of Metropolitan Mañjuvajra stele both in terms of the regional style and ritual practices its forms express. Remarkably, a work extremely similar to the Metropolitan piece now exists in the Rubin Museum collection in New York (fig. 2). However, the Met stele's atypically large size, technical refinement, and formal balance further mark its individual importance as an exceptional work of art. Though the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra stele is one of the most distinctive and expertly-carved Pāla artworks to be found among

⁶ Timken Burnett loaned many the works in her extensive collection to the Met as early as the 1920s. Upon her death in 1957, the work was bequeathed to the museum. A museum publication written at that time, penned by Far Eastern Art curator, Aschwin Lippe, indicates the work's lack of a solid date or provenance. See: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Additions to the Collection." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series: Eighty-Seventh Annual Report of the Trustees for the Fiscal Year 1956-1957* (Oct. 1957, Vol. 16, No. 2), 62-70: 66; as well as, Aschwin Lippe, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series* (Feb. 1960, Vol. 18 No. 6), 177-192: 188.

⁷ Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, 92. The ramifications of this lack of documentation, particularly for works that were exported and purchased in the West, warrant further study. One strand of such a discussion concerns, as Leoskho (2003) notes, the lack of interest on the part of late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars in the documentation of find sites for Pāla artworks. Scholars, such as A.M. Broadley, privileged the religious classification of these works over any interest in provenance and their disturbed original context. See Janice Leoskho, *Sacred Traces: British Exploration of Buddhism in South Asia* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate Pub, 2003), 90-92.

⁸ see Lippe, *op. cit.* fn 6 and, among her multiple publications on this topic, Jane Casey *et al.*, ed. *Divine Presence: Arts of India and the Himalayas* (Barcelona: Casa Asia, 2003), 28.

American collections, it has never before been fully studied. However, its multiple visual discourses and themes prove a particularly productive point of entry for understanding this important and often misconceived period of Indian Buddhism.

Images recognizably associated with Vajrayāna-phase Buddhism include new female forms and fierce deities – often with multiple limbs and faces – along with an elaboration of iconographic elements including various ritual implements and, more rarely, *mandalas*. These constitute a relatively small corpus within several thousand extant Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain Pāla-period stone *stelae* and smaller metal images. Yet, scholars have fixated on the novelty and “degraded” character of the divergent iconography related to this latest phase of Indian Buddhism. Their presentation of these works as emblematic of the Pāla canon has led not only to a misrepresentation of the nature of the most typical Pāla forms, but to erroneous assumptions about the type of Buddhist practice most prevalent at the time, equally across Pāla regions.

The Problem with “Tantric Images”

There are a number of methodological pitfalls that one encounters when discussing a Pāla image as a “tantric” or “esoteric” form of the deity. The labeling of a work in this way has historically led to the perception of the image as divorced from earlier deity forms. My goal here is to express a continuity with regard to the earlier extant deities and Buddhist doctrine, particularly with regard to Śākyāmuni Buddha and the continued emphasis on the soteriological goal of Enlightenment.

I propose here that visual elements associated with tantric practice as conveyed in Buddhist deity imagery are most productively considered as a sliding scale developing in

connection with Mahāyāna theology over time. The question is not “what is tantric?” in early medieval Buddhist Mahāyāna imagery (dated from at least the fifth century) but “what is not tantric?” Thus, it is a misnomer to describe Buddhist images as “tantric” (vs. “non-tantric”) as it is not a clearly definable term or applicable in a general sense. For one, the scope and context of the term “tantric” or “tantra” changes depending upon the religious tradition in ancient and medieval India (e.g. Buddhist, Hindu, or Jain).

Scholars often describe *mantras*, *mudrās* and/or *mandalas* as elements of tantric ritual yet these are found quite early in Mahāyāna Buddhism.⁹ However, Vajrayāna yogic elements including fierce deities and sexual symbolism are what we would situate at the upper end of this tantric Buddhist sliding scale. More and more, we realize that these are not diachronically stratified phases of Buddhism, but simultaneous. Ironically, the Buddhist pilgrims did point this out to some extent in the seventh century CE.¹⁰ In monasteries such as Nālandā, for example, earlier schools of doctrine and practice were maintained by certain groups of monks while others adhered to the Mahāyāna and/or later Vajrayana ritual developments.¹¹ The process of defining what does and does not constitute tantric Buddhism is complex and must be carefully navigated in scholarship.

A Mixed Reception at Best: Pāla scholarship and Buddhist Tantra

When the western study of Pāla artworks began in the nineteenth century, Bengal was a unified region and the hub of the British Colonial Empire. Alexander Cunningham,

⁹ Stephen Hodge, *The Mahā-vairocana-abhisambodhi Tantra* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003), 4-5.

¹⁰ Hsuan-Tsang, *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Trans. by Samuel Beal (Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1969).

¹¹ *ibid.*

the first director general of the Archaeological Survey of India spearheaded scholarship on Indian Buddhist material culture. Cunningham dedicated himself to uncovering the sites of the historical Buddha (and opening the large *stūpa* monuments to locate inside their long-forgotten “treasures”).¹² His concerns reflect a tendency in Buddhist textual scholarship to focus on the life and of Śakyāmini.

The focus of the earliest nineteenth century British scholars was the “pure” Buddhism concerned with the earliest period of Buddhism, the life and teachings of the Historical Buddha (Śakyāmini or Siddhartha Gautama) outlined in the Pāli canon of texts. Many scholars of this time understood the Pāli canon, translated most notably by T. William Rhys-Davids (1881), as reflecting the original doctrine of the Buddha and thus a “classical Buddhism.”¹³ Although, again, Mahāyānist doctrines developed quite early in the Indian Buddhist trajectory (probably ca. second century CE or earlier), the earliest Buddhist scholars viewed these developments as the beginning of the end of original and thus “correct” Buddhism. Tainted by Hindu deity worship and metaphysical concerns, the Mahāyāna school – in their view – ushered in a stage of decline or corruption. One of the foremost pioneers of this mode of thinking, L. Austine Waddell (1894), writes:

¹² Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 46-51, 61. These were sites previously marked by the first known Emperor of the South Asian continent, the Maurya ruler Aśoka.

¹³ Among Rhys Davids’ numerous publications, see for example, T. W. Rhys Davids and Hermann Oldenberg. *Vinaya texts* (Oxford: The Clarendon press, 1881) and T. W. Rhys Davids, *Buddhist suttas*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881). These are two of the three divisions of the Pāli (i.e. Ceylon-originating) canon also known as the *Tipiṭaka* (“three-baskets”). See also later volumes published in connection with the Pāli Text Society.

Intense Mysticism was the inevitable outcome of the Mahāyāna system, with its severe ritual and objective Buddhism, and it soon declared itself in polytheistic forms and fantastic idolatry.¹⁴

This sense of increased “idolatry” in Buddhism seemed to western colonial investigators and scholars to culminate in the sexual practices of *Vajrayāna* Buddhism just prior to its period of dying out.¹⁵ In the view of Waddell and Cunningham among others scholars of their time, Pāla sculpture thus reflected a later decline of pure Buddhism.¹⁶

The earliest survey or general “handbook” of Indian Buddhist Art is Albert Grünwedel’s *Buddhistische Kunst in Indien* (1893). At the behest of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, James Burgess, the second Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India (hereafter ASI), “revised and enlarged” Agnes C. Gibson’s English translation of Grünwedel’s volume, entitling it *Buddhist Art in India* (1901).¹⁷ As very little was known of Pāla sculpture at the time, scholars conflated the artistic traditions of northeast India, Tibet, China, and Japan into a “degenerate northern school.”¹⁸

Grünwedel accurately accedes that practitioners gained merit through the production of the Buddha’s image. Yet, he writes, the seeming endless repetition of the Buddha’s form in the stone reliefs on walls of excavated cave temples, for example at

¹⁴ Austine L. Waddell, “Lamaism and its Sects,” *Imperial Asiatic Quarterly Review* (Jan. 1894, vol. 7, no.13), pp.137-147 [cited in Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 108]. For further discussion of Waddell’s biases and contributions toward the study of Pāla sculpture and Himalayan Buddhism, see Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 103-110; *op.cit.* fn 50.

¹⁵ It’s important not to take this as a causal linkage, as early scholarship (and at times that continuing to the present day) unfortunately proposes. Even in scholarly circles today, the use of the term “tantra” (i.e. tantric or esoteric practices identified with the Vajrayāna school of Buddhist thought) produces something of an unwanted stigma and therefore must be carefully explicated.

¹⁶ *op. cit.* fn 50 for reference to Cunningham and other early writers on Pāla sculpture.

¹⁷ Albert Grünwedel *et al*, *Buddhist art in India* [Translated from the ‘Handbuch of Albert Grünwedel, by Agnes C. Gibson. Revised and enlarged by James Burgess] (New Delhi: S. Chand & Co., 1972).

¹⁸ *ibid.*, In fact, Grünwedel’s chronological table of Buddhism ends at the end of the 7th century, with the arrival in India of the Chinese pilgrim I-tsing.

Ellora (ca. seventh–eighth century), weakened the power of the Buddha image.¹⁹ For him, multi-limbed deities were mere personifications without personality.

Alfred Foucher (1900), the first scholar to undertake iconographic and iconological studies of the early medieval Buddhist artworks, echoed this sentiment of degeneration in Pāla artworks as did his student R.D. Banerji (1923) the first director of the Indian Museum in Calcutta.²⁰ Though these scholars showed some appreciation for the artworks, there is a tendency to treat the idiom as something of a double-edged sword: interesting, unusual, but lesser in artistic merit than earlier forms and emblematic of a degraded Buddhism.

When the Pāla school of art eventually was given attention by early South Asian art historians Ananda Coomaraswamy and Stella Kramrisch, colonial discourse on Buddhist visual culture came with it. As increasing numbers of Pāla sculptures were unearthed in the early twentieth century, they were greatly overshadowed by discoveries related to Gupta Dynasty, dubbed the “golden age” of Indian sculpture (ca. fourth–sixth centuries).²¹ Though Coomaraswamy (1927) praises particular Pāla artworks in his classic early survey of South and Southeast Asian art he, like Kramrisch, laments the

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 198.

²⁰ Alfred Foucher. *Étude sur l'iconographie bouddhique de l'Inde* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1900); R. D. Banerji & Archaeological Survey of India, *Eastern Indian school of mediaeval sculpture* (Delhi: Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, 1981); See also Leosko, *Sacred Traces*, 116–119.

²¹ A significant amount of Buddhist imagery from this period hailed from Sārnāth, a major production site (and the historical site of the Buddha's first teaching). Styles from Sārnāth inform the Pāla stone and metal sculptural style, as Huntington (1984) and Leosko (2000) have aptly pointed out. See Janice Leosko, “About Looking at Buddha Images in Eastern India,” *Archives of Asian Art* (2000, Vol. 52), 63–82.

absence of the elements from the earlier Gupta style in this later school.²² Without delving deeply into a discussion of Pāla works, he focuses on a progressive evolution of subject matter, that is, the oft-cited separation of the phases of Buddhist doctrinal developments versus any sense of simultaneity among them. Looking to Nālandā as the exemplar of Pāla artistic production, a comprehensive analysis of the site's works, he writes, "tends to show three stages in the later development."²³

Describing some Pāla imagery as "baroque," Stella Kramrisch writes: "The sculpture of the Pāla and Sena period does not belong to the greatest moments of Indian art." In her view, the value of Pāla art exists merely in the temporal and regional "continuity of a large number of preserved images."²⁴ In sum, she writes:

...its entire evolution, the law of it may be found in an oscillation between fleshy and abstract form, but so that even the abstraction has a sensuous basis. From generation to generation this process continues safeguarded by a carefully followed tradition... The evolution thus in the ninth century leads from the reality of the flesh to that of abstraction. The tenth century on the basis thus gained achieves a ponderous grandeur. The eleventh century in its turn is working in a downward direction; it makes cool regularity take charge of the sensuous wealth of forms, until in its second or third generation the sensuous perception grows strong once more and celebrates its final triumph in the twelfth century but for a short time only, for already in the next generation the obstacle rises again, which at the end of the century, no longer can be mistaken for a spontaneous abstraction on the basis of

²² Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1965), 114. He writes: "everything is conceived in clear-cut outlines... with no true modeling to be compared with that of the earlier schools."

²³ Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian art*, 113. He writes: "...first, early Mahāyāna types, with Buddha and Bodhisattva images and votive *stūpas*; then, marking the development of the Tantrayāna (i.e. a liminal phase between Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna) on the basis of the older Yogācāra doctrines, the appearance of Śaiva influence and images; and finally the introduction of the Kālacakra system with Vaiṣṇava figures."

²⁴ Stella Kramrisch, *Pāla and Sena sculpture* (Calcutta: Indian Society of Oriental Art, 1929); See also Kramrisch, *Indian Sculpture in the Philadelphia Museum of Art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 62-65.

plastic sensuousness, but are the clear signs of the approaching end, with its inevitable rigidity.²⁵

Kramrisch's clearly essentializing "biological model" assumes an increased corruption of form over time – in this case through "abstraction and rigidity" – that will eventually degrade and kill the Gupta-influenced style altogether.²⁶ Interestingly, this parallels beliefs about the insidiousness of tantric forms and the demise of Indian Buddhism per Grünwelde. Ultimately, however, her view likely derives from the Winckelmannian model of a classical artistic ideal that degrades through time into a baroque and mannerist demise.

To Kramrisch's and Coomaraswamy's credit, both generally do not express disdain for the themes expressed in the later Vajrayāna phase (e.g. iconography influenced by tantric ritual), more so they problematize what they see an exaggeration of form in these later Pāla works. Conversely, Benjamin Rowland's *Pelican History of Art* (1953), first published in 1953, upholds the Gupta period as the "the Golden Age" of Buddhist art, describing the Pāla period as both a "prolongation and a degeneration of the Gupta tradition" outright.²⁷ According to Rowland, the Vajrayāna School fully supplants all reverence for the historical Buddha, Śakyāmini.²⁸

²⁵ Kramrisch, *Pāla and Sena Sculpture*, 15.

²⁶ *ibid.*; Jinah Kim, *Unorthodox practice: rethinking the cult of illustrated Buddhist books in South Asia* (Ph.D. Thesis in History of Art--University of California, Berkeley, Fall 2006), 2. Kim uses this term "biological model" to describe Kramrisch's approach.

²⁷ Benjamin Rowland, *The Art and Architecture of India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain* (London: Penguin Books, 1953), 255. His chapter on the Gupta period is entitled "The Golden Age and the End of Buddhist Art." The following chapter, inclusive of Pāla-Sena art, describes India as largely devoid of Buddhism by the seventh century, surviving "only in Bengal." His conflation of Bihar with Bengal aside, we know now that this is of course far from true: Buddhism continued to have a sustained and significant presence in the

One finds a much more careful account of Pāla works and architecture in James Harle's survey of Indian art and Architecture (1986). Here, Pāla art is included in a section entitled "The Post-Gupta Period," reflecting – as Leoshko (1996) has stated – a definition of the genre's artworks based upon "what they are not."²⁹ Harle describes Pāla sculpture as "instantly recognizable because of the not very attractive stone (particularly when polished)" which bears "an unappealing appearance of metallic precision" in the later phases.³⁰ He notes that at the time of his writing scholarly analysis of Pāla sculpture was still in its nascent stages though scholars who have studied it in detail (e.g. Claudine Bautze-Picron) "are naturally inclined to emphasize its artistic merits."³¹ Harle, in contrast to earlier art historians, describes the "luxuriant" motifs and postures of the figures as at times evoking "great beauty," yet they nonetheless might appear "increasingly rigid and formalized and wearing a particularly vapid and artificial smile."³² In terms of Pāla subject matter, Harle writes:

subcontinent (in the western Deccan and Orissa for example) until at least the tenth century and as late as the twelfth.

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ James C. Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books); Janice Leoshko, "An Eleventh Century Jambhala Maṇḍala of the Pāla Period," *Orientalia* (1996, Vol. 27, No.7), 36.

³⁰ Harle, *The art and architecture of the Indian subcontinent*, 212. He continues: "To be fair, Pāla sculpture, unlike Gandhāra, is almost always of a high technical standard, and the figures surrounding the main image are usually carved carefully and in considerable detail; occasionally the central figure... is of great beauty."

³¹ *ibid.*, 216.

³² *ibid.*, 212. Susan Huntington's 1984 study somewhat echoes this view for styles of the late eleventh and twelfth centuries (i.e. the end of Pala Period artistic production).

...the icon arises not from the memory of ancient historical events, as in Buddhist images of earlier times, or from timeless myth, but from fairly recent metaphysical and more or less occult speculation.³³

Therefore, almost a century after the writings of Grünwedel (1893), major scholarly works on Indian art shared a similar bias toward both Vajrayāna developments in Buddhism and Pāla artistic developments in Indian art. They assert that a Pāla period emphasis on tantric ritual and the celestial *jina* buddhas supplanted devotion to the historical Buddha and traditional Buddhist concepts. Rather than focusing solely on the identity of the figure, as did the earliest investigators of the Pāla sculpture, art historians shifted their focus primarily to Pāla style, namely its “clear debt to the Gupta model” and the differences of Pāla art from that classical ideal.³⁴ Due to the discursive framework upon which scholarly discussion of Pāla art has been built, it cannot stand independently as an artistic genre of merit in its own right. Yet, as Harle notes, its volume of production is comparable to that of Gandhāra with “splendid productions” of high “technical competence” reflecting the then “in decline” Buddhism.³⁵ These dueling discourses of degradation – in terms of both Buddhist doctrine and Pāla artistic style – leave scholars with an attitude that the genre must receive a mixed reception at best, given as it is to a potential frivolity in form and meaning.

³³ *ibid.*, 214. Further, “there is no real iconographic invention” among “the innumerable members of the Vajrayāna pantheon,” merely their number of arms, faces, and combinations of “stock” accoutrements identifies them.

³⁴ Vidya Dehejia, *Indian Art* (London: Phaidon, 1997), 99. Dehejia’s survey devotes just one paragraph to Pāla artworks.

³⁵ Harle, *The Art and Architecture of the Indian Subcontinent*, 212-216. See also Gary Michael Tartokov’s critique of the larger discourses inherent within the historiography of India (those of race and colonialism from which attitudes of decay and lesser quality are born), in Catherine B. Asher and Thomas R. Metcalf, eds., *Perceptions of South Asia's visual past* (New Delhi: American Institute of Indian Studies; New Delhi, Swadharma Swarajya Sangha, Madras, and Oxford & IBH Pub. Co, 1994), 30-31.

Methodology: Comparing Images with Textual Sources

Art historical scholarship on early medieval Buddhist imagery must come to terms with the intrinsic overlap of the appearance of new forms of Buddhist deities in both artworks and textual descriptions, most explicitly perhaps in the *sādhana* and *mandala* descriptions in Vajrayāna-phase Buddhist texts. This is not, however, most often a 1:1 correspondence and therefore we cannot take an image as an illustration of contemporaneous textual sources. An image may also precede a written account, such as that found in the *Sādhanamālā* (“garland of *sādhanas*,” hereafter SM). Lee writes:

We may consider the possibility of a reciprocal relationship between text and image in this regard. It is possible that in India, just like in some other cultures, the connections between text and image were not unidirectional but rather mutual. Existing images possibly affected the formation of the visual perception of the deities, which was eventually verbalized through the SM instructions.³⁶

The point here is that in such a climate of doctrinal and practitioner innovation, it is quite possible that an image preceded a related text in its production, and not vice versa, as has been typically suggested in the historiography of Pāla art.

Methodology: Image Theory and Stylistic Analysis

The project of establishing the agency of an artwork within a social environment is an intellectual territory well traversed by social and aesthetic theorists. An artwork’s agency has been considered to be inherent (Latour 2005) or “abducted,” i.e. taken away as an inference by the viewer (Gell 1998), although these distinctions don’t affect the

³⁶ Lee, *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal*, 64.

communicative process.³⁷ Given the definition of the term we could also say that an artwork's agency, or its "capacity to exert power,"³⁸ is equal to an artwork's function.³⁹

The question then arises, what does it do?

A large part of this study is engaged in the project of demonstrating *how* the Met Mañjuvajra image functions to convey meaning. In viewing Pāla steles overall, every formal component of an artwork is a stylistic expression of an iconographic form. Meyer Schapiro (1953) observed that style might be understood as "...a system of forms with a quality and a meaningful expression through which the personality of the artist and the broad outlook of a group are visible."⁴⁰ The artist conveys meaning through his personal style and treatment of iconographic imagery, on the one hand, as well as his alignment or divergence with regard to the style of the region at large (i.e. the slippage between personal innovations and regional stylistic cohesion). Lastly, the style of the artist mediates between a rote presentation of iconography, the raw data (what has been traditionally inventoried by scholars with a focus on the central deity), and the viewer's

³⁷ "Ch. 3 Third Source of Uncertainty: Objects Too Have Agency," in Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, UK, 2005), 63-86; Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: an Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 12-27, 72.

³⁸ Agency: (second meaning) "action, capacity to act" or (fourth meaning) "Ability or capacity to act or exert power; active working or operation; action, activity." Function: "to operate, to act"; "agency, n." and "function, n.," *OED Online*, November 2012, Oxford University Press, <<http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/view/Entry/3851?redirectedFrom=Agency>> (accessed November 24, 2012).

³⁹ Latour, "Ch.3 Third Source of Uncertainty: Objects too have agency," 63-86. Latour's now classic 2005 study argues for the undeniable agency of the object. Objects have agency as social actors. He states that objects themselves "act" and "release... social energy." Objects participate in the "'reflexive' 'symbolic' domain of social interaction." As "origins of social activity" they are social forces that "express," "symbolize," "reinforce," "transport," and so on. Latour here makes a marked distinction between objects as "mediators" and "intermediaries," but here I am taking the two terms as synonyms, as per *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) *op cit.* fn 36.

⁴⁰ Meyer Schapiro, "Style," in A.L. Kroeber, ed. *Anthropology Today* (Chicago: University of Chicago, Press, 1953) 287-312: 287 [cited in Kathryn Reese-Taylor and Rex Koontz, "The cultural poetics of power and space in Ancient Mesoamerica," in Rex Koontz, Kathryn Reese-Taylor, and Annabeth Headrick, *Landscape and power in ancient Mesoamerica* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 2001), 6.]

reading of the overall meaning of the work. One of the major ways that artworks manifest agency, according to Gell, is via this “physical intervention of the artist” – i.e. the artist’s “virtuosity.”⁴¹ Gell essentially argues that the success of the artist’s personal style produces the effect of “captivation” on the viewer.⁴² This sense of virtuosity and resultant “captivation” underscores, as Leoshko (2003) states, “the particular character of specific works.”⁴³ In this way, style participates in the artwork’s agency that in turn serves to construct new knowledge for the viewer, as Anne D’Alleva’s model below suggests.

Methodology: Image Theory and Visual Metonymy

In her study of Tahitian Tamau images, D’Alleva (2001) demonstrates the productivity of metaphor and metonymy – both linguistic semiotic terms – in analyzing the “mechanics” of “visual representation.”⁴⁴ D’Alleva advocates a “cognitive model of metaphor and metonymy that does not situate” these terms “exclusively within language,

⁴¹ Gell, *Art and Agency*, 72. Gell highlights two major ways that the agency of artworks manifest (though he states that these are not the only ways in which a work might manifest agency). First, objects that are representative (vs. “abstract”) permit a twofold “abduction of agency” via (1) their depiction of the prototype and (2) their physical presence as the “index” substituted for the “prototype” (p.12-27). Second, artworks manifest agency through “the abduction of [their] origination in artistic agency” (p.72).

⁴² *ibid.*; see also Anne D’Alleva, “Captivation, Representation, and the Limits of Cognition: Interpreting Metaphor and Netonymy in Tahitian Tamau,” in Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas, eds., *Beyond Aesthetics: Art and the Technologies of Enchantment* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 81.

⁴³ Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 125, states that ignoring “differences... [i.e. between works] either in terms of iconographic detail or style, reflect[s] how an “an emphasis on subject can undermine an interest in the particular character of specific works.”

⁴⁴ D’Alleva, “Captivation, representation, and the limits of cognition,” 79-82. Scholars including Gell (1998) have cautioned against the use of linguistic terminology as “antithetical” to an artwork’s agency. In opposition to this view, D’Alleva has made a convincing argument for its indispensability in artistic analysis. Her work forms the theoretical basis for my approach. D’Alleva derives her method from a “conjoining” of “Gell’s two primary modes of agency.”

but recognizes that they are basic to a much broader range of perceptual and conceptual processes.”⁴⁵ She continues:

It is important to note that in this cognitive model, metaphors and metonyms are not denotative: they are not simply ornamental, expressing more pleasantly that which can be expressed otherwise. Rather, they act as an additive instrument of knowledge.⁴⁶ Metaphor and metonymy stimulate the mind, provoking the imagination and creating understanding in sometimes new and unexpected ways.⁴⁷

Thus in D’Alleva’s view, “the metaphoric and metonymic indexing of a prototype” produces “a form of captivation” as well.⁴⁸ This theoretical model illustrates “the nature of the relationship between an indexical artwork and its prototype” (i.e. that which it represents).⁴⁹ This model speaks to the function of the image: how it expresses power in formal terms. In this study, I define an artwork’s “exertion of power” as its means to convey meaning through its forms, which in turn inspires realizations – new knowledge – in the viewer.

Purpose of this Study

This thesis attempts a careful contextualization of the Metropolitan Museum *Mañjuvajra Mandala* both in terms of regional style and within eleventh century Pāla

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 82.

⁴⁶ Here D’Alleva cites Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 89; and Raymond W Gibbs, *The Poetics of Mind: Figurative thought, Language, and Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 5.

⁴⁷ D’Alleva, “Captivation, Representation, and the Limits of Cognition,” 87-88. She writes: “Eco has noted the difficulties of articulating a simple definition for metaphor, for to sake of metaphor is to speak of rhetorical activity in all its complexity.” Yet for her purposes, D’Alleva defines metaphor “as a process of figuration operating fundamentally according to the principle of substitution based on similarity, as in ‘flame’ for ‘passion.’” See Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language*, 87. Eco states here that metaphor, and thus metonymy as a type of metaphor, transcends linguistics and may be found in imagery as well.

⁴⁸ D’Alleva, “Captivation, Representation, and the Limits of Cognition,” 82.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

Buddhist doctrine and practice. It considers the function of the image in two major ways. First, I look at stylistic aspects of the work, how the image functions formally beyond a specifically Buddhist context. Here I demonstrate the accuracy of the southeast Bengal provenance and date through comparison of the *Mañjuvajra Mandala* to images unearthed in the southeastern Bengali region (primarily the Dhaka and Comilla districts). Secondly, I build upon this stylistic analysis by focusing on how the work's forms might function metonymically to reference both lived and visualized sacred space. That is, as a physical temple in the ritual landscape as well as a *mandala* within Vajrayāna ritual visualization practices (*sādhana*).

