Introduction

The central question of the thesis is about the relation between visual forms and their inlaid meanings in a broad context. The research undertaken here is basically meant for exploring the metaphysical dimension of visuals with the question how the visible dimensions of forms are related to their invisible dimensions. The metaphysical dimensions of visual forms are experiential, and their vital presence unfolds in the process of creation or aesthetic relish. While we discuss about the inlaid meanings of visual forms, we are naturally confronted with the questions: what do we mean by the inlaid meanings? Are they symbolic meanings? Or, metaphoric meanings? From the preset, it should be discerned that there is a non-discursive meaning as well as discursive meanings that are charged in visual forms.¹ The non-discursive layer of visual forms may be illustrated by artists' inspirations that result in the creation of forms. Then, what are the relationships between the non-discursive layer and the discursive layers of visual forms? For the purpose of investigating into the nature of forms and their relationship to the formless source of the forms, the thesis focuses on Buddhist maṇḍalas, because they are profound and multi-layered in contents as much as they are elaborate and affluent in forms. The term maṇḍala designates different objects according to the context of references. It may refer to the system of bodily cakras where deities reside; or the secret ritual meeting of tantric initiates and yoginis (melaka) where the participants usually form a circle; or the ritual maṇḍala seen during the initiation; or the one perceived in one's body in the process of tantric yoga. The maṇḍala considered in the thesis is limited to those visual objects permanently represented in the monastic complex and seen by the public during the worship.

The Question of the Relationship between Forms and the Formless

In regard to the topic, the relationship between forms and the formless, let us consider some examples, before the problem of form and the inner contents of maṇḍalas is to be looked at. Somebody sees the contradiction in Buddhists' bowing down in front to the

Buddha images and says that the Buddha resides in one’s own mind not in the images. However, it is not the physical form, but the spirit of the Buddha to which devotees bow down. The physical form of the Buddha is placed at the altar in order to remind people of the bodhicitta in their mind. Among the Buddhist community of East Asia, the portrait of Bodhidharma, who is the first patriarch of Zen tradition, is revered and believed to have a spiritual power. Thus, monk painters of the Zen tradition often draw his portraits. When they draw his portrait, it is not the beautiful face of Bodhidharma but the spirit imbued in his face that they challenge to draw. These two examples typify the true meaning of visual forms lying in the expression of what is formless. If we talk about the form in the context of Buddhism, first of all, we are reminded of the great affirmation: ‘the rūpa (form) is the śūnya (void), and the śūnya is the rūpa’.² The Sanskrit word mandala, meaning ‘the circle’ literally, is the combination of two words ‘manḍa’ (Tib.: dkyil) and ‘la’ (Tib.: kor), respectively denoting ‘the chief divinity and the emanation’; or nirvāṇa and samsāra.³ Thus, we notice that the term itself contains the two counterparts of the formless Ultimate and multiple forms. The ritual of sand-mandala explicitly demonstrates that the multiplicity of colourful forms return to the state of śūnya in the final dissolution of the mandala. One may raise a question: How is the śūnya represented in the colourful forms of mandalas which are not meant to be dissolved? The first question which is often raised in regard to Buddhist mandalas is how the bodily figures and primary colours in mandalas can be consistent with the prime concept of śūnya in Buddhism. There are mandalas permanently painted on the walls of ancient monasteries in the Western Himalayas. While facing colourful mandalas on the wall, we are in a difficult position to understand the non-dualism of forms and the formless affirmed in Buddhism. At first glance, mandalas seem contrary to the śūnya. I, personally, had been struggling with the fact that Buddhist monasteries are filled with images, golden statues and colourful paintings, which, I felt, contradictory to the Buddhist teaching of ‘śūnya’. Nevertheless, one thing was clear: if the employment of colourful forms were contradictory to the quest for the śūnya, these

³ The meaning has been explained in the Dharmamandala Sūtra of 8th cent. A.D. cf. DMS, trans. Lo Bue 1987: p. 796.
forms would not have become the perennial tradition. Thus, colourful forms are present in Buddhist monasteries as a self-evidence of the non-difference between forms and the formless. The thesis investigates the question about the colourful forms of *manḍalas* and their relation to the *śūnyā*.

**Reflection on the previous Researches on the *Manḍalas***

Tucci draws attention to the cosmic meanings inlaid in *manḍalas* and attempt to relate those meanings with the human psyche from the perspective of the modern psychology. Though *manḍalas* are viewed in correspondence with the deepest level of the human consciousness, the relationship between their cosmic affiliation and their visual significance has been overlooked in his scope. Many attempts have been made to comprehend *manḍalas* primarily on the basis of their association with religious practices, because they accompany the rituals and spiritual practices. In the field of religious studies, their significance has been read as the representation of doctrinal expositions, and their ritual process and ritualistic function have been unraveled. In these approaches, the visuals of *manḍalas* have been viewed within the frame of traditional interpretations, chiefly as symbols with discursive meanings. But they are not questioned in their sheer visual aspect. The visual aspect of *manḍalas* has been the focus of art historical studies. In the field of art history, efforts have been made to trace their formal development. The deities of *manḍalas* have been identified on the basis of the ancient manuals of the visualization, and the empirical *manḍalas* are compared with possible textual sources. The previous researches in art history, while focusing on the visuals, appear excluding their inner contents in its scope. Thus, we notice that most of the previous studies on *manḍalas* deal with either their religious and cosmic meanings, or their physical forms. The relation between the meanings and the forms in *manḍalas* has not been a topic of attention.

