

How Buddhist is the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* (a.k.a. *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*)?

Abstract of the talk in Tokyo on December 22, 2011

The bulky ancient Indian text *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* (a.k.a. *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*) belongs to the earliest specimen of Buddhist Tantric works, if we define this genre in such a way that it teaches special rituals which are reserved to those adepts who have been initiated into a *maṇḍala*.

As is well-known, the phenomenon of Tantrism was not limited to Buddhism, but occurred in other Indian religions as well. Recently, Alexis Sanderson has, in a book-length article, argued that Tantrism originated in Śaiva circles and has subsequently absorbed other religious currents or forced them to remodel their own teachings along Śaiva lines. In this context, he has shown convincingly that already early Buddhist Tantric texts like the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* were confronted with the objection that many of its teachings are of non-Buddhist origin and tried to solve this problem by claiming that the non-Buddhist Tantric texts themselves have in actual fact first been proclaimed by the Buddha.

In the present talk, I want to deal with another, though closely related, problem. Not only the above-mentioned fact that the authors of the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* tried to solve the problem of the non-Buddhist origin of some of its teachings, but many other features of the text as well leave no room for doubt that fervent adherents of Buddhism as opposed to other religions are responsible for its production. However, then the question arises to what extent the authors of the text tried to harmonize the teachings of the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa* (and early Buddhist *tantras* in general) with earlier and more orthodox standards of Buddhist ethics and spirituality and to what extent they were successful in doing so.

Special emphasis will be laid on the three Yamāntaka chapters of this text which contain rituals which are either aggressive in nature or are performed for the sake of obtaining sensual and sexual gratification.

A rather lengthy introduction will give an overview of the basic philological work already done on the text and the huge gaps and problems which are remaining. This will, among others, serve the purpose to remind the learned audience of the inevitably preliminary and non-exhaustive character of my remarks on the problem of ethics and spirituality in the *Mañjuśrīyamūlakalpa*.

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