In addition to contextualizing the function of the image in terms of Pāla Buddhist beliefs and practice, then, I emphasize the ways in which the image presents multiple stylistic characteristics – albeit not comprehensively – of eleventh century southeastern “Bengaliness,” as formally conveyed by contemporaneous steles. The rarity of the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra image among extant steles is most evident in this sense. The stele's most exceptional characteristics result from the artist's conflation of three southeastern Bengal styles in order to create a unique and innovative image both stylistically and iconographically. The artist combines these elements of regional style and content to create a stunning multivalent image that conveys the power of wisdom that the bodhisattva Mañjuvajra embodies. Overall, this study entails a primary focus on the visual. It presents the ways in which a close consideration of the range of the forms in the image, rather than simply an emphasis on the identity of the figure itself, can illuminate

what the Met Mañjuvajra signifies and what it can tell us about Pāla art and early medieval Buddhist practice in southeastern Bengal.

Chapter Two: Historiography of Pāla Sculpture and the Metropolitan *Mañjuvajra*

Pāla stone sculptures were first noted in the nineteenth century writings of Francis Buchanan (1829), A.M. Broadley (1872), Rajendralal Mitra (1878), Alexander Cunningham (1892 *et al*), and L. Austine Waddell (1892).⁵¹ The artworks discovered during this period are now a part of the collections of the major museums of India, with Broadley’s collection divided between the British Museum, the Indian Museum in Calcutta, and the Patna Museum, Bihar.⁵² Subsequently, Theodor Bloch (1911) and Parmeshwari Lal Gupta (1965) published the Bihar-based collections of the Indian and Patna museums.⁵³ As for Bengali Pāla stelae, Radhagovinda Basak and Dinesh Candra Bhattacharyya undertook the initial publication of a group of works from the Museum of the Varendra Research Society (1919) and just a decade later N. K. Bhattasali (1929)

⁵¹ See for example, Francis Buchanan, “Description of the Ruins of Buddha Gaya,” *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1829, vol. 2), pp. 40-51; Alexander Cunningham, *Mahābodhi, or the Great Buddhist Temple Under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-Gaya* (London: W. H. Allen and Company, 1892); Rajendralal Mitra, *Buddha Gaya: The Great Buddhist Temple, the Hermitage of Sakya Muni* (Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1878); A. M. Broadley, “The Buddhist Remains of Bihar,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1872, vol. 41, part 1, no.3): 209-312; A. M. Broadley, *Ruins of the Nalanda Monasteries, at Bargaon, Sub-Division of Bihar, Zillah Patna* (Calcutta, Bengal Secretariat Press, 1872); Austine L. Waddell, “Discovery of Buddhist Remains at Mount Uren in Mungir (Monghyr) District, and Identification of the Site with a Celebrated Hermitage of Buddha,” *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (1892, vol. 61, part 1), pp. 33-42; Austine L. Waddell, “The Indian Buddhist Cult of Avalokita and his Consort, Tārā “the Saviouress,” Illustrated from the Remains in Magadha,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1894, pp. 51-89. All texts cited in Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 40, 46-49, 71-77, 79-90, 94-95, 103-110, 114-115 *et al*. Leoshko’s volume centers on a critical historiography of the study Buddhist art and its methods. She provides a detailed account of early scholarship on Buddhist art.

⁵² Huntington, “*Pāla-Sena*” *Schools*, 3.

⁵³ Theodor Bloch, *Supplementary Catalogue of the Archaeological Collection of the Indian Museum* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1911); Parmeshwari Lal Gupta, ed., *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities* (Patna: Patna Museum, 1965) [both cited in *ibid.*, 4].

published a group of artworks from the Dacca (aka Dhaka) Museum.⁵⁴ Susan Huntington (1984) describes Bhattasali's as the earliest work on Pala sculpture to gauge "religious developments" over the course of Pāla period Bengal.⁵⁵ Though he focuses on iconography to the omission of style or chronology he provides important references to the find-spots of these artworks in the Dhaka region that has richly formed this study.⁵⁶ The latest survey of Pāla period sculpture prior to Susan Huntington's (1984) volume is R.D. Banerji's *Eastern School of Medieval Sculpture* (1933). Banerji attempts to establish a relative chronology of artworks, though only those from the Indian Museum, on paleographic grounds rather than through stylistic developments. His discussion centers primarily, again, on iconography and subject matter.⁵⁷ This tendency to focus on iconography in scholarship is evident throughout much of the earliest studies of Indian art and Pāla art in particular given its wide range of deity imagery.

Alfred Foucher was the first scholar to undertake a study of the *Sādhanamālā* text in his *Étude sur l'iconographie bouddhique de l'Inde* (1900).⁵⁸ The *Sādhanamālā* (SM) is one of the two ritual manuals along with the roughly contemporaneous *Niṣpanna-yogāvālī* (NSP) text (ca. late eleventh to twelfth century) that art historians have routinely

⁵⁴ Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya, Radhagovinda Basak, and Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi. *Catalogue of the archaeological relics in the museum of the Varendra Research Society, Rajshahi* (Rajshahi: Bimala Charan Maitra, 1919); N.K. Bhattasali. *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum* (New Delhi: Aryan Books International, 2001).

⁵⁵ Huntington, "Pāla-Sena" Schools, 4. In terms of understanding the diaspora of Indian Buddhism and its artworks into the Himalayan regions and particularly Tibet, L. Austine L. Waddell's article (1894) and subsequent book, *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism* (Cambridge, 1895); reprint New York: Dover Press, 1972, were the first of studies of their kind. See Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 103 *et al.*

⁵⁶ *ibid.* Nor does he mention correlations with Bihāri works per Huntington.

⁵⁷ *op. cit.* fn 20; For a thorough discussion of R D Bannerji's contributions see Huntington, "Pāla-Sena" Schools, 4-5, and Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 116-119.

⁵⁸ *op. cit.* fn 20.

looked to for elaboration on the complex iconography of Pāla Buddhist sculpture. These texts describe numerous *sādhanas* (visualization rituals) for a range of deities and deity forms.⁵⁹ Foucher's student Benoytosh Bhattacharyya then published both texts in Sanskrit and, drawing from these, his tremendously valuable compendium of the various deity forms and their iconography in his *Indian Buddhist Iconography* (1924).⁶⁰ S. K. Saraswati's volume *Tantrayāna Art* (1977) significantly contributes to this discourse on Pāla iconography by carefully outlining numerous forms for each of the major Buddhist deities with accompanying images in metal and stone.⁶¹ Mallar Ghosh (1985) takes a similar approach of mining textual sources in tandem with visual evidence.⁶² Her volume looks at Pāla works through a focused consideration of the figure of the goddess Tārā and the five female *prajñās*.

In a departure from the identification or iconography-based approach, Susan Huntington (1984) focuses on epigraphic and stylistic evidence in order to establish a relative chronology for Pāla sculpture. Though Huntington largely omits iconographic discussion, she writes:

The reader should understand that the emphasis on style and chronology in the present work is seen only as a first step, in which an ordering of the Pāla-Sena

⁵⁹ The NSP's twenty-four chapters each describe the construction of a *mandala* surrounding its focal deity.

⁶⁰ Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Sādhanamālā* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1928); Bhattacharyya and Abhāyakaragupta, *Niṣpannayogāvālī of Mahāpaṇḍita Abhāyakaragupta* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1949); Bhattacharyya, *The Indian Buddhist Iconography, mainly based on the Sādhanamālā and cognate tāntric texts of rituals* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1958). The author substantially revised the second (1958) edition of *The Indian Buddhist Iconography* to include the *Guhyasāmaja Tantra* (which he published in 1931) and other relevant texts; R D Banerji was also a student of Foucher's.

⁶¹ S.K. Saraswati, *Tantrayāna art: an album* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1977).

⁶² Mallar Ghosh, *Development of Buddhist iconography in eastern India: a study of Tārā, Prajñās of five Tathāgatas and Bhṛikuṭī* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1980).

materials is attempted, so that the way is paved for future studies into religious history, iconography, and the like.⁶³

The study of the iconography of these works is, therefore, not a detriment. It is, rather, a necessity, though not to one to be privileged over stylistic analysis, as has historically been the case in Pāla scholarship.

Scholars have analyzed Pāla artworks with the assumption of progressive stylistic developments, as put forward by Kramrisch (1929), inclusive of her early model of steadily growing elaboration in the Pāla period. Huntington (1984) echoes this view to some extent as well, as at times she relies on the assumption that artistic refinement increases diachronically. Such a model may be generally accurate in analyzing this stylistic period. Yet, with regard to an increasing multiplicity of body parts or technical refinement it cannot be taken as invariably true.⁶⁴ That is, in the study of Pāla artworks, we should not work from a hypothesis of progressive refinement and iconographic elaboration, and hence a system of dating that utilizes only these diachronic modes. A careful approach to dating, then, includes a simultaneous regional contextualization.

Indeed, Huntington takes many steps forward in this regard. Her work refines Kramrisch's approach of increasing "elaborations of form" in Pāla period art by noting this tendency as a simultaneous geographic shift.⁶⁵ Huntington's work forms a breakthrough in terms of methodology in that she traces stylistic developments both

⁶³ Huntington, "*Pāla-Sena*" *Schools*, 3. "Pāla-Sena" denotes two of the major dynasties of the Pāla period. For a complete overview of dynastic chronologies from the Pāla period, see pgs. 27-78.

⁶⁴ See Geri Malandra, "The creation of a past for Ajanta and Ellora," in Catherine Asher, *Perceptions of South Asia's Visual Past*, 67-96, for a critique of scholarly assumptions on dating and stylistic trends.

⁶⁵ Huntington, "*Pāla-Sena*" *Schools*, 6. In general, she finds the earlier and less complex images of the eighth-ninth century "found in Magadha [south central Bihar]" and a majority of the later, more intricate and complex stelae of the eleventh and twelfth centuries "recovered in eastern Bihar and Bengal."

regionally and diachronically, along with an enhanced appreciation for the works' artistic merit.⁶⁶ Her study consists of roughly four thousand pieces of sculpture in both stone and metal, beginning with those that bear dated inscriptions.⁶⁷ Her innovative model establishes a general chronological "grid" of dated works that serve as "control pieces" by which she then gauges regional developments (i.e. works with documented find-spots).⁶⁸ In this way, she identifies particular "subschoools" across the sizeable amount of Pāla sculpture of which little study had been undertaken prior.⁶⁹

Janice Leoshko completed a major survey of both the style and iconography of Bodhgayā artworks (1987).⁷⁰ Among Leoshko's numerous publications on northeastern Indian artworks, her book *Sacred Traces* (2003) critically examines the ways in which the study of Buddhist artworks has been handled by Indologists, scholars of Buddhist

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 4-5. According to Huntington, "the only major works attempting to deal with these sculptures as a continuous development were published between 1928 and 1933" and among these, none "dealt with the problems of Bihar and Bengal sculpture in their entirety."

⁶⁷ These dated artworks are primarily from collections in South Asia, as the majority of Pāla sculptures in European and American collections do not have a documented provenance.

⁶⁸ Huntington, "*Pāla-Sena*" *Schools*, 5-7. Huntington carefully outlines the characteristics of dated sculptures during the reign of each Pāla, Sena, Pratihāra, and Candra ruler directly associated with a particular sculpture's epigraph (see pp.37-60).

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 3. Huntington writes: "More important in some cases than its date, the provenance of a given sculpture accounted for its style and other distinguishing features." For example, she states that "there can be no question that major sites such as Bodh Gāya, Nālandā, and Kurkihār maintained fairly large groups of artisans at all times during this period of activity and had little need to import artists or craftsmen from other places. Thus while the sculpture produced at individual sites certainly bears similarity to other sculpture of the period from different locales, distinct schools of craftsmanship may be discerned and a history of the developments at separate locations may be propounded. Minor sites (that is, those bearing remains but no evidence of either a long or particularly active developments) are often derivative of the styles found at influential centers of religious and artistic activity." The major and minor sites of a region would then be taken as a "subschoool" in this view. For example, Huntington states: "sculptures from numerous sites in the Gayā District show remarkable resemblance to carving from Bodh Gayā and Kurkihār and together form a distinct subschoool of Pāla art which sets them apart from other regional schools, such as that of Nālandā and environs..."

⁷⁰ Janice Leoshko, *The iconography of Buddhist sculptures of the Pāla and Sena periods from Bodhgayā* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Ohio State University, 1987).

religion, and art historians from its outset. The methodology she proposes in this volume and elsewhere (2010, 2000, *et al*) has been invaluable to this study.⁷¹ Claudine Bautze-Picron's important work on Pāla imagery has also made inroads in terms of method and approach.⁷² Both scholars emphasize the importance of considering the range of an artwork's forms rather than merely the iconography of the central deity as well as the importance of style to the meaning of a piece.

In investigating the distinctive practices and style formations of the little studied Bengal regional schools, Eun Su Lee (2009) has made significant advancements with her "case study" of works from the Dhaka and Comilla districts.⁷³ Lee elaborates on the uniqueness of the southeastern Bengal style through an analysis centered on Buddhist artworks. The evidence she introduces has also been of immense value to the present study. Before her, the former Director General of the Bangladesh National Museum, Enamul Haque (2007), made one of the most comprehensive studies of the iconography of Bengali Hindu sculptures to date.⁷⁴ His volume defines regional iconographic tendencies in Bengali sculpture, classifying West and North Bengal as similar to one

⁷¹ Janice Leoshko, "Tracing Buddhist Devotion in South Asia," *Orientalism* (2010, vol. 41, no.2), 89; Leoshko, "About Looking at Buddha Images in Eastern India," *Archives of Asian Art* (2000, vol. 52), 63-82.

⁷² For example, see Claudine Bautze-Picron, "The Stone Images of the Buddha at Kurkihar—Analysis of a Style," in Debala Mitra and G. Bhattacharya. *Studies in art and archaeology of Bihar and Bengal: Nalinikānta Śatavārṣikī Dr. N.K. Bhattacharya centenary volume, 1888-1988* (Delhi, India: Sri Satguru Publications, 1989). Bautze-Picron proposes the method of studying Pāla stele through comparison of "motifs and structure" of three major "zones" of pedestal and back-slab, that could prove extremely useful for potential comparative studies of extremely similar sculptures such as the Viṣṇu images from Eastern Bengal in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.

⁷³ Eun-Su Lee. *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal: The Dhaka Region*. (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, May 2009), 2.

⁷⁴ Enamul Haque, *Bengal sculptures: Hindu iconography up to c. 1250 A.D.* (Dhaka: Bangladesh National Museum, 1992).

another in contrast to southeast Bengal, the most distinctive Bengali school in this regard.⁷⁵ Haque has also completed the largest recent surveys of Bengali Pāla sculptures overall along with a survey of architectural sites (2007, 2008).⁷⁶ Though his primary goal for these volumes seems to be a compulsory inventory rather than in-depth analysis, they are invaluable for their comprehensive compilation of artworks, clear photographic reproductions, as well as detailed listings of publications for each sculpture. Claudine Bautze-Picron (1985) has also looked closely at regional tendencies in the style and iconography of southeastern Bengal sculpture specifically.⁷⁷ Here she notes certain tendencies of dress that the stone *mūrtis* (images for worship) present, that I also discuss in Ch.3 below. With the exception of the Śiva Naṭarāja from Comilla (fig.6), the artworks she surveys in her study do not overlap with those I analyze here.

Previous Publications of the Metropolitan *Mañjuvajra*

Aside from short articles in the *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*,⁷⁸ older survey volumes by Ananda Coomaraswamy (1927) and N K Bhattasali (1929) briefly allude to the Met *Mañjuvajra* stele. While Coomaraswamy's volume is possibly the earliest publication of the Met *Mañjuvajra*, he alludes to it only peripherally and without

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, discussed in Lee, *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal*, 61.

⁷⁶ Enamul Haque, *The Art Heritage of Bangladesh: with 536 illustrations* (Dhaka: International Centre for Study of Bengal Art, 2007); Enamul Haque and Adalbert J. Gail. *Sculptures in Bangladesh: an inventory of select Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain stone and bronze images in museums and collections of Bangladesh (up to the 13th century): 547 plates with 91 in colour* (Dhaka: International Centre for Study of Bengal Art, 2008).

⁷⁷ Claudine Bautze-Picron, "La statuaire du Sud-Est du Bangladesh du Xe au XIIe siècle," *Arts Asiatiques* (1985, vol. 40, no. 1), 18-31.

⁷⁸ *op. cit.* fn 6. These note the work's acquisition as well as Lippe, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, New Series* (Feb. 1960 Vol. 18 No. 6), 177-192: 188, that describes the artwork within the context of a wider South Asian art milieu.

description. As noted in Coomaraswamy's work, the deity was originally identified as Arapacana Mañjuśrī. However, this form of the bodhisattva, as outlined in most of the *sādhana* texts, does not align convincingly with that of the Met sculpture.⁷⁹ Bhattasali, reproducing only a detail of the Met stele (from Coomaraswamy's volume), discusses the sculpture not in terms of its individual merits but rather as a potential illustration of the now mostly destroyed temple architecture of early medieval Bengal.⁸⁰

The name of the Met piece was likely changed to reflect Mallman's scholarship on Mañjuśrī (1964) wherein she translates portions of the *Niṣpannayogāvalī*'s first chapter. It describes the bodhisattva Mañjuvajra as a deity very similar in form to that of the Metropolitan stele. The *Niṣpannayogāvalī* (hereafter NSP) is a late eleventh to twelfth century compilation of twenty-four prescriptions for *mandala* construction to be used in *sādhana* practice. The title of this first chapter, Mañjuvajra Mandala, has been assigned as the title of both the Met and the Rubin steles. I provide a detailed comparison of the Met Mañjuvajra with NSP 1 in Ch. 4.

Following this, art historian Jane Casey Singer (1981) was the first to analyze either of the Mañjuvajra steles, focusing on the Rubin piece in a brief, unpublished monograph.⁸¹ While she illustrates the Met image, her research identifies the deity image

⁷⁹ Jane Anne Casey, "Mañjuvajra." S.I: s.n, 1981. [holding of Cleveland Museum of Art Library]; see also Benoytosh Bhattacharyya, *Indian Buddhist Iconography*, 120-121.

⁸⁰ Bhattasali, *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, pl. LXXXIc.

⁸¹ Casey, "Mañjuvajra," 1981. She also includes an image of the Met work but does not describe it. At the time, the Rubin work was a part of the Fogg Museum collection as a loan work from Dr. David Nalin. Casey's 1985 exhibition describes this and numerous works in Nalin's collection at that time. Her study, held by the Cleveland Museum of Art Library, is a brief, unpublished monograph, a 15-page graduate seminar paper that was extremely valuable to this study at its outset.

by comparing the Rubin stele to the Mañjuvajra Mandala in the first chapter of the NSP.⁸² She identifies this textual passage as that which most closely aligns with the forms of the deity.⁸³ Like Bhattasali, Casey also compares the *sikhara*-type temple spire in the Rubin image to similar extant temple ruins from West Bengal. She does not, however, engage in a comparative stylistic contextualization of the Rubin stele with a range of artworks from the region, nor does she provide an in-depth discussion on how the image functions in specific relation to Buddhist doctrine and ritual practice. I take up this discussion in the chapters 3 and 4.

Lee describes both the Met and Rubin steles at length in her 2009 study.⁸⁴ Here, Lee concurs with Casey in her identification of the small figures within *caityas* as the five *tathāgatas* (or *jinas*).⁸⁵ In addition to the significance of the *mandala*, *saptaratnas*, and yogic monk figures, she notes that the image “shares a conscious emphasis on the divine seat with the Buddha images from the same region.”⁸⁶ Though Lee associates the image with tantric practices broadly, she does not compare the Mañjuvajra image to textual sources that shed light on its meaning and function (c.f. Ch.4 here).⁸⁷ In addition, Enamul

⁸² *ibid.* Casey utilizes Mallman’s partial translation of NSP 1 (1964) as well as her own. See M.T. de Mallman, *Étude iconographique sur Mañjuśrī* (Paris: École française d’Extrême-Orient, 1964).

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ Lee describes the Met Mañjuvajra image in her section “God of Wisdom in *mandala*,” p. 186, 243-248. See also her discussion of the *vajra*-bearing figure on the stele base and Vajrasattva, p.263-267.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, 246-247. Yet she believes the central *tathāgata* directly above Mañjuvajra to be Akṣobhya rather than Vajrasattva.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, 242. See Lee (p.296-300) for her discussion of the cruciform temple plans that I introduce in ch.4.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, In fact, she states: “no surviving literature provides a clear reference to the iconography of the five deities surrounding Mañjuvajra.” As Casey’s publications (along my discussion in Ch.4 here) demonstrate, this is not the case.

Haque and Claudine Bautze-Picron both mention the Met Mañjuvajra in articles, with Bautze-Picron pointing out the rare “iconographic innovation” of the image.⁸⁸

Other recent publications of the Met stele along with its close counterpart include merely a handful of fairly recent exhibition catalog entries. Casey has published the Rubin stele in two exhibition catalogs including *Medieval Sculpture from Eastern India, Selections from the Nalin Collection* (1985) and *Divine Presence: Arts of India and the Himalayas* (2003).⁸⁹ These two catalogs have duplicate entries of the Rubin image described in comparison to, as noted, NSP 1. However, in David Jackson’s recent entry on the Rubin work in *Mirror of the Buddha* (2011), he calls the image a “Guhyasamāja Mañjuvajra *mandala* in stone,” the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* being the earliest text (ca. eighth century) to mention Mañjuvajra.⁹⁰ In divergence with Casey’s identification, Jackson

⁸⁸ Haque writes on the Met Mañjuvajra in an overview of the Met’s collection of Pāla art works. In his description of the artwork he states: “...in certain cases figures of bodhisattvas occasionally took on iconographic characteristics previously restricted to Buddhas” without then describing how Mañjuvajra resembles a buddha. He calls the five *jina* figures, further, “miniature Mañjuvajra[s].” See Enamul Haque. “The Pāla patrimony in the Metropolitan Museum of Art,” *Oriental Art* (1994, vol. 25. no.3), 54-61: 57; Claudine Bautze-Picron notes the absence of the Met stele and the Rubin image (formally of the Nalin collection) in Huntington’s volume (1990) in her review: “Crying Leaves: Some Remarks on ‘The Art of Pāla India (8th-12th Centuries) and Its International Legacy,’” *East and West* (December 1993, Vol. 43, No. 1/4), 277-294; Janice Leoshko identifies a similar deity form as Mañjuvajra in a *mandalic* stele in the Norton Simon Museum collection (ca. late eleventh-early twelfth century). The deity holds differing implements from those of the Met stele (and thus is perhaps connected to a different Mañjuvajra-related *sādhana* and/or ritual lineage). Interestingly, rather than *tathāgatas*, the central deity is surrounded by feminine forms that mirror him. This piece, in comparison with other *mandala* steles from this later period – for example, the Arapacana Mañjuśrī from Dhaka surrounded by smaller self-reflexive forms and separate non-reflexive *tathāgatas* (in Bhattasali, 2001) – warrant further investigation. see Leoshko, “Buddhist Art of Northern India” in Pratapaditya Pal, ed. *Asian Art: Selections from the Norton Simon Museum* (Pasadena: Norton Simon Museum, 1988), 19 published in connection with *Oriental Art* (July 1988): 30-43.

⁸⁹ Jane Casey Singer, ed., *Medieval Sculpture from Eastern India, Selections from the Nalin Collection*, Livingstone (New Jersey: Nalini International Publications, 1985); Jane Casey Singer, ed. *Divine presence: Arts of India and the Himalayas* (Barcelona: Casa Asia, 2003). These are duplicate entries of the now Rubin collection stele.

⁹⁰ Ronald Davidson, *The Tibetan Renaissance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 35-36.

describes the five small figures at the top of the image as “correspond[ing] roughly to the main deities of the thirty-two deity *Guyhasamāja mandala*.”⁹¹ Jackson compares the Rubin image to a Tibetan painting on cloth of the late thirteenth century depicting Phagmotrupa, or Phakmo Drupa (1110-1170), and his disciple Tashipel (1142-1210), the founder of Taklung monastery (fig. 3).⁹² Phagmotrupa was a guru of a lineage of teachings that centered upon *Guhyasamāja* Mañjuvajra. The image illustrates the transmission to Tibet of both Vajrayāna *annutara* yoga practices and Pāla period style and iconography (e.g. the lotus, *vyālakas*, and *makaras*). Jackson writes:

The sculpture depicts above the large central deity a mandala of five smaller deities, who in a painted mandala would also be differentiated through different body colors. The statue illustrates in three-dimensional form the deities with which Phagmotrupa most closely identified himself in his tantric practice.⁹³

Early Tibetan portrait images of the twelfth to thirteenth centuries routinely depict “Indian lineal masters” from whom a Tibetan guru’s ritual practices had been transmitted over numerous generations. Thus Tibetan ritual lineage systems, like the styles and forms of its art, may be traced back to the Pāla period and region. This fascinating connection of Phagmotrupa with Mañjuvajra’s ritual lineage points to an elite level of monastic

⁹¹ David Paul Jackson and Christian Luczanits, *Mirror of the Buddha: early portraits from Tibet from the Masterworks of Tibetan painting series* (New York: Rubin Museum of Art, 2011), 143-145.

⁹² Jackson and Luczanits, *Mirror of the Buddha*, 134-145. These five deities similar to those in the Met stele are repeated in numerous thirteenth-fourteenth century portraits of the Tibetan monk-guru Phagmotrupa illustrated in both Jackson (2011) and in Steven Kossak, Jane Casey Singer, and Robert Bruce-Gardner, *Sacred visions: early paintings from Central Tibet* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998). In this volume, Casey describes the Phagmotrupa-Tashipel portrait (here cat. no. 26, p.113-114), as “illustrat[ing] the transmission of Tibetan Buddhist religious teachings within the Taklung branch of the Kagyu order.

⁹³ *ibid.*, See also section on “The Earliest Depiction of Lineages,” in *Mirror of the Buddha*, 27-33.

practice, and potentially patronage, associated with this bodhisattva image over an extended period.

Most notably, however, the authors of the exhibition catalog entries of the Met and Rubin steles have focused on finding a textual source by which to identify the image. A third text referred to in the identification of the Met Mañjuvajra stele is the *Mañjuśrī-nāmasaṃgīti* (“Hymn of the Names of Mañjuśrī,” hereafter MNS) as described by the only exhibition catalog to include the Met sculpture, *Mandala: The Architecture of Enlightenment* (1997) by Denise Patry Leidy and Robert A. F. Thurman.⁹⁴ Their catalog entry unfortunately highlights the dangers of reading an image as an illustration of a text or texts. The passage describes the Met stele as “a two-dimensional representation of Mañjuvajra as the central figure in the famous Hymns of the Names of Mañjuśrī.”⁹⁵ There are two major problems here. The first is the suggestion that the work is a direct representation of a text, as is true of all three catalog entries discussed in this study albeit more explicitly here. Though it is entirely possible that the artist or, more likely perhaps, the patron of the image would have been familiar with the MNS Ch. X, we have no direct evidence for this.