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4 Tucci 1961.
8 See Chandra & Vira 1995; Snodgrass 1997; Mallman 1975.
9 See Klimburg-Salter 1999.
Buddhist *mandalas*, though used in religious practices, are not merely one of the religious paraphernalia. Yet, they are neither the same as ordinary works of art that are free from religious allegories. Being defined to be the object of religious arts, their inner contents and visual forms should be perceived all together. In this respect, Jung’s comprehension of *mandalas* in the field of psychology is remarkable in unveiling the connection between forms and inner contents of *mandalas*.\(^{10}\) Modern understanding of *mandalas* as the mirror of our psyche has to be attributed to Jung’s research. His analysis of *mandalas* created by his psychotic patients demonstrates the *mandalas* as symbols constantly recurring in diverse cultures from the ancient to the contemporary. Jung observes that *mandalas* appear in the process of individuation in case of his patients, in order for the self-healing, and he speculates that they spring from an instinctive impulse. He writes that many patients realize the reality of ‘the collective unconscious’ as an autonomous entity, and these *mandalas* are governed by the same fundamental laws that are observed in the *mandalas* from different parts of the world. He uses words such as ‘instinctive impulse’, ‘transconscious disposition’ or ‘collective unconscious’ to express the kernel of *mandalas* as the archetype. Jung views the motif of *mandala* as ‘one of the best examples of the universal operation of an archetype’.\(^ {11}\) Jung’s writings on *mandalas* urge us to uncover that the *mandalas* are primarily the archetypal space or the primeval space.

Although, Jung’s researches on the *mandalas* of psychotic patients unearth the fundamental meaning of *mandalas* as the archetypal symbol, his psycho-analytical interpretations of their visual symbols have little scope of application in regard to Buddhist *mandalas*, because the cultural background of symbols depicted in particular *mandalas* have not been considered in his interpretations. The misapplication is exemplified by his interpretation of the burial ground as ‘the horror’ without the consideration of its tantric context. However, we need to pay attention to his

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\(^{10}\) Jung 1973.

retrospective comments after his research on the *manḍala* symbolism: “Knowledge of the common origin of these unconsciously preformed symbols has been totally lost to us. In order to recover it, we have to read old texts and investigate old cultures so as to gain an understanding of the things our patients bring us today in explanation of their psychic development.”12 His comment confirms that the research of Buddhist *manḍalas* on the basis of the old texts may contribute to illuminate the common origin of the recurring archetype of *manḍala*. In Jung’s time, the translations of old texts into the Western languages had not been done as much as they are today. In the meanwhile, crucial tantras in relation to *manḍalas* have been translated into English, which I have been tremendously benefited in carrying out my research.

Problem of Forms and the Formless in Buddhist *manḍalas* in the context of the religious practice

The religious meaning of Buddhist *manḍalas* conceived by modern researchers may be represented by the words of Snellgrove. In his words, two essential concepts of the *manḍala* are implied: the centre and its transformations.

“The *manḍala*, the primary function of which is to express the truth of emanation and return (*samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*) is the centre of the universe....Its core is Mt. Meru: it is the palace of the universal monarch, it is the royal *stūpa*; it is even the fire altar where one makes the sacrifice of oneself.”13

His words express the cosmic significance of *manḍalas*. However, not all *manḍalas* are charged with cosmic meanings. Depending on the main divinity represented in the centre, the purpose and the meaning of *manḍalas* vary. For example, the *manḍala* of the Eight Nāgas is for pacifying the venom of the snakes,14 thus, the cosmic symbolism is hardly appropriate in this *manḍala*. Buddhaguhya, in the commentary of the

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12 Jung 1972: p. 100. The quotation is from the conclusion of the article ‘Concerning Mandala Symbolism’, first published, as “Über Mandalasymbolik”, in *Gestaltungen des Unbewussten* (Psychologische Abhandlungen, VII), Zürich, 1950.
Sarvadurgatiparīśodhana Tantra, remarks that each mañḍala is designed for different purposes. Thus, we should be clear in the mind that the cosmic symbolism with the emphasis on the centre and its transformation is apt only when we deal with the mañḍalas of divinities who represent the Absolute. For instance the mañḍalas of Tabo and Alchi we are dealing with in the text are centred on Mahāvairocana who represents the Great Illumination of Enlightenment and the Absolute Body of the Dharma. Thus, these mañḍalas are charged with cosmic significance, involving such concepts as the dharmadhātu (Ultimate Dharma), the śūnya (Void) or the bodhicitta (Awareness of Enlightenment).

Let us look at how the forms and the formless Ultimate are conceived by the religious practitioners. For monks who practice with mañḍala images, the external mañḍalas are not real mañḍalas. They are merely reflective images (pratibimba). The real mañḍala, which is the ‘Essence’, has to be internally explored. During the interview I carried out in Ladakh in July 2007 in order to survey what actually mañḍalas mean for the present Buddhist practitioners, Geshe Tsewang, a practitioner of Heruka mañḍala, said:

“When the external mañḍala is successfully internalized, the way how to practice mañḍala is revealed.”

His statement confirms that the complicated external forms are not all about the mañḍala and there is the deeper dimension to be explored. Unless the real mañḍala is tasted, one would not know what the mañḍala is, merely by looking at it. Geshe Tsewang actually used the expression of ‘tasting a mañḍala’ indicating the inner sensual experience of a mañḍala. It is remarkable that a religious practitioner used a terminology of Indian aesthetics in explaining his spiritual experience, having been unaware of what history the concept of ‘tasting (rasa)’ has gone through in Indian

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15 Ibid.
16 The mañḍala is called in Tibetan, ‘dKyilkor’ (the center and the circle), and also ‘şīhpó’ which means the essence.
17 Geshe Tsewang Dorje is the director of Ngari Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, in Leh in Ladakh.
18 Personal interview, in Leh, Ladakh, on 30th July, 2007.
aesthetics. The use of the metaphor, ‘tasting a manḍala’ by a religious practitioner is particularly significant in the present approach to Buddhist manḍalas.

