Prologue

It was fifteen years ago when I witnessed the great ritual of Heruka *maṇḍalā* in Leh, the centre of Ladakh in India in 1992. I was then an art student, and my trip to India was triggered by a very vague question about the meaning of artistic creations. My encounter with the ritual of the *maṇḍalā* was unexpected, and indeed overwhelming. First of all, the ritual of the *maṇḍalā* that was accompanied by the mantra recitation and the *mudrās* had shaken my senses with their strong aural and visual powers. I was enraptured in the current of colourful visuals and penetrating sounds throughout the ritual that continued more than a week. Above all, the final dissolution of the *maṇḍalā* into a flowing river after such an elaborate ritual around the building-up of the colourful forms seemed to have given me the answer why I had to travel in India: I thought I have seen the true form of arts. The impression of the *maṇḍalā* ritual was so strong that I wanted to write an essay about it, when I returned to Korea. However, I could not handle the topic in spite that I had written down the notes with technical descriptions during the ritual. The subject was too formidable to be dealt with in an essay. Moreover I did not have even an idea about the background and the philosophy of the *maṇḍalā*. However, my personal experience of the *maṇḍalā* spoke itself about the profundity of the *maṇḍalā*. I started looking up the books to know about their symbolic and religious meanings. During my M.A. study, when I was mainly concerned with the question of the relation between the concepts and the forms, I attempted to write about the *maṇḍalā* for the M.A. dissertation. Even though I had learnt some symbolic meanings of the *maṇḍalā*, they were too fragmentary to give me the confidence that I had learnt anything. At the same time, I had been influenced by the idea of ‘the meaninglessness of the ritual’, which seemed to tell me that knowledge of some symbolic meanings of the *maṇḍalā* ritual is futile.

Finally, I present my understandings of the *maṇḍalā* in the form of a Ph. D. thesis carried out under the supervision of Prof. H.S. Shivaprakash in the School of Arts & Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. Here, I deal with the visual forms of *maṇḍalas* and their meaning beyond the religious or symbolic meanings. Since
my interest on the \textit{mandala} started from the overwhelming experience when I had no knowledge of the \textit{mandala}, my thesis focuses on the question about the nature and aesthetic power of the \textit{mandala} that is conferred to the viewer during the aesthetic experience. It is only thanks to Prof. H. S. Shivaprakash that my quest for the meaningful visuals has been encouraged and possibly taken into the fruit of thesis.

I must above all express gratitude for the help and critical comments received from Dr. Ernst Fürlinger. From the initial stage of the conception till the final refinement of the writings, he shared his knowledge about the subject and provided me with treasuries of research sources. Conversations with him stimulated me to carry on the research with enthusiasm and gave me the chance to look at the subject from the different angles. His critical comments helped me in organizing my fragmentary thoughts into a structure. I thank Dr. Bettina Bäumer in having read through my unripe synopsis and given me helpful comments. Also, I must express thankfulness to her for introducing the field of Trika Śaivism to me and for helping me out in comprehending the verses from the old texts. I must equally express my gratefulness to Dr. Christian Luczanits for giving me a number of practical guidance in regard to the researches on the sites of Tabo and Alchi. I appreciate his scholarly quality and great generosity that was proved by his detailed comments on my unorganized draft. I am grateful to Prof. Lokesh Chandra for his generous help in the matter of textual understanding of Buddhist \textit{mandalas}. He generously shared his erudition and years of researches on the \textit{mandalas}. I should not forget to thank the late Prof. Ramachandra Gandhi for helping me in relating my research with the creative activity of paintings. His questions about my paintings and academic interest stirred me to bring forth the question about the relationship between forms and the formless from the dormant state of the consciousness. I thank Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan whose presence and writings have been a continuous inspiration for my research. I thank Dr. Lolita Nehru for teaching me how to write and how to organize ideas.

I must express my gratefulness to Geshe Tsewang Dorje of the Ngari Institute of Buddhist Dialectics in Ladakh for accepting my request for the personal teaching on the practice of tantric visualization. His compassionate teachings were extremely helpful in understanding the descriptions of the practice given in the old texts. I also thank Genla
Takpa Jigmet of the Spituk monastery for sharing his understanding of visualization. I thank monks of the Tabo monastery, especially Lama Urgyen Angrup for explaining me the revived ritual of Vajradhātumāṇḍala and Lama Sonam for helping me at the site of the research.

I thank the staff in the Western Himalaya Archive of Vienna for providing me with valuable visual materials and giving me the permission to publish them for the thesis. I also thank the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund for financial support. I gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Tsering Wangchuk, Archeological Survey of India in Leh. I also express my gratitude to Anil Pawar for his help in many practical matters.

Finally, I thank my parents in Korea for encouraging me all the way through the research. The equal gratitude should be expressed to my family and friends in Austria, especially Anni, Christa, Hemma and Fransiska for their constant help and love.

I dedicate the final thesis to my husband Ernst and our little daughter Yu Zin.

January, 2008

Sung Min Kim