Even if we could assume a direct correspondence, the second major problem arises in the description of the Met Mañjuvajra image in comparison with the MNS text itself, along with other visual sources and textual material. In this regard, there are four

⁹⁴ Denise Patry Leidy and Robert Thurman. *Mandala Architecture of Enlightenment* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997), 52-53. The exhibition was held September 24, 1997 – January 4, 1998 at the Asia Society Galleries, New York.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, clearly the term “two-dimensional” here is inaccurate as we have a very three-dimensional sculpture with three-dimensional low relief elements. However, it is clear that the authors use this term with reference to the spatial flattening of the four directions in the stele’s stepped *caitya* assemblage.

points of difficulty in the passage. First, in describing the figure as “a two-dimensional representation” the Hymns of the Names of Mañjuśrī (hereafter MNS), the catalog entry seems to allude to a *mandala* mentioned there. Upon closer inspection however, the MNS does not actually describe *mandalas*: the connection of *mandalas* with seven of the ten chapters are made in the commentarial allusions to the text, not (as implied here) within the text itself.⁹⁶ Nor does the text explicitly mention the name Mañjuvajra. The catalog entry then states:

He is shown in the center of a *mandala* within a great *stūpa*, clearly a reference to the great *stūpa* of Amaravati in South India, despite the Bengali architectural form... He holds the *vajra* scepter and bell in his two front hands...and flower with a missing text of the Transcendent Wisdom Scripture in the last pair.⁹⁷

This passage presents a clear privileging of text over image. As a second point, the author would like us to believe that we are seeing the Great Stūpa of Amarāvātī (in South India, ca. second century CE) here in the form of a ninth to eleventh century schematized Bengali temple. Third, the statement that Mañjuvarja holds a *vajra* and bell (*ghaṇṭā*) is flawed, as it evident from his remaining hand that he does not (and made very plain when we compare the Met Mañjuvajra with the Rubin image). Fourth, the author states that there is a “missing” text of the *Prajñāpāramitā* here, when no damage has been sustained by the sculpture in the region of the lotus, thus alluding to a flaw in the image's iconography. Through privileging the text over the image here in their comparison with

⁹⁶ There are seven main *mandalas* with deities and this is the seventh from that group. Alex Wayman states that based upon various commentators' discussion, Chapter X aligns with the *mandala* of NSP 1. The latter *sādhana mandala* is that which most closely aligns with the image (although that textual description may in fact be later than the image!), see Alex Wayman, *Chanting the names of Mañjuśrī: The Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti, Sanskrit and Tibetan texts*. Boulder, CO: Shambala, 1985).

⁹⁷ Leidy and Thurman, *Mandala Architecture of Enlightenment*, 53.

the Met piece – and presumably others images and texts as well – Leidy and Thurman essentially see parts of the image that aren't there. This is, interestingly, without ever mentioning the absent presence of the *prajñā*, which Casey's publications suggest.⁹⁸

This is a very tricky area of scholarship in that it is particularly exciting to compare an image with textual sources in order to glean insight into the meaning of its forms. Texts are certainly helpful and at points indispensable in interpreting ancient Buddhist art. We cannot however, conclusively assume that certain texts were consulted or known of in the crafting of an image, nor can we allow particular texts to lead our analysis of a work. The multiple methodological pitfalls of taking an image as an *illustration* (that is, an assumed product, a result) of one or a group of textual sources are evident in Leidy and Thurman's Met stele description.

To summarize these three catalog entries, there is clearly there is room for interpretation with regard to textual comparison that the scholars do not hint at. I will return to the intricacies of this text-image comparison in Ch. 4. Yet, whether we are seeing in the Met stele a visual connection with the *Guhyasamāja* Mañjuvajra, the Mañjuvajra of the NSP 1 *mandala*, both of these, or even some allusion to the MNS remains unclear. While avoiding the historical scholarly tendency to read an image as an illustration of a text, we can nonetheless – with caution – consult relevant textual sources in order to gain an enriched understanding of the message of the image.

The Bodhisattva in Pāla-period Indian Buddhism

⁹⁸ Among her multiple publications on this topic, see Jane Casey *et al*, ed. *Divine presence: arts of India and the Himalaya*, 28.

This discussion of these previous publications of the Met Mañjuvajra raises topics that require further explanation, including the role of and connection between the Bodhisattva, Śākyamuni Buddha, and five *jina* buddhas in Pāla Buddhism. As these concepts form the foundation for my later discussion, I will elaborate on them further here. Though the Met image was developed in a phase when Vajrayāna ritual was paramount, the image has strong consonances with the continued emphasis of the event of Śākyamuni's enlightenment at Bodhgayā (as well as the connection of *prajñā* with both). Scholars date the earliest known texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism to as early as the second century CE or prior. In Mahāyāna doctrine and practice, devotees vow to take up the path of the bodhisattva. Translating roughly to “enlightenment being,” the bodhisattva delays her or his own liberation from *samsāra* (the cycle of rebirth in the mundane world), and thus passage into *nirvāṇa*, until all beings have attained enlightenment as well. Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis writes: “The bodhisattva is a personification of the compassion shown by Śākyamuni when he left his *bodhimaṇḍa*” or *vajrāsana*, the seat of enlightenment at Bodhgayā and “resolved to spend the rest of his life in teaching.”⁹⁹

The cramped and heavily constrained character of the Buddha life scene images describe something of the frenzy of distractions that the Buddha had to overcome beneath the Bodhi Tree at Bodhgayā (see fig. 15-16). He is described as Conqueror, for his conquering of mental obstacles and ultimately Death (the figure of demon Māra

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas Representations of Sacred Geography* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 7; The life of the Historical Buddha has generally been dated by scholars to the fifth century BCE.

symbolizes both of these).¹⁰⁰ Upon his death, the Buddha Śākyamuni attained *nirvāṇa* (literally an “extinguishing”), by which he freed himself from the wheel of rebirth (*saṃsāra*), passing into a rather undefined realm of non-existence per texts from the Pāli canon.¹⁰¹

In Mahāyāna doctrine, the Buddha, having passed from *saṃsāra* into *nirvāṇa*, is believed to inhabit a heavenly realm. The celestial bodhisattvas remain as emanations of the Buddha in the mundane (*laukika*) world. Further, followers of Mahāyāna doctrine believe there to be innumerable buddhas and bodhisattvas in the world (including the heavenly realms), initially all as emanations of Śākyamuni and “identical in essence to him.”¹⁰² In the Mahāyāna school of thought, Śākyamuni is one of countless buddhas: he is the Buddha of our age. By the Pāla period, however, the doctrine of the *jina* buddhas had gained considerable credence.¹⁰³ This group of *jina* buddhas (*jina* meaning “victor”)

¹⁰⁰ Leoshko (2003) discusses the Buddha as Conquerer and this connection of Māra with death.

¹⁰¹ *op. cit.* fn 13; Scholars often refer to the Pāli canon (a corpus of early Buddhist texts in the Pāli colloquial language rather classical Sanskrit) as constituting the history of the Buddha as many accounts of the Buddha’s life-stories are found there. Scholars have also historically described it as the doctrine of classical or early Buddhism in distinguishing it from the Mahāyāna school, originally believed to be a significantly later development. While the dating of the Pāli *vinaya* is in question, two of the three *piṭakas* in the Pāli canon are generally still thought to date to a period closer to the time of the Historical Buddha than the earliest Mahāyāna texts, perhaps two to three centuries later (although the development of Mahāyāna and the nature of Mahāyāna vs. an earlier classical or mainstream Buddhism that it split off from is a topic much-debated among scholars and constantly shifting in scope with the discovery of new manuscripts. Today, we know that early Mahāyānists lived among monks of a more traditional bent. See for example, Jan Nattier, *A Few Good Men: the Bodhisattva path according to the Inquiry of Ugra (Ugrapariprcchā)* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2003).

¹⁰² Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas Representations of Sacred Geography*, 7; Here she describes that this concept as originating in the Pāli canon account of the Śrāvasti Miracle.

¹⁰³ The *jinās* – most-famously Amitāyus or Amitābha – were revered from an early period in Mahāyāna Buddhism (ca. second CE at the latest). It is in later Pāla art however, that we see the group of five – in mandalic formation – routinely depicted. Each *tathāgata*, in the later Mahāyāna school (ca. 5-6th c. CE), has his own *kūla* (family or lineage) of deities that he forms the head of. For example, Amitābha is pictured in the headdress of Avalokiteśvara, the ubiquitous Bodhisattva of Compassion in medieval Buddhist imagery.

are also known as the five celestial *tathāgatas*: Akṣobhya, Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava, Vairocana, and Amitābha. Small figures of these *tathāgatas* are often depicted at the top of Buddhist Pāla steles, in a two-dimensional, collapsed *mandala* formation as in the Met sculpture.

The potent visualization rituals (*sādhanas*) described in the *anuttara yoga* (“highest yoga”) Vajrayāna texts focus on bridging the divide between polarities. In his *History of Indian Buddhism* (1958), Etienne Lamotte states that a paramount goal of the bodhisattva is to “realize the twofold emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of beings and things.”¹⁰⁴ He writes: “From the higher point of view which is that of the Mahāyāna, every contradiction disappears.”¹⁰⁵ The institutionalized Vajrayāna monastic practices of the ninth through twelfth centuries continue to emphasize one’s surpassing of conceptual opposites. This transcendence is inherent in the attainment of *bodhicitta* (the thought of enlightenment) through which the conquering of Māra and the powerful event of Awakening occur. There are ten stages that the bodhisattva must advance through on the Mahāyāna path towards Buddhahood and such a path would typically require countless lifetimes for mastery prior to the greater prominence of Vajrayāna rituals meant to accelerate this process. The bodhisattva’s attainment of the upper stages (the seventh stage, or *bhūmi*, and above) constitutes rebirth in a heavenly or celestial realm with a *sambhogakāya* (literally “enjoyment body”). The celestial bodhisattva’s presence in the

Amitābha is also associated with the goddess Tārā, the feminine counterpart of Avalokiteśvara who personifies compassion required of the bodhisattva as well.

¹⁰⁴ Etienne Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism: from the origins to the Śaka era [Translated from French by Sarah Webb-Boin]* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université catholique de Louvain, Institut orientaliste, 1988), 84.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

mundane world is then merely as an emanation body (*nirmāṇakāya*) of his self in the higher, spotless heavenly realm (*lokottara*). Overall, the celestial bodhisattvas are emblematic of the compassion required both to attain and delay Buddhahood. They remain in the world as emanations of their celestial bodies in order perform salvific functions for Buddhist devotees.

By the Pāla Buddhist era (ca. 8th century CE), a group of celestial bodhisattvas were revered as deities in their own right. Among them, the most prominent are Tārā, Avalokiteśvara, and Mañjuśrī, the images of whom I analyze in Ch. 3.¹⁰⁶ These three figures, in their multitudinous iconic forms, are those most often depicted in Pāla period Buddhist art. Additionally, weapon-wielding goddesses (including Mahāpratisarā and Mārīcī) and fierce male deities (e.g. Acala and Hevajra) serve to eliminate obstacles on the path to Enlightenment, providing a protective function for the Buddhist *dharma* and its practitioners.¹⁰⁷ Like them, Mañjuśrī as Mañjuvajra – in sharp contrast to Avalokiteśvara or Tārā – wields his sword, bow, and arrow in protection of the *dharma* and in order to destroy Māra, the personification of obstacles to enlightenment. The popular encomium MNS (ca. eighth century) praises various forms of the bodhisattva-deity Mañjuśrī, including his form as Mañjuvajra according to the commentarial tradition, as:

The hero[,] enemy of the Māras and tamer of the Māras,

¹⁰⁶ Yet there are other rather significant celestial bodhisattvas, including the future Buddha Maitreya,

¹⁰⁷ See Robert N Linrothe, *Ruthless compassion: wrathful deities in early Indo-Tibetan esoteric Buddhist art* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999); In the *anuttara yoga* texts of the Vajrayāna school, we get the deities of fierce visage, wearing skulls and stepping on corpses in addition to their wielding of weapons. Male deities, such as Saṃvara and Heruka, have feminine counterparts (or consorts) including Vajravārāhī and Vajrayoginī.

who ends the danger of the of the four Māras;
who defeats the entire Māra army,
(you) the complete Buddha, guide of the world.¹⁰⁸

Here Alex Wayman translates *sambuddho* as “the complete Buddha:” this term has further consonances with the *sādhana* ritual of NSP 1, that is, with Mañjuvajra as Vajrasattva, the sixth *jina* or transcendent Ādibuddha discussed in Ch. 4. Clearly, Mañjuśrī-Mañjuvajra is an exceptionally powerful figure in the enterprise of achieving Māra’s defeat and thus the attainment of Enlightenment. The text further refers to him as God of gods (*devatidevo*) and *guru* of the gods (*suraguruḥ*)¹⁰⁹ It states:

Who is girded with the girding of love and armed with the armor of compassion;
who bears the sword of insight [*prajñā*] along with bow and arrow and has routed
the combativeness of defilement and ignorance.”¹¹⁰

In his form of Mañjuvajra, Manjuśrī is the compassionate warrior battling against ignorance and all impediments to Enlightenment. Though, like Avalokiteśvara and Tārā, he is a source of infinite compassion, Mañjuśrī’s primary function is as a personification or embodiment of *prajñā*. Therefore, his implied union with the *prajñā* goddess figure in the Met image is particularly fitting: it is a Vajrayāna gloss on the Mahāyāna connection of the celestial bodhisattva of insight wisdom (*prajñā*) with the feminine characterization of the same. In fact, this intrinsic connection is likely one major factor for why it is that this peaceful bodhisattva appears in advanced *sādhana* rituals – in contrast to Avalokiteśvara – in union with the consort. This is a station typically relegated to fierce

¹⁰⁸Alex Wayman, *Chanting the Names of Mañjuśrī*, 109. The Sanskrit here states (MNS 10.9): *Mārārimārajīdvīraścaturmārabhayāntkṛt sarvamāracamūjetāsambuddholokanāyakaḥ*. According to the commentator Candragomin, among these four Māras is death.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, 108.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, 109, MNS 10.8: *maitrīsaṃnāhasaṃnaddhaḥ karuṇāvarmavarmitaḥ/ prajñākhaḍgadhanurbāṇaḥ kleśājñānaraṇam jahāḥ*.

deities such as Hevajra and Heruka in imagery. Another reason for this may, according to Laura Harrington (2002), be his close connection with the monastic realm and thus advanced Buddhist tantric practitioners themselves.¹¹¹ Overall, Mañjuśrī's popularity gains ground in both imagery and the textual tradition during this period of institutionalized Vajrayāna ritual practice.

¹¹¹ Laura Harrington, *A View of Mañjuśrī: Wisdom and its Crown Prince in Pāla-period India*. (Ph. D. Dissertation--Columbia University, 2002), 1-12.

Chapter Three—Situating the *Mañjuvajra Mandala* within the Stylistic Environment of Eleventh century Southeastern Bengal

My focus in this chapter is to demonstrate how the style of the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra stele exhibits characteristics of formal “Bengaliness.” It closely aligns in particular ways, albeit not comprehensively, with many pieces unearthed in the region or “discovered” while in worship during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among these, just two steles with close similarities bear dated inscriptions.¹¹² The dated works are extremely valuable in allowing scholars to construct a diachronic stylistic framework, as per Susan Huntington’s innovative methodology of her 1984 study. Yet without dated pieces, a close stylistic analysis of the Met Mañjuvajra would nonetheless point us to a provenance of southeastern Bengal. Scholars including Huntington and Claudine Bautze-Picron have stated that artist workshops produced Buddhist as well as Hindu imagery in places like Bodhgayā, Nālandā, and likely in southeastern Bengal as well due to the strong stylistic cohesion among the region’s images.¹¹³ Jane Casey (1981 *et al*) has proposed a date and provenance of the eleventh century Dhaka district for the image with which I concur after surveying a wide range of works from throughout the Pāla region (Bihar and Bengal).

¹¹²Though the correspondence between regnal dates and the Western calendar are often not exact. For further discussion see Huntington, “*Pāla-Sena*” *Schools*, 27-80.

¹¹³ Huntington, *Leaves from the Bodhi Tree*, 92; Claudine Bautze-Picron and G. Bhattacharya. *The art of Eastern India in the collection of the Museum für Indische Kunst, Berlin: stone & terracotta sculptures* (Berlin: Reimer, 1998), 10-11.

The Dhaka district is situated on the Padma River, not far from where it joins the wider Meghna (see maps 2-4).¹¹⁴ Munshiganj, the find-spot of a number of steles described below, is situated to the south of the Narayanganj district (just south of modern-day Dhaka proper) (see map 4). Comilla, including ancient Tippera and the documented Lalmai-Mainamati *vihāra* sites, is roughly 100 km (or 62 mi.) to the east of Dhaka city and forms part of the region I consider as a potential provenance for the Met Mañjuvajra stele.¹¹⁵

It is important to keep in mind that these works were not found through systematic excavation and thus their find-spots may not correspond to their location during the era of their production or to their intended place of use. In Bihar, stone steles and metal images “have been recovered in well limited centers,” at sites such as Nālandā, Bodh Gayā, Kurikhar, and Antichak.¹¹⁶ This is not the case, however, Bengal. Archaeological excavations, including the monastic sites of Mainamati (Comilla District), Mahāsthān (north Bengal near Bogra) or nearby Pāhārpur, have yielded scant stone imagery later than the eighth century.¹¹⁷ Most ninth to twelfth century sculptures from the Dhaka District were discovered by accident, typically within temple tanks.¹¹⁸ Though inscriptional evidence describes Dhaka as the site of ancient Vikramapura, a

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*; All site names mentioned are present-day unless otherwise noted.

¹¹⁵ Lee, *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal: The Dhaka Region*, 6, 19. Lee writes: “The Dhaka region...comprises the city of Dhaka, which is the capital city of modern Bangladesh, and its surrounding area. It covers the modern districts of Dhaka, Gazipur, Munshiganj, Narayanganj, Narshingdi, Manikganj, Faridpur, Shariatpur, and Madaripur of Bangladesh... It is widely known as the territory of ancient Vāṅga... located in the central part of East Bengal.”

¹¹⁶ Bautze-Picron, *Art of Eastern India*, 10-11.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

royal hub of the Candras and Senas and large monastic center, no formal excavations have been undertaken there and the precise location of the *vihāra* remains unknown.¹¹⁹

Because of the breadth of the region over which steles have been unearthed in the Dhaka region (e.g. in multiple villages) along with a the lack of systematic excavations there, Bautze-Picron states that “the attribution of images from Bengal can only be made very approximately as one relates the images to a region and not to a site.”¹²⁰ Enamul Haque (2007), however, states that the provenance of the Rubin Mañjuvajra work is Munshiganj, essentially the section of Dhaka thought to be synonymous with the region of ancient Vikramapura (i.e. Rampal).¹²¹ Yet he does not cite his source information and therefore does not make clear whether his proposed provenance is based on stylistic comparison or other evidence. The circumstances surrounding the findings of these works seem to preclude an accurate assessment of provenance, as Bautze-Picron suggests. However, enough closely similar examples have been recovered, particularly at Munshiganj, to make the specific provenance that Haque proposes at least somewhat convincing.

Yet, these stone sculptures are mobile. It is not hard to fathom a network of bustling Bihari and Bengali communities with their respective *vihāra* complexes and artists’ workshops exchanging artists and being sought out by particular patrons across

¹¹⁹ Bhattasali, *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, 1929; N.K. Bhattasali’s account of the unearthing of many pieces by “casual excavation” and a repeated lack of funds and lack of attention of the ASI.

¹²⁰ Bautze-Picron, *Art of Eastern India*, 10-11.

¹²¹ Haque, *Sculptures in Bangladesh*, 2007.

regions.¹²² However, there are groups of works that significantly transcend the stylistic uniformity that permeates many works with Bihari or Bengali find-spots before the late tenth century.¹²³ In particular, the southeastern works inclusive of the Met Mañjuvajra stele display a greater sense of regionality than do works elsewhere in Bengal.¹²⁴

My point of departure in this analysis is not a regional overview of Buddhist art but a specific comparison and an attempt to place the Met Mañjuvajra stylistically. The small group I will present here is a cohesive yet not necessarily comprehensive range of southeastern Bengali works dating to the eleventh century.¹²⁵ It incorporates both those discussed by Lee (2009) in her comprehensive study of southeastern Bengal Buddhist imagery as well as additional non-Buddhist images primarily located via the Huntington archive and publications by Huntington (1984), Banerji (1933), and Bhattasali (1929).¹²⁶ I am attempting to define, to use a terminology of a biological bent, a *taxon* of aggregate visual characteristics that denote visual “Bengaliness,” specific to this southeastern

¹²² Huntington, “*Pāla-Sena*” *Schools*, proposes a similar scenario.

¹²³ Bautze-Picron believes that prior to the eleventh century, when image production in southeastern Bengal increased, images were imported to the region from Bihar and North Bengal. See Claudine Bautze-Picron, “La Statuaire du Sud-Est du Bangladesh du Xe au XIIe siècle,” *Arts Asiatiques* (1985, vol. 40, no.1), 18-31.

¹²⁴ To complicate matters of understanding specificities of regional style and date, images were made in portable metal as well. In considering style, the metal works are best studied in comparison to one another rather than to large stone steles, though there is major stylistic and iconographic overlapping between the two mediums.

¹²⁵ A full overview of how southeastern Bengali works might be understood within the greater Pāla region and time period is beyond the scope of this paper as this has been aptly underscored in previous scholarship namely that by Susan Huntington (1984, 1990) and Eun-Su Lee (2009) in her overview of these regional works. Janice Leoshko’s earlier work primarily focused on sculptural production at Bodhgayā, yet she incorporates discussion and analysis of Bengali sculpture in multiple publications (2003 et al). Claudine Bautze-Picron has looked at specific themes in Bengal works and focused on outlining differences in regional styles. In addition to Lee’s dissertation work, Bautze-Picron has also studied southeastern Bengal works from the eleventh to twelfth centuries. See Bautze-Picron, “La Statuaire du Sud-Est du Bangladesh du Xe au XIIe siècle,” 18-31.

¹²⁶ The Huntington Archive Digital Database Collection. 2012. Ohio State University <http://huntingtonarchive.osu.edu/database.php> (Accessed November 2012).

region. This analysis presents a sampling of such works, focusing on those that most closely align with the Met Mañjuvajra. This process of comparison sheds light on the larger artistic context of the region and perhaps why artists made the formal and thematic choices that they did. What emerges is a temporal cross-section of those formal factors that make a work immediately recognizable as Bengali.

Style and Subject Matter of Eleventh century Southeastern Bengal Stelae

The Met Mañjuvajra, though rare as a composition, fits squarely within the southeastern Bengali stylistic environment. In its close resemblance to its “partner” at the Rubin museum, the Met stele is not a singular image but a rare Mañjuvajra image-type. There are however significant differences between the two works, variations such as those we would note between other southeastern Bengal image-types such as Naṭarāja Śiva. With the exception of the Rubin stele, the Met Mañjuvajra does not align comprehensively with the style and composition of any of its extant contemporaries. I argue that the Met stele artist, in both his structuring of the composition and treatment of the forms of the image, conflates three “sub-styles” evocative of early-to-mid eleventh century southeastern “Bengaliness.” The first sub-style includes stelae with back-slabs filled with low-relief carving. These still have a clearly differentiated central deity figure in high relief. The second sub-style consists of a simplified composition and plain black-slab. They are similar to Mañjuvajra both in the treatment and character of the figure as well as in the volume of negative space that surrounds him. The third sub-style

incorporates a temple formation in high relief in addition to traits of the first sub-style.¹²⁷ These are stelae with a central *garbha grha* (lit. “womb chamber,” i.e. inner sanctum) framed by an archway and topped by a *sikhara* as a part of their central, more three-dimensional focal “zone” (to use Bautze-Picron’s terminology).¹²⁸ This third group differs from the first two in that it is not confined to the Dhaka-Comilla region, it includes sculptures found at Sibbati, Khulna district and Betagi, Chittagong (see map 2). In sum, I propose three stylistic sub-types within this aggregate visual taxon of “Bengaliness” present in eleventh century Pāla stone stelae. Members of each group have strong consonances with particular facets of the Met stele, each made up of aggregate components in themselves, some of which clearly overlap with one another.

My system of grouping these southeastern Bengali works is not meant to be comprehensive or have fixed boundaries. Yet it is helpful, I think, to break down the styles, to classify them in this way, in order to clarify similarities and divergences with my focal image. As a method, however, I acknowledge the limitation of drawing boundaries where there may actually not be any (e.g. from the perspective of the artists). Therefore, I propose style sub-groups with fluid rather than rigid boundaries. These

¹²⁷ This simplified style has been pointed out by Huntington, “*Pāla-Sena*” *Schools*, 166-173. Lee also notes a trend in this period towards a “relatively simple composition” and “define[s] such simplicity as one of the major characteristics of the eleventh century Buddhist sculptures from the Dhaka region” and a “a distinct local tendency.” She also notes a simultaneous tendency toward “linear details” and “shallow carving” on back-slabs as opposed to those that are plain. Lee, *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal*, 105-107, 121-122, *et al.* Huntington points out the valuation of refined restraint in southeastern Bengal ca. the early eleventh century that we see in images of my first sub-style discussed below. The fluorescence of elaborate surface carvings is a second and seemingly contemporaneous trend in southeastern Bengal. In contrast to the simplified style, the elaborations of the ornate back-slab (my first sub-style here) include trefoil archways and temple structures (my third stylistic sub-group).

¹²⁸ Claudine Bautze-Picron, “The Stone Images of the Buddha at Kurkihar—Analysis of a Style,” in *Studies in art and archaeology of Bihar and Bengal*, 1989; Lee (2009) also discusses these figures.

artworks are grouped together based on their artists' sculptural articulation of composition and figure (and in some sense, but less so, iconography). As we look closely, this may help to clarify site-specific styles as well.

In-depth Formal Analysis of *Mañjuvajra Mandala*

The Metropolitan *Mañjuvajra Mandala* sculpture presents visual connections to both Buddhist and non-Buddhist imagery from the southeastern region of Bengal. Though without a solid provenance or date, the stele aligns on stylistic grounds with imagery from the eleventh century. The sculpture, carved from a dark grey phyllite stone, depicts a six-armed, triple-faced form of Mañjuśrī affiliated with the Vajrayāna school of Buddhism (figs 1-1.7). He brandishes a long sword and arrow with his right hands, a lotus and archers' bow with his left. He is seated in *vajraparyāṅkāsa* with legs folded and soles of the feet facing upward atop a stylized lotus throne that signifies the transcendent realm of the deity. A columned trefoil archway denotes the *garbha grha* of an abbreviated temple with a *śikhara* rising high above it. The *śikhara* forms the centerpiece of a peaked assemblage of rounded *caityas* (or *stūpas*) holding small buddha forms. The richly carved *caityas* bear concentric moldings and conical pinnacles. The five *jina* buddhas that these *caityas* house reflect the posture and dress of the central deity. Each *jina* holds a varying succession of four implements: a sword (*khadga*), jewel (*ratna*), lotus flower (*padma*), and wheel (*cakra*).¹²⁹ As is often the case in Pāla art, the five *jinās* are delineated in a schematized or flattened *mandala* meant to be visualized as

¹²⁹ An exception is the central *jina* buddha who appears to hold a *vajra* (a ritual implement in this period symbolizing the diamond-hard or adamantine state of Buddha mind), sword, lotus, and jewel. See also Casey, *Divine Presence: Arts of India and the Himalayas*, 28.

aligning with the four cardinal directions and center position. The more rare presence of the architectural elements in this artwork emphasizes the directional positioning of the celestial *jina* figures.