Manḍalas are used in the practice of visualization. However, not all the Buddhists are eligible to practice the visualization of manḍalas. One should be first of all initiated. According to the spiritual ability, the practitioners are assigned with particular manḍalas that are categorized into four groups. These four categories of manḍalas correspond to the four categories of tantras: Kriyā, Cārya, Yoga and Anuttarayoga. Because the Anuttarayoga Tantras are the predominant stream of Tibetan Buddhism today, mainly the divinities of Anuttarayoga Tantras are taken up for the manḍala practices. Thus, only the spiritually advanced monks are said to be able to carry out the manḍala practice.

Manḍalas are understood as the form of śūnyatā, its reflective image (pratibimba): the essence of manḍalas is the śūnya, and their forms are the reflective images of the śūnya. Realizing the śūnya of the self should precede the visualization of the manḍala. From śūnya of the self, the deity is generated as the self. In visualization, a self becomes a divinity through the śūnya and returns to the self through the śūnya; the deity of the manḍala appears in the śūnya and disappears into the śūnya. The practice of śūnyatā, bodhicitta and karuṇa should precede the practice of manḍalas, and the Buddhist practice of manḍalas are meant to strengthen the realization of the Truth, that is śūnya.19 Thus, the Hevajra Tantra, an Anuttarayoga Tantra says,

"The bodhicitta which has both absolute and relative forms should be generated by means of the Mañḍala Circle etc. (manḍalacakrādi) and by the process of Self-empowerment (svādhiṣṭānakrama)."20 21

19 Geshe Tsewang of Ladakh mentioned emphatically in a personal interview (4. Aug. 2007) that the manḍala practice should be based on śūnya, bodhicitta and karuṇa.
The tantra succinctly explains about the essence of the *maṇḍala*. It teaches that the *maṇḍala* is the essence having the nature of void (*kha*) and purifies the sense faculties, thus the *bodhicitta* is cultivated through the *maṇḍala*.\(^{22}\) *Maṇḍalas* are said to be the abode (*puraṇa*) of the essence of all the Buddhas (*sarvabuddhātmanam*)\(^ {23}\) and bears the great bliss (*mahat sukham*).\(^ {24}\) It is clearly noticed in the tantra that *maṇḍalas* are defined to be the Essence (*śāraṇa*), or the *bodhicitta*.\(^ {25}\) At the same time they are the means to realize the Essence or the *bodhicitta*. Thus, we observe that in the religious practice, the notions of the *śūnya* or *bodhicitta* are symbolically implied in the visual images of Buddhist *maṇḍalas*.

**Buddhist *Maṇḍalas* as Works of Arts**

*Maṇḍalas* are regarded in the present thesis as works of arts, while their distinction from ordinary works of arts is also observed. One may question whether we can deal with *maṇḍalas* under the category of arts in spite that they are meant to serve the purpose in religious rituals. The question may be, at the first hand, argued back on the basis that the separation between the religion and arts is a modern invention, which accompanied the rise of individualism and the emancipation of arts in the West free from the power of the Christian churches. The isolation of arts from religion in the modern concept of arts should be discerned as the freedom from the religious authority, not the denial of religion as a source of artistic inspiration. Even today, the validity of religion as the source of artistic activities remains intact. Secondly, we should notice that *maṇḍalas* are created by artists or monk-artists, yet not by ordinary monks. Above all, it is revealing that the *maṇḍalas* have been permanently depicted on the walls in the monasteries in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. Especially when they are painted permanently on the wall, they should be considered in their visual dimensions because they are meant to be the focus to be looked at by ordinary devotees. Thus, they are placed in a

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\(^{22}\) Cf. HT II. 3. 27. "The Circle (*cakra*) is an assembly (*nivahaṇa*) and having the nature of the Space element (*khadāttu*), it is that which purifies (*viśodhanam*) the sense objects (*viṣayā*) and other aggregates." Trans. Farrow & Menon 1992: p. 191.


\(^{25}\) Cf. Ibid.
different context from that of the initiation *manḍalas* of tantric rituals. The initiation *manḍalas* are created temporarily to be the base of the internal visualization, which are to be dismantled after the rituals are over. One generalizes on the basis of the information about the initiation *manḍalas* that *manḍalas* are secret and esoteric. On the contrary to this generalization, the *manḍalas* permanently painted on the walls of monasteries are open and publicly exposed to be seen. Thus, our understanding of *manḍalas*, at least in case of those permanently represented on the walls, can be dealt with as works of arts, not restricted by their religious context.

**Aesthetic Approach to Buddhist *Manḍalas***

In order to examine the relationship between the inner meanings and the visual forms of Buddhist *manḍalas*, the thesis takes up their aesthetic dimension for the exploration. For the aesthetic approach keeps us in the track of seeing both the inner contents and the external form in its scope. While I deal with the aesthetic dimension of Buddhist *manḍalas* in the thesis, they are essentially viewed in their aspect of being an archetype beyond their association with religious practice. Their being the archetype is determinant for our aesthetic appreciation of *manḍalas* beyond cultural, spatial or temporal boundaries.

I behold especially the fact that *manḍalas* are appreciated even away from their religious meanings. The fact should be emphasized that *manḍalas* can be aesthetically, or even spiritually appealing without getting their contents and meanings known. This fact speaks itself about the importance of visuals of *manḍalas*. Today artistically executed *manḍalas* are publicly displayed in exhibitions, and people appreciate them even without knowing their ritualistic context or symbolic indications. People are overwhelmed by the exquisite forms and bright colours. However, the appreciation of *manḍalas* is different from that of ordinary pictures of portrait, still life or landscape, etc., in that the exquisite forms of *manḍalas* lead one to feel something transcendent or awesome. One may have such experiences even without worshipping divinities delineated in the *manḍalas*. These experiences would be better described in terms of the
reaction of the heart, which we may call 'aesthetic rapture'. Such experiences unambiguously indicate the inner meanings different from religious associations or discursive interpretations of symbols. The non-discursive meaning inbuilt in the visuals of manḍalas is proved by the present use of manḍalas as a psychotherapeutic method in the West. In this method, no meanings are instructed to patients. Patients are to copy the manḍalas given to them, which is quite opposite to Jung's method encouraging the active imagination of patients. And in primary schools, children are given with drawing of manḍalas and asked to fill the drawing with the colours they like. Though the contemporary applications of manḍalas in the West are doubtful in the matter of whether such regulated imitations could bring the desirable result, they mirror the idea that the heart spontaneously responds to the visuals of manḍalas and they influence in molding the structure of the mind, whether consciously or unconsciously. The main question of the thesis is, thus, phrased as such: 'How do the visuals of Buddhist manḍalas appeal to the heart of people even away from their religio-symbolic meanings?'

Scope of Empirical Research: Manḍalas of Tabo and Alchi in the Western Himalayas from the 11th cent. A.D.

Manḍalas have been the perennial theme in the religious arts of India. Its symbolic meanings are intensified through elaborated artistic language especially within Hindu and Buddhist traditions. The forms of Buddhist manḍalas are traditionally laid down, on the basis of the vision attained at the state of the absorption into the non-conceptual world. The Buddhist manḍalas, in general, may be described in their geometric palace with clear indications of the four cardinal directions. The divinities, either represented in anthropomorphic forms or in symbolic forms, are arrayed in the hierarchical order around the centre within the geometric palace. Here, Buddhas and bodhisattvas are conceived as spatial manifestations from the centre. However, as we will see in the main text, the manḍalas of Tabo do not conform to our general image of Buddhist manḍalas. They are neither based on the geometric structure, nor are their centers conspicuous. The visual forms of manḍalas vary. Thus, it is necessary to narrow down the scope of
the empirical examinations to particular examples.

The present thesis focuses on the *manḍalas* in the monasteries of Tabo and Alchi in the Western Himalayas, in order to approach the question of the relationship between the inner contents and the visual forms, more particularly about how the Buddhist *manḍalas* appeal to the heart of people even away from their religio-symbolic meanings. These examples have been chosen because they display rare refinement and sophistication in their forms as comparable with the classical arts and also because they are one of the earliest *manḍalas* extant in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. *Manḍalas* are not isolated paintings in Tabo and Alchi, but central in the whole iconographic program and vital in creating the visual effect of the space.

The monasteries of Tabo and Alchi belong to the period of the Second Diffusion of Buddhism (*phyi dar*) in the Tibetan history that was carried out by the patronage of Puran-Guge in the Western Himalayas.26 As is also observed in other monasteries established under the same historical background, such as Nako, Duñdkar, Sumda and Mangyu, Mahāvairocana is the central theme of the iconographic program of the monasteries at this time. Consequently we encounter in these monasteries the *manḍalas* related to Mahāvairocana. His position as the central divinity characterizes the *Yoga Tantra* class, thus these *manḍalas* with the image of Mahāvairocana at the centra are justifiably viewed in association with what the *Yoga Tantras* say.

The *manḍalas* of the *dukhang* in Tabo are well preserved. So far as the present remains indicate, there were only two *manḍalas* represented in the *dukhang* in Tabo: the Vajradhātu-*maṇḍala* and Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara-*Maṇḍala*. The Vajradhātu-*maṇḍala* of Tabo made up of thirty-three clay sculptures is one of rare sculptural *manḍalas* set in the architectural space. Although the bibliography of Rin-chen-bzang-po (958-1055 A.D.) tells us that he founded the monastery of Tabo, the inscriptions reveal that the monastery was founded by Yeshe Ö, ca. 996 A.D.. The research on the inscription in the *dukhang* also reveals that the wall paintings as well as the sculptural *maṇḍala* of Tabo

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26 Apart from Tabo and Alchi, these monasteries were established at this time.
may be assigned to ca. 1042 during the renovation of Jang Chup Ö.27

The oldest structure of Alchi monastery, that is, the dukhang is almost contemporary to the dukhang of Tabo, founded in the mid-11th century by Kelden Sherap, a follower of Rin-chon-bzan-po. The sumtseg, a three story structure, is assumed to have been founded in the early 13th century by a monk Tsultrim Sherap.28 The dukhang is the Main Hall of the monastery in the nature of a congregational space, whereas the sumtseg is the three-story temple, more conducive for the personal worship and prayer. The dukhang of Alchi is completely filled with mañdalas on the walls. Six large mañdalas of over three metres in diameters and a small mañdala over the doorway create a remarkable visual effect with their prominent large circular frames. Among them, the Vajradhatu-mañdala and Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara-Mañdala seem essential as much as their variations occupy entire walls of the second and the third stories of the sumtseg. In addition, it should be also mentioned in the preset that the Goddess Prajñāpāramitā has a significant place in Alchi, featuring in two mañdalas: one in the dukhang and another in the sumtseg.