Beneath the temple *śikhara* and *caitya* forms, architectonic columns and a trilobate arch frame the deep, shadowy niche of the central deity. The polished precision of the sharply-carved curves of the archway give the impression that they were smoothly sliced out like a blade through soft clay, a compelling counterpoint to the sharp edge of the extending blade just beneath. The volume of negative space within the niche emphasizes Mañjuvajra's form, making it the most three-dimensional and focal section of the stele. The archway trope also dramatically frames and directs the eye to focus first on, the deity rather than the towering temple spire. This angular, six-armed central figure in high relief casts a dramatic silhouette. This, along with the work's clean, symmetrical lines, wide lotus base, trilobate archway, and towering temple and *stūpa* forms produces a powerful image evocative of the potent yet benevolent deity.

The temple structure demarcates a celestial sacred space. The curling vegetal leaf pattern that covers the background of the upper zone suggests the forceful movement of divine energy. This vegetal motif presents frothy circular streams that build-up like clouds as they emerge from the tiny *makaras*' (mythic composite sea creatures) elephantine trunks. Below them, leogryphs (*vyālakas* or *vyālas*) stand in profile atop smaller elephants and flank the deity figure. These zoomorphic figures and lotus pedestal symbolize a ruler's throne.

Within the raised curling vines along the base the artist depicts various small figures. The horse, elephant, small sword, *cakra* (wheel), goddess Tārā, wealth god Jambhala, and jewel in its setting comprise the *saptaratnas* (seven jewels) of the *cakravartin* (great ruler or teacher). Commonly found at the base of southeastern Bengal Buddhist steles, they add a further dimension of symbolism suggestive of wealth, abundance, and kingship.¹³⁰ Also common and almost ubiquitous in Pāla stele plinth imagery are kneeling devotees, more often female, who raise garlands as offerings to the deity. We also find a book on a stand and a *yogin* holding both thunderbolt (*vajra*) and *ghaṇṭā* (bell) mirroring the stance of the primordial buddha Vajrasattva in his two-armed human form.¹³¹ The book on the stand reflects the doctrine and practice of this time period and may represent the *Prajñāpāramitā* manuscript. By the same token, the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* implements held by the small cross-legged yogic figure denote his practice of Vajrayāna phase ritual. Interestingly, he also wears a pointed monk's hat.¹³²

An expert level of execution in carving in terms of scale, symmetry, and crisp treatment of the figures and forms bolsters the clarity and dynamism of the artwork's composition. The Met Mañjuvajra is exceptional in its status among the technical masterpieces of Pāla stone sculpture. This status comes not only from the large scale of the stele and treatment of its central figure, but in the clean lines of its architectonic milieu and uniformity of background detail. Here we see a self-assuredness of line and an

¹³⁰ Claudine Bautze-Picron, "Between Gods and Men," 59-79.

¹³¹ *ibid.*; Leoshko, "Buddhist Art of Northern India," 43, describes the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā* as "ritual implements that signify the nonduality of enlightenment."

¹³² *ibid.*

almost starkness of form in the central region. This use of negative space is one facet of sculptural style from the Dhaka-Comilla region in the early eleventh century. The overall effect of the Met Mañjuvajra is one of carefully balanced forms. Before even considering the rarity of the deity's depiction, this piece stands out even among others in the galleries today as a strikingly powerful image.

Despite the extreme rarity of the Met sculpture among recovered Pāla stelae, a remarkably similar counterpart in terms of both iconography and style survives (fig. 2). Now in the Rubin Museum collection, the artwork was formerly a part of the collection of Dr. David Nalin. In making an accurate comparison between the Met Mañjuvajra and other contemporaneous works, it's important to consider that even two such similar works present significant variations between them. Yet, is there a personal style or artist's "voice" shared between them? Here, I analyze the differences between these two virtually duplicate works in order to more clearly gauge regional stylistic fluctuations.

Though the composition of each piece is basically the same, the two images differ in size. The Met Mañjuvajra is 128.9 cm (and roughly half that in width) while that of the Rubin is just 95 cm in high. This discrepancy in scale is most notable when comparing the size of the central figures: the deity of Rubin stele is less than half the height of the entire piece (roughly one-eighth less). In comparison to the scale of deity figures in most of eleventh-century Pāla stelae, the Rubin Mañjuvajra appears somewhat diminutive in size below the towering *śikhara* and wide swath of archway (although the comparatively smaller deity form – relative to the rest of the composition – is indeed facet of eleventh

century style overall that differentiates it from earlier periods).¹³³ The Met Mañjuvajra, on the other hand, is close to half the stele's height with the exception of the *caitya* at very top of the *śikhara*. The flanking zoomorphic and plinth figures are also identical though the order of the figures on the base differs. The pilaster capitals of the Rubin piece are completely plain while the Met work's show ornamentation. There is also a wide band of empty space cut away along the edge of the back-slab, and the motifs and ribbon of the Rubin piece present a shallower depth of carving and less circular elaboration. The overall composition of the Met piece is tighter (note the placement of Mañjuvajra's sword, extending from one edge of the archway to the other). Further, the more centralized position of the deity's slighter larger head, along with the more uniform curve and loftier height of the arch above him, creates a pleasing sense of visual balance and symmetry lacking in the Rubin piece.

The jeweled headdresses (*kirīṭāmukūṭa*) of the deities are nearly identical though necklace and armbands vary slightly. For instance, the Met work presents swags of pearls and a greater number of circular jewels along with a diamond-shaped patterning on the flat plane of the necklace. The Met piece has endured damage to the hands, face, and implements of the deity while in the Rubin image they are preserved. The overwhelming similarity between the two works, however, allows the Rubin piece to act as a reference for the damaged *mudrā* of the Met Mañjuvajra, giving us a sense of the placement of the

¹³³ Huntington, "Pala-Sena" Schools, 168.

now missing fingers. The Rubin image also provides us with a sense of the missing facial features of the Met deity.

Looking closely at the deities' physiognomy and body style, the remaining facial features are almost identical, while the larger Met Mañjuvajra presents a slightly more pointed chin and heart-shaped face, narrower eyelids, and not necessarily the same overt smile of the Rubin image (although the flanking faces doubtlessly do). His central face is more frontal and angled towards the viewer producing an enhanced sense of immediacy in comparison with the Rubin piece. But for the damaged areas, we can also see that the forms on the torso of the deity (e.g. the details of the necklace) are better preserved in the Met Mañjuvajra. The Rubin stele also seems to have been painted gold at some point.

Though the bodies of both figures' torsos appear identical in size upon close comparison, the Met Mañjuvajra's upper arms are shorter in length and hugged closer to the body. This affords a greater view of the waist area that accentuates the *tribhanga* posture and produces an enhanced sense of movement in the deity image. Further, in addition to a tighter, more cohesive composition, the stele is elongated upward through its greater height. This allows for a more centralized placement of the Met stele deity, and from that, a satisfyingly symmetrical composition. The artist delineates this composition through a series of balanced, interlocking triangular forms.

Overall, the Met piece is a more refined work, not in terms of the comparative skill in carving so much as the technical mastery of the compositional space itself. Because of the utter similarity of the style and iconography of the two sculptures, it is likely that they are both produced by the same artist(s) and thus roughly

contemporaneously. As the Met piece appears to be an improvement upon an already formidable composition, however, the Rubin image seems to be the initial piece attempted among these two.¹³⁴ The comparison of these two works of the same image-type is, again, particularly useful in that it gives us a sense of the similarity and deviations in form – that is the range of variation the artist allows – in two manifestations of the same Mañjuvajra image type.

Characteristics of early-to-mid Eleventh century Southeastern Bengali Style

While I have chosen to discuss the following group of images for their formal connections to the Met Mañjuvajra stele, this pool of extent artworks details many of the nuances of the early-to-mid eleventh century Bengali style. Most, but for the Lokanātha image, have identified find-spots in the region. Though Casey has proposed an eleventh century date for the image based on affinities with the dated Betkā Viṣṇu piece discussed below (fig. 4), there are a total of three published dated southeastern Bengal steles from this early-to-mid eleventh century period.¹³⁵ I focus on two of these as productive starting points for situating the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra within stylistic environment of southeastern Bengal. Though roughly contemporaneous in date and region, these two dated works lead us in two differing directions stylistically. They form the basis of my first two style subgroups: the ornately filled-in vs. simplified back-slab.¹³⁶ The earlier of these two dated works, the Śiva Naṭarāja piece from Bhārellā, Comilla (fig. 8-8.1), has

¹³⁴ Though additional similar pieces, yet to be found, may have been created.

¹³⁵ Published in Huntington (1984) and Banerji (1933).

¹³⁶ *op. cit.* fn 132 and fn 142 below.

never before been discussed in its relationship to the Mañjuvajra image, yet this comparison, as I will show, yields promising results.

There are a few general characteristics that typify stone stelae in this early-to-mid eleventh century southeastern Bengali style. We see more attenuated figures than those previous with elongated and angular limbs. Steles are larger in scale with pointed back-slabs that are either plain or covered in ornate, low relief detail.¹³⁷ The almost-three dimensional central deity is smaller within the stele composition as a whole. We also see an emphasis on architectural features and temple frameworks and a more elaborate plinth with projecting “*rathas*” (or squared-off and gradually narrowing levels of outcropping). There is also a general tendency for the artist to use vegetal motifs, particularly circular vines, streaming ribbons, variations on the elaborate “tiger tooth” necklace, and armbands and diadems with round jewels within a floral pattern. Further, tall headdresses at times with swirling *jaṭākmukūṭas* (twisted ascetic locks arranged in the form of a tall headdress) are typical and often topped in with an inverted heart shaped finial. Significant features that seem particularly tied to the early-to-mid eleventh century simplified style of the Dhaka district (my second sub-style) are the elegant head tilt and *tribhāṅga* posture conveying peaceful repose, grace, and divine power. In comparison, the rarity or even uniqueness of the Met Mañjuvajra stele lies in its level of refinement in tandem with the artist’s conflation of these three sub-styles in its composition.¹³⁸ The Met Mañjuvajra

¹³⁷ Huntington, “*Pala-Sena*” *Schools*, 161-171; Lee, *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal*, 105-107, 121-122, *et al.*

¹³⁸ To be clear, I am not suggesting that the Met Manjuvajra is the only work that achieves a similar conflation of the first two groups: the Mainamati Tārā below (fig. 7) comes to mind as well.

artist achieves the sensitive, graceful deity form surrounded by negative space though with a filled black-slab surrounding this. He also ingeniously incorporates the structural *mandala* and temple formation in high relief. In these ways, the Met stele (along with its close counterpart) presents a combination of styles, compositions, and forms in a manner not evident in other contemporaneous Pāla works.

Southeastern Bengali Sub-style Number One: The Ornate Back-slab

Casey (1995 *et al*) has compared the then Nalin collection work to that of the Viṣṇu from Betkā, Dacca District with an inscription citing the 23rd year of Govindachandra (fig. 4-4.1).¹³⁹ Some elements of Viṣṇu's dress and adornments are quite similar to or even shared by Mañjuvajra. These include valances of pearls along the headband, earrings, and knotted belt. The deities bear similarly shaped headdresses and necklaces, including one simple strand and another more elaborate with a row of tiger teeth (yet Viṣṇu's has a longer pendant). Similar too are their facial features – large downcast eyes, long nose, and high cheekbones – though Viṣṇu's are more broad and rounded (fig.4.1).

Their body styles differ. In the Betkā image, I find the transition from torso to shoulders and upper arms quite awkward and unconvincing. This is true, however, for many Viṣṇu figures of this of *mūrti* type. It seems to be almost the ideal form that artists turned to in delineating this deity or Sūrya, the sun god, in Bengal during this period. My misgivings with this particular work are that the body is handled more clumsily than

¹³⁹ Casey Singer, *Medieval Sculpture from Eastern India*, 60, states that the Rubin work exhibits affinities with the Betkā Viṣṇu in its “angular but sensitive facial features, slender torso, jewelry and treatment of the lotus petals.”

either of the Mañjuvajra images. The torso is also less refined with a narrow chest, implausibly wide shoulders, and an unconvincing thickness in the upper arms.

The *makaras* and leogryph-elephant flanking figures along with the lotus pedestals and architectonic pilasters seem indeed to be a close match. Yet these elements are actually the norm in Pāla stelae throughout the northeastern region, including Bihari artworks as early as the 9th century and sustained throughout the Pāla period (ca. 8th-12th centuries). We may, however, trace this stele composition, throne, and lotus pedestal iconography back to Gupta-era forms of the Buddha from Sārnāth (ca. 6th century) and even earlier.¹⁴⁰

By examining the range of southeastern Bengali stelae we find artworks that align much more closely with the style of the Met Mañjuvajra while at the same time showing direct links to the dated Betkā Viṣṇu sculpture. The first I'll look at is of the śākta/śaiva goddess Pārvatī (or Umā, wife of the god Śiva), an image from Mohammadpur, Comilla District (H: 49.25 in.) now in the Indian Museum collection, Calcutta (fig. 5). The figure of Pārvatī and her adornments display numerous similarities to the Met Mañjuvajra: the pearl valances of her headband and those of her armbands, although not an exact match in the form of the jewels, along with the curling tendrils falling over her shoulders. Her lotus and stalk, echoed in Mañjuvajra's bow, are almost identical as well. Further, the shape of her face and facial features, with the curving eyebrows, downcast almond

¹⁴⁰ For a discussion of the Sārnāth regional influence on early Pāla works, see Huntington, "Pāla-Sena" *Schools*, 16-21 and Leoshko, "About Looking at Buddha Images in Eastern India". *Archives of Asian Art*. 52: 63-82.

shaped eyes, and bud-like smiling mouth are more similar to the Met Mañjuvajra than to the Betkā Viṣṇu.

The leogryph and elephant forms present a crispness in their treatment that is much closer to the Met Mañjuvajra (though the leogryphs have no rider figures in the latter) as is the shape of the capitals of the columns and adjoining base for these flanking zoomorphic forms. We also see a similar emphasis on the curling streams of vegetation from the mouth of the *makaras* above the heads of the leogryphs. The crisp treatment of the lower relief back-slab imagery appears more defined than that of the Betkā Viṣṇu image. Moreover, with her identifying lotus, Pārvatī is quite similar to the general iconography of Tārā images in this case, but clearly the five forms of the Brahmanical gods are pictured above here denote a non-Buddhist deity.

The most remarkable similarity between the Pāvātī and Mañjuvajra steles, however, is the rare delineation of the upper row of lotus petals along the deity throne: there is a similar raised curvilinear ridge on each upper side of the upper petals (fig. 5.1 cf. fig. 1.2). Of the numerous images I have surveyed, only this stele along with the unfinished lotus petals of the Aṣṭamābhaya Tara from Vikramapura share this rare characteristic with the Met and Rubin Mañjuvajra sculptures.¹⁴¹ This factor could be particularly significant in determining the Met artwork's provenance, or at least a shared

¹⁴¹ Aṣṭamābhaya Tārā, Somapada, Vikramapura area, ca. late eleventh century, is the only other image I have found that shows this style of lotus petal, though unfinished. See Lee, *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal*, figs. 16 and 16-9. This stele can be included within this sub-style and shares marked consonances with the figure and facial features of Mañjuvajra as well as presenting the book on a stand and yogic practitioner carved on its base.

artist between Vikramapura and Comilla.¹⁴² Further, the curling vegetal base holding the stalk of the lotus is also remarkably close. There is, interestingly, a seated yogic figure in lotus position next to a lighted lamp to the right of the lotus stalk on the base of the Pārvatī stele, along with a horse and parasol indicating rulership.

This Mohammadpur Pārvatī stele corresponds strongly with the Betkā Viṣṇu in the forms of the goddess's headband and outward-extended flourishes above each ear. Viṣṇu's belt is quite similar to hers also as are the intricately beaded adornments of his girdle. Lastly, the schematized curling flames of her *prabhāmaṇḍala* (halo) strongly echo the Betkā stele. The treatment of the figures is close enough to tell us, at the very least, that we're in the same realm of artistic production (if not necessarily the same workshop). Compare, for example, the outstretched palm of both figures, showing *vārada* (wish-granting) *mudrā* and the echoing curvilinear forms on each side of the deity figure. Yet, rather than the Betkā Viṣṇu, the style of Met Mañjuvajra corresponds more closely to the forms of this Comilla district Pārvatī work. In the richness of their adornments and beautiful benevolent features, both images express a similar grandeur and powerful presence for their respective deities. We also see stylistic similarities with some relatively unusual elements of the Met Mañjuvajra: the treatment of the tall leogryphs, pilaster moldings, and particularly, the lotus petals. These consonances provide important clues in

¹⁴² There is also a Muhammadpur (aka Mohammadpur) in present-day Dhaka, and it's not clear if the Comilla provenance may be an error. However, the stele might also have been created in an ancient Vikramapura workshop and transported to Comilla given these similarities (or, as noted, possibly even have a shared artist who traveled between locales). This stele is a prime example of why we cannot separate these two proximate districts on the basis of style.

determining provenance as well as the character of trans-sectarian deity production in the region.

Moving on to the next image of this sub-group, I will actually violate my own taxonomy a bit in presenting the first of three Naṭarāja Śiva images discussed in this study (though for differing purposes). I introduce it here for its distinct formal linkage with the Betkā Viṣṇu and Mohammadpur Pārvatī steles (fig. 6). The jewels of Siva's armbands match those of the Betkā Viṣṇu, though this is not the case for his headdress. In addition, Śiva has the same extended flourish above each ear and the similar earrings, also matching those of Mañjuvajra. The Pārvatī stele from Mohammadpur has an even closer linkage with the Śiva image in their respective girdle adornments that show the same beading with rows of small spherical pendants. The shape of his face is very similar to hers, as it is to Mañjuvajra: compare in particular his to the bodhisattva's smiling faces in profile (fig. 6.1). Similarities with the Mañjuvajra stele also include Śiva's necklace and long curls trailing over the shoulders, both virtually similar, as is the treatment of the upraised hand and sword. His *jaṭāmukutā* bears the inverted heart-shaped finial that all four deities – Mañjuvajra, Viṣṇu, Pārvatī, and Naṭarāja Śiva – share.

Compositionally, this work belongs in my second sub-style as it bears a plain back-slab, yet this can hardly be called a simplistic image and thus I've complicated things a bit by including it here. There is little room for low-relief décor given the iconographic characteristics of this deity form. Further, the stele doesn't follow the compositional program of the simplistic substyle: the fiery outer ring, clearly demarcated base, *tribhaṅga* pose, and characteristic graceful tilt of the head. It is a somewhat

anomalistic image in that it doesn't actually follow either one compositionally or in the treatment of the figure although the base does share some features with the Śiva Naṭarāja discussed below. It may even be somewhat earlier than the other works, or perhaps something of a nascent attempt on the part of the artist at portraying a particularly complex deity icon.

The last member of this group is seemingly anomalistic as well, yet it follows the general character of this stylistic sub-group. Discovered at Mainamati, Comilla District this is the image of Buddhist goddess Tārā encased in a mountain (fig.7).¹⁴³ Though this image presents the deity within a deep niche like Mañjuvajra, I have included it in this stylistic sub-group as we still have a multiplicity of forms in rather low relief surrounding the main image, stacked to follow the shape of the stele, as is so often the case. The physiognomy of this Tārā stele, the Mohammadpur (Comilla) Pārvatī, and the Comilla Śiva Naṭarāja, and are all very closely connected. In turn, this facial type is closely similar, again, to those of Mañjuvajra. The cylindrical headdress she wears is found in many images of Viṣṇu from eleventh to twelfth century Bengal, and it is not clear if this is a diachronic or merely artistic choice.¹⁴⁴ Seated here in *vajraparayankāsana*, she is quite similar to Mañjuvajra in her compact body style with slender, elongated thighs, though she sits straight *sans* his *tribhaṅga* pose. She shows the *mudrā* of teaching

¹⁴³ Tārā, though often referred to as a goddess, is also a female bodhisattva. See Lee, *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal*, 190, fn 269. Here she provides evidence of a Mainamati find-spot for this piece stating: "The DAB [Dept of Archaeology, Bangladesh] preserves a record on this work that was discovered in Mainamati but transferred to Karachi, Pakistan during the East Pakistan period (1945-1971)."

¹⁴⁴ It is less typical of these early-to-mid eleventh century artworks than in later images or those from the more Northern regions of Bengal.

(*dharmacakra*). Tārā also has the upswept ribbons characteristic of, but by no means limited to, Buddhist images of this time period.

Specific to Buddhist iconography, however, are the *saptaratna* figures along the base of the sculpture, placed within circular vines in a manner similar to the Met Mañjuvajra stele. If we compare the forms of her lotus flowers to those of Pārvatī, they match but for the open vs. closed (*ūtpāla*) state of the lotus on the right. Further, the rectangular-shaped striations and low-relief outcroppings that suggest “mountainous” forms are similar to those of the dated Bhārellā Śiva Naṭarāja and more so that of the Rāmpāl image of the same deity (figs. 8.1, 13).¹⁴⁵ Above Tārā, the *stūpa* at the pinnacle – also a distinctly Buddhist iconographic element – differs from that usually depicted in this region and may even reference a specific *stūpa* site. Though it diverges in shape from the *stūpa* (or *caitya*) form at the pinnacle of the *śikhara* of the Met Mañjuvajra image, it is similar in signifying the attainment of Enlightenment (Buddhahood) and the state of *nirvāṇa* (release from rebirth in *saṃsāra*). In this Mainamati Tārā stele, we have a

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 187-190, Lee describes the artist’s use of “the sacred mountain as a central device for the manifestation of divine power” in this era and region noting that it is also used for Vikramapura icons of Umā-Maheśvara and Khasarpaṇa Lokeśvara (a form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara). She speculates that the mountain encompassing Tārā in this “rare stele” from Mainamati, likely represents the Potalaka, the sacred mountain housing Avalokiteśvara in the *Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra* of roughly fourth century CE. [Here she cites *The Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*, critically edited by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki and Hokei Idzumi, Tokyo: The Society for the Publication of Sacred Books of the World, 1949, pp. 208-216.] As evidence of the artist’s emphasis of Tārā’s connection to Avalokiteśvara, she points to the open lotus that Tārā bears (which is typically closed). In any case, texts generally describe the goddess Tārā as originating from the heart of the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara, and indeed she is closely connected to him. As she gains popularity in this period, she often takes over his salvific functions (i.e. the deliverance from the Eight Perils, *aṣṭamābhaya*); Banerji, *Eastern Indian school of mediaeval sculpture*, 28, discusses an image of Tārā from the Indian Museum, Calcutta (No. 3820), bearing the inscription *Potalaka Upatārā*, and though this image also bears a seated form with two arms and two seated “male figures” flanking the base, Bannerji states that the Calcutta Tārā image also has two female attendants along with a differing *mudrā*.

similarity in iconography with Mañjuvajra. Like the Met stele, however, there is a close connection to non-Buddhist works as well in the sculpture's style and figural treatment.

Southeastern Bengali Sub-style Number Two: The Simplified Style

Turning to the simplified sub-style, I begin with a second dated piece from this period, a now-broken image of Śiva Naṭarāja (fig. 8-8.1). It is slightly earlier than the dated Betkā Viṣṇu from the reign of Govindacandra year 23. The inscription places it in the 18th regnal year of Govindacandra's predecessor, Laḍahacandradeva (ca. first quarter of the eleventh century, possibly end of the tenth). Bhattasali calls the fragmentary Śiva Naṭarāja from Bhārella (near Baḍkāmtā in the Comilla district, former Tippera) "the earliest known sculpture inscribed with the name of a Candra king," stating that it was broken in half soon after its discovery.¹⁴⁶ This stele's inscription identifies the deity as Nartteśvara ("Lord of the Dance") or Naṭarāja ("ruler or king of the dance").¹⁴⁷

Here the Śiva Naṭarāja *mūrti*, unlike the two additional steles of this image-type I discuss here, has central arms raised high above his head with palms joined. The style of the schematized *jaṭāmukutā* (ascetic hairstyle or headdress) is, however, very similar to that of the previous Pārvatī and Śiva images. He also wears a version of the tiger claw necklace, a temporo-regional characteristic common to images from both sub-styles. Here the necklace has flattened "teeth" with a central heart-shaped pendant. The shapes of his armband jewels are identical with those of Mañjuvajra as is the shape of his torso. This figure is emblematic of the simplified Bengali style for its empty compositional ground.

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 114-115.

¹⁴⁷ Huntington, "Pala-Sena" Schools, figs. 64-65; Bhattasali, *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, plate XLIV.

It is further emblematic of this sub-style in its high level of its refinement – more so than our previous Śiva Naṭarāja – in the treatment of what remains of the figure. The plain framing band next to a ring of schematized flames running along the back-slab’s edge is also indicative of the simplified southeastern Bengal sub-style.

As was the case with the first group, the sculptures without dated inscriptions come stylistically closer in many respects to the forms of the Met Mañjuvajra than this dated Siva Naṭarāja image (that nonetheless shares formal consonances with it). This is quite evident in the unprovenanced Lokanātha piece (H: 95cm) from the Virginia Museum of Arts (fig. 9-9.1).¹⁴⁸ Here we see the plain back-slab and raised framing band with the ring of stylized flames characteristic of this style. As the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara as Lokanātha pervades the all worlds offering protection and saving devotees from various calamities, signified by his *abhaya* (“fear not”) *mudrā*. Like Mañjuvajra, he has three rings encircling his neck indicating one of the marks of a great man (*mahāpuruṣa*) as well as ribbons streaming upward from his headdress and the same flower-laden *jaṭāmukutā* of Śiva Naṭarāja and others previous here. The plain band below the edge of his headdress matches that worn by Mañjuvajra’s heads in profile. His pointed armbands, with floral-shaped jewels also share a close affinity with Mañjuvajra’s, as do his earrings, the shape of his hyperbolically-large almond shaped eyes, his stylized curving brow, long straight nose, and bud-like mouth. In contrast to

¹⁴⁸ S.K. Saraswati, *Tantrayāna art: an album*, 27, Lokanātha is a two-armed form of Avalokiteśvara that may display various *mudrās*, yet with a seated or standing *tribhaṅga* (thrice-bent) posture and usually with female attendants; R. D. Banerji, *Eastern Indian school of mediaeval sculpture*, 28-29, describes a two-armed form with two male attendant figures (as is the case here) in the Indian Museum collection, Calcutta.

Mañjuvajra, however, Lokanātha's flattened tiger tooth necklace and long straight locks mirror instead the dated Śiva Naṭarāja from Bhārellā.