Methodology: Doctrine of Vāk

As Jung has realized, valuable accounts of mañdalas are found in the old texts, particularly in tantras in regard to Buddhist mañdalas. Buddhist mañdalas are explained in the context of tantric practices, which is called mantrayāna (the way of mantras). Though the aesthetic dimension of Buddhist mañdalas is the main concern of the thesis, the meanings of mañdalas given in the context of religious practices are indispensable in comprehending the nature of the Formless that is the implied meaning of visuals of Buddhist mañdalas. Especially, the references from the visualization practice provide us with a key to interpret the internal experience of mañdalas. By means of the visualization of a mañdala, the practitioner identifies the self with the various manifestations of the divinity and experiences the non-duality of the self and the

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27 Cf. Petech & Luczanits 1999. The iconographic program, dating from the restoration phase 1042, includes painting, sculptures, inscriptions and extensive wall texts. The evidence of the paint underneath the mañdala sculptures makes it evident that the mañdala sculptures belong to the restoration phase.

divinity. Though there is a fundamental difference between the aesthetic seeing and the visualization in regard to the way the visuals are processed, the visualization practice of maṇḍalas, systematically laid out by the tradition, demonstrates convincingly the innate depth of maṇḍalas, which could be related to the aesthetic immersion to them. For the major question of the present research, the religious practice of visualization also gives invaluable references to ‘the sounds’ that make up for the gap between the ultimate state in the nature of śūnya and the manifested images of pratibimba.

The descriptions of visualization indicate that the levels in between the śūnya and multiple forms in maṇḍalas are conceived in the nature of sounds, which is consistent with the fact that the practice of mantras has been the essential soteriological means in realizing the formless Ultimate in the Yoga Tantras. The concept of subtle sound plays the central part in the tantric practices and holds a crucial key to interpret the tantric methods of salvation. The visuals of Buddhist maṇḍalas have been elaborated in association with the mantrayāna practice, and they are always combined with mantras and mudrās in tantric practices. Thus, the thesis looks into the notion of subtle sound that explains the conceptual basis of the mantra practice. Specifically its philosophy formulated in ‘the doctrine of vāk’ may be taken as the guideline in approaching the questions of forms and the formless in maṇḍalas.

The sound in spiritual traditions of India has been taken as the crucial factor in the descriptions of the cosmic revelation and the world manifestations. The term vāk is traced back as early as the Rgveda. Vāk has been speculated as the principle of the divine manifestations and the multiple creations in the world. Sophisticated philosophy of vāk is found in the Trika Śaivism of Kashmir. The doctrine of vāk in the Trika Śaivism is an achievement brought about by the synthesis of diverse streams of spiritual traditions: earlier Śaiva tantras, Bhartrhari’s philosophy of sound (śabda-brahman), the Vijnānavadin’s philosophy of logic, and the non-dualistic vision represented in its pratyabhijñā (recognition) philosophy. The comprehensive philosophy of vāk in the Trika Śaivism demonstrates a systematic way to explain the non-dualism between all the phenomenal objects and the Supreme Divine, that is, Śiva. It renders elaborate
expositions about the nature of worldly manifestations and their relation to the Ultimate Origin. Thus, I take the texts of Trika Śaivism as the main source of understanding vāk. Since the doctrine of vāk mainly deals with the question regarding the relationship between the Un-manifest Source and multiple creations, it is expected that the comprehension of vāk would impart the framework through which we can explain what makes the visuals of Buddhist mandalas appeal to the heart of people even away from their doctrinal associated meanings. Moreover, its wide scope that encompasses the field of aesthetics has been testified by the poetics of dhvani in the texts of Dhvanyāloka and its Locana.

The non-dualistic philosophy of the Trika Śaivism is pronounced in profound stanzas in the Śiva Sūtra by Vasugupta. The logical arguments of its non-dualistic theology has been carried out by the Pratyabhijñā School, represented by Somānanda (c. 900-950) and his disciple, Utpaladeva (c. 925-975). Abhinavagupta (c. 975-1025), who represents the culminating point of the Indian aesthetics with his theory of rasa and dhvani, is the descendent of these philosophers of the Kashmir, and he is the one who accomplished and synthesized the different streams of tantric traditions on the basis of the non-dualistic philosophy established by the Pratyabhijñā School. These key personages of the Trika Śaivism in Kashmir are contemporary to the period when the region of Western Himalayas was in active interactions with Kashmir in terms of not only economy but also arts and religion. Especially, Abhinavagupta is exactly contemporary to Rin-chen-bzang-po (958-1055) who translated a number of texts into Tibetan and motivated the foundation of monasteries along the Western Himalayas.

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29 The presence of Kashmir artists in Western Tibet has been discussed at length by Tucci in his Transhimalaya (1973). He mentions about the artistic influence of Kashmir on Western Himalaya (1973). He refers to the importance of Mangnang and its paintings being done by a number of painters from Kashmir summoned by Rin-chen- bzang-po (pp. 91-93). He exemplifies it with illustrations of a figure of a sadhu (Pl. 114) in affinity to the one depicted on terracottas from Harvan in Kashmir, figures of divinities (Pl. 122) and an ivory statue from western Tibet (Pl. 128), “Work such as this provides indisputable evidence of Kashmir influence in Tibet in the 10th and 11th centuries and similar examples from a later period have been found at Alchi in Ladakh.” (p. 92) He adds examples from Tsaparang (Pl. 138), Thofing (Pl. 136) and Tabo (Pl. 129) as Revealing their Kashmir origin.

Snellgrove also states about the same point (1977: p. 16): “It may be taken for granted, and we think quite rightly, that the main source of artistic work in Western Tibet and Ladakh from the 10th to the 13th centuries was north-west India, and especially Kashmir, which was then still a Hind-Buddhist land, and which is often specifically mentioned in Tibetan sources.”
including those of Tabo and Alchi.