At the left side of the base, this image shares with the Met stele the presence of the yogic figure with a pointed hat – a monk engaged in *sādhana* practice – next to a book on a stand in worship. Again, the book is likely the Prajñāpāramitā, central to Vajrayāna philosophy for its discussion of *śūnyatā* (or “emptiness,” i.e. the absence of intrinsic causality) the realization that is key to Enlightenment. Female figures on the base offer garlands at left (as is customary in most steles) and males and females even dance and play instruments for the deity. In fact everything about this lavish piece – including Lokanātha's large parasol signifying his exalted status (and historically reserved for royalty), his attendants who hover at a close yet reverential distance, and his lavish jeweled adornments – suggests both a powerful ruler and powerful divinity.¹⁴⁹ Lokanātha can mean “lord of the world,” a term associated with a king, or “protector/refuge of the world,” and in this context it likely is meant to be understood multivalently.

Overall, this piece has a more open and schematic quality in its treatment vs. the Met stele whose artist renders similar adornments. This spread-out effect in the carving of the Lokanātha image extends even to the flat, squared-off lotus pedestals, the broad framing band, and scarcely noted wide set flames. The deity has more heft in his rounded cheeks and tubular limbs.

¹⁴⁹ Generally, the concepts of ruler and deity are conflated in ancient Indian culture and, from its very nascent stages, Indian Buddhism incorporated many elements symbolic of a great king into its visual and textual repertoire, as we have seen thus far.

The artwork is preserved in impeccable condition. Overall there is less delicacy than we've seen previously: the carving is bolder in the treatment of the forms of the eye and brow along with a very lovely bemused face. Perhaps this is due in part to the excellent condition of the work, yet here we see the deepness of incision in the *jaṭāmukuta* and neck folds as well as the deity's necklace. The work is in a very similar style and could be of the same workshop or production site as the Met stele, yet not by the same artist(s) and possibly later in its enhanced stylization.

A second stele that shares this openness of form in an extremely simplified composition is the Buddhist goddess Mahāpratisarā from Vikramapura, Munshiganj (35 in. H x 24 in. W) in the Dhaka museum collection (figs. 10-10.1).¹⁵⁰ Only approximately 35 inches in height, it is significantly smaller than many of the pieces I've presented thus far. This stele – now with the top section broken off – has no ornamentation save the lotus pedestals and stalk with two subsidiary blooms on each side. This upturned flower form is typical of Pāla sculpture across mediums. The tripartite leaf design at the base of the stalk is similar to that of that of the Met stele. The base of the work is surprisingly plain, with a plain back-slab and outer band of stylized flames.

The open quality of the artist's carving is evident in the delineation of her necklace, floral jewels at the headdress, and diamond-shaped emblem at her belt.¹⁵¹

These echo the same forms in the Lokanātha sculpture, as does the somewhat narrower

¹⁵⁰Mahāpratisarā is among the group of female deities described in the popular medieval *Pañcarakṣa* text. Bhattasali *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, 61-62, pl. 24, calls her a Buddhist "protective goddess," translates a portion of the *sādhana* of the goddess from the *Sāghanamālā* and gives the Bengali version of the text. The goddess seems to have been more prevalent in Bengal as Leoshko (1987) does not note her presence at Bodhgayā.

¹⁵¹With, however, differently-shaped armband jewels than those of the Met Mañjuvājra.

shape of the flattened and squared off lotus petals. Her facial features are also closely similar. Her head is tilted to the lower left, while her lower left hand is in *Tarjjanīmudrā* (a form of teaching gesture) held to her chest.¹⁵² In her left hands, she holds a hatchet, *vajra*, and bow; in her right, a noose, trident, arrow, and sword. Her attributes include those held by Mañjuvajra (with the omission of the lotus), the sword held aloft in the upper right hand, bow in outstretched left. She sits in *tribhaṅga* posture, with three faces, three eyes, a pleasant expression, and youthful face. She bears a slightly extended *praṇā* belly. As one of the Pancarakṣa goddesses, she is a protector of both the Buddhist *dharma* and practitioners of the *dharma*.¹⁵³ With the exception of the Siva Naṭarāja, the majority of deity figures from Bengal who wield swords and other implements similar to Mañjuvajra are female.¹⁵⁴ Thus, there is much to be developed in this respect in future studies. Female figures abound in Bengal art overall and serve a protective function.

Mahāpratisarā shares the graceful head tilt and *tribhaṅga* of Mañjuvajra, which to my mind is so key to this simplified southeastern Bengali sub-style. These characteristics are echoed by a third example of the simplified sub-style, a Viṣṇu Trivikrama stele (H:

¹⁵² *ibid.*

¹⁵³ Bhattasali suspects that that a form of the Bodhi Tree might once have been at the pinnacle of the sculpture. He states that in her *sādhana* (located in the *Sāadhanamālā* text) “the bodhi tree rises above her head.” He also speculates that the *caitya* the text prescribes for her headdress might also originally have been present above her head. See Bhattasali, *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, 61-62; A work quite similar to Mahāpratisarā is the standing Tārā image from Rāmpāl, Vikramapura. See Lee, *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal*, fig.19. The deity shares the same style of headdress with this figure (as does the Trivikrama Viṣṇu from Dhaka described below) as well as the same emblem of the diamond Mahāpratisarā wears on her belt. This image, unlike those discussed, depicts the five *jina* buddhas at the apex of the stele. Additional images that belong in this simplified sub-style from the Vikramapura region include a Tārā image (see Lee fig. 18). This image has a very openstyle in the treatment of decorative elements as well.

¹⁵⁴ The Buddhist goddess of the dawn, Mārīcī, is a ubiquitous form in Bengal that bears iconographic similarities with this piece. As is the case for Mārīcī and Mañjuvajra, Mahāpratisarā’s sword cuts away obstacles to Enlightenment.

34.5 in.) from Dhaka (fig.11).¹⁵⁵ The viewer can feel the sense of peace in his beatific expression, elegant features, and graceful pose. Although Viṣṇu is about to take a step the artist emphasizes his poised serenity.

Yet, in the Met stele, both an expressive dynamism and quiet refinement come together. An image of this simplified sub-style that wholly captures this paradoxical dynamism and quiescence is the Narasiṃha stele (H: 29.50 in., W: 14.75 in.) also from Munshiganj, Dhaka and currently in the Dhaka Museum collection (fig. 12). There is a strong consonance with the Met artwork in elegance of the lithe shape and posture of the body and graceful repose in the tilt of the head. Though Narasiṃha is a man-lion composite form of Viṣṇu, the quality and scale of the figure is quite similar to Mañjuvajra. Though the image presents the vicious death of the demon, Hiranyakaśipu, the artist has focused here instead on depicting a sense of divine purity in the refined treatment of the figure. As in the Met stele, Narasiṃha's artist expertly captures a sense of active force and simultaneous serenity through his multiple upraised arms holding weapons personified as small deity figures combined with elegant *tribhaṅga* posture and downward tilting chin.

In sum, the artist of the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra stele conflates these two sub-styles: one with a back-slab filled with low relief forms and a frontally situated deity, the other with a plain back-slab and deity in graceful *tribhaṅga* with a high-level of refined treatment. A figure that captures the conflation of the two styles in a strikingly similar in terms is the Śiva Naṭarāja (H: 37 in., W: 18 in.) from Rāmpāl, Munshiganj (fig. 13). Here

¹⁵⁵He shows the teaching *mudrā* like Mahāpratisarā.

we see a close similarity to the Met Mañjuvajra in the shape of the eye, the upward curve at the end of each eyebrow, long straight nose, bud-like smile and heart-shaped face, along with similar earrings and beaded edge of the headdress. This figure is most similar to Mañjuvajra in his visage, however: that is, Siva's serene face and downcast eyes. Compare, for example, the face of Mañjuvajra in profile, the shape of the ear, and corner rosettes at the deity's temples with the Śiva stele (figs.13.1 and 1.1). The necklaces of each figure are virtually identical. Further, there is a marked similarity in the way the hand grasps the sword held aloft, the angular squarish transition of the slender tubular arms, the torso, and even the anklets. The headdress of the left female attendant of Siva also bears close similarity to the cap-like form of Mañjuvajra's *kirīṭāmukūṭa*.

This Śiva figure also has consonances with many of the images discussed here, particularly in terms of his *jaṭāmukūṭa*, posture, and dress and relative scale to the back-slab. Like the Viṣṇu, Pārvatī, and Mañjuvajra, this stele has a distinctly defined inner and outer zone with low relief figures covering a majority of the surface not entirely unlike the Tara of Mainamati. If we look closely, we can see the square truncated form of the "mountainous" patterning along the base, similar to the Mainmati Tārā piece and here referencing Śiva residence on Mt. Kailāsa. Within this patterning are small figures of devotees, numerous *nāgas*, *gaṇas*, and surprisingly, another *yogin* figure in the same *vajra*-wielding posture we've seen throughout with what appears to be pointed hat like a

monk.¹⁵⁶ In the outer zone are female flanking figures Gaṅgā (at left on her *makara* vehicle) and Pārvatī (on the right standing atop a small lion).

Hard to detect for the extremely low relief on the back-slab, the artist of the Munshiganj Śiva sculpture depicts figures surrounding the deity in a mandalic sense (yet they do not mirror the form of the central deity image). We can however see the extreme delicacy and modeling of the bull, Nandi, with his face upturned, looking at his Lord. This *mūrti* – with Śiva’s ten slender arms brandishing various implements – is, again, a particularly challenging task for the sculptor. Overall then, I find this Siva Naṭarāja stele to be stunning work of extraordinary accomplishment.¹⁵⁷ Further, as in the Met Mañjuvajra, the artist here expertly combines a sense simultaneous quiet serenity and spirited dynamism via the deity's graceful head tilt, lowered eyes, and *tribhaṅga* posture. Through consonances in physiognomy then, this artwork and the Met Mañjuvajra could be by the same hand.

Southeastern Bengali Sub-style Number Three: Temple Architecture

The sculptures most similar to the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra in terms of the overall composition of the work depict temple architecture surrounding the central deity form. This visual convention of depicting the deity within a schematic or abbreviated temple is found across the Pāla region, in both stone sculptures (including steles, votive *stūpas*, and sculptures of miniature temples) as well as in images from illuminated manuscripts. The

¹⁵⁶The ramifications of the presence of this *yogin* in comparison to those of the Buddhist figures is a topic that warrants further study. As mentioned, the Mohammadpur Pārvatī’s stele also has a *yogin* figure that resembles a Buddha in lotus position.

¹⁵⁷ This translates to ritual efficacy, which I discuss in chapter 4.

temple structures in these images demarcate the sacred space of the deity, which, as we will see in Ch. 4, is of profound importance in Vajrayāna Buddhism at this time. In Bengal (and potentially elsewhere in the Pāla region) the use of the temple form was not, however, relegated to Buddhist art but included in Jain, Buddhist, and Brahmanical (i.e. Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta) forms.

This architectural setting is generally comprised of the columned trilobate archway and temple spire, the latter of which takes on a number of forms. The temple towers cited in steles are more generally of the *bhadra deul* type (e.g. the later stele of Śakyāmuni stele from Vikramapura, fig.14).¹⁵⁸ A *bhadra deul* temple style has a squat and pyramidal upper level delineated by horizontal plank-like structures and topped with a horizontal striated disc (*āmalaka*). The appearance of the *śikhara* temple spire is a significant exception, however, as it is only found in extant Bengali Buddhist works. Two sculptures from eleventh century Bengal present the high *śikhara*, with a slightly convex or rounded tower, positioned atop the central deity surrounded by the more common trefoil archway with flanking columnar supports, in a similar manner to the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra (figs.15-16). These two steles are from the more outlying areas and are not direct regional stylistic counterparts to the Met *Mañjuvajra*, as are the pieces previously discussed. One is from Sibbati, Khulna district (117 cm x 66 cm) (fig.15), the other from Betagi, Chittagong (130 cm x 70 cm) (fig.16).

¹⁵⁸ For a complete discussion of architecture during this period see S. Bandyopadhyay, *Architectural motifs in early mediaeval [sic] art of eastern India: Pāla-Sena period* (Kolkata: R.N. Bhattacharya, 2002); This image is from the late eleventh-early twelfth century as were most of the additional examples that could be relegated to, and thus excluded from, my third sub-style.

Both steles depict the Buddha Śakyāmuni in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* (earth-touching gesture) at the moment that he attained Enlightenment. Situated around him are the various personified forces meant to obstruct this process, sent by the demon Māra, as well as small vignettes in vertical bands along each edge. These vignettes depict eight pivotal moments in the Buddha's life. At the apex of each piece, where not broken off (as in fig.16) a reclining Buddha represents *parinirvāṇa*, or the moment of the Buddha's death when he simultaneously attained release from rebirth.

Upon close inspection, these peripheral Buddha images and attendant figures are all placed within small *bhadra deul* temple forms. The work from Betagi, Chittagong presents these small temples topped by *āmalakas* (striated discs) as opposed to the Sibbati work that shows a greater emphasis on tiny *caityas* placed above the *bhadra deul* structures. The columns, archway, and *śikhara-stūpa* assemblage is far more ornate and refined in the Betagi vs. the Sibbati stele. In the former artwork, the artist has worked out the problem of conveying the depth of the four directions by stacking the *stūpas* one atop the other. Although barely visible here, a very small buddha form is also present before the center of the *śikhara*. Further, this piece shows what appear to be ten life scenes verses eight. Interestingly, this piece depicts only two small subsidiary shrines flanking the *śikhara*, while the Sibbati stele shows three (including one in the center, in front of the *śikhara* form directly above the Buddha).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ A third stele, closely aligning in style to these, has been provenanced to Tetravan (near Nālandā, Bihar) according to the Indian Museum. Given its similarity in style and composition to these stelae, it is likely of a Bengali origin. This work presents five *jinas* in niches in the pyramidal assemblage that the Met Mañjuvajra stele shares; see Bandyopadhyay, S. *Architectural motifs in early mediaeval[sic] art of eastern India*, 2002), fig. 16.

In sum, the stele from Betagi shows considerable refinement overall. In comparison to the Sibbati stele, there is a more careful consideration of spatial balance in the empty space around the life scene vignettes that recalls the spacing of the low relief forms of the Siva Natarāja from Munshiganj. Further, there is a larger deity within a smaller-scale temple relative to him, as in the Met piece. This larger buddha figure presents a more robust torso and powerful, imposing form. The Betagi stele's plinth has stacked protruding *rathas* with raised points. This, along with the pillow-like lotuses, could point to a later date than the Sibbati or Met Mañjuvajra artworks, although they each are from a differing region.

We see differences in the delineations of the *śikhara* base in each stele as well. The sculpture from Sibbati, Khulna has the typical raised point at the edge of the *bhadra deul* "planks" resting at the base of the *śikhara*. The Met stele has very slight and less pronounced points on these base slabs below its *śikhara*. The Rubin Mañjuvajra image does not have these points (possibly due to wear) but the patterning of its temple façade in comparison to the Sibbati *śikhara* is very similar.

As noted by Bhattasali and Sarasvati, the *śikhara* forms represented in these steles seem to follow that of the towers of Bengali Pāla period brick temples versus those in stone. For example, the tenth-eleventh century Sat Deulyā tower exhibits a striated brick edge similar to those portrayed in these stelae.¹⁶⁰ Its levels of protruding *ratha* layers appear, however, far more elaborate. In this regard, the Siddeśvara Temple from Bahularā, Bankura district (tenth century) seems most similar in form to the nonetheless

¹⁶⁰ See S.K. Saraswati, *Architecture of Bengal* (Calcutta: G. Bharadwaj, 1914), Pl. IX.

more schematized stele *śikharas*.¹⁶¹ The temple's "three courses of moldings," again, are rather closely aligned with them.¹⁶² The reduplication of the temple form on the face of temple itself, prolific on this particular temple and a practice unique to the Bengal region, reflects the high level of importance placed on the *śikhara* form in Bengal.¹⁶³ Further, these particular temple forms, I would argue, acted as regionalized marker of the sacred space of the deity yet with the added resonance of Bodhgayā's Mahābodhi temple, referencing the site of enlightenment. In sum, among the Pāla images I have surveyed, this tall *śikhara* form is unusual and not found in other images depicting temple structures. It is possible that these particular works, including the Met stele, may serve as a metaphor – in a Bengali style – of the *vajrāsana*, the place of the Buddha's enlightenment.

Conclusion

My purpose with this regional analysis is to demonstrate how the Met Mañjuvajra image clearly aligns in specific although not necessarily comprehensive ways with a range of artworks of the southeastern Bengal region of the eleventh century. Based upon a comparison of dated and non-dated works with documented find spots, sculptures from this region present a clearly distinctive, unified style beginning in this early-to-mid eleventh century period of production. The Metropolitan Mañjuvajra fits securely within

¹⁶¹ See Bimal Kumar Datta, *Bengal Temples*, Plate III fig. 5.

¹⁶² Saraswati, *Architecture of Bengal*, 60. Saraswati defines the *pañcaratha* plan of the Bahularā Siddheśvara temple in this way: "...the cube is divided axially into five sections by three courses of moldings running along the middle of the wall surface" (p. 59). Interestingly, he further indicates the now-empty niches on the center of each central *ratha*, each "capped by a *śikhara*" (p.60).

¹⁶³*ibid.*, Some temple remains also evidence the lions that we see on the Met Mañjuvajra *śikhara*, though these are from a later date. See for example Datta, *Bengal Temples*, Pl. VIII.

this style, yet the image is a hybridization of three differing yet overlapping sub-styles. These consist of: (1) the back-slab teeming with symbolic decoration in low relief with a deity seated or standing straight and frontal-facing; (2) the simplified back-slab with deity in *tribhaṅga*, downward tilted head, and a heightened refinement in sculptural treatment; and (3) the temple architectural setting with *śikhara* spire combined with a two-dimensional *jina mandala*. The Met Mañjuvajra artist's conflation of these three styles and iconographic conventions results in a paradoxical sense of dynamism and serenity in the figure of the deity along with a dramatic trilobite arch and mountain-like palatial architectural setting.

The Met Mañjuvajra and its close counterpart from the Rubin collection share enough commonality of form to suggest that the same sculptor carved them. The Śiva Naṭarāja from Rāmpāl, Munshiganj is also particularly close in terms of the delineation of the figure and may be by the same artist as well. My assertion is not meant to exclude this possibility for other pieces discussed here as well given their many consonances with the Met Mañjuvajra.

When we look at the specific style of the Mañjuvajra's face, body, and adornments, the Met stele shares much in common with non-Buddhist deities. First, though textual sources such as the MNS describe the general form of Mañjuvajra, the stele has a closer formal affinity to images from across religious traditions provenanced to the same southeastern Bengal region. Secondly, given the similarity of the Met Mañjuvajra to the range of imagery from Munshiganj-Vikramapura, it appears that Haque may be accurate in his assessment of Munshiganj as the provenance for the Mañjuvajra

figure. However, the styles of the stelae discovered in nearby Comilla are similar enough so that the two regions cannot be discussed in separate terms.

As evidenced by the eleventh-century Buddha Life Scene sculptures from Khulna and Chittagong, the image of the Buddha Śākyamuni and his *biography* continue to be significant in eleventh-century southeastern Bengal. This is a fact that has been continuously de-emphasized in scholarship in favor of a focus on later Vajrayāna-phase imagery including multi-limbed female and fierce deities.¹⁶⁴ What is rarely emphasized in art historical scholarship are the ways in which innovative Pāla Buddhist artworks like the Met stele might be connected to pre-existing images types.¹⁶⁵ The significance of the Met Mañjuvajra is demonstrated in part through its allusion, in a Bengali style, to the *vajrāsana* (or the *vajra* seat), to both the place and event of Śākyamuni’s attainment of Enlightenment at Bodhgayā.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ The presence of additional limbs and faces in deity imagery should not be assumed to be teleological (progressively increasing over time) or relegated to Pāla period developments. Janice Leoshko (2003) has shown that multi-limbed forms of Avalokiteśvara lost prominence in the Pāla period. Further, multi-limbed and multi-faced deities survive in earlier periods of Buddhist sculpture (i.e. *in situ* at the Kānheri caves, ca. fifth-sixth century). These Kānheri images are not necessarily thought to be evocative of Buddhist tantric practice, although this is generally still unclear, as the site has undergone little comparative study.

¹⁶⁵ Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 115. Namely the Buddha Śākyamuni in *bhūmisparśa* mudrā of whom images produced after the eighth century formed the largest corpus among image-types at Bodhgayā. Artworks of this type are also found in Bengal, and thus continue to emphasize the importance of the Buddha’s biography in the Vajrayāna phase of Indian Buddhism practiced there.

¹⁶⁶ Jinah Kim, *Unorthodox practice: rethinking the cult of illustrated Buddhist books in South Asia*, 248. With regard to relations of “Vajrasattva-Mañjuvajra and the [images of] Buddha’s enlightenment at the very center of the book,” she writes: “Here, going back to the discussion of the significance of the enlightenment scene, I wonder if... esoteric deities such as Hevajra, Sambara [i.e. Saṃvara], and Vajrasattva-Mañjuvajra might transform the scene of enlightenment from a historical event to the experience of enlightenment or the enlightened state in general.”

Chapter Four–Lived and Visualized Ritual Space: The Metropolitan *Mañjuvajra* as a Metonymic Image

In this chapter, I consider evidence of ritual *mandalas* associated with Mañjuvajra in textual accounts as well as *mandalas* in the Bengali landscape in order to shed further light on the function and meaning of the Met *Mañjuvajra* sculpture. Here I propose that the image is likely associated with *Vajrayāna* visualization practices (*sādhana*s) shared across various tantric traditions. Therefore, an important aspect of the Met Mañjuvajra image is its obvious *mandalic* quality linking it to *sādhana* ritual. Here, I compare textual accounts of Mañjuvajra with the Met stele. Considering Mañjuvajra’s association with *Vajrayāna sādhana*, I first propose that the image references the sacred realm, or buddha field, that visualization rituals allow practitioners to attain. Secondly, the Mañjuvajra image is also potentially reflective of a lived sacred geography in an interconnected sense that includes the *vajrāsana* as symbolized by the temple *śikhara* and more general divine realms articulated by actual religious structures. This is the *vihāra* (monastery) temple with a *mandala* ground plan. In sum, the artwork’s metonymic function references sacred space in both a lived and visualized sense.

Vajrayāna Ritual Practice in Pāla period Bengal Buddhism

Vajrayāna is not to be taken as a school of doctrine and practice separate from Mahāyāna soteriology, but rather as a powerful ritual complement; a ritual overlay to extant Mahāyāna soteriological goals.¹⁶⁷ In Mahāyāna doctrine – enlightenment arises

¹⁶⁷ Hopkins, Jeffrey, “Tantric Buddhism, Degeneration or Enhancement: The Viewpoint of a Tibetan Tradition,” 87-96.

from the union of the wisdom of insight (*prajñā*) and means (*upāya*). Vajrayāna philosophy expands upon the concept of *upāya* with an utmost sophistication in ritual technology exemplified by *mandala* visualization through *sādhana* practice (or deity yoga).¹⁶⁸ As described by Reginald Ray and Jeffrey Hopkins among others, *sādhana* is central to Vajrayāna practice and often these rituals employ *mandalas* in visualization.¹⁶⁹ By the late tenth century in Pāla Bengal, Vajrayāna Buddhist practices take the concept of deity yoga to its most advanced phase, inclusive of *prajñā* personified as a feminine consort or sexual partner of the practitioner.

Whether such advanced practices were engaged in by monks is not clear, yet once the ritual tradition moved to Tibet at least, it is likely that the ritual was often completely visualized.¹⁷⁰ In addition to Tibetan historical accounts, clues for the existence of these *sādhana* practices in eleventh-century Bengal are provided by the common image of the monk holding *ghaṇṭā* and *vajra* symbolic of the union of *prajñā* and *upāya*. These appear on the base of a number of southeastern Bengali stelae discussed in Ch.3 including the Met Mañjuvajra. According to Tibetan historical accounts, such practices – primarily the generation stage wherein a practitioner visualizes her or himself as the deity in the center of the *mandala* – were institutionalized by the late tenth to eleventh centuries in Bengali and Bihari *vihāras*.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *ibid.*; Reginald Ray, “Reading the Vajrayāna in Context: A Reassessment of Bengal Blackie,” 173-189.

¹⁷⁰ Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 37.

¹⁷¹ Ray, “Reading the Vajrayāna in Context: A Reassessment of Bengal Blackie,” 173-189.

By this time period, the Vajrayāna school had moved into the *anuttara yoga* phase of tantric practice incorporating yogic philosophy along with a ritual canon rife with symbolic sexual imagery including the figure of the female *yogin* (a *yoginī*) as a sexual partner personifying *prajñā*.¹⁷² David Snellgrove, who took up a translation and critical study of the *Hevajratantra* (first published in 1959) notes some consternation on “the constant and deliberate identifying of the part with the whole” in the Buddhist tantras.¹⁷³

He writes:

It is this dominating notion of ‘two-in-one’...upon which the whole complicated structure of the tantras is reared... its philosophy, its theology (if we may grace it with that name), and its practice of yoga. If one is therefore prepared to understand it, one must meet with sexual symbolism at every turn.

Yet, he continues:

The power and (in a sense) the profundity of these symbols is very great, for while on the one hand they refer intimately to the realm of sensual experience (*saṃsara*), they also indicate two coefficients of mystical experience (*nirvāṇa*). In fact these symbols indicate the identity of the one with the other in a way that no other symbols can possibly do.¹⁷⁴

In Vajrayāna ritual practice the *Prajñāpāramitā* (Perfection of Insight Wisdom) text is of profound importance as the fundamental realization that leads to enlightenment. In his

¹⁷² Martin Brauen, *Mandala: Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism*, explores this tantric practice with respect to the use of mandalas, 155-71.

¹⁷³ David Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra: a critical study* (Hong Kong: Orchid, 2010), 24.

Snellgrove in this passage and the next is acting as something of an apologist for the pervasive sexual symbolism of the tantric texts. This aligns with the general apologetic view of late Indian Buddhism put forth by scholars in the early twentieth century (e.g. Harle). In addition to questioning its validity as a theology he states that the sexual symbolism, “can *only* cease to be burdensome if one is able to see beyond the symbols to the ideas” [emphasis mine]. Whether one generally agrees with him or not here, this sweeping pronouncement takes something of a moral stance, yet not surprisingly. Given the time period and reigning scholarly discourse on tantric practice, Snellgrove is if anything a proponent of the texts’ importance.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.* He notes that one factor here is the reference to earlier Buddhist doctrine in the use of *prajñā* and *karuṇā*.

two-armed form, Mañjuśrī is typically pictured with a book, the *Prajñāpāramitā* text, resting atop a lotus.¹⁷⁵ As the bodhisattva of wisdom, and thus the embodiment of *prajñā*, he is associated with the text from the outset of his depiction in Buddhist imagery. The text is viewed as feminine and embodied by a goddess figure, also known as *Prajñāpāramitā*, from the 8th century. As discussed in Ch.3, we also see the importance of the *Prajñāpāramitā* text as the book on a stand in worship, next to the monk as ritual practitioner, on the base of the Met stele and on a number of the early eleventh century southeastern Bengali sculptures.

By this time, as discussed, Mañjuśrī as Mañjuvajra was represented in sexual union with an unnamed *prajñā* goddess (via the *mudrā* he presents in the stele) continues this *prajñā* association. There is also evidence of an image of Mañjuvajra with consort from this period (and later Tibetan images make this plain as well). This image from the Indian Museum collection in Calcutta may quite well be identified as Mañjuvajra or a deity closely associated with him (fig.17).¹⁷⁶ The absent presence of the *prajñā* in the Met stele is compelling, and given the extant rarity of Mañjuvajra form and the use of this *mudrā* in general in extant stelae from the period, it points to interesting ramifications of a veiled secrecy and public versus private vision.

By the early Pāla period, Laura Harrington (2002) describes the bodhisattva as “both symbol of monasticism’s loftiest aspiration and barometer of its institutional

¹⁷⁵ The NSP 20 form of Mañjuvajra – sans *prajñā* – holds the text.

¹⁷⁶ See Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 119-121.

vitality.”¹⁷⁷ In this regard, Harrington sees the bodhisattva as having the potential to both “challenge” state authority and “promote” the *vihāra* system.¹⁷⁸ We can perhaps also extend this notion to the promotion of monastic practices in that the Met Mañjuvajra image conveys a direct association with *sādhana* practice. Tantric Buddhist practices and fierce deities (especially those in union with *prajñā*) are usually veiled in secrecy in a monastic environment and relegated to the advanced adept. In considering the Met stele, the bodhisattva’s *mudrā* signifies sexual union with the *prajñā*. This esoteric rendering (vs. a present *prajñā* figure) along with the bodhisattva’s relatively peaceful character in comparison with Heruka or Hevajra may perhaps have constituted an image with a wider range of acceptable visibility.¹⁷⁹ Whether this was the case, Harrington’s states:

“representations of Mañjuśrī and his *prajñā* may have promoted, mirrored, or challenged the state’s vitality and legitimation.”¹⁸⁰ Perhaps, at least, we can think of this image of Mañjuvajra as affirming powerful monastic practices, and by doing so, rivaling the “legitimacy” of the power of state. If rulers then sought out the power of Mañjuśrī through Buddhist teachings and ritual practice, and for this time period and region this is pure speculation, then the bodhisattva’s strength may have bolstered their aims.¹⁸¹ In any case, the existence of this small sculpture perhaps buttresses Mallman’s interpretation of Mañjuvajra’s *mudrā* in terms of the Met image for this particular time and place.

¹⁷⁷ *ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 12.

¹⁷⁹ If my theory of a wider viewership is accurate, there are multiple potential explanations for it. We do not know, further, if it was limited to within the monastery itself or to within some other elite context, *etc.* Yet, this potential connection of Mañjuvajra’s *mudrā* to wider visibility is certainly a topic warranting further comparative study.

¹⁸⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁸¹ Again, further study remains to be undertaken on this topic.

Yet, can the text personified as the goddess Prajñāpāramitā be considered as intrinsically connected with the Vajrayāna phase *prajñā* consort associated with Mañjuvajra? Regarding the union of *prajñā* and *upāya* – symbolized by the *ghaṇṭā* (or *padma*) and *vajra* in Vajrayāna phase imagery – Snellgrove writes:

In this union Wisdom, although unrealizable apart from the Means, yet predominates. It has behind it the whole tradition of the Perfection of Wisdom, already actually symbolized in a feminine divinity, the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā. She is therefore herself the supreme truth of the Void (*śūnyatā*) which is the Perfection of Wisdom... it is in her that the *yogin*, as Means, is consubstantiated” or united in substance, and dissolved.¹⁸²

Thus, the *yogin* or ritual practitioner embodying *upāya* (“the Means”) visualizes himself as the male deity united with *prajñā*. Snellgrove notes that regardless of which deity the practitioner chose to identify himself with, whether Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Mañjuvajra, etc., this union produces *bodhicitta* (the thought of enlightenment) that leads to the attainment of Buddhahood.¹⁸³

The resurgence in popularity of the *Prajñāpāramitā* doctrine of *śūnyatā* (“emptiness”) is therefore intrinsically linked with *sādhana* practice. Śūnyatā emphasizes the lack of the inherent causality of all things.¹⁸⁴ In the union of opposites, again a Mahāyāna-derived doctrine, all phenomena are inherently and therefore equal. This emphasis on the *Prajñāpāramitā* text on *śūnyatā* perhaps conflates with the popularity of *pratitya samūtpada* (the Buddhist formula) and the wheel of independent origination

¹⁸² Snellgrove, *Hevajra Tantra*, 24.

¹⁸³ *ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ This inherent lack of causality is described by the Buddhist formula. See for example, Leoshko, *Sacred Traces*, 23-24, 123-131.

(*bhavacakra*) in the Pāla period.¹⁸⁵ Through the visualization of oneself as the center of the *mandala* within the deity's sacred realm and united with *prajñā* (essentially the wisdom of the insight of *śūnyatā*), the practitioner aspires to transcend the wheel of *samsāra* completely by, again, gaining the realization of the *bodhicitta* leading to Buddhahood.

The concept of a *mandala* as central to *sādhana* practice is, as Martin Brauen writes, extremely complex and the recent scholarship is vast.¹⁸⁶ But basically, as a mode of representation, the *mandala* is both a “microcosm” and “map” metonymically (or even mnemonically) referencing a “purified buddha realm in in either two or three-dimensional form.”¹⁸⁷ Logistically, a *mandala* is typically “a circular or square configuration with a center that radiates outward into compartmentalized areas.”¹⁸⁸ Within this structure, a group of Buddhist deities are arranged hierarchically from center to periphery. Often, the *jina* buddhas appear at the cardinal directions, with certain bodhisattvas and/or *prajñās* (as consorts) in the secondary directions and with guardian

¹⁸⁵ For a full discussion of these see Leoshko, *ibid.* and “About Looking at Buddha Images in Eastern India,” 63-82; In the Met Mañjuvajra image this may be indicated by Mañjuvajra's implements. As the three animal forms in the center of the *bhavachakra* (wheel of dependent origination) signify desire, hatred, and ignorance, Mañjuvajra's sword of *prajñā*, his lotus of compassion, his bow and arrow (associated with *kāma* per Casey, 1981) and posture of loving embrace signify the overcoming of the wheel of *samsāra* and thus attainment of enlightenment.

¹⁸⁶ Martin Brauen, *Mandala: Sacred Circle in Tibetan Buddhism*, 155-71.

¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas Representations of Sacred Geography*. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999), 1-2.

¹⁸⁸ *ibid.*

figures at the outer edges. These assemblages can, however, become extremely complex and multi-tiered.¹⁸⁹

The *mandala* can be understood as a visualization tool central to the structuring of *sādhana*, wherein the devotee sees herself or himself as the divine form. “The deity at the center of the configuration,” Ten Grotenhuis writes, “signifies absolute truth” while those “in the outer precincts...signify manifested aspects of that truth.”¹⁹⁰ Geoffrey Samuel clarifies: When the *yogin* “takes on the role” of the deity, “the world around him is remade in the image of the *mandala* of which he now forms the center.”¹⁹¹ In terms of esoteric Buddhist ritual function, *mandalas* might generally be understood then as a “blueprint for buddhahood.”¹⁹²

As for the *prajñās* figures themselves, Mallar Ghosh (1980) states that generally the character of these female forms are rather devoid of individual personality in that they reflect the nature of the *tathāgatas* they are depicted with. Ghosh writes: “The word *svābha*,” a term used to describe the *prajñās* of the *tathāgatas* and Mañjuvajra in NSP 1 discussed below, “means reflection of oneself.”¹⁹³ Thus, the *prajñā* is literally a reflection of the *tathāgatas* and the central deity of the *mandala*’s own *prajñā* or wisdom of insight (e.g. Mañjuvajra in this case).

¹⁸⁹ For a discussion of the variations in *mandala* structures see Patry-Leidy and Thurman, *Architecture of Enlightenment*, 130-133.

¹⁹⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Geoffrey Samuel, *Tantric Revisionings*, 83; Elizabeth Ten Grotenhuis, *Japanese Mandalas Representations of Sacred Geography*, 1-2. Ten Grotenhuis continues: “The practitioner, in meditation on the *mandala*’s peripheral elements, unites these outer manifestations with the center of the *mandala* and then internally absorbs the *mandala* as a whole.”

¹⁹² Patry-Leidy and Thurman, *Mandala: Architecture for Enlightenment*, 127.

¹⁹³ Ghosh, *Development of Buddhist iconography in eastern India*, 91. This concept is present in the NSP 1 as discussed below.

Mandala imagery related to *sādhana* practices are frequently encountered in Pāla sculpture, particularly if we view the depiction of the five *jinas* as an abbreviated *mandala*. In addition to extant artworks, there was likely a plethora of *mandala paṭas* (cloth paintings) that have not survived from the Pāla period and earlier. Buddhist texts ca. the seventh century describe the construction of *mandala paṭas* that Himalayan Buddhists (in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan *et al*) have kept alive to the present day.¹⁹⁴

Mañjuvajra in Textual Sources

Mañjuvajra was a deity of some renown in Northeastern India by the late Vajrayāna phase. His first appearance seems to be that of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (ca. 8th century CE), a textual tradition forming the apex of one of three major Vajrayāna movements that gained ground by the tenth century in the Pāla region, along with the *Hevajra* and *Cakrasaṃvara Tantras*.¹⁹⁵ Though Mañjuvajra's role in the text is peripheral, he subsequently became the focus of an important ritual lineage.¹⁹⁶ The *Guhyasamāja* corresponds to the Mañjuvajra Mandala of the Nispannyogavali (NSP 1), according to Alex Wayman. I will quote Wayman's statement as it is of some significance here:

In the *Guhyasamāja* cult, there are several different deities that are taken as the central deity [i.e. of the *mandala* in *sādhana* practice]. While the Akṣobhya-maṇḍala is predominant, there is also the Guhyasamāja

¹⁹⁴ Here, I refer to the Gilgit manuscript of the *Kāraṇḍa-vyūha sūtra* that discusses the construction of a painted *paṭa* devoted to Avalokiteśvara. Painted images possibly attributed to Northern India or painted by Indian artists in Tibet survive today ca. the twelfth to thirteenth centuries. The *sādhana* texts contain a seemingly countless number of deities upon which that the practitioner might focus in ritual practice.

¹⁹⁵ Indian *siddha* hagiographies denote the famous tantric adepts of that period as adhering to one of these three Vajrayāna ritual traditions. See James B. Robinson and Abhayadattaśrī, *Buddha's Lions: the lives of the eighty-four siddhas (Caturaśṭu-siddha-pravṛtti)* (Berkeley: Dharma Publications, 1979).

¹⁹⁶ Davidson, *Tibetan Renaissance*, 36-38.

Mañjuvajra (the first Mandala in Abhayākaragupta’s Niṣpannayogāvalī), based on Mañjuśrī (Manjughoṣa).¹⁹⁷

This gives us a much earlier textual association for Mañjuvajra than that of the NSP, written by Abhayākaragupta in northern Bihar in late eleventh century. Another branch of textual sources for Mañjuvajra seems to stem from the Mañjuśrī-Namasāṃghiti, “The Hymns of the Names of Mañjuśrī” (MNS). Though, again, the text doesn’t name Mañjuvajra explicitly, a centuries-old commentarial tradition names the Mañjuvajra Mandala (corresponding to NSP 1 according to Wayman) as one of seven *mandalas* gleaned from descriptions referenced in the text.¹⁹⁸ To summarize, we have the Mañjuvajra Mandala present in some form in both the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (hereafter GST) and the commentarial tradition of the MNS. Both of these earlier textual references have close associations with the Mañjuvajra Mandala described in NSP 1 but precede it in authorship. For example, this correspondence between the GST 16 and NSP 1 include pervasive light and fire imagery. The GST 16 describes the Mañjuvajra Mandala in terms of visualizing a *cakra* (wheel) “with the light of a firebrand as the abode of all the Buddhas.”¹⁹⁹ A full English translation of the GST remains to be undertaken, which would then allow for a full understanding of Mañjuvajra’s role in the text.²⁰⁰

I present the textual “biography” of Mañjuvajra here in order to outline a broader understanding of the deity’s function in Vajrayāna ritual practices, as the texts invariably

¹⁹⁷ Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamājantra: the arcane lore of forty verses*, 124.

¹⁹⁸ Commentators interested in the Kālacakra textual tradition of the late 10th and early 11th century, found links with the MNS in terms of philosophy as well. See Wayman (1985), Vesna Wallace (2001), and Davidson (1981).

¹⁹⁹ Wayman, *Yoga of the Guhyasamājantra: the arcane lore of forty verses*, 29.

²⁰⁰ *ibid.* Wayman translates a portion of the chapters to the exclusion of Ch.16 that includes Mañjuvajra’s *mandala*.

link him with *sādhana mandalas*. From this, I propose that the Met stele inclusive of the *jina mandala* describes a form of *sādhana* ritual practice centered on the bodhisattva.

What the few exhibition publications have not emphasized is that deity himself, though rarely found in extant imagery, seems to have been rather popular in northeastern India at this time.

Moreover, in looking at these various sources, I found that the philosophical underpinnings as well as ritual procedures and organization seem to be fairly similar throughout. Prof. Bajra Raj Shakra, of the Lotus Research Centre in Nepal (2001), confirms my view. Explaining such consonances among the Vajrayāna ritual texts, he writes:

Guhyasamāja provides the general framework of Buddhist *tantra* consisting of all the essential in its fold. Within the groundwork provided by GST other father and mother tantras seem to have developed later on. As such it is regarded as the forerunner of other tantras.²⁰¹

By “father and mother tantras” Raj Shakra is referring to those employing sexual symbolism in the joining of *prajñā* and the deity-*cum*-practitioner embodying *upāya*. Overall, in surveying the additional textual sources in which Mañjuvajra appears, I am less concerned in finding an additional iconographic match for Mañjuvajra than in uncovering the general consonances between the Met image and ritual practices associated with the deity in general.

Comparison of the Met Mañjuvajra stele with NSP 1

²⁰¹ See Introduction by Raj Shakra in Herākāji Vajrācārya and Divyavajra Vajrācārya, *Ārya Śrī Guhyasamājantraṃ of Ācārya Candrakīrti* (Lalitapura, Nepāl: Lotus Research Centre, 2001).

As part of my investigation into the ritual context(s) for the image, the visualized “sacred geography” is vividly described in textual sources, not the least the NSP 1. This passage has been identified as most closely aligned with the Met Mañjuvajra stele.²⁰² The focus of NSP 1 is not Mañjuvajra, however, but the Ādibuddha Vajrasattva.²⁰³ In elaboration of this Ādibuddha concept I must reiterate for a moment the points discussed above. As John Newman states, in the process of the *mandala* visualization of *sādhana* practice, one’s own *prajñā* (insight wisdom of *śūnyatā*) might then be “directly perceived.”²⁰⁴ Newman continues:

It produces the result that is the desired aim. The result is the gnostic mind of imperishable bliss... the unity of ... wisdom and method [means] the supreme imperishable great aim, the Ādibuddha without relation, [here] Bhavān Kālacakra—is renowned in all other Tantras as Vajrasattva.²⁰⁵

Vajrasattva, who takes the form of Mañjuvajra in NSP 1 can be said to embody the metaphor for enlightenment: as the “Ādibuddha without relation” he personifies “the imperishable great aim.” S K Saraswati (1977) describes Vajrasattva as intermittently identified with Vajradhāra, “who is considered to be the exoteric manifestation of the Ādi

²⁰²According to Mallmann (1986), two *sādhana*s of the *Sāadhanamālā* (SM) focus on Mañjuvajra yet correspond with those of the NSP: SM 83 to NSP 1 and SM 76 to NSP 20. NSP 20 presents Mañjuvajra (a six armed three faced form) as being “of the nature” (*svābhāva*) of Bhagavān Vairocana. See Mallman, *Introduction à l’iconographie du tântrisme bouddhique*, 254. Mallman translated much of this *sādhana* in her dissertation (1964), while Casey supplemented this translation in her 1981 paper on the *Mañjuvajra Mandala* image.

²⁰³ In fact, the *sādhana* begins with the phrase *om namaḥ śrīvajrasattvāya*, “homage to the venerable Vajrasattva,” signifying that the Ādibuddha forms the focus of the *sādhana*. Bhattacharyya, *NSP*, 1-4, 33-34. In his discussion of NSP 1, he refers to Vajrasattva here as “an extension” of Vairocana, though the *sādhana* describes Akṣobhya as being the kuleśa (lord of the lineage or family) of Mañjuvajra, and what appears to be the entire inner circle of the *mandala*.

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*, 592.

²⁰⁵ Though this is from the *Kālacakra Tantra* that nonetheless bears the same aim as the *sādhana*s of other *anuttara yoga* texts. *ibid.* 592-593.

Buddha” though more often described as the sixth *jina*.²⁰⁶ The *Advayavajrasaṃgraha* identifies Vajrasattva’s second name as Dharmadhātu.²⁰⁷ Luis Gomez, whose work has centered on translation and interpretation of the *Gaṇḍavyūha sūtra* (an earlier Mahāyāna text), describes Dharmadhātu as “the object of a Bodhisattva’s gnosis, the sphere” of his actions:

...[it is] the inner panorama of the Bodhisattva’s effortless *samādhi*, which is one with the outer panorama of his wonderworking activity for the sake of all beings... to lead all beings to enlightenment.

Gomez also states:

The Dharmadhātu as Buddhahood is the whole range of the Bodhisattva’s knowledge and skill as a wonderworker (in this sense, the Bodhisattva, though one with the Dharmadhātu works within the Dharmadhātu).²⁰⁸

In NSP 1, Mañjuvajra acts as an emanation of Vajrasattva Ādibuddha who personifies enlightenment while as the bodhisattva himself, he is in *samādhi* working to lead all beings to it. Thus, the Ādibuddha, here as the sixth *jina* Vajrasattva, personifies or embodies the disembodiedness of the supreme and intrinsic nature of Buddhahood. As his emanation, Mañjuvajra is the ultimate role model for the *sādhana* practitioner.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ 1977 p.45 Bhattacharyya concurs that Vajrasattva is sometimes “added” as the sixth *jina*. Bhattacharyya (1958, p.47) In his discussion of NSP 1, Bhattacharyya refers to Vajrasattva here as “an extension” of Vairocana, though the *sādhana* describes Akṣobhya as being the kuleśa (lord of the lineage or family) of Mañjuvajra, along [with] what appears to be the entire inner circle of the *mandala* (see Bhattacharyya p.34). For further discussion of the meaning of Ādibuddha, see Bhattacharyya, p.42-43]

²⁰⁷ Bhattacharyya translates the passage from p.42 here (1958, p. 75); Thomas E. Donaldson, *East and West* (December 1995, Vol. 45, No. 1/4), pp. 173-204:195. Donaldson describes Vajrasattva as an extension of Vairocana, the *jina* whose nature Mañjuvajra embodies in NSP 20.

²⁰⁸ Lancaster, Lewis R., Luis O. Gómez, and Edward Conze. *Prajñāpāramitā and related systems: studies in honor of Edward Conze* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 229, 238-239.

²⁰⁹ Rob Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion, wrathful deities in early Indo-Tibetan esoteric Buddhist art*. (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 251.

In the NSP 1, as Casey's publications (1985 et al) have rightly pointed out, Mañjuvajra and the five *tathāgatas* have a certain correspondence in their similar three-faced, six armed forms, all seated in *vajraparyāṅkāsa*. The fact that they hold differing implements, however, speaks to the tension in Vajrayāna *sādhana* philosophy of the simultaneous proliferation and intrinsic sameness of phenomena. Yet, the similarities in iconographic correspondences between the NSP 1 text and the Met image reside only with the six central deities with Mañjuvajra in the *kūṭāgāra* (or sanctuary). The five *tathāgatas* emanate in the five directions from it (in the sky rather than within *caityas* as we see in the stele). In description of the central deity of the *mandala*, the text states:

In the center of this [sanctuary (*kūṭāgāram*)],²¹⁰ Bhagavān Vajrasattva (the venerable or blessed Vajrasattva) having the form of Mañjuvajra, is the color of *kunkum* (deep brick red), his right face being black (or dark blue) and his left face, white. His two principal hands embrace the *prajñā*, (while the others) hold the bow, arrow, sword, and lotus. (He wears) a jeweled mukuṭa (*prajñāliṅgito 'sisarendīvaracāpadharoratnamukuṭī*).²¹¹

Vajrasattva as Mañjuvajra is surrounded by four *tathāgatas* (situated in the cardinal directions) who are compressed to two dimensions in the Met Mañjuvajra but bear the same series of attributes according to Ghosh's translation.²¹² Here, Vairocana is in the east (corresponding to the leftmost *tathāgata* in the image), Ratnasambhava next to him (representing south), the identity of the buddha in center position being either Vajrasattva or Akṣobhya (unclear), then Amitābha in the West, and Amoghasiddhi in the North

²¹⁰ M. T. Mallman translates the term as "sanctuaire." See, M. T. Mallman, *Étude iconographique sur Mañjuśrī*, (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1964), 72.

²¹¹ SM 1, p.2 line 17. See B. Bhattacharyya, *Sāadhanamālā*. Gaekwad's Oriental series, no. 26, 41. (Baroda: Central Library, 1925).

²¹² Ghosh, Mallar. *Development of Buddhist iconography in eastern India: a study of Tārā, Prajñās of five Tathāgatas and Bhṛīkūtī*. New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1980), 111; Casey, "Mañjuvajra," S.I: s.n., 1981, describes a slight difference in Ratnasambhava's implements to those of the text.

(represented as far right in the image). While clearly we don't have the colors of the deity in the image described in NSP 1, the stele deity bears the same attributes and pose (i.e. *vajraparyankīno*, seated position of the *vajra*).²¹³ In this section, the NSP author states that all of the *tathāgatas* in the primary circle are joined in the secondary directions (i.e. southeast, southwest, etc.) by actual *prajñā* goddesses in the “likenesses” (*svābha*) of their associated *tathāgatas*. These are (beginning with southeast), Lochanā, Mamakī, Pāṇḍarā, and Tāra in the (northeast) as described by Casey (1981) and Mallar Ghosh (1980).²¹⁴ The text describes Vajrasattva-Mañjuvajra as embracing the *prajñā* goddess (*prajñāliṅgito*).²¹⁵ In the stele, however, the bodhisattva's *mudrā* is *prajñāliṅgitanābhinaya* – the *mudrā* describing the “action of embracing the *prajñā*” – that, confirms Mallman, describes the *prajñā*'s absent presence.²¹⁶

Overall, in comparing the NSP 1 with the Met Mañjuvajra there are some marked discrepancies. Most of the actual *mandala* is not depicted in the stele image, a point that the few previous discussions of the work in their comparison with textual identifications have failed to point out. The *mandala* of the NSP 1 has three levels of deities situated horizontally, inner to out, and two levels of deities from top to bottom. The five *tathāgatas* we see here in the stele form the inner *kūṭāgāra* circle in the text where there is yet another band of *tathāgatas* bearing alternate forms situated beyond it. Also, within

²¹³ NSP 1 p.3, line 18. See B. Bhattacharyya, *Niṣpannayogāvalī* of Mahāpaṇḍita Abhayākara Gupta. Gaekwad's Oriental series, no. 109. Baroda: Central Library, reprint ed., Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1972.

²¹⁴ *op. cit.* fn 210.

²¹⁵ R. O. Meisezahl. 1976. *Akṣobhya-Mañjuvajra. Ikonographie und Ikonologie des Ekonaviṣadātma-kamañjuvajramandala*. *Oriens*, 26, 190-274: 228.

²¹⁶ Marie-Thérèse de Mallman, *Introduction à l'iconographie du tântrisme bouddhique* (Paris: Libr. d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1986), 34.

the secondary directions, four *prajñās* (female consorts) of the central *tathāgatas* are to be situated.

Given the plethora of deity images pictured within temple forms throughout the Pāla period in region, it is perhaps not surprising that the *mandala* has a sanctuary or nave as its center where the deity-*cum*-practitioner is meant to sit. A style of temple form is not indicated in the NSP 1, but is described thus:

... the *yogin* desires to expand the solid element, all one piece, a flaming diamond world whose boundaries are drawn by a series of light beams, which blazes like the fire at the end of a world age. To the lower world and also very high above rises the firm and strong wall, a flaming adamantine encirclement, and through the composition of this [stretching diamond wall] is a network of diamond arrows. Among these, flares up occasionally a diamond canopy and adamantine chamber. In this space a yellow wheel rotates with ten spokes in a southerly direction...

A breathtaking scene, and we could substitute R. O. Meizhel's choice of "diamond" or "adamantine" for the Sanskrit *vajra* here.²¹⁷ The *mandala* of the NSP 1 rises and turns in the sky, ablaze with light. Though our Met Mañjuvajra is certainly a spectacular piece, it is no match for the dynamic "motion picture" presented in the NSP 1. The diamond canopy and adamantine chamber of the *kūṭāgāra* at the center of the *mandala* is intriguing in thinking about the temple shrine emphasis in the Met Mañjuvajra, but should not be taken as relegated to this *mandala* description alone. Benoytosh Bhattacharya's summary of the *NSP* states:

²¹⁷ I have paraphrased R.O. Meizhel's German translation here. For original Sanskrit passage see R. O. Meisezahl. 1976. *Akṣobhya-Mañjuvajra. Ikonographie und Ikonologie des Ekonaviṣadātmakamañjuvajramandala. Oriens*, 26, 190-274: 223-233.

Generally, the central chapel [*kūtāgāra*] is reserved for the principal deity. His companions appear in regularly well-defined groups and surround him in the four cardinal directions and in the intermediate corners.²¹⁸

Therefore, though the comparison of the Metropolitan stele with the image bears a meaningful iconographic similarity, we cannot determine anymore than that in terms of a direct textual linkage. In fact, the *sādhana* may likely have been written after the Met stele artist produced the image. It is also possible that the stele may provide a direct formal correspondence to the *Guhyasmāja mandala*, which is, again, a topic for further study. Yet, this study proposes a comparison between the image and the ritual structure of its period of production in a more general sense. Comparing the image with relevant texts is mutually enriching, shedding light on the meaning of the image as well as the visual aspects of contemporary ritual practices and the doctrinal motivations behind them.

Lived Space and the Met Mañjuvajra Image:

Mandala Structures in the Bengali Landscape

Though the original context of the use-function of Pāla steles is lost, scholars generally believe that steles may have been placed in niches on actual temple facades or at times inside the temple's shrine (*gārbha griha*). Most steles do not present deities in architecture in this way, thus the form of the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra is quite distinctive. In terms of discussing the image as a symbolic index, I turn to D'Alleva's model, in that it is particularly productive in describing how the forms of the image function on multiple and interconnected levels to convey meaning. While this may be goal of all Buddhist steles, the Mañjuvajra stele – through its inclusion of a rarely depicted type of temple

²¹⁸ Bhattacharyya, *NSP*, 18. Here he uses the term “central chapel.”

structure conflated with a *mandala* – functions to communicate the doctrine of Enlightenment in a particularly powerful way. This is accomplished through the artist’s *virtuoso*, that is, through his expert and innovative delineation of the composition.