The Trika Śaivism, in its philosophical exegesis, makes up for the non-dualism between the Ultimate and the phenomena conceived by the Yogācāra Buddhists. Especially, the conviction of the Pratyabhijñā School that Śiva permeates everything and the ‘recognition’ (pratyabhijñā) of one’s own identity (ātman) as Śiva leads one to the salvation reminds us of the Yogācārīn’s exposition of Tathāgatagarbha. Tucci has recognized the validity of the Trika Śaivism of Kashmir in understanding maṇḍalas. In his book on maṇḍalas, he expressed his view that the Hindu yantras are “the quintessential reduction of the identical idea which the Buddhist maṇḍalas are based on”.30 Consequently, he draws upon the Hindu tantras even in interpreting the symbolic meanings of the Buddhist maṇḍalas. He interprets the five Buddha Families in parallel with the five aspects of Paramaśiva or the five tattvas in the absolute plane: Śivatattva, Śaktitattva, Sadāśivatattva, Iśvaratattva, Sadvidyā. And the five aspects of Śakti are also referred in relation to the five Buddha Families.31 Most of all he pays attention to the concept of sound in understanding of maṇḍalas, and he introduces the third chapter of Abhinavagupta’s Tattrasāra to explain the symbolism of sound which lays the basis for the relation between the mantra and the emanation of images.32 Tucci’s attention to the texts of Trika Śaivism encourages us to look up their philosophy in exploring the Buddhist maṇḍalas. The vast cosmic vision of the Trika Śaivism certainly renders parallel concepts that can be compared or applied to those of the Buddhist maṇḍalas, as Tucci displays. The relationship between Kashmir Śaivism and Tibetan Buddhism has drawn attention of eminent scholars, and has been explored in terms of the history33, the religious practice,34 and arts. The cultural connection between Kashmir and the Western Himalayas during the 10th to 13th cent. A.D.35 is particularly relevant in regard to the empirical research of the Buddhist maṇḍalas of Tabo and Alchi. The fact that the artists

33 See Klimgurg 1982.
had been brought from Kashmir to embellish these monasteries and their arts reflect the style of Kashmiri arts in these monasteries should not be ignored. However, it is not the intention of the thesis that Buddhist mandalas are interpreted in terms of the philosophy of the Trika Śaivism at the level of symbolic or doctrinal meanings. The application of the philosophy of the Trika Śaivism to the symbolic meanings of Buddhist mandalas is avoided, because the doctrinal or symbolic meanings have been consciously endowed in the context of particular religious practices, thus they should be interpreted within the context. It should be clarified that the doctrine of vāk is looked up in the thesis for the purpose of interpreting the aesthetic phenomena and structuring the different levels of meanings and manifestations of mandalas from the aesthetic perspective. Vāk, primarily viewed as the principle or vehicle of transformation, is scrutinized in the thesis in its four aspects: parāvāk, pāśyantī, madhyamā and vaikharī.

The doctrine of vāk has its validity also in regard to the common origin of mandalas that Jung questions about. Let us briefly think of what is meant by ‘the origin’. From the religious perspective, the origin would be the Essence of the divinity, which is

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36 The presence of Kashmiri artists in Western Tibet is especially well corroborated by Rin-chen-bzang-po’s biography where the name of a Kashmiri artist is mentioned. Bhidhaka, and thirty-two are said to be brought by him, as was requested by the King Yeshe Ö.

37 Pal, while illustrating stylistic variations and their chronological order of mural paintings of Alchi, states that “the style of the murals in the Dukhang and the Sumtsek is generally considered to derive from Kashmir which was undoubtedly the principal source for Western Tibetan artistic tradition at that time” (1982: p. 19). He presents paintings of Western Tibet rendered in Dukhang and Sumtsek as “the only surviving evidence for inferring what Kashmir paintings once looked like” (ibid), because no comparative paintings have survived from Kashmir. Luczanits states, “all the original paintings of Alchi and related monuments can be considered to have been made under the supervision of Kashmiri craftsmen, or at least the strong influence of a Kashmir school.” (1997: pp. 201-2)

In regard to the arts of Tabo, the style of Buddha figures in the west wall of Ambulatory corridor in the Main Temple of Tabo has been comparable with the metal sculptures attributed to 10th to 11th century Kashmir. One of the closest comparisons would be between the Maitreya Buddha in Tabo (Klimburg-Salter 1997: figs. 181, 182) and the standing Buddha in Cleveland Museum (Klimburg-Salter 1982: Pl. 27). Klimburg-Salter suggests two phases of artistic activity in Tabo main temple: original in 996, and renovation in 1042. The 2nd phase consists of four different stylistic groups. She attributes the Group A (paintings in the Ambulatory and clay sculptures of mandala in the assembly hall) to the true Kashmir-derived style, and presumes that the Group A and B (all the narrative paintings and the protectress in the Assembly Hall) may have been undertaken by the Kashmiri artists, as stated in Rin-chen-bzang-po’s biography (Klimburg-Salter 1997: p.51). She considers other groups of style derived from the Group A. Luczanits discerns that the style of thirty-three clay sculptures of the Vajradhātu-mandala is only partly comparable to the contemporary Kashmiri style, while the sculptures of Alchi are recognized as the “direct influence of Kashmiri art” (Luczanits 1997: p. 202).
manifested in the *manḍalas*. In respect to the visual dimension of *manḍalas*, their origin is the artistic inspiration that gives birth to such forms. Probably Jung has not had thought of the artistic inspiration when he mentioned the origin of *manḍalas* though it is possible he considered the origin in religious terms as well. From the psychological perspective of Jung, the origin of *manḍalas* would mean the spiritual origin that would give birth to the inner symbolic meanings. However, these concepts are not to be separated ultimately. If the meanings and the forms are interrelated, the devotional source, the spiritual source, and the artistic source would be also interconnected, or even converge. The quest for the common origin of *manḍalas* could bring altogether the divinity, the deepest consciousness (or collective unconscious in Jungian term), and the artistic inspiration. The doctrine of vāk portrays its highest level, *parāvāk*, to be the artistic inspiration (*pratibhā*) as well as the pure consciousness (*saṁvid*). And at the same time it is worshiped as ‘Devi (the Primeval Goddess)’. Thus, it certainly contains the crucial key in explaining the common origin of *manḍalas*.