The temple form of the Met Mañjuvajra is composed of the inner sanctum presented as a throne with a large trefoil archway that conflates this *gārbha griha* with the entranceway of the temple, usually a *maṇḍapa* (or porch). The deity shrine itself has the tall *śikhara* above it that typically caps the inner sanctum room of north Indian temples in general (called *rekhā deuls* in Bengal). As discussed, the assemblage of a *caitya maṇḍala* structure is situated in the four directions. Multiple temples at large *vihāras* (i.e. monastic universities) conformed to this four directional (i.e. “cruciform”) plan that we see flattened in the Met Mañjuvajra stele. These temples structures are now in ruins, and thus we have no sense of how the rise of the shrine was structured. It is compelling evidence nonetheless that these lived ritual spaces seem to have resembled directional *mandala* structures sharing consonances with those pictured in the Met Mañjuvajra and the Buddha life scene steles.

Evidence survives that temples of this plan type formed the center of multiple Buddhist monastic centers (*vihāras*) in the Pāla region. Among these were major monastic universities and centers of Vajrayāna teachings and practices. In general, the construction of these *vihāra* temples date to roughly the eighth through ninth centuries based on donative inscriptions by early Pāla monarchs, including Devapāla and

Dharmapāla.²¹⁹ These *mandala*-like temples (also called *pañcaratna*, or “five jewels”) follow a “cruciform” or cross-shaped plan with a central axial shrine and four antechambers of equal length. Renown excavated sites in Bihar that include such temple plans include site No. 3 at Nālandā and the central temple at Antichak, both centers of Vajrayāna ritual practice.

Through pre-1971 excavations at Vikramaśīla, situated on the banks of the Ganges in North Bihar (Ancient Magadha) near the Bengali border, compelling evidence for the purpose behind the central temple design has come to light. A Patna University archaeological team unearthed images of the Buddha and bodhisattvas in four subsidiary shrines of the central temple.²²⁰ These important finds affirm the likelihood that these large, centralized temples were intended to reflect a *mandala* structure and to function as a *mandala* in the lived ritual landscape. Of further interest are Tibetan accounts that, according to B.S. Verma, describe the “central shrine” of this *vihāra* as “adorned with a life size image of the *mahābodhi*.”²²¹

The Antichak (Vikramaśīla) site and Somapura (or Pāhārpur) in northern Bengal are quite similar to one another in plan and size with extremely large cruciform temple

²¹⁹ Puspa Niyogi. *Buddhism in Ancient Bengal* (Calcutta: Jijnasa, 1980), 54-58; See Huntington (1984) for a thorough examination of regnal dates for the various dynasties ruling during the period.

²²⁰ Verma, *Antichak Excavations*, 9. Enshrined Śākyamuni Buddha images typically have flanking attendant bodhisattvas in ancient medieval India. Verma does not supply specific information on these discovered images besides their being “clay” and “colossal.” In the same excavation it was discovered that the “structure suffered damage and was renovated twice.” Verma describes the complex as having a single gateway from the north with an “imposing” stone passage to the shrine entrance. This combined with his mention of an epigraph describing a thwarted attack by neighboring rulers seem to suggest that the *vihāra* was susceptible to outside intrusion and thus had to be well fortified. The subsidiary shrines holding clay figures were eventually walled off with the antechambers “utilized as shrines at a later date.” Later, the northern antechamber was completely filled in and a stone image was of Śākyamuni Buddha (now at the Patna University Museum) was installed on a pedestal above the earlier shrine.

²²¹ *ibid.*

remains forming the center of each complex.²²² According to a Tibetan historical account, Mahīpāla I was the last Pāla king known to have patronized the *mahāvihāra* at Pārhārpur in northern Bengal (figs. 18-19).²²³ Scholars have described the Somapura (Pārhārpur) *mahāvihāra* as one of the largest monastic universities in India, rivaling Nālandā in its number of monks.²²⁴ Remains of *mandala*-like temples exist in southeast Bengal as well, at Lalmai-Mainamati, a region roughly six miles west of present-day Comilla in southeast Bengal that contains the ruins of a number of excavated monastic sites that flourished during the Pāla period.²²⁵ There is no evidence of monastic patronage by the Candras, according to Niyogi, the rulers mentioned on the dated images I have compared with the Met stele.²²⁶ The earlier Deva kings however “were [e]specially active in their patronage of Buddhist institutions” and Bhavadeva is listed in an inscription on a terracotta sealing (on an image of two deer with a central cakra) at Salban Vihāra calling the site “Śrī *bhavadeva mahāvihāra-arya-bhikṣu-saṅghasya*” (figs. 20, 21-21.1).²²⁷ This seems to indicate that the monastery was founded and/or patronized by Śrī Bhavadeva son of Ananda Deva, who in turn is believed to have patronized the largest monastery at Lalmai-

²²² *ibid.*

²²³ Niyogi, *Buddhism in Ancient Bengal*, 54-58. Some scholars have attributed Paharpur’s founding to Dharmapāla and others to Devapāla (who alternately founded the *vihāra* and/or built a temple there, according to medieval Tibetan historians Tārānatha, Bu-ston, and Sumpa (see p.54 fn 26). In any case, Niyogi states: “It appears that the Somapura Mahāvihāra was quite a prominent institution of its kind, financially well-off and maintained by the Pāla rulers.” Haque describes “a set of clay sealings” discovered at Somapur/Pāhārpur (northern Bengal) naming Mahīpāla I as the founder or at least as a directly associated with the monastery. Haque, *The Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, 158.

²²⁴ S. K. Saraswati, *Architecture of Bengal* (Calcutta: G. Bharadwaj).

²²⁵ Md. Shafiqul Alam, “Buddhist Establishments at Rupban Mura, Mainamati, Bangladesh,” *East and West* (Vol. 42, No. 2/4, December 1992), pp. 281-300.

²²⁶ Niyogi, *Buddhism in Ancient Bengal*, 81.

²²⁷ *ibid.*, 74.

Mainamati, Ananda Vihāra.²²⁸ Multiple Buddhist sites excavated in the Lalmai-Mainamati region present ruins of these *mandala*-form temples. These include the Ananda Vihāra, Salban Vihāra, Bhoja Vihāra (partially-excavated), and Rupban Mura temple (fig. 20.1).²²⁹ The Salban Vihāra, further, has yielded a wonderful life-size bronze image identified as Vajrasattva in its northern enclosure (fig.22). This figure, although dated to an earlier period (ca. eighth to ninth centuries per John Huntington),²³⁰ mirrors the many monks with pointed hats on the southeastern Bengali stele plinths. It also provides an interesting counterpoint to my discussion of the Met image in comparison with NSP 1. The elongated limbs and thin body of the Vajrasattva image correlate to the stele figural style discussed in Ch.3 and buttresses our understanding of the importance of Vajrasattva in the region during this time.

Image Theory, Metonymy, and the Met Mañjuvajra

While Alfred Gell has devised many productive theoretical and conceptual tools with which to analyze and interpret artworks, Anne D’Alleva (2001) confronts Gell’s prohibition on metaphor and metonymy in his preference of a model solely for “the ‘presented object.’”²³¹ A metonym, writes Anne D’Alleva, “operates on the principle of contiguity”:

²²⁸ Haque, *The Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, 156.

²²⁹ *ibid.*, 154-159. Salban Vihāra ca. 750 CE. Haque provides a wonderful overview of the archaeological evidence yielded from these sites, yet further study, including a close comparison of the varying stages of construction of these temples is certainly warranted. For example, the . There also evidence suggesting that some of these sites were once Jain. (see Verma too or just on this subject, see also Niyogi)

²³⁰ John C. Huntington *et al*, *Circle of Bliss: Buddhist Meditational Art* (Chicago: Serindia Publications, 2003), 216.

²³¹ Christopher Pinney and Nicholas Thomas, eds, *Beyond aesthetics: art and the technologies of enchantment* (2001 Oxford: Berg), 9.

It takes a part and substitutes it for the whole...metonymy in general, and synecdoche in particular, is frequently produced by deleting one or more items from a combination generally perceived as natural.²³²

The Met Mañjuvajra stele utilizes visual metonymy in a number of ways. Most noticeably, the abbreviated temple form housing the deity stands in for an actual temple and the abbreviated *caitya* grouping for the full *mandala* assemblage. Further, the *mudrā* is a metonym for the complete image of the deity united with a female consort embodying *prajñā* (all six deity figures in the Met stele present this *mudrā*). Further, the mountain-like temple with its *caitya* pinnacles and setting – that is, the curling vegetal detail and streaming banners on the back-slab – metonymically suggests the temple’s presence within a larger sacred realm. The hieratic scale of the enlarged archway and *gargha grha* (inner sanctum) emphasizes the lofty cosmic nature of the temple form that, again, seems to stand in for the complete cosmic realm to be visualized in ritual practice. Thus it may be taken as a metonym for the sacred geography described in the *sādhana* texts and likely fully diagramed in a two-dimensional painted *mandala paṭas*.

Mañjuvajra represents the model practitioner engaged in *sādhana* practice. The metonymic reference of the temple architecture-*mandala* conflation denotes the sacred realm yet references a spatial tension and liminality between the lived and visualized realms that a practitioner would encounter. By extension, Mañjuvajra himself might be understood to visualize as well as exist within the sacred realm.²³³ If the practitioner used a painted *mandala* in ritual practice, then the Met stele would serve as a multivalent

²³² D’Alleva, “Captivation, representation, and the limits of cognition: interpreting metaphor and metonymy in Tahitian tamau,” 79-82.

²³³ Linrothe, *Ruthless Compassion*, 251.

symbol of said practice (inclusive of the action of visualizing the sacred realm here demonstrated by Mañjuvajra). The image also includes symbolic reminders of the purpose of that practice – the attainment of Enlightenment – through Manjuvajra’s Māra-defeating implements and his symbolic union with *prajñā*.

D’Alleva states that metonymy is “one source of the captivation of an artwork”:

... for it attracts and sustains the interest of the viewer through the continual presentation of new possibilities...new ways of understanding the metaphoric and metonymic connections between *index* [here the stele] and the *prototype* [the multivalent sense of place it references].²³⁴

“The captivation of the artwork,” precisely what Alfred Gell (1998) has argued against “succumbing to” in analytical interpretation, I would argue is a major facet of what imbues the artwork with agentive power.²³⁵ The particular power of a successful religious artwork, perhaps, is that it symbolically encapsulates the doctrine as well as presents the realm, the space of the god. In the Met Mañjuvajra, power is conveyed style, in *how* the artist represents the forms, both in terms of region and individual voice. This style is inclusive of the artist’s (and/or patron’s) choice of what forms are represented and, as D’Alleva convincingly argues, *not* represented through metonymic allusion.

²³⁴ Anne D’Alleva. “Captivation, representation, and the limits of cognition: interpreting metaphor and metonymy in Tahitian tamau,” 79-82.

²³⁵ *ibid.*

Chapter Five: Thesis Conclusion

Thus perhaps we can see the Met Mañjuvajra as a powerful aid for visualization and a tool for achieving the ultimate understanding, enlightenment or “Supreme Buddhahood.”²³⁶ As a metaphor of this, I have argued in ch.3 that the temple form in the *Mañjuvajra Mandala* is likely meant to invoke the site of Śākyamuni’s Enlightenment itself: the *vajrāsana* (the *vajra* seat) at Bodhgayā. This is evident through comparison with the *mandala*-like temple forms of the Śākyamuni steles from Sibbati and Betagi depicting the Buddha in *bhūmisparśa mudrā* surrounded by vignettes of his life scenes. So closely similar to that of the *Mañjuvajra Mandala*, they surely resonate with a suggestion of the place where the event of the Buddha’s enlightenment occurred, a common theme in Pāla art. Yet, this particular temple form is a stylistic convention emphasized only in southeastern Bengal. Its prominence may have been buoyed by actual structures present within the ritual landscape: the cruciform temples at the Salban (aka Bhavadeva), Candra, and Bhoja *vihāras* in Lalmai-Mainamati, Comilla.

This emphasis on *mandala* – both in the lived landscape at these sites and in sculptural imagery (and also likely painted images given textual and later material evidence) – extended beyond Bengal and throughout the Pāla region during this period. This is an innovation of *annutara yoga tantra* phase of Vajrayāna practice in the later Pāla period. The *mandala* is employed as part of sculptural images that constitute powerful visualized metaphors of enlightenment. These images, like the Metropolitan

²³⁶ Lancaster, Gomez, and Conze, *Prajñāpāramitā and Related Systems*, 236.

Mañjuvajra, reference visualized sacred geography and actually reflect *sādhana* the ritual process by depicting Mañjuvajra as the ideal *yogin* engaged in practice.

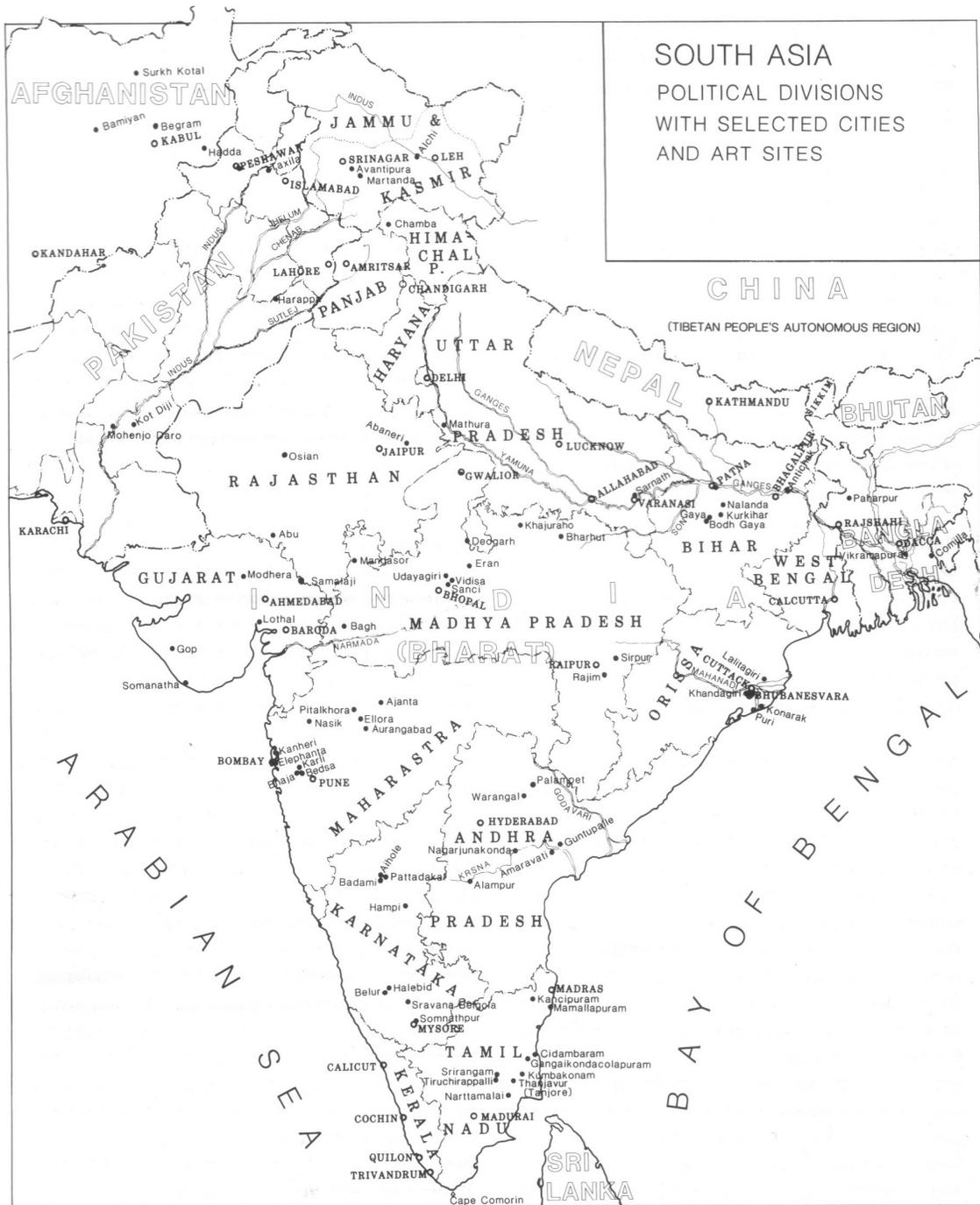
In sum, the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra stele represents an early eleventh century example of visual evidence for the importance of Mañjuvajra and his powerful mode of practice in the Bengal. It is a rare image of the peaceful bodhisattva Mañjuśrī as the central deity of *anuttara* yogic *sādhana* practice, the late-phase Indian Buddhist *tantra* tradition involving union with a consort whose absent presence is signified here by the bodhisattva's *mudrā*. Yet, the most unusual characteristics of the Met Mañjuvajra seem to be its style, encompassing an innovative conflation of multiple composition types and an elevated level of artistic skill. The Vajrayāna doctrine and *mandala* practice it reflects do not appear to be particularly unusual from what we can infer of specialized ritual technologies in a monastic setting in southeastern Bengal during this period. Overall, I propose that the Met Mañjuvajra is a unique artwork not in terms of what it represents but how.

First, the Metropolitan Mañjuvajra stele bears most similarity not to textual descriptions of Mañjuvajra's *mandala* but to a range of works produced in the region that transcend religious boundaries. This group produces a formal immediacy of both place and the religious praxis situated in that place through the evidence of stele production. The work is both technically masterful and innovative in terms of its early date and the extant rarity of its compositional conflation of three southeastern Bengali sub-styles. A prime evidence of this innovation is the *mandala* structure of the work, in its conflation of the typical abbreviated *tathāgata* mandala within a temple structure with the *śikhara*

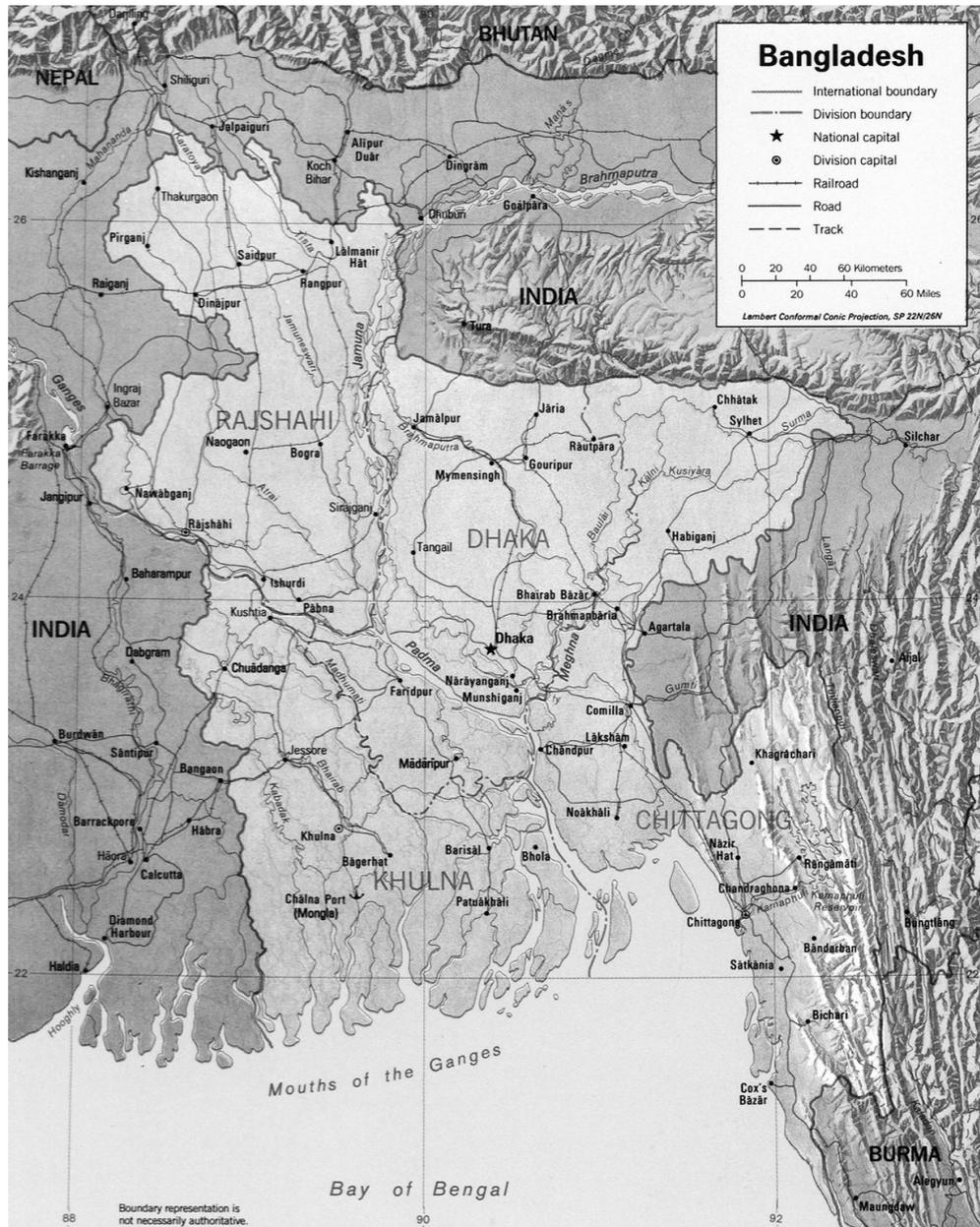
tower rarely found among Pāla stelae. In comparison with the Buddha life scene steles, the *śikhara* of the Mañjuvajra Mandala signals continued importance of Śākyamuni despite the increased Pala-period ubiquity of celestial *jina mandalas* and multi-limbed deities such as this form of Mañjuśrī in the Met image. The significant sense of a regional Bengali style is evident in the work, further, in its high level of technical refinement, its elegant and restrained formal balance, and paradoxical sense of dynamism and serenity. This sense of the stele’s “Bengaliness” is bolstered by the individual artist’s technical mastery, and in turn, both enrich the meaning of the image. Overall, both regional style and artistic *virtuoso*, in the innovative delineation of the regional style, work to bolster the power of the artwork.

Lastly, The Met Mañjuvajra stele can be contextualized on both formal stylistic and conceptual terms with regard to its multivalent iconography. The artist’s individual skill in carving and imaginative composition mediate, in turn, between regional style and the communication of ritual processes, producing both an extraordinary artwork and object of religious contemplation. The abbreviated *mandala*-temple conflation of the Met Mañjuvajra stele impacts the viewer both formally, as a dynamic image, and conceptually in potentially referencing both lived and visualized ritual landscapes. I outline Mañjuvajra’s connection with Vajrayāna *sādhana* visualization practices in this study in order to demonstrate the ways in which the image conveys this allusion to soteriological ritual in a particularly rich and layered sense through the use of visual metonymy. This leads us to a significant opportunity to witness how an artwork might elucidate complex ideas in a streamlined, multivalent manner. Art can enrich and advance our understanding

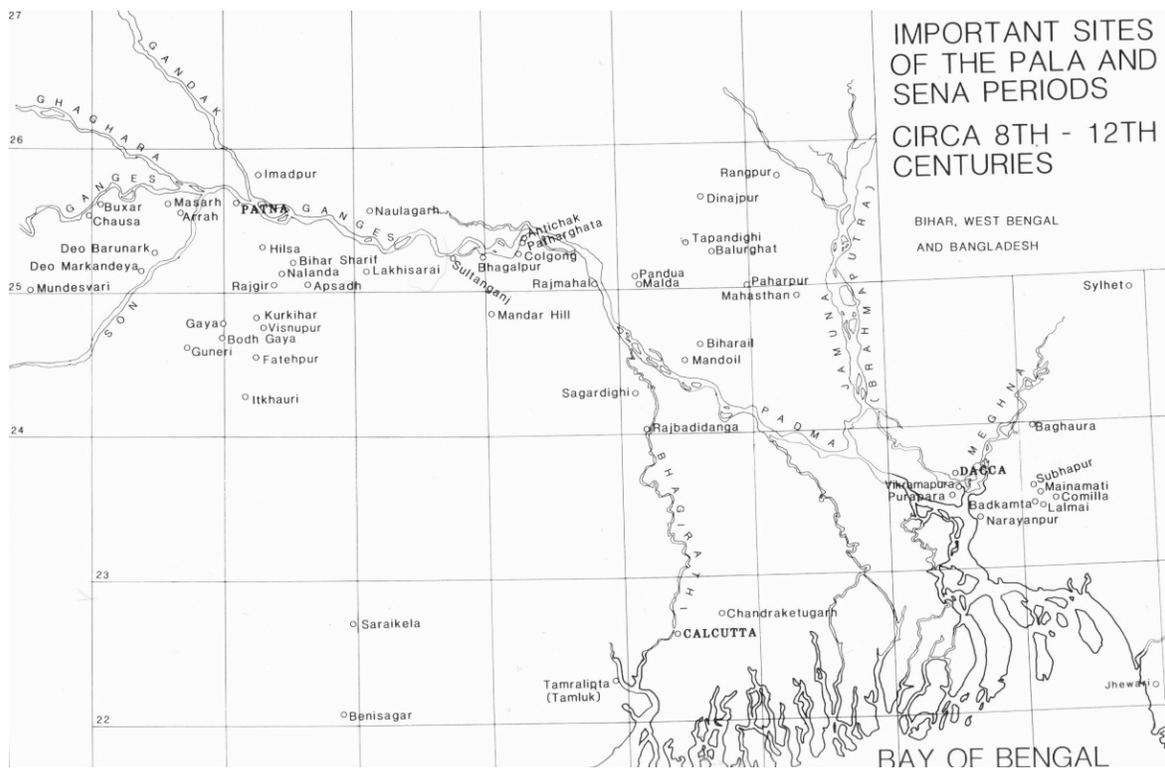
of religious doctrine and practice, and *vice versa*. In visualizing the power of wisdom, the Metropolitan *Mañjuvajra Mandala* stele enriches an understanding of *sādhana* practices, creating I suggest new moments of realization.