**Primary Sources of the Research**

The understandings of the doctrine of vāk in the thesis have been chiefly based on texts that represent the synthetic phase of the Trika Śaivism, such as Abhinavagupta’s *Tantrāloka* with Jayaratha’s commentary and his *Parātriśikā-Vivaraṇa*. The verses from the *Spandakārikā* with one of its commentaries by Rājānaka Rāma called *Spandavivṛti* have been also consulted. For the logical expositions of vāk, the invaluable sources are Utpaladeva’s *Iśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* with two commentaries of his own: a short one (*vṛtti*) and a long one (*vivṛti* or *ṭīkā*), of which only fragments are available.38 Abhinavagupta wrote a commentary on the *Iśvarapratyabhijñākārikā* (*Iśvarapratyabhijñāvivimarsini*) and a much longer commentary on Utpaladeva’s *vivṛti* (*Iśvarapratyabhijñāvivṛtvivimarsini*). The texts of *Spandakārikā* with Rājānaka Rāma’s *vivṛti*, *Parātriśikā-Vivaraṇa*, *Iśvara-pratyabhijñākārikā* and *Iśvarapratyabhijñāvivimarsini* have been translated into English.39 Apart from these English translations, the

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38 Torella 1988.
relevant verses on vāk are painstakingly translated into English by André Padoux in his book 'Vāc: The Concept of the Word In Selected Hindu Tantra', which immensely benefits my research on vāk.

In regard to the Buddhist maṇḍalas, the thesis is based on the texts that belong to the Yogatantra class, due to the nature of the examples of Tabo and Alchi. Especially, the commentaries of the major Yoga Tantras by Buddhaguhya help us in comprehending cryptic words of tantras. And his own composition on the maṇḍalas presents us with the discourse on maṇḍalas integrated from different Yoga Tantras. Buddhaguhya lived in the 8th cent. A.D. Tāranātha mentions him as being very well acquainted with Kriyā, Caryā and Yoga tantras. The primary texts on the Buddhist iconography such as the Śādhanamālā, Vajrāvalī or Niṣpannayogāvalī, are consulted only occasionally in order to compare the data from empirical examples with the conventional rules. The major texts consulted in the present research are described below.

* Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra

In the Tibetan tradition, the Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra is classified as a Carya Tantra. Snellgrove mentions that it belongs to the early Yoga Tantras. In the summarized commentary of the same Tantra, called the Piṅḍārtha, Buddhaguhya mentions only two classes of tantras, Kriyā and Yoga, which implies that the four divisions of tantras are a later denomination. Buddhaguhya classifies the Mahāvairocanābhisambodhi Tantra in the category of ubhaya (dual), which combines

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Pandey 1954.
41 Cf. Skorupski. 1983: p. xxv, in the introduction to his translation of SDPT.
42 "The Niṣpannayogāvalī (NSP) and Vajrāvalī (VV), two complementary works by Abhayākara-gupta (1064-1125) were written around 1100 A.D. Both texts describe in great detail twenty-six maṇḍalas from various Tantric traditions. NSP focuses on three-dimensional forms of these maṇḍalas for visualization (bhārīyanāṃḍala) and describes in detail the iconography of deities. VV explains the construction and ritual use of two-dimensional maṇḍalas, which are to be drawn (lekhyamanḍala) on the ground." (Bühnemann 2005: p. 5643). "According to Abhayākara-gupta, the Vajrāvalī, a practical guide to all the preliminary rites preceding the initiation into the maṇḍala, is the main text while the Niṣpannayogāvalī, which deals with maṇḍalas in details, and the Jyotirmāñjari, which deals with the homa ritual exclusively, are supplementary." (Bühnemann & Tachikawa 1991: p. xvi).
the orientations of both *Kriyā* and *Yoga Tantras*. While the text provides us with a profound philosophy of Mahāvairocana and fundamental concepts of the *mantrayāna*, we encounter invaluable materials that especially help in comprehending *maṇḍalas* of Mahāvairocana. The Tibetan text with Buddhaguhya’s commentary has been translated by Stephan Hodge. His translation entails the *Pinḍārtha* as well.

* *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*

The text of *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* gives more direct references to the Vajradhātu-*maṇḍalas* in Tabo and Alchi. Thirty-three clay sculptures in Tabo have been interpreted first by Tucci as the Vajradhātu-*maṇḍala* described in the *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha*. Along with the *Mahāvairocanābhisambodh Tantra*, it is regarded as the central text in the tantric Buddhism of the East Asia. The Tibetan translation of the text *Sarvatathāgatatattvasaṃgraha* by Śraddhākaravarma and Rinchen-bzang-po dates from the early eleventh century. There exist Tibetan translations of Sanskrit commentaries of the text by Śākyamitra and Ānandagarbha who were active in the eighth century. Its Chinese translation was done by Amoghavajra ca. 754 C.E. Its Sanskrit manuscript from the 10th cent. A.D. is extant and has been published. The Sanskrit text consists of four major sections and a commentarial section. In the introduction of its Sanskrit publication, Snellgrove says that the texts contains “teaching of invocations of sets of divinities with instructions in setting up their *maṇḍalas* and in the rites and benefits concerned with them”. Snellgrove translated some parts of the Sanskrit text into English in the introduction of the Sanskrit publication and also in his another publication. Giebel has translated Amoghavajra’s Chinese text into English, which covers only the first part of the first major section, called ‘Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalavidhivistara’. Amoghavajra’s Chinese translation “tallies very closely with the corresponding portion of the Sanskrit text, the Tibetan translation, and

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Dānapāla’s Chinese translation”. 49 Thus, Giebel’s translation of the text of Amoghavajra can be used for examining the Indo-Tibetan maṇḍalas of Tabo and Alchi. I have been benefited a great deal from Giebel’s English translations as well as from those by Snellgrove.