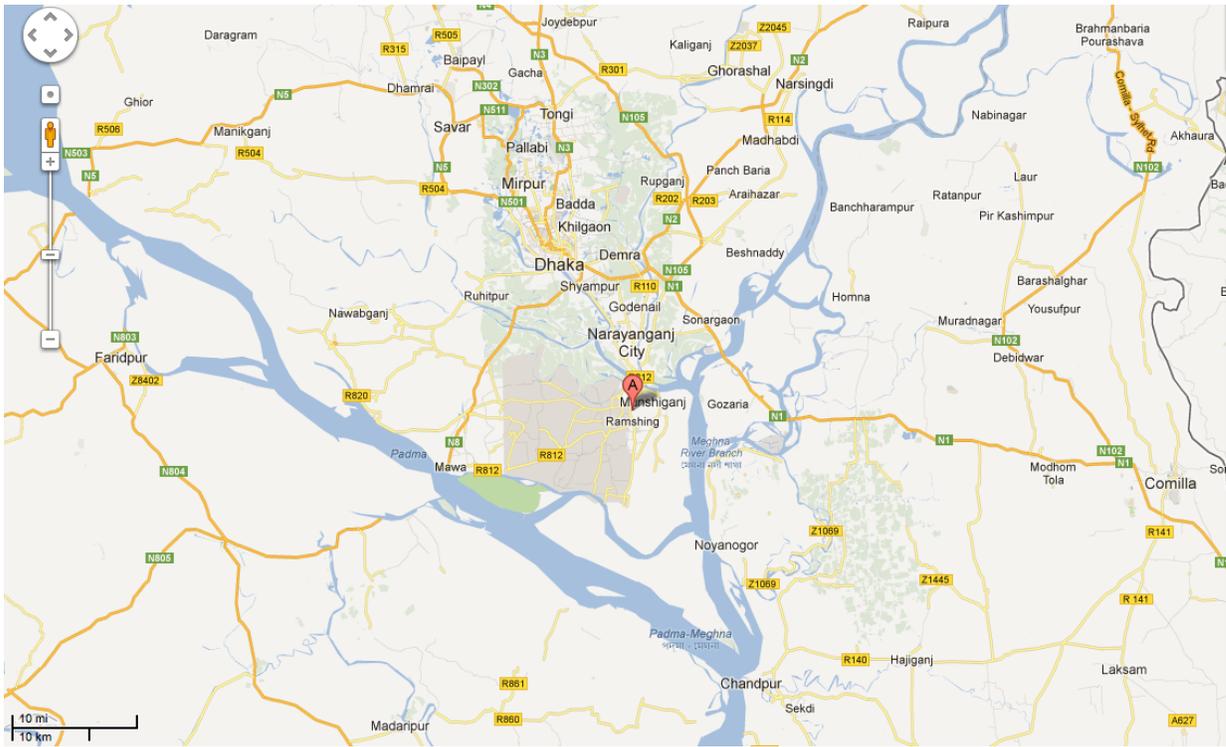
Map 1 South Asia. Illustrated in Susan L., and John C. Huntington. *The art of ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain.* (New York, 1985).



Map 2. Bangladesh [Showing Major Divisions]. Washington: Central Intelligence Agency, 1996.



Map 3 The Pala Region, ca. 8th–12th Centuries. Illustrated in Susan L., and John C. Huntington. *The art of ancient India: Buddhist, Hindu, Jain*. (New York, 1985).



Map 4. Dhaka District and Comilla (Far Right), Present-day Bangladesh. Google Maps 2012.



Figure 1 *Mañjuvajra Mandala*. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early 11th century. H. 50 3/4 in.; W. 23 3/4 in; D. 9 1/2 in. Black Stone. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.1 *Mañjuvajra Mandala*. Detail, face and torso. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early 11th century. H. 50 3/4 in.; W. 23 3/4 in; D. 9 1/2 in. Black Stone. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.2 *Mañjuvajra Mandala*. Detail, *mudrā*. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early 11th century. H. 50 3/4 in.; W. 23 3/4 in; D. 9 1/2 in. Black Stone. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.3 *Mañjuvajra Mandala*. Detail, top left side. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early 11th century. H. 50 3/4 in.; W. 23 3/4 in; D. 9 1/2 in. Black Stone. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.4 *Mañjuvajra Mandala*. Detail, top right side. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early 11th century. H. 50 3/4 in.; W. 23 3/4 in.; D. 9 1/2 in. Black Stone. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.5 *Mañjuvajra Mandala*. Detail, left side of plinth. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early 11th century. H. 50 3/4 in.; W. 23 3/4 in; D. 9 1/2 in. Black Stone. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.6 *Mañjuvajra Mandala*. Detail, center of plinth. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early 11th century. H. 50 3/4 in.; W. 23 3/4 in; D. 9 1/2 in. Black Stone. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett. Photograph by author.



Figure 1.7 *Mañjuvajra Mandala*. Detail, right side of plinth. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early 11th century. H. 50 3/4 in.; W. 23 3/4 in; D. 9 1/2 in. Black Stone. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Bequest of Cora Timken Burnett. Photograph by author.



Figure 2 *Mandala of Mañjuvajra*. H: 37 3/8 in. (95cm). Phyllite. Southeastern Bangladesh, ca. early eleventh century. Rubin Museum of Art, New York. Illustrated in Jackson and Luczanits. *Mirror of the Buddha*, 144, Fig. 5.11.



Figure 3 *Portrait of Two Monks (Phagmotrupa and Taklungthangpa Chenpo)*, ca. late 13th century, Distemper on cotton. 20 1/8 x 15 1/2 in. (51 x 39.5 cm), The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund. Illustrated in Jackson and Luczanits, *Mirror of the Buddha*, 144, Fig. 5.10 and Kossak and Casey Singer, *Sacred Visions*, 144, No. 26.



Figure 4 *Viṣṇu (Vāsudeva)*. 23rd year of Govindacandra. Betkā (Pāikpārā), Dhaka District. Ca. 1030-1050 CE. H:130 cm. Dacca Museum, Dhaka. Illustrated in Huntington, *“Pāla-Sena” Schools of Sculpture*, 1984, fig. 67.



Figure 4.1 *Viṣṇu (Vāsudeva)*, detail. 23rd year of Govindacandra. Ca. 1030-1050 CE. Betkā (Pāikpārā), Dhaka District. H:130 cm. Dacca Museum, Dhaka. Illustrated per Huntington Archive.



Figure 5 *Pārvaṭī (Umā)*, ca. early eleventh century. Mohammadpur, Comilla District. H: 49.25 in. Indian Museum, Calcutta. Illustrated per Huntington Archive.



Figure 5.1 *Pārvaṭī (Umā)* from *Mohammadpur, Comilla* (Plinth detail). ca. early eleventh century. H: 49.25 in. Indian Museum, Calcutta. Illustrated per Huntington Archive.



Figure 6 *Śiva Nāṭarāja*, ca. early eleventh century. Palagri, Comilla, Dhaka Museum, Dhaka. Illustrated per Huntington Archive.



Figure 6.1 *Śiva Nāṭarāja* (detail), ca. early eleventh century. Palagri, Comilla, Dhaka Museum, Dhaka. Illustrated per Huntington Archive



Figure 7 *Tārā in a Mountain*, ca. early eleventh century. Mainamati, Comilla District. Dhaka Museum, Dhaka. Illustrated in Lee (2009), *On Defining Buddhist Art in Bengal: The Dhaka Region*, 414, fig. 65 (Courtesy Dept. of Archaeology, Bangladesh).



Figure 8 *Śiva Nāṭarāja (Torso fragment detail)*. 18th year of Ladahacandradeva (ca. 1000-1025 CE). Bhārellā, Comilla. Illustrated in Huntington, “Pāla-Sena” Schools, fig. 65.

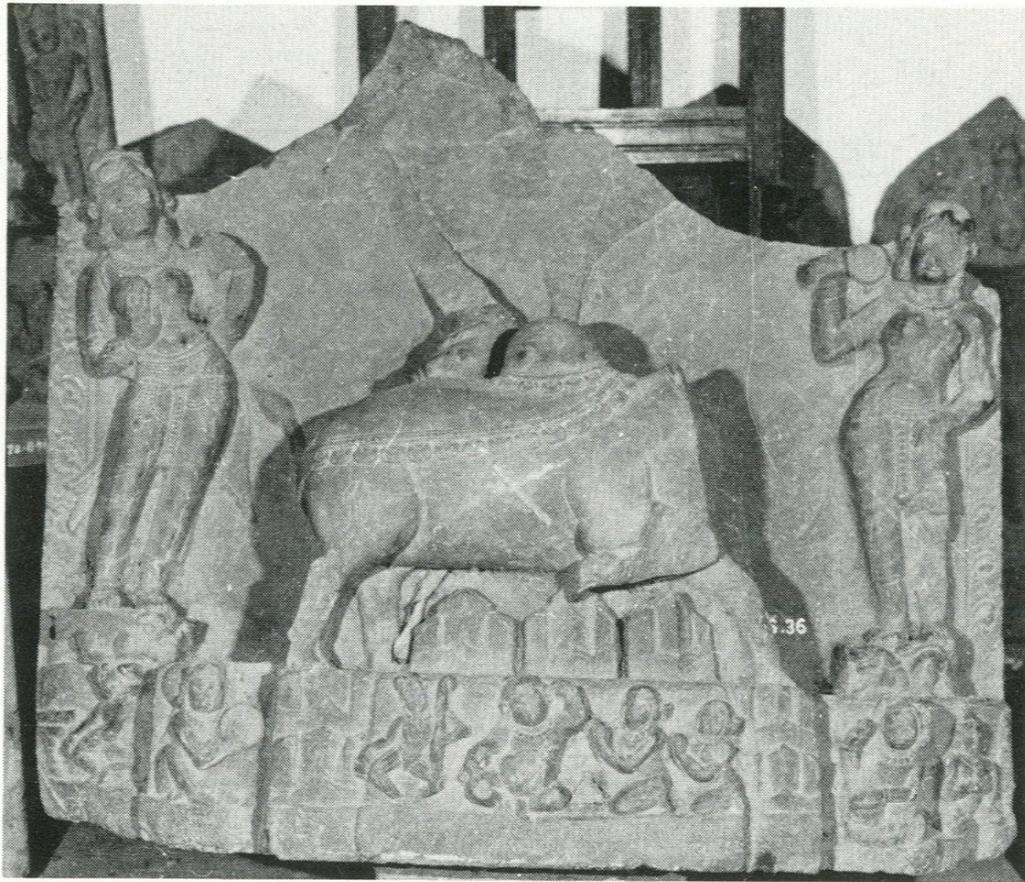


Figure 8.1 *Śiva Nāṭarāja (base fragment detail)*. 18th year of Ladahacandradeva (ca. 1000-1025 CE). Bhārellā, Comilla. Illustrated in Huntington, “Pāla-Sena” Schools, fig. 64.



Figure 9 *Lokanātha*, unidentified provenance, Bengal, ca. mid eleventh century, H: 95cm. Nalin Collection/Virginia Museum of Art. Illustrated in Casey, *Divine Presence*, pl. 30.



Figure 9.1 *Lokanātha* (detail), unidentified provenance, Bengal, ca. mid eleventh century, H: 95cm. Nalin Collection/Virginia Museum of Art. Illustrated in Casey, *Divine Presence*, pl. 30.



Figure 10 *Mahāpratisarā (Pañcarakṣa goddess)* from Vikramapura, Munshiganj, Dhaka;
Illustrated in Banerji, *Eastern Indian school of mediaeval sculpture*.



Figure 10.1 *Mahāpratisarā (Pañcarakṣa goddess)*, detail, from Vikramapura, Munshiganj, Dhaka; Dhaka Museum Collection. Illustrated per Huntington Archive.



Figure 11 *Visnu Trivikrama*, Dhaka District (National Museum, Karachi, Pakistan), H: 34.5 in.
Illustrated in Banerji, *Eastern Indian school of mediaeval sculpture*.



Figure 12 *Narasimha*, Vikramapura, Dhaka District. Dhaka Museum, Dhaka.

H: 29.50 in. W: 14.75 in. black stone. Illustrated per the Huntington Archive.



Figure 13 *Śiva Nāṭarāja*, Rāmpāl, Munshiganj, Dhaka District. Dhaka Museum, Dhaka.

H: 37 in. W:18 in. Illustrated per Huntington Archive.



Figure 13.1 *Śiva Nāṭarāja* (detail). Rāmpāl, Munshiganj, Dhaka District.

Dhaka Museum, Dhaka. H: 37 in. W: 18 in. Illustrated per Huntington Archive.



Figure 14 Śākyamuni in trilobate archway, Mahākali, Vikramapura. Dhaka Museum, Dhaka. Illustrated in N. K. Bhattasali, *Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum*, pl. IX.

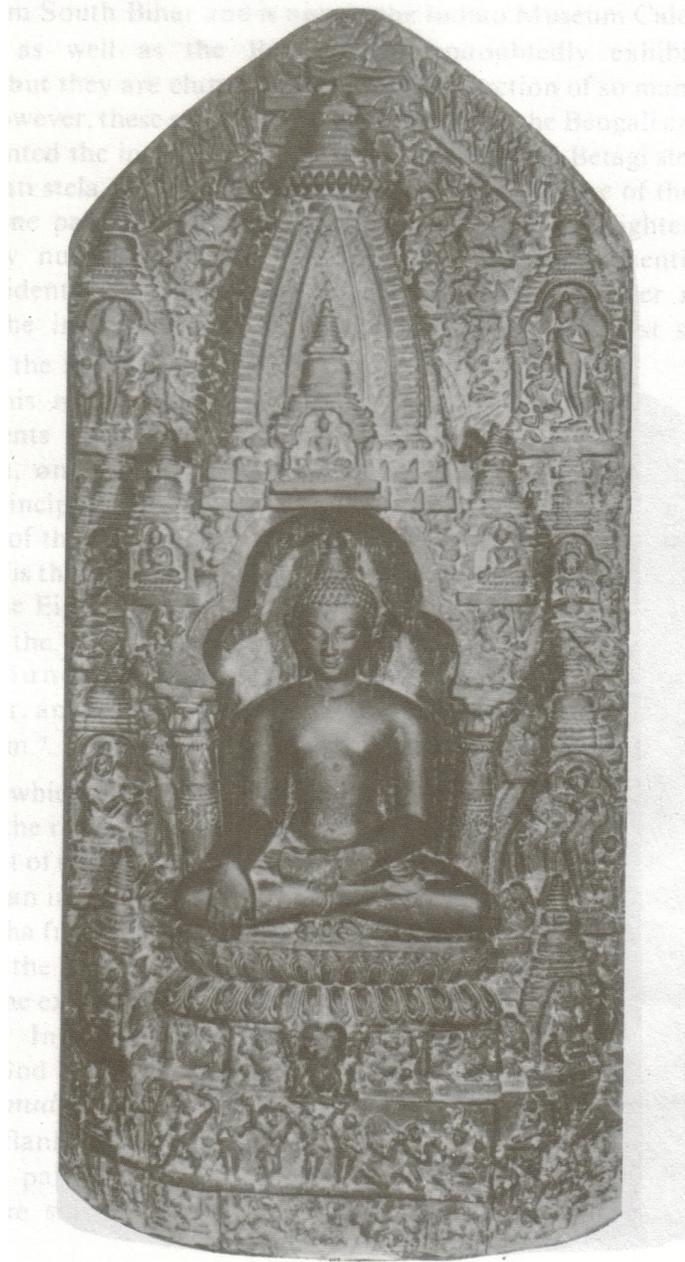


Figure 15 *Buddha Life Scenes with Temple Structure* from Sibbati, Khulna District. 117 cm x 66 cm. Illustrated in Shamsul Alam, *The Sculptural Art of Bangladesh*, 185, fig. 75.

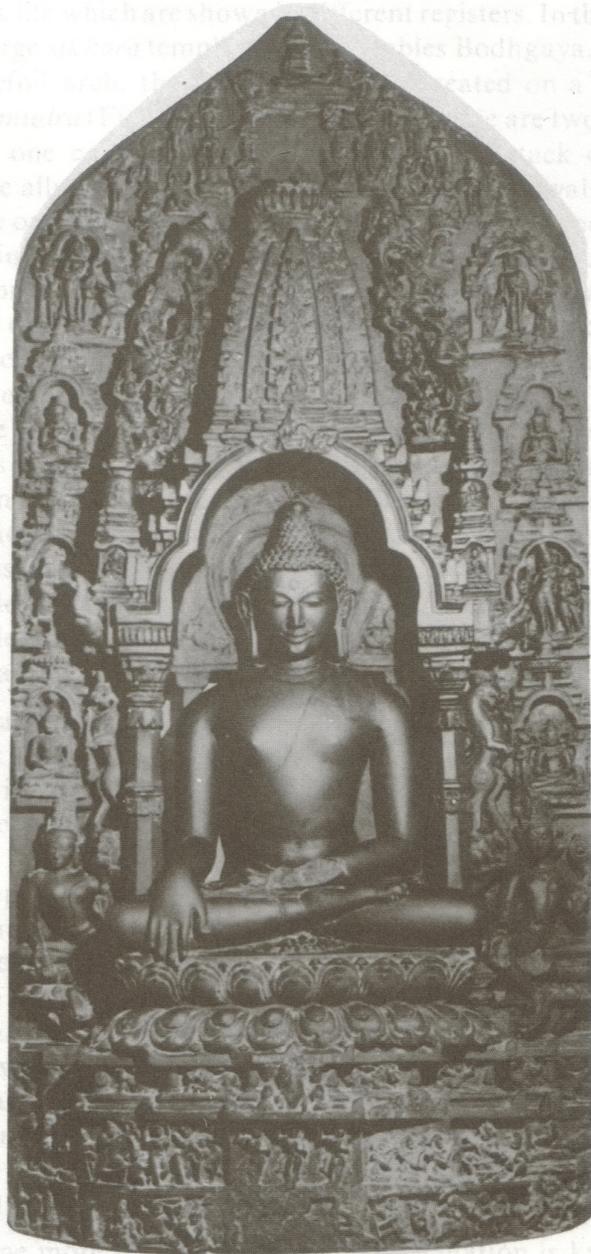


Figure 16 *Buddha Life Scenes with Temple Structure* from Betagi, Chittagong District, 130 cm x 70 cm, Illustrated in Shamsul Alam, *The Sculptural Art of Bangladesh* p.186, fig. 76.



Figure 17 *Bodhisattva (Manjuśrī?) with his prajñā*. From Bodhgayā, Gaya District, Bihar. Eleventh-Twelfth centuries. H: approx. 20 cm. Indian Museum, Calcutta. Illustrated in Huntington, "*Pāla-Sena*" Schools, fig. 111.

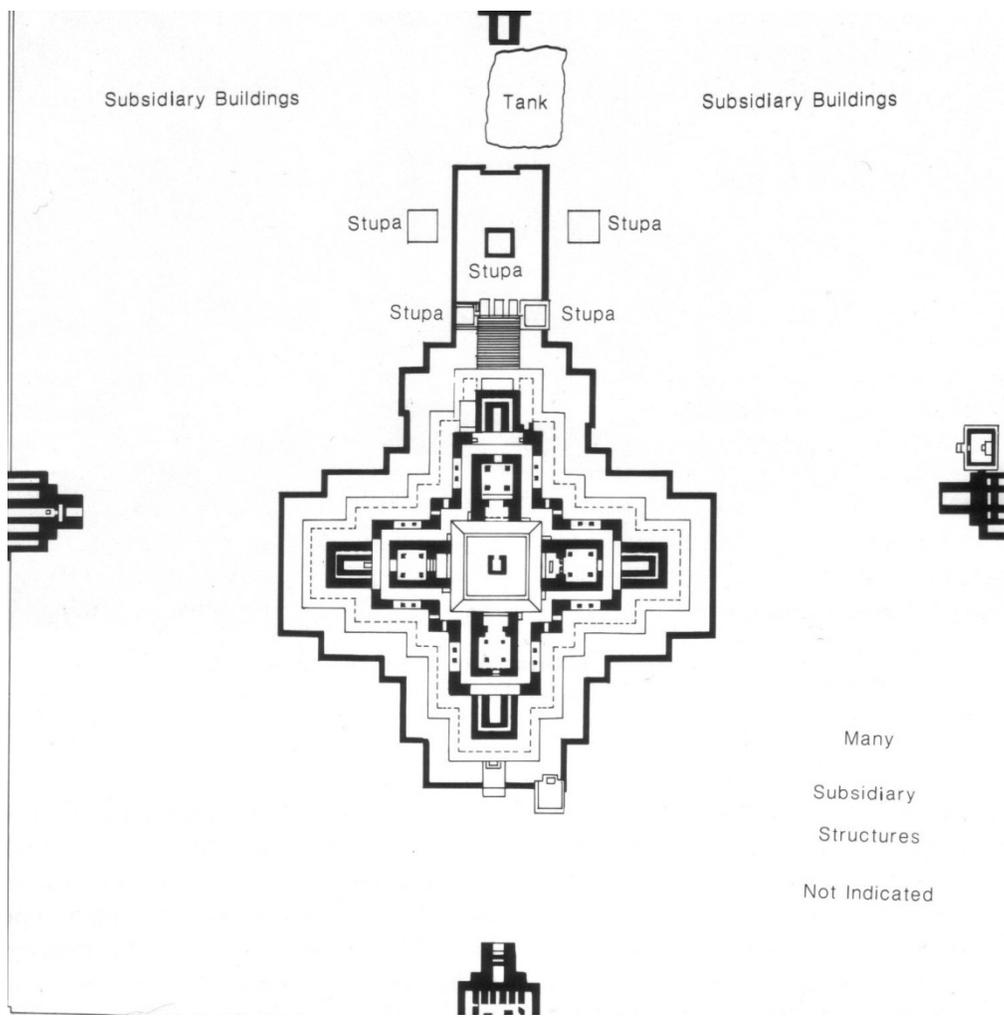


Figure 18 Plan of Pāhārpur Temple complex. Pāhārpur, Bengal. Illustrated in Enamul Haque, *Heritage of Bangladesh*, plate 177.



Figure 19 Pāhārpur Temple complex remains. Pāhārpur, Bengal. Illustrated in Haque, *Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, plate 159.

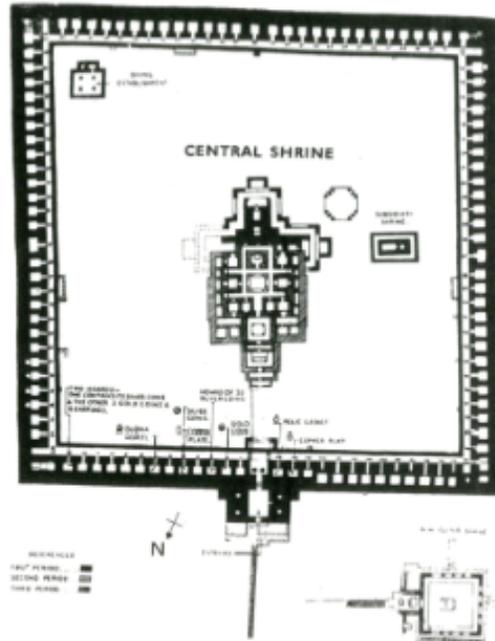


Plate 187. Ground plan of Salban Vihara, Mainamati, p. 155.

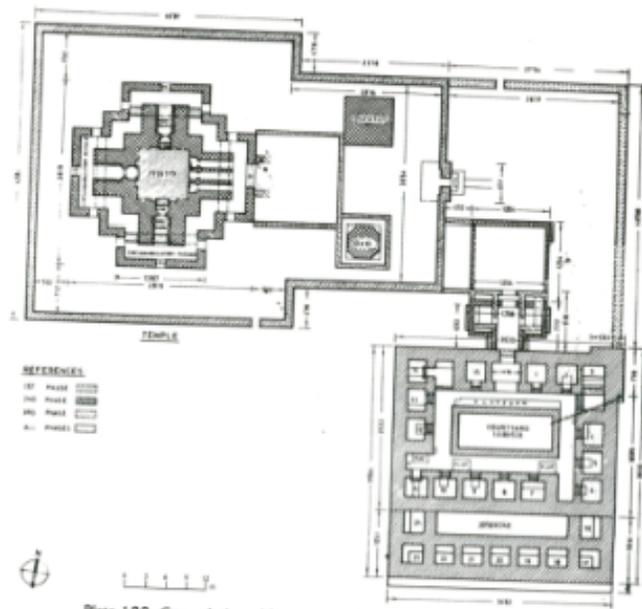
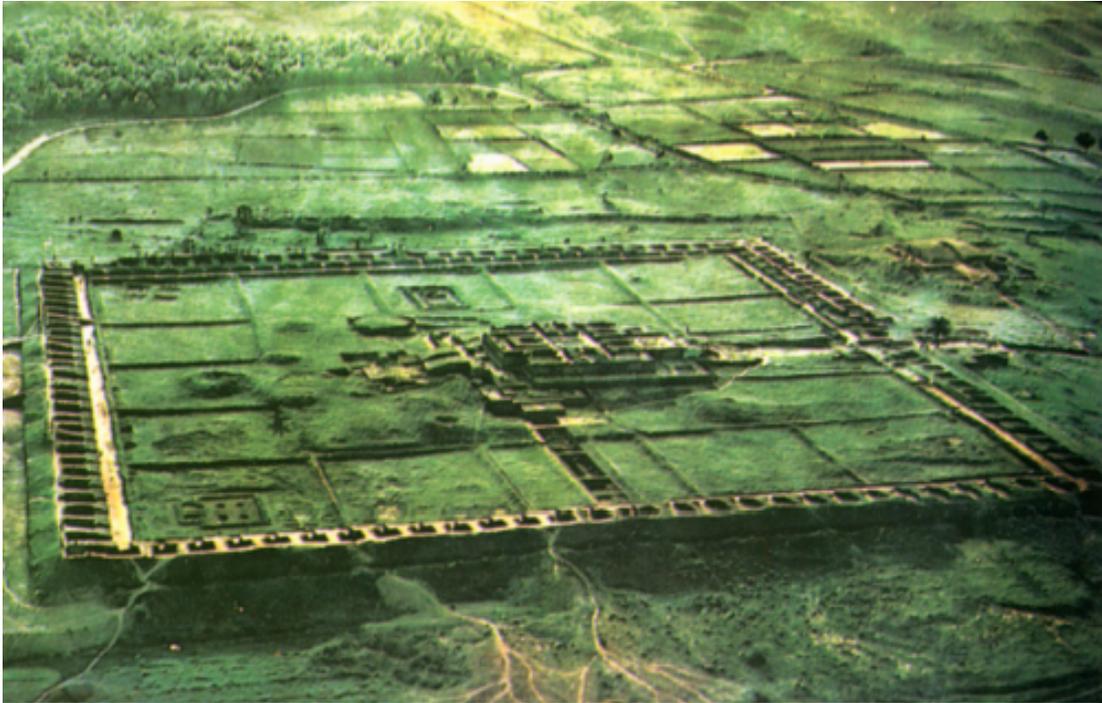


Plate 188. Ground plan of Rupban Mura Complex, Mainamati, p. 157.

Figures 20-20.1 Plan of Salban Vihāra complex and Rupban Mura complex. Lalmai-Mainamati, Comilla District Illustrated in Haque, *Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, pls. 187-188.



Figures 21-21.1 Salban Vihāra complex (aerial view) w/ rise of central temple remains. Lalmai-Mainamati, Comilla District. Illustrated in Haque, *Art Heritage of Bangladesh*, pls. 160-161.



Figure 22 *Vajrasattva*, bronze, ca. ninth century. H: 55 in. (140 cm). Excavated from Bhoja Vihāra, Lalmai-Mainamati, Comilla District. Archaeological Museum, Mainamati. Illustrated in *Orientalist*, October 2008, Vol. 39, No. 7.

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