* Sarvadurgatipariśodhana Tantra

The first translation of this Tantra from Sanskrit into Tibetan was made sometime at the end of the eighth century A.D. and revised sometime before 863 A.D. 50 Some information is available from Tāranātha and Blue Annals, which refer to three Indian commentators: Buddhaguhya, Ānandagarbha (early 9th cent. A.D.) and his teacher Vajravarman 51. Rin-chen-bzang-po (958-1055 A.D.) translated two works of this Tantra.

Skorupski’s English translation of the Tantra is based on the Tibetan version which was translated from Sanskrit sometime during the first half of the 13th cent. A.D. by Lo tsa ba Chog. Chos rje dpal. Chapter II of the Tantra is especially useful for the study of Buddhist iconography and maṇḍalas. However, the descriptions of the divinities are confined to their mudrās and locations, and colours, which are simple and unelaborated. Vajravarman’s commentary gives detailed accounts on the basic maṇḍala of the Tantra 52 and the divinities of maṇḍalas.

* Dharmamāṇḍala Sūtra

Its original Sanskrit text has been lost. Its authorship is attributed to Padmākara by Tucchi, however, Lo Bue clarifies that it is attributed to Buddhaguhya 53 on the basis of the Tanjur (the second part of the Tibetan canon). It is a philosophical poem of 386 verses. Buddhaguhya states that he explains the maṇḍala’s divinities and their palace from the substance of all the great tantras. The text is divided into eight sections:

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50 Skorupski 1983: p. xxiv, in the translator’s introduction to the SDPT.
51 “From a short colophon at the end of a work by Ānandagarbha -who was a renowned scholar of the yoga tantras- we learnt that Vajravarman came from Śiṁhala (Śri Lanka) and was Ānandagarbha’s teacher.” (Skorupski 1983: p. xxv).
53 Buddhaguhya was contemporary to the Tibetan King Khri-srong-lde-brtsan who ruled from 754 to c. 798. He is also contemporary to Padmasambhava and Śāntaraksīṭa. Cf. Lo Bue 1987: p. 788.
substance; categories; literal definition (vv.51-4); structure (vv.55-177); faults; virtue; example and symbolism (vv.202-386). It lists and describes in great detail the essential constituents of the conventionalized fivefold scheme of maṇḍala. Lo Bue states that it gives the earliest known account of the conventionalized maṇḍala as we know today.⁵⁴

* Nāmasaṃgīti

The Nāmasaṃgīti reflects the popularity of devotional practice in the ⁸th cent. It was still popular in north-east India in the early ¹¹th cent. The text was translated into Tibetan during the first period of translation.⁵⁵ A commentary to the Nāmasaṃgīti that has been affiliated to the Māyājīla Tantra has laid the ritual of the maṇḍala of Dharmadhātu-Vāgīśvara, which is one of the main maṇḍalas in Tabo and Alchi. The text has been understood as the devotional hymns for Mañjuśrī, and the title has been translated into ‘Litany names of Mañjuśrī’. In contrast to the prevalent understanding of the text, Chandra draws a new understanding of the text, on the basis of the titles of Chinese, Tibetan, and Sanskrit manuscripts.⁵⁶ He argues that the Nāmasaṃgīti refers to litany names of Advaya Paramārtha (Mahāvairocana in the context of the Yoga Tantra) recited by Mañjuśrī.⁵⁷ The text is a crucial source which tells the nature of the Ultimate, as it had been understood in the period when the maṇḍalas of Tabo and Alchi were established.

Overview

Part I of the thesis surveys the external forms and the symbolic meanings of Buddhist maṇḍalas. The physical dimensions of empirical examples are described with special reference to those in Tabo and Alchi, and the relevant textual accounts are briefly looked upon. The symbolic meanings of the divinities are comprehended one the basis of the root tantra of the Yoga Tantras. From the symbolic dimension of maṇḍalas in association with the Buddhist tripartite, the discussion of various levels of forms is

The visualization of the *mandala* is looked upon, as it demonstrates a way to discern the different levels of form. The descriptions of the visualization throw light on the key role of sound in the religious practice that connect the physical forms of the self to the inner forms of the divinity. The Buddhist affirmation of the non-dualism of *śūnya* and *rūpa* is reflected.

Part II looks upon the doctrine of *vāk* as the method of analyzing the non-dualistic proposition of the *rūpa* and the *śūnya* contained in Buddhist *mandalas*. The concept of *vāk* adhering in the Buddhist practices of *mantras* and *mandalas* is brought up into attention, and the elaboration of the concept is consulted in the fold of Trika Śaivism. The four levels of *vāk* are studied in their dimensions as the transforming power, which lays the conceptual basis of explaining the non-duality between the phenomena and the Ultimate. The doctrine is examined in respect to its validity to interpret the aesthetic phenomena of Buddhist *mandalas*.

Part III redefines Buddhist *mandalas* from the perspective of the *vāk* theory, and appraises their aesthetic values. By analyzing the examples of Alchi as the external form of *paśyanti* *vāk*, it is attempted to present the theoretical basis that explains the identification of the *rūpa* and the *śūnya* in Buddhist *mandalas*. Further, the spirituality of the aesthetic seeing of *mandalas* is reassured in association with the philosophy of ‘*pratyakṣa* (direct perception of the Reality)